

**The Food Project**  
**Lynn Food Accessibility Report**

—  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At The Food Project, we believe that everyone has the right to fresh, healthy, affordable food. Since its founding in 1991, The Food Project's mission has been to create a thoughtful and productive community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds who work together to build a just and sustainable food system.

The goal of this Food Assessment was for The Food Project to better understand the needs of residents in regards to food access. With the ultimate goal being to leverage our resources to continue to address food insecurity in the city of Lynn in collaboration with key stakeholders that are aligned with our mission. Within The Food Project's community-based approach, we decided to facilitate focus groups and survey residents at various community hubs to hear directly from residents about how they are impacted by Lynn's food system. Our objective was to learn from residents — what their needs are, what barriers residents have in accessing fresh, healthy food, and how our organization can increase food accessibility in Lynn.

The collection of data from Lynn residents was captured through focus groups and surveys, between December 2022-February 2023. Focus Groups were located at the Lynn Senior Center, St. Mary's School, New American Association of Massachusetts, and Justice Resource Institute's Family Support Group at the YMCA. Surveys were collected through canvassing and tabling at the Lynn Farmers' Market, Demakes Family YMCA, Market Basket, Lynn City Hall, and LHAND housing locations. Surveys were available to residents in English and Spanish. Residents were presented with four open-response questions regarding their personal experience with Lynn's food system. In addition, they were given the opportunity to share what they would like to see from The Food Project within the food system and describe the importance of food in their lives. With each survey, residents were given the option to respond to a series of questions to capture resident demographics – Lynn zip code, race/ethnicity, age, and household income. All resident responses, 210 in total, were then analyzed and organized into broad themes.

## **RESULTS**

In analyzing the qualitative data from Lynn residents, a majority of residents (73%) expressed that they had a positive experience with Lynn's food system. Of the residents that expressed challenges in accessibility to fresh, healthy foods — we separated the needs and priorities that were mentioned the most into two tiers.

<b><i>Tier 1</i></b>	Affordability of Fresh and Healthy Foods
	Transportation to Access Fresh and Healthy Food

<b>Tier 2</b>	Need for Food that Supports Dietary Needs
	Need for Nutritious Foods in Lynn Schools
	Need for More Gardening/Growing Spaces
	Need for Nutritional Education
	Need for More Food Pantries

## **QUESTIONS, RESPONSES, AND THEMES**

### **Question 1: What has your experience been like with food in this city?**

Our purpose in asking this question was to collect a broad range of responses and allow Lynn residents to offer their own characterization of how the food system meets or fails to meet their needs.

Out of the total responses, 73% wrote that overall they had a positive experience of the food system. Below are some common themes expressed in responses:

- There is good quality food available in Lynn
- It is easy to access grocery stores with my car
- Farmers' markets are a good option for accessing food
- There is an abundance of local restaurants and markets offering diverse and culturally relevant food

10% of respondents wrote that finding affordable food was a challenge. Common responses include:

- The prices of foods like meat have become too high
- It is difficult to find coupons or discounts on fresh, high quality food
- My SNAP funds are no longer sufficient to buy the food I need

2% of respondents expressed that transportation was a primary obstacle to accessing food.

Common responses include:

- Taking public transportation is not feasible when shopping for my family
- I do not have a car and so have to rely on a taxi
- There are no grocery stores within walking distance from where I live

Other responses expressed that there is a lack of high quality school food available, it is difficult to find time to shop for food while working full time, and the limited hours of food pantries make them hard to regularly access.

**Question 2: Have you had any challenges accessing food in this community? If so, what have those experiences been like?**

With this question, we sought to identify the barriers that Lynn residents face in accessing the food they want to eat.

Out of the total responses to this question, 4% wrote that transportation was a significant barrier preventing them from accessing food. Common responses expressed that using public transportation is difficult when shopping for a family.

4% of responses expressed that it was difficult to find the kind of food that meets their dietary needs. Common responses included:

- It is difficult to find Halal food in Lynn
- It is hard to find fresh food
- There is a lack of high quality, affordable food in Lynn
- It is hard to find culturally relevant food

17% of responses expressed that high costs were a significant barrier to accessing food.

**Question 3: At The Food Project one of our goals is to make good, quality food accessible. What would you like to see us do to ensure that this happens?**

Our purpose in this question was for our organization to learn from residents what they would like to see happen in their community. The Food Project will then use these responses to inform our work and inform fellow stakeholders in the Lynn Community addressing food security.

8% of responses expressed that they would like growing their own food to be more accessible.

Common responses include:

- Expand community gardens
- Teach residents how to grow their own food
- Desire to learn how to grow at home, in containers or in raised beds
- Providing Shelters in the city with raised beds

7% of responses shared that they would like TFP to provide nutritional education to residents.

Common responses included:

- Increased access to nutritional information
- Cooking classes
- Education on how to best store produce
- Education on produce that may be new to residents' diets
- Partner with local chefs and businesses to offer cooking and nutrition classes

11% of residents would like to have high quality fresh foods be more affordable for all.

Common responses include:

- Help by setting produce prices to be more affordable to those who do not have the income like other residents
- Help increase the qualifying income for SNAP

8% of residents expressed that they would like to see more food pantries and food distribution programs in Lynn. Common responses include:

- More pantry access, or “open tables”
- Expand programs similar to *My Brother’s Table*
- Programs that provide families with food for various holidays
- Food Delivery programs with fresh vegetables
- Less food waste – more food banks
- Food pantries that provide residents with the autonomy to select items for themselves
- Coordinate for restaurants and stores to donate meals or food to the community
- Provide “meal kits”
- Municipal landscaping to include edible foods that are accessible to everyone

12% of responses expressed the need for The Food Project to increase community outreach of resources and information. Common responses are:

- More advertisement in Lynn neighborhoods that are underserved
- Resources for individuals to locate food banks, etc.
- Increasing access to resources by translating in more languages
- Engage with citizens to become an active participant in addressing issues
- TFP can reach more people through people that residents trust – teachers, parents at school, in churches, mosques, etc.
- Fundraising events, social media, and school outreach
- Get involved with teens at highschoools – sustainability and gardening clubs
- Broaden outreach to young people to help them understand where food comes from
- Interest in how to support more local food businesses and ethnic stores in Lynn

12% of responses shared that they would like TFP to modify our food distribution in Lynn. Common responses include:

- More farmers’ markets in the city
- Improve the existing Lynn Farmers’ Market
- Increase the frequency of farmers’ markets
- Make produce available in every neighborhood
- Mobile Markets in more areas for residents who cannot attend the farmers’ market
- Have a farm stand

6% of residents wrote that they would like healthy foods to be accessible in the Lynn Schools. Responses were:

- Be involved in schools, providing space to grow their own food for healthy lunches
- Bring TFP produce to schools
- Find ways to make school food more healthy and nutritious

#### **Question 4: What does food mean to you?**

We included this as an open-ended question to invite Lynn residents to express in their own words why food is important to them. Many expressed valuing the connection between food and people, health, and happiness. Below are some quotes from responses:

“Food means staying healthy and alive. Nutritious food that is healthy, tasty, produced in a nature-friendly way by farmers, fishers folks or food producers who got a decent price for their product.”

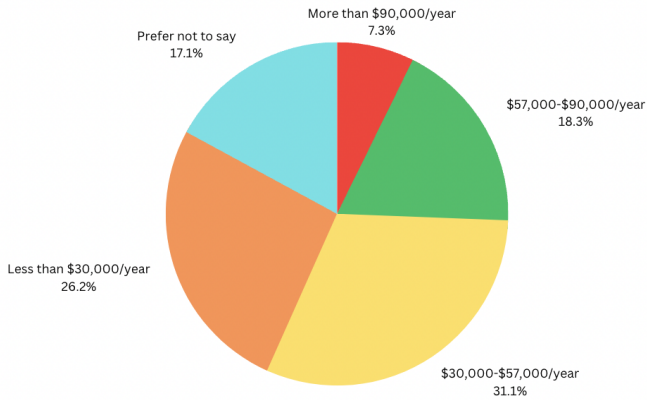
“Staying Alive! Being diabetic I have to take care [of] my health and what I eat.”

“I connect with my family through food”

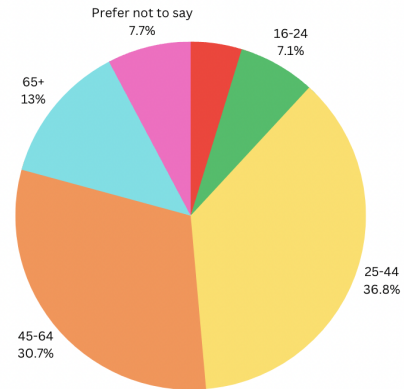
# **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The survey concluded with several demographic questions asking respondents their age, annual household income, and race or ethnicity. Below are the results of those questions:

### Annual Household Income



### Age



### Race/Ethnicity

