



Working to Save Our Rural Grocery Stores One Challenge at a Time

Challenge 1: Competition with Big Box Chain Grocery Stores

In the past twenty years, we have seen the dramatic rise in the number of big box stores, and it is difficult for rural grocers to compete with these stores. Customer surveys indicate that the top two reasons people select grocery stores are food price and variety of food choice – often the very strength of big box stores. At the same time, many rural citizens working in larger cities simply stop for groceries on their way out of town. Yet, local grocery stores are critical to our rural communities and we must strive to find ways to increase sales volume providing more dollars for community investment and rural community sustainability.



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Fast Facts:

- A 2005 study reveals big box grocery stores displace smaller, local food stores.
- Food prices may be to up 40% higher at rural stores, in part due to transportation costs.
- 42% of rural households have no access to public transportation.
- Incidences of diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and heart disease increase by a lack of access to healthy foods.

Solutions

Surveys of rural grocery customers offer some possible solutions to pulling more people into local groceries. While the top two reasons people shop at particular stores are **price and food variety**, the next four

reasons people select stores offer rural grocers an opportunity to attract additional business. Rural customers reported important to their choice of grocery store were issues of: **customer service, store cleanliness,**

convenient business hours, and supporting local business. Each of these offer areas rural grocers can address. For additional information please visit our website at www.ruralgrocery.org.

Kansas Best Practices:

The goal of Little River's grocery store – the Garden of Eden – is to give complete, friendly, superior service. Owner David Nelson tells his customers, "This is your store. What would you like us to put on the shelves? Let us know what you need and we will get it. Let us carry your groceries and load your car."