



Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Plan

Trenton, New Jersey
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Background

Community Background

Trenton, New Jersey is a small city of 90,000 that is steeped in history. Playing a pivotal role in the American Revolution, it still maintains several museums and monuments, including the Old Barracks Museum, the country's only remaining British Barracks, the New Jersey State Museum, and the Trenton Battle Monument, among others. As the state capital, Trenton is a hub of political activity and a community of vibrant cultural diversity.

Trenton also faces significant inequities and challenges common to those faced by many former industrial cities: abandoned property and homes in disrepair, dilapidated infrastructure, low incomes, housing and food insecurity, and negative outcomes relative to many health and social determinants of health indicators. Further, as the State Capital and seat of County Government, Trenton's property tax base is reduced by the presence of government buildings, making our community financially dependent on receiving State aid.

As a majority minority city, Trenton has a rich and diverse culture, but also experiences the state capital and seat of county government. Trenton's property tax base is reduced by the presence of government buildings, making our community financially dependent on receiving State aid.

While benefiting from a rich and diverse culture, Trenton residents also experience the effects of disadvantages rooted in historic racial barriers. Trenton is situated within Mercer County, one of the state's wealthiest counties, yet has a poverty rate among the highest in the state. Longstanding systemic racism and decades of disinvestment have resulted in inequitable health and socioeconomic outcomes between Trenton and the rest of the county and state overall. Trentonians face disproportionate rates of chronic disease, exacerbated by food insecurity and housing instability.

The vast majority of Trenton has been identified as a food desert by the NJ Economic Development Authority, while many Trenton Census tracts are considered 'low income, low access' areas by the US Department of Agriculture. For the first time in five years, Feeding America reported an increase in food insecurity in Mercer County with the rate rising from 7.2% in 2021 to 9.7% in 2022. A first-of-its-kind Mercer County Food Insecurity Index developed by Trenton Health Team (THT) in 2022 indicated that food insecurity in the county is concentrated in Trenton. Trenton households often have difficulty accessing, affording, and/or storing and preparing healthy, culturally appropriate food.

These same households face housing instability in a city where 62% of households are renters; more than half of all homes were built before 1940, and the housing stock is often dilapidated with high rates of vacancy and abandonment. In Trenton, housing values are low but rents are high, and two-thirds of renters and 20% of owners pay more than 30% of their income on housing. In addition, residents face high rates of housing-related health challenges like lead poisoning and asthma.

Trenton neighborhoods are often difficult for residents to navigate on foot, with broken sidewalks, poor lighting conditions and unsafe pedestrian crossings. From 2017-2021, 48% of Trenton crashes that caused a fatality or serious injury involved a pedestrian, as compared to 28% of fatal or severe crashes in Mercer County.¹

Demographics

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 five-year estimates, in Trenton, 45.5% of residents identify as African American and 38.7% as Hispanic or Latino of any race. Median household income in the city (\$44,444) is less than half that of Mercer County and the state (\$92,697 and \$97,126, respectively). More than a quarter (26.2%) of Trenton residents live below the poverty level, nearly three times the rate for New Jersey, and 20.5% of residents age 19-64 have no health insurance, more than double the rate for Mercer County and the state. There is a nearly 17-year gap between life expectancy in parts of Trenton (69.4 years) and the highest life expectancy in Mercer County (86.5 years in the north central area).

Of note, while Trenton is a majority minority city, poverty levels are similarly high across racial and ethnic groups, compounding the impact of disadvantages based on historical race-based barriers such as lack of access to quality housing, employment restrictions, and other resources. Significant disparities exist in health and social determinants of health, including public safety, education, housing, food security, and workforce development. The growing number of immigrants, primarily from Latin America, face additional challenges due to documentation or language barriers.

In general, people living in Mercer County achieve higher educational attainment in advanced degrees compared with New Jersey and the US. This is not true in Trenton; nearly 1 in 4 (23.7%) of adults over age 25 in Trenton have not attained a high school diploma. Education attainment is a key driver for wage-earning. Across the US, New Jersey and Mercer County, the proportion of white collar to blue collar workers is similar, with 35-40% of workers categorized as blue collar and roughly 60% categorized as white collar. Trenton is different, with fewer than half of Trenton workers (42%) classified as white collar workers.

Community Health Issues

Chronic Disease

Data from the New Jersey Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (2021) and the City Health Dashboard (2021) sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), identified significant health disparities between Trenton and the broader region for diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, smoking, and uninsured population. Diabetes prevalence (14.6%), smoking (24%), and lack of insurance (21%) are almost double in the city of Trenton than in Mercer County or New Jersey. Obesity and hypertension are also higher than the county and state levels, but to lesser degrees. Data is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Health Disparities²

1. <https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/crash-data/?geom=34021,county,Mercer&filter=KSI>

2. New Jersey Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (NJBRFS), Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey Department of Health. New Jersey Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, New Jersey State Health Assessment Data (NJSHAD) [online]. Accessed at <http://nj.gov/health/shad> on 08/21/2024 at 1:35 PM.

Characteristic	New Jersey	Mercer County	Trenton ³
Diabetes (adults)	10.3%	9.9%	14.6%
Obesity	28.6%*	20.3%	33.9%
Hypertension	27.8%	28.7%	35.7%
Smoking	11.1%	13.9%	23.9%
Uninsured (ages 19-64)	9.8%	8.7%	15.9%

Note: Data is for 2021. *NJ Obesity data is for 2020.

Chronic health conditions are often identified later for many Trenton residents than they would be with regular primary and preventive care. For example, Trenton residents are at much higher risk of needing emergency visits or hospitalizations due to diabetes than residents of other parts of the county. Within Mercer County, Trenton residents account for 23% of the population but accounted for a much larger proportion of the high-intensity medical interventions related to diabetes between 2019-2021. Over half of the hospitalizations and 65% of the emergency department visits for all of Mercer County were Trenton residents who had a primary and/or secondary diabetes diagnosis.

Food Insecurity

The most recent Trenton Community Health Needs Assessment⁴ developed by THT in 2022 in partnership with St. Francis Medical Center (since then closed after a merger with Capital Health), indicated that nearly 1 in 10 Mercer County residents were food insecure, as well as a slightly higher proportion of children. These numbers are significantly higher for those living in Trenton, as illustrated by THT's 2022 Mercer County Food Insecurity Index.⁵



These challenges are further exacerbated by decades of disinvestment in Trenton that has left much of the city without sources of fresh, healthy food. The NJ Economic Development Authority⁶ has identified essentially all of Trenton as a food desert. The USDA Food Access Research Atlas (2019; see Figure 2) identifies most census tracts of Trenton as being “Low Income, Low Access”, with a high concentration of low-income residents living over half a mile from a grocery store. As shown in Figure 2, approximately 14,312 individuals live within low-income neighborhoods with the nearest grocery store more than one-half mile away, representing 23% of Trenton residents. Among those residents, 12% are under age 17, 5% are seniors, 23% are Black or African American, and 11% are Hispanic or Latinx.

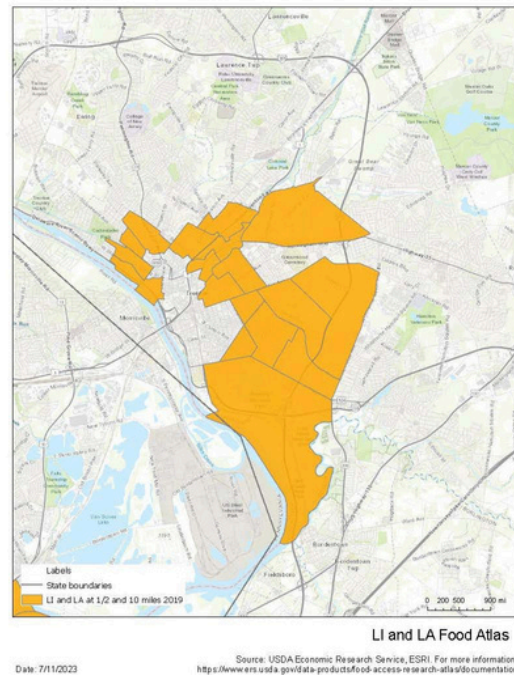
3. <https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/nj/trenton/city-overview?metric=37&dataRange=city>, City Health Dashboard accessed on 05/13/2024

4. https://trentonht.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/St.Francis.Final_.CHNA_.June.22.2022.pdf

5. [Mercer County Food Insecurity Index](#), 2022

6. [NJ Economic Development Authority Food Desert Relief Program](#) and [Map](#), 2022.

Figure 2: Census Tracts with Low Income and Low Access ($\frac{1}{2}$ mile from a grocery store)⁷



City of Trenton

Trenton Health Team, in partnership with Rider University, conducted a resident food needs survey of Trenton in 2021, with a follow up survey of Mercer County completed in 2023. The top challenges regarding the use of free food resources in Trenton included limited knowledge of available resources and eligibility, resources aren't open at times that are convenient, and lack of transportation to and from the resources. Over the past couple of years there has been significant effort to combat these challenges. The Mercer County Food Stakeholders has been a venue to collaborate and share information, Mercer Street Friends Food Bank has distributed a great deal of food and funding through its network of Local Distribution Agencies (LDAs), and The Mercer County Food Security Leaders have begun to strategically tackle the most common barriers Trentonians face when accessing food resources.

Built Environment

Trenton residents face challenges in the built environment that impact their health. The remnants of the city's industrial past include dilapidated, outdated facilities and environmental contamination. A handful of adaptive reuse projects, like the Roebling Center, have shown how these industrial properties can be redeveloped to serve the community, but a significant inventory of these properties remain inactive, and their legacy of negative environmental



7. [USDA Food Access Research Atlas](#), 2019 (last available data).

impacts is still evident today. Residents report a variety of street safety issues around the city, from poor street and sidewalk maintenance to insufficient lighting. These safety issues, along with connectivity issues like unmarked crosswalks or bike paths, prevent Trenton residents from walking or biking to work, school or to local amenities like parks and open spaces. While there are few of them, Trenton's parks are well-loved by residents and are in need of better maintenance. Trenton has a significant number of vacant and abandoned properties, and while the State of New Jersey provides useful tools to help municipalities manage these properties, the city has yet to develop a sustainable plan for returning these sites to productive use. While all of these built environment factors are important, housing is the most pressing built environment priority for residents currently.

Trenton homes are old and often in disrepair - over 70% of single-family homes were built before 1939. Sixty-two percent of Trenton households are renters, and many are at risk of unfair treatment by bad landlords and high housing costs, especially in recent years as inflation has pushed rents higher and incentivized landlords to try to remove existing renters for whom rent increases are capped. Housing is often the largest single monthly expense for households and, ideally, should represent no more than 30% of a household's monthly income. The most recent CHNA (citing American Community Survey, 2016-2020) indicates that two out of three Trenton renters and one in five Trenton homeowners paid more than 30% of their income towards housing costs. Those who are homeowners are challenged by low property values. The median home value in Trenton (\$95,800) lags far behind the median home value in Mercer County (\$291,100), New Jersey (\$335,600), and the US (\$217,500). Despite the lag, home values have actually begun to increase for the first time in decades, and investor buying has increased. This is both good news and bad news: increased investment suggests that investors are seeing long-term value in Trenton properties, however, increased investor activity makes it more difficult for Trenton residents to compete for homes in their own city.

Older houses built before the ban of lead paint in 1978 - particularly rental properties in low-income areas - are more likely to contain lead-based paint and plumbing fixtures. This contributes to Trenton having one of the highest rates of childhood lead poisoning in the state. According to the FY21 New Jersey Annual Childhood Lead Report, in Trenton 6.4% of all children screened for lead had an elevated blood level, representing the highest lead burden among all large municipalities in the state. With only 36% of children aged six years or younger being screened, this means the number of lead impacted children is likely much higher.⁸ It is also important to note that the state report looks at elevated blood lead levels of five ug/dL or greater (>5 ug/dL), but the federal reference value has since decreased to 3.5 ug/dL, so we know there are more children who are lead impacted but whose blood lead level is lower than the reference level used in the State report.

East Trenton Collaborative's Traffic Safety Community Organizing Committee conducted a traffic safety audit in 2022 to identify dangerous areas for cars, bikes and pedestrians. The audit has been hailed by the City of Trenton as a template for future city improvements.

A 2019 Choice Neighborhoods survey of Donnelly Homes residents found that residents primarily travel by car or bus, and only 15% of residents feel the neighborhood is good for walking. 51% of residents feel that pedestrian safety is a challenge in North Trenton, and brighter lighting and improved sidewalks on MLK Blvd were specifically mentioned as needed improvements.

8. [FY2021 New Jersey Annual Childhood Lead Report](#)

Partnerships

Leadership Team

Our Leadership Team included a diverse group of community stakeholders representing 10 organizations as shown in Table 2. Many of the organizations were recruited from Trenton Health Team's (THT) Community Advisory Board (CAB). Two of the Leadership Team members are Trenton residents, with significant experience working on addressing SDoH issues experienced by Trentonians.

The Leadership Team's shared mission is to create an implementation ready accelerator plan that has been informed by community stakeholders and residents that provides practical and Trenton-appropriate strategies to work towards food security and healthy housing for all Trentonians. This mission will be accomplished by leveraging data and insights to mobilize resources to meet the unique community needs.

Table 2. Leadership Team Composition

Sector Type	# of Organizations
Healthcare	2
Community Development	2
Public Health/ Health Policy	2
Academic Institution/Education	1
Social Service	1
Housing	1
Local Government	1

Capital Health: Capital Health is the region's leader in providing progressive, quality patient care with exceptional physicians, nurses, and staff as well as advanced technology.

Center for Health Care Strategies: The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a policy design and implementation partner devoted to improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid.

City of Trenton, Department of Health and Human Services: The Department of Health and Human Services advocates for and ensures access to services which enhance the quality of life for the people of Trenton.

East Trenton Collaborative: The East Trenton Collaborative is a community organizing initiative that exists to help make East Trenton a great place to live, work, and play.

Henry J Austin Health Center: Henry J. Austin Health Center delivers person-centered, high-quality health care. Working with our community partners, our exceptional team provides

trauma-informed, holistic care to maximize individuals' strengths and abilities to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Isles, Inc.: Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization based in Trenton, New Jersey. With a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities, we design and develop effective services that support this mission and share what we learn with others who can make a difference.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County: Rutgers Cooperative Extension helps the diverse population of New Jersey adapt to a rapidly changing society and improve their lives and communities through an educational process that uses science-based knowledge. Through science-based educational programs, Rutgers Cooperative Extension truly enhances the quality of life for residents of New Jersey and brings the wealth of knowledge of the state university to local communities.

Trenton Health Team: Trenton Health Team (THT) fosters cross-sector collaboration and implements innovative projects to improve health and well-being in the greater Trenton community

Trenton Housing Authority: Trenton Housing Authority is committed to building and maintaining affordable housing for City of Trenton residents.

Mercer Street Friends: Mercer Street Friends is a nonprofit organization that provides food for those who are food insecure, support for families, and educational opportunities that lead to better tomorrows.

Multisectoral Partners

In addition to the The Leadership Team, feedback and development of the SDoH Accelerator Plan was guided by two of THT's CAB existing issue-focused multisectoral stakeholder groups, specifically the Mercer County Food Stakeholders (formerly Trenton Food Stakeholders) and the Trenton Housing Stakeholders. Both of these stakeholder groups which are described below, informed the development of SDoH Accelerator Plan and many of these organizations will be involved in the implementation of the strategies included in this plan.

The Mercer County Food Stakeholders (MCFS), a collaborative convened in 2019 to address food access and the food system in a region with both significant food assets and areas of extreme need. Before the pandemic, MCFS members began the groundwork for a food systems plan. MCFS then became a critical mechanism for coordinating pandemic response and relief efforts. Members collaborated on food sourcing and distribution, analyses of need relative to food availability, public information tools, and fundraising. MCFS now includes more than 50 active stakeholders, from food safety net providers to local farmers. Its goal is to leverage the new approaches and collaborations fostered by the pandemic into a more equitable and resilient food system over the long term.

Key previous work included:

- A resident food needs survey of Trenton, conducted in 2021, with a follow up survey of Mercer County completed in 2023.
- A network analysis survey of Mercer Street Friends Food Banks member agencies, conducted in 2021
- Creation of the [Mercer County Free Food Finder](#), an interactive directory of free food resources in the region.
- A food security index at the block group level for [Mercer County](#).
- Ongoing documentation of the Mercer County food system and its key assets

The Trenton Housing Stakeholders (THS), a collaborative convened in 2021 to coordinate among local organizations that provide permanent housing services, including financial and legal support for renters and owners and the development of housing units. THS is focused on using data to define the housing landscape in Trenton. It supports stakeholders through data collection and analytics, and assisting partners to coordinate their work. THS now includes more than 20 active stakeholders, from community development to local advocacy organizations.

In order to create new linkages and avoid duplication, the leadership team also engaged The Mercer County Food Leaders (MCFSL) organization and the Trenton Lead Coordination group. THE MCFSL was formed in the Fall of 2023. It's mission is to collaborate in addressing food insecurity, promote equitable access to nutritious food, and foster community resilience. MCFSL will play a significant role in the implementation of the food and nutrition security strategies. The Trenton Lead Coordination group started meeting in 2023. The group serves as a forum for organizations working on lead in various capacities to coordinate local, on-the-ground activities like education, screening/testing, and remediation. The group is currently coordinated by Lead Free NJ's Trenton Hub and includes THT, East Trenton Collaborative, Isles, GHHL, and other partners.

Programs and Resources for SDoH

Existing Resources and Programs

Inside Trenton there are many existing resources related to Food and Nutrition Security and the Built Environment. The list below is not exhaustive, but is most relevant to the strategies outlined later in this plan.

Food and Nutrition Security

- **Arm in Arm:** Arm in Arm is a place where our community comes together to make sure we all have the most basic needs of food and shelter and, as possible, the livelihood to maintain them. Arm in Arm provides food assistance services to the Trenton community through their Huston Street food pantry and mobile pantry program.
- **Isles:** Isles' urban agriculture work addresses hunger, food access, and community disinvestment in Trenton by sharing tools, networks, and resources that empower residents and stakeholders to take action and make healthy choices.
- **Jewish Family and Children's Services:** Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community service agency that strengthens individuals and families by empowering people to care for themselves and others. The JFCS Mobile Food Pantry distributes 1,200+ bags of food each month across almost 30 partners with roughly 40% of households served through the mobile program are located in Trenton.
- **Meals on Wheels of Mercer County:** Meals on Wheels of Mercer County (MOWMC) delivers hot, nutritious and medically-tailored meals to seniors and other vulnerable populations throughout Mercer County. All meals are overseen by a registered dietician nutritionist and adhere to NJ Standards for The Nutrition Program Serving Older Adults. In addition, all participants receive fresh fruits and vegetables each week and some receive non-perishable groceries from Mercer Street Friends.
- **Mercer Street Friends Food Bank:** Mercer Street Friends Food Bank (MSFFB) leads the community response to hunger in Mercer County. As of November 2023, 24 food pantries in Trenton were part of the MSFFB network. Mercer Street Friends also operates 3 school based food pantries in Trenton.
- **SNAP-Ed:** SNAP-Ed is a federally funded grant program that teaches about good nutrition, how to make food dollars stretch further, and increasing physical activity. Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County is the partner offering the program in Trenton, which includes nutrition education classes and healthy food access initiatives.
- **SNAP Navigation:** SNAP Navigators teach you about SNAP availability, eligibility requirements, can answer your questions about applying and assist you with your SNAP application. SNAP navigators are available in Trenton through the United Way of Greater Mercer County.
- **Trenton Area Soup Kitchen:** Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) feeds the hungry and offers programs and services to encourage self-sufficiency and improve quality of life for people in the Greater Trenton Area. In addition to TASK'S Escher St location they operate a mobile soup kitchen and provide meals to community partners.

Built Environment

- **Lead screening, testing and remediation:**

Lead screening for individuals is available through private healthcare providers, though both East Trenton Collaborative and the City of Trenton offer occasional public screening events. Isles offers free Healthy Homes Assessments, which include lead testing, to all Mercer County residents. Income-eligible residents may also qualify for free or reduced-cost lead remediation services.

- **Traffic Calming pilot projects:**

East Trenton Collaborative has coordinated the resident-led Traffic Safety Community Organizing Committee (TSCOC) since 2020. The TSCOC has coordinated with the City of Trenton to repaint crosswalks, repave streets, add speed bumps, and install temporary bump-outs and daylighting at key intersections.

Approach

SDOH Priority Areas

Priority 1: Food and Nutrition Security

Priority 2: Built Environment

The two SDOH priority areas have been selected based on public and proprietary data sources, including data summarized in the most recent 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), resident and stakeholder priorities, and the fact that nutritious food and stable housing underpin health and well-being.

The process for plan creation happened in multiple phases. The first phase of the planning process included the collection of existing conditions information related to our priority areas. Once this information was collected and summarized it was shared with the leadership team to further define the community served and problems faced. This served as a baseline to work from for the planning process. Once we had the baseline completed, we conducted stakeholder outreach to determine needs, priorities, gaps in service, and suggestions for interventions. This information was collected via various methods including stakeholder meetings, individual outreach to organizations, and community conversations.

Once we had a list of suggested interventions, we reviewed each intervention with the leadership team to determine feasibility. Agreed upon interventions made it to the next phase where we determined which organization(s) would be responsible for implementation. During this phase we continued to solicit feedback from the methods mentioned early. Lastly, we developed an evaluation and implementation plan.

Food and Nutrition Security Goals and Strategies

As outlined in Table 3, this accelerator plan contains three main goals focused on improving food and nutrition security. Within these goals are thirteen identified strategies. Each strategy is described below and included in the Implementation Plan shown in Appendix A.

Table 3. Food and Nutrition Security Goals and Strategies

Goal	Strategy
1. Increase knowledge of available food resource and benefit programs	1.1 Promote the Mercer County Free Food Finder (MCFFF)
	1.2 Targeted Benefit Enrollment (SNAP maybe WIC)
	1.3 Promote local Good Food Bucks programs (Greenwood Ave; maybe Trenton Farmers Market)
	1.4 Coordinate communications across organizations to build partnerships via the Mercer County Food Stakeholders
2. Reduce barriers to access and utilization of available food resources (both free and purchased)	2.1 Expand mobile food pantry & meal programs
	2.2 Expand resident resources at existing school-based pantries
	2.3 Expand nutrition education and cooking classes
	2.4 Engage local transit partners to address transportation barriers to food access locations
3. Improve availability of healthy, fresh, and culturally preferred foods	3.1 Create or expand produce prescription programs
	3.2 Expand meal rescue programs
	3.3 Expand community and school gardens
	3.4 Expand availability of culturally preferred foods at food pantries
	3.5 Expand implementation of healthy pantry initiatives (Growing Healthy Pantries & The PA Healthy Pantry Initiative)

Goal 1: Increase knowledge of available food resource and benefit programs

Strategy 1.1 Promote the Mercer County Free Food Finder (MCFFF)

One of the biggest barriers to accessing free food resources in Trenton, based on THT's 2022/23 Mercer County Food Needs Survey, is that residents don't know what resources are available or what they may qualify for. The Mercer County Free Food Finder (MCFFF) lists meals sites, food pantries, and meal distribution sites serving children, families, seniors and adults. We will create a dedicated communications plan to promote and share the tool with target populations, review utilization on a quarterly basis, and modify promotion as needed.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of monthly visits

Collection Mechanism: App analytics

Strategy 1.2 Targeted Benefit Enrollment (SNAP maybe WIC)

There are specific areas of Trenton where there is an underutilization of SNAP. Using data from the Mercer County Food Insecurity Index (MCFII), we will identify areas where there is low SNAP enrollment and high poverty. Once areas have been identified we will work with United Way to target outreach to these areas, host events, and evaluate participation to determine level of success.

Responsible Party: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Partners: Rider University, Trenton Health Team, United Way of Mercer County

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of enrollees in SNAP; # of enrollees in WIC

Collection Mechanism: Administrative data

Strategy 1.3 Promote local Good Food Bucks programs (Greenwood Ave; maybe Trenton Farmers Market)

Not all Trenton residents who receive SNAP are aware of incentive and matching programs like Good Food Bucks. Good Food Bucks help SNAP recipients buy more fresh fruits and vegetables at New Jersey farmers markets. We will create communications materials to promote the Good Food Bucks program at the Greenwood Ave Farmers Market, and this may be expanded if the Trenton Farmers Market begins to offer this program.

Responsible Party: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of Good Food Bucks vouchers used

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 1.4 Coordinate communications across organizations to build partnerships via the Mercer County Food Stakeholders

The Mercer County Food Stakeholders was convened to drive collaboration to address food system issues facing our region and to build on the good work of previous similar efforts. We will continue to convene this group with the goal of maximizing collective impact to expand healthy food access.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team/Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of engagements among MCFS members

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Goal 2: Reduce barriers to access and utilization of available food resources (both free and purchased)

Strategy 2.1 Expand mobile food pantry & meal programs

Lack of transportation is a significant barrier to accessing free food resources in Trenton, based on resident feedback from THT's 2022/23 Mercer County Food Needs Survey. Mobile food pantries & meal trucks bring free food right to the areas where people need it most. Using data from the MCFFF & MCFII, we will work with the mobile food providers to expand distribution in the areas with the high food insecurity and limited access to transportation.

Responsible Party: Arm in Arm/Jewish Family and Children's Services of Mercer County/Trenton Area Soup Kitchen/Mercer County Meals on Wheels

Partners: Mercer Street Friends, Trenton Health Team

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of recipients

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 2.2 Expand resident resources at existing school-based pantries

School pantries provide free food for students and their families. Mercer Street Friends currently operates food pantries at the three community schools. We will work with MSF to expand the availability of resources at the food pantries.

Responsible Party: Mercer Street Friends

Partners: Trenton Public Schools

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of resources at school-based pantries

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 2.3 Expand nutrition education and cooking classes

An important aspect of food and nutrition security is healthy food utilization by residents. Nutrition education and cooking classes teach individuals how to prepare meals with healthy ingredients that they will enjoy. We will work with the organizations who already provide nutrition education and cooking classes to expand to new locations.

Responsible Party: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Partners: Eating for Your Health, Henry J Austin Health Center, Isles, Progressive Center for Independent Living

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of new nutrition education and/or cooking classes

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 2.4 Engage local transit partners to address transportation barriers to food access locations

Lack of transportation is a significant barrier to accessing free food resources in Trenton. A partner organization, Isles, Inc., recently launched their “Go Trenton” resident e-vehicle transportation program. One of the goals of “Go Trenton” is to increase access to nutritious food through clean, reliable transportation. We will work with “Go Trenton” to increase transportation options to key food assets such as at the Trenton Farmers Market.

Responsible Party: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County/Trenton Health Team

Partners: City of Trenton, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association, Isles, Mercer County Department of Transportation

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of transit improvements to enhance food access

Collection Mechanism: Environmental scan

Goal 3: Improve availability of healthy, fresh, and culturally preferred foods

Strategy 3.1 Create and/or expand produce prescription programs

Healthcare providers can play an important role in increasing food security for patients who are at risk of diet related chronic conditions. Produce prescription programs provide fresh produce for at risk populations. We will work with the Trenton healthcare partners to secure funding to create and/or expand produce prescription programs for target populations.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team

Partners: Capital Health, Henry J Austin Health Center

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of produce prescription programs

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 3.2 Expand meal rescue programs

Food waste is a major issue with a significant amount of food going unsold and a minimal amount of prepared food is recovered for donation. Share My Meals is a NJ-based non-profit organization whose mission is to fight both food insecurity and the environmental impact of food waste. They accomplish this by recovering healthy meals from 40 plus recurring meal donors and delivering the meals to residents in local communities. We will work with Share My Meals to increase their meal distribution to Trenton families.

Responsible Party: Share My Meals

Partners: Anchor House, Boy and Girls Club of Mercer County, Capital Health, Gesture of Love, Homefront, Kind Collective, Trenton Health Team, Workswell

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of program participants

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 3.3 Expand community and school gardens

Hands-on opportunities to learn about agriculture are limited in urban areas like Trenton. Community and school gardens provide residents and students, respectively, with first hand experience growing their own food, often empowering them to make healthy choices. We will support Isles, Inc. as they continue to offer garden-based environmental education to residents and schools.

Responsible Party: Isles

Partners: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County, Trenton Public Schools

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of active community and/or school gardens

Collection Mechanism: Environmental scan

Strategy 3.4 Expand availability of culturally preferred foods at food pantries

Through stakeholder feedback, we have identified a gap in the availability of culturally preferred foods in Trenton food pantries. The CDC describes culturally preferred foods as “safe and nutritious foods that meet the diverse tastes and needs of customers based on their cultural identity”. We will administer surveys and lead community conversations to understand the food preferences of Trenton residents, and work with MSF Food Bank to expand availability of the preferred food items.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team/Mercer Street Friends

Partners: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2025

Key Outputs: # of pantries services culturally-preferred foods

Collection Mechanism: Food distribution agency survey

Strategy 3.5 Expand implementation of healthy pantry initiatives (Growing Healthy Pantries & The PA Healthy Pantry Initiative)

Healthy pantry initiatives focus on increasing healthy food and beverage options availability in food pantries. We will work with a subset of Mercer County pantries to implement the Growing Healthy Pantries or PA Healthy Pantry Initiative.

Responsible Party: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County/Mercer Street Friends

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of “healthy” pantries

Collection Mechanism: Food distribution agency survey

Built Environment Goals and Strategies

As outlined in Table 4, this accelerator plan contains four main goals focused on improving the build environment. Within these goals are seven identified strategies. Each strategy is described below and included in the Implementation Plan shown in Appendix A.

Table 4. Built Environment Goals and Strategies

Goal	Strategy
1. Increase knowledge of available home repair and remediation programs	1.1 Promote existing home repair programs (not focused on lead)
	1.2 Promote free lead testing and expand remediation programs
2. Increase inspection and remediation of lead-impacted homes	2.1 Target inspection and remediation of lead-impacted homes for target populations including households with pregnant families and/or homes built before 1978
3. Reduce lead exposure and poisoning	3.1 Target blood lead level screenings for people living in likely lead-impacted homes or other target populations including pregnant women
	3.2 Expand mobile blood lead level screenings
4. Improve transportation safety via complete streets	4.1 Pilot complete streets project using DVRPC Complete Streets Design Handbook
	4.2 increase traffic calming via low cost interventions

Goal 1: Increase knowledge of available home repair and remediation programs

Strategy 1.1 Promote existing home repair programs (not focused on lead)

Existing home repair programs are limited to specific neighborhoods and income ranges. Home repair may include remediation of environmental hazards other than lead, or other essential health and safety improvements. We will coordinate existing programs and work to expand them to a broader geography and/or population.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team/Isles

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of program participants

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 1.2 Promote free lead testing and expand remediation programs

Lead testing is available for free to all Mercer County property owners, but few owners take advantage of this service. Subsidized remediation programs are limited to households making less than 80% AMI. We will expand outreach and identify funding sources to make testing and remediation programs free for a broader range of residents based on income eligibility.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team/Isles

Partners: Many

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of program participants

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Goal 2: Increase inspection and remediation of lead-impacted homes

Strategy 2.1 Target inspection and remediation of lead-impacted homes for target populations including households with pregnant families and/or homes built before 1978

Home inspections typically happen after an occupant has been diagnosed with elevated blood lead levels. This is too late, particularly for pregnant people, who are at greater risk for the impacts of lead poisoning. Proactive inspection could prevent lead exposure among residents. We will utilize health data and property records to target homes that are likely lead-impacted for inspection. We will introduce a pilot program for pregnant families that includes free healthy homes assessments, lead risk assessments and lead remediation.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team

Partners: City of Trenton, East Trenton Collaborative, Isles, Lead-Free NJ Trenton Hub, Trenton Housing Authority

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of inspections and remediations completed

Collection Mechanism: Administrative data

Goal 3: Reduce lead exposure and poisoning

Strategy 3.1 Target blood lead level screenings for people living in likely lead-impacted homes or other target populations including pregnant women

Only about 36% of children under the age of six are being screened for lead in Trenton, which means that far more children are impacted by lead than current numbers indicate. We will utilize health data and property records to target people who live in homes that are likely lead-impacted for screening. We will introduce a pilot program for pregnant families that includes the coordination of free screening for the pregnant person and any children in the family.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team

Partners: City of Trenton, East Trenton Collaborative, Isles, Lead-Free NJ Trenton Hub, Trenton Housing Authority

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of test completed

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Strategy 3.2 Expand mobile blood lead level screenings

Transportation to and from a health clinic remains a significant barrier to completing blood lead level screenings for many Trenton families. Mobile screening units bring services to the areas where residents need it most. We will coordinate with mobile screening providers and local community-based organizations to schedule screening events in neighborhoods with low screening rates and high risk of lead exposure.

Responsible Party: Trenton Health Team/City of Trenton

Partners: Capital Health, East Trenton Collaborative, Henry J Austin Health Center

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of test completed

Collection Mechanism: Program data

Goal 4: Improve transportation safely via complete streets

Strategy 4.1 Pilot complete streets project using DVRPC Complete Streets Design Handbook

Existing home repair programs are limited to specific neighborhoods and income ranges. Home repair may include remediation of environmental hazards other than lead, or other essential health and safety improvements. We will coordinate existing programs and work to expand them to a broader geography and/or population.

Responsible Party: TBD dependent on pending funding

Partners: City of Trenton, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Isles, Trenton Housing Authority, Trenton Health Team

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of projects completed

Collection Mechanism: Environmental scan

Strategy 4.2 Increase traffic calming via low cost interventions

Transportation to and from a health clinic remains a significant barrier to completing blood lead level screenings for many Trenton families. Mobile screening units bring services to the areas where residents need it most. We will coordinate with mobile screening providers and local community-based organizations to schedule screening events in neighborhoods with low screening rates and high risk of lead exposure.

Responsible Party: East Trenton Collaborative

Partners: City of Trenton, Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association, Mercer County Department of Transportation, Trenton Health Team, Trenton Cycling Revolution

Timeframe: Oct 2024-September 2026

Key Outputs: # of projects completed

Collection Mechanism: Environmental scan

Anticipated Reach

While we anticipate the strategies included in this plan will benefit the entire Trenton community, specific strategies will be targeted to the areas where they are needed the most. For example, promotion of the Mercer County Free Food Finder will be targeted to the areas with higher food insecurity as identified by the Mercer County Food Insecurity Index. Similarly, we will use data related to the age of the housing stock and previous elevated blood lead level screenings to target lead remediation programs.

Outcomes

Food and Nutrition Security

Short-term:

- Increased knowledge of available food resources and benefit programs
- Increased knowledge of nutrition and healthy cooking preparation techniques

Medium-term:

- Increased availability of healthy, fresh, and culturally preferred food at food pantries in Trenton
- Increased SNAP Enrollment, Reduced Barriers to resource food resource utilizations

Long-term:

- Increased food security in Trenton, decreased rates of diet related chronic conditions

Built Environment

Short-term:

- Increased knowledge of available home repair and remediation programs
- Increased inspection of likely lead-impacted homes
- Increased remediation of lead-impacted homes
- Increased blood lead level screening rates

Medium-term:

- Reduced lead exposure and poisoning
- Increased traffic calming

Long-term:

- Decreased rates of chronic conditions caused by poor housing conditions
- Increased traffic safety for all road users

Evaluation of the SDoH Accelerator Plan Strategies

While it is the intention of the partners to produce the outcomes listed above, sufficient investment does not currently exist to implement and sustain a robust evaluation plan. Key output indicators were developed for each strategy and will be evaluated via annual reports of the responsible party back to the Trenton Health Team. Where applicable, baseline data 2024 will serve as the baseline for indicators in which an increase or expansion is suggested.

Data Integration

THT will serve as the lead organization responsible for data integration across partners. When applicable, THT's internal data team will collect, analyze, and share data with project partners. From the implementation and evaluation of this accelerator plan, THT and its partners will use data from both public and proprietary data sources. The public data sources may include the Census, CDC, and New Jersey Department of Health. The proprietary data sources may include the Trenton Health Information Exchange (HIE) and program and administrative data from partner organizations.

Responsible Party

A responsible party has been identified for each of the strategies listed above. The responsible party will lead planning, implementation, and reporting for the individual strategies. In some circumstances there are multiple organizations listed as the responsible party and they will share the aforementioned responsibilities. Partner organizations may support each strategy in a wide variety of ways such as program outreach and recruitment, technical assistance, grant writing, and evaluation. As the CDC SDoH Accelerator Plan grant recipient and author, THT remains the lead organization responsible for reporting the success across strategies towards accomplishing the goals included in the plan.

Sustainability/ Funding Strategy

In order to successfully expand and sustain implementation of the strategies included in this plan, there will be an ongoing need to assess the level of current and future funding. Many of the strategies included in the plan can be implemented without the need for significant additional funding by aligning efforts with funded projects and programs. As described in the implementation plan activities, some strategies require new or expanded funding sources. These strategies are currently unfunded or would require additional funding to expand.

Appendix A: Implementation Plan

Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan:

Strategy	Responsible Party	Partners	Activities	Timeframe
Promote the Mercer County Free Food Finder	THT	Many	Identify and promote to target populations On a quarterly basis, review food finder utilization and modify as needed	Oct 2024-September 2025

Targeted benefit enrollment	RCE	Rider, THT, UW	Analyze MCFII data to determine block groups with low SNAP utilization and high poverty Identify and reach out to potential partner locations to host SNAP enrollment events in the target block groups Host events and evaluate participation to determine level of success	Oct 2024-September 2025
Promote local Good Food Bucks (GFB) programs	RCE	Many	Identify GFB locations and promote to target populations	Oct 2024-September 2025
Coordinate communications across organizations to build partnerships via the Mercer County Food Stakeholders	THT/RCE	Many	Hold monthly virtual meetings Hold quarterly in person meeting	Oct 2024-September 2025
Expand mobile food pantry & meal programs	AiA/JFCS/TASK/MOWMC	MSF, THT	Analyze MCFII data to determine block groups with high food insecurity and limited transportation options Expand mobile pantry/ meal distribution to the transportation constrained block groups	Oct 2024-September 2025
Expand resident resources at existing school-based	MSF	TPS	Assess school community need and current resources	Oct 2024-September 2025

pantries			available Working with local partners expand resources available	
Expand nutrition education and cooking classes	RCE	EFYH, HJAHC, Isles, PCIL	Identify gaps in residents served Coordinate plan to expand reach	Oct 2024-September 2025
Engage local transit partners to address transportation barriers to food access locations	RCE/THT	COT ,DVRPC GMTMA, Isles, MCDOT,	Identify locations which could benefit from new transit routes Assess current transportation options Develop new transportation routes or services	Oct 2024-September 2026
Create and/or expand produce prescription programs	THT	CH, HJAHC	Identify target populations Identify funding sources to create and/or expand produce prescription programs	Oct 2024-September 2026
Expand meal rescue programs	SMM	AH, BGC, CH, GoL, HomeFront, KC, THT, Workswell	Identify target populations who would benefit from receiving prepared meals and target recruitments efforts	Oct 2024-September 2025
Expand community and school gardens	Isles	RCE, TPS	Identify locations suitable for gardens Identify target populations Engage with	Oct 2024-September 2025

			school representatives to begin new gardens and reactivate old/defunct	
Expand availability of culturally preferred foods at food pantries	THT/MSF	RCE	Conduct survey to determine cultural appropriateness of foods served in pantries Address priority gaps at food bank level for distribution to pantries	Oct 2024-September 2025
Expand implementation of healthy pantry initiatives (Growing Healthy Pantries & The PA Healthy Pantry Initiative)	RCE/MSF	Many	Recruit pantries for initiative Conduct assessments Develop action plans for enhancements	Oct 2024-September 2026

List of organizations: Anchor House (AH), Arm in Arm (AiA), Boy and Girls Club of Mercer County (BGC), Capital Health (CH), City of Trenton (COT), Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), Eating for Your Health (EFYH), Gesture of Love (GoL), Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association (GMTMA), Henry J Austin Health Center, (HJAHC), HomeFront, Isles, Inc (Isles), Jewish Family and Children's Services of Mercer County (JFCS), Kind Collective (KC), Mercer County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Meals on Wheels of Mercer County (MOWMC), Mercer Street Friends (MSF), Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL), Rider University (Rider), Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County (RCE), Share My Meals (SMM), Trenton Health Team (THT), Trenton Public Schools (TPS), United Way of Greater Mercer County (UW), Workswell

Built Environment Implementation Plan

Strategy	Responsible Party	Partners	Activities	Timeframe
Promote existing home repair programs (not focused on lead)	THT/Isles	Many	Identify and reach out to target population	Oct 2024-September 2026
Promote free lead testing and expand remediation programs	THT/Isles	Many	Identify and reach out to target population Identify funding sources to expand	Oct 2024-September 2026

			subsidized remediation programs	
Target inspection and remediation of lead-impacted homes for target populations including households with pregnant families and/or homes built before 1978	THT	COT, ETC, Isles, LFNJTH, THA,	<p>Acquire health and property data</p> <p>Analyze data to identify target populations/properties</p> <p>Reach out to target population to educate about lead risks and inform about available services</p> <p>Coordinate with COT, Isles and other agencies to perform assessments and inspections</p>	Oct 2024-September 2026
Target blood lead level screenings for people living in likely lead-impacted homes or other target populations including pregnant women	THT	COT, ETC, Isles, LFNJTH, THA,	<p>Acquire health and property data</p> <p>Analyze data to identify target populations/properties</p> <p>Reach out to target population to educate about lead risks and inform about available services</p> <p>Coordinate with providers to perform screenings</p>	Oct 2024-September 2026
Expand mobile blood lead level screenings	THT/COT	CH, ETC, HJAHC	<p>Analyze data to identify target populations</p> <p>Convene partners to review data and determine target locations for mobile screenings</p>	Oct 2024-September 2026

			<p>Identify funding sources to expand screenings</p> <p>Scheduling screening events in target locations</p>	
Pilot complete streets project using DVRPC Complete Streets Design Handbook	TBD	COT, DVRPC, Isles, THA, THT	<p>COT will contract with engineer to design project</p> <p>Design team will coordinate community outreach</p> <p>Design will be prepared for bid</p> <p>COT/THA will identify additional sources of funding for construction</p>	Oct 2024-September 2026
Increase traffic calming via low cost interventions	ETC	COT, GMTMA, MDOT, THT, TCR	<p>Identify road safety issues (speeding, truck traffic, street damage, and unsafe crossings)</p> <p>Install low cost traffic calming interventions</p> <p>Monitor interventions and communicate findings to increase traffic safety awareness.</p>	Oct 2024-September 2026

List of organizations: City of Trenton (COT), Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), East Trenton Collaborative (ETC), Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association (GMTMA), Isles, Inc (Isles), Lead-Free NJ Trenton Hub (LFNJTH), Mercer County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Trenton Cycling Revolution (TCR), Trenton Housing Authority (THA), Trenton Health Team (THT)