



Duval County Medical Society

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DCMS FOUNDATION LEADS JACKSONVILLE IN TACKLING FOOD DESERTS

Jacksonville, FL (May 15, 2019) – This evening, Jacksonville City Council Members unanimously approved an ordinance that creates an incentive program for grocers to enter into food deserts in the northwest quadrant of Jacksonville.

The legislation stems from the Duval County Medical Society Foundation’s 2017 Future of Healthcare Conference. This annual conference brings together healthcare professionals, local politicians, university leaders, and non-profit organizations to discuss Northeast Florida’s most concerning health issues and work toward unified solutions.

Following the 2017 event, Conference attendees formed a coalition to create public policy that would tackle the food deserts issue.

“What this suggests is that having a conference where you don’t just talk about the issues that affect the health of Northeast Florida but come up with actionable items, actually can make a difference,” said Dr. Sunil Joshi, DCMS Foundation President. “When you group people together and you get the public sector, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector working together on an issue, anything can happen.”

To qualify as a food desert, according to United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) standards, at least 500 people in and/or at least 33 percent of the population of an urban census tract must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store.

Recent studies on the effects of food deserts found that communities which lack access to fresh, healthy foods will likely result in increased rates of premature death, typically the result of chronic health conditions. Nearly 180,000 people in Jacksonville are food insecure.

The new incentive program will utilize \$3 million in funds that was appropriated from the Northwest Jacksonville Economic Development Fund.

Interview Opportunities:

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