On May 8th, 2019, America Walks hosted the webinar, “Fuel for Active Bodies: Increasing Access to Healthy Foods”, where we highlighted how communities are working to increase access, via walking and active transportation, to healthy food in their own backyards.

It featured Hanifa Adjuman, seasoned community activist, urban farmer, educator, and community elder. She is a founding member of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and serves as the organization’s Education and Outreach Director, Caroline Harries, who supports the implementation and development of policies and resources to encourage healthy food retail development and preservation in underserved areas throughout the country, and Marisa Jones, the Healthy Communities Senior Manager for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. Our inspiring panelists shared intimate details of the innovative processes, resources, tools and creativity that helped them overcome obstacles to walkability and food access.

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees. Panelists took time to offer their expert answers, to continue the conversation and provide further insight on best practices they used for creating safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking conditions in their communities, so you can too.

How will a community looking to do similar project benefit from your experience? Is there any opportunity to share knowledge?

Carolina: Check out the resources we shared, including healthyfoodaccess.org which provides examples of how to make the case for healthy food retail in your community as well as case studies. And feel free to reach out to us with further questions. (healthyfoodaccess.org)

Marisa: We have a number of Safe Routes to Healthy Food resources available at: www.saferoutespartnership.org We also welcome quick questions via phone or email! Feel free to email me at marisa@saferoutespartnership.org

I’m interested in the map you showed...did the red areas indicate areas in Philadelphia that had higher diet related illness?

Marisa: On the map of walkable food access in Philadelphia, red indicates areas of the city where a person cannot access a grocery store within a ten minute walk.

Carolina: Yes, they indicted areas that exhibited the confluence of 3 factors: Low income, low access to a grocery store, and high rates of death from diet-related disease.

Is there any real solution to this problem without a buy-in from the private sector (those who own grocery stores)?
Carolina: We've seen many community-driven projects increase access to healthy food including farmers markets. You can find information on a variety of different healthy food retail models here: http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/launch-a-business-models

*How was the distance of 1 mile determined for accessibility?*

Carolina: 1-mile is not a hard and fast rule but reflects the USDA’s definition for low access areas in urban areas. The USDA uses 10 miles for rural areas. Of course, local context and nuances are important such as geographic and transportation barriers which should be factored in when understanding individual communities.

*Can you give an example of a current community living in a food desert? How does the community’s landscape prevent access to fresh produce and whole grains?*

Carolina: There are many rural areas where a grocery store may have closed and residents need to drive long distances to access produce and other fresh foods. In urban areas there are communities with no grocery stores that require several buses to get to a store. As a result, hours can be spent just to get food shopping done. If you google "food desert" you’ll find stories of these affected communities across the country.

*I would like some ideas on teaching youth how to make healthy foods without cooking.*

Hanifa: I have found lots of recipes for Food Warriors' food demonstrations. They contain both cooked and uncooked. You can go to Pinterest and follow me. Hanifa Adjuman. I have also included other websites that will inspire!

https://cookingwithkids.org/recipes/
https://cupcakesandkalechips.com/healthy-no-bake-snacks-kids-love/

*If possible, will you submit a proposal to NACCHO to present your work to a broad public health audience? They post their programs on line and these get looked at by public health professionals from all over the US.*

Carolina: We'd be happy to explore this opportunity Thanks for the suggestion.

*How do you address culturally responsive preferences in inviting change and availability of “healthy foods”? What are incentives for food vendors (shops carts, trucks ) to have healthy foods and offer options for food allergies and intolerance choices*

Carolina: Many of the HFFI programs described take culturally responsive preferences into account when assessing eligibility for program funding. Cultural responsiveness is an important aspect of creating a robust and impactful healthy food environment that will meet the needs of residents.

*Are there state level incentives to help food deserts--e.g. tax credits? I've only heard of local actions.*
Carolina: Yes- there are many state HFFI programs across the country. You can find more information and search for one in your state here: http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/take-action-now-policy-efforts-impacts

**What are some ways to collaborate with city/county/metro transit to make sustainable changes?**

Hanifa: The Detroit Department of Transportation offers non-stop bus rides to and from the Eastern Market--one of the country’s oldest and largest farmers’ markets in the country--on Saturdays. There are currently six neighborhood pick-up and drop off spots. This is at least a step in the right direction to assist those who lack transportation, access to healthy food.