

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Food Policy Council  
Michael P. May, City Attorney

FROM: Heather Allen, Common Council Legislative Analyst

DATE: March 6, 2013

RE: **Healthy Vending in Public Facilities**

### Overview

Chronic diseases associated with obesity (cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease) are a growing health threat for American communities. Poor nutrition, excess calories from sugar-sweetened beverages and processed foods, as well as insufficient physical exercise contribute to increasing obesity rates across the United States. In Dane County approximately 23 – 24% of children are overweight or obese<sup>1</sup> while 59% of adults are overweight or obese<sup>2</sup> and 13% of low-income preschoolers are obese.<sup>3</sup> Obesity measures are a good indicator of community health and quality of life. In fact life expectancy may be shortened as a result of childhood obesity.<sup>4</sup>

Madison and other cities are evaluating a variety of policies to reduce obesity by promoting healthy behaviors and nutritious food. A 2009 study by the National Academies of Science found that local governments play a vital role in efforts to reduce obesity.

*Local government leadership is critical to both reducing and preventing further increases in childhood obesity. The places in which people live, work, study, and play have a strong influence on their ability to consume healthy foods and beverages and engage in regular physical activity. Local governments make decisions every day that affect these environments.<sup>5</sup>*

This memo summarizes opportunities to increase access to healthy foods through enhanced vending policies for City facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The percent of Dane County 7th-12th grade youth who are either overweight or obese has been stable since the 2009 survey (23.2% ±0.7 in 2012 vs. 24.1% ±0.9 in 2009). Currently, 9.1% (±0.5) of all 7th-12th grade youth are obese, compared to 10.2% (±0.7) in 2009. The 9.2% prevalence of obesity for Dane County high school youth is comparable to that for Wisconsin high school youth but lower than the national rate. *2012 Dane County Youth Assessment, Dane County Youth Commission*. Retrieved from [http://pdf.countyofdane.com/humanservices/youth/assessment\\_surveys/2012/youth\\_2012\\_overview.pdf](http://pdf.countyofdane.com/humanservices/youth/assessment_surveys/2012/youth_2012_overview.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Measurement of Dane County adults between 2008-2010. Data source is the Wisconsin Department of Health. Data retrieved from Healthydane.org. [http://healthydane.org/?hcn=%2Fmodules.php%3Fop%3Dmodload%26name%3DNS-Indicator%26file%3Dindicator%26iid%3D7203559%26hcnembedredirect\\_%3D1](http://healthydane.org/?hcn=%2Fmodules.php%3Fop%3Dmodload%26name%3DNS-Indicator%26file%3Dindicator%26iid%3D7203559%26hcnembedredirect_%3D1)

<sup>3</sup> Measurement of Dane County children aged 2-4 living in households with an income less than 200% of the federal poverty level who are obese. Data source is the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Food Environment Atlas. Data retrieved from Healthydane.org

<sup>4</sup> Olshansky, S. J., and D. S. Ludwig. 2005. Effect of obesity on life expectancy in the U.S. *Food Technology* 59(7):112.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Parker, Annina Catherine Burns, and Eduardo Sanchez, Editors; *Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity*. Committee on Childhood Obesity Prevention Actions for Local Governments; Institute of Medicine; National Research Council. 2009.

## Policy Options

The National Academies of Science recommend three action steps to promote healthy foods and beverages in publicly run facilities.<sup>6</sup>

- Mandate and implement strong nutrition standards for foods and beverages available in government-run or regulated after-school programs, recreation centers, parks, and child care facilities (which include limiting access to calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods).
- Ensure that local government agencies that operate cafeterias and vending options have strong nutrition standards in place wherever foods and beverages are sold or available.
- Provide incentives or subsidies to government-run or -regulated programs and localities that provide healthy foods at competitive prices and limit calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods (e.g., after-school programs that provide fruits or vegetables every day, and eliminate calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods in vending machines or as part of the program).

In practice, local governments and academic institutions have approached vending policies by setting nutrition standards for a variety of products and setting requirements that a certain percentage of products meet those standards. Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) developed nutrition standards as part of its Wellness Policy. MMSD's Wellness Committee develops an annual list of approved snacks and beverages. In addition, some governments opt to establish labeling guidelines or educational materials to support consumer decision making. Implementation of vending standards must be tailored to accommodate existing vending contracts and other specific conditions. In certain cases, Memorandums of Understanding may be developed in partnership with vendors to establish new healthy guidelines. Many times, nutrition standards are developed in consultation with health departments.

In addition to nutrition standards and vendor agreements, creative solutions to deliver fresh produce are beginning to show promise. New York City has adopted a green cart initiative to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables by licensing vendors. Funded by a \$1.5 million grant, the green carts sell fresh produce, but they do not peel, cut, slice or otherwise process the food. Over 500 licenses have been granted, and the carts will be targeted toward food deserts.<sup>7</sup> Locally, Freshmobile delivers fresh produce in a mobile truck to Madison areas lacking easy access to healthy foods. The Freshmobile initiative is a non-profit founded by Fresh Madison Market owner Jeff Maurer and supported by the Urban League, Centro Hispano, The Boys and Girls Club, Meriter Partners for a Healthy Community and City of Madison Community Development Block Grant<sup>8</sup>.

Madison has nineteen public facilities frequented by youth which offer concessions or vending machines (see last page). These locations offer the City of Madison an opportunity to provide healthy food choices to its residents. The following table highlights some of the policy options the City of Madison could implement.

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<sup>6</sup> Lynn Parker, Annina Catherine Burns, and Eduardo Sanchez, Editors; *Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity*. Committee on Childhood Obesity Prevention Actions for Local Governments; Institute of Medicine; National Research Council. 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Green Cart Initiative information retrieved from <http://www.healthydane.org/?hcn=PromisingPractices>

<sup>8</sup> Support provided by Madison Community Development Block Grant consists of building awareness about the Freshmobile initiative in neighborhoods. In addition Freshmobile has worked closely with the Public Health Madison & Dane County, the Madison Mayor's office, and the Dane County Executive's office to pinpoint the food deserts in and around Madison that could benefit most from access to Freshmobile's produce.

## Vending Policy Tools

Organization	Policy Tool	Results/Accomplishment
Marin County (Department of Health)	<p>TOOL: Memorandum of Understanding with vendors who stock vending machines.</p> <p>DETAILS: Guidelines match local school district guidelines for consistency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% of products are healthy,</li> <li>• color coding and pricing promote healthy choices,</li> <li>• oversight was needed to verify products met standards</li> </ul>	<p>MOU was a quick way to launch program for areas without vending contracts.</p> <p>Sales of healthier products increased after program launch.</p>
Northern Kentucky University	<p>TOOL: Healthy Food Policy and Memorandum of Agreement with Vendors.</p> <p>DETAILS: All dining service and vending contractors promote healthy food choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% of vending machine snacks must meet healthy criteria</li> <li>• Healthy choices grouped together and located near the top 1/3 of vending machine for visibility</li> <li>• No incentives for increased sales of soft drinks or unhealthy snack options in vending contracts</li> </ul>	<p>"The healthy food offerings on campus have risen tremendously over the past year in both availability and quality... at an affordable price will ensure that everyone at NKU can choose healthy, even if they are on a budget" - Keith Kaseke, President of NKU Student Government Association.</p>
City of Pasadena	<p>TOOL: Healthy Food and Beverage Vending and Procurement Policy</p> <p>DETAILS: All snacks and products meet standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of vending machine snacks meet specific nutrition standards</li> <li>• 100% of vending machine beverages meet specific nutrition standards</li> <li>• 100% of beverages and snacks served at all meetings/programs/events meet specific nutrition standards</li> </ul>	<p>Growing community support for healthier food environments (promoted by the Health Department) evidenced in the City Council's 2011 Vending and Procurement Policy.</p>
Madison Metropolitan School District	<p>TOOL: Nutrition Standards for all foods</p> <p>DETAILS: Standards on products and limits on availability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No vending permitted in elementary/middle school</li> <li>• Beverage and snack vending (of approved snacks) allowed in high schools only before and after the school day – during times that meals are not served</li> </ul>	<p>Comprehensive food policy developed in partnership with students and the Board of Education.</p>

## **Recommended Next Steps:**

### **1. Assess vending contracts**

The City of Madison has a variety of vending arrangements at different facilities. In some cases vending facilities are owned and operated by the City, while in other cases there vendors contract for vending machines or concessions. Madison Metro and Parks Division are responsible for the majority of facilities frequented by youth which have vending machines or concessions. The first step in building a vending policy will be to assess the existing contracts for these facilities and determine whether agreements with vendors, or a citywide vending policy would be the most expeditious approach.

### **2. Develop nutrition standards**

Nutrition standards range widely among municipal governments. The Food Council should develop nutrition standards, in partnership with Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC) and other relevant agencies and experts. PHMDC has already developed *Guidelines for Healthier Concession Choices* as well as a list of recommended snacks. It may be beneficial to work with a range of local partners to establish matching guidelines. Factors to consider include:

- Types of beverages to be sold (soda, diet soda, milk products with specific fat content, plant derived beverages such a soy or rice milk, vegetable juices or fruit juices with specific limits for added sugar levels)
- Nutrition standards for food products (dietary fat levels, sugar levels, calorie limits, sodium limits, exceptions for nuts and seeds or naturally occurring sugars)
- Sizes (weight or volume of snacks or beverage products)
- Percentage of products to meet nutrition standards

### **3. Consider labeling, educational materials, and pricing**

Labeling may be a useful tool to help consumers identify healthy choices. Marin County implemented an educational tool with a color coding system. Green indicates a healthy choice, yellow recommends caution and red means stop. The City should work with vendors to determine how to label products. Marin County found it very important to “develop a quality assurance process to help guarantee that vendors accurately designate products in accordance with the guidelines and keep the machines adequately stocked. This is a very time consuming process.”

Other options to promote healthier foods include setting lower prices for healthier items, positioning the healthiest choices at eye level, or developing accompanying educational materials for consumers and vendors.

#### **4. Write MOU or Citywide vending policy**

Utilizing an MOU to forge agreements with vendors may be fastest approach to initiate a healthy vending program. MOU examples are widely available and can be tailored for each specific arrangement. A comprehensive vending policy can help set broad standards and provide language that can be included in vending contract agreements.

#### **5. Identify opportunities for mobile vending at City facilities**

Consider opportunities to bring fresh produce to City parks, bus transfer stations or other City events by partnering with Freshmobile or other healthy food vendors.

#### **6. Evaluate the program**

Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to the success of the program. As mentioned above, if a labeling or color coding standard is used, quality assurance is vital to ensure that the guidelines are met. In addition, the City should develop the program to include regular feedback from consumers, vendors and operators. The data should help determine if healthier items are more popular after the changes. It will also be important to understand how the policy impacts vendor profits. Vendors can become promoters of healthier options if they regard the program as beneficial.

### **Conclusion**

The City of Madison has the opportunity to implement a vending policy that actively promotes healthier food choices, especially for children and youth. A number of cities, school districts and Universities have already made the commitment to offer healthy food choices in an effort to promote wellness and reduce chronic disease. The process of developing a vending policy and accompanying nutrition standards would increase access to healthy food for residents, and demonstrate that the City of Madison is committed to building a healthier community. The first steps to implement a vending policy require an assessment of existing vending contracts and the establishment of nutrition standards for snacks and beverages. The Food Policy Council could initiate this work as part of its broader efforts to make sure everyone has access to food and good nutrition.

City of Madison – city-owned facilities, open to the public, typically frequented by youth, which have vending machines or concessions					
Facility	Location	What’s offered	City agency owned/operated, or contract w/vendor?*	Other questions	Other comments
Elver Park	McKenna	Retail food estab., winter concessions	Parks		
Elver Park	McKenna	Pop machine at shelter and ball diamonds	Contract		
Shelter-Tenney	Johnson	Retail food estab., winter concessions	Parks		
Shelter-Tenney	Johnson	Pop machine at shelter	Contract		
Shelter-Vilas Winter	Vilas Park Rd	Retail food estab., winter concessions	Parks		
Olbrich	Atwood Ave	Pop machine at shelter and ball diamonds	Contract		
James Madison	Johnson	Summer concessions Pop machine at shelter	Parks Contract		
Warner Beach	Woodward	Pop machine at restroom	Contract		
Golf Course -Glenway	Speedway	Clubhouse	Contract		Liquor license
Golf Course -Monona	Monona Dr	Clubhouse/concessions	Contract		Liquor license
Golf Course-Odana Hills	Odana Rd	Clubhouse  Winter concessions	Contract  Parks		Liquor license
Golf Course -Yahara Hills	E. Broadway	clubhouse/concessions	Contract		Liquor license
Goodman Pool	Olin Ave	Retail food estab., concessions	Parks		
Transfer Point East	Milw street	Pop machine	Metro, Leased location		
Transfer Point North	Off Aberg Ave	Pop machine	Metro, Leased location		
Transfer Point South	S Park St	Pop machine	Metro, Owned		
Transfer Point West	Tokay Blvd	Pop machine	Metro, Leased location		
Warner Park Community Rec Center	Northport Dr	Pop machine, snack machine in facility, coffee bar	Parks	Unclear: are snacks also sold at front desk?	
Olbrich Gardens	Atwood	Pop machine, coffee,	Parks	“gourmet food & beverages” sold in gift shop	

Warner concessions: pop, Gatorade, water, hot chocolate, candy bars, sour candy, trail mix, fruit snacks, sun chips, and goldfish.

Goodman pool concessions: above, plus hot dogs, brats, ice cream snacks

\* All Parks land is owned by City of Madison. The designation “contract” means that Parks has a contract with an outside vendor to maintain and stock the vending machines. In the case of golf courses, Parks has a contract with the golf pros who operate the courses to operate the clubhouses, which sell beer by the barrel. It is unclear whether the clubhouses sell food to order, or if they only respond to advance requests for box lunches for larger golfing groups.