JUNE, 2017

INVEST HEALTH

Strategies for Healthier Cities

Northwest Roanoke Food Access Initiative

RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

ROANOKE COLLEGE Classic for Tomorrow

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGRICULTURE PROJECT

FreedomFirst

ROANOKE

United Way

Acknowledgement

The Northwest Food Access Initiative is supported by a collaborative of Northwest community residents, community-based organizations, and cross-sector partners involved in Roanoke City's Invest Health Initiative, including Roanoke College (**Dr. Liz Ackley, project lead**), Local Environmental Agriculture Project (**Maureen Best, Ned Savage**), Freedom First Credit Union (**Dave Prosser, Tim Cerebe**), United Way of Roanoke Valley (**Pat Young, Brittany DeKnight**), and the City of Roanoke (**Chris Morrill, Sherman Stovall, Aisha Johnson**). The Invest Heath Initiative is a national collaborative supported by Reinvestment Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to reduce health disparities in low-income communities through transformative neighborhood projects.

In supporting the Northwest Roanoke Food Access Initiative, we are grateful to **Tim Saunders** for his commitment to community engagement activities and survey distribution. We also thank **Hannah Alleman**, undergraduate student intern at Jefferson College of Health Sciences, for her tireless efforts and conscientious attention to detail throughout the data-entry process.

In addition to the Invest Health team, this survey was conducted with the help of numerous community partners. We are grateful for the assistance in survey distribution from **Keith Farmer** (**Straight Street**), **the Peacemakers**, **Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Association, Loudon-Melrose Neighborhood Association**, **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority**, **Melrose Towers, Blue Ridge Village, Ashton Heights, Central Church of the Brethren, Melrose Avenue Seventh Day Adventist Church, Gainsboro YMCA, Habitat for Humanity, AmeriCorps, Joint Resident Council, Goodwill Industries of Roanoke Valley, ARCH, TAP, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, West End Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters,** and **Virginia Cooperative Extension.** We also thank the student volunteers from **Jefferson College of Health Sciences** for their assistance in door-to-door survey distribution.

We are grateful for the survey prize donations provided by **Fleet Feet Sports Roanoke** and **Local Environmental Agriculture Project**.

This report was developed by Dr. Liz Ackley, project lead for Roanoke City's Invest Health Initiative and Associate Professor at Roanoke College. To request more information about the Northwest Food Access Initiative, or for questions or concerns, please email the Invest Health team at RoanokeInvestHealth@gmail.com.

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The Northwest Food Access Initiative

I. Background:

The Northwest Food Access Initiative began in February, 2017 in response to resident concerns over inadequate access to affordable, healthy food options in Roanoke's Northwest neighborhood quadrant[1]. The survey process, led by Roanoke's Invest Health team[2], was conducted to allow Northwest residents to guide ongoing and future efforts aimed at addressing neighborhood-level food initiatives. The survey tool was adapted from the Southeast Sector Food Preference Survey, and was administered in electronic and print forms through neighborhood association meetings, churches, partner organizations, public housing venues, and door-to-door interactions with residents. With an emphasis on the neighborhoods surrounding the city-designated Melrose-Orange Target Area in Northwest (Figure 1), 2,500 printed surveys were disseminated between February and April, 2017, resulting in the collection of 321 valid surveys. The findings summarized in this report are intended to support ongoing conversations with Northwest residents to develop strategies to improve the availability of high quality, affordable foods in the neighborhood. Despite high levels of participation by neighborhood residents, limitations associated with convenience sampling should be considered when interpreting this data.

II. Executive Summary:

- The majority of survey participants (57%) were 55-years of age or older and reside in the Melrose-Rugby (36%) or Loudon-Melrose (20%) neighborhoods.
- On average, participants shop for one additional person, who is more likely to be an adult than a child; more than a third of participants shop only for themselves.
- Two thirds of participants shop once per week (or less) and report spending < $100 on groceries each week.
- While 34% of participants report using food assistance vouchers (SNAP, WIC, or both), the rate of use is highest among the youngest age groups (< 34 years of age).
- 67**%** of survey participants report using a personal vehicle as their primary mode of transportation to make food purchases, compared to 27% who use public transportation or get a ride with someone else. Regardless of transport mode, the majority of participants report spending 5-10 minutes in transit.
- Participants make the majority of their food purchases at major retailers, primarily Kroger (44%) or Walmart (27.3%). Nearly a third of participants also report getting food from fast-food retailers or a food bank / pantry.
- Fewer than 10% of participants report difficulty in purchasing fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood; 42% of participants report fruits and vegetables are too expensive.
- 87**%** of survey participants would like to see a change in their neighborhood's food system, with the majority of participants (61%) reporting they would like to see a full service grocery store within the neighborhood.

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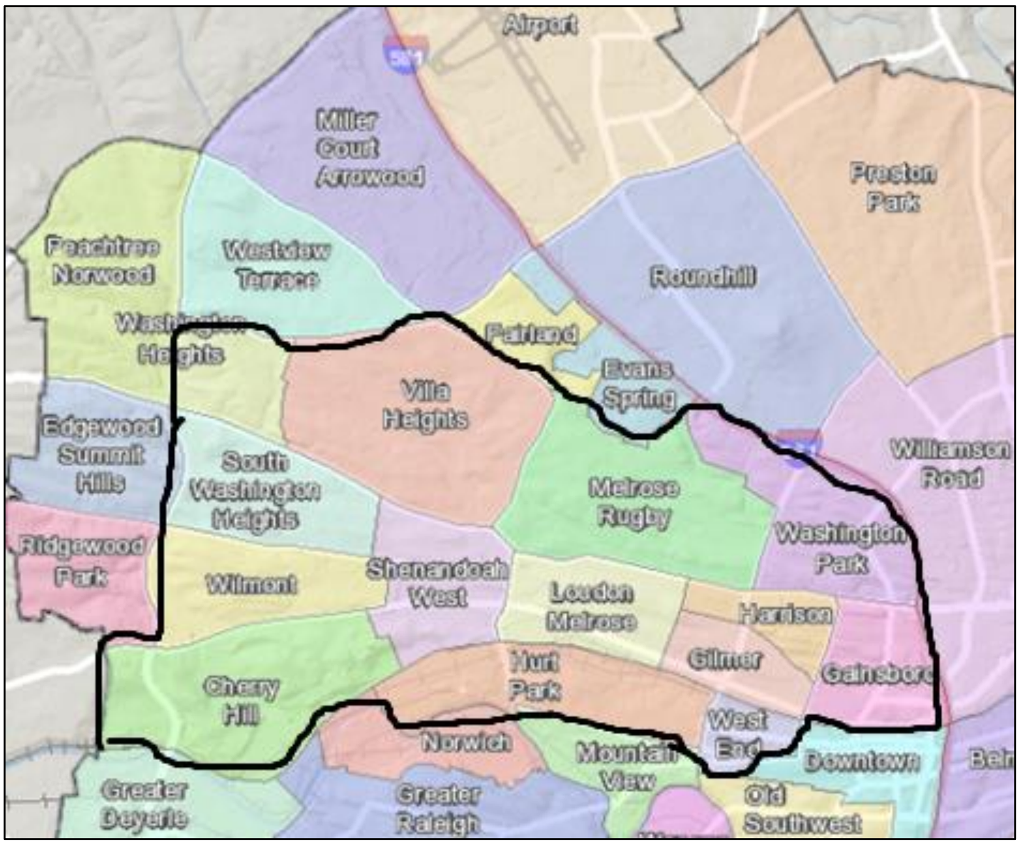
[1] Loudon-Melrose Shenandoah West Community Needs Assessment; Roanoke Valley Community Health Needs Assessment; Roanoke Valley Community Healthy Living Index

[2] Invest Health is an initiative of Roanoke College, Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP), Freedom First Credit Union, the City of Roanoke, and United Way of Roanoke Valley

III. Participant Recruitment Area

With a focus on the city-designated Melrose-Orange Target Area, the Northwest Food Access Initiative resident survey focused primarily on the following neighborhoods (Figure 1): Cherry Hill, Gainsboro, Gilmer, Harrison, Hurt Park, Loudon-Melrose, Melrose-Rugby, Shenandoah West, Villa Heights, Washington Heights, West End, and Wilmont. After accounting for invalid survey responses (respondent does not reside in Northwest, n = 2; duplicate survey entries, n = 6; no data included, n = 1), a total of 321 surveys were analyzed. While race, income, and household demographics were not collected as a part of this survey, census estimates indicate that residents in the target area are primarily African American (80%) and of low income (47% report less than $25,000 in annual income).

Figure 1. Target survey area

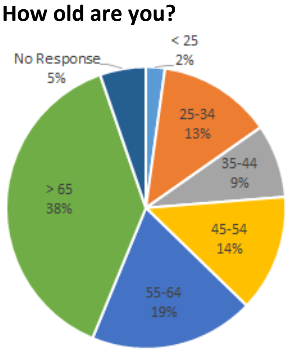


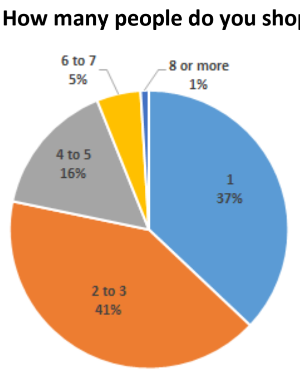
IV. Demographics

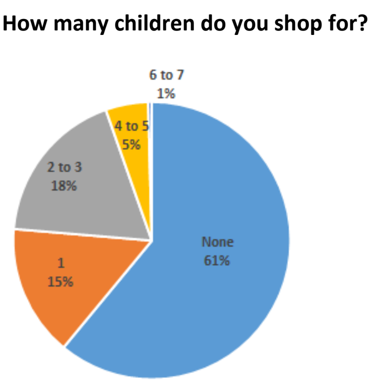
Survey respondents were primarily middle-aged or older adults who reside in the Melrose-Rugby (36%) and Loudon-Melrose (20%) neighborhoods. Likely a result of this demographic (with more than half of respondents over the age of 55-years[3]), the majority of participants reported shopping for a household of fewer than four individuals and more than a third indicated they shop only for themselves. The majority of participants who indicated they shop for children (39% of the sample) are middle aged (35-44 years) and shop for more than one child. Whereas 34% of participants reported using food assistance vouchers, 69% of SNAP users reported they shop for an adult-only household and 48% only shop for themselves.

[3] *Note: Based on 2015 census estimates of the target survey area, the age-breakdown of residents in the target area is as follows: under 5-years (8%), 5-18 years (27%), 18-64 years (59%), over 65-years (14%)*

Figure 2. Respondent Demographics







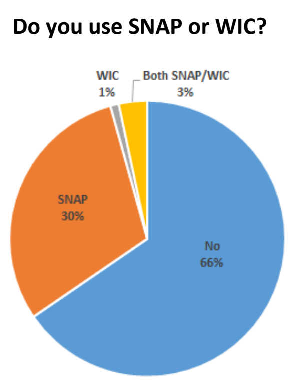
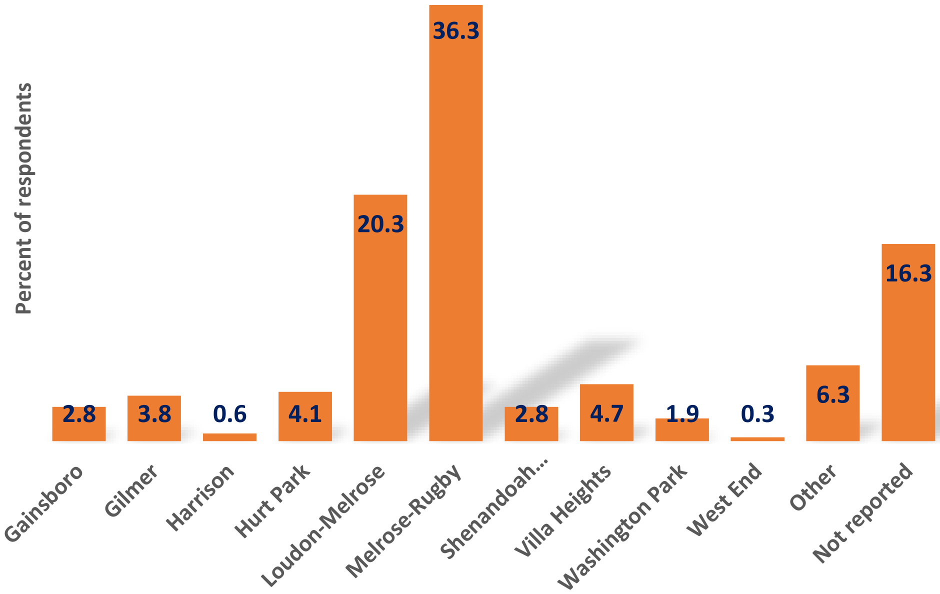


Figure 3. Respondent neighborhood



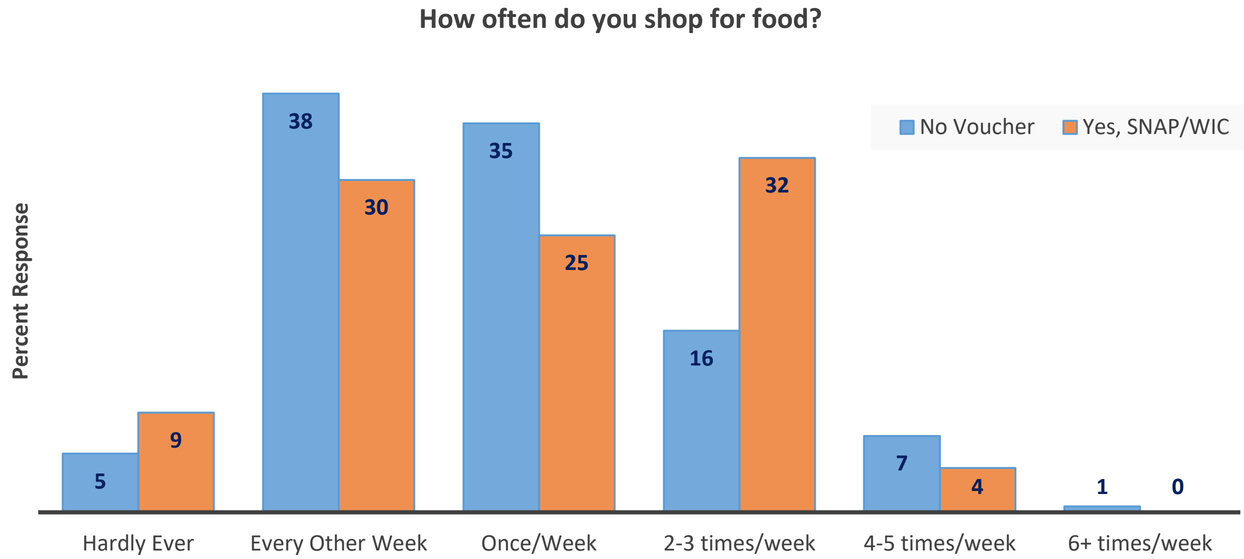
Note: "Other" indicates a neighborhood located in Northwest Roanoke that is outside the target focus area (*n* = 20; e.g., Airport, Roundhill, Miller Court).

V. Shopping Behaviors

Shopping Frequency and Expense: As a cohort, approximately 40% of participants shop for food less than once per week (Figure 4), yet the frequency of shopping increases among individuals who are middle aged (35-54 years), use food assistance vouchers (SNAP, WIC, or both; Figure 5), shop for adults other than themselves, or shop for more than 2-3 children (Figure 6). Among individuals who report using food assistance vouchers, 32% report shopping 2-3 times per week compared to 16% of participants who do not use food vouchers.

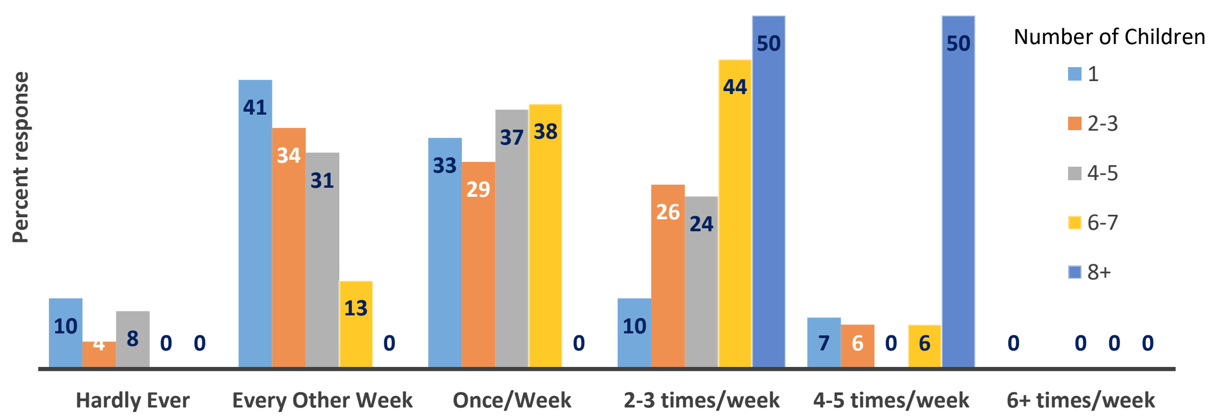
Figure 4. Shopping Frequency

Figure 5. Shopping Frequency by Food Voucher Use



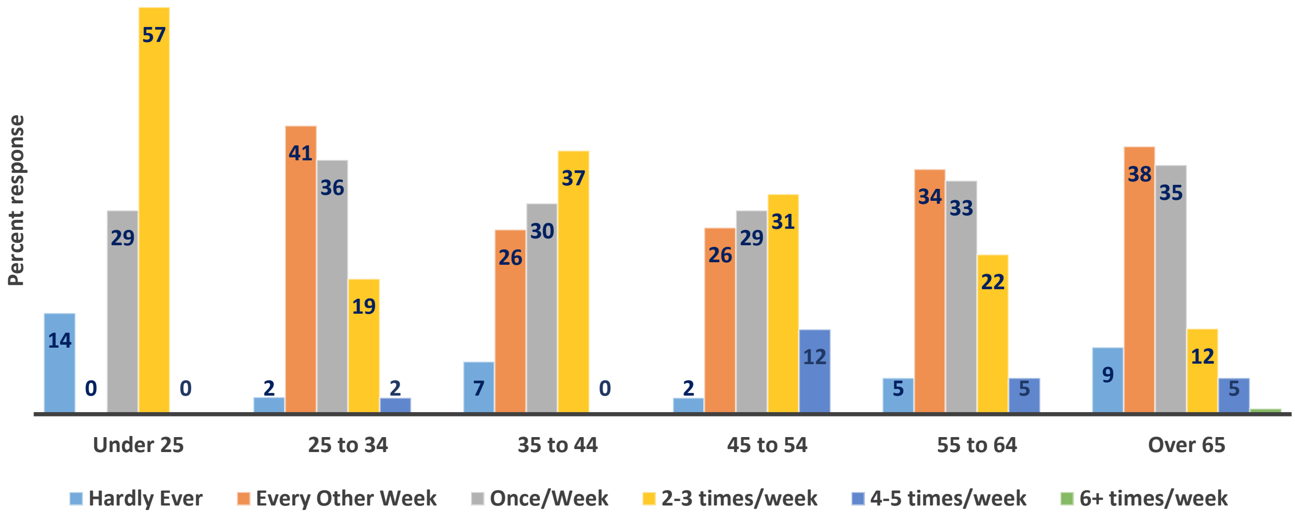
Among participants who shop for children, shopping is less frequent for those who shop for fewer than three children (51% of these individuals shop less than once per week), whereas nearly half of individuals who shop for 6 or more children shop at least twice per week.

Figure 6. Shopping Frequency by Number of Children



Across age cohorts, individuals in the 25-34, 55-64, and over 65 age groups shop less frequently (e.g., every other week) than the under 25, 35-44, and 45-54 age groups, who are more likely to report shopping 2-3 times per week (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Shopping Frequency by Age



Across the cohort, two thirds of participants indicate they spend less than $100 on groceries per week, with twice as many SNAP/WIC users (who represent 34% of the total cohort) spending less than $50 per week (see Figures 8 and 9).

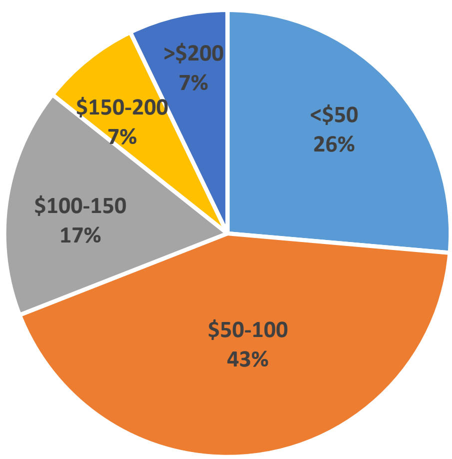


Figure 8. Weekly Grocery Expenses

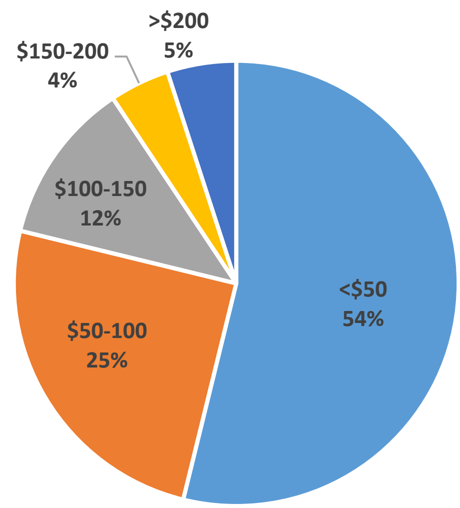


Figure 9. Weekly Grocery Expenses among Food Voucher Participants

When weekly grocery expenditure was stratified by age, the most frequently reported expenditure within each age cohort (range = 30-50%) was $50-100 per week, with exception of the 25-34-year old age group. Within the 25-34 year age cohort, individuals were more likely to report spending $100-150 per week on groceries. Further, a substantially higher number of individuals in the under 25 and the 25-34 year age groups report using food assistance (50% and 46%, respectively) compared to individuals in in the 35-44, 45-54, 54-65, and over 65 age groups (range = 28-38%).

Primary Mode of Transport: More than two thirds of survey participants reported that they use a personal vehicle to get to the place they shop for food most often, compared to 14% who use public transportation or get a ride with a friend or family member (Figure 10); this rate of personal vehicle use (wherein ~ 33% of respondents indicated they do not use a personal vehicle) is similar to census data estimates indicating 28% of households in the target area do not have access to a personal vehicle. In general, personal vehicle usage declines with age and reliance on the bus system or friends/family for rides remains relatively stable (Figure 11).

Figure 10. Transportation Mode to Primary Food Retailer

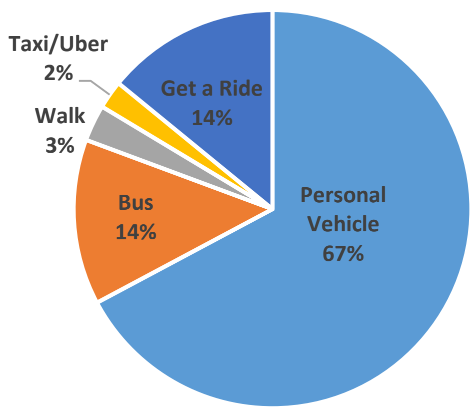
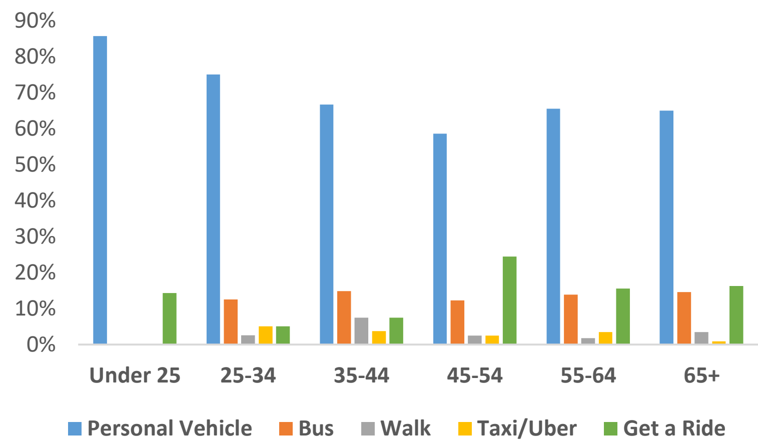


Figure 11. Transportation Mode by Age Group



Primary Food Store:

When asked, "where do you shop for food most often?", respondents primarily indicated large full-service grocers, including Kroger (at Rutgers and Lakeside) and Walmart (at Valley View); see Figure 12. Primary shopping locations were generally similar between users and non-users of food assistance vouchers (Figure 13) and across age groups (Figure 14), with slightly higher reports of small neighborhood retailers (indicated as "other") among the youngest age cohort (< 25 years of age) and individuals using food assistance vouchers.

Figure 12. Primary Food Retailer

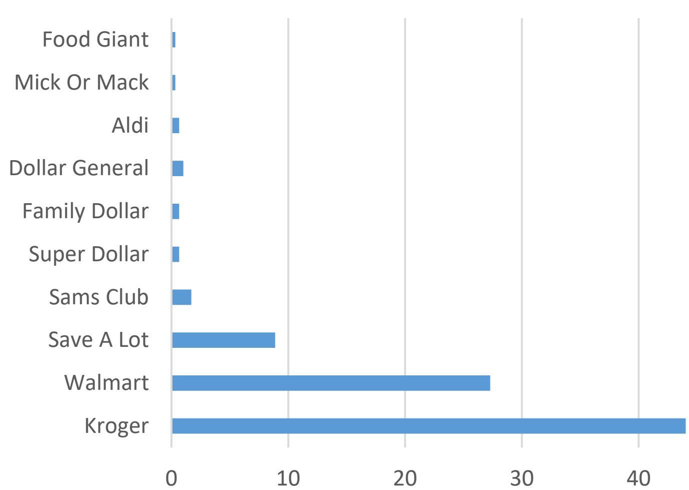


Figure 13. Primary Food Retailer among Food Voucher Users

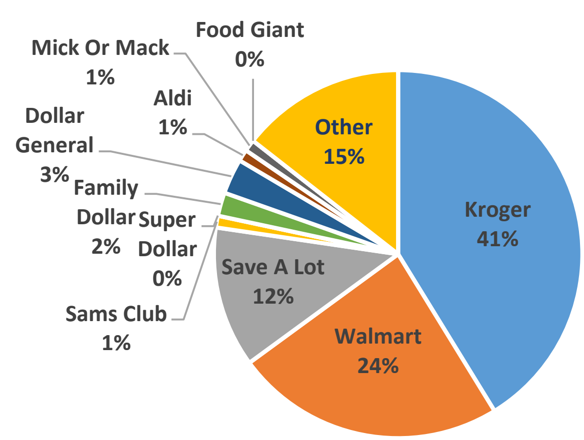
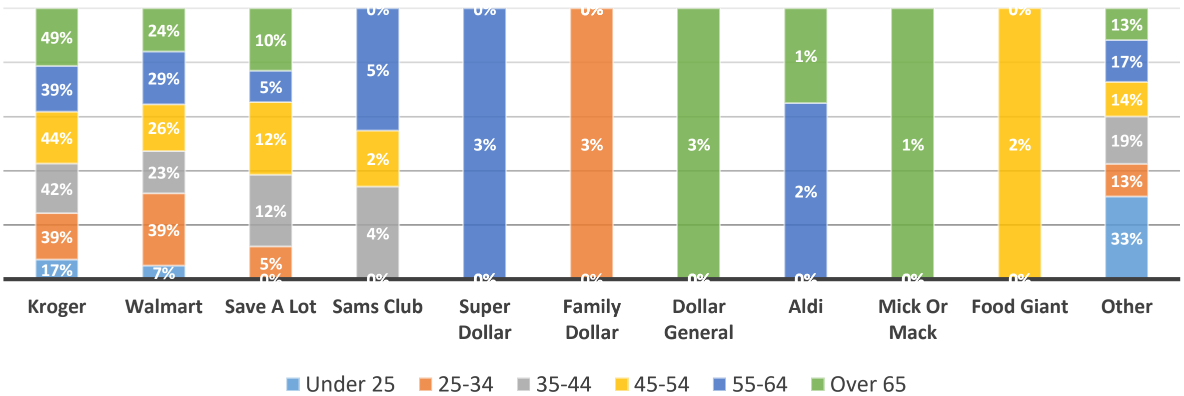


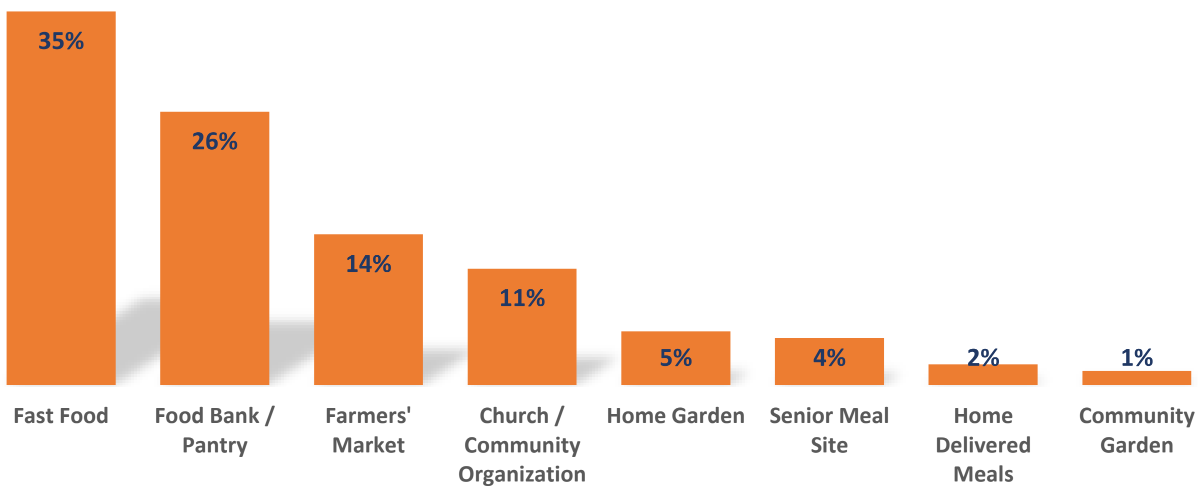
Figure 14. Primary Food Retailer by Age Group



Note: Percentages correspond to the percent of the age-group who reported using each food retailer.

As a follow-up question, participants were asked, "Besides grocery stores, where else do you get food?". More than a third of participants reported purchasing fast food. Forty percent of participants also indicated getting food from a charitable organization (i.e., food pantry, church, community organization, or senior meal site; Figure 15).

Figure 15. Other Food Sources



To better understand how Northwest residents decide where to shop, participants were also asked to identify the types of services and other factors that are important when selecting a grocer. In terms of services, meat, dairy/refrigerated items, and bakery items were prioritized; the availability of home goods and prepared foods were perceived as less important (see Figure 16). In choosing where to shop, prices and quality/freshness were perceived as the most important determinants (see Figure 17), whereas self-reported factors included the cleanliness of the store (n = 3), the availability of fresh, healthy options (n = 2), access to parking (n = 2), the ability to purchase organic, non-GMO items (n = 2), the ability to have someone shop for them (n = 1), access to a scooter (n = 1), and access to a pharmacy (n = 1).

Figure 16. Important Services in Selecting a Food Store

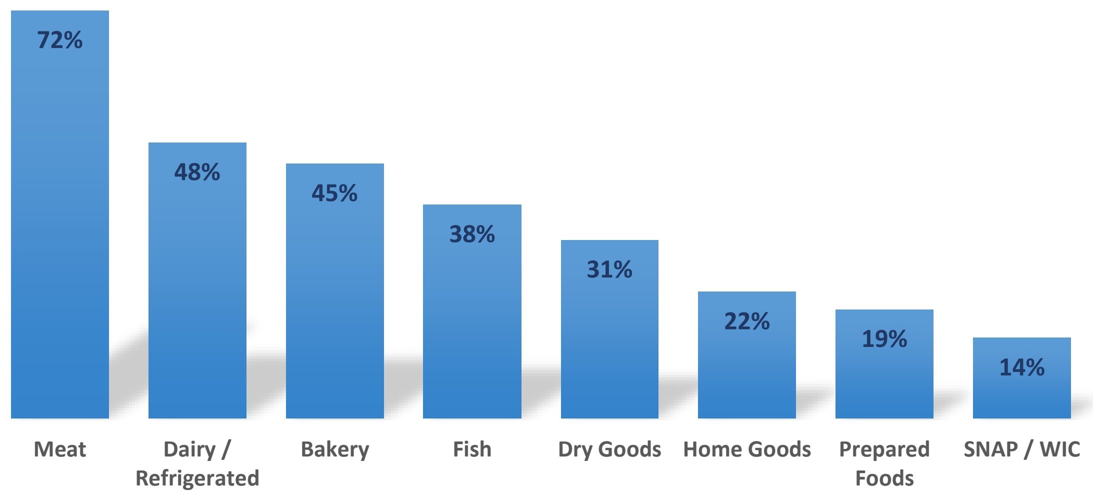
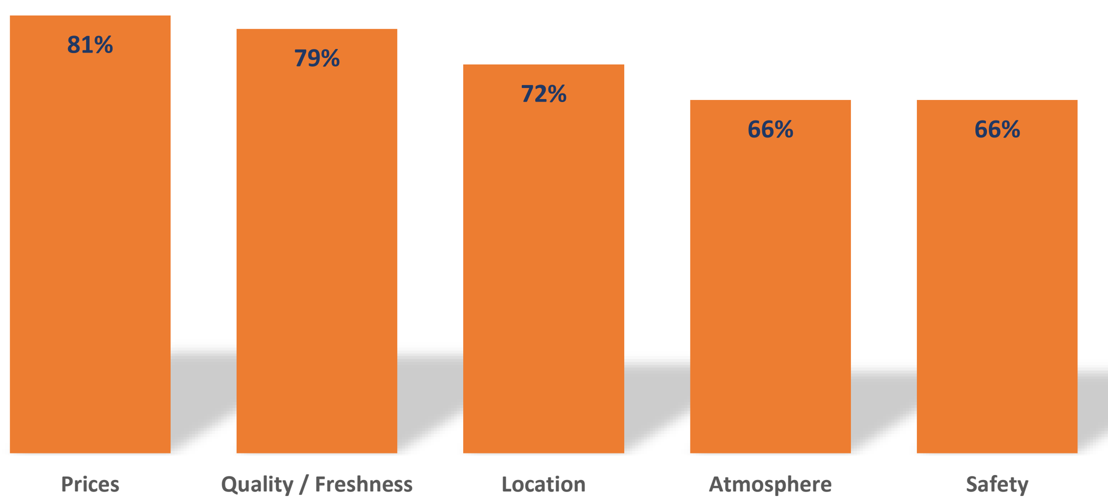


Figure 17. Important Factors in Selecting a Food Store



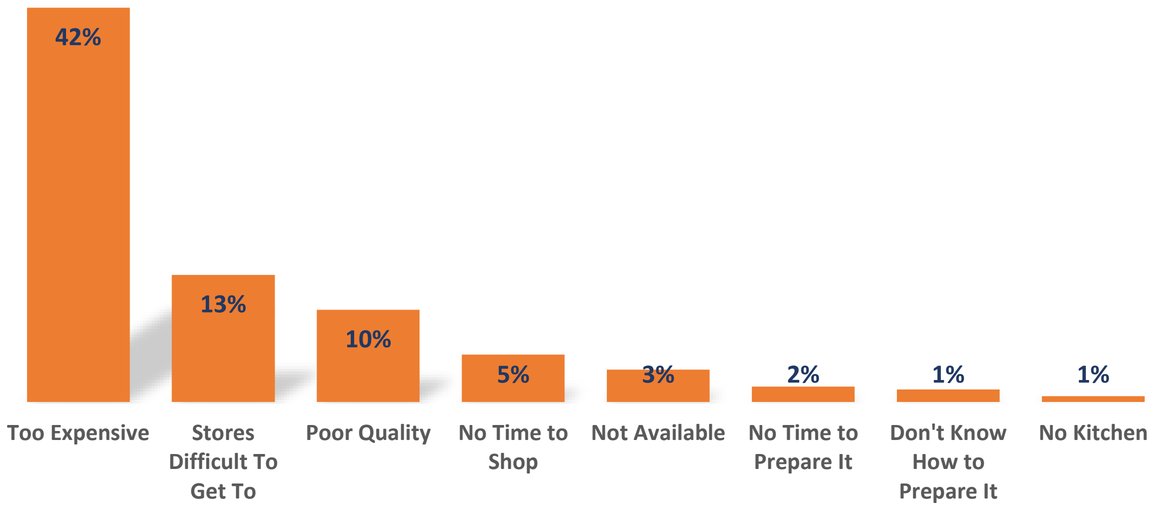
Produce Purchases:

When asked to report which fruits and vegetables are purchased most often, the majority of participants reported bananas (76%), potatoes (72%), broccoli (65%), green beans (65%) onions (64%), tomatoes (63%), apples (62%), grapes (59%), corn (56%), collard greens (55%), oranges (54%), lettuce and spinach (51%), cucumbers (50%), and cabbage (49%). Conversely, the items least likely to be purchased by participants included berries (25%), pears (23%), cherries (23%), kiwi (18%), avocado (17%), mango (16%), plums (14%), and peppers (12%). Only 9% of participants felt they could not buy the fruits and vegetables they like in their neighborhood and, among this group, the most frequently identified items included “all of the above” (refers to items previously listed), “anything fresh”, and “watermelon and cantaloupe”.

When asked if factors existed which kept participants from eating fruits or vegetables, the most frequently reported responses included “prices are too expensive” (42%), “stores are hard to get to”

(13%) or “produce is of poor quality” (10%); the distribution of responses did not differ across age groups or by use of food assistance vouchers. Other responses provided by participants included “allergies” (n = 1) and “transportation issues” (n = 2).

Figure 18. Factors impacting produce consumption



VI. Northwest Roanoke Food Access Recommendations

<u>Recommended Changes to Neighborhood Food System</u>

In echoing previous reports concerning resident-perceived areas of need in Northwest Roanoke, 98% of survey participants reported they would like to see changes in their neighborhood food system. Among participants seeking a change, 62% indicated a desire for a full-service, neighborhood-level grocery store; approximately 40% would like to see more fresh food options in existing neighborhood stores or more farmers’ markets (Figure 19). When asked explicitly if respondents would support a full-service grocer within the neighborhood, 96% of participants indicated that they would actively support one (Figure 20).

Figure 19. Recommended Changes to Neighborhood Food System

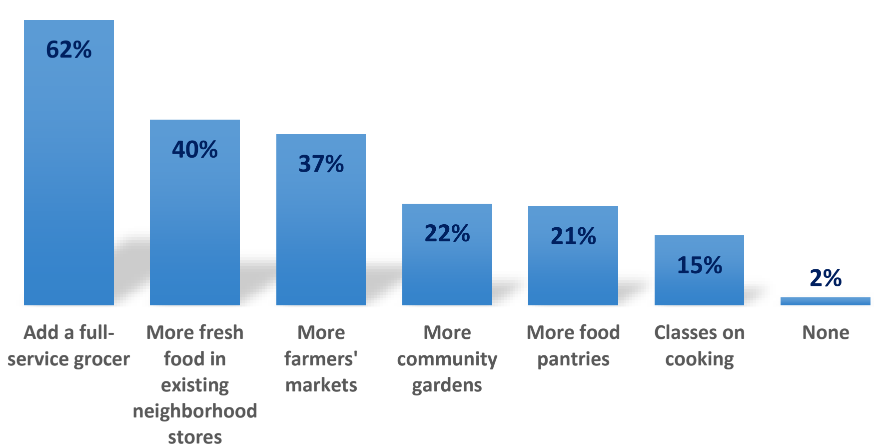
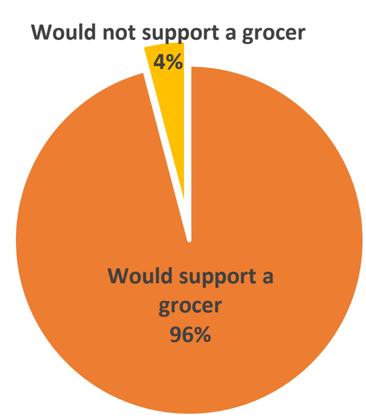
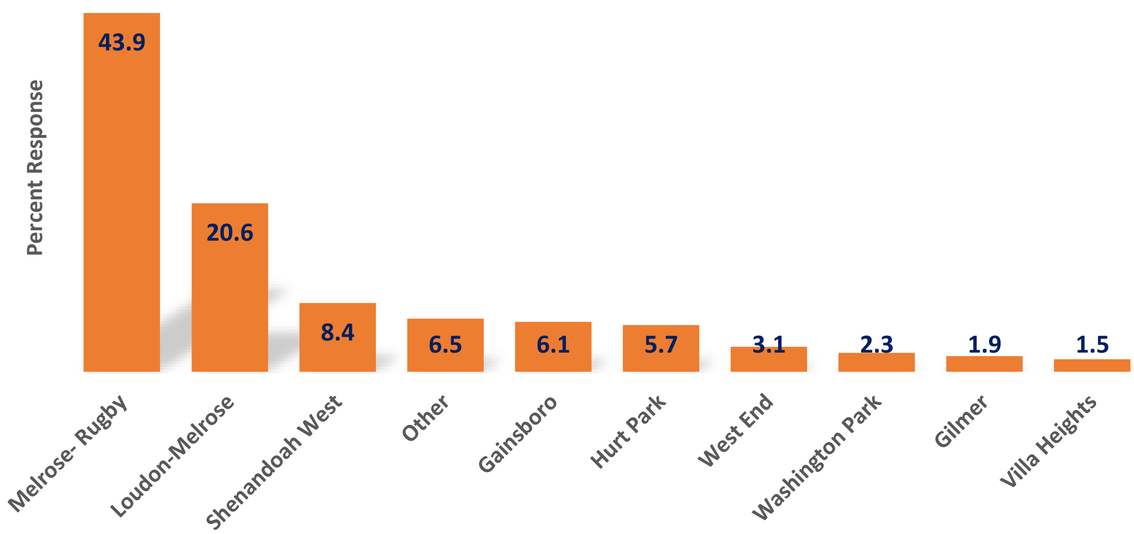


Figure 20. Support for Neighborhood Grocer



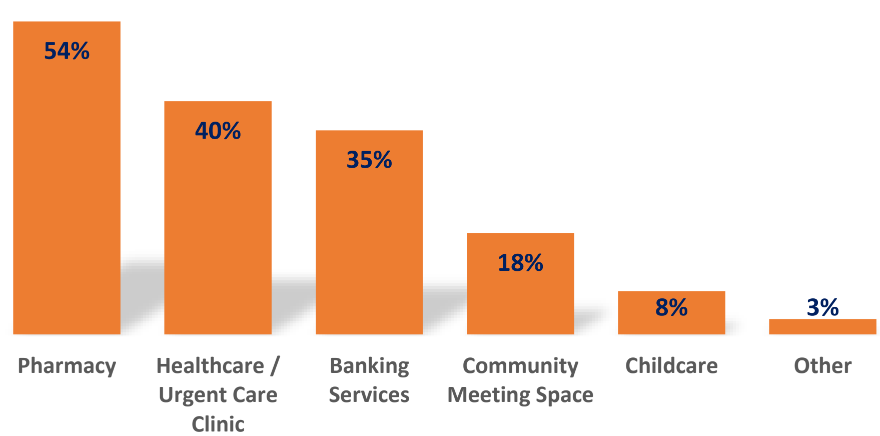
Participants were then asked to indicate where a new grocery store should be located. Among participants who reported they would support a neighborhood-level grocery store, the most frequently reported neighborhoods included Melrose-Rugby, Loudon-Melrose, and Shenandoah West (see Figure 21). While neighborhood residents tended to self-select their own neigborhood as a desirable location, 26% of individuals who indicated Melrose-Rugby and 43% of individuals who indicated Loudon-Melrose lived in a different neighborhood. Participants who self-reported "other" as their preferred location provided the following location ideas: "central, Loudon-Melrose/Melrose-Rugby" (n = 7); "the Gainsboro, Gilmer, Harrison area" (n = 3), "11th street (next to Hope Center)" (n = 2), "near new Family Dollar at 16th and Orange" (n = 1), "intersection at Melrose and Peters Creek" (n = 1), and "Westside" (n = 1).

Figure 21. Suggested Grocery Store Location



To support the viability of a neighborhood grocer as a destination, participants were asked to identify other services that would be important to them in close proximity to a grocer (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Suggested Co-Located Services



Individuals who indiciated “Pharmacy” were more likelty to be in the youngest (< 25 years) or oldest (> 65 years) age groups (i.e., > 65% of cohort answered “yes” to service) or to use food assistance vouchers (61% of voucher users versus 50% of non-users). Individuals who indicated “Healthcare / Urgent Care Clinic” were more likely to be in the 25-34 year-old age cohort (50% of cohort compared to ~40% across other age groups) or to use food assistance vouchers (45% of cohort versus 39% of non-users). Individuals who indicated “Banking Services” were more likely to be in the 34-45 year-old age group (52% of cohort compared to ~30% across other age groups) and were less likely to use food assistance vouchers (35% of non-users compared to 13% of users). Among individuals who reported “other”, suggestions included: “cleaners/laundry” (n = 3), “Dollar Tree” (n = 1), hair store/salon (n = 2), extra parking (n = 1), “gas station” (n = 1), “clothes stores” (n = 1), and “schools with home ec and cooking classes” (n = 1).

APPENDIX 1: Northwest Roanoke Food Access Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather input from local residents about food purchasing behaviors, preferences, and needs in NW Roanoke. <u>One survey per household</u>, please. Feel free to contact the Invest Health team at <u>RoanokeInvestHealth@gmail.com</u> with questions, concerns, or to become involved in future grocer planning activities. All survey respondents will be entered into a prize drawing.

1. Please check the neighborhood where you live:

□ Gainsboro □ Gilmer □ Harrison □ Hurt Park □ Loudon-Melrose
□ Melrose-Rugby □ Shenandoah West □ Villa Heights □ Washington Park □ West End
□ Other: ____

2. How old are you? *Circle one* Under 25 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

3. Where do you shop for food: *Check all that apply*

□ 24th St Market	□ Farmers' Market	□ M&S Stopmart	□ S&S Grocery
□ Aldi	□ Food Giant	□ Melrose Stop Mart	□ Save-A-Lot
□ Annwil Groceries	□ Food Lion	□ MJ's Super Store	□ Sunbeam Discount Bakery
□ Campbell's Place	□ Fresh Market	□ New Deli Mart	□ Tony's Deli Mart
□ Co-op	□ George's Mart	□ Paradise Deli Mart	□ Wal-Mart
□ CVS	□ Jack's Shop In	□ Quik Mart	□ Wilmont Market
□ Dollar General	□ Kroger	□ Royal Deli Mart	□ Z Mart / Brothers
□ Family Dollar	□ Lafayette Express	□ OTHER: ______________________	

4. Where do you shop for food most often (i.e. what is your primary store)?

Store: ____________________________ Location: ________________________________

5. How do you get to the place you shop for food most often?

Circle all that apply: Personal vehicle Bus Walk Bike Taxi/Uber Get a ride Other: _______

6. How long does it take you to get to the place you shop for food most often (one way)?

Circle one: Less than 5-mins 5-10 mins 10-20 mins 20-30 mins More than 30 mins

7(a). How many people do you shop for?

Circle one: 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

7(b). How many children do you shop for?

Circle one: 0 1 2-3 4-5 6-7 8+

8. Do you use SNAP or WIC? □ *No* □ *Yes, SNAP* □ Yes, *WIC* □ Yes, both *SNAP* and *WIC*

9. How often do you shop for food?

Circle one: Hardly ever Every other week Once/week 2-3 times/week 4-5 times/week 6+ times/week

10. How much do you spend on groceries in a week?

Circle one: $0.00-50.00 $50.00-100.00 $100.00-150.00 $150.00-$200.00 $200.00+

11. Besides grocery stores, where else do you get food? *Check all that apply*

□ Food bank / Pantry	□ Community garden	□ Home-delivered meals
□ Church / Community organization	□ Fast food	□ Farmers' Market
□ Home garden	□ Senior meal site	OTHER: ________________________

12. What fruits and vegetables do you purchase most often? *Check all that apply*

□ Apples	□ Oranges/tangerines	□ Berries	□ Pears	□ Cherries	□ Kiwi
□ Bananas	□ Peaches/Nectarines	□ Grapes	□ Pineapples	□ Plums	□ Mango

OTHER: ____

□ Avocado □ Cabbage □ Lettuce/Spinach □ Corn □ Green beans □ Cauliflower
□ Broccoli □ Carrots □ Collard Greens □ Cucumbers □ Green peas □ Squash
□ Potatoes □ Peppers □ Tomatoes □ Onions □ Mustard Greens
OTHER: ____

13. Are there fruits or vegetables that you like, but cannot buy in your neighborhood? □ Yes □ No
If yes, please list: ____

14. Which of the following factors (if any) stop you from eating fruits and vegetables?
Check all that apply
□ Prices are too expensive □ No kitchen equipment to prepare/store them
□ Stores are hard to get to □ Not enough time to prepare them
□ They are of poor quality where I shop □ I don't know how to prepare them
□ They are not available where I shop □ I don't like fruits/vegetables
□ Not enough time to shop for them □ None / Other: ____________________________

15. Other than fruits and vegetables, what other services are important to you when you shop for food? *Check all that apply:*
□ Bakery □ Meat □ Prepared foods □ SNAP/WIC □ OTHER: ____________
□ Dry goods □ Fish □ Home goods □ Dairy/Refrigerated ________________

16. What factors are most important to you in choosing where you shop for food?
Please rank 1-5 (1 = most important, 5 = least important)
___Quality/freshness of food ___Atmosphere ___Prices ___Location ___Safety

Other important factors: ____

17. What would you like to see change in your neighborhood's food system (Northwest Roanoke)? *Check all that apply*
□ Add a full-service grocery store □ More fresh food in existing neighborhood stores
□ More farmers' markets □ More food pantries
□ More community gardens □ Nothing, there's plenty of access to food in our neighborhood
□ Classes on cooking OTHER: ____

18. Would you actively support and shop at a new full-service grocery store in your neighborhood?
□ Yes □ No Comments: ____

19. If a new grocery store were to open in NW, where do you think it should be located?
Check a neighborhood or provide a comment
□ Gainsboro □ Gilmer □ Harrison □ Hurt Park □ Loudon-Melrose
□ Melrose-Rugby □ Shenandoah West □ Villa Heights □ Washington Park □ West End
□ Other/Comments: ____
____

20. What other services would be important to you at a neighborhood food store? *Check all that apply*
□ Pharmacy □ Healthcare / Urgent care clinic □ Childcare
□ Banking services □ Community meeting space □ Other:_________________________________

21. Would you like to be entered into the prize drawing? If so, please provide your contact information:
____ □ Keep me updated about efforts to bring healthy food to NW

THANK YOU for your time and your answers!