



Summary of Findings for City of Boulder Grocers/Convenience Store Survey December 5, 2019

As an outgrowth of the Citywide Retail Study and at the direction of City Council, the City of Boulder Community Vitality Department asked the Boulder Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to survey small independent grocers and convenience stores on its behalf. The purpose of this project is to (1) gather input on neighborhood-scale grocery operators; (2) to determine if they sell fresh produce, and if not, (3) why they don't sell produce; (4) to determine if they have any current operating or business needs to continue to operate in Boulder; and (5) to see what requirements they would have if they expanded their operations to meet shopper needs elsewhere within the City of Boulder, i.e. areas outside a walkable distance from food locations.

The SBDC provided outreach and data collection by performing in-person interviews in both English and Spanish. Interviews were conducted within five weeks beginning on October 24, 2019. During this time, SBDC interviewer, Jesse Esparza, met with existing fruiterias, panaderias, carnicerias and other local convenience store operators with the goal of interviewing 10 small businesses - not including franchise operators.

The information gathered includes:

- Identification of ethnic grocers that could meet the needs cited in the Citywide Retail Study shopper survey
- Preliminary outreach to store operators to determine if capacity issues exist (i.e. they can sustain their businesses in Boulder)
- What they would need to open an additional location in underserved areas of Boulder
- communication regarding existing program opportunities
- Whether they participate in the SNAP food assistance program

Each location received at least one visit, some needing more. If the owners were not present and employees were unable to answer questions, follow up visits were needed. At each location, information was gathered using the attached questionnaire. All owners interviewed were very cordial, positive and curious as to the City's interest in gathering information. The consultant was able to share with these business owners the objectives of the Citywide Retail Strategy outreach, and provide information on SBDC services that can support their businesses at no cost. This information helped to strengthen the interviewer's rapport with most of the business operators.

Overall, those interviewed were pleased with what City services had already been provided (such as the upgrading refrigeration systems and store fronts, snow removal and additional signage posted when construction was under way). However, some businesses that had applied for refrigeration upgrade assistance not yet received program delivery or follow up communications. The SBDC provided the names of these businesses to the city, and staff has followed up with the rebate coordinator to reconnect them with the business operators.

Results:

Goal: 10 grocer/convenience operators.

Interview total: 11 operators

Locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- West Pearl- 1- 28th Street- 6- 30th Street- 1- Broadway- 1- 55th Street- 1- 13th Street- 1	Years in Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 15+ Years- 3- 2 Years- 2- No Answer- 6
Items sold: <p>90% (10) sold ethnic items 73% (8) have a deli counter 55% (6) sold baked goods</p>	SNAP: <p>None of the businesses participate in SNAP</p>

64% of the businesses interviewed sold fresh produce. The reasons given for not selling fresh produce were:

- lack of interest (3 businesses)
- the product not selling (1 business)
- more focused on selling their primary food (such as bread) (1 business)
- nearby competition (1 business)

Business Needs

54% mentioned refrigeration upgrades as a need. Out of those companies 45% (6 businesses) were still waiting for next steps. One business that received its refrigeration upgrades was very happy with their assistance from the City.

- 18% (2) businesses mentioned parking as a need
- 36% (4) businesses mentioned needing more customers.
- 18% (2) businesses mentioned needing more space.

The question was asked: "If you were to open a new location, what requirements would you look for (i.e. square footage, population within x miles, visibility, transit access proximity to other types of businesses)"

- The **top requirement mentioned was square footage at 64%.**
- 27% (3) businesses were interested in proximity other businesses.
- 27% (3) businesses said they would need more money, loans or grants.
- 27% (3) businesses mentioned visibility and exposure.
- One business was content and had no interest in expanding.
- One business mentioned parking as an interest.

Overall, the perception of the SBDC interviewer was that the businesses had a positive response to the City asking for their input and ways that the City could help their businesses. Additionally, they were pleased to hear about assistance that is available through the SBDC