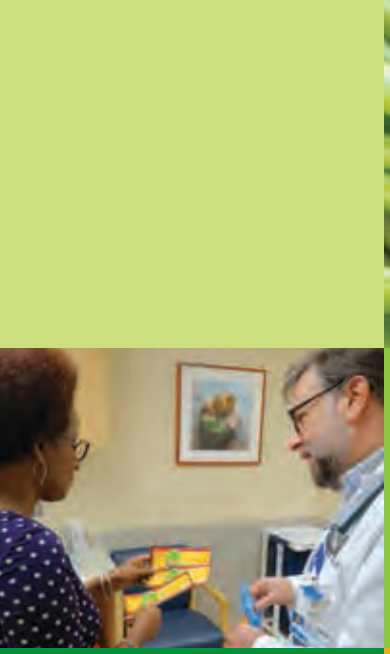

FOSTERING COMMUNITY BENEFITS

How Food Access Nonprofits and Hospitals Can Work Together to Promote Wellness

The Food Trust
THEFOODTRUST.ORG

Lankenau Medical Center
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Department of Public Health
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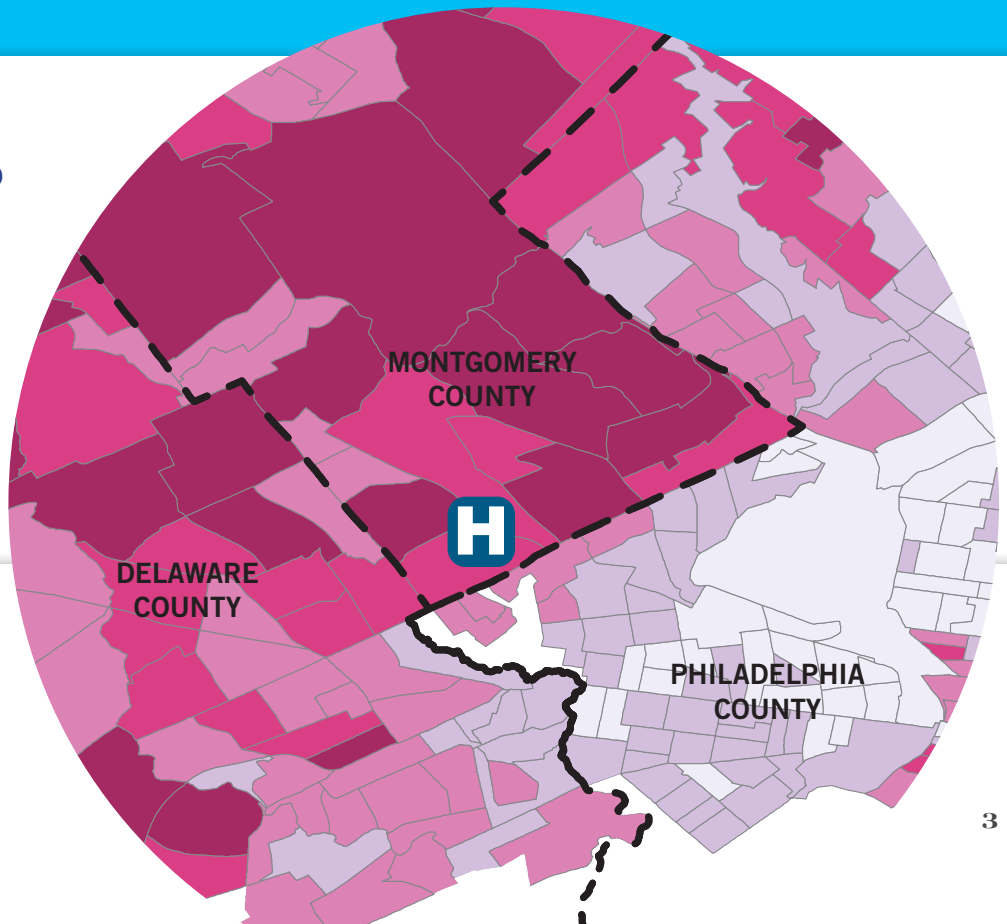
INTRODUCTION:
NONPROFIT HOSPITALS AND THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

As part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, nonprofit hospitals are required to provide benefits to the communities they serve to keep a tax-exempt status. In the past, nonprofit hospitals have met this requirement by providing care to uninsured or underinsured patients. Now that the Affordable Care Act has expanded insurance coverage to these populations, **hospitals are looking for new ways to give back to the communities they serve**. The Affordable Care Act has also tasked these hospitals with conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment and subsequently developing Community Health Improvement Plans to help prioritize the most pressing needs in their community and identify programs and resources that will directly improve patient health outcomes.

This new requirement is an opportunity for hospitals to work together with community partners to foster a culture of health by addressing underlying drivers of chronic disease, which often include lack of access to healthy, affordable food. In December 2014, the Internal Revenue Service ruled that nonprofit hospitals can claim their support of programs that ensure adequate community nutrition toward their federal tax exemption.

Launching an Innovative Community Health Partnership

In 2012, **Lankenau Medical Center**, part of Main Line Health, and **The Food Trust**, a national food access nonprofit, began developing a multi-pronged partnership to help address community health needs identified in the hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment. The Food Trust began working closely with Lankenau's primary and specialty care physicians who serve uninsured or underinsured individuals in the Philadelphia region.



INCOME MAP: While Lankenau Medical Center is located in Montgomery County, one of the healthiest counties in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, many of its patients reside in West Philadelphia, where health outcomes and factors like income, diet, exercise, education, employment and housing quality are ranked the worst in the commonwealth.

Median Household Income

- Under $25,000
- $25,000–$49,999
- $50,000–$74,999
- $75,000–$100,000
- Over $100,000

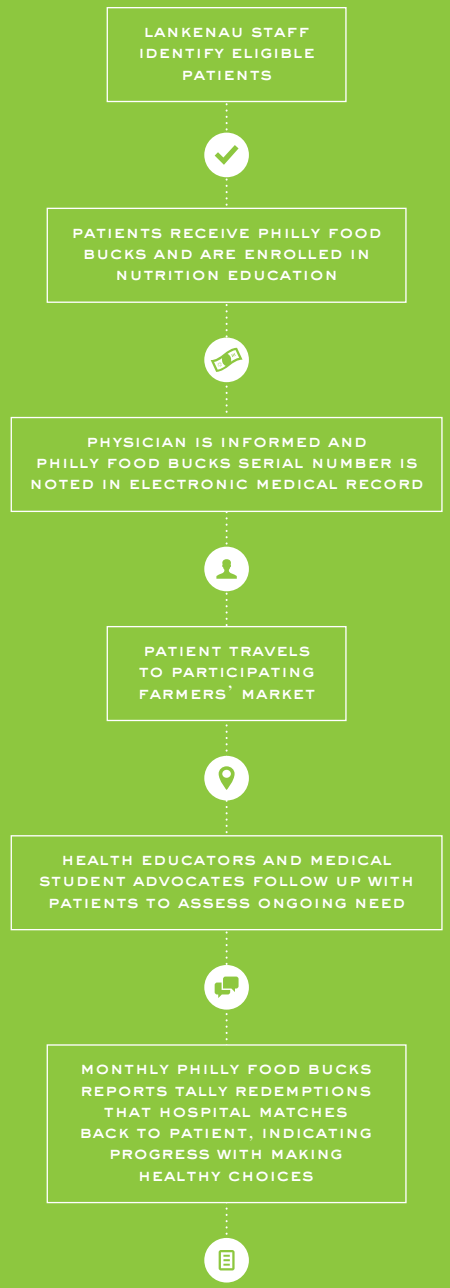
Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings, www.countyhealthrankings.org

Linking Primary Care to the Community: At Lankenau Medical Center

To help address several health conditions identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment, such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, and ultimately improve patient outcomes, Lankenau partnered with The Food Trust and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's Get Healthy Philly initiative to pilot a Philly Food Bucks project in conjunction with its outpatient practice. Lankenau leveraged community benefit dollars to purchase Philly Food Bucks for patients as a way to begin a conversation with patients about meeting basic food needs. **The program provides eligible patients with $6 worth of Philly Food Bucks that they can redeem for fresh fruits and vegetables at any participating Food Trust farmers' market.** This pilot integrates into the broader Philly Food Bucks program, which uses coupon incentives to encourage SNAP (food stamp) recipients to purchase high-quality, healthy food at Food Trust farmers' markets in Philadelphia. For every $5 in SNAP purchases at market, customers receive a $2 Philly Food Bucks coupon, **increasing their buying power to bring home 40% more fresh fruits and vegetables**. Patients enrolled in SNAP can therefore take advantage of the continued benefit, receiving additional Philly Food Bucks for each SNAP purchase at the farmers' markets.

Lankenau has incorporated the Philly Food Bucks program directly into routine care in the practice, making it possible to track long-term patient behavior change. All eligible patients with a body mass index (BMI) over 30 or who are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes receive a prescription for Philly Food Bucks, which is tracked and monitored through the patient's electronic medical record. **Each Philly Food Buck has a unique serial number linked to the patient.** As the Food Bucks are redeemed at markets, The Food Trust generates monthly reports for Lankenau, allowing physicians to match each Buck back to the patient and note redemption in the patient's electronic medical record. In addition to Philly Food Bucks, patients receive nutrition education, as well as information on other community resources to help address needs like housing and child care through Lankenau's Medical Student Advocate Program.

Distributing and Tracking Philly Food Bucks



"DURING ONE OF OUR ROUTINE FOLLOW-UP CALLS FOR THE PHILLY FOOD BUCKS, WE DISCOVERED THAT THE PATIENT WAS ALSO UNDERINSURED AND PREGNANT, AND WE WERE ABLE TO CONNECT HER WITH SOCIAL WORK AND FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR ASSISTANCE."

— LANKENAU MEDICAL STUDENT ADVOCATE

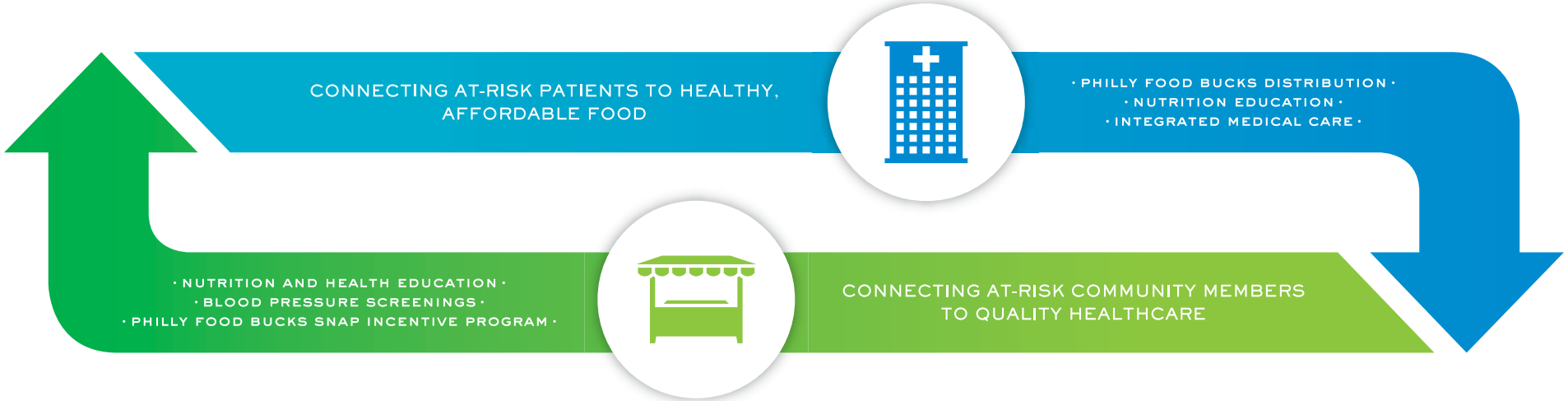
The Medical Student Advocate Program is an innovative collaboration between Lankenau Medical Center and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, created with the intention of improving health outcomes for vulnerable patients. The program uses second- and third-year medical students to address the complex social and economic issues faced by patients of Lankenau. The students act as advocates for patients, working collaboratively with the Patient Centered Medical Home team to recognize and address non-medical needs and barriers to care. To date, the students have addressed access to care, health insurance, prescription coverage, transportation, utility assistance, health education, food assistance, child care, housing, personal care and social support needs. The Philly Food Bucks component is a key element, providing an opportunity to connect patients with valuable community resources and empower them to meet their own needs for healthy, affordable food.

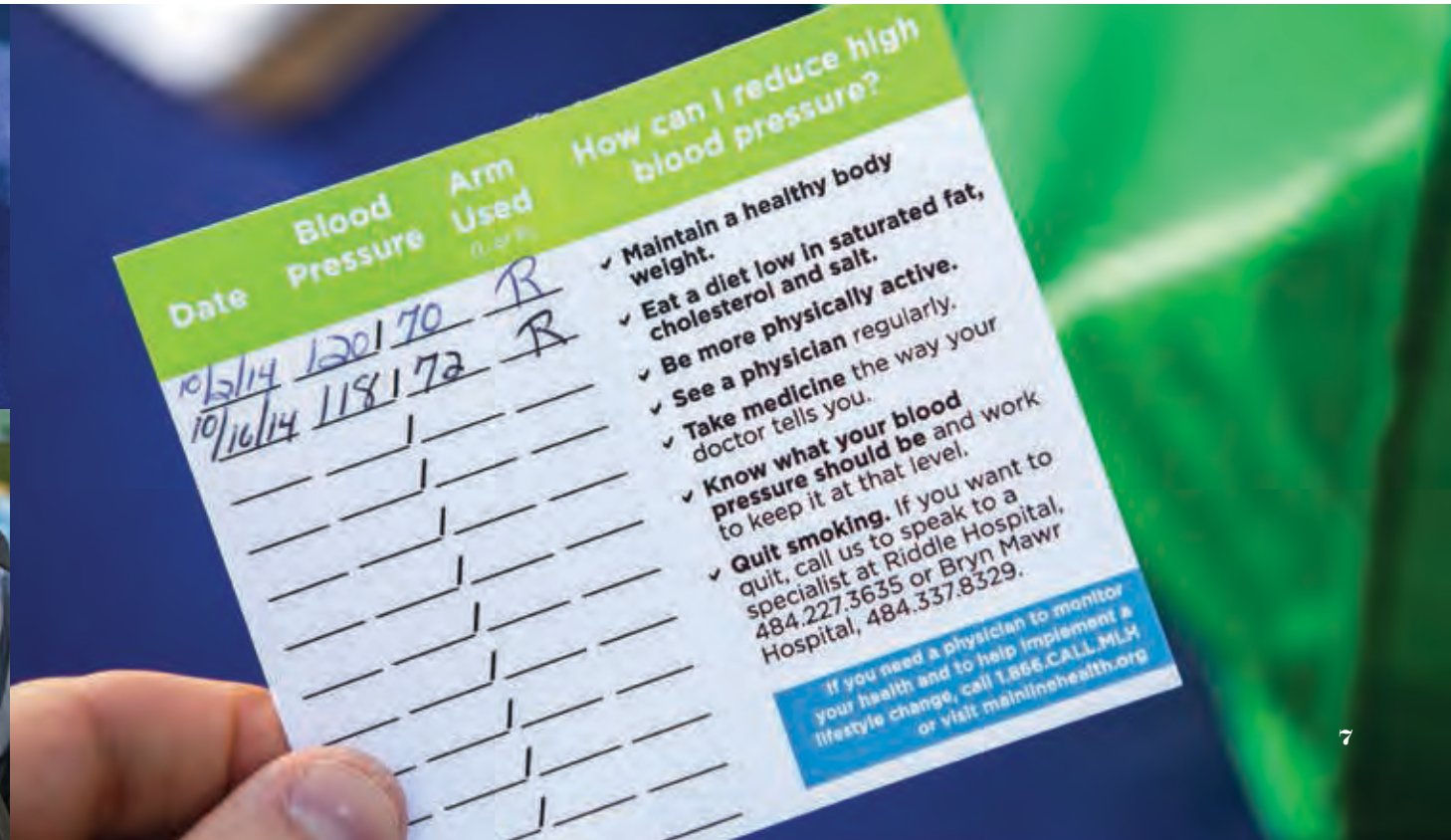
Linking Preventive Care to the Community: At the Farmers' Market

The second pillar of this partnership delivers prevention services in community settings at several farmers' markets operated by The Food Trust. **Lankenau has made a substantial investment in healthy food access infrastructure by directly sponsoring three Food Trust farmers' markets**, including Overbrook Farmers' Market, located just a few blocks from the hospital. This sponsorship helps support The Food Trust to staff and sustain these fresh food retail outlets in low- and mixed-income communities, while **bringing preventive care services directly to the community** and raising public awareness of Lankenau's services.

At each of the three markets, a team of Lankenau health educators provides shoppers with **free nutrition information, health screenings and family-oriented wellness activities**. These educators are also familiar faces to Lankenau's patients receiving Philly Food Bucks and visiting a farmers' market for the first time. As health educators offer seasonal recipes, nutrition tips and blood pressure screenings to hundreds of shoppers, they underscore the connection between nutrition and health outcomes, **helping to create a bridge between primary care and healthy food access in the community**.

Linking Primary Care to Community Food Access to Reach Vulnerable Populations





Preliminary Findings

- **A total of 432 Philly Food Bucks coupons were distributed from May to November 2014.** Among hospital patients who received the coupons, nearly one-third (31.5%) visited markets during the six-month pilot period and redeemed these benefits for fresh fruits and vegetables.

- The majority of Philly Food Bucks coupons distributed to hospital patients were redeemed at sites in close proximity to the hospital campus. **Coupons were redeemed at 12 farmers' markets**, with 76% of coupons redeemed at markets in West Philadelphia. One-third of all coupons were redeemed at the Overbrook Farmers' Market, located across the street from Lankenau's campus.

- Lankenau patients who received nutrition counseling were more likely to redeem their Philly Food Bucks coupons. Among patients who received Philly Food Bucks, 31% were provided with health education counseling to further explain the coupon program and stress the importance of good nutrition, and these patients redeemed their coupons at a rate of 43% (compared to 31.5% for all patients).

- Farmers' markets provided an effective setting to raise awareness of Lankenau's services and engage with the community. **On 48 market dates in 2013–2014, Lankenau health educators provided nutrition information, health screenings and wellness activities at three Food Trust farmers' markets that served over 70,000 shoppers.** The hospital's presence at the market was also promoted via The Food Trust's web and social media outlets, reaching over 50,000 online followers.

- Farmers' market shoppers—including underserved populations with significant health needs—were eager to engage with Lankenau health educators, including participating in on-site blood pressure screenings. **During the 48 market dates, Lankenau health educators conducted 764 screenings, and provided health information to over 1,200 farmers' market shoppers.** Screenings identified at-risk individuals in the community. Among those screened, 50% were at pre-hypertension or elevated levels, and were provided with health information and connections for follow-up care. All participants were also given a wallet-size card to track blood pressure; many returned to the markets for repeat screenings, using their cards to monitor progress.

Market	% of Coupons Redeemed
1 Overbrook	33%
2 52nd & Haverford	14.9%
3 58th & Chester	13.2%
4 Clark Park*	14.9%

*Thursday and Saturday markets combined

"THESE PHILLY FOOD BUCKS CAME IN HANDY BECAUSE IT WAS THE END OF THE MONTH AND I WAS OUT OF FOOD. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TRY FARMERS' MARKET FOOD."

— LANKENAU PATIENT AND OVERBROOK FARMERS' MARKET SHOPPER

432
PHILLY FOOD BUCKS

...

12
FARMERS' MARKETS

...

48
MARKET DATES

...

764
HEALTH SCREENINGS

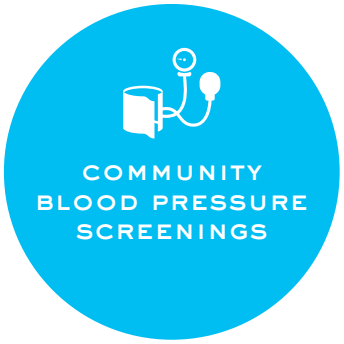
...

70,000
SHOPPERS

Tracking Community Benefits

Benefits for Hospitals and Health Care Systems

- Over time, farmers' market "prescription" programs that incentivize healthier eating habits have the potential to improve patient wellness and reduce health care costs. Since the launch of Philly Food Bucks in 2010, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health has reported that **users of the program are increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and improving their diets**. By enrolling high-risk patients in the Food Bucks initiative as a prescription for health, hospitals can tap into a promising program to motivate behavior change.
- **Farmers' markets provide an ideal setting to engage diverse populations**, creating an opportunity for hospitals to improve access to health care, with special emphasis on primary care, while simultaneously expanding community-based prevention efforts.
- Lankenau is differentiating itself from other medical institutions in the region by piloting a partnered strategy to **strengthen community-based wellness and prevention services that can serve as a model for health systems nationwide** as they navigate the aims of the Affordable Care Act.



Benefits for Public and Nonprofit Partners

- By partnering with a health care provider, **The Food Trust has increased its capacity to measure individual health outcomes** resulting from participation in the Philly Food Bucks program. Tracking Food Bucks utilization in high-risk patients' electronic medical records is a promising new strategy to assess the impact of healthy food incentive programs.

- By engaging Lankenau in promotion and outreach efforts, The Food Trust and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health have raised awareness of city farmers' markets and increased utilization of the Food Bucks program. In 2012, market customer surveys revealed that only 3% of customers learned about farmers' market through traditional advertising (e.g. print, newspapers, radio), suggesting that **community-based promotional efforts may be the most effective outreach strategy**. Beyond its Food Bucks prescription program to incentivize high-need patients to visit farmers' markets, Lankenau has promoted The Food Trust's farmers' market network and Food Bucks program through posters, pamphlets and other information distributed on the hospital campus.

- Providing programming at city farmers' markets can help to increase customer attendance and retention, encouraging the purchase of fresh, healthy food. Among market shoppers, **72% report that they would attend the market more often if they expected regular programming**. Coupled with participatory market tours and cooking demonstrations, Lankenau's engaging health education activities and screenings have helped to establish the markets as community gathering spaces, resulting in regular customers and increased sales.

Benefits for Communities and Food Systems

- By providing free health screenings and education at farmers' markets, **hospitals can connect vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations with health information and resources for follow-up care**, helping to prevent diet-related disease and improve health outcomes.

- Lankenau's sponsorship of The Food Trust's farmers' market program—which has helped to support market staffing and administration, SNAP and Food Bucks processing and tracking, and other core program expenses—represents a critical investment in Philadelphia's healthy food access infrastructure. By supporting farmers' markets and other healthy food retail strategies, hospitals can generate economic returns for regional farmers and urban neighborhoods, while **helping to foster a more equitable food system and healthier communities.**

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Initial findings from this pilot are promising, and through continued partnership, The Food Trust and Lankenau Medical Center will work together to build on the program's successes, refine the model and expand evaluation efforts.

Next steps for this partnership include:

1. **Continuing to bring preventive care** to the community by providing services and outreach at additional healthy food retail venues including corner stores in West Philadelphia.

2. **Expanding collaboration with federally qualified health centers** associated with Lankenau to distribute Philly Food Bucks to at-risk patients.

3. **Developing a system to track longitudinal health outcomes** of Lankenau patients and their ongoing utilization of the Philly Food Bucks system and other social services.

4. **Exploring the expansion of this pilot** across the Main Line Health System and into Montgomery and Delaware counties.

The Food Trust
THEFOODTRUST.ORG

For more than 20 years, The Food Trust has been working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust's comprehensive approach includes improving food environments and teaching nutrition education in schools; working with corner store owners to increase healthy offerings and helping customers to make healthier choices; managing farmers' markets in communities that lack access to affordable produce; and encouraging grocery store development in underserved communities.
www.thefoodtrust.org.

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Lankenau Medical Center, a member of Main Line Health, is recognized as a national leader in advancing new options to diagnose and treat illness, protect against disease and save lives. Located on a 93-acre suburban campus just outside of Philadelphia, Lankenau Medical Center is a 389-bed, not-for-profit teaching hospital that includes one of the nation's leading cardiovascular centers; the Lankenau Institute of Medical Research, one of the few freestanding hospital-associated research centers in the nation; and the Annenberg Conference Center for Medical Education. Lankenau offers state-of-the-art services from cancer care to maternity care.
www.mainlinehealth.org/Lankenau

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This report was prepared by Stephanie Weiss and Jenny Weissbourd of The Food Trust. It was published in June 2015. Photos by Dave Tavani.
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