

Improving Local Food Accessibility within the Village of Menands



April 2020

Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands

Capital District Regional Planning Commission

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www.cdrpc.org



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Cover Picture Courtesy <https://dreamtimes.com>

About the Capital District Regional Planning Commission

Our Mission

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) is a regional planning and resource center serving Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. CDRPC provides objective analysis of data, trends, opportunities, and challenges relevant to the Region's economic development and planning communities. CDRPC serves the best interests of the public and private sectors by promoting intergovernmental cooperation; communicating, collaborating, and facilitating regional initiatives; and sharing information and fostering dialogues on solutions to regional challenges.

Our History

CDRPC was established as a regional planning board in 1967 by a cooperative agreement among the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. Its original purpose was to perform and support comprehensive planning work, including surveys, planning services, technical services, and the formulation of plans and policies to promote sound and coordinated development of the entire Region. Over time, the mission of the Planning Commission evolved in response to changes in the Region's needs, funding sources, organizational structure, and information technology. While continuing to provide a wide variety of comprehensive planning services, CDRPC has also assumed the functions of Data and Information Center, Economic Development District, Foreign-Trade Zone Administrator, Clean Energy Communities Program Coordinator, and Water Quality Manager.



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Introduction

2019 CDRPC/CDTC Technical Assistance Program Village of Menands Food Access Best Practices and Feasibility

The Technical Assistance Program is offered by Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) and Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC). The Technical Assistance Program is intended to offer staff time and expertise to local governments undertaking small scale community planning initiatives that resonate with the principles of CDTC's New Visions 2040 Regional Transportation Plan. Planning initiatives that support New Visions include those that preserve and enhance the Capital District's existing urban form, infrastructure and quality of place; emphasize livable communities and smart growth; encourage concentrated development patterns and smart economic growth; and protect sensitive environmental resources. The Village of Menands is one of the five communities that were awarded funding for Food Access Best Practices and Feasibility in 2019.

Food access in the was identified as a priority issue during the initial stages of the Village's multi-year Comprehensive Planning process that began in 2017. At all stages of the Comprehensive Plan's public engagement process- including stakeholder interviews, extensive surveying, and public workshops- residents expressed a desire for improved access to local grocery options. The back-to-back closure of two major food retailers in the Village prompted a sense of urgency amongst residents and elected officials. The Village sought assistance from the CDRPC in advance of the completion of the Comprehensive Plan as a way to take immediate action on the issue.

The Food Committee served to provide guidance on the technical assistance project, and the opening kick-off meeting was held on October 22, 2019. Existing conditions regarding food accessibility in Menands and national best practices within the topic were presented to members of the committee. Members were then asked to provide feedback on a prioritization of potential technical assistance tasks identified to assist Menands in improving the community's access to healthy food:

- Increase access to existing grocery establishments outside of Menands

- Improve food accessibility collaborating with existing community stores and entities in Menands
- Develop strategy to attract new grocery store/outlets

Upon further discussion with the committee, the approaches based on feasibility were narrowed down to the first two approaches; increase access to existing grocery establishments outside of Menands, and improve food accessibility within existing community stores in Menands.

Based on the agreed consensus of the first meeting with the members of the Village of Menands food committee, the recommendations that provide strategies, potential partners, or activities designed to provide greater accessibility to food in short to long-term timeframes were developed.

This report contains specific information related to the food accessibility issue as perceived within Menands, and strategic recommendations for how to improve food accessibility as provided within two main categories:

Improve access to the existing grocery establishments outside of Menands

- Connect those eligible to transportation serving Disabled/ Elderly/ Low income residents
- Provide information on grocery delivery options currently available
- Bike-share: obtain a CDPHP hub location in Menands

Improve Food Access Collaboratively with Local Resources

- Convenience stores
- Capital District Farmers Market
- Ethnic grocery store

FOOD ACCESS AND RECENT PRACTICES

Food is a basic necessity of life along with shelter, water, and air. As the American Planning Association notes, food plays a role in our health, economy and culture and is a critical part of a sustainable community. Access to not just food, but healthy food is receiving more attention in the US due its essential nature and implications for community health, social and economic factors, as well as quality of life. Disparities in accessibility are found to be

related to geography, a community's local food production, distribution, and economic inequity.

To provide information and recommendations related to food accessibility, it is first necessary to provide common terms and definitions utilized when discussing the topic:

Healthy Food

“Healthy food provides an individual with a balanced diet that meets national dietary guidelines and provides plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and healthy fats like olive and canola oil and protein such as lean meats and legumes.”

Food Environment

“The food environment is the physical presence that affects a person's diet; a person's proximity to food store locations; the distribution of food stores, food service, and any physical entity by which food may be obtained; or a connected system that allows access to food.”

Food Access

Ensuring that “healthy, high-quality, culturally appropriate options [are] available and affordable wherever people reach for food and drinks—in supermarkets, corner stores, restaurants, childcare centers, schools, after-school programs, healthcare facilities, and workplaces.”

Food System

“The chain of activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management, as well as all the associated regulatory institutions and activities.”¹

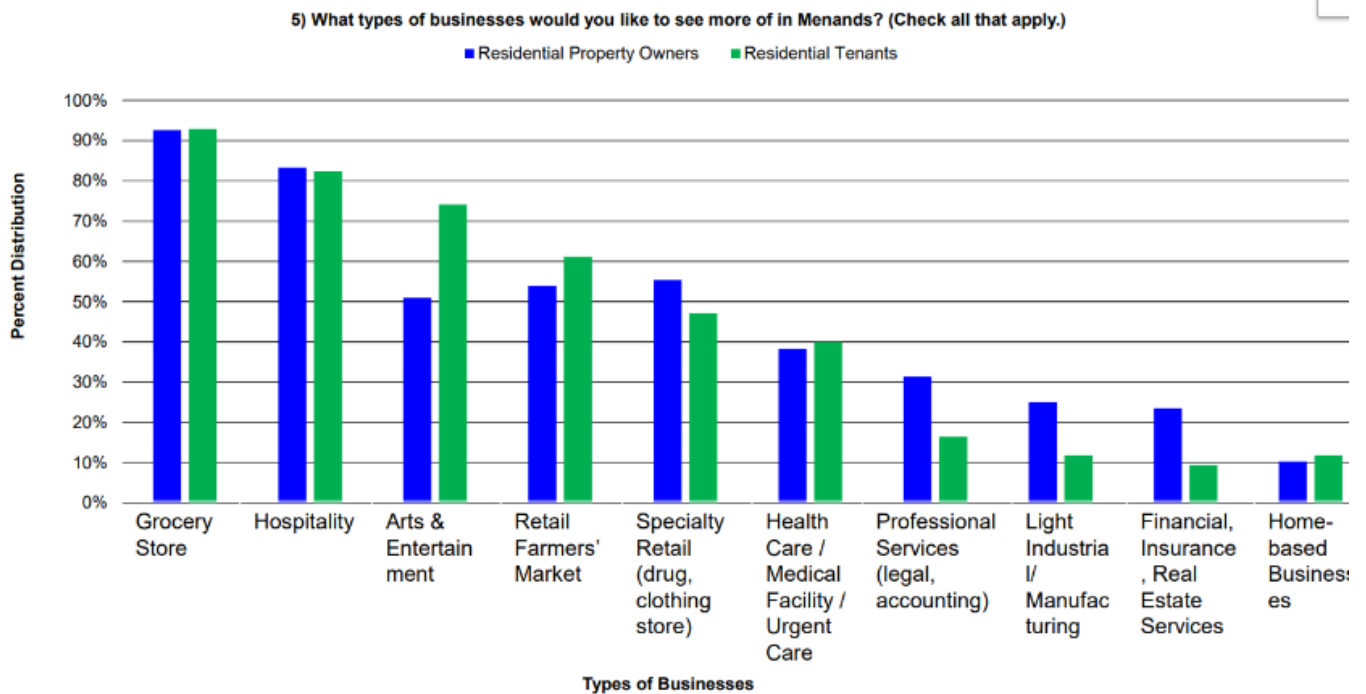
Food access, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and

¹Source:<http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/ActiveDesignWebinar/King%20County%20Food%20Access%20Guide.pdf>

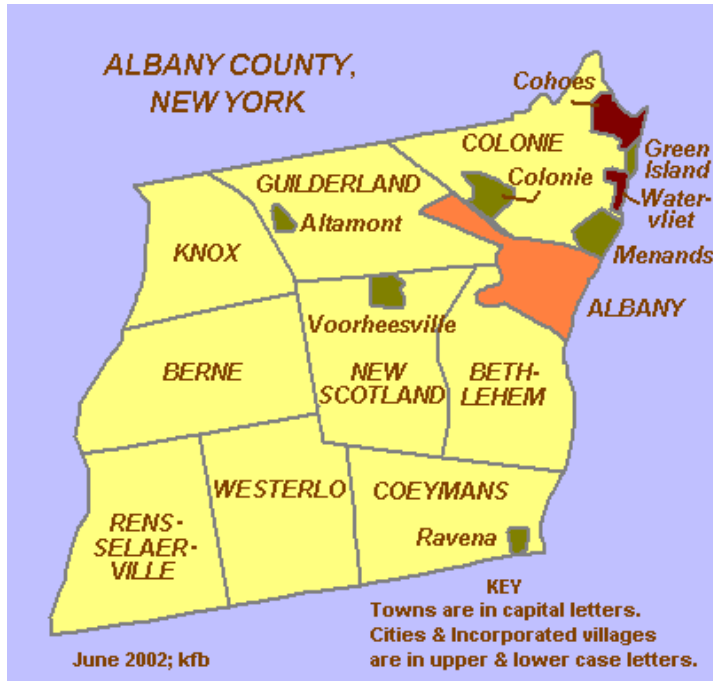
economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Food Accessibility within the Village of Menands

Following the Price Chopper closure in Menands, community survey and other outreach completed by the UAlbany Studio in 2017 identified a priority issue as lack of a local grocery store. The Mayor of the Village of Menands convened a Food Committee to progress discussion of the topic and provide potential action items that may be progressed to address the issue as perceived. Prior activities were heavily focused on the attraction of a new grocery store to the Village. Technical Assistance as provided via this project was summarized as providing the most practical, useful recommendations that the community could utilize to progress further accessibility to healthy food to Menands residents.



COMMUNITY PROFILE RELATED TO FOOD ACCESSIBILITY



Menands at a Glance:

Population (estimate 2017): 3,977

Median Household Income: \$65,297

Poverty Rate: 14.6%

Source: American FactFinder

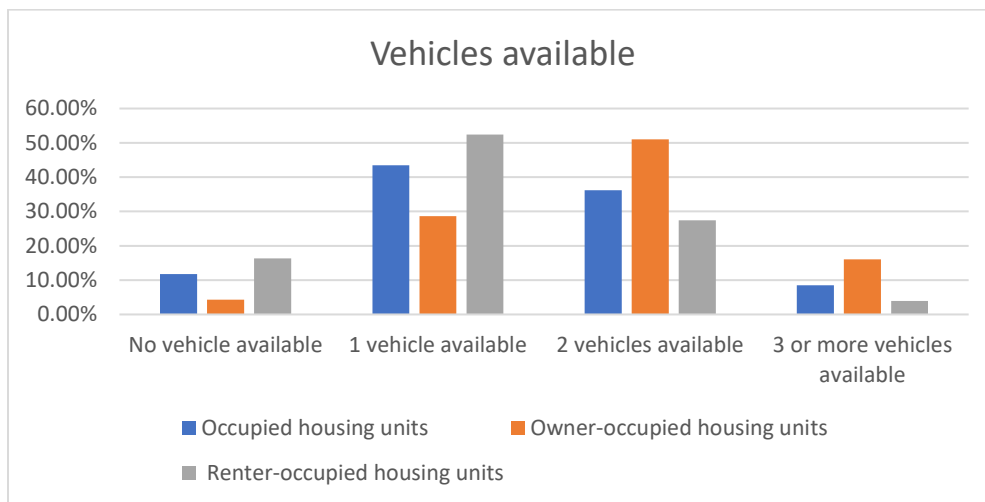
To understand the issue of food accessibility as perceived by the community, it is first important to explore Menands' demographic and economic profile.

- A considerable portion of the community has limited access to private automobiles
- The median household income in Menands is higher than that of the region as a whole
- Menands has a small population base and relatively lower population density compared to surrounding municipalities
- Existing food outlets in the Village do not provide a full range of healthy affordable food

The Village of Menands is a smaller community, well-situated along the Hudson River within the Capital Region of New York State. The community is

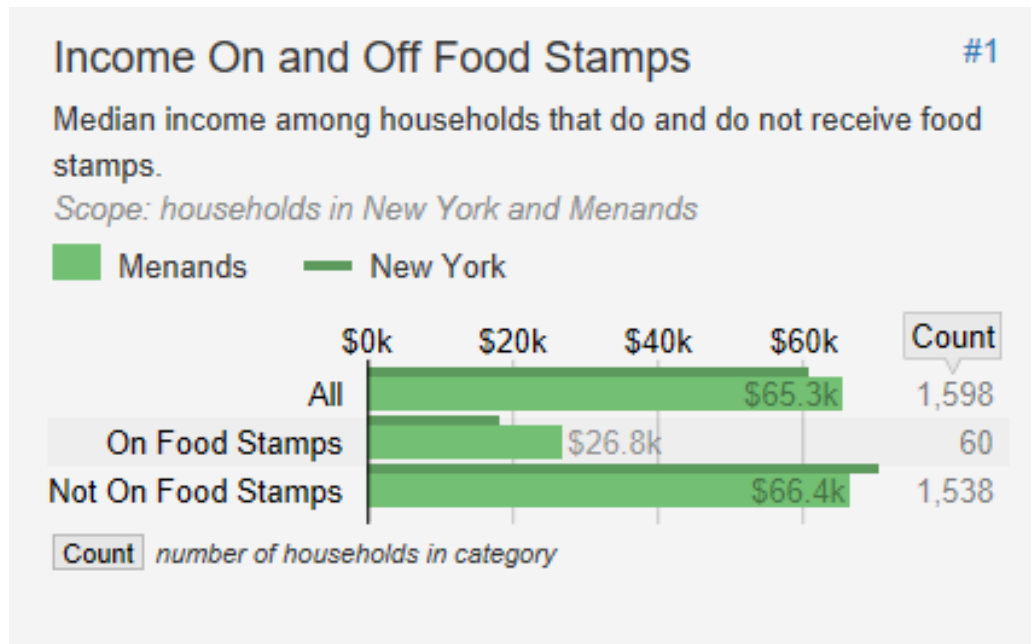
directly adjacent to the City of Albany, Loudonville, Watervliet, with Troy and larger Rensselaer County to the east of the Hudson River. While small on its own, the community is well connected to the region via roads including Rte 32, I-787 and local road network. The community is well served by transit lines operated by CDTA. Given it's proximity to employment centers, many residents commute to jobs in Albany, Troy, and elsewhere.

With a smaller community population and understanding the general locational strategy of regionally based grocery stores, the size of Menands is likely influential in terms of a new grocery store not locating currently to the community when other regionally based stores are available to the population.



Source: American Fact Finder

Overall, Menands features a high percentage of households that have one or two cars available. The high car ownership implies that the vast majority of homes have the means to travel to grocery stores within adjacent communities. However (11.8%) of overall households do not own a vehicle, and rental households have a higher percentage of (16%) that do not own a car. What is clearly lacking currently is a local full-service grocery store that is easily accessed on foot or bike, and a destination that services as a place that residents feel is “their” local store, and place where residents may have planned or unplanned social interactions that can be critical to a community’s sense of place.



Source: <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/New-York/Menands>

Economically, the community features a median household income of \$65,297, higher than the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA of \$62,283. This comparison provides a sense that the community as a whole is comparative or slightly more advantaged than other communities in the region that may face economic challenges and unemployment.

The percentage of households without access to a vehicle, specific parts of the population including elderly, lower income or residents that are not able/ or choose not to drive are noted of potential interest that recommendations in this report can provide potential resources towards accessing healthy food.

Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands

2011-2015 ACS Poverty Status of Persons for Whom Poverty Status Was Determined						
Poverty Status of Persons	Total #	MOE	# Below	MOE	% Below	MOE
Total Persons	3,988	133	255	94	6.39%	2.35%
5 & Under	400	91	0	31	0.00%	7.80%
6 to 17	516	96	28	38	5.43%	7.31%
18 to 64	2,673	168	153	44	5.72%	1.62%
65 & Over	399	82	74	44	18.55%	10.24%

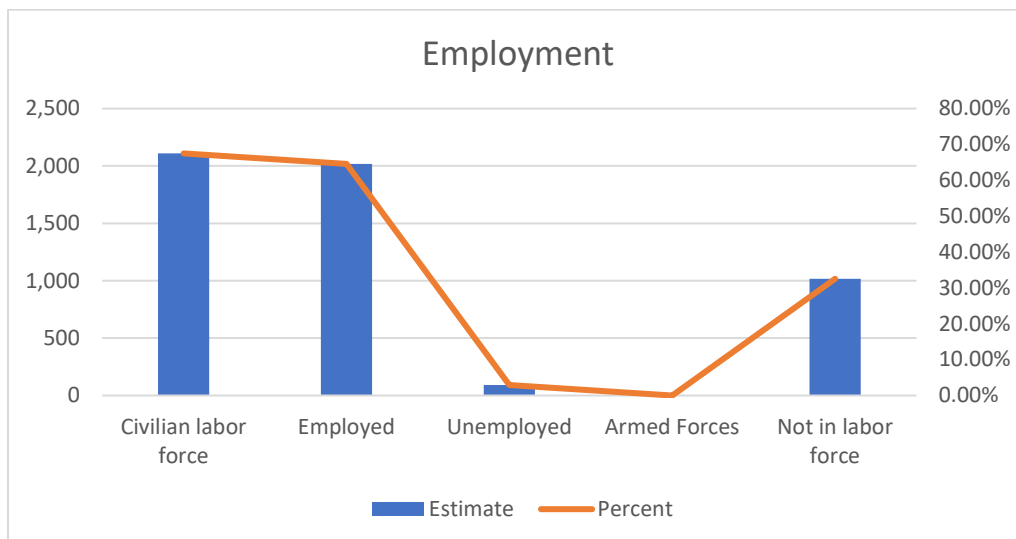
Poverty Status of Households	Total #	MOE	# Below	MOE	% Below	MOE
Total Households	1,670	137	110	111	6.59%	6.62%
Married Couples	712	116	46	44	6.46%	6.09%
Married w/ Related Children	272	106	13	26	4.78%	9.42%
Married w/o Related Children	440	96	33	39	7.50%	8.71%
Single Female Head of Household	176	123	0	11	0.00%	6.25%
Female w/ Related Children	154	118	0	19	0.00%	12.37%
Female w/o Related Children	22	37	0	11	0.00%	50.00%
Single Male Head of Household	53	50	0	11	0.00%	20.75%
Male w/ Related Children	42	51	0	19	0.00%	45.36%
Male w/o Related Children	11	21	0	11	0.00%	100.00%
Single Person Living Alone	548	177	63	84	11.50%	14.87%
Other Non-Family Household (2+)	181	249	1	120	0.55%	66.02%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Note: The ACS replaces the decennial census long form. CDRPC recommends using the 5-year data, which is more reliable than the 1- or 3-year data. This also allows for better comparability among municipalities. For more information, please see <http://cdrpc.org/ACS.html>

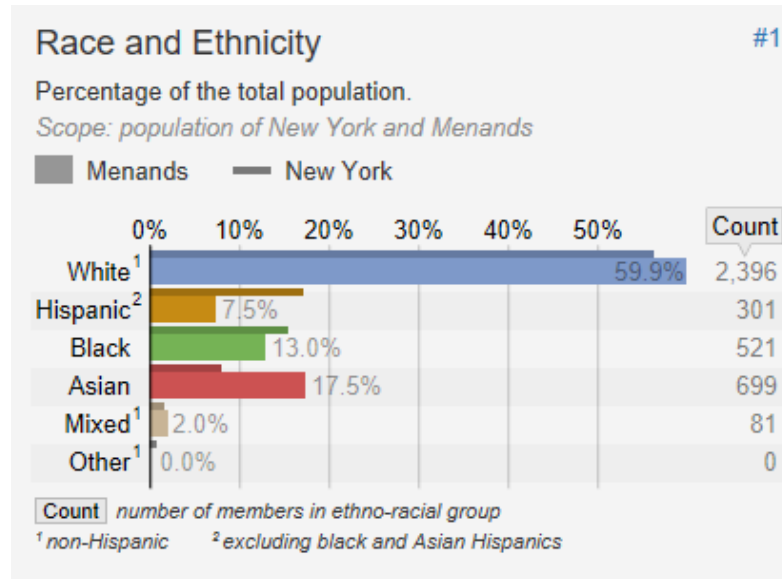
Note: The Margins of Error (MOE) suitable for creating 90% confidence intervals are now published for most of the estimates. Statistically, there will be a 90% probability that the true population parameter (e.g., mean, median, percent, etc.) falls within the interval: ESTIMATE ± MOE.

Revised: January 2017
 Prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission



Based on the Census provided employment data, the employed population in the village is around 64.5%, and the unemployment rate is 2.9% which is comparatively lower than local and national averages. So, we can speculate

that this 2.9% may be vulnerable and need help with affording and accessing food. The 32.5% of the population that's not in the workforce may also benefit from better transportation options or more local full-service grocery stores to meet their food needs.



- Based on the population composition, we have a growing diverse population in Menands.
- With noted increases in self-identifying Hispanic and Asian populations, with (7.5%) and (17.5%) respectively. Interestingly, the sole smaller scaled ethnic market in Menands does not focus on the Asian or Hispanic larger minority populations, but instead provides Middle Eastern focused food and grocery items to its customers.

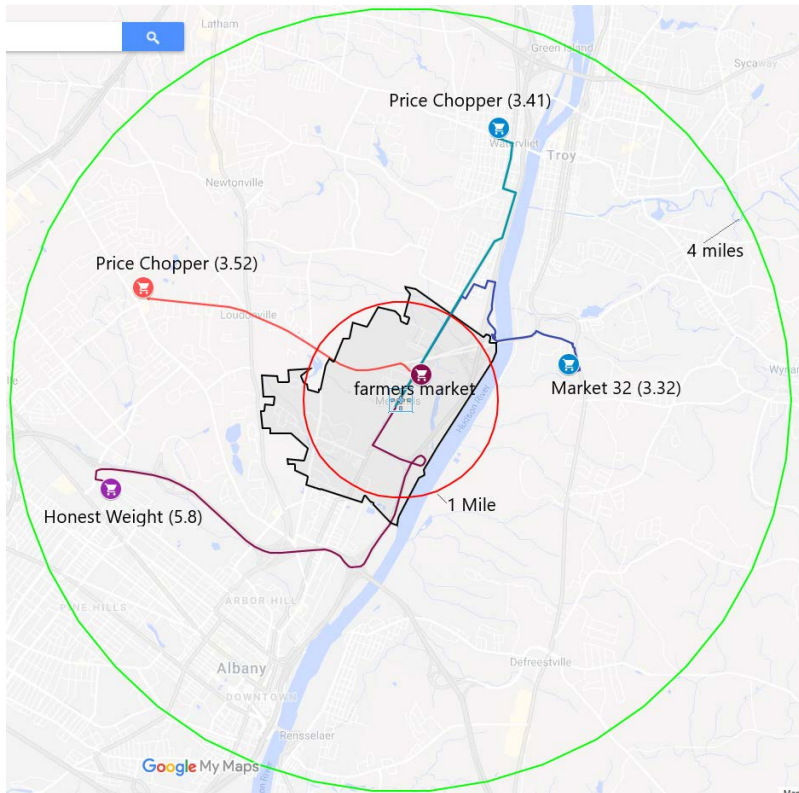
EXISTING GROCERY OUTLETS IN AND AROUND MENANDS

Menands features some limited service grocery outlets within the community. Identified stores include:

- Rite-Aid: Functioning, Type- retail
- Stewarts: Functioning, Type- retail

Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands

- Adventure in Foods: Functioning, Type- wholesale
- Istanbul International Market- Middle Eastern focused
- Capital Region Farmers Market (Open seasonally and wholesale)



Full-service grocery stores with distance from center of Menands noted.

In addition, there are at least 4 full service grocery stores, outside of the Village boundaries, between 3 and 6 miles from the center of Menands:

- Price Chopper
- Market 32
- Honest Weight
- Price Chopper

Former Grocery store locations:

- Price Chopper: Jan 2017- Permanently Closed
- Ideal Food Basket: Mar 2014- Nov 2015- Permanently Closed

METRICS OF FOOD ACCESSIBILITY

Preliminary meetings of the Food Committee revealed the need for a shared understanding of what food access is as well as how the Village compares to other municipalities in the region. By establishing these baseline conditions or metrics, the Village will be able to make informed decisions about what policies to pursue and to benchmark their progress towards improving food accessibility.

To better understand the Village of Menands' access to food, we can turn to both general food policy and implementation work being completed across the US and internationally- in this case the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as work focusing on the Capital Region specifically currently underway with Capital Roots.

Capital Roots' Capital Region Food System Assessment

The Greater Capital Region's Healthy Food System Assessment is currently being prepared by Capital Roots-an active non-profit who notes their mission is "to nourish healthy communities by providing access to fresh food and green spaces for all."

The comprehensive regional food system assessment will be based on four counties of consumption (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady) and eleven counties of production (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren and Washington). Assessment data will be accessed and utilized by community partners in the Capital Region to serve as a resource for future projects and policies and serve as the roadmap for a Regional Food Policy Council.

The following information from the The Capital Roots healthy food assessment survey assists in understanding Menands' food accessibility environment. You'll note the community is divided into a northern and southern portion, with the designation of limited healthy food availability made based on inventory available within stores in Menands.

Scoring Food Outlets

Scoring was developed by a SUNY Albany School of Public Health Master's candidate. The scoring is meant to show where there is full healthy food availability across food groups and highlight opportunities for increased distribution at outlets that scored limited and poor.

Score	Items	Criteria
Full Healthy Food Availability (FHFA)	Fruits	At least 3 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Vegetables	At least 3 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Whole Grains	At least 3 available
	Protein (Meat)	At least 3 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Protein (Non-meat)	At least 3 available
	Eggs	Available
	Dairy	At least 3 available
	Non-Dairy Alternative	At least 1 available
Limited Healthy Food Availability (LHFA)	Fruits	At least 1 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Vegetables	At least 1 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Whole Grains	At least 1 available
	Protein (Meat)	
	Protein (Non-meat)	At least 1 available, whether fresh, canned, or frozen
	Eggs	
	Dairy	At least 1 available
Poor Healthy Food Availability (PHFA)	Fruits	Missing 1 or more food group(s)
	Vegetables	
	Whole Grains	
	Protein (Meat)	
	Protein (Non-meat)	
	Eggs	
	Dairy	
	Non-Dairy	

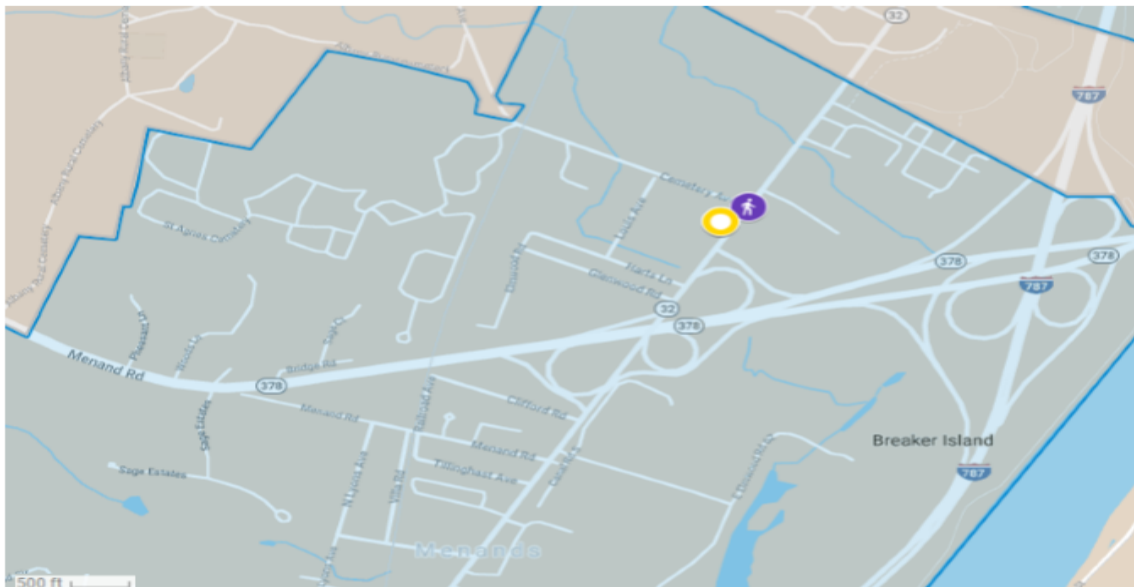
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Healthy Food Availability & Affordability in:

Menands (North), NY

Number of Retail Outlets within one mile	Total	Full	Limited	Poor	Not Surveyed
Retail Food Outlets	1	-	1	-	-
TRADITIONAL RETAIL OUTLETS					
Supermarket	-	-	-	-	-
Big-Box	-	-	-	-	-
SMALL-SCALE RETAIL OUTLETS					
Specialty, Ethnic, Independent	-	-	-	-	-
Convenience Store	-	-	-	-	-
Pharmacy	1	-	1	-	-
ALTERNATIVE RETAIL OUTLETS					
Farmers Market or Stand	-	-	-	-	-
Veggie Mobile® Stop	-	-	-	-	-



Closest Full Healthy Food Outlet:
Watervliet Price Chopper, 2.7 miles (to the North), bus transit is available.

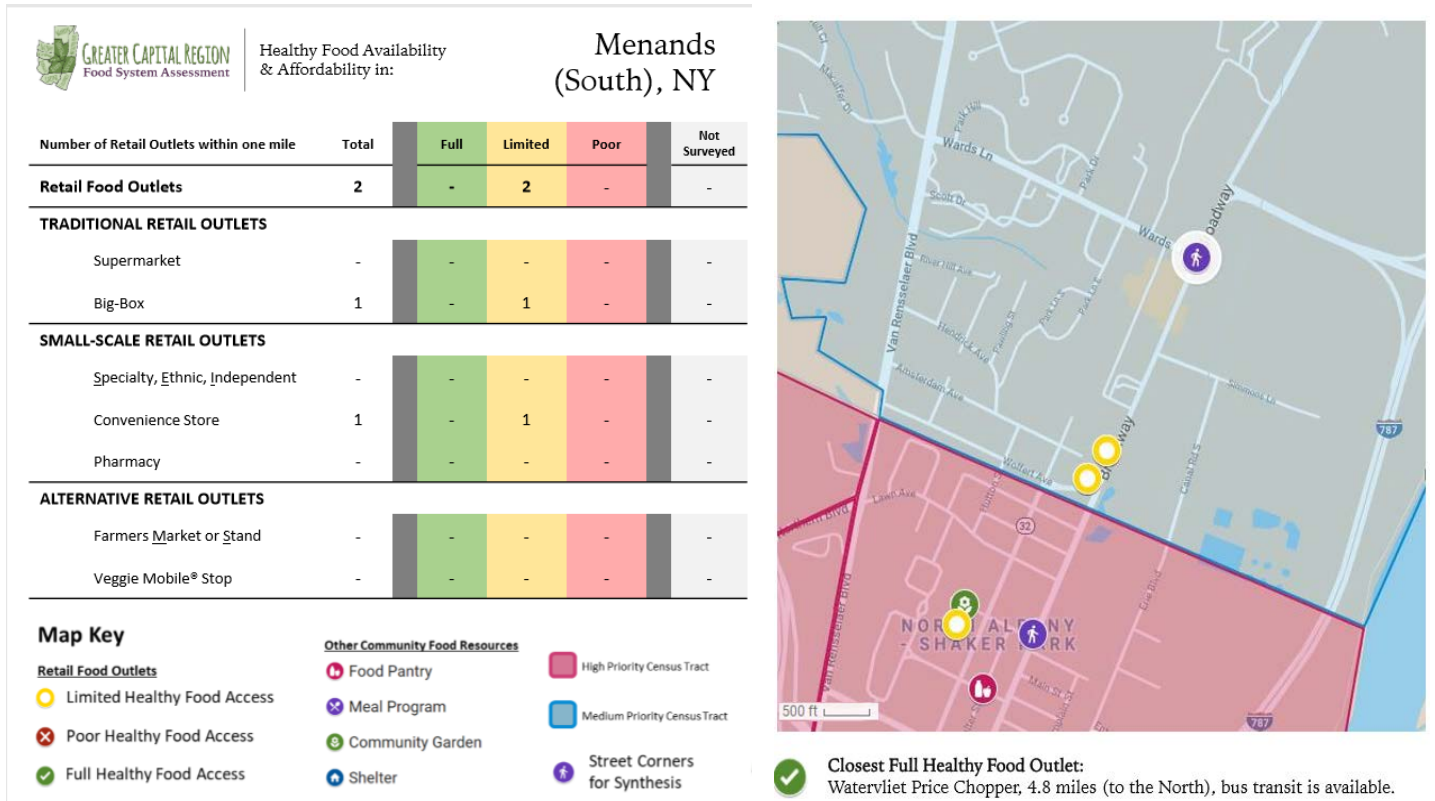
The Capital District Regional Farmers Market, a wholesale farmers market is located in Menands but does not sell retail food.

Map Key

- Limited Healthy Food Access
- Poor Healthy Food Access
- Full Healthy Food Access
- Food Pantry
- Meal Program
- Community Garden
- Retail Outlet Not Surveyed
- Shelter
- High Priority Census Tract
- Medium Priority Census Tract
- Street Corners for Synthesis

Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands

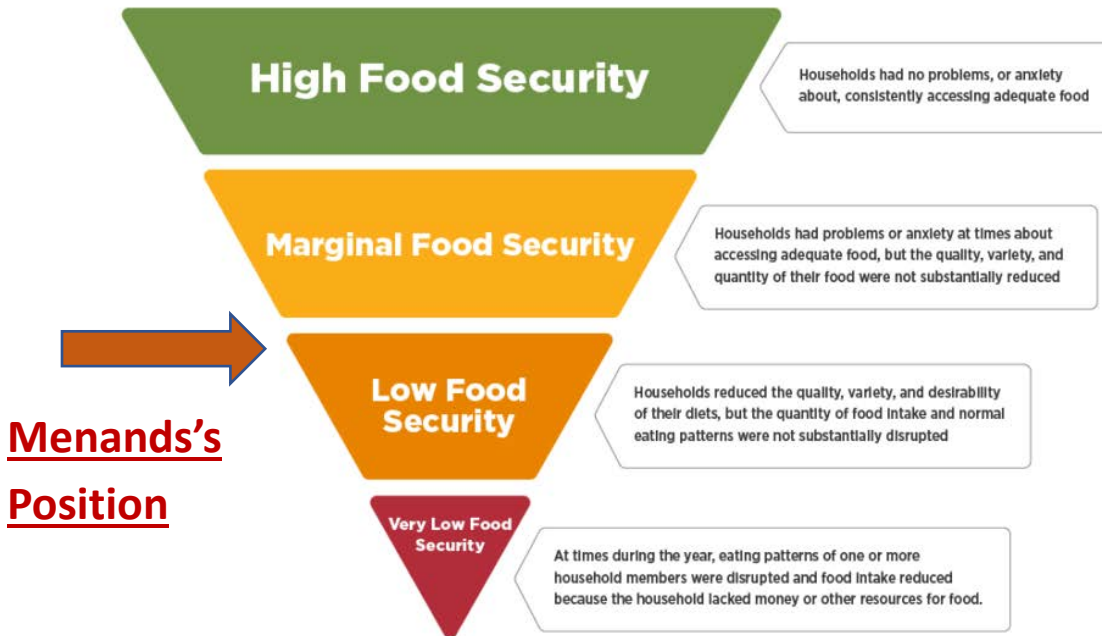
The healthy food availability and affordability assessment of the Village of Menands suggest that there is limited healthy food access in the north part of the community with only one local food option.



Two establishments were noted in the southern part of Menands- one big box (Family Dollar), and one small scale convenience store (Stewarts). Both Stewart’s and Family Dollar offer processed food, canned and some varieties of whole grain-based food options but they lack the availability of produce.

In addition, CDRPC identified and completed the Capital Roots provided survey for the Istanbul International Market. Like Stewarts and Family Dollar, some canned, whole grain food options are available for purchase, as well as selective produce.

USDA Economic Research Service



Source: Adapted from the USDA Economic Research Service.

USDA’s Economic Research Service defines low access to a healthy food retail outlet as more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store in urban areas and as more than 10 miles from a supermarket or large grocery store in rural area.

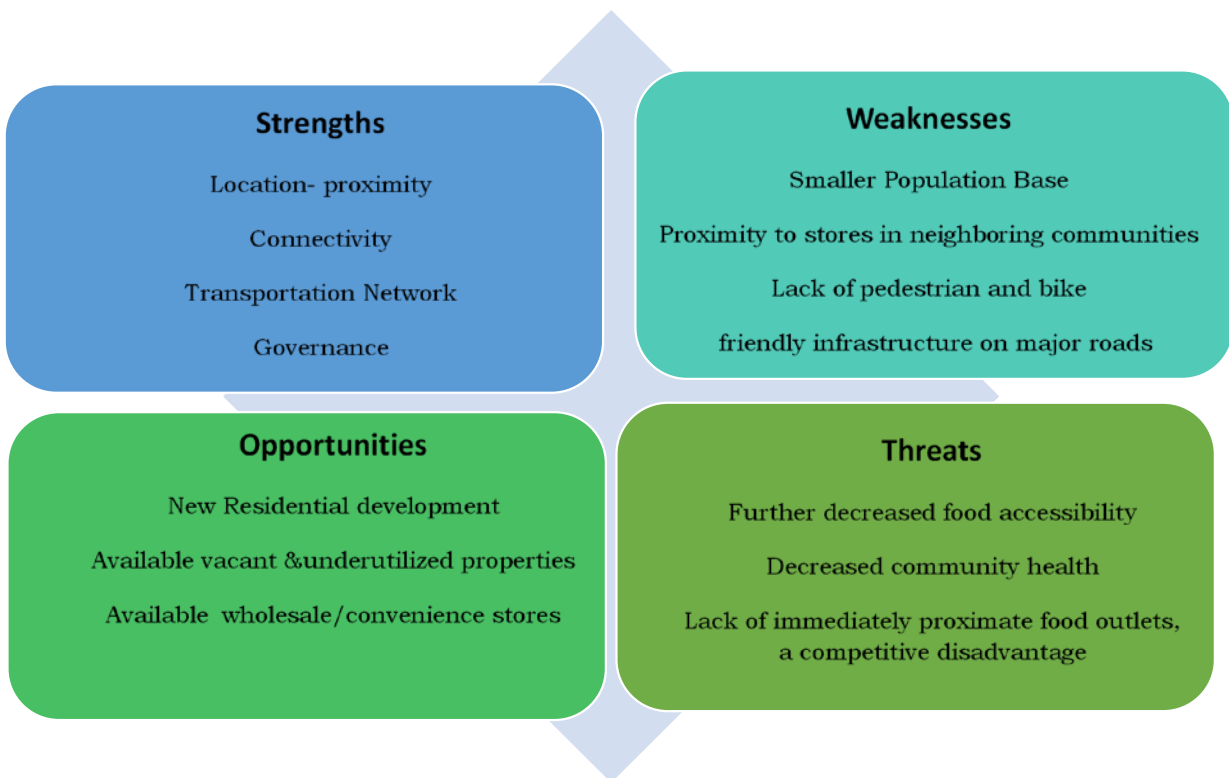
By this classification, we can consider Menands to be a low food access community².

Both the Capital Roots’ Regional Food Assessment and USDA’s Economic Research Service Tools reflect the context of Menands having limited access to full service grocery options within its’ borders, but with full-service options available proximate to the community.

²Source: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/80591/archived_documentation.pdf?v=41332

STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITY, THREAT (SWOT) ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis was completed to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding local full variety grocery store being available within the Village of Menands. The village has several advantages as well as disadvantages in the provision of healthy food options to the community. The close proximity of the village to Albany and Troy gives the community the character of a bedroom community. Destinations within Menands can be accessed easily by adjacent communities including Albany from the south, and Troy to the east, major transit CDTA route 22 operates regularly throughout the community.



The village has some limitations that prevent the profitable function of supermarkets in the village, within the last five years two major supermarket chains have closed their branches in Menands due to lack of sizable market in

the community. This can likely be attributed to having a smaller population base and the proximity to supermarkets in the neighboring communities. Finally, the absence of pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure in the village is a significant disadvantage to the community as 11.8% of the population does not own a car and the provision of designated bike paths and sidewalks along the major roads discourage the non-motorized commuters in the village.

The Village of Menands has been witnessing a small but cumulative increase in new residential units including apartment complexes from the early 2000's, and two recent apartment complexes were constructed. Residential growth is an important indicator and catalyst for supporting more local grocery stores. Currently there are vacant and underutilized properties within Menands that could potentially meet the real estate needs for the upcoming convenience stores. Should Menands experience future residential and commercial growth, this also could support the provision of more local grocery options within the community.

The village faces some threats to its community health due to the shutdown of local focused grocery stores-i.e. Price Chopper in 2017, and it has become a concern for the residents of Menands not to have this convenient option within their community. The lack of immediately proximate food outlets has been seen as a competitive disadvantage over other communities in the region.

In the limited scale of this technical assistance project, it was not possible to discern more thoroughly what the community felt was specifically lacking or desired within the community. There is some merit to considering the value of additional community gathering places within the community. Community gathering places provide ample opportunity for residents to formally or informally meet, provide a sense of place and reflection of the community as a whole. In addition to the limited availability of some grocery items directly within the village, it could be that the community could benefit from further community gathering places being planned for and implemented for future public benefit, placemaking, and other community development minded goals. Work within the Comprehensive Plan could further focus on defining the issue as perceived, utilizing the analysis and recommendations made in this report as a foundation for further efforts.

The following sections identify the strategies developed as practical recommendations to increase local food accessibility to Village of Menands residents.

Strategy 1: Improve Access to Existing Full-Service Grocery Options Outside of Menands

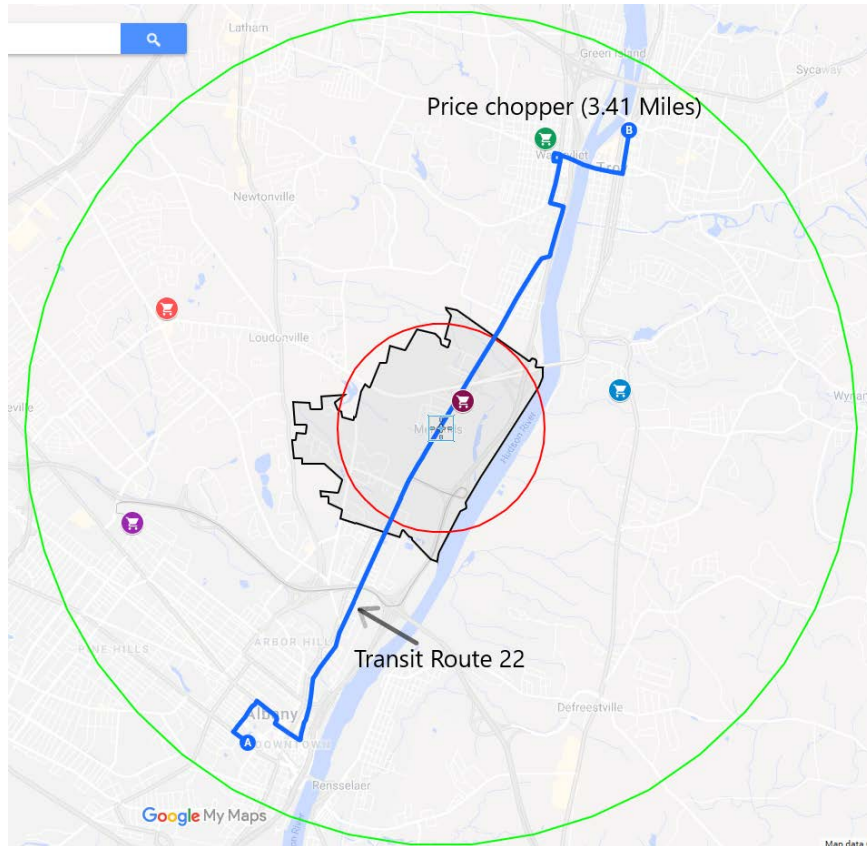
This first strategy is designed to practically focus on existing full-service grocery stores located proximate to the Village of Menands and provide recommendations to better connect residents to these locations through transportation options and programs, as well as delivery services in which groceries can be ordered online and delivered directly to Menands residents' doorsteps. The Study advisory committee noted that they felt information regarding these options may not be well known in the community and that compiling and providing this practical information to the public was an important first strategy for this technical assistance project.

TRANSPORTATION

As noted previously, Menands features a majority of households with access to at least one car that could be used to reach a nearby grocery store. While not as convenient, many residents are driving to nearby full service grocery stores for their full grocery needs, and likely utilizing local limited service stores in Menands for day to day needs.

However, it is also noted that just under 12% of households do not have access to a car, and that number grows to 16% for renter-occupied households within Menands. There may be an inability to drive a car due to temporary or permanent physical disabilities, elderly or minor status, or residents who prefer not to drive. To best serve any of these categories, the following provides available transportation options program available with basic information that can be made widely available to the public.

TRANSIT



The Village of Menands is well connected to both Troy and Albany by transit through CDTA Bus Route 22 that runs from downtown Albany to downtown Troy.

Bus Route 22 is highly frequent, with local pick up in Menands every 13 minutes. This service most directly connects Menands to the Price Chopper in Watervliet-3.4 Miles from Menands.

Drivers will assist wheelchair users to secure the wheelchair once in the vehicle. Service hours are daily 6:00 am – 1:00 am, depending on the route. Wheelchairs, service animals, people with limited or no vision.

Who May Ride: No restrictions. Half Fare Navigator ID needed to be eligible for half fare.

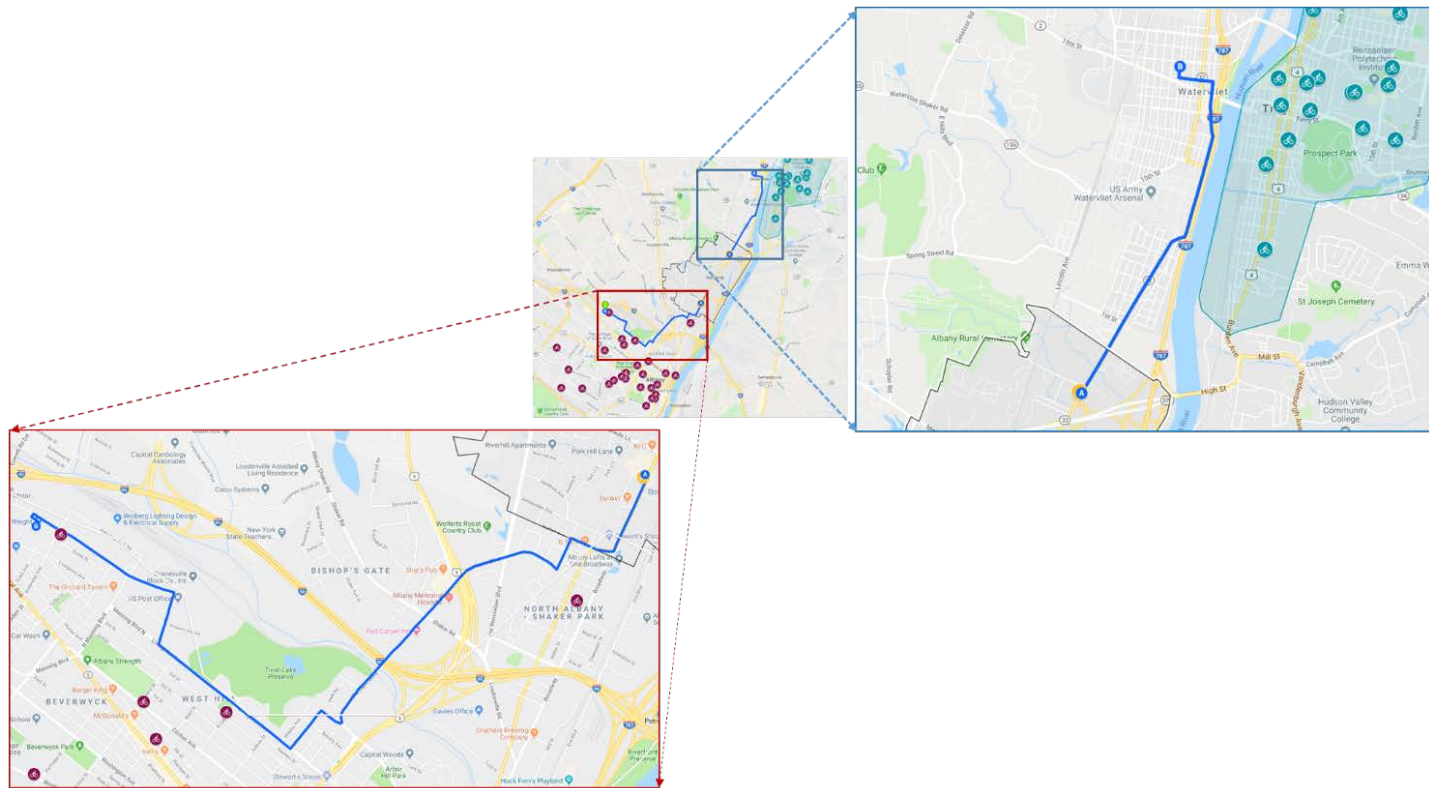
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Web Address: www.cdta.org

Phone: 518-482-8822

Fees: Senior citizens 65+: Half fare is \$32.50 for a monthly pass; \$0.65-\$1.50 for a single ride by cash or Navigator card.

In addition, Menands will soon feature enhanced service along this route with the upcoming Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. BRT service through the Broadway corridor has been confirmed with two stops placed in Menands, one at Riverview Center and another is at Route 378. This means residents will have an expedited trip to and from destinations like a grocery store.



BIKE ROUTES TO THE NEAREST SUPERMARKETS

Travel to a grocery store doesn't need to take place in just a vehicle. While potentially weather dependent, or for smaller purchases, traveling to the grocery store by bike is also an option.

The distance from the point (A) to Honest Weight is 3.85 miles. As an average, a leisurely bike ride would take 25 minutes to reach Honest Weight at Watervliet Ave, Albany. The distance from point (B) to Price Chopper is 2.65 Miles. On average, a leisurely bike ride would take 20 minutes to reach the destination at Watervliet, NY.

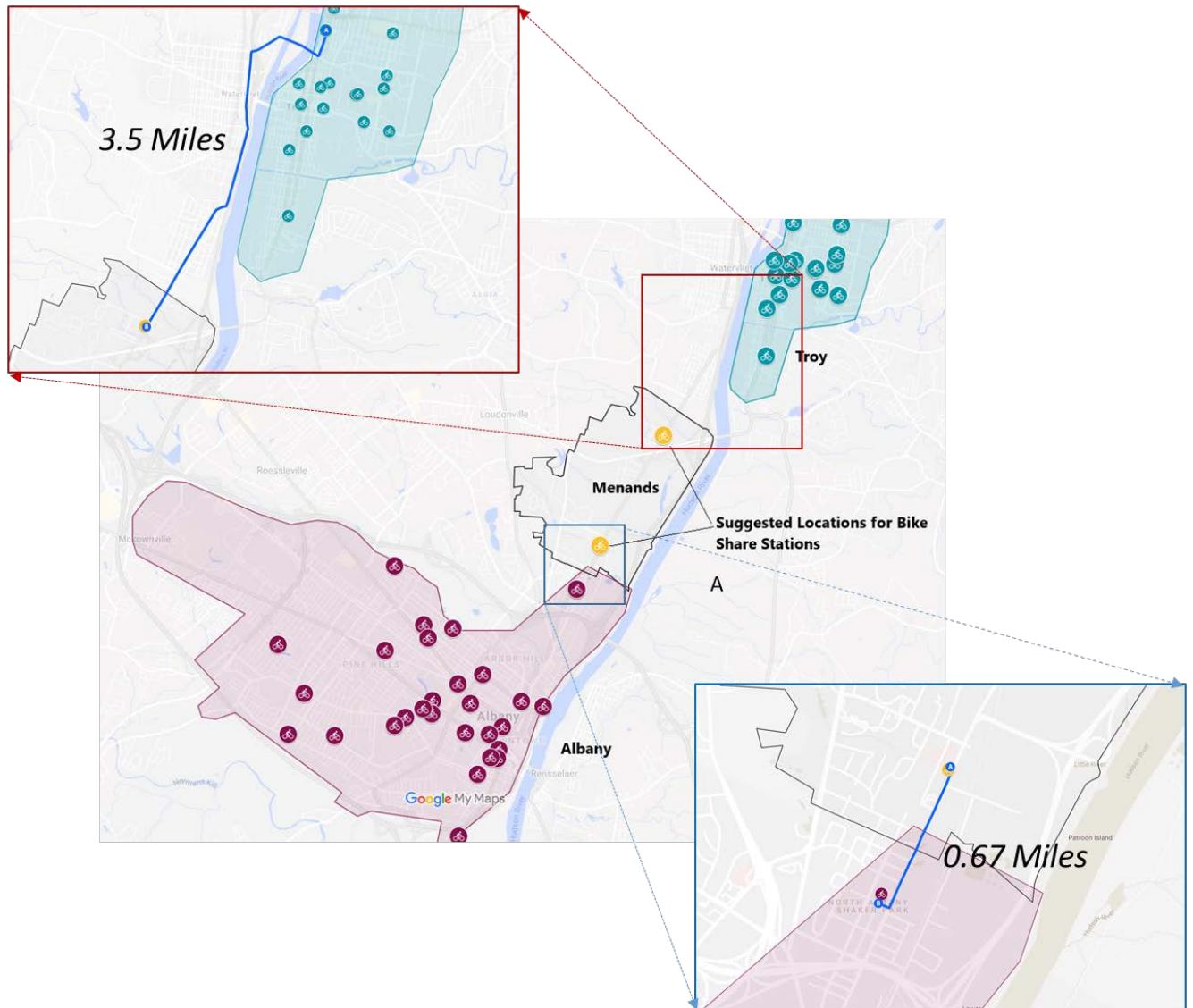
RECOMMENDATION: BIKE SHARE

The Capital Region features CDPHP Cycle! an active bike-share program that is operated by CDTA with locations currently within Albany, Schenectady, Troy, Saratoga Springs, and now Cohoes.

To expand accessibility and cycling opportunities within Menands, and specifically for trips to the grocery store, the village may wish to consider working with CDTA to install additional bike share locations.



Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands



The best locations for bike-sharing stations illustrated in the graphic above are selected based on the availability of adequate space to place the stations and proximity to bike-sharing stations locations in the neighboring communities.

The nearest current bike-share location is between the North Ferry station and Broadway in Albany which is 1.3 Miles south of Menands. The second bike-share location in Troy is 2.6 miles from Menands. The first suggested site (A) is located .65 miles from the nearest bike share station in Broadway, Albany. The second suggested site (B) is on the northern side of the village from 3.5 miles from the nearest bike share location in Troy.

RIDESHARE

A private transportation option is through on-demand rideshare services- currently this is typically either Lyft, or Uber. A one-way trip can be arranged via either service's app and can transport residents and their groceries to and from the nearby store. An estimate of cost is provided at time of requesting service.

Web Addresses: www.lyft.com, www.uber.com

WAZE CARPOOL SERVICE

Deemed a cost effective alternative to rideshare services like Lyft or Uber, Waze Carpool allows you to search for a ride with someone already going to or near your destination at a particular time of day. The 11.8% or 198 households of the households who do not own a vehicle could utilize this service to reach the grocery store or other destinations while sharing the fuel costs.

Web address: www.waze.com/carpool.

EXISTING SPECIALIZED SERVICES

There are several programs or services that can serve to connect Menands residents with destinations such as a grocery store. The following services provide transportation for those meeting noted eligibility.

ACCESS TRANSIT SERVICES

Provides local rides to adult day programs, doctor, pharmacy, congregate meals and groceries. It also provides trips to medical appointments in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady Counties. First-time callers will need to be registered by a call center representative and sign a consent form. Service hours are anytime.

Who May Ride: Albany County residents 60+ who do not own a car or have other means of transportation and are not Medicaid recipients; Medicaid recipients can go shopping once a week.

Phone: 518-437-5161, fax 518-453-8833

Web Address: www.cdta.org/access-transit-services-faqs

Email Contact: accesstransit@cdta.org

To Schedule: Call Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm at least 2 business days ahead unless emergency.

Fees: Suggested contribution of half the cost of a trip by cash or check.

ALLIANCE FOR POSITIVE HEALTH

The program provides taxi rides, bus passes, and bus or train tickets to medical and other services that help you maintain your health.

Who May Ride: People living with HIV/AIDS who are not eligible for Medicaid transportation. In areas that have buses, a doctor note explaining the medical reason you can't use the bus is required to be eligible for a taxi.

Phone: 518-434-4686 x 2247

Web Address: www.allianceforpositivehealth.org/programservices/transportation/

Email Contact: whitetransportation@alliancefph.org

To Schedule: Service hours are Call or email two days ahead.

Fees: No fee.

CDTA RIDE STAR- PARA-TRANSIT

Complementary paratransit within 3/4 mile of a fixed CDTA route. Reasonable assistance is provided on and off the vehicle and to the building entrance. Companions may ride as space allows and with advance notice. Call or email before 4 pm the day before the trip is needed, up to 7 days in advance.

Who May Ride: People who because of a disability or impairment are unable to use the regular fixed-route buses. Pre-certification is required and can take 21 business days.

Can Accommodate: Service hours are daily 6 am – 1 am, depending on the route. Wheelchairs, service animals, people with limited or no vision.

Web Address: www.cdta.org/node/56

Phone: 518-482-2022

Email Contact: starreservations@cdta.org

To Schedule: Call or email before 4 pm the day before the trip is needed, up to 7 days in advance

Fees: \$2.50 by cash - an exact amount only, or STAR tickets.

DAV VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Volunteers provide rides to and from medical appointments at VA medical facilities. No assistance is provided, but riders are welcome to bring a companion who can assist them.

Who May Ride: Albany and Schenectady County veterans. Service hours are Monday - Friday based on volunteer availability.

Can Accommodate: Service animals, people with limited or no vision.

Address: Albany Stratton VAMC, 113 Holland Ave., Rm. 111, Albany, NY 12208

Phone: 518-626-5504; Fax 518-626-5511

Web Address: www.dav.org/veterans/i-need-a-ride Albany and Schenectady County veterans.

To Schedule: Call Monday – Friday, between 5:30 AM and 2 PM.

Fees: Free service.

THE UMBRELLA OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT

Membership organization for people 55+ or who have a disability. Volunteers and paid workers transport you in your car for purposes, including appointments, shopping and social trips. Must own your car. The annual fee is based on income and ranges from \$156 to \$530. Services are \$15/hour.

Address: 9 North Broadway Schenectady, NY 12305

Phone: 518-346-5249

Web Address: www.theumbrella.org/

Email Contact: info@theumbrella.org

GROCERY DELIVERY OPTIONS

Grocery delivery options have expanded greatly over time. Currently there are a number of delivery options that could connect Menands' residents with full-service grocery items, delivered straight to their home. Listed below are known services that are noted to deliver to locations within the Village of Menands.

GORSKY'S FARM MARKET

Gorsky's Farm Market provides some farm products such as eggs, and firewood, and assortment of soups and meals for delivery. A large area of Capital Region, including Menands, is available for delivery.

www.gorskysfarm.com

9 MILES EAST

9 Miles East is another diversified farm and food business currently delivers to the Capital Region an assortment of fresh, prepared meals suiting diverse diet needs. A cooler is dropped off with items ordered at your home or workplace at schedule you choose.

www.9mileseast.com



INSTACART

Instacart grocery delivery services are available in Menands for a fee from many area grocery stores. The stores listed in the Instacart website are Market 32, Market Bistro, Aldi, CVS Pharmacy, Sam's Club, Petco, BJ's, Shoprite, The Fresh Market, Price Chopper, Restaurant Depot.

Web address: www.instacart.com

Improving Local Food Access in the Village of Menands

WALMART GROCERY DELIVERY

Walmart offers its delivery services to the Village of Menands with a per-order fee or monthly subscription.

Web Address: www.walmart.com

SHIPT

The Shipt service offers grocery delivery from CVS Pharmacy, Petco and Target to Menands.

Web Address: www.shipt.com

Strategy 2: Improve Access Collaboratively with Local Resources

The second priority recommendation for increasing food accessibility was established by the Advisory Committee to practically focus on actions that could draw upon the existing community and its resources.

Goals developed in this strategy include identifying:

1. Potential partners
2. Community assets and resources
3. Potential catalyst activities to improve food accessibility in Menands

The first logical focus for potential partners are existing stores within Menands that offer limited access to groceries- including Stewart's, Istanbul International Market, Capital District Farmers Market (wholesale), pharmacies, and big box retail. The community also features resources such as the Village of Menands municipality, active school district community, churches and other organizations and businesses. A practical focus on what existing community organizations can potentially accomplish-especially while working collaboratively- forms the backbone of this specific strategy.

ENHANCE UTILITY/SERVICES OF EXISTING COMMUNITY STORES IN MENANDS

Interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Stewarts Shops, Istanbul International Market, and the Capital Region Farmers Market, and potential recommendations of a review of initial activities of concepts that may be best applied towards improving food accessibility in Menands.

STEWART'S SHOPS



The Stewarts is located at 14 Broadway in Menands. As noted in the existing conditions portion of this report, the store features a small assortment of convenience foods and household items. However, it was also noted that in at least two other Stewarts stores in the region the store has taken on a more expanded grocery line to serve its customers.

Outreach to Stewarts to discuss food access and the potential of increasing produce and expanding grocery selection in the store was made by Mayor Grenier and Kate Maynard from CDRPC. **As a result of the outreach, a senior representative of Stewart's noted that within the internal remodel of the Menands store in 2020, plans will now include expanded produce coolers and expanded array of produce for purchase.** This small expansion in produce is a positive improvement to expanding further produce options within existing stores in Menands. It also points out the power of collaboration- that a targeted discussion with a willing partner resulted in action that will improve local access to healthy food.

Future, continued collaboration with Stewart's and other stores in the community could lead to further opportunities for more full-service grocery availability in Menands. For example, if further residential or commercial growth takes place in Menands as prioritized within the Comprehensive Plan, Stewart's or another entity could choose to further expand its grocery items, or even relocate to a more significant building site and provide more extensive variety of groceries.

In addition, Capital Roots works extensively with regional grocery stores in efforts to expand local produce and product accessibility. Encouraging future collaboration among Capital Roots, Stewart's and other stores listed herein is recommended and can lead to further local food accessibility in diverse ways.

ISTANBUL INTERNATIONAL MARKET



A healthy food retail assessment was conducted at Istanbul International Market to determine the availability, affordability, quality and quantity of whole and healthy foods in the store.

The store's atmosphere and appearance is neat and appealing for a regular customer.

Availability of fruits are pretty minimal at the Istanbul International Market there were grapes and strawberries in the form of preserves in the store.

The availability of vegetables are also limited during the survey by the owner informed the surveyer that he generally has more in stock and also ready to have more supplies if there is

enough demand. Through the survey, it's been noted that the store had green beans, green peas, Bell Peppers and Tomatoes. The store has a decent amount of whole grain options such as brown rice, 100% whole wheat tortillas and 100% whole grain pasta. The store has some protein options available like eggs, chicken, canned beans, a variety of nuts, seeds like sunflower seeds and beef. The store also has a number of dairy products like whole milk, cheese and goat cheese but lacks low and non-fat dairy products.

The owner of the store was very supportive of the effort to improve access to local healthy food in Menands and noted he would be very interested in expanding his products to include more produce and healthy foods- signaling a very possible "right-sized" solution to increase access to food in Menands that doesn't just require attracting another full sized grocery store to the small community.

CAPITAL DISTRICT REGIONAL MARKET

The Capital District Regional Market in Menands is an organization by the farmers for the farmers. It is dedicated to promoting local agriculture, history, and businesses of the local region and operating on a wholesale basis.

According to the localharvest.org website, the farmers market operates on Saturdays seasonally from May to October. The seasonal operation creates an issue for the community in the winter and spring seasons of the year. The potential to operate on a retail, more individual customer basis, and expanding hours was discussed with a representative of the Capital District Farmer's Market. Also discussed were opportunities to better connect retail stores such as Istanbul and Stewart's to purchase wholesale produce from farmers at the market, and make available on a regular basis to retail customers.

The site as a whole is a huge asset to the community through it's existing wholesale activity, but also as an opportunity as a large, highly accessible site (with parking) to host specific or regular food- related events.

ADVENTURE IN FOOD TRADING



Adventure in Food Trading is located at 381 Broadway in Menands and is a wholesale distributor of culinary specialties. They deliver to chefs and restaurants in the Capital District, Berkshires, Hudson Valley, and north to Saratoga and Lake Placid. In addition to their wholesale distribution, they welcome and are open to the public during regular hours of operation (according to the manager of the store).

Their products include exotic game (boar, bison, elk, alligator, kangaroo, rabbit, snake, venison, yak), natural meats (beef, goat, lamb, pork, veal), free-range poultry, duck breasts, etc. They have a variety of gourmet cheeses, both international and domestic. They also sell nuts, dry fruit, fruit preserves, fruit purees, dry beans, rice, grains, mushrooms, and truffles.

In conversation with the manager of the facility, they seem to only serve in wholesale amounts.

CATALYST ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE FOOD ACCESS IN MENANDS

HOST A FOOD FESTIVAL OR OTHER EVENT

A single event focused on food could be a great catalyst activity to focus on improving food accessibility locally in a fun and manageable way. Such events can be extremely popular, appeal to large variety of people, and also be a great way to build community as well as economic development opportunities in Menands.



A simple search of existing regional festival or events in the Capital Region reveals a number of events that already exist, many with a specific focus related to their community, time of year, ethnic background etc. See examples of events in pictures to right.



In addition to serving the Menands community, its enviable location central within the Capital Region also opens up a larger number of people that may come from Albany, Troy and residential areas from around the region to enjoy an event in Menands.



Events apparently were held previously in Menands, but it was agreed that there have not been any in recent years and could be a good opportunity for the community.

The sky really is the limit in terms of what event could be developed in Menands. Further research should be completed to best determine what fits Menands' desires, offers something unique not yet offered in region, and offers an opportunity to engage community partners to carry out the event-i.e.

local stores previously mentioned, stores, Midland Farms, Farms active with the Capital District Farmer's Market, local schools, and Village of Menands.



A few ideas as a start include:

- **Pop Up Dinners that feature local produce**
- **Farm to Table Tastings**
- **Food Festival focusing on a theme or time of year**
- **Food Truck Festival**



www.pointbrealty.com

In the stakeholder interview and advisory committee meeting, a great opportunity became apparent of utilizing the Capital District Regional Market grounds for such an event. Not only is it extremely accessible via major roads, but the size is conducive to host small to larger events, features parking, and apparently has notable availability to host such events.



Some general advice for the community to utilize in bringing an event to reality:

1 Farm. Field. Sea. event www.pointbrealty.com

- Host a healthy food festival to showcase healthy foods in the neighborhood.
- Invite local grocery stores, healthy restaurants, farmers, and other healthy food vendors to participate in the event. Let them know the event will be great publicity!
- Advertise! Promote the event through social media and flyers.
- At the event, provide handouts with healthy recipes and coupons for healthy food items. You can encourage vendors to do the same.
- Offer taste tests of healthy foods (e.g., smoothies, fresh fruit, salads).
- Set up kid-friendly activities to encourage families to attend the festival.

RETAIL FARMER'S MARKET

At various points in the past the Capital District Regional Market has hosted a retail farmers market. Currently, while a token amount of retail sales occur, the Market's primary emphasis is on wholesale.

Bringing back a retail farmer's market received enthusiastic reaction from the Food committee and could be a future option for the village to consider. Such an action should be carefully considered to assess it's viability in terms of: capacity of region to successfully host another farmer's market, finding party to

manage such an operation on a long term basis, and viability of bringing sufficient vendors to ensure a successful venture.

The catalyst activities such as single food related events are recommended as initial activities that could provide momentum and a foundation to provide the sustainable long term management of a retail farmer's market. Capital Roots may be an excellent resource for further guidance to Menands in regards to the viability of another farmer's market being added to the region.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

A community garden is a lower-cost, scaleable activity that can be installed in a variety of locations within Menands. Not only does it encourage close interaction with producing your own food, but it also can be a very visual effort of the community focusing on improving its access to local healthy food.



Some benefits of creating a community garden are that it:

- Visually signals the community cares about local, healthy food. Utilizing public sites such as Village offices, along Broadway corridor where it may be seen by many, churches or library can increase visibility.
- Creates a fun and safe way for youth and children in the community to spend their time
- Promotes physical activity—gardening can be an excellent way for residents to stay active, burn calories, and build muscle
- Facilitates community ownership by creating a site that residents can feel proud of and involve civic groups
- Beautifies the neighborhood and environment

Below are some steps that can help you create a community garden:

- Identify a group of people interested in creating a community garden and form a planning committee. You can reach out to people in schools, church groups, recreation centers, and specific neighborhoods.



2capitalroots.org

- Identify a planning coordinator to lead the planning and establishment of the garden and to take on conducting specific tasks such as funding, partnerships, construction, and communication.
- Tap into local resources! Find out who in the community has valuable skills (like gardeners and landscapers) and is willing to donate his or her time to help out with the garden or lead a class on how to take care of the garden.
- Secure an ongoing source of funding. This could be through a sponsor, membership dues, or quarterly fundraising activities to cover costs such as water, seeds, planting equipment, and containers.
- Locate an appropriate garden site that has access to water and sunlight, can be protected against animals or vandalism, and is easily accessed by potential gardeners.
- Request permission to use the site for at least three years, if possible. Find out if the site can be used for free, requires a lease, or can be purchased. Also, find out if you need to acquire public liability insurance to use the site.
- Organize a group of volunteers to clean and prepare the site for planting.

- Locate a place to store tools, figure out where in the garden you want to put pathways, and organize the garden space.
- Establish rules for the garden, such as how funding will be allocated, who will have access to the garden and when, and how often the planning committee will meet.

Capital Roots is an excellent resource to consider if help is needed as they have a number of sites that they operate around the capital region.

BULK OR PREPARED FOOD PICK-UP AND DELIVERY

With the rising interest in eating healthy and emphasis on local food, options continue to increase to connect people with healthy food. A food delivery service can be a useful tool for increasing access to healthy, local food. It also provides a convenience for providing healthier prepared foods for busy people. Existing delivery options include: Gorsky's Farm Market- provides some farm products such as eggs, and firewood, and assortment of soups and meals for delivery. A large area of Capital Region, including Menands, is available for delivery.

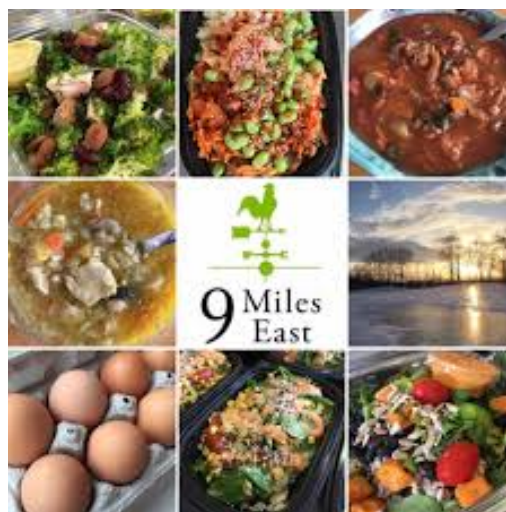


3gorskysfarm.com

www.gorskysfarm.com

9 Miles East- another diversified farm and food business currently delivers to the Capital Region an assortment of fresh, prepared meals suiting diverse diet needs. A cooler is dropped off with items ordered at your home.

www.9mileseast.com



Additional opportunities for Menands could focus on more locally created options. This is also an excellent business opportunity for a local entrepreneur or someone passionate about local food or cooking.

Wholesale scaled for individual market- currently Black Horse Farms offers a community supported agriculture (CSA) program in which a single retail purchaser can pre-pay and then receive a weekly “share” of various produce, picked up at the Capital District Farmer’s Market. This and other CSA programs should be better publicized in Menands to connect people to this opportunity. In addition, existing or new programs could expand the concept and offer pre-packaged delivery to homes or locations in town.



For example, an existing store or service provides an array of local produce, products and prepared foods for pick-up in the community or for delivery. This could be on a pre-order basis to ensure efficiency and that the amount of wholesale produce purchased doesn’t get wasted or exceed customer demand. Alternatively, a group of people could also organize this effort- purchasing in bulk at the Regional Market and dividing into shares for those in buying effort.

Implementation

The strategies and recommendations contained within this report are designed practically to focus on connecting residents to existing stores better outside of Menands, and improve local food access through collaboration with existing resources.

Although designed to be “right-sized” recommendations that offer ability to tackle individual easy entry activities, or larger scaled initiative, an implementation strategy will still be key to ensuring successful improvement of access to food in Menands.

EDUCATION

The Newsletter prepared as a means to communicate results of this technical assistance effort can be an important first step in getting information to residents that can aid them in better accessing current opportunities for healthy foods. It can also assist with getting more people interested and involved in future activities.

To assist with educating residents regarding current access to healthy food and future initiatives, it is also recommended that the Village of Menands create a webpage on their website to serve as a central hub for information.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERSIGHT

While implementation of activities can be led or delegated to individuals or groups, a centralized committee that continues to provide guidance and direction to the effort is still very important to its success.

The Village of Menands currently has an advisory committee with a diverse representation of people that are associated with the village, both private and public. The committee is comprised of Village leaders, planning consultants, members of the Capital Roots (regional food systems organization) employees of Albany county, and volunteers. However, in the future, if the committee plans to expand, this could spread group responsibilities and ensure a variety of viewpoints and perspectives are included.

Suggested Additional Committee Members Could Be:

- Public health department staff
- Wellness coordinators
- Purchasing directors
- Agency leaders
- Community leaders
- Staff from legal departments
- School administrators and cafeteria staff
- Foodservice staff
- Nutritionists
- Evaluation staff
- Food vendors
- Community residents
- Representatives from local businesses
- Hospital administrators
- County planners
- Health communication specialists
- Health educator

Creating a plan with more concrete activities, time frames, funding needed and responsible parties should be created to assist all current and future interested parties in staying engaged and progressing activities as a whole.

Beyond catalyst activities recommended above, efforts could be expanded to include a number of destinations in the Village where food is distributed and eaten. Some examples are included here:

- **Cafeterias:** facilities that provide prepared foods (can include hot meals) and drinks, usually through a line where customers select and serve food items themselves; can be found in locations such as schools, workplaces, or hospitals
- **Vending machines:** automatic facilities that dispense food items when currency is inserted; usually do not include eating accommodations or an onsite supervisor
- **Concession stands, snack bars, and carts:** facilities that often offer previously prepared food items for a light meal such as sandwiches and salads; include an onsite manager and can sometimes have eating accommodations

- **Patient meals:** meals provided to patients in a hospital or patients in a long-term care facility
- **Meals served in institutions:** meals supplied to individuals in nursing homes, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals
- **Distributive meals:** meals provided through after-school snack programs, child care facilities, soup kitchens, or home delivery for seniors or children

LEADERSHIP

Designated leadership should be established to provide direction and ability to leverage individual activities into a largely collective effort. Menands may wish to secure an undergraduate or graduate level Intern to provide focus and hours necessary to progress efforts. UAlbany's Sustainability Program is one such resource that may be able to provide such an Intern for Menand's efforts on food accessibility. Contact with their program in Spring 2020 signalled that this was a definite possibility and should be followed up with to bring to fruition.