



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

# Healthy Food Procurement in American Cities

Leveraging Local Purchasing Power to Fight Obesity



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank our peer reviewer:

Katie Bishop Kendrick, MS, MPH  
Healthy Eating Strategic Policy Lead  
Policy Analyst  
American Heart Association

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the peer reviewer.



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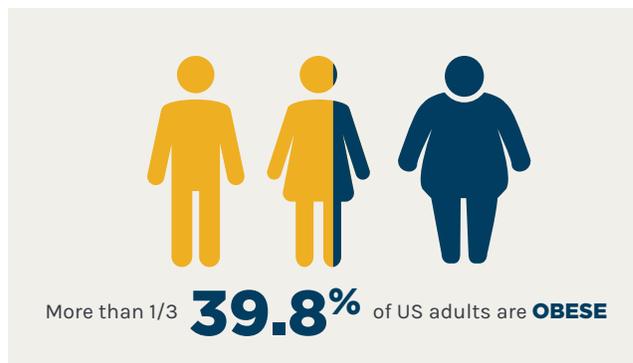
**C**ityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, provides leaders with a package of nine evidence-based policy solutions that have the potential to help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities. CityHealth awards the nation's largest 40 cities with gold, silver, or bronze medals annually in each of the nine CityHealth policy areas, based on the quantity and quality of those policies. One of these policy solutions is healthy food procurement, which gives cities the opportunity to leverage their purchasing power to improve their residents' health.

Obesity rates have risen steadily in the United States over the past two decades, creating significant long-term effects on workforce wellness and economic vitality. In response, many cities are leveraging policies that improve opportunities for people to eat healthy and be more active. Strong healthy food procurement policies ensure that healthy food options are available in city-owned or controlled places and give city residents food choices that can help them achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

CityHealth's assessment of healthy food procurement policies includes whether the city has nutrition standards in place, and what percentage of foods and beverages sold on city property abide by those nutrition standards. CityHealth's criteria allow cities to tailor standards to their unique cultural and population needs.

In CityHealth's 2019 assessment, nine cities earned gold medals: Boston, Long Beach, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

Four cities advanced their CityHealth healthy food procurement medal status. San Antonio moved from receiving no medal in 2018 to achieving gold in 2019. Seattle moved from bronze to gold. Denver moved from no medal to silver, and Austin moved from receiving no medal to bronze. To see the full list of cities that were assessed and the medal status of each, please see page 9.



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## Obesity in America: Common and Costly

The growth of the obesity epidemic in America is well documented. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2017, more than one-third (39.8%) of U.S. adults are obese, and two-thirds are considered to be overweight or have obesity.<sup>12</sup> Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer, which are some of the leading causes of preventable death.<sup>3</sup>

Obesity rates of this magnitude increase health care costs for every American, as well as private and government organizations. Health care costs associated with obesity now total \$190 billion every year, adding up to one fifth of all health care spending.<sup>4</sup> This amount continues to rise.<sup>5</sup>

These costs are not just paid by individuals. About one-half of these expenses are paid through taxpayer funded health programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid.<sup>6</sup> Experts estimate that if obesity-related spending were eliminated, Medicare and Medicaid outlays would be reduced by 8.5 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively.<sup>7</sup>



“Local government agencies that operate cafeterias and vending options have strong nutrition standards in place wherever foods and beverages are sold or available.”

— National Academy of Medicine

Cities also pay part of the bill. Every year, cities with the highest obesity rates pay an estimated \$50 million in costs associated with obesity and related chronic conditions.<sup>8</sup> Even cities with comparatively low obesity rates incur millions of dollars in preventable health care costs.

While there are many factors that drive how individuals make food choices, evidence shows us that what people eat is heavily influenced by food access and availability, as well as the quality, variety, and cost of food and beverages served and sold in stores, restaurants, workplaces, schools, and other community institutions. The growth in obesity correlates with changes in Americans’ diets. Studies show that between 1971 and 2000, daily consumption by American adults grew by 168 calories for men, and 335 for women. During the same three-decade span, the obesity rate more than doubled.<sup>9</sup>

Consuming sugary beverages, long considered a second tier concern, is now considered by experts to be one of the most important factors in one’s health and weight. Sugary drinks have risen in popularity, especially among children, with consumption tripling since the 1970’s.<sup>10</sup> Now, 80 percent of children consume at least one sugary drink daily.<sup>11</sup> Experts have also found that sugary drinks are the second most obtained food or beverage at work



## MOST FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN VENDING MACHINES ON PUBLIC PROPERTY ARE UNHEALTHY

### BEVERAGES

- Fifty eight percent of beverages were sugary drinks.
- Of the 42% that were “healthier” options: 23% were low-calorie beverages, 16% were water, and 3% were 100% juice.

### FOOD

- Candy (32%) was the most commonly offered food offered followed by chips (24%) and sweet baked goods (15%).
- Healthy options like fruits, vegetables, or nuts made up only 5% of vended foods available.

Source: Katherine Bishop. Center for Science in the Public Interest, “Vending Contradictions: Snack and Beverage Options on Public Property,” 2014.

for adults, after coffee.<sup>12</sup> Evidence shows that sugary drinks like soda, sports drinks, and sweetened juices contribute directly to obesity rates.<sup>13</sup>

To combat the obesity epidemic and its related conditions, the National Academy of Medicine (previously the Institute of Medicine) recommends that, “local government agencies that operate cafeterias and vending

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options have strong nutrition standards in place wherever foods and beverages are sold or available.”<sup>14</sup> Cities across the country are heeding this advice by adopting healthy purchasing or procurement policies, so that foods served or sold on city property include healthy options and meet basic nutrition standards.

## An Opportunity To Show A Citywide Commitment To Advancing Health

Many local governments have made advancing and protecting the health and quality of life of their residents a top priority. This is especially true in the last two decades, when research began to show that the United States was facing a rapidly growing obesity epidemic.<sup>15</sup> Yet in the parks, recreational facilities, and workplaces that cities manage, many municipal vendors almost exclusively offer calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods, running counter to cities’ goals.<sup>16</sup>

A study conducted in 2013 by the Center for Science and the Public Interest found that vending machines on state and local property primarily offer an abundance of unhealthy products.<sup>17</sup>

Providing healthy options allows cities to have a tangible impact on the health of their residents. City procurement policies are particularly important because local governments are often among the largest employers and food purchasers in a community. Cities can use this purchasing power to provide healthier food to community members and improve community health.



## GROWING MOMENTUM

### CITY MAYORS COMMIT TO OFFERING HEALTHY FOOD ON PUBLIC PROPERTY

The following text is an excerpt from an Adopted Resolution at the 86th Annual Meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Celebrating America's Mayors Who Make Health Policy a First-Tier Solution to Municipal Challenges

**WHEREAS**, everyone, in every city, deserves the chance to live the healthiest possible life; and

**WHEREAS**, policy is one of the most important tools local governments can use to improve their residents' lives; and

**WHEREAS**, mayors lead the country's most successful efforts to bring health to Americans in cities all across the country; and

**WHEREAS**, CityHealth policies have been shown to improve people's health and quality of life; including:

...Healthy food procurement policies that ensure healthy food options are available on public property; ...

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the United States Conference of Mayors will celebrate mayors that make health policy a first-tier solution to their municipal challenges.<sup>18</sup>

## How Well Does Healthy Procurement Work?

A systematic review of research conducted on healthy food and beverage procurement programs showed that they consistently led people to buy healthier foods and discouraged purchases of food high in fat, sodium and sugar. Some programs were also shown to be effective at reducing participants' weight and blood pressure.<sup>19</sup>

A 2010 study showed that offering healthier foods in workplaces had a direct effect on employees' food choices and resulted in net weight loss amongst workers.<sup>20</sup>



These benefits translated into lower health care costs, such as insurance premiums and workers' compensation claims. It also helped lower indirect costs, such as absenteeism and lost worker productivity.<sup>21</sup>

Strong healthy procurement policies can affect large numbers of city residents. For example, New York City's procurement policy applies to approximately 250 million meals and snacks served per year at sites around the city which include day care centers, correctional facilities, and senior centers.<sup>22</sup> Policies and implementation vary widely among cities. The stronger the nutrition standards and the more outlets that are comprehensively included, the more likely the policy will help reduce obesity and chronic disease.

## The Business Case

Not only does diversifying retailers' offerings have the potential to address the obesity epidemic in cities, it also can help grow businesses' bottom lines. The 2017 Automatic Merchandising State of the Industry report, produced by the National Automated Merchandising Association, finds that there is an increasing demand for healthy procurement, from both customers and vendors. "Vendors reported that healthy food attributed as much as a 25% upswing in sales."<sup>23</sup> According to the Snack Food Association, sales growth of healthier snacks is outpacing traditional snack foods by 4 to 1.<sup>24</sup>

Setting nutrition standards can also be popular with the public, and positively affect revenue for retailers. In a case study on Chicago's healthy vending program in city parks, 100% of city staff and nearly nine in ten park visitors approved of the changes. Over the 15 months of the study, average per machine sales increased from \$84 to \$371.<sup>25</sup>

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## Nutrition Standards

Healthy procurement can be defined in a number of ways, but generally these guidelines aim to limit the amount of calorie dense, nutrition poor foods and beverages, while increasing the number of lower-calorie, nutrient rich offerings. Cities often limit elements like the amount of sugar, salt, fat, saturated fat, and trans-fat in each serving, as well as the size and number of portions in each item.

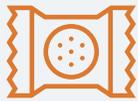
CityHealth does not have specific nutrition requirements in its assessment criteria, but in order to receive a CityHealth medal of any kind, a city must have a procurement policy that includes nutrition standards. Cities have taken a variety of approaches to adopting or developing nutrition standards. Some cities refer directly to nutrition guidelines issued by the federal

## OPTIONS FOR CITY NUTRITION STANDARDS

### 1 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES FOR FEDERAL FACILITIES

#### 100% of products

must meet sodium and trans-fat standards.



#### 75% of packaged food

products should meet calorie, saturated fat, and sugar standards

#### 50% of beverage products

should meet calorie requirements



### 2 AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION (AHA) FOOD AND BEVERAGE TOOLKIT



#### 100% of food products

should meet calorie, sodium, trans fat, saturated fat and sugar standards

#### 50% of beverages

should meet calorie requirements



### 3 THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR NUTRITION AND ACTIVITY (NANA) MODEL VENDING GUIDELINES.



#### 100% of all food products

must meet calorie, sodium, trans fat, saturated fat and sugar standards

#### 100% of beverages

must meet calorie requirements



government or other nutrition experts. Others have chosen to craft their own nutrition standards to meet their city's unique needs. Options for city nutrition standards include:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities. These standards were first implemented in 2011 and updated in January 2017. Among other things, they require that 100% of products must meet sodium and trans-fat standards. At least 75% of packaged food products should meet calorie, saturated fat, and sugar standards as well. At least 50% of beverage products should meet calorie requirements.
2. American Heart Association (AHA) Food and Beverage Toolkit. AHA developed a toolkit that includes nutrition standards. 100% of food products should meet calorie, sodium, trans fat, saturated fat and sugar standards. At least 50% of beverages should meet calorie requirements.
3. The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) Model Vending Guidelines. 100% of all food products must meet calorie, sodium, trans fat, saturated fat and sugar standards. 100% of beverages must meet calorie requirements.

## WHERE HEALTHY FOOD SALES CAN HAPPEN

- Parks
- Sports arenas
- City buildings
- Airports
- Public hospitals
- Senior centers
- Recreation centers
- Homeless shelters
- Child care centers
- Correctional facilities

School nutrition standards are covered under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and are not part of the CityHealth scoring system.

## CITYHEALTH'S 2019 HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT MEDALS

 = medal increase from 2018

Albuquerque		Mesa	
Atlanta		Milwaukee	
Austin		Nashville	
Baltimore		New York	
Boston		Oklahoma City	
Charlotte		Philadelphia	
Chicago		Phoenix	
Columbus		Portland	
Dallas		Sacramento	
Denver		San Antonio	
Detroit		San Diego	
El Paso		San Francisco	
Fresno		San Jose	
Ft. Worth		Seattle	
Houston		Tucson	
Indianapolis		Virginia Beach	
Jacksonville		Washington, D.C.	
Kansas City			
Las Vegas			
Long Beach			
Los Angeles			
Louisville			
Memphis			

These policies can be applied across a broad spectrum. For example, some cities have set nutrition standards for vending machines only, while other localities have expanded the policy to cover city meetings, cafeterias, community hospitals, jails, detention centers, and senior and child care facilities.



## METHODS

How did we award healthy procurement policy medals?



	Bronze	Silver	Gold
City has a procurement policy mandating nutrition standards			
Policy applies to all city contracts			
If policy only applies to vending machines:			
• More than 75% of food and beverages must meet standards			
• More than 50% of food and beverages must meet standards			

## Issues For Policy Improvement

Encouraging an entire city to eat more fruits and vegetables and consume fewer unhealthy foods requires a comprehensive approach. In combination with health education, equitable access to supermarkets and healthy foods, and affordable pricing, procurement policies can be a powerful tool in improving health. These policies can be applied across a broad spectrum. For example, some cities have set nutrition standards for vending machines only, while other localities have expanded the policy to cover city meetings, cafeterias, community hospitals, jails, detention centers, and senior and child care facilities. The more comprehensive the policy, the greater the potential impact.

Cities could also consider policies that influence other parts of the food system. For example, policymakers have the opportunity to use healthy food procurement policies to incentivize locally-grown products, spur

community development, and increase sustainability (such as energy efficiency, natural resource management, and environmental impact reduction). Cities can also ensure that healthy food procurement contracts are equitably distributed to minority and woman-owned businesses.

The formation of strong policies should engage many stakeholders—from the food policy task forces that make recommendations on healthy food options, to the mayors and city councils that adopt healthy food purchasing policies, to the procurement and health department officials who implement the new policy and, in some cases, develop the specific nutrition standards.

CityHealth will review its policy measures in cooperation with a committee of experts to ensure they are consistent with the best available science. The new medal metrics for health food procurement and other policy areas will be announced in 2021.



## Spotlight On Kansas City

Healthy options have been a focus in Kansas City since at least 2014, when the city council adopted a resolution to establish the “KCMO Healthier Vending Initiative.”<sup>26</sup> Citing the city’s “obligation to create a healthier workforce while concurrently controlling healthcare costs,” the initiative included nutrition standards for the food and beverages sold in the city’s vending machines.

Four years later, the city council unanimously updated that policy to require even more—75 percent—of snacks and entrée-type foods (such as sandwiches and burritos) sold in city vending machines to meet specific nutrition standards.<sup>27</sup> Kansas City required its vendors to comply with the U.S. Health and Human Services Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities. The city also

maintained specific nutritional standards—such as a calorie limit and caps on the amount of saturated fat, sugar, and sodium—for entrée-type foods.

As the ninth largest employer in the Kansas City metro area, the city’s healthy food procurement policy helps set an example for other employers who want to cultivate a healthier workforce. The effort to secure the 2018 policy was the result of a partnership between the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department, the City of Kansas City Procurement Office, the American Heart Association, and the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City. Kansas City received a silver policy medal from CityHealth in 2018 for its updated healthy vending policy.

## Spotlight On Boston

In 2011, Mayor Thomas M. Menino issued an executive order to increase access to healthy beverage options on city property.<sup>28</sup> The executive order outlined the requirements for beverages that could be sold and directed city departments to eliminate the sale of sugary drinks on city property (including through vending machines and city-managed food and beverage services programs). The policy built on Boston's prior efforts to adopt healthy beverage and snack requirements for school vending machines.

Among its goals, the executive order was designed to enable Boston to “serve as an example to other local and national institutions and use its purchasing power to make healthy eating a priority.” After Mayor Menino announced the policy, 10 Boston-area hospitals also opted to improve the availability of healthy beverages for their employees and patrons.

The executive order established a Healthy Options Coordinating Committee—an interagency committee with members from relevant city departments

led by the Boston Public Health Commission—to coordinate implementation of the executive order. The committee met five times over six months and created sample standard contract language regarding healthy beverage standards. This helped city agencies easily incorporate this language into their contracts with vendors. The committee also created a toolkit with consumer educational tools that used a red-yellow-green traffic light system to identify categories of beverages (e.g., red designates “drink rarely, if at all” while green designates “drink plenty” or “healthy choice”).

A 2015 study concluded that Boston's executive order helped make healthier beverage options more accessible to city residents and employees.<sup>29</sup> Fewer sugary drinks were available after the executive order was implemented, and city agencies were significantly more likely to sell only low-sugar beverages two years after the executive order was issued. Researchers observed declines in the sugar content and calories of beverages for sale on city property without a change in price.



## Conclusion

The costs of the obesity epidemic in cities is high, in health care costs, lost productivity, and human suffering. Research shows that offering healthy foods is one tool city leaders can use to reverse the tide of the obesity epidemic and help residents achieve a higher quality of life. Healthy food and beverage procurement also benefits businesses, by increasing profit margins for sellers, and helps employers cultivate a healthier workforce. Cities that aim to cultivate health and well-being for

their residents should review whether the food and beverages they currently offer in public places like public parks, sports stadiums, hospitals and detention facilities live up to that goal, and then take action to ensure the food and beverages on their property are consistent with that commitment.

To learn more about how your city can engage with CityHealth to advance policies that advance health and quality of life, please visit [www.cityhealth.org](http://www.cityhealth.org).

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