

The JUST FOOD Initiative
The Story
October 20, 2011

THE SITUATION

- Mason Square residents, by and large, have challenges meeting basic living needs.
- A 2005 study found that one in five households are worried about food.
- One in ten households experience moderate to severe hunger.
- Type II Diabetes, “the silent killer,” is the number one health concern.
- Childhood obesity, a precursor to a lifetime of struggle with chronic disease, is also present at alarming levels.

THE NEED

Mason Square literally has no place to go year round to purchase quality, affordable food. It is a “Food Desert.” Neighborhood residents, especially those without transportation (which is NOT an insignificant number) are forced to purchase “groceries” from a local CVS. This contributes significantly to the “The Situation.”

THE RESPONSE

The Mason Square Food Justice Initiative, along with the Mason Square community at large, is working together to bring in a full service grocery store so that, ultimately, Mason Square residents can feed their families high quality, fresh foods.

Over 600 people have signed a petition asking Springfield's leadership to prioritize bringing a full line conventional grocery store to Mason Square. And over 1200 community members—comprised of people who live and work in and around Mason Square—have responded to a survey regarding their ideas and grocery store preferences.



- 75% of respondents would shop at the neighborhood full-line grocery store.
- Ranking of stores in order of preference
 - 1) Big Y
 - 2) Shop Rite
 - 3) Stop and Shop
- The community wants to ensure local hiring for both the building of the store and its operation.
- The community wants to ensure the availability of culturally appropriate food in the store's product mix.

RESPONSE TO DATE

We have reached out to both the State Street Corridor Alliance and Develop Springfield. Both have expressed their support in working toward bringing a full line grocery store to the neighborhood. A potential site is being considered at the corner of Walnut/Oak/State streets

CALL TO ACTION

Grocery chains want to site their stores where people have money to spend. We want to demonstrate the purchasing power of the Mason Square community in a practical, yet powerfully symbolic way. **We're inviting residents in Mason Square and surrounding neighborhoods to save their grocery receipts.**

We'll be launching the receipt collection on Saturday, October 29 at the cultural harvest fest at the Mason Square Farmer's Market (11 Wilbraham Road in the health clinic parking lot). Anyone who lives, works, worships or regularly visits Mason Square is encouraged to participate. We will provide collection envelopes for their receipts.

Collection envelopes will also be available throughout the community. Receipt bundles will be collected through the end of November.

Community partners include: Mason Square Health Taskforce, Partners for a Healthier Community, Concerned Citizens of Mason Square, Springfield Partners for Community Action, the Dunbar Community Center, Gardening the Community, Holy Trinity Church and Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.