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2017

Mobile Farmers' Market Feasibility Study



Nashua Regional Planning Commission

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Executive Summary

The Nashua Farmers' Market Promotion Program aims to bolster the availability of fresh local foods in an area with unmet demand. Nashua, the second most populous municipality in New Hampshire, currently hosts a weekly Farmers' Market in the downtown area. The market is centrally located within a low income community with low access to food or personal vehicles. However, the low income, low food access population extends beyond the City center and into surrounding communities, for this reason, there is interest in studying the feasibility of establishing a mobile market option to serve populations beyond the walkable proximity to the existing farmers market. A mobile market could operate during the prime growing season, with potential to operate year round, and increase the geographic area of market sales with routes extending out to surrounding neighborhoods, communities, and food deserts.

As part of the initiative, NRPC conducted a Mobile Market Feasibility study, which identifies and evaluates the feasibility of a mobile market including market demand, existing supply, nearby examples of success and potential competition, and essential considerations for route selection and permitting. This plan establishes the foundation for a sustainable mobile market for the Nashua Region. Evaluation assesses the financial costs, overall feasibility, and capacity, as well as the access provided for low income-low food access neighborhoods.

A mobile market (a vehicle that would transport and sell local foods) would extend the area consumers could purchase local agricultural products as well as provide additional opportunity for local farmers and businesses to sell their products. After conducting extensive public outreach via written surveys administered to patrons and vendors during summer markets and well as online surveys, patrons were strongly in favor of participating in a mobile market, with moderate support from vendors.

Introduction and Project Background

In order to expand access to fresh local foods beyond the existing farmers' market locations, NRPC, along with the City of Nashua, was interested in operating a mobile market. Such an expansion opportunity would increase access to local agricultural products to be available to a larger audience. The low income, low food access population extends beyond the City center and into surrounding communities, for this reason, Nashua Public Health and Community Services Department (NPHCS) is interested in additionally studying the feasibility of establishing a mobile market option to serve populations beyond the walkable proximity to the existing farmers' market. Such an initiative would further regional planning goals of both the NRPC and NPHCS as well as economic development goals in the Nashua Master Plan. NRPC, with support from NPHCS, applied for and received a two-year, \$70,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to fund the research of the feasibility of a winter farmers' market and a mobile market, as well as, promote the current market while expanding and recruiting vendors.

Community Context

The existing Nashua Farmer's Market is organized by the local chapter of Great American Downtown (GAD): Nashua, NH. The market has grown over the course of 2015 to 2017 from 8 to 10 vendors to

over 30 vendors at weekly markets held on the Main Street Bridge and into Renaissance Park each Sunday, 10am – 2pm, from mid-June through mid-October. The market is centrally located in the Nashua Downtown, which as described by GAD is the place to be “whether you’re seeking fine dining, eclectic shopping, a vibrant arts scene, historic architecture, fun-filled events or just a place to relax and watch the world go by.” The summer market is also centrally located within walking distance of the City’s low income, low food access community. Further, this community has a low level of access to personal vehicles and is often dependent upon walking and transit.

Geographically, the market primarily serves the City’s downtown. However, Nashua is the largest urban center in southern New Hampshire, so many surrounding communities and populations also come to the City for services and opportunities such as the farmers’ market. The existing market targets people of all ages and backgrounds. In 2016 the market added payment options for SNAP/EBT customers as well, offering Granite State Market Match that matches a dollar for each dollar of SNAP/EBT funds used to buy fresh fruits and veggies.

There are several additional summer and winter farmers’ market across the Nashua Region. The Merrimack summer market began in 2009 and is located at 526 Daniel Webster Highway on Wednesday afternoons from June to October. The Merrimack Winter market moves to the John O’Leary Center from December to May. Milford’s market operates on Elm St from June to October and during winter shifts indoors for November to May. Both these markets offer a mixture of fresh local foods and other local products.

There are many other organizations within Nashua and the surrounding communities whose mission is to increase people’s access to healthy and local food. Many of these organizations are at the beginning stages of forming a Nashua Food Council to increase capacity and further similar missions. There is also the Nashua Meals for Kids, which is a citywide partnership working to end childhood hunger by providing three meals a day to children who would otherwise go hungry. Nashua is also a Farm to School Beacon Community, which is a pilot project of the New Hampshire Farm to School Program. The goal of the program is to move innovative farm to school practices forward and serve as models for other communities across the state.

In addition to farm stands and food pantries in the Nashua Region, there are many organizations whose mission is to increase access to nutritional food. Grow Nashua focuses on families that do not have the space and/or financial means to have a garden of their own. Grow Nashua acts as a resource and a partner in providing space, fostering neighborhood activities, and hosting nutrition education through collaboration with schools, city parks, and hospitals. The Nashua Soup Kitchen is dedicated to providing shelter and food to those in need, including providing daily meals at their facility and distributing them through the Nashua Meals for Kids program in partnership with Corpus Christie, Ending 68 Hours of Hunger, the Salvation Army, and Southern New Hampshire Services.

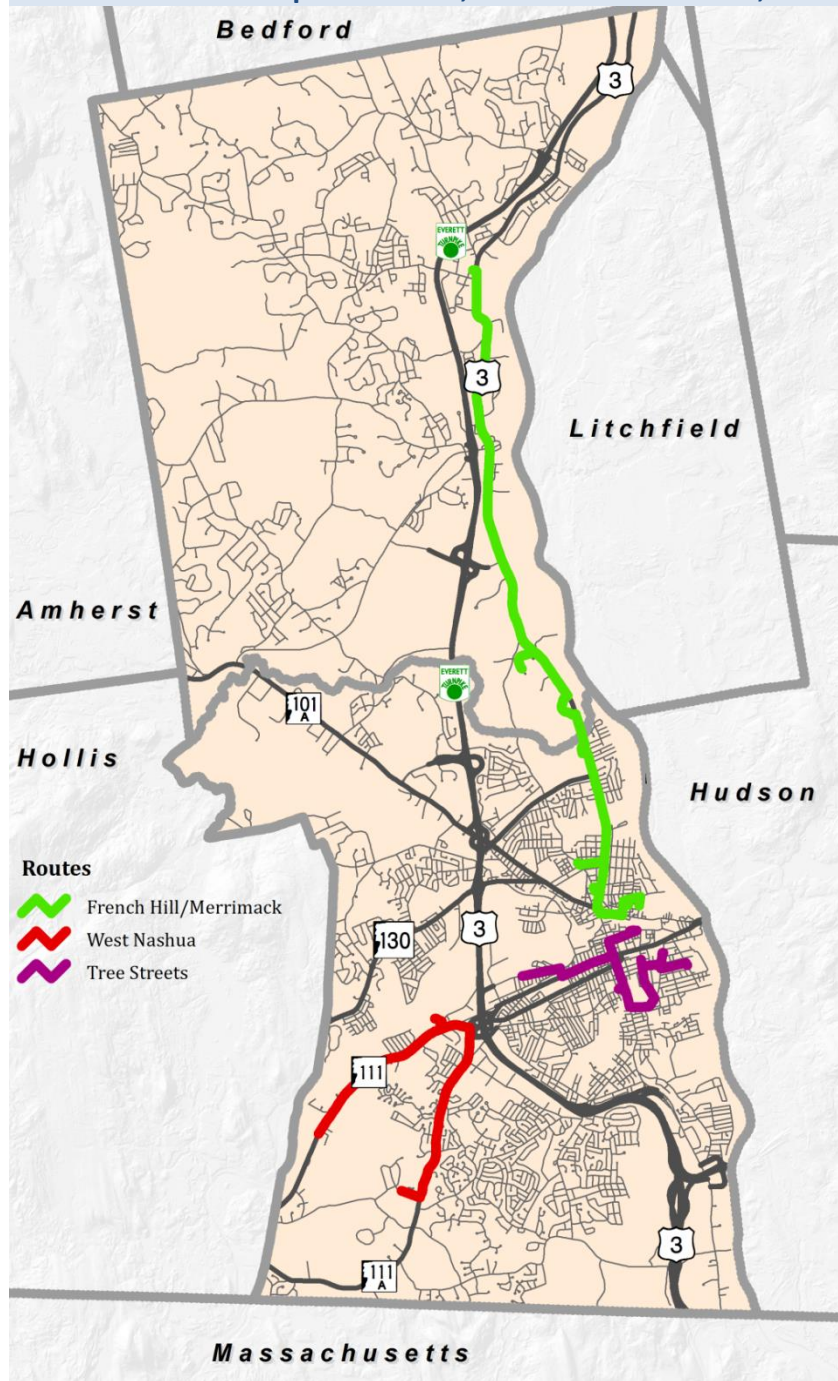
The Nashua Region also has experience with using mobile units to expand outreach efforts. The City of Nashua’s Health Department has had a mobile health clinic that offers individuals access to screening and preventive services in a variety of locations in Greater Nashua. The City has partnered with St.

Joseph Hospital and Rivier University to upgrade this facility and increase medical services to the Nashua Region. Furthermore, there are many large businesses and office parks within the Nashua Region that could augment the customer base for the mobile market. Direct access to local food may health decrease health insurance costs, while also providing a local food option to employees.

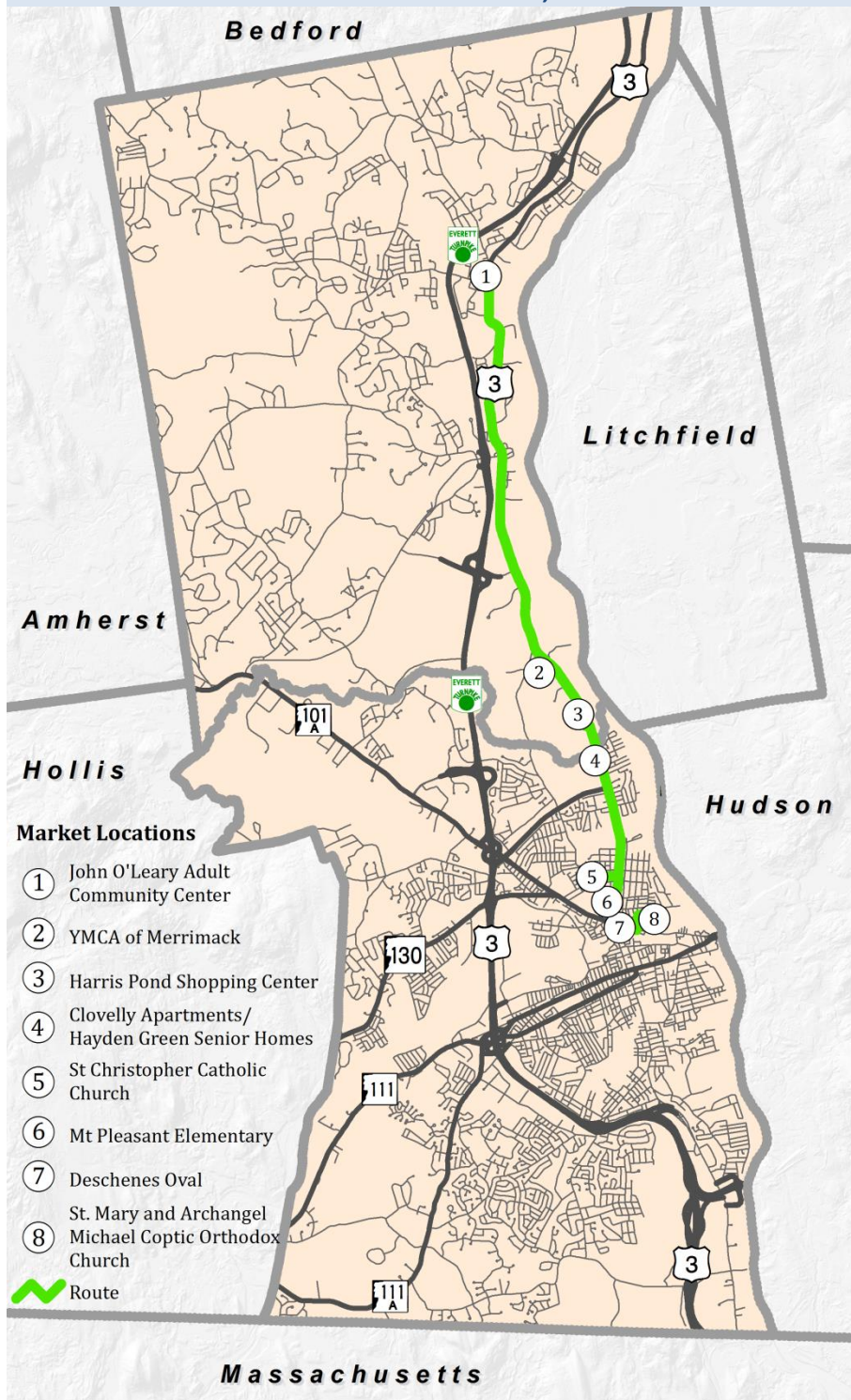
Vision

Looking forward to build on the Nashua community's growing momentum for promoting local food, summer market's tremendous growth, the Nashua Region would like to be home to a mobile farmers' market. An expanded geographic reach would increase a customer based, which would then be available to support local farmers and provide healthy food options for communities in need. The ideal mobile market would provide a wide variety of products at different times and locations to reach as many people in need in various municipalities. The mobile unit could even provide educational materials on preparing local foods. Ideally the mobile market would serve populations without access to a vehicle and low food access and could serve other purposes, such as a mobile library. Conceptual routes and stops that the mobile market could use to reach underserved populations are pictured below. These are just proposed stops that have not received permission from either the City or property owner and are intended to give ideas to potential stakeholders based on the following market demand analysis.

Overview of Conceptual Routes, Nashua & Merrimack, NH

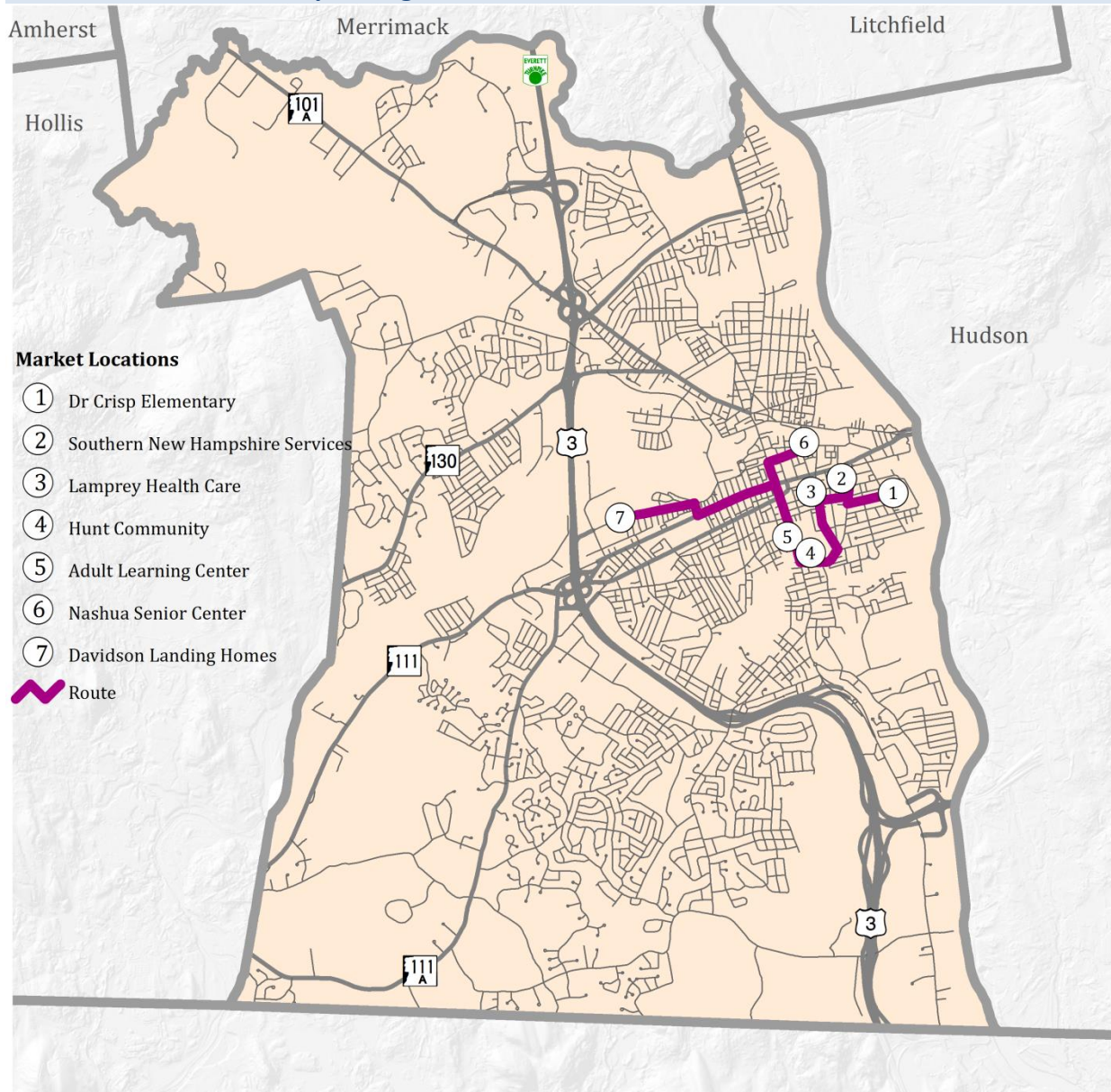


**Potential stops along the French Hill/Merrimack Route,
Nashua & Merrimack, NH**



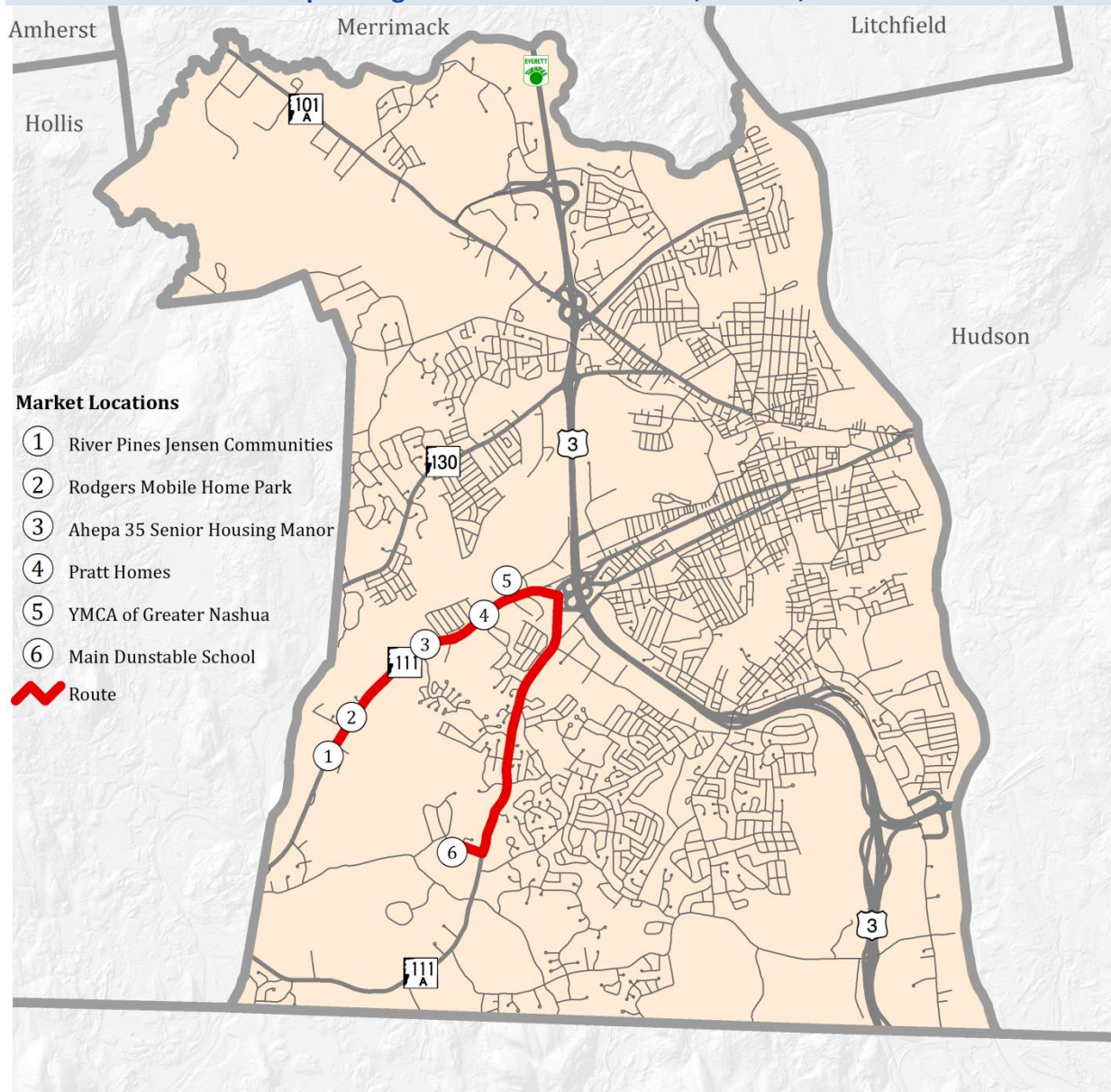
Source: NRPC

Stops along the Tree Streets Route, Nashua, NH



Source: NRPC

Stops along the West Nashua Route, Nashua, NH



Source: NRPC

Market Demand

As previously stated, the existing Nashua Farmer's Market is centrally located within a low income, low food access community, where this community also has a low level of access to personal vehicles and is often dependent upon walking and transit. NRPC and GAD collaborated and surveyed patrons and vendors throughout the 2016 summer season. There were a total of 266 patron responses and 27 vendor responses.

The demand for a mobile market held in Nashua was somewhat high, with 61% of patrons answering that they would shop at a mobile market in Nashua and 46% of current vendors would like to participate in the mobile market. Similar to national trends, interest in local foods has increased in Nashua. Seventy seven percent of survey respondents said that their main reason for buying fruits and/or vegetables at the Nashua Farmers' Market was to support local farmers and 24% said they preferred fruits or vegetables from the Nashua Farmers' Market because of product quality and freshness.

The summer market provided a consistent location for the 87,000 residents of Nashua to purchase fresh local foods and products. However, few options exist outside of this fixed location. The central part of the city has limited access to quality fresh fruits and vegetables within walking distance for the many residents without access to a vehicle. Most neighborhood food store options consist of corner shops or restaurants in this area. There are a high percentage of residents in the downtown, western Nashua, and surrounding communities that do not have access to a vehicle, so they cannot drive the distance to a grocery store. The mobile farmers' market would alleviate this problem and provide fresh and healthy food options in stops that are within walking distance. An estimated 6% of Nashua Region residents are living below the poverty, with 9% of Nashua residents living below the poverty level. Much of this low income population is concentrated in the downtown region and western portion of the City. Low income residents benefit from the summer market's SNAP/EBT system and would continue to benefit if the market was expanded to reach surrounding neighborhoods.

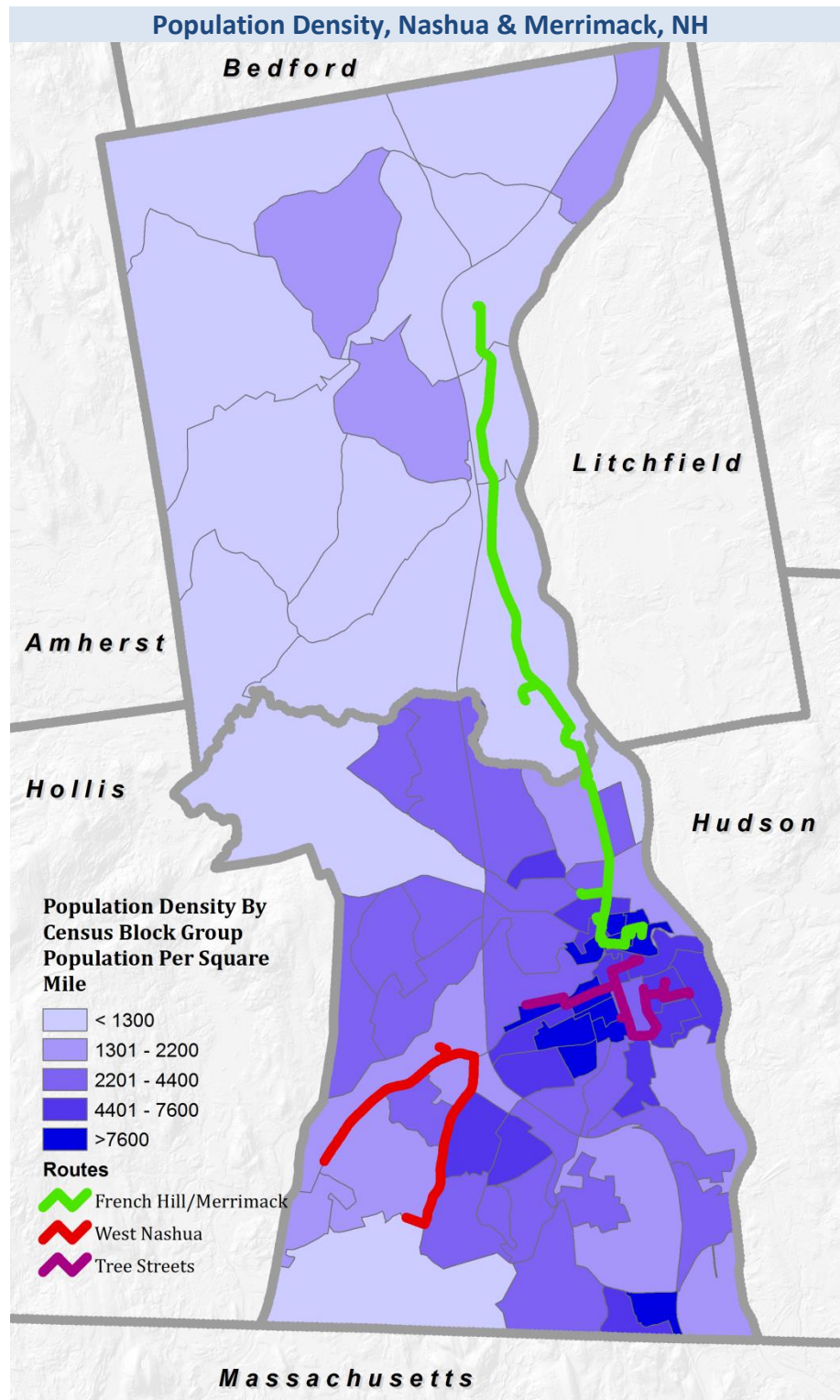
Where do People Live?

The data collected from the summer farmers' market shows that about 25% of the customers surveyed came from outside Nashua. The Towns of Hudson (8%) and Merrimack (4%) were the most substantial. However, there was also a large percent of patrons that fell into the "other" category (14%), which means that many patrons travel to the Nashua market from other communities that do not neighbor Nashua such as Amherst, Andover, Bedford, Brookline, Derry, Hollis, Litchfield, Londonderry, Manchester, New Boston, and various communities in Massachusetts. There were occasional patrons from places far away such as Seattle, WA and the United Kingdom who were staying in the area.

Even though 75% of those surveyed were within Nashua, only 6% were customers already living downtown. Eighteen percent of the Nashua Summer Market's patrons travel less than a half mile to visit the market, with most travelling less than 5 blocks to get to the Nashua farmers' market during the summer, another 29% travel between a half mile and 3 miles, 35% travel between 4 and 10 miles, and the remaining 12% travel over 10 miles to come to the market. Driving was the most common form of transportation, used by approximately 70% of patrons to get to the market, followed by 22% of patrons

that walk and 5% that bicycle. The mobile market could reach these populations not willing to drive several miles for the summer farmers' market or capture some of the more distant customers, potentially mitigating congestion and vehicle trips in the Nashua Region.

Naturally, the population is the densest in the city center, which includes Main Street and the Tree Streets and French Hill neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have more than 7,600 residents per square mile. Locating the stop for the mobile market in this area would be beneficial given the large number of people that live within the area, but may face health or transportation issues that may deter them from going to the farmers' market on Main Street. Having stops in Merrimack would also reach populations that live in dense residential developments, but may lack access to a vehicle or public transit.

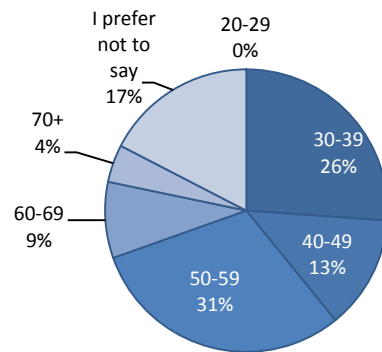


Source: ACS 2015, Map Created by NRPC

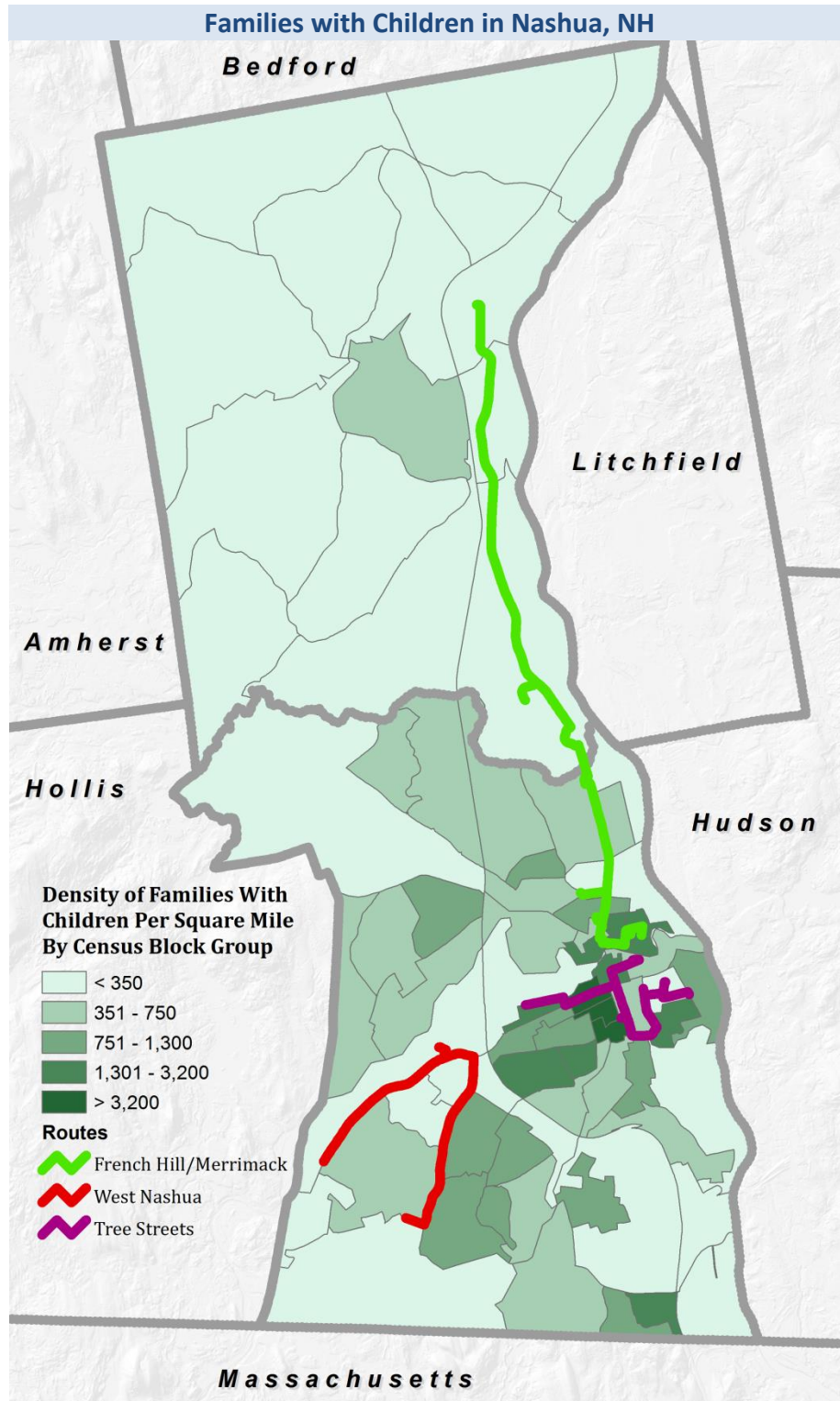
Population by Age and Presence of Children

The Nashua Farmers' market age profile is relatively consistent with others in New Hampshire. The average age of market patrons in Rockingham and Strafford Counties was 45.7 years and 85% of respondents were between 26 and 65 (Jewel McKenzie et al., 2013). Nashua market customers surveyed were predominantly between 30 and 59 years old, representing 70% of shoppers. By widening the geographic range through a mobile market, operators may be able to reach both families with children and seniors that have a difficult time coming to the farmers' market. Stops can be planned around when school lets out, or when other recreational programs begin or end.

Age of Nashua Market Shoppers



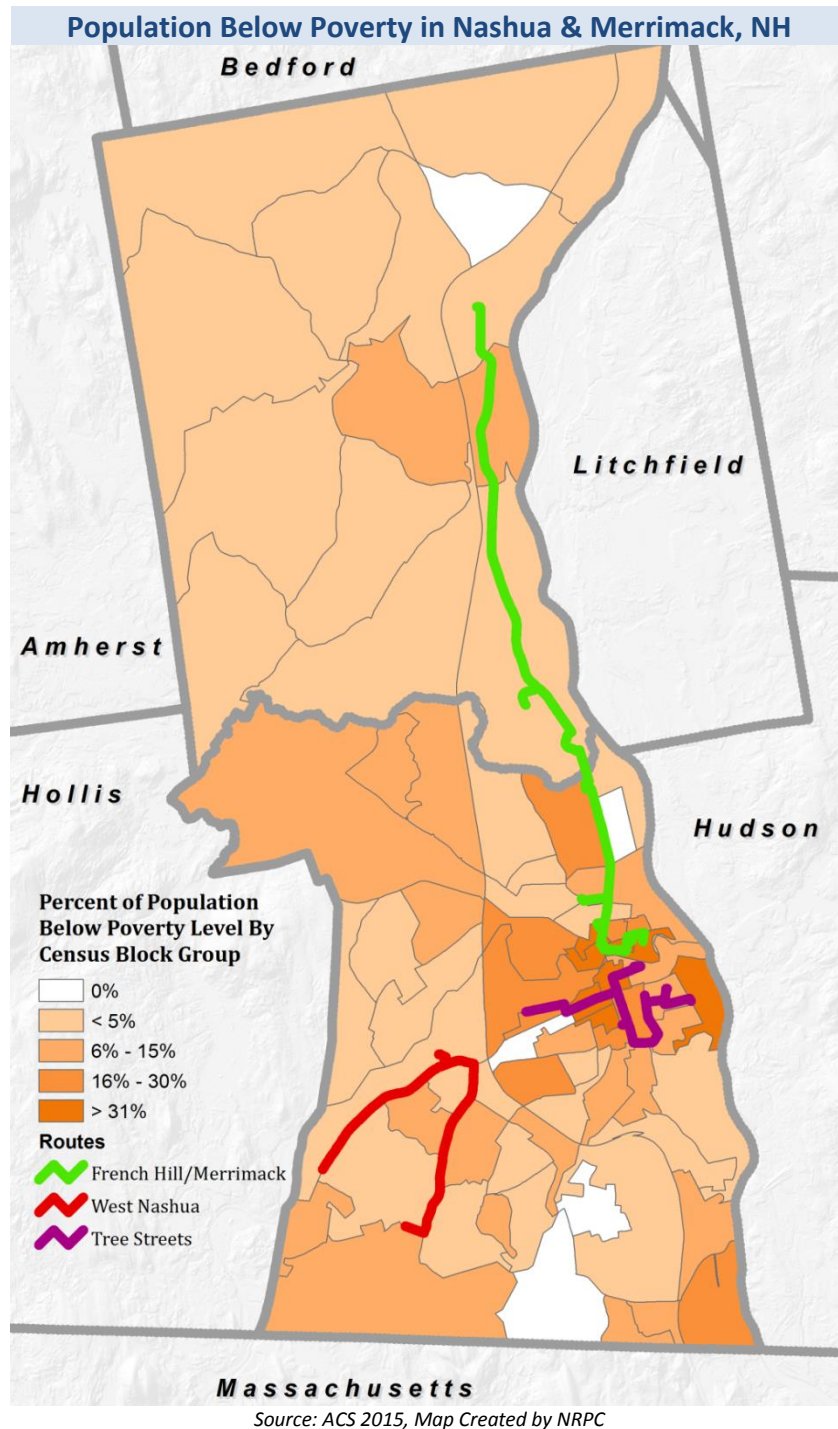
Source: NRPC Surveys



Source: ACS 2015, Map Created by NRPC

Income

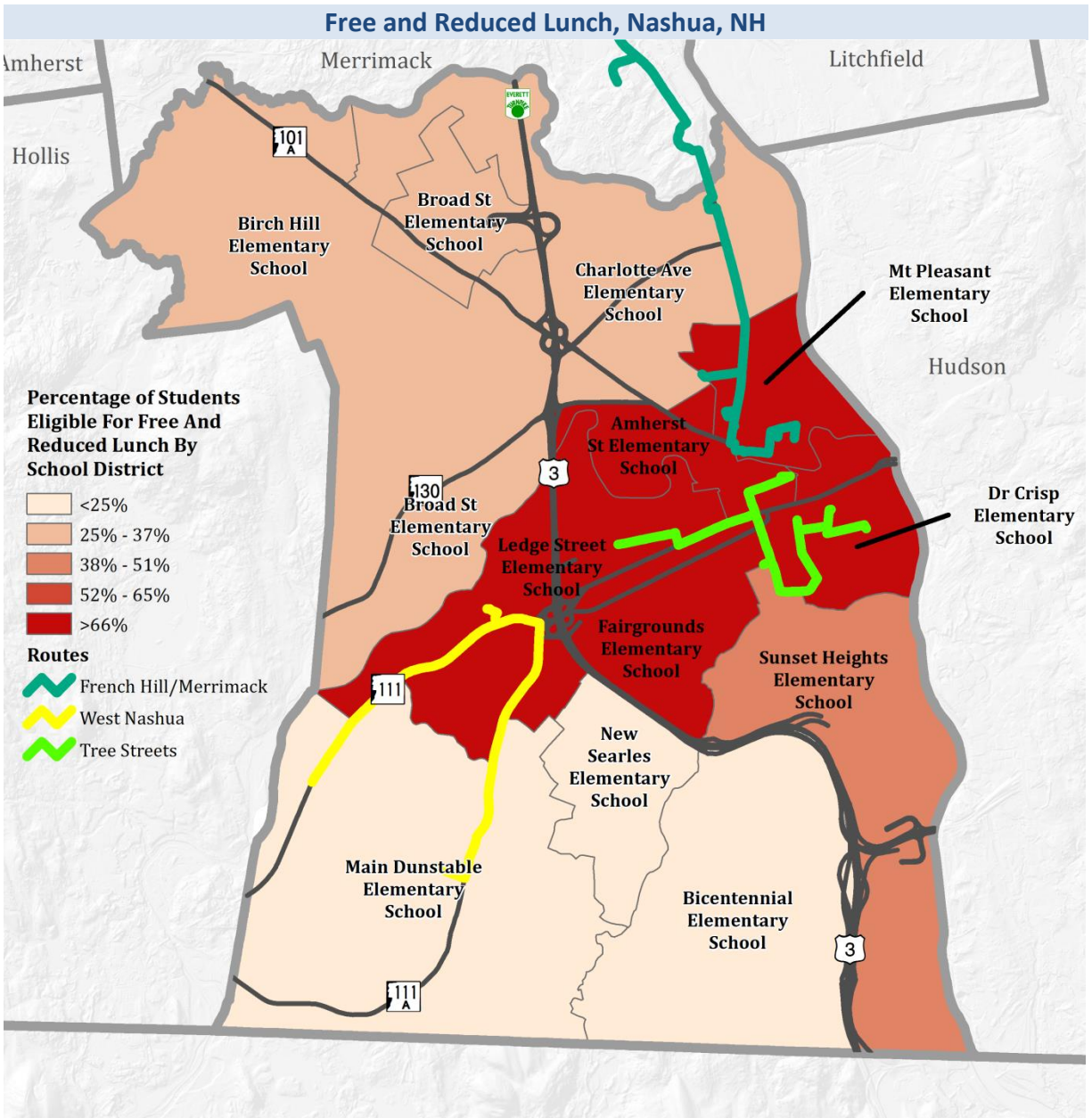
In the Nashua Region, high rates of poverty are mostly clustered around downtown Nashua with some spots in Merrimack and western Nashua. This also coincides with the food desert locations. Because of this, it is important to have affordable options at a mobile market such as the SNAP/EBT system to accommodate patrons of all income levels, as is currently used at the summer Nashua Farmers' market.



Income as measured as both household and per capita medians are lower in Nashua compared to other communities in the NRPC region. While consumers at the Nashua Market were not surveyed to determine the income levels of customers, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension surveyed customers at markets in nearby Rockingham and Strafford Counties. The greatest share of customers, 28.6%, had a household income of over \$100,000. Approximately 25% earned from \$50,001-\$75,000 a year, 18.6% \$75,001 to \$100,000 and another 18.6% between \$25,001 and \$50,000. Fewer than nine percent earned less than \$25,000. Looking to the Nashua neighborhoods beyond the walkable downtown, income levels increase as you move outward. Surrounding communities have median income levels well into these upper income ranges that tend to generate market shoppers, which could help the financial solvency of the mobile market.

Median Household, Family and Per Capita Income, 2000 and 2014

Community	Household Income		Family Income		Per-Capita Income	
	2000	2014	2000	2014	2000	2014
Amherst	\$89,384	\$115,898	\$97,913	\$123,354	\$35,531	\$47,881
Hollis	\$92,847	\$107,333	\$104,737	\$124,318	\$44,936	\$57,523
Hudson	\$64,169	\$84,448	\$71,313	\$95,139	\$25,696	\$32,157
Litchfield	\$73,702	\$96,071	\$76,931	\$105,093	\$25,203	\$33,487
Merrimack	\$68,817	\$91,429	\$72,011	\$104,357	\$27,748	\$36,574
Nashua	\$51,969	\$66,818	\$61,102	\$80,793	\$25,209	\$33,200
State	\$49,467	\$65,986	\$57,575	\$80,812	\$23,844	\$31,422
Sources: 2000 and 2010 US Census, 2000-2014 American Community Survey						



Source: Nashua Public School Systems, Map Created by NRPC

Students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch directly correlate with populations in poverty. The figure above shows that higher percentages of students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch are concentrated in the census tracts in central and western Nashua. Families with children and populations in poverty all cluster around the downtown for resources, so it makes sense that there is overlap between the two categories. Data for free and reduced lunch by school district in Merrimack was unavailable for this study.

Race and Ethnicity

About 79% of Nashua's population is White, followed by 10% Hispanic, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander and 2% Black. Native American and other races make up the remaining one percent. 4.9% of the city's population has limited English proficiency with Spanish as their first language. The table below depicts City's race, ethnicity, national origin, and family type. There is an opportunity to recruit vendors and product options to a mobile market that appeal to the City's diverse citizenry and potential customers.

Demographics of Nashua, NH

Race/Ethnicity		#	%
White, Non-Hispanic		68,309	78.98
Black, Non-Hispanic		1,954	2.26
Hispanic		8,510	9.84
Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic		5,618	6.50
Native American, Non-Hispanic		167	0.19
Other, Non-Hispanic		452	0.52
National Origin		Country	
#1 country of origin	India	2,358	2.73
#2 country of origin	Dominican Republic	1,034	1.20
#3 country of origin	Mexico	885	1.02
#4 country of origin	Canada	742	0.86
#5 country of origin	Brazil	698	0.81
#6 country of origin	Colombia	619	0.72
#7 country of origin	China excl. Hong Kong & Taiwan	580	0.67
#8 country of origin	Vietnam	277	0.32
#9 country of origin	El Salvador	232	0.27
#10 country of origin	Korea	179	0.21
Family Type		#	%
Families with children		10,071	46.04
All % represent a share of the total population within the jurisdiction or region, except family type, which is % of total families.			
Sources: HUD AFFH Tool Table 1, Decennial Census; ACS, Refer to the Data Documentation for details www.hudexchange.info			

Education Level

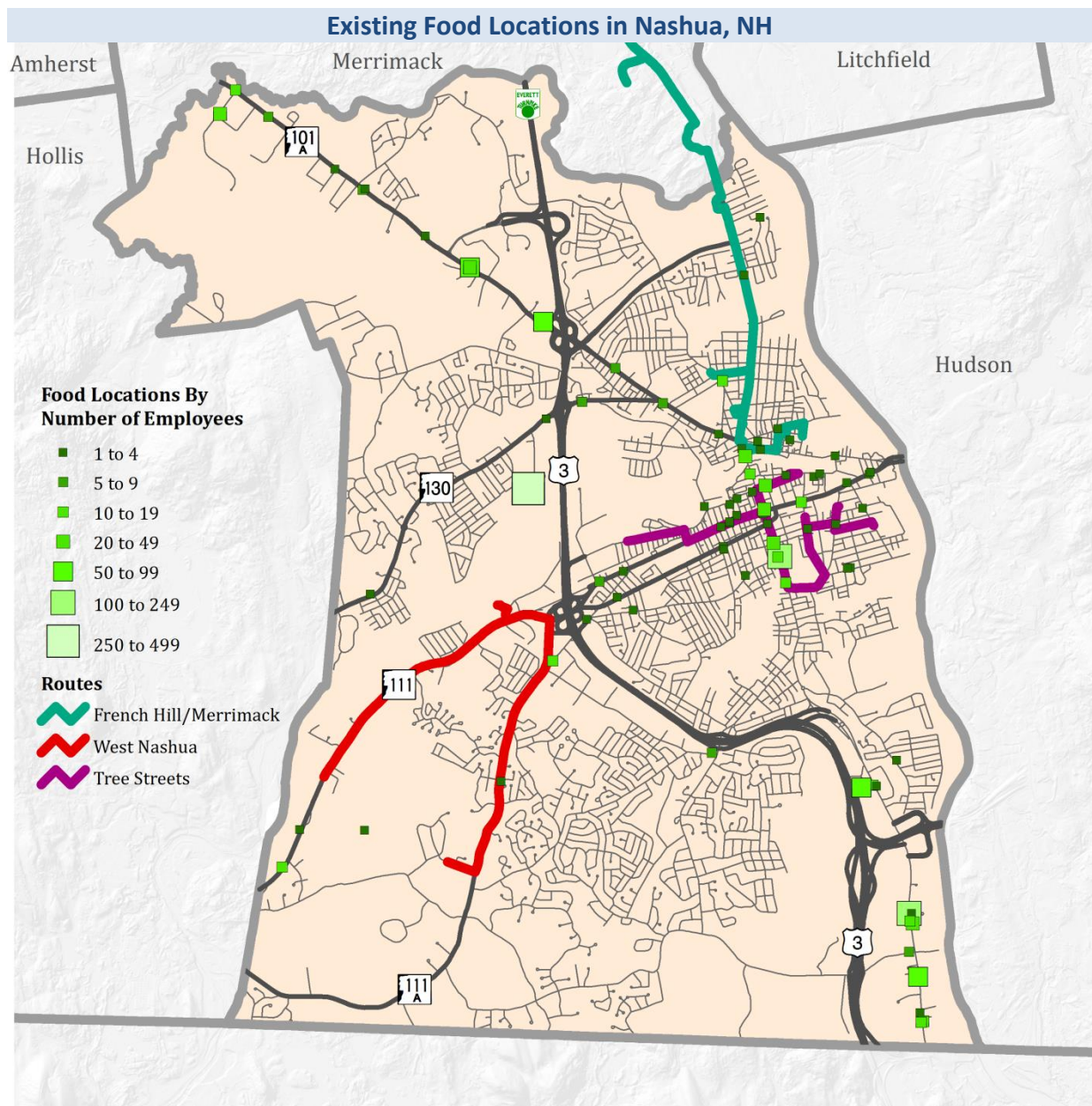
The City of Nashua has a large percentage of population that continued education after receiving a high school diploma. Compared to the state, Nashua has a higher percentage overall of population with advanced schooling (schooling after high school). For farmers' markets in the seacoast area, 82% of the customers surveyed had a college education or higher (Jewel McKenzie et al., 2013).

Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Population over Age 25, 2010-2014

Education Level	Nashua		Region		State of NH	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<9 th Grade	3,102	5.2	2,552	1.8	23,895	2.6
9 th – 12 th Grade (No Diploma)	3,580	6.0	4,820	3.4	49,628	5.4
High School graduate	14,975	25.1	36,148	25.5	267,439	29.1
Some College (No Degree)	11,455	19.2	24,949	17.6	173,697	18.9
Associates Degree	5,608	9.4	13,892	9.8	87,267	9.6
Bachelor's Degree	13,007	21.8	37,423	26.4	197,592	21.5
Graduate or Professional Degree	7,876	13.2	21,972	15.5	117,636	12.8
Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey						

Existing Food Locations

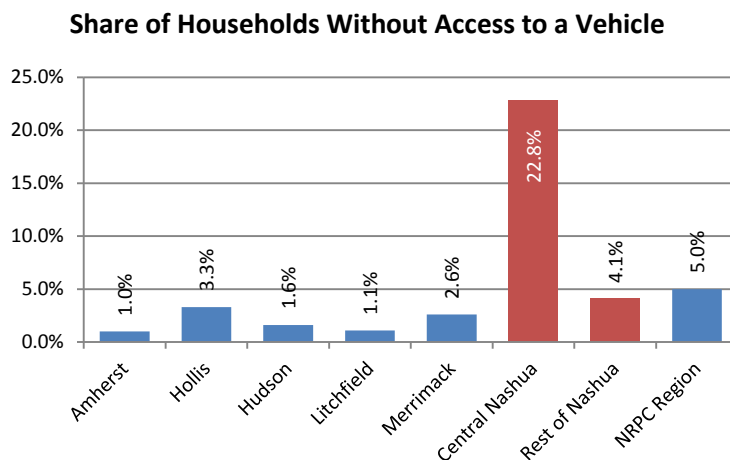
The University of New Hampshire has mapped existing food locations in Nashua categorized by number of employees at each site. Food locations include all establishments ranging from large super markets to small convenience stores. Typically, locations with fewer employees are smaller stores while locations with more employees are larger grocery stores. It should be noted that smaller shops do not necessarily have produce, and often times are convenience stores with items like soda and candy. Nashua's food locations are clustered in the downtown area and along major routes such as 101A and exits off the F.E. Everett Turnpike. This creates pockets of lower food access in less densely populated areas of the city and areas further from major roadways. Data for food locations by employee size in Merrimack was unavailable for this study.



Source: Sally Wall (UNH), Map Created by NRPC

Vehicle Availability and Transit

Central Nashua has the highest percentage of households in the region that do not have access to a vehicle. During the 2016 summer farmers' market, 22% of patrons surveyed walked to the market. When planning a mobile market, it is essential to choose routes with stops that are accessible to patrons via walking or public transportation. This would provide healthy food options to people who can't necessarily access a grocery store due to the inability to drive or lack of vehicle access.

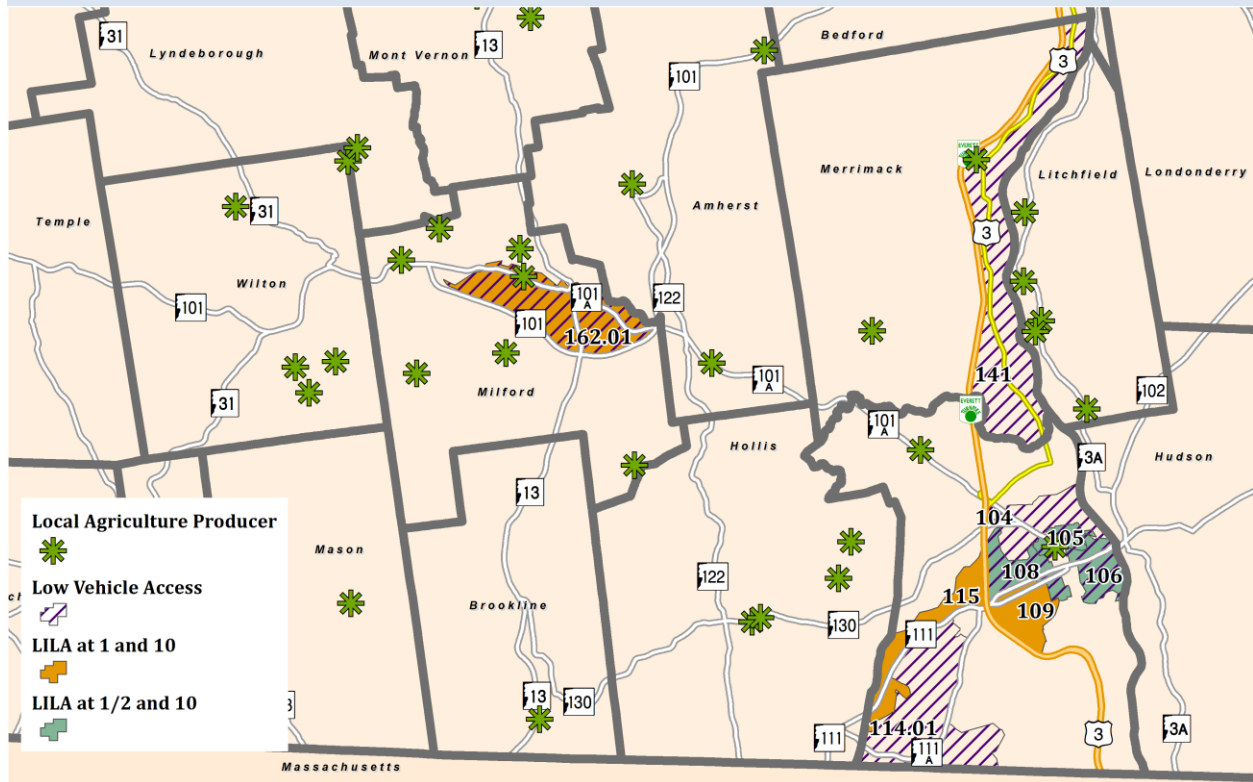


Source: American Community Survey

Food Deserts

Food deserts are locations where the population is low income, has low food access and low vehicle availability. The USDA Food Atlas shows two different food desert types. The first is where a significant number (at least 500 people) or share (at least 33 percent) of the population is greater than ½ mile from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store for an urban area or greater than 10 miles for a rural area. The 2015 USDA Food Atlas identifies these areas in central Nashua around Census tracts 105, 106, 108, and 109. The second type of food desert is where a significant number (at least 500 people) or share (at least 33 percent) of the population is greater than 1.0 mile from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store for an urban area or greater than 10 miles for a rural area. These tracts are in the western and southern pockets of Nashua, as well as the eastern side of Merrimack. The summer market is located in census tract 107, which is right in the middle of the food deserts. The mobile market would complement the summer market by helping to serve these outlying areas.

Areas of Low Food Access in Nashua and Milford in 2015



Source: 2015 USDA Food Atlas, NRPC GIS, US Census

Areas of Low Food Access in the Nashua Region, 2015

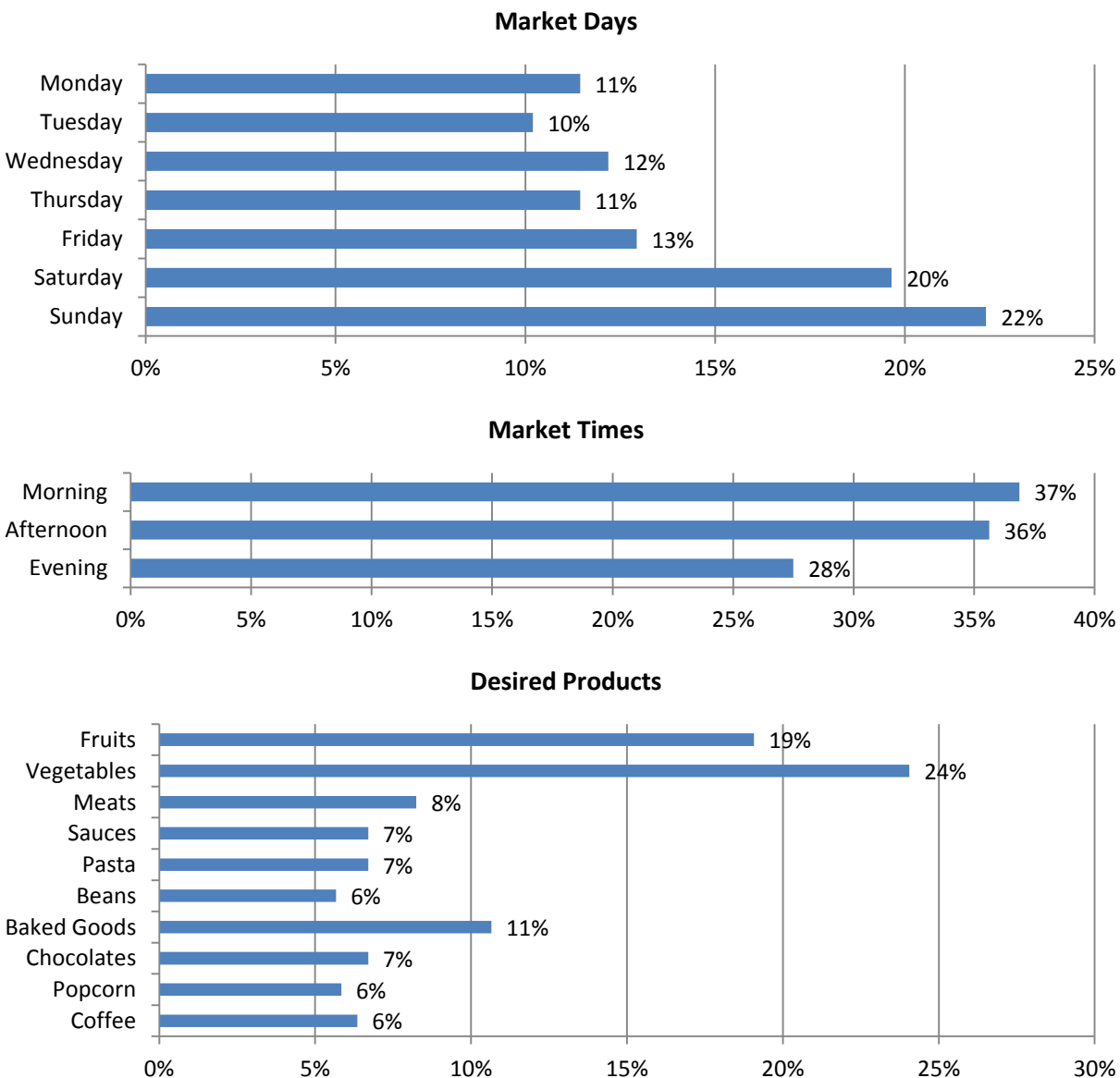
Census Tract	Total Population	Low Income, Low Access % of Population		Low Access % of Population		Low Vehicle & Food Access % of Population	
		@ ½ mile	@ 1 mile	@ ½ mile	@ 1 mile	@ ½ mile	@ 1 mile
105	3,903	55%	7%	99%	11%	13%	3%
106	5,560	40%	-	84%	-	11%	-
108	7,583	27%	-	40%	-	11%	-
109	6,183	25%	10%	82%	36%	3%	-
115	2,430	27%	24%	96%	89%	9%	8%
162.01	7,017	26%	17%	93%	72%	5%	4%

Source: USDA Food Atlas, US Census

Customer Interest

A mobile farmers' market in Nashua was of great interest to customers surveyed over the 2016 summer season, with over 61% of responses in favor. Patrons were most interested in being able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at the mobile market. Nashua Farmers' market customers are drawn to the local fresh produce and vegetables in summer as an alternative to grocery stores. Respondents also said that the fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market were fresher than those found in grocery stores, and were in favor of supporting local farmers when given the opportunity.

Customer Preferences (% of patrons)

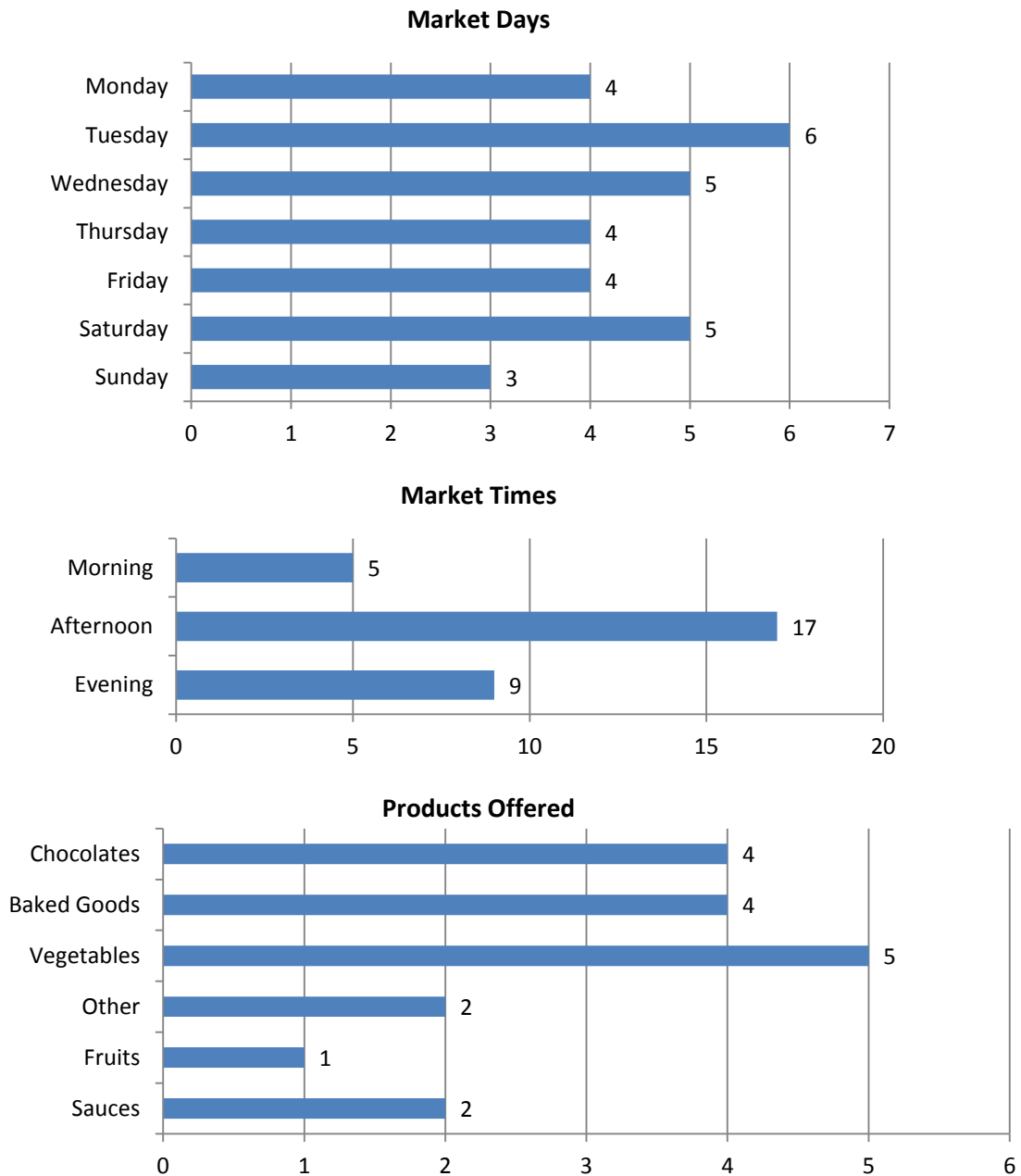


Source: NRPC Survey Data collected at the Nashua Farmers' market, Summer 2016

Vendor Interest

Of the surveyed vendors, 46% would participate in a mobile market. Vendors preferred weekday afternoons and Saturdays for market times. Top items vendors would be willing to sell at a mobile market include fruits, vegetables, baked goods, and chocolates. One of the benefits of a mobile market is that one operator can purchase items directly from farmers so that farmers do not have to travel to different locations. Mobile markets provide a way of expanding vendors' geographic reach and customer base without added travel for farmers.

Vendor Preferences (# of vendors)



Source: NRPC Survey Data collected at the Nashua Farmers' market, Summer 2016

Precedents and Examples of Success

Farmers' markets are very popular in the state of New Hampshire, with most communities hosting summer markets. Bedford, Concord, Groton (MA), Lowell (MA), Manchester, Merrimack, Milford, and Salem are all communities that either border or are in close vicinity to Nashua with competing summer markets. Mobile markets, while still new, are starting to grow in popularity, and more towns are trying to find ways to incorporate them. Existing mobile markets can be found in the New Hampshire Seacoast area, Manchester, Boston, MA, Somerville, MA, and Portland metropolitan area of Maine. These different examples show that mobile markets can operate within one municipality or span regions, and they can utilize different scales, such as tricycle-power, using a decommissioned school bus, or retrofitting a brand new vehicle.

Seacoast Area Mobile Market, New Hampshire

The Seacoast Area Mobile Market (SAMM) van was started in 2016 as a program of the nonprofit Seacoast Eat Local, a grassroots organization that also organizes an annual Winter Farmers' market and publishes Seacoast Harvest, a guide to the farms, farmers' markets, CSAs, and farm stands of Rockingham, Strafford, and York Counties of New Hampshire and Maine. It is the first mobile market in New Hampshire and services 10 sites in the Seacoast area (in Portsmouth, Exeter, Dover, Hampton, Seabrook, Greenland, and Farmington) and is supplied by approximately nine farms. SAMM accepts SNAP tokens as well as Granite State Market Match fruit and vegetable coupons that SNAP customers may receive at traditional markets. In 2017, SAMM will be operating in July through September.



The funding for this project came from a three year grant from Harvard Pilgrim Health that funds the salary, food purchases, fuel for the van, and other miscellaneous costs. Funds to purchase, retrofit, and insure the van came from a one-time grant from New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The market sells whole fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, and honey, and maple syrup, among other items.

For More Information

For more information about Seacoast Eat Local and the mobile van, call 1-888-600-0128, jill@seacoateatlocal.org or visit <http://seacoateatlocal.org/samm/>.

Cultivating Community Good Food Bus, Maine

Cultivating Community was founded in 2001, in the Portland, Maine area to increase access to healthy, local foods, while empowering people by teaching and advocating for ecological food production. Their many programs include garden education, teen leadership training, the New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (which is a farmer training program for



refugees and immigrants), and expanding school and community garden spaces.

One of their programs is the Good Food Bus, a mobile food market that brings fresh vegetables, fruit, and other essential food items. During the 2017 season, it ran Tuesdays through Fridays and stopped at 12 stops in five communities across several Maine counties. Retrofitting a decommissioned school bus, The Good Food Bus is a project of St. Mary's Nutrition Center, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation and its Healthy Food Fund, and Cultivating Community. The mobile market sells fresh produce, bread, eggs, cheese, and more. All foods come from local producers whenever possible; it also supports local distributors for bananas, citrus, avocados, etc.

Cultivating Community also designed and built a mobile farm stand (The Grow Cart) with support from the Maine College of Art's public engagement program. The cart is mounted on a truck trailer cart frame, has display boxes to keep the produce secure during transport, and is tricycle-powered. The cart stops at six locations in Portland and Lewiston five days a week during the summer season. Funding for the construction of the Grow Cart was obtained from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program grant.



For More Information

For more information about the Good Food Bus or Grow Cart, call (207) 513-3848, email goodfoodmoves@gmail.com or visit <https://www.cultivatingcommunity.org/>. Photos courtesy of Cultivating Community.

Trustees Mobile Farmers' Market, Boston, Massachusetts

The Trustees of Reservations preserve properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts for public use and enjoyment. In 2017, they launched the Trustees Mobile Farmers' Market, which was funded by a grant from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program and was developed with the support of Fresh Truck and the Boston Public Market. The Trustees Mobile Farmers' market makes stops every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (excluding holidays) at community locations in Dorchester and Roxbury from July to November. The Trustees Mobile Farmers' Market carries a wide selection of seasonal vegetables, along with local fruits, milk, meat and eggs. The market accepts cash, credit, SNAP/EBT, and WIC and Senior Farmers' market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons.



For More Information

For more information on The Trustees Mobile Farmers' market, email Allison Pekel, the Mobile Market Manager APekel@thetrustees.org or call (508) 785-0339, or visit <http://www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/csa/mobile/>. Photo courtesy of Trustees of Reservations.

The Somerville Mobile Farmers' Market, Massachusetts

The Somerville Mobile Farmers' Market is run by Shape Up Somerville (an initiative of the City of Somerville's Health and Human Services Department) and Groundwork Somerville (an environmentally-focused nonprofit). It primarily sells a wide variety of local produce. The market accepts cash, debit, credit, SNAP/EBT, WIC Farmers' Market Coupons, and Senior Farmers' Market Coupons. Additionally, they offer an unlimited 50% discount for residents of North Street or Mystic Housing, as well as for anyone who shows their SNAP, WIC, or Senior Farmers' Market Coupons. The market runs from July to October and stops at eight locations on Fridays and Saturdays. The food is delivered by bicycle or van.



For More Information

For more information about the Somerville mobile market, call (617) 625-6600x4321, or visit <https://somervillemobilefarmersmarket.wordpress.com/>. Photo courtesy of the Somerville Patch.

Recommendations for Market Startup and Operations

There are a few key factors to success when holding a farmers' market. The first is **advertising**. A lot of advertising in different areas will inform people of the market and lead to increased turnout.

Communication is another key to success. Communication with vendors is essential in having a market run smoothly. **Variety in products and vendors** is also very important. Having a variety of products available at a market ensures that there is something for everyone. Having prepared food available is also helpful for certain demographics (e.g. seniors) that have limited cooking capabilities or may live alone. Lastly, **venue** can make or break a market. Stops that are easily accessible in denser neighborhoods will draw more patrons to the market.

Farmers' Markets America published ten characteristics of successful farmers' markets, including:

1. **Vendors:** Freshness and quality are key. Consumers want fresh local fruits, vegetables, and other local agricultural products. The market should provide a mix of vendors with high quality products. As the Nashua market surveys found, customers find the quality of produce better than area grocery stores. Operators may also want to choose locations that are near suppliers to minimize travel costs.

2. **Product Mix:** Markets should include a wide variety of products effectively displayed. In addition to high quality, consumers are looking for choice and variety, but also convenience, they want to buy all their food at once. The addition of meats, cheeses, and breads and other goods expands the markets available choice. The Nashua summer market has found a good mix, adding meats in 2017. If the mobile market becomes established and sustainable, it should consider adding in meats and other products that will require additional maintenance and permitting. Nashua customers have expressed interest in being able to buy vegetables, fruit, baked goods and meat at a mobile market. When queried during the 2016 summer season there were vendors willing to participate and sell each of these with the exception of meats that were newly added in 2017.
3. **Location:** High visibility provides free advertising. While location alone is not sufficient, it is helpful. Helpful components of a good location include adequate space and parking, visibility on a high traffic volumes roadway, a place for signage, and proximity to other local destinations. Other factors that should be considered are areas where there will be a high concentration of in-need populations, such as senior housing facilities, low income housing developments that have limited access to transit, or social services offices. If stops are on private property, formalized contracts should be written to ensure that the space is blocked off for the mobile unit at the agreed upon time. Mobile market operators may want to consider going to a mix of low access and corporate sites. Companies are willing to pay for a mobile market to come to their offices because it can help lower the company's health insurance rates.
4. **Mission:** What is the mission for the market? The operator of the mobile market should consider crafting guiding principles for the market in conjunction with other stakeholders and organizers. This should be codified in a document that includes a mission statement and goals for the mobile market. A strong focus on vendors is essential along with effective communication of market goals, policies and programs. The Nashua Market may want to consider adding readily available vendor information as is provided at the Salem market. This will help ease the start up at a new market.
5. **Management:** Professionalism and organization yields sustainability for the market. This includes training opportunities for the market's staff, board and vendors. The creation of a mobile market will require an immense amount of staff time and capacity. The organization operating the mobile market need to consider volunteer recruitment or increasing staffing to take on the mobile market without spreading workloads too thin. Depending on target customers, operators may want to consider having staff or volunteers that are multilingual and have the ability to lift heavy objects. Managers will also need to be good communicators and schedulers to ensure the mobile market has enough time to get supplies and clean the vehicle, while also traveling to stops.
6. **Value:** Consumers communicate that they value quality and price through their purchases. Market managers and policy makers should value what customers value. The community in turn gains value from the markets success, local vendors bring revenue to the local economy. Market

operators can invest in creating added value though helping with additional promotion, training, micro-enterprise development, and other efforts that aid market performance. The mobile market's presence can also help to activate a space by bringing more people together, thereby become a neighborhood amenity.

7. **Partnerships:** Relationships build stability. Strong markets are connected with their community and build relationships with business sponsors and local organizations. Expanding connections increases the ability to build the market's visibility. The existence of the Nashua Food Council embodies an existing community network that will help spread the word and bolster the potential for success. It is also important that since the mobile market will be selling products, that operators maintain positive relationships with local food suppliers. One way of ensuring good partnerships with local suppliers is to establish non-compete contracts to ensure that the mobile market does not take away from their customer base, but instead grows the customer base. Operators will also want to maintain positive relationships with host sites, and further mutual mission objectives to strengthen the market's reach.
8. **Promotion:** Special events and programs help build visibility and increase demand and supply. Since the location of the market may change depending on time and day of the week, a strong social media presence may be beneficial. Good graphic design on the mobile unit will also serve as eye catching advertisement. By participating in other events, the mobile market can attract new customers and capture the attention of passerby's that might not otherwise stop. If done well, enhanced market promotion will increase demand and in turn support increasing the number and variety of vendors.
9. **Economics:** A solid financial plan is essential. Owning and operating a vehicle that can transport food products will require a great deal of overhead costs. Vendor fees need to be adequate to balance expenses for salaries, insurance, promotional materials and any other essentials. While sponsorships, grants and other fundraising based revenue sources are beneficial and may help the program get off the ground, they are not sustainable. Reserve funds should be maintained to counteract downturns or to fund training and other expansion costs. Great American Downtown has had access to USDA Farmers' market Promotion Program grant funding for the 2016 and 2017 market season to help increase marketing efforts. While such grant funding might be available in the future to kick off a mobile market, it shouldn't be a primary source of funds.
10. **Public Spaces:** Vibrant markets and public spaces are mutually beneficial to one another. An active market can help activate a public space and vice versa. Markets have the ability to help with community building initiatives and creating people friendly places. By having the mobile market stop in public spaces (such as parks, community centers, and senior housing facilities), there may already be a greater customer potential.

Mobile Market Equipment and Needs Programming

The burgeoning Nashua Food Council and more specifically, Grow Nashua have expressed interest in operating the Mobile Market serving the City Nashua. These energetic organizations can use their momentum to help collaborate with regional partners to develop this kind of program to advance their mission. Clear expectations should be set at the beginning to ensure sustainability, while leaving room for growth and the program gains in popularity.

Expected Number of Vendors and Customers

For the mobile market the ideal minimum is to have 1 to 5 vendors, with the ability to expand if demand supports it. The mobile market could see fewer patrons because of less pedestrian activity and rotating schedule. About 62% of Nashua summer market patrons surveyed said that they would be interested in shopping at a mobile market. Convenient locations in Nashua and other municipalities in the region would encourage these interested respondents to come pay the mobile market a visit.

Market Vehicle

Operators have many options of vehicles to use for a mobile market, which vary in scale. Some mobile markets have started out on bicycles while others have used delivery trucks, food trucks, buses, or vans. Other mobile markets have used existing vehicles to transport the food products to stops and then set up display tables. Other markets have retrofitted vehicles to have built in shelving and refrigeration. Since the vehicle can be one of the largest costs of a mobile market, the other being staffing if it is not run by volunteers, the degree to which the unit is retrofitted will be heavily driven by available funds. One possibility is to purchase a vehicle that allows immediate basic operations and has the ability to be retrofitted at a later date, which can help spread out costs. Another major cost for a mobile market is the insurance on the vehicle as well as the fuel, E-Z pass (if the vehicle will regularly travel on the F.E. Everett Turnpike) and maintenance. If budget allows, the vehicle should be branded to encourage marketing and education efforts. Less costly alternatives to hiring professional graphic designers include partnering with local arts organization.

One option for the mobile market is decommissioned buses or vans from Nashua Transit System. These vehicles are already ADA accessible, should the future operator choose to allow for sales space within the van. NTS's replacement bus fleet is expected to be in circulation in late fall of 2017. The decommissioned fleet will potentially be sold off in early 2018. The bus sales must follow the FTA process that requires fair and open competition. NTS is also replacing their van fleet with new vehicles arriving in spring 2018, which will be sold in a similar process to the bus fleet. The van fleet may be more appropriate for the mobile market, since they are smaller.



Nashua Transit Service Van with accessible ramp. Photo courtesy of NRPC

Facilities and Supplies

The products that are sold on the mobile market will drive the storage needs that may be required by the Health Department. If refrigeration is required, coolers with ice may be sufficient, but an electric freezer unit with generator may be best. Covered waste disposal containers will also be needed. A permanent parking area will be needed when the mobile unit is not in use (i.e. night times, off season). Additionally, operators of a mobile market must envision the set up at each stop. Supplies such as tables, signs, orange traffic cones, scales, iPad, pop-up tent (for shade or rain), bags, and baskets will be very useful.

Money Handling Equipment

Since many transactions will be solely cash, a secure container for money is crucial such as a cash register. A credit/debit card reader (e.g. a Square Card reader) is also important for people who may not have cash on them. Accurate accounting is also important for a mobile market, especially if there are audits for grant or EBT/SNAP benefits. One option is an app called [Farmer's Open Register](#), which costs \$800. This app can track the number of products sold, what the revenue was, and how much of the revenue came from SNAP/EBT benefits. It can also calculate SNAP/EBT matching that is part of the Granite State Market Match.

Power Equipment

An on-board electrical refrigerator or freezer, if included, can be powered either through a generator or a wall unit using an extension cord. Operators should look into affixing solar panels to the roof of the vehicle to power any generators or other electrical equipment. It is critical that any foods requiring cool temperatures are stored properly when the mobile market is on route. Overnight storage is required for any unsold food and should preferably be in a facility refrigerator or freezer and not on the vehicle.

Expansion Capabilities

In selecting a vehicle and routes for the mobile market, it is important to consider future market growth and expansion. The vehicle should be fuel efficient and low maintenance. The ultimate market operators may also want to plan routes that can be easily extended as demand grows. However, increases in customer demand and stop locations will lead to extra wear on the vehicle. Mobile market

operators are encouraged to follow a slow growth model to balance potential increased revenue with additional costs.

Site Access

Whether customers can easily access the market locations is essential to success. Stops should be along public ways that have sidewalks or paved surfaces to allow easy pedestrian movement to and from the vehicle. Customers need to be able to safely access the site whether traveling on foot from their parked car, the bus stop or directly from their home. Additionally, mobile market staff needs space to operate along the sidewalk or parking lot that will not interfere with the flow of traffic or create a safety hazard.

Sustainability

Continual consumer marketing is essential to success and growth. The mobile market will need to be advertised via multiple platforms to raise awareness and attract patrons. Working to expand local vendors to increase variety and bring additional farms and products to the market will also aid in recruiting new customers. Most importantly, the mobile market should provide payment options for SNAP/EBT customers.

Image and Visibility

Visibility is important for the mobile market. More than 12% of patrons found out about the summer market by driving, cycling, or walking by it on Main Street. For markets in the seacoast region, many customers (about 22%) learned of farmers' markets by road signs (Jewel McKenzie et al., 2013). The mobile market operator should consider increasing visibility with road signs as done for the summer market. High traffic and pedestrian volumes in the downtown create highly visibly market locations, which may help the mobile market's initial launch. It is also important to choose locations that leave a positive impression on consumers, especially those who want to bring their children. For example, a space that is well-lit, maintained, and in a safe neighborhood will appeal more to potential patrons than a space that is dark, run down or hard to access.

Local Health Codes and Pertinent Permits

Permit Process for Farmer's Market Operators

The following series of permits will need to be obtained by the operator of the Mobile Farmers' market. Different permits will need to be obtained for each of the municipalities the mobile market serves. Permits may need to be obtained from the community's Health, Public Works, and Clerks offices, and through state in non-self-serving communities. All permits must be filed and approved before a market can take place. Refer to the following flow chart diagram to assist in determining what permits are required and when they should be sought. The following represents licenses needed from Nashua, where there are equivalents in Merrimack and the remaining communities in the Nashua Region.

Food Handler Training Certification

Since the driver and any other operators of the mobile market will be handling edible items, the operator(s) may be required by the municipality to receive a Food Handler Training certificate. This

provides a baseline understanding of food safety and can be obtained through [UNH Cooperative Extension](#). ServSafe® is a nationally recognized food safety certification program of the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF). After attending a one-day course, the national ServSafe certification exam will be administered. Participants passing the exam with a grade of 75% or higher will receive ServSafe® Food Safety Certification from NRAEF. Certification is valid for five years.

Food Service License

This permit will be required if vendors are selling anything other than whole fruits or vegetables, honey, or maple syrup. In Nashua, a [food service permit](#) can be filed and approved from the [Environmental Health Department](#).

Hawker and Peddler License

Obtaining a [Hawker and Peddler License](#) is a state requirement per [RSA 320](#), which states that “no hawker or peddler shall sell or barter or carry for sale or barter, or expose therefor, any goods, wares or merchandise, unless he holds a license to do so” where the terms "hawker" and "peddler" shall mean and include any person, as defined by [RSA 358-A: 1](#), either principal or agent, who:

- I. Travels from town to town or from place to place in the same town selling or bartering or carrying for sale or barter or exposing therefor, any goods, wares, or merchandise, either on foot or from any animal, cart, or vehicle; or
- II. Travels from town to town, or place to place in the same town, offering to perform personal services for household repairs or improvements, or solicits or induces any person to sign any contracts relating to household repairs and improvements, including contracts for the replacement or installation of siding on any residence or building; or
- III. Keeps a regular place of business, open during regular business hours at the same location, but who offers for sale or sells and delivers, personally or through his agents, at a place other than his regular place of business, goods, wares or merchandise.

All vendors within the City of Nashua must also obtain a [Vendor's License](#) from the [Nashua City Clerk's Office](#) prior to the market start date. The mobile market would be considered an Itinerant Vendor, which is defined by Nashua Revised Ordinances Chapter 231 as, “Any person, either principal, agent or employee, who engages in a temporary or transient business in this state, either in one locality or traveling from place to place, selling goods, wares and merchandise from stock or by sample for future delivery, and who, for the purpose of carrying on such business, hires or occupies any building or structure for the exhibition and sale of such goods, wares and merchandise or samples.”

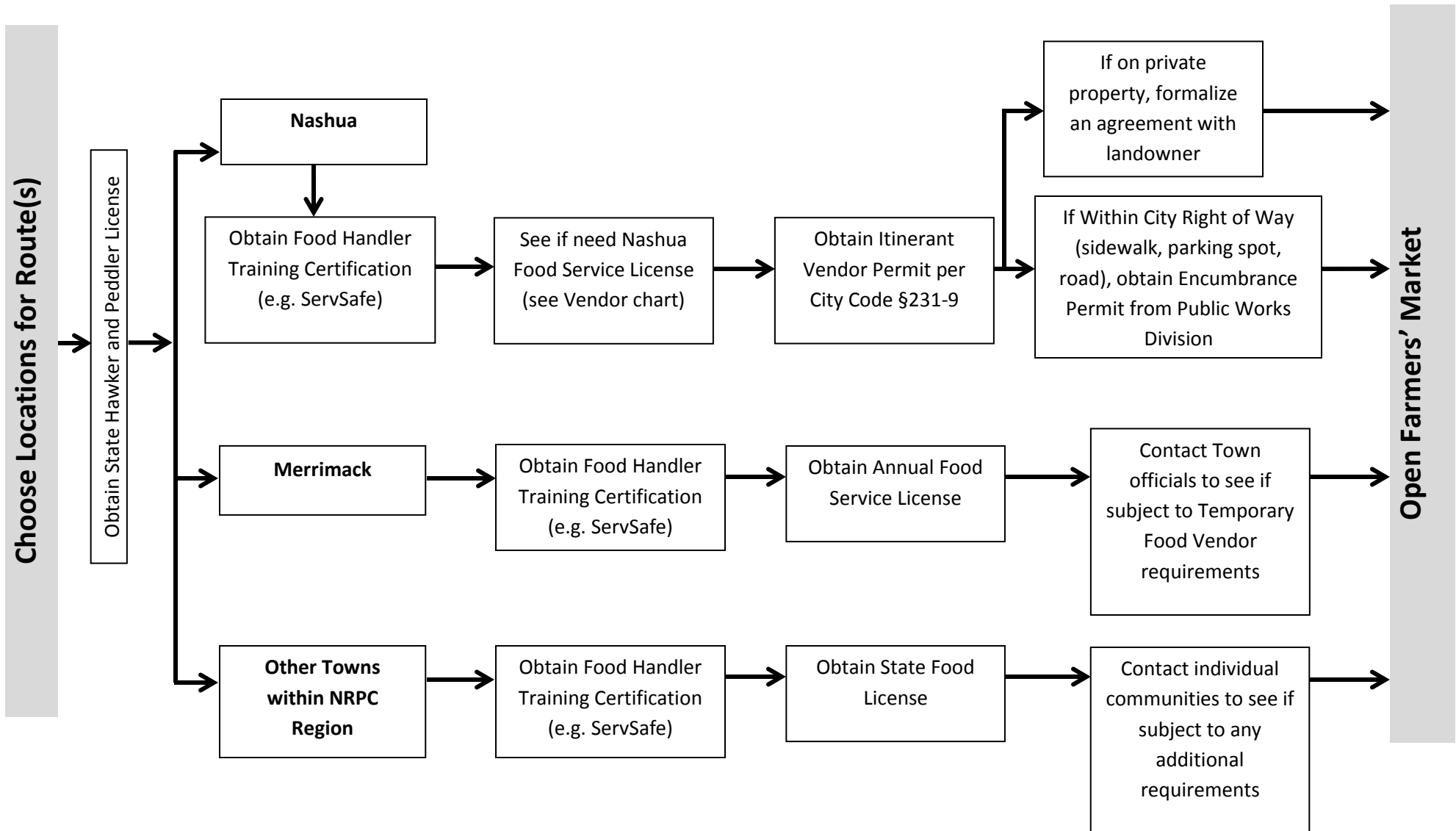
Encumbrance Permit

If any of the mobile market's stops are on City property, such as a sidewalk or parking space, an [Encumbrance Permit](#) will need to be obtained from the Board of Public Works. No vending is allowed at city parks, on playgrounds or recreation facilities, so the vehicle must be mindful of staying within the public rights-of-way that is permitted to occupy.

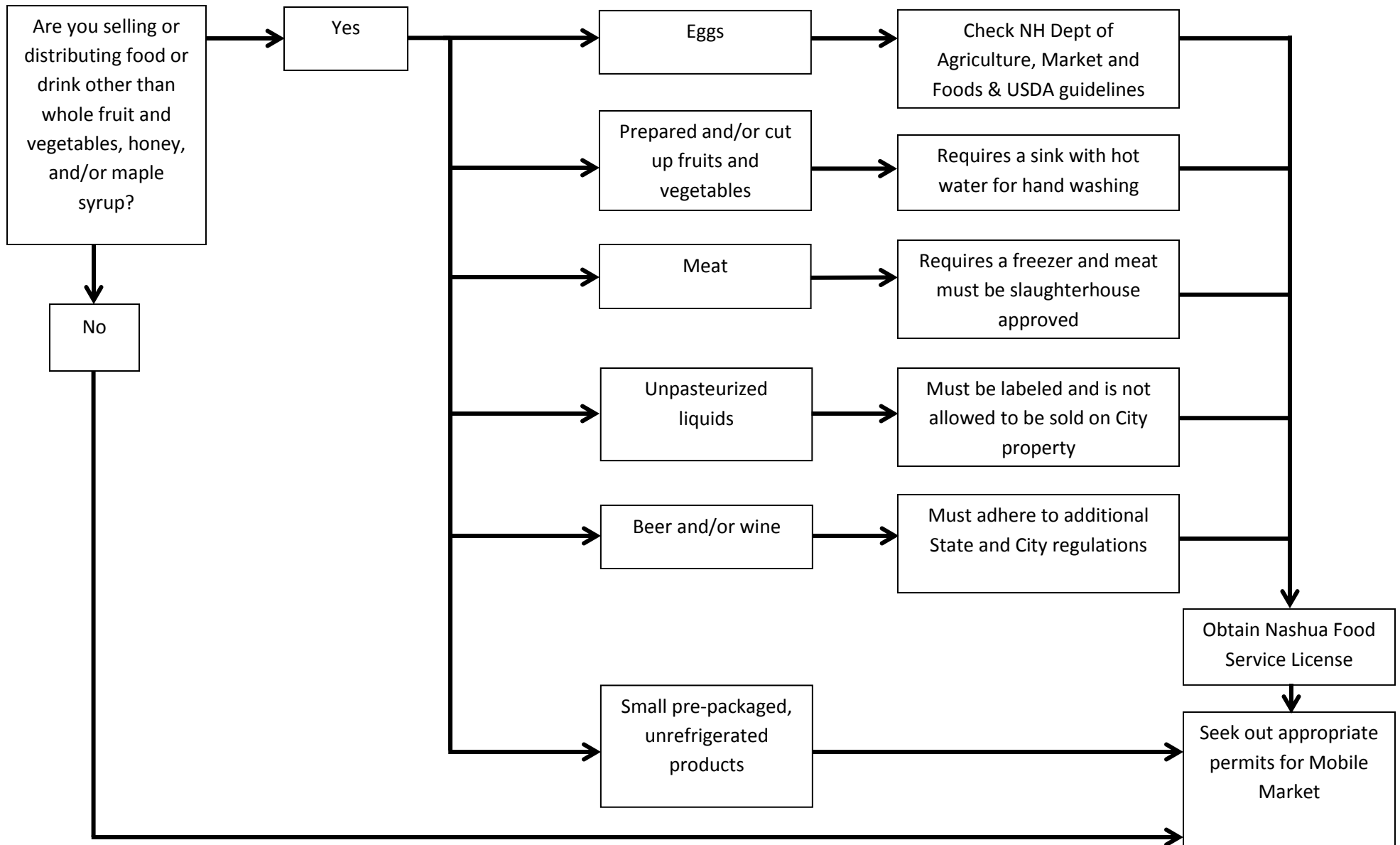
Permit Process for Farmers' Market Vendors

In addition to the various operator permits, individual vendors also need to submit a Farmers' Market Licensed Vendor Form and may also need to obtain a [Nashua Food service license](#) from the Environmental Health Department. Anything that is being sold other than whole fruit and vegetables, honey, or maple syrup must adhere to State and City regulations and follow the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture (USDA) Market and Foods guidelines. Refer to the following flow chart diagram to assist in determining what permits are required and when they should be sought. The City of Nashua and the Town of Merrimack are self-inspecting communities while the remaining towns in the Nashua region must obtain food service licenses through the Food Sanitation Inspection and Licensing Program, which is in the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Please note that the City of Nashua Board of Health is debating whether to allow the sale of raw milk at farmers' market during the writing of this report.

Flow Chart of Permit Process for Mobile Farmers' Market Operators



Flow Chart of Permit Process/Requirements for Mobile Farmers' Market Vendors



Conclusions

Given the popularity of the summer farmers' market and the growing level of community interest in local food, a mobile market could be a very feasible endeavor. Many of existing patrons surveyed are interested in shopping at a mobile market and the Nashua region seems to be well suited to support a mobile farmers' market. The market operator should be careful when scheduling routes and stops not to create competition with neighboring farms or farm stands. A weekday market would complement the already existing Sunday summer market and minimize competition with area markets.

It is important that since this program is in its nascent stages that whichever group shepherds this program start out with clear manageable expectations and strong organization. Formulating a mission statement or guiding principles will help the longevity of this project. Working with the City of Nashua and the Nashua Transit System during their RFP process for the decommissioned buses and van presents a great opportunity for a mobile market vehicle. This option would not only be more affordable, but also promote sustainability. It is also crucial that the organization operating this market seek out sustainable funding sources to ensure that the market lasts through multiple seasons. Stopping at a mix of low access and corporate sites may help bring in greater revenue to meet funding needs. And finally, the common thread through all successful mobile markets is solidifying partnerships and capitalizing on existing networks.

Major next steps and milestones to bring the Mobile Market to fruition include:

1. Utilize existing networks to determine available resources within the City
2. Determine what group will champion this project and be the market operator
3. Set initial budget and seek out funding sources
4. Obtain market vehicle.
5. Select initial routes and stops and determine what permits will be required
6. Recruit local farmers
7. Develop by-laws and market rules
8. Apply for non-profit status (if applicable)
9. Identify staff needs
10. Develop marketing plan
11. Address liability issues through insurance

Works Cited

Farmers' Markets America (2008). Portland Farmers' Markets/Direct-Market Economic Analysis: Characteristics of Successful Farmers' markets. City of Portland.

McKenzie, Jewel, et al. (2013). Farmers' Market Consumers in Rockingham and Strafford Counties, New Hampshire. Durham, NH: Cooperative Extension, University of New Hampshire.