



On December 7, 2015, advocates for healthy food in the upper Manhattan region formally organized as Healthy Food for Upper Manhattan (HFUM) came together to continue collaborations on food-related work in the area. HFUM is a workgroup for communication between public health practitioners, health care providers, community stakeholders, and policy makers, which aims to raise awareness of the role of food policy in our communities and to build strategies to create healthier food environments in East and Central Harlem and Upper Manhattan. This meeting was hosted and organized by the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College in collaboration with Mount Sinai Hospital, and Supportive Children's Advocacy Network NY (SCAN NY).

#### Re-Cap of Last Meeting

The last meeting on September 21, 2015 convened a panel on "Rezoning and Food" and what it means for the food movement. The panelists included Kimberly Libman, the Deputy Director for Prevention, Division of Health Policy at the NY Academy of Medicine, Mia Brezin, Assistant District Manager at CB 11, and Carmen Diaz-Malvido, Program Manager of East and Central Harlem District Public Health Office (DPHO).

- Overview provided on how zoning is a legal mechanism for shaping the neighborhood- what can happen where. Discussion on EastHarlemPlan.nyc and inclusion of community in planning process- this is important considering many real estate transactions for upscale buildings and residential units have been made without community input and will have tremendous impact. Participants discussed resiliency plans for including community visioning in the rezoning planning process and other related ideas.

#### Today's Panel: Not a Big Box, Not An App: Alternative Food Sources for Upper Manhattan

Today's panel discussion was surrounding the topic of alternative food sources. The closing of the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Pathmark Supermarket has invited fresh conversation and exploration of innovative solutions for purchasing healthy food in East Harlem and throughout Upper Manhattan. Panelist included Alyssa Creighton with East Harlem District Public Health Office (DPHO), Olivia Blanchflower of GrowNYC, Anthony Reynoso and Andy Almante of SuperFi Emporium. The discussion was moderated by Carey King with the New Harlem East Merchants Association. Below are main points from the panel and announcements.

1. Alyssa Creighton with Harlem District Public Health Office (DPHO) and the Shop Healthy initiative.

- a. Reviewed Shop Healthy: Ecological model for promoting healthier choices in bodegas. Includes bodegas and supermarkets, suppliers and distributors, and residents. Initiative first started in zip code 10029 and is now moving into 10035 starting with a baseline assessment and survey. Program includes “Healthy Food Retail Challenge” where the stores aim to meet 7+ guidelines for increasing inventory of healthy products and encouraging their consumption through prominent placement and promotion.
  - b. Challenges for bodegas include purchasing produce in small quantities and extending the shelf life of produce. Some stores have used their produce to offer smoothies and this has been successful. Bodegas require continued technical assistance and support and resources (staff, signage, etc).
  - c. Success found in incremental changes and addressing the simple things first, such as placing healthy choices at eye level.
2. Olivia Blanchflower with GrowNYC
    - a. Reviewed the Greenmarket initiative: Supporting infrastructure for local farmers in the wholesale marketplace and increasing access to fresh, healthy foods for underserved communities in NYC.
    - b. Other GrowNYC programs include: Piloted EBT and WIC in Farmer’s Markets; Youth Market Stand on 116<sup>th</sup> and Park during July to November; Fresh Food Box distribution.
3. Anthony Reynoso and \_\_\_\_\_?? with SuperFi Emporium
    - a. Future site for new location at 2211 Third Ave. to open in Fall 2016.
    - b. Reviewed background of supermarket business model and supermarket retail operations environment in East Harlem. Reynoso and his family own the real estate where they operate their supermarkets and as such are not subject to lease increases. Other supermarkets that lease space are vulnerable when their lease comes due for renewal because rents are increased beyond what their operating margins allow. Because of this, he imagines that more supermarkets in East Harlem will close in the coming years.
    - c. Recommends that the FRESH program needs to be reconfigured because it only benefits the landlord and does not incentivize supermarket operators.
    - d. Extell purchase included not only real estate but also the Pathmark Supermarket lease for an additional \$21 million ensuring that another bidder could not operate a supermarket in that location, allowing Extell more control over re/development.
4. What is something innovative your organization/business is doing and perhaps reaching out to East Harlem specifically?
    - a. Olivia Blanchflower with GrowNYC: Partnerships have been vital to managing and collaborating distribution and outreach. Pairing education initiatives with offering fresh, high quality produce has led to program success.
    - b. Reynoso: Also cites partnerships as key to improvements. States that as a supermarket operator, they made decision to lower operating margins and provide lower cost goods to customers. They found this decision increased their volume substantially- good for consumers and also good for increasing business sales. This is an example of market-based way to make food more affordable.

- c. Fresh Food Box from GrowNYC is able to provide produce box for \$12 because they are largely grant supported. When they started in 2012, the cost was \$10/share, only covering cost of the produce while marketing and operation costs were fundraised. With growth, some of the burden of scaling up was shifted to consumer to increase sustainability. Price is now \$12/share. But as participation and distribution grows, some costs may decrease and savings can be translated to lower prices.

Question, Answers and Comments:

1. Nevin Cohen asks: Are food delivery services viable in a lower-income community such as East Harlem?
  - a. Reynoso: In his opinion, costs of these operations are too high and the neighborhood environment is not supportive; finds many residents count pennies and search for the best discounts. Not a strategy that supermarkets looking to keep costs low can afford to provide.
2. Comment: Demonstrations showing sugar content in soda bottles are effective in educating consumer on health risks of soda.
  - a. Reynoso: Not viable to do such demonstrations in stores because would pose challenges with distributors. Can be done outside retail environment. Other strategies that are not as political but can promote health include discounts on water, or community water tastings.
3. Are there cooperative initiatives amongst retailers to obtain lower costs of produce?
  - a. WeACT is working on a Northern Manhattan Food Co-op. People who are interested in developing the coop can reach Josette Bailey at [bailey.josette@gmail.com](mailto:bailey.josette@gmail.com)
4. Can health promoting messages be encouraged in the retail environment?
  - a. Shop Healthy initiatives provides their participating stores with shelf inserts and other signage promoting healthy foods and alerting consumer to the healthy option on the shelf i.e. low sodium canned option.

Announcements:

1. Diana Johnson with NYC FPC and HFUM:
  - a. The NYC Food Policy released a policy brief regarding the closure of the 125<sup>th</sup> street Pathmark grocery store titled “Beyond Pathmark: Assuring Access to Healthy Affordable Food in East Harlem”. Copies were available at the meeting but can also be found online at: <http://nycfoodpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Beyond-Pathmark-Community-Report.pdf>
  - b. HFUM is hosting a special Food Policy for Breakfast seminar on “Soda Politics” a new book by NYU Professor Marion Nestle. The event is free and will take place on Monday December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am at CUNY School of Public Health 55 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street 7<sup>th</sup> floor.
2. Caitlin Falvey with HFUM:
  - a. HFUM funding source expires September 2016- seeking funding sources for continuation. Any ideas?
3. Carmen Diaz-Malvido with East Harlem DPHO:
  - a. TakeCare NY consultation meeting on Thursday Dec. 10 from 6-8 pm at Aguilar Library at 174 East 110<sup>th</sup> Street. Opportunity for community members to

prioritize health indicator list and speak about what really matters to the people in EH.

4. CB 11 Re-zoning meeting in January
5. Silicon Harlem: Technology and innovation and community thought leadership. Winter meet-up City College Campus- Looking at data and technology. Dec 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm Aaron Davis Hall at City College of New York. Website: [Siliconharlem.net](http://Siliconharlem.net)