

Report Contributors

Daniel Block, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Geography, Coordinator of the Neighborhood Assistance Center
Chicago State University

Jessica Hooberman, MPH
Director of Community Planning
Chicago Center for Community Partnerships
Chicago Department of Public Health

Darrell Moore
Cartographer
Chicago State University

Rich Noty, MA
Research Associate
Chicago Department of Public Health

LaDonna Redmond
Project Director
Chicago Food System Collaborative

Erica Salem, MPH
Assistant Commissioner
Planning, Development, and Community Partnerships
Chicago Department of Public Health

Support for the activities described in this report comes in part from the Searle Funds at the Chicago Community Trust, the Michael Reese Health Trust, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

Copies of this report can be obtained from the Chicago Department of Public Health's website at www.cityofchicago.org/Health. Other inquiries may be directed by e-mail to partnerships@cdph.org.





Two different approaches were used to conduct the assessments described in this report. The Austin assessment was conducted by the Chicago Food Systems Collaborative.

The methodology of the Austin study was developed by adapting instructions set out in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "Community Food Assessment Handbook" to the Austin community and through discussions with community members. A list of foods was prepared based on a list in the USDA's handbook with additional items suggested by community members and a nutritionist in the collaborative. The foods in the USDA handbook are based on recipes in the second week of the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, designed to provide a healthy diet for a family of four of modest means. This USDA list has a number of problems, in particular it does not include many items that are culturally important in the Austin community. The final list consisted of 102 foods. Questions were also added on the quality of the produce (rated as either acceptable or poor) and the availability of organic foods in each food category. The Northeastern Food Security Assessment is just beginning work following a similar methodology in six Chicago communities.

The survey takers consisted of eight teams,

Report Highlights

Detailed findings for each of the five communities follow on pages 7-16. The aggregated findings of our surveys are:

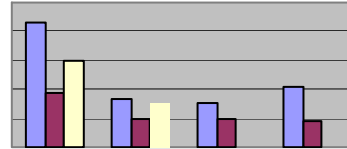
- Just over one-half of the 178 stores that sell food do not carry fruits or vegetables.
- Four of the five communities are served by at least one chain supermarket or chain discount supermarket. The seven chain stores, along with 17 independent chain supermarkets, are most likely to carry the largest variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. The produce at these stores generally received a higher quality rating than that found at other stores.
- The majority of stores that sell food, 54%, are corner stores. Of these 97 stores, 39% offered no produce. In four communities, most of the produce that received a “poor” or “would not buy” rating is found in corner stores.
- Excluding the 26 liquor stores, the percentage of food stores within a community that sell produce ranges from 46% in Chicago

A Look at Other Factors

Tobacco

In addition to healthy eating, another behavior-related influence on the health of Chicagoans concerns tobacco use. For this reason, we examined the availability of tobacco in selected communities.

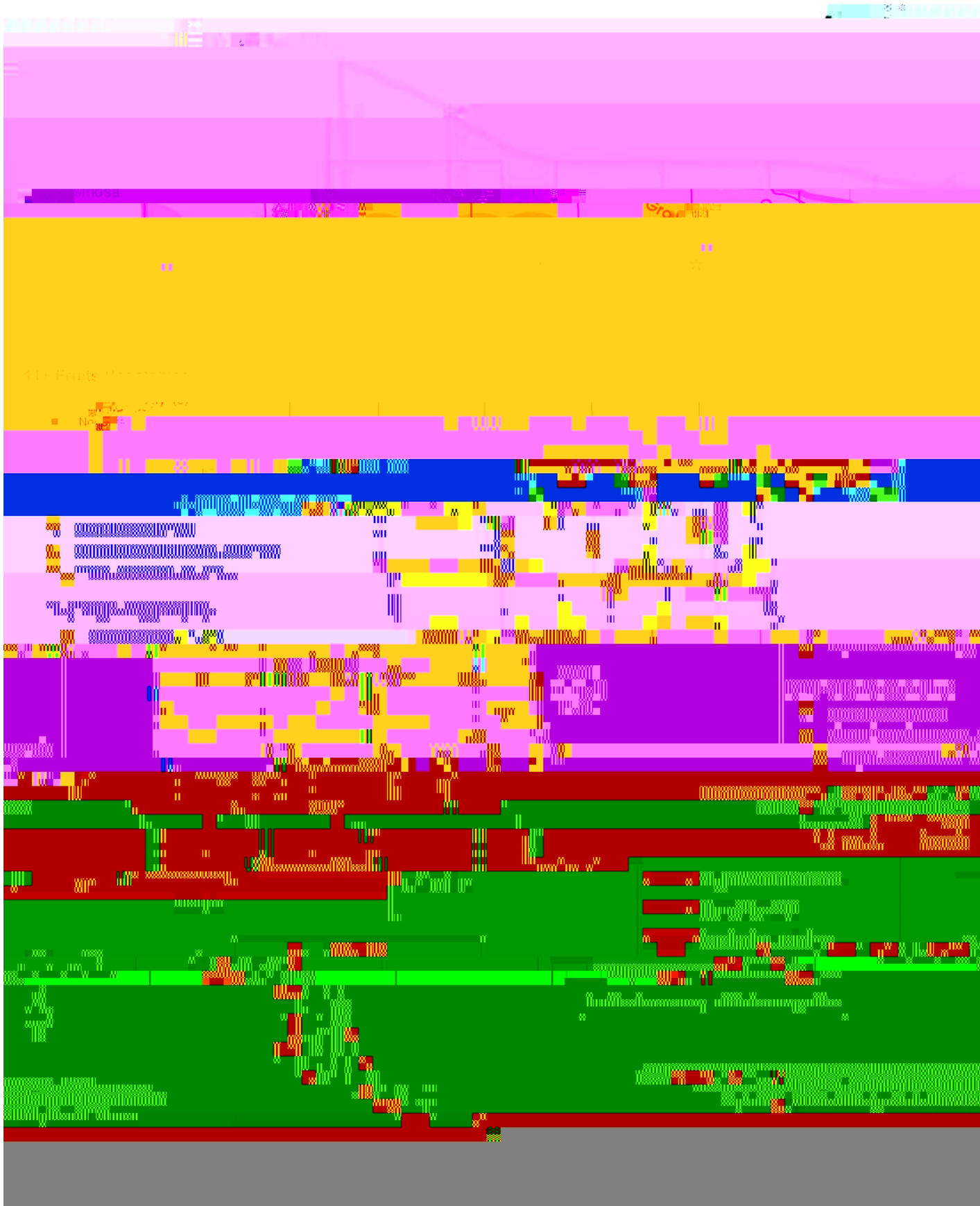
In Chicago Lawn, Hermosa, North Lawndale, and South Chicago, surveyors assessed the availability of tobacco products (cigarettes and chewing tobacco) in area stores. Across the four communities are a total of 96 food stores. Collectively, 81% (78) of these stores sell tobacco products. Within these same communities, only 50% (48) of the stores sell fresh fruits or vegetables, meaning that stores are 62% more likely to sell tobacco products than fresh produce.



Surveyors also looked at the number of stores with advertisements for tobacco. Posted tobacco ads were much more prevalent than posted nutritional information or low sugar/low fat aisles. In total, 51 of the 96 stores display tobacco ads, while only 10 stores post nutritional information and/or low sugar/low fat aisles.

Fast food/take out restaurants

Information on the types of restaurants was also gathered in the five communities to provide more insight into both the availability of healthy foods and healthy eating behaviors. Across the five communities the majority of restaurants were either fast food or take out restaurants, with typical fare including hamburgers, french fries, fried chicken, and pizza. In total there are 255 restaurants, of which 76% (194) are either fast food or take-out. The presence of fast food and take out restaurants ranged from 40% (South Chicago) of restaurants to 96% of restaurants (Austin).



Grocery Shopping in Chicago

Background

Austin is a community of just over 117,500 on the western edge of Chicago. It has a primarily African-American population that includes a variety of income groups, ranging from lower to upper income. Austin is notable for its generally good housing stock, and the long-term residency of many of those who live there. Despite this, it also features high rates of violent crime, certain health problems such as diabetes, and an infant mortality rate well above the citywide rate.

Austin is the most populous community in Chicago, yet it has only one large chain supermarket. Many Austinites must go to neighboring communities to buy their food; this can be a problem when many households do not own a car.

Findings

- Austin is served by 82 food stores. Of those, there is one chain supermarket, two discount supermarkets, three independent supermarkets, 50 corner stores, seven drug or convenience stores, and 19 liquor stores with food.
- Out of all the corner stores, 60% carry either little or no produce.
- Chain supermarkets carry the vast majority of the items.
- Per capita there is one large food store for every 19,578 residents.
- All poor quality fresh produce is found at corner stores and liquor stores with food in Austin.
- Of the 35 corner stores and liquor stores with food that carry fresh produce in Austin, 19 had at least one poor quality item.
- The three corner stores in Austin that carry at least 11 fresh produce items have no poor quality items recorded.
- The price of fresh produce and meat is generally lower at Independent Supermarkets and corner stores than at chain supermarkets. The opposite is true for all other foods.
- 31% of households in Austin do not own cars.



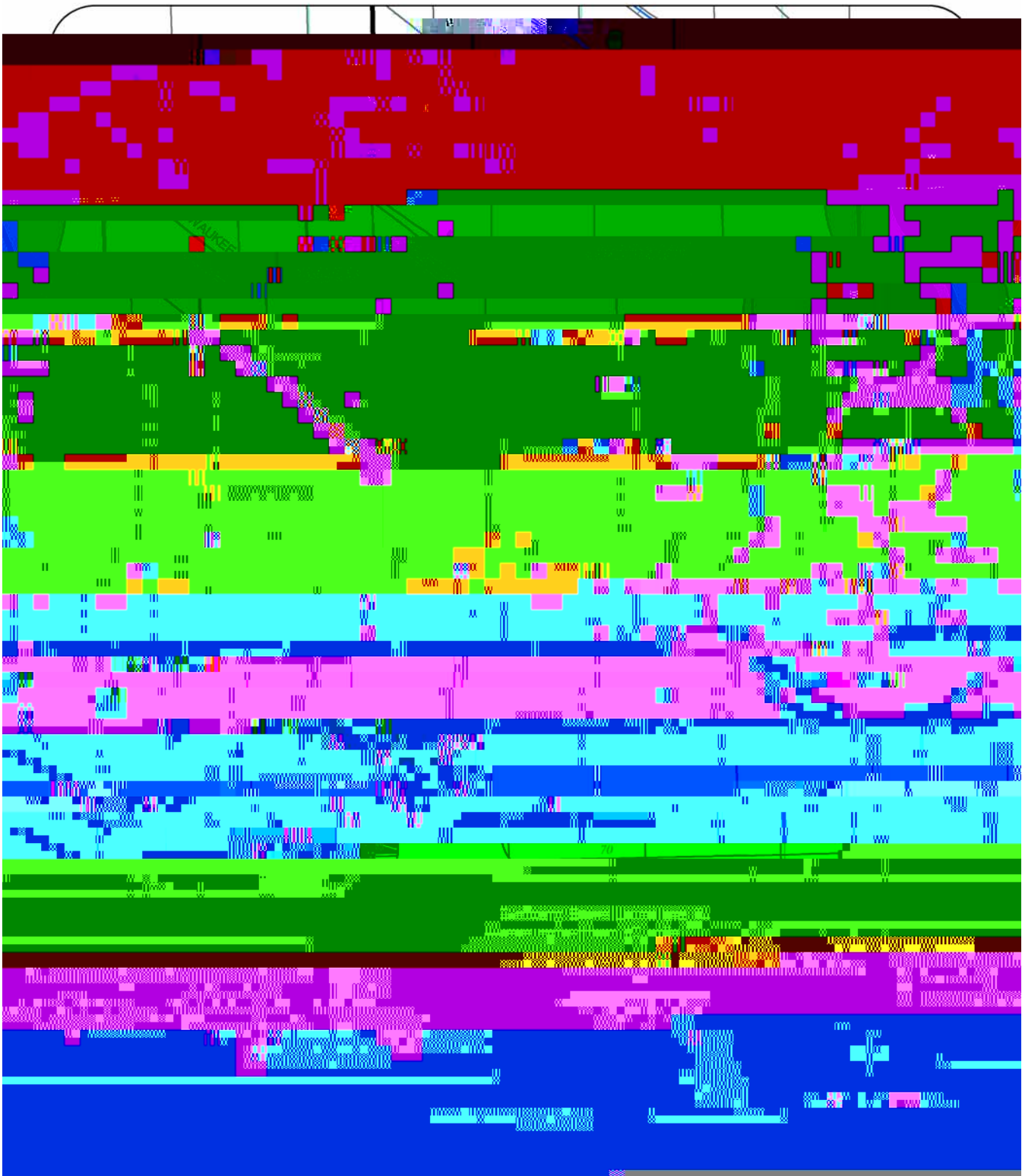
Background

The Chicago Lawn community area is located on the southwest side of Chicago and has a population of 61,412. Historically a Lithuanian community, the demographics have shifted to become more diverse, with 52% of residents African American, 35% Hispanic, and 10% White. There is diversity within the ethnicities as well; the Hispanic population consists of individuals of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and South American descent, and the White population consists of individuals of Lithuanian and Middle Eastern descent. Compared to neighboring communities, Chicago Lawn residents have higher rates of preventable hospitalizations due to such conditions as congestive heart failure and diabetes complications. And while the City's overall poverty rate decreased by 10% over the past 10 years, the proportion of Chicago Lawn residents living in poverty has increased. The community is, however, experiencing some revitalization with renewed interest in the bungalow housing stock and the creation of new community collaborations.

Findings

- Of the 43 food stores in Chicago Lawn one half are corner stores. There is also one national chain supermarket, one discount supermarket, 3 independent supermarkets, and a number of convenience stores.
- Per capita there is 1 large food store per 15,353 residents.
- 70% of the stores sell tobacco products and 30% of the stores sell alcohol.
- 37% of food stores sell fresh produce.
- Stores with the highest variety of produce are either national chain supermarkets or independent supermarkets.
- The majority of produce-carrying stores stock high quality produce.
- Of stores with high quality produce, one is a national chain supermarket, one is an independent chain supermarket, and three are corner stores.
- The majority of stores that stock produce are located in the northern half of the community area.
- 20% of the population must travel 1/2 mile or more to get to the nearest food store with fresh produce.
- One quarter of Chicago Lawn households do not own cars.

Hermosa Availability of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Food Markets



Grocery Shopping in Chicago

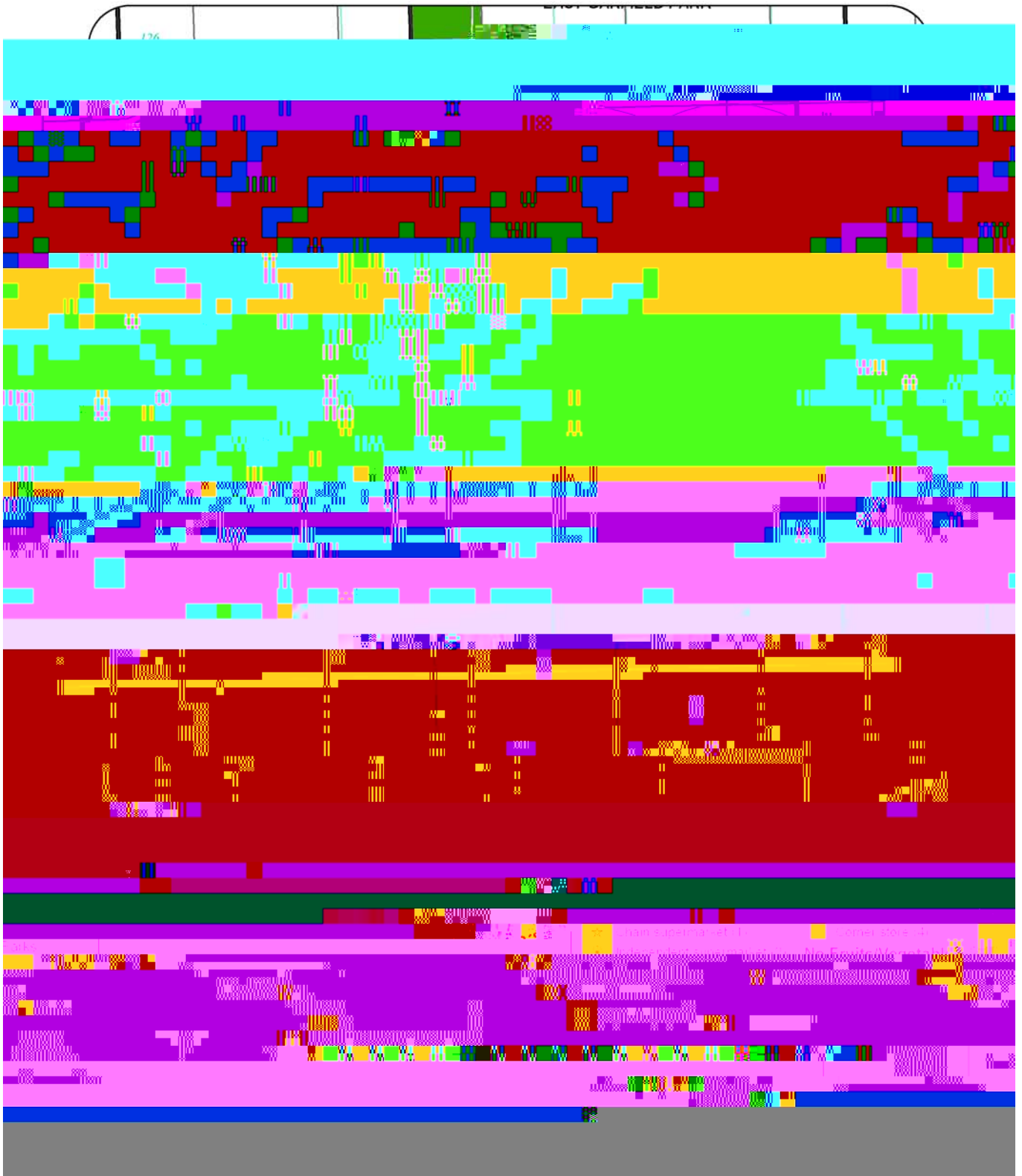
Background

The Hermosa community area is located on the northwest side of Chicago near the Logan Square, Belmont Cragin, and Avondale neighborhoods. The majority of Hermosa's 27,000 residents (84%) are Hispanic and over one third of the residents report speaking English "less than very well." The proportion of those living below the poverty level has declined slightly over the past decade, while the rate of those living twice below the poverty level has increased slightly. Though health care is difficult to access with no community or publicly-operated health centers within its boundaries, the health status of Hermosa residents has been fairly stable with better rates on several indicators than the city of Chicago overall.

Findings

- Out of the 17 food stores in Hermosa, over one half are corner stores, one is a chain drug store, and the rest are evenly divided between indep

North Lawndale Availability of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Food Market



Grocery Shopping in Chicago

Background

The North Lawndale community is located on the near southwest side, and is surrounded by South Lawndale, the Lower West Side, the Near West Side, and East and West Garfield. With a population of 41,768, North Lawndale has been a primarily African American community for the past 40 years. Despite the presence of four community health centers and two hospitals within the community, when compared to Chicagoans citywide North Lawndale residents experience higher rates of death due to cancer and stroke, and face higher rates of preventable hospitalizations due to such conditions as congestive heart failure, diabetes, and hypertension. Though the community's poverty rate is more than twice the City of Chicago's, in the last several years new initiatives have started to rebuild sections in North Lawndale. Specifically, many new homes including duplexes and town homes have been built, including the new Homan Community Center and Lawndale Shopping Plaza. In addition, the new Greater Lawndale Theater and new train station have been built in an effort to begin revitalization of the community.

Findings

- Of the 15 food stores in North Lawndale, there is one national chain supermarket, one independent supermarket, five corner stores, and six convenience stores.
- There is one large food store for every 10,442 residents.
- Though there are few stores in North Lawndale, those that exist are likely (67%) to carry at least some fresh produce.
- Over half of the food stores in North Lawndale carry fewer than five varieties of produce.
- High quality produce was found at the national chain and independent supermarkets.
- Produce at one half of corner stores received the "would not buy" rating, and only 1 of 5 corner stores had high quality produce.
- 26% of the total population lives 1/2 mile or more from the nearest food store with fresh produce.
- 38% of North Lawndale households do not own cars.

What Communities are Doing...

Three of the five communities

Grocery Shopping in Chicago

Where Do We Go From Here?

The work of individual communities is essential to increasing access to healthy foods in Chicago. At the same time, these efforts must be supported at a broader level. While the willingness of store owners to carry produce is a necessary component of a systems-level response, by itself this is insufficient to bring about change at the community level. The issues that must be considered range from production to marketing, with several steps in between. Towards this end, the following efforts are currently underway:

Increasing our Understanding of Access Barriers: The Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment is designed to address this issue through mapping and a series of surveys and consumer and retailer interviews. Mapping will improve our understanding of citywide patterns, for example, by revealing the distribution of national or regional chain supermarkets across Chicago

Grocery Shopping in Chicago



City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley
Mayor



Chicago Department of Public Health
John Wilhelm, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner