

The Cambridge Food Pantry Network

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CAMBRIDGE MA.

October 31, 1994

Ms. Kathy Born
Chair, Cambridge City Council Food Policy Committee
Cambridge City Hall

Dear Councilor Born,

I am following up on my letter of October 14 concerning the nutritional needs survey that is to be done because of the recent defeat of the Cambridge Plan for Stop and Shop.

I have suggested using the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) nutritional risk survey to begin identifying the issues which underlie the serious nutritional situation faced by many elders in Cambridge. In my previous letter I attempted to make clear the underlying issues which affect elderly nutrition and the degree to which the failure to provide adequate access to affordable food impacts older people.

The data collected using the nutritional risk survey can assist the city in educating Cambridge policy makers at all levels about the extent of nutritional risk among elders in Cambridge. Survey results can be used to mobilize Cambridge to develop and implement needed services that address the issue of nutritional risk.

The FRAC survey can be used as a blue-print from which to develop a more extensive survey tool. This expanded survey can be designed to meet the informational needs directly related to the defeat of the Stop and Shop plan. Possible additional questions to the basic FRAC survey might include:

- how far from the grocery store do you live? how do you get to the store? (walk, take the bus, take a cab, friend/family drives me, drive my own car, don't go to the store, other)
- do you need assistance from another person in going to the grocery store? (always, sometimes, never)
Are you able to easily obtain this assistance?
- How much do you spend on food each week? How much money do you have to spend on food each week? How would a 20% increase in your food costs affect your food purchases?
- Would you use the services of a major full-service food store and pharmacy in your neighborhood?
Would you use this food store/pharmacy if it reduced your food costs by 20% or more?
- To what extent does bad weather affect your food shopping abilities? (Snow, rain, cold, excessive heat)
- To what extent would you use the services of a major food store to purchase special diet foods, foods packaged in smaller amounts etc.
- To what extent do you have food waste at home because of the need to purchase large amounts of food each time you can get to a major food store? To what extent would that food waste be lowered if you had a major food store directly in your neighborhood?

- How important to you would it be to combine a major full service food store with a pharmacy in meeting your food and prescription drug needs?
- How much money is currently spent on transportation to food stores each month? How much money is spent on transportation to a pharmacy each month?
- If you are not using food stamps, why not? (list of possible responses)
- If you are not participating in a congregate meals program, why not? (a list of possible responses)
- If you are using a congregate meals program on weekdays, what do you do for meals on weekends? (eat snacks only, eat at restaurants, don't eat, fix full meals)
- If you eat lunch at a congregate meals program, what do you do for dinner?
- If you are receiving home-delivered meals during the week, what do you do for food on weekends? (receive meals seven days a week, family/friend provides meals, don't eat, eat easily prepared snacks)
- Do you use food pantries to assist you in getting food. How often? Where?
- Do you use the food pantry home delivery program? how often?

Use of this survey may provide the beginnings of a campaign to identify "at risk" elders in the community. A coordinated outreach, information, referral and food access-related service campaign could be initiated in certain target areas such as Riverside, Cambridgeport and portions of Area 4.

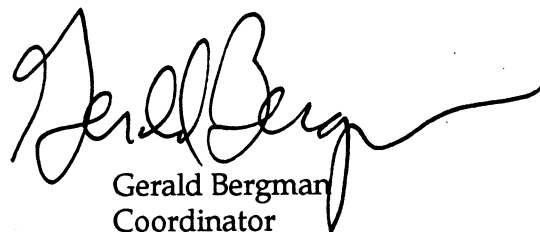
Survey results can be used to encourage better utilization and coordination of food services. Program operators and concerned community members may wish to meet on a regular basis in order to share information and ideas on how to better meet the food access needs of elders. We could bring attention to the problem of nutritional risk in Cambridge by designating hunger awareness weeks which could promote both existing programs and/or the need for expansion or creation of new services.

These additional questions would be asked within the framework of the basic FRAC nutritional risk survey. First we must establish nutritional risk, then we can identify the extent to which providing an affordable, accessible foodstore and a pharmacy, which would save elders 20% or more on their food and transportation costs, would alleviate that risk.

Again, I look forward to working with the City Council Food Policy Committee, the Council on Aging, the City Manager and other food policy advocates on this important nutritional risk survey.

Sincerely,

cc. City Manager
Council on Aging
✓ City Clerk (council communication)


Gerald Bergman
Coordinator

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CITY CLERK
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Consent Comm #2

S-475

A comm was received from the Cambridge Food Pantry Network regarding the nutritional needs survey.

In City Council November 7, 1994

Placed on file