**Creating a Healthy Thriving Community**

**Linn County**

- 26,030 individuals in Linn County are food insecure.

**Cedar Rapids**

- 5,967 residents live in areas with low access to food.

**Southwest Neighborhood**

- Median Income: $28,407
  (47% of households include children under 18)

- Nearly 3 in 8 residents are on SNAP.

**Southeast Neighborhood**

- Median Income: $19,190
  (30% of the population is over 55)

- Nearly 3 in 3 seniors lack access to grocery stores.

**Cost of Doing Nothing**

Children who experience food insecurity are more likely to exhibit:

- Tardiness and absenteeism
- Poor social interaction
- Aggression
- Inattentiveness

They are also two times more likely to report poorer health

And 1.4 times more likely to have asthma than non-food-insecure peers.

**“PANTRIES RARELY HAVE THE RESOURCES TO SUPPLY FAMILIES WITH BALANCED MEALS.”**

Cedar Rapids Resident, Single Mother

Poor nutrition and increased stress leads to higher numbers of people who are overweight and with chronic conditions. Chronic conditions with food insecurity lead to higher healthcare costs and poor health management. For example, the average medical cost for diabetes is estimated to be $13,966 per person every year. This cost is much higher for people who cannot afford a diabetic diet and needed medications, leading to more severe health issues and continued ER visits.

**“I HAVE DIABETES; I DO NOT HAVE THE OPTION NOT TO EAT A BALANCED DIET. BUT THE GROCERY STORES KEEP Raising THE PRICES OF THE THINGS THAT PEOPLE NEED THE MOST.”**

Cedar Rapids Resident, Retired

**Academic Achievement – Cedar Rapids Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Free Reduced Lunch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Readiness</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Reading Proficiency</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>83%</td>
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Students who receive Free and Reduced-price Lunch (FRL) receive healthy and nutritious meals at school, however limited resources at home prevent them from having regular balanced meals outside the school day, which can impact their academic achievement and overall well-being.

*Food insecurity refers to USDA’s measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. —Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap.*

**“75% of kindergartners did not show up ready to learn.”**

Cedar Rapids Resident, Mother with $19 in SNAP

**“I TRY TO MAKE BALANCED MEALS, BUT I DO NOT HAVE THAT KIND OF MONEY.”**

Cedar Rapids Resident, Single Mother

**“62%”**

Cedar Rapids Resident, Single Mother

62%

71%

83%
The Food Environmental Alliance (FEA) is a diverse group of individuals and organizations with an interest in improving access to healthy food, visibility of food production, and learning about the food system.

Increase Collaboration: Partnerships and collaboration are key to making programs and environmental changes more impactful for more people. Aligning the work of the Linn County Food Systems Council with the Food Environment Alliance efforts is one example of how the community is coming together to address this challenging health and social issue.

Increase Access: Food pantries and mobile food markets are a significant source of food for many families in the Cedar Rapids area. By promoting local produce, encouraging use of SNAP benefits for those who are eligible and expanding where and when fresh food is available, there are more opportunities for people to get what they need to stay healthy.

Increase Visibility: Communities can demonstrate a commitment to well-being and vitality by using land to produce food. Acres of urban farms have recently been established on vacant lots, church properties and by businesses and schools. Urban food production encourages volunteerism; much of the food grown is distributed in areas of the community with the greatest needs.

Increase Learning: Children and adults who have knowledge and skills about growing, harvesting and preparing fresh foods are more likely to have a balanced, nutritious diet. School gardens, nutrition education, and cooking classes can help people find ways to eat more fruits and vegetables, which improves health outcomes.

What Are We Currently Doing?

Increase use of SNAP at farmer’s markets

Support comprehensive urban agriculture zoning laws

Donate healthy food items to food pantries and other emergency food distribution organizations

Volunteer at a school garden or urban farm

Buy locally grown food at restaurants, grocery stores, farmer’s markets and through CSA’s

What More Can Be Done?

Advocate for sustainable food procurement policies

Support urban agriculture zoning laws