

# **BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: GROWING SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN OUR FOOD SUPPLY**

**COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT  
A REGIONAL APPROACH FOR FOOD SYSTEMS  
IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**



**Community Farm Alliance**



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*Photos, R to L: Devi, CFA intern; Ali Institute and 700 War Zone Committee; Marshall Gazaway, CFA board member and West Louisville resident*



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## VISION STATEMENT

We believe that all citizens have the right to access quality, healthy, affordably priced food in sufficient quantities.

We believe that the small, independent, family farmers of Kentucky are the most reliable, efficient and careful producers of food for Kentucky citizens.

We believe that a local or regional food economy is the best system for meeting the needs of Kentucky farmers, rural communities and our urban centers.

We believe that a Locally Integrated Food Economy (L.I.F.E) is a sound economic development strategy for both urban and rural communities. We believe that the creation of a local food economy should be grassroots led and will create jobs for both urban and rural residents.

We believe that neighborhoods and engaged, active citizens have a crucial role to play in building new urban markets and that new markets can meet a variety of community needs. We believe that a local food economy provides an opportunity for farmers and residents to plan the next generation of local food businesses together.

We believe that a publicly supported comprehensive plan for a local or regional food economy is necessary in order to achieve this end. We believe that the city must pass, support and implement specific proposals, such as city investment in existing and new markets, to help provide locally grown, healthy food to citizens in Louisville. We believe that city institutions must participate in building the infrastructure necessary for a local food economy.



*Smoketown Farmers Market*

## **THE VISION OF A LOCALLY INTEGRATED FOOD ECONOMY (L.I.F.E.) FOR LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

The West Louisville Food Working Group hopes to transform an integral component of the local economy – food – and thereby transform the nature of relationships between farmers and inner city residents. This transformation will improve the ability of neighborhoods to solve community problems, strengthen rural communities and substantially contribute to the health of urban residents, particularly in West Louisville and East Downtown. In the process, members will work towards building rural and urban communities, providing opportunity for collaborative efforts and strengthen democratic decision-making. The alliances and relationships created will reach across racial and cultural barriers to build a robust local food economy. Led by a committed grassroots leadership dedicated to creating community-led economic activity and building political power, this effort will enrich the civic and cultural life of communities and reinvigorate inner-city neighborhoods.

These new local food systems will provide citizens of low-income urban neighborhoods with high-quality affordable food. In return, citizens will develop a shared understanding of economic policies that contribute to both rural and urban poverty, allowing them to create a common strategy for pursuing solutions that build local wealth for urban and rural people.

A local food economy responds to local needs and capitalizes on community assets, while keeping food dollars circulating and multiplying within the community. A local/ regional food economy will allow Kentuckians to consume most of their food from local farms, thereby enabling Kentucky family farmers to make an adequate living. This will also encourage a new generation of farmers to prosper and simultaneously create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities in food processing and marketing for urban residents. Some of these opportunities will be in the form of more Kentucky-owned businesses, cooperatives and value-added enterprises processing Kentucky-grown food.



## **IT TAKES A COMMUNITY: PERFORMING A COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT**

### ***What is a Community Food Assessment?***

A community food assessment is a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food *issues and assets*. This assessment: 1) outlines the vision of a local food economy, 2) documents the food needs and health issues found in West Louisville and East Downtown - the two most vulnerable sections of the city in terms of food security, and 3) offers solutions and policy recommendations that farmers, urban residents, city officials, and city institutions can implement together.

### ***Why Perform a Community Food Assessment?***

The purpose of this community food assessment is to:

- 1) Promote a vision of a regional plan to address food needs – a blueprint for the development of a regional food economy in Louisville;
- 2) Provide a menu of policy recommendations toward that end; and
- 3) Incorporate the wisdom and viewpoint of the community in a document that uses standard research methodologies to highlight the ‘food-print’ of West Louisville and East Downtown.

As Community Farm Alliance members and partners began to build new markets in West Louisville in 2003, we also laid the foundation for an enormous shared learning process. The efforts have borne tangible results with more people eating locally grown food, new resources for the neighborhoods, and demonstration projects for children and WIC recipients. The inequities of our food system have to be highlighted and the wealth of knowledge we are accumulating needs to be shared widely to invoke broader community and governmental responses. CFA members believe that we have an obligation to understand the food needs of our communities and the economic needs of our family farmers and that once those needs are identified, we have an obligation to act upon that knowledge. Our research indicates that the basic human needs of our communities are not being met.

Community Farm Alliance submits this document, under the auspices of the West Louisville Food Working Group, to generate a public discussion and discourse in Louisville about markets, local food, food-related economic development and the connection between health, nutrition and race in the low-income areas of West Louisville and East Downtown. It is our hope that this document will provide direction and form the basis for determining investment priorities for successful food-related policies for Metro Louisville.

## ***The Process: Resident-Led, Collaborative and Participatory***

This document reflects a yearlong citizen-led initiative that developed in collaboration with Louisville institutions. A research team comprised of Community Farm Alliance members, University of Louisville faculty and students, and staff from the Louisville Metro Health Department designed customer surveys; documented community attitudes towards nutrition, health and food; gathered census data; and compared prices and availability of food (12 items spread across the five food groups) based on the USDA food pyramid requirements. Members of the research team, along with residents, farmers, two Fellows from the Congressional Hunger Center and staff from the Metro Development Authority, spent innumerable hours hosting community meetings, researching structural attributes of the food system, mapping Louisville's food assets, compiling our findings, and spreading the word.

In community meetings, members began identifying and mapping the food access in West Louisville and downtown neighborhoods. Members of CFA analyzed the geography of food insecurity using the data from the US Census, the Louisville Metro Health Department and the results of a market survey conducted by CFA chapter members and University of



Louisville students under the aegis of the Anthropology Department. They also examined the quality and price of food available in these neighborhoods and the specific barriers to food access. This information forms the basis of the chapter *Why it's Easier to Get a Burger than Broccoli on West Broadway*, which was distributed as a stand-alone piece in CFA's March 2006 newsletter.

Members then evaluated the potential benefits of implementing WIC FMNP (Women Infant Children – Farmers Market Nutrition Program) in Jefferson County. The group used data from the US Census, Metro Health Department reports and information from nutritionists in downtown Louisville and found a compelling case to implement the WIC FMNP in Jefferson County, which has the largest number of WIC recipients in the state. Twenty-five WIC nutritionists, the Louisville Metro Health Department employees and graduate students

from the Department of Pan-African Studies gave interviews for the health data contained in the community food assessment and for a separate document summarized herein and entitled *Building Health and Wealth – Assessing Potential Benefits and Raising Awareness of the WIC FMNP in Louisville Metro*.

CFA member Angelique Perez, Master of Public Health student at University of Louisville, began a project to understand how the foodscape of a low-income urban neighborhood impacted the eating habits of youngsters living in the neighborhoods in 2005. With the cooperation of Jefferson County Public Schools, middle school students were asked to keep diaries of foods they ate, whom they ate with and which meals they preferred. As reflected in this document, Angelique describes patterns in their eating habits in *Youth Food Diaries*.

In the last stage of the process, members compiled all of the data and recommendations gathered from the various community meetings into one final document. This document is the result of over one year of extensive research and grassroots participation and is meant to be an impetus for change in our city and state. **The participants of this food assessment insist that healthy food is a human and civil right and have crafted a list of recommendations that will bring us closer as a community and provide citizens with a voice in our food system.** We hope the readers of this document will advocate for policy changes, make responsible food choices, and simply talk with family and friends about how to change the patterns of ownership and inequality in our food system.





## **FORWARD: THE MAKING OF AN URBAN FOOD DESERT**

**DR. YVONNE JONES, PH.D.**

West Louisville, home to about 77,000 people, predominantly African American, has unemployment rates well over double the regional average, a median household income 46.5 % that of the regional average, and a poverty rate of 42%-close to three times the regional rate (ICIC 2001). West Louisville, like many other predominantly African American urban areas, can be characterized as a "food desert," replete with limited access to shops, high prices, poor quality, and narrow variety of food items, especially fresh produce. What factors contributed to the creation of this food desert? How did it begin and evolve to the current situation?

It began with the implementation of the federally-sponsored urban renewal program in the 1950s and 1960s in Louisville, resulting in the movement of African Americans from neighborhoods east and south of downtown to the formerly white west end. This coincided with the movement of middle class whites to the suburbs who were joined a decade later by middle-class African Americans. The loss of middle-class from West Louisville led to the exit of the neighborhood-based grocery stores (individually or family-owned enterprises) to follow the urban-suburban movement or alternately adjust to their new

customer base (poor African Americans). The nationwide urban riots of the 60s, which in the case of Louisville was sparked by Dr. King's assassination in 1968, destroyed the black business community. In this racially charged atmosphere, most white-owned businesses relocated and the remaining constructed bulletproof glass barriers

**West Louisville, like many other predominantly African American urban areas, can be characterized as a "food desert."**

between customers and the cashier, restricting the customers' selection of goods. In these stores, canned or packaged goods were favored and those were all that was offered.

At this juncture, the nationwide changes in the marketing and distribution practices of the grocery industry that began in the 1970s led to practices encouraging corporately owned national and regional supermarket chains. This process led to the disappearance of family-owned independent enterprises like green grocers, meat and poultry shops, fish shops etc. This national trend was



reflected in West Louisville. Up to the late 1980s, West Louisville residents had access to multiple neighborhood-based grocery stores, discount stores, a large two-block area of fruit and vegetable vendors (serving East and West sectors of West Louisville), a family-owned grocery store with a large meat section, craft vendors and others. This changed in the 1990s. West Louisville residents are left with a few major chain stores (stand alone) located on West Broadway, in the midst of huge parking lots and a number of twenty-four hour fast-food restaurants.



This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of capital that forces many owners of small neighborhood-based grocery stores to squeeze profits by not stocking perishable foods, restrict the range of canned foods for sale, and to concentrate on snack foods and beverages. Owners will also stock toiletries and beer and will attempt to increase store traffic by offering lottery tickets. However, these cost-saving strategies do not allow for expansion in store size or merchandise offered. Items are more costly than those at chain

supermarkets and goods are limited. Profits are not large enough to expand their business and banks, while willing to approve loans for minorities, often hesitate to approve loans for investment in minority neighborhoods. At any rate, the presence of large superstores dominating West Louisville's grocery market makes smaller entities unable to compete.

Over the past forty years, patterns of ownership of these neighborhood grocery stores have changed considerably. Before the 1960s, neighborhood-based stores were owned by whites or Lebanese-Americans, whose immigrant ancestors arrived

from what was then known as Syria in the early 1900s. The movement of African Americans into former all-white neighborhoods in the late 1960s and 1970s spawned several black-owned grocery stores. In the 1980s, immigrants from Palestine (Israel) began to replace them, so that at present, more than 90% of small grocery outlets in West Louisville are owned by this ethnic group. Group ownership, the use of male family members, and group purchase of merchandise act to keep outlays low and maximize the absence of capital.



## **GROWING SOLUTIONS: KENTUCKY'S FAMILY FARMS PROVIDE AN OASIS**

Tobacco literally shaped Kentucky's landscape since its inception as an agrarian community. Kentucky still has a family farm system because of the tobacco program, the very last New Deal program that took the land pattern of the 1930's and made it into policy. The tobacco program – a system of production control and marketing – preserved the stability and security of Kentucky's family farmers for generations. The average tobacco allotment of around 3 acres represented an attempt to create and spread wealth, by limiting the amount farmers could grow, but making the companies pay a fair price. With an average farm size of 153 acres, one-third the size of the national average, Kentucky boasts 86,500 family farms, making it fourth in the nation in total number of farms and first per-capita east of Mississippi and among Southern States.<sup>1</sup>



Average farm income is \$12,000 per annum.

The contribution tobacco made to Kentucky's farm economy is enormous, not only in terms of total dollars, but because it was often the difference between being profitable or not for most of Kentucky's diversified operations. The 1998 lawsuits brought by 48 states against the four largest tobacco companies threatened the stability and security of small and medium-sized tobacco farms. The tobacco quota fell by 66% between 1997 and 2004, when the Federal tobacco support program ended. In 2005, without the program, Kentucky farmers grew just half the amount of tobacco they had in 2004.

Kentucky is unusual in that state support exists for pursuing diversified agriculture. Under a singular piece of state legislation passed in 2000, House Bill 611, half the funds Kentucky will receive from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement – a total of 1.75 billion dollars over 20 years – are to be directed to the development and diversification of the state's agriculture. Therefore, our state's agricultural system stands to benefit significantly if that money is used as proposed.

Kentucky farmers are on the cusp of an historical shift between a stable tobacco cash crop and an uncertain future of growing food crops and finding new markets in order to survive. The University of Kentucky predicts that Kentucky will lose 75% of its farms by 2010. Although income from food production

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<sup>1</sup> Southern States west of the Mississippi include Texas, Arkansas, Missouri and Louisiana.



does not yet surpass tobacco income in counties surrounding Jefferson County, this change is on the horizon and Kentucky's largest urban center can make this shift happen, while solving its own food-access problems, if decision-makers and the public recognize and seize the opportunities at hand.

CFA members conceptualized a statewide plan for a Locally Integrated Food Economy (L.I.F.E) to transition out of Kentucky's tobacco-dependant farm economy, while enhancing the economic and social vitality of Kentucky's urban areas. L.I.F.E is predicated on the replacement of the existing agricultural system with one in which the majority of Kentuckians eat food grown and processed in the state. Keeping this goal in view, CFA members identified Louisville, the largest city in the state and home to 25% of Kentucky's population, as the starting point for CFA's urban work in 2003. CFA believes that availability of local food must be universal in this new system, and thus began the work in low-income neighborhoods where people do not have access to quality food.

Since the conceptualization of L.I.F.E, CFA members built three new markets in Louisville: the Portland Farmers Market, the first low-income, urban market in the state, the Rowan Street Co-op that delivers produce to low-income seniors, and the Smoketown/Shelby Park Farmers Market. The West Louisville Food Working Group grew out of the success of the markets and their need to coordinate broader mutually beneficial goals.

**The West Louisville Food Working Group has a vision of food self-sufficiency built on economic cooperation between urban and rural communities resulting in more access to high quality affordable food for low-income city neighborhoods and sustainable livelihoods for small family farmers.** The collective vision is to build wealth within the community, while meeting community needs by creating new markets and new local food businesses, selling only Kentucky grown and/or processed foods.

We believe that the first step necessary towards building a local or regional food economy is creating a local food infrastructure that would serve the most vulnerable part of the population first, ensuring that local food is not relegated to the status of a luxury item. In 2006 Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC, was formed to build a distribution system that will serve rural and urban communities and create jobs for urban and rural residents. The other components required for this system include:

- 1) Mobile markets that use the assets of the distribution business to serve the most food-deprived neighborhoods in West Louisville;
- 2) Community kitchen(s) so that urban entrepreneurs can fully participate in the development of new markets; and
- 3) a local food store, owned by residents.

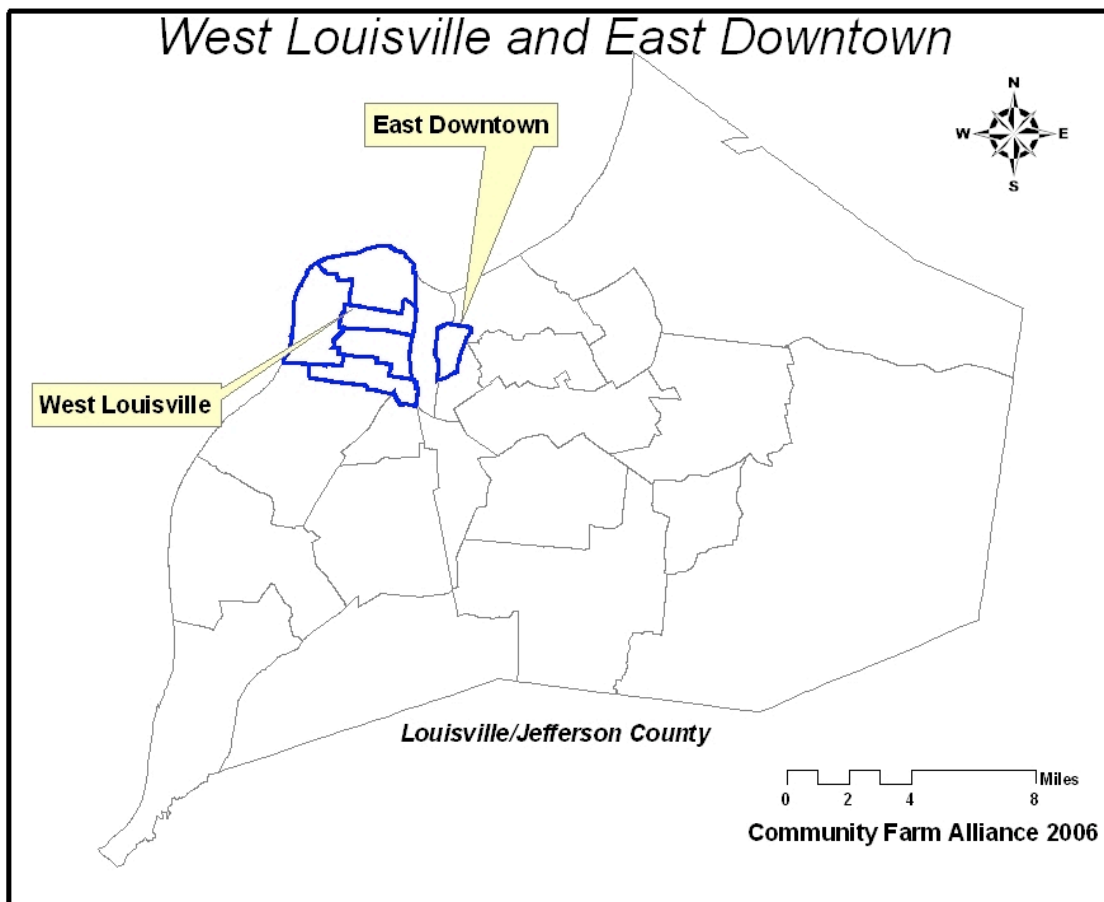


# WHY IT'S EASIER TO GET A BURGER THAN BROCCOLI ON WEST BROADWAY: WEST LOUISVILLE, EAST DOWNTOWN, AND FOOD

## *West Louisville and East Downtown*

Community food security (CFS) is defined as a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. The basic principles of CFS are to address a broad range of problems affecting the food system, to address low-income food needs, to build a community's food resources to meet its needs, to support local agriculture and to emphasize the need to build individuals' ability to provide for their food needs.

*Map 1*



The communities that make up West Louisville and East Downtown are food insecure, meaning that many individuals and families living here do not have access to enough healthy food. This injustice is created by a related set of problems. Like other low-income communities of color across the nation, the food retail sector in West Louisville and East Downtown does not meet local demand, leaving community members without good options for buying food within their neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> Since many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown do not have access to vehicles, they become marooned within a food desert, where they cannot purchase the nutritious foods necessary for healthy living.<sup>3</sup> Often, the only remaining



*Vegetable aisle at a West Louisville corner store*

option for members of these communities is to buy the readily available unhealthy foods, especially fast food. As a result, the standard of living is lower in West Louisville and East Downtown than it is in other parts of Louisville, and residents are at risk for food-related health problems.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Geography and Demographics***

West Louisville stretches north from the Algonquin Parkway and west from Roy Wilkins Drive. It includes the neighborhoods of Algonquin, Park Hill, Park Duvalle, Chickasaw, Shawnee, Portland, California, Parkland and Russell. According to the last census, about 51,000 of West Louisville's 64,741 inhabitants are African American. [Census numbers for low-income populations tend to misrepresent the actual size of the population due to various factors including transient lifestyles that arise from the lack of affordable housing.] The region is also home to 12,282 white people, 9,779 of whom live in the Portland neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> By census tract, the average median household income is \$20,900, about half of the Jefferson County-wide median of \$39,457.<sup>6</sup> In some parts of the West End, the median household income drops below \$10,000, less than one-fourth of the county median.

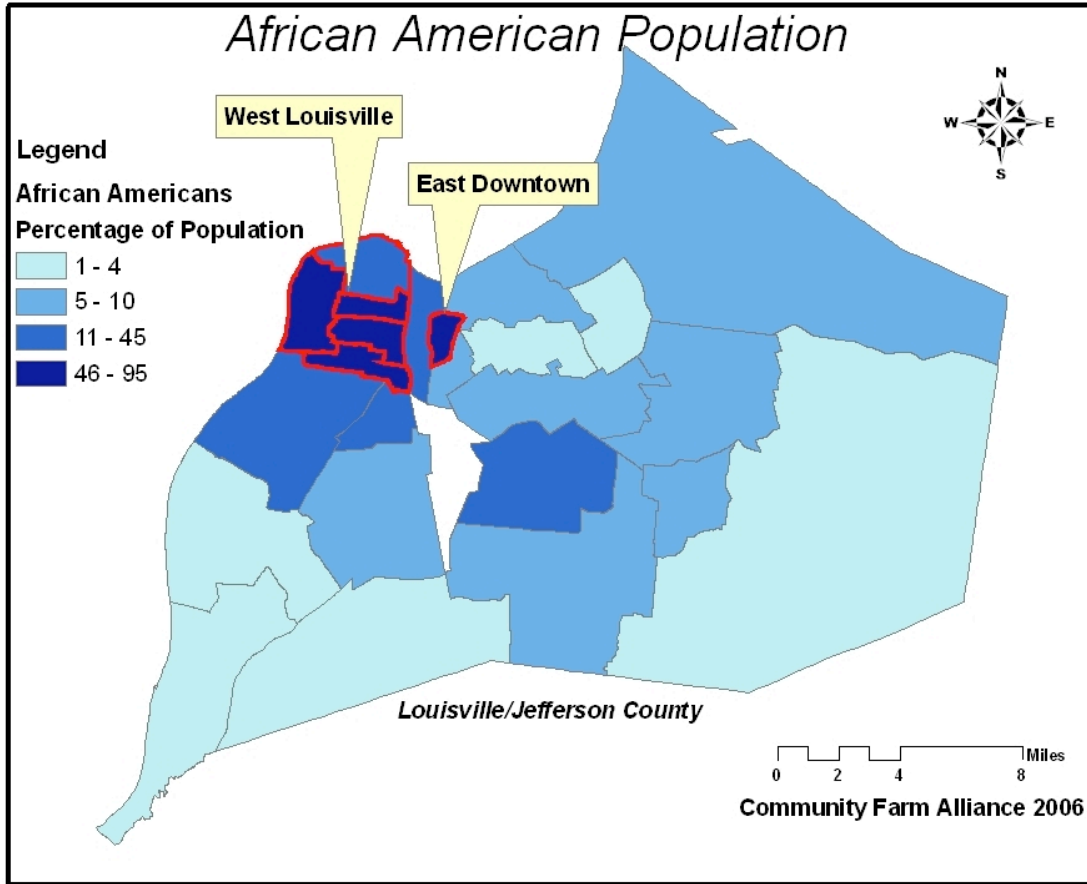
<sup>2</sup> Nord, Mark; Andrews, Margaret *Putting Food on the Table: Household food security in the US* Amber Waves, Feb. 2003 Vol. 1, issue 1 ERS USDA

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fooddeserts.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Vosoris, Nichola T.; Tarasuk Valerie S. *Household Food Insufficiency is Associated with Poorer Health* 2003 [The American Society for Nutritional Sciences](#) J. Nutr. 133:120-126, January 2003

<sup>5</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center

<sup>6</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, P53



East Downtown is composed of the Phoenix Hill, Smoketown, and Shelby Park neighborhoods and its demographics are similar to the West End's. 10,224 people inhabit East Downtown – 6,971 of them are African American, and 2,840 are white.<sup>7</sup> Poverty is especially striking in East Downtown, where the median household income is only \$14,333 when averaged by census tract.

Table 1

**Race and Income<sup>8</sup>**

Region	African American Population (%)	Average Median Household Income by Census Tract (\$)
West Louisville	79	20,900
East Downtown	68	14,333
Jefferson County	19	39,457

<sup>7</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center

<sup>8</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center, and *Making Connections* Kentucky Population Research, Fall 2000

## *Store locations and food prices*

The cost and quality of food available to Louisville residents depends on where they live within the city. In the spring of 2005 it was confirmed that Louisville/Jefferson County food prices vary greatly depending on where food is purchased.<sup>9</sup> Researchers surveyed stores across the county for the price and availability of a 12-item market basket of foods that reflects the USDA's food pyramid eating recommendations.<sup>10</sup> Their findings were dismal. The research shows that residents of the low-income West Louisville and East Downtown areas are likely to have to spend the most to buy healthy foods and have the least access to the high-quality foods.

The major problem for these residents is that the types of stores that carry a good selection of high-quality, low-priced foods, under serve their neighborhoods. The market basket research shows that supermarkets and superstores provide customers with the best combination of quality and affordability when compared to other types of food sellers (*see Tables 2 and 3*). Supermarkets and superstores under serve West Louisville and East Downtown (*see Map 3*). Neither of these areas has a superstore. Although there are some supermarkets in West Louisville, its residents are still significantly underserved.<sup>11</sup> Throughout West Louisville, there is an average of only 1 full service grocer per 25,000 residents, compared to a Jefferson County wide ratio of 1 per every 12,500 residents<sup>12</sup> (*see Map 3*).



*Another West Louisville vegetable aisle*

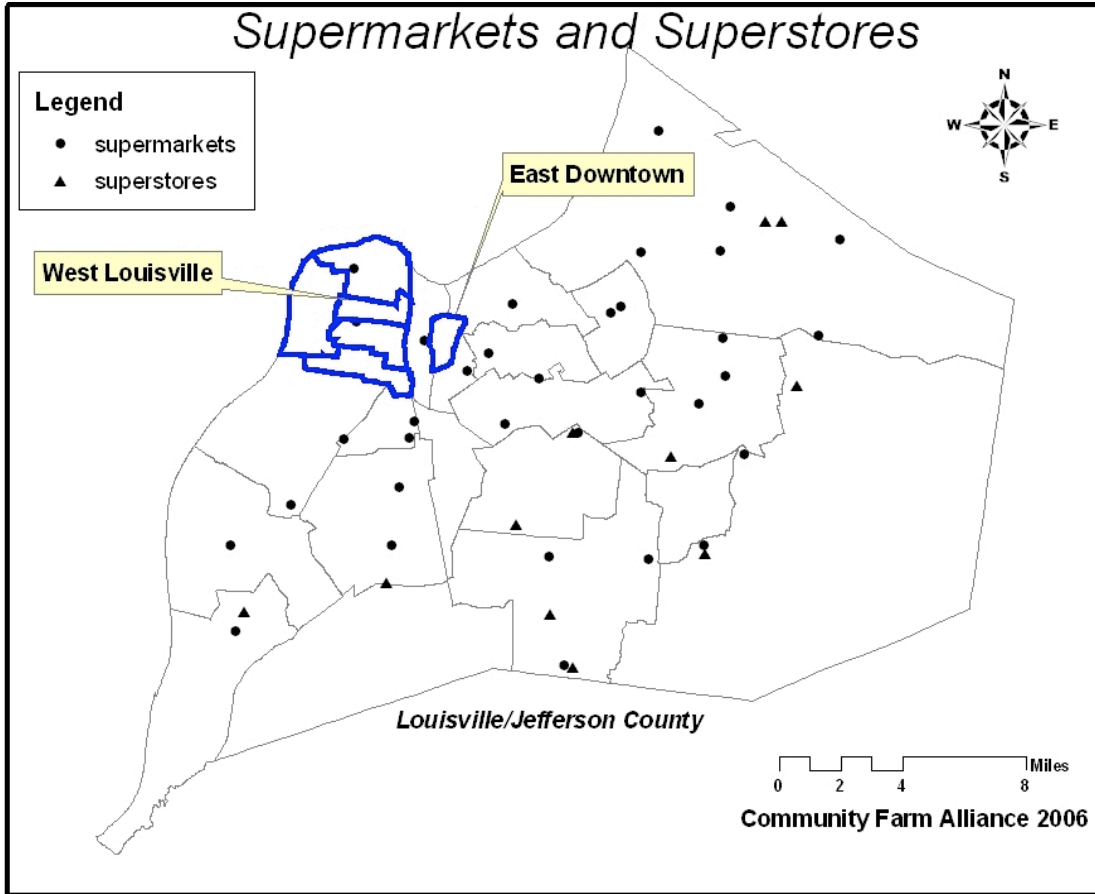
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<sup>9</sup> Conducted by the West Louisville Food Assessment Research Advisory Team (RAT), Chair: Dr. Lisa Markowitz, Anthropology, University of Louisville

<sup>10</sup> [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

<sup>11</sup> Louisville Metro Health Department, a listing of all stores and restaurants licensed to sell food

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of this study we counted only superstores, supermarkets and natural food supermarkets as full service grocers



The other three store types that carried all, or almost all, of the market basket were natural foods stores; discount grocers, and convenience stores without gas. Like superstores, natural food stores are completely missing from West Louisville and East Downtown. Both of these areas do feature discount grocers, however the food and service at these outlets is of a lower quality<sup>13</sup> Convenience stores are abundant in West Louisville and East Downtown (see map 4), but come with another set of problems.

<sup>13</sup> Shaffer, Amanda *The Persistence of LA's Grocery Gap* 2002 Center for Food and Justice Urban and Environmental Policy Institute; Occidental College

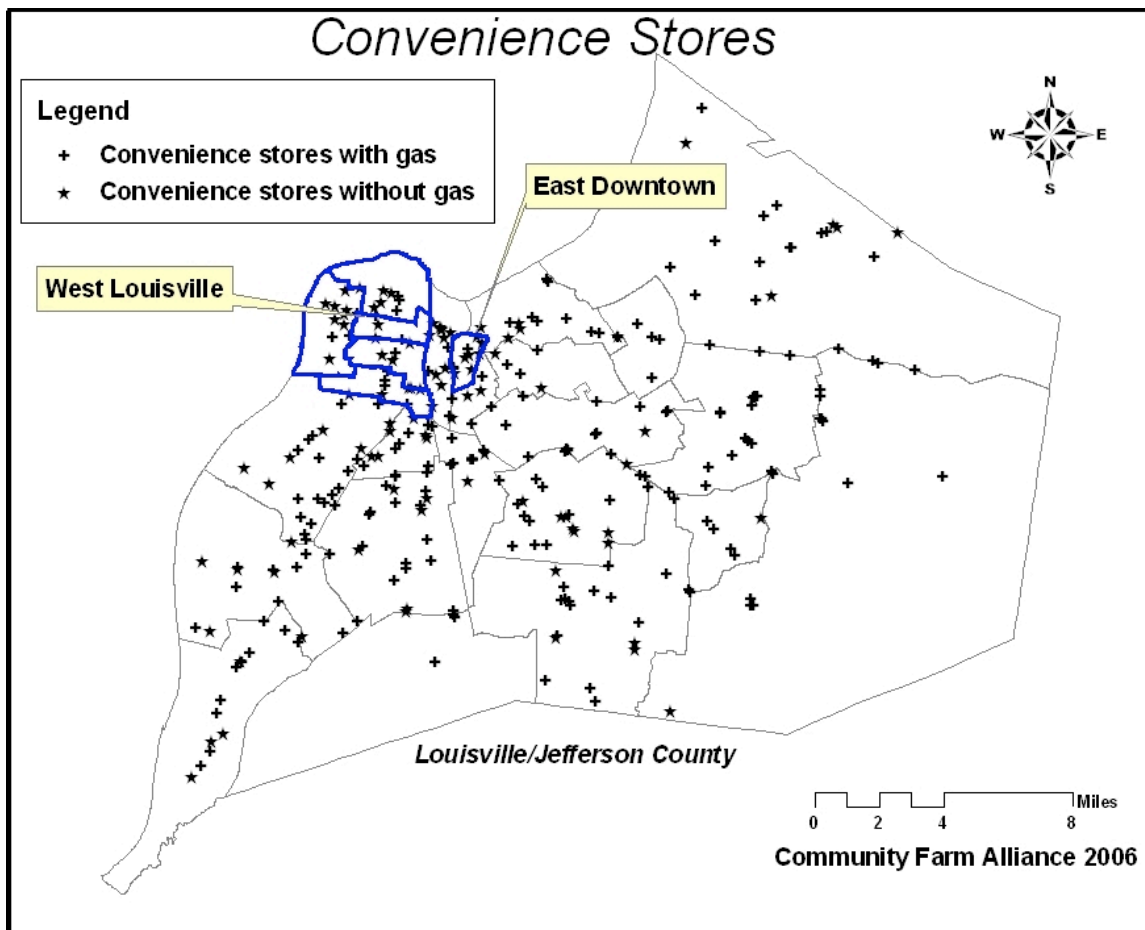


Table 2

### Food Availability at Different Types of Stores

Store Type	Percentage of Market Basket Items Carried (%)
Supermarket	100
Convenience With Gas	58.3
Convenience Without Gas	100
Health Food	100
Pharmacy/Drugstore	25
General Stores	25
Discount Grocers	91.6
Superstore	100

Map 4



Convenience stores charge higher prices for food than any of the other store types, aside from the natural foods stores. This is important because for many people living in West Louisville and East Downtown, convenience stores are the only accessible type of food retailer. Because of this, residents are forced to do a great deal of their shopping at convenience stores, where the market basket costs roughly 50% more than at the supermarket (see Table 3). Discount grocers are the store type that appear to have the lowest price, however this figure is misleading. At the discount grocery stores surveyed, researchers found only 11 of the 12 market basket items, and so the market basket price is lower because there is an item missing and its price is not accounted for.

*Table 3*

**Market Basket Prices at Stores with Good Food Availability**

Store Type	Market Basket Price (\$)
<b>Supermarket</b>	16.09
<b>Convenience Without Gas</b>	23.89
<b>Health Food Stores</b>	40.05 *
<b>Discount Grocers</b>	15.07
<b>Superstores</b>	20.24

*\* The numbers beside health food stores reflect the cost of organic and specialty items rather than generic brands, so that some of the cost difference is a measure of product quality differences.*

***How's the Food?***

Another problem is food quality. As previously mentioned, the discount grocers sprinkled throughout West Louisville and East Downtown carry inferior goods and offer an inferior shopping experience. They are messy, disorganized and have long, slow lines at the cash register. However, the discount grocers are not the only store type offering a second rate shopping experience to grocery buyers in West Louisville and East Downtown. Even first tier national chains sell lower quality goods at their low-income outlets. The following quotes from residents of the West End and East Downtown illustrate the poor quality of the food sold by chain stores located within their neighborhoods.



At the Portland Farmers Market we asked an anonymous shopper who lived in the neighborhood: *Do you eat more fruits and vegetables because of the market?*

And she responded, “Yeah, cause it’s available...it’s hard to find good fresh produce at the store...I bought iceberg lettuce at Kroger and it looks good, and then when I cut it open it’s not good inside, it’s all brown and wilted.”



The situation is much the same in East Downtown, as reported by a CFA member who lives in Shelby Park: “The Second Street store [Kroger] caters to a lot of elderly African American people, and that meat is not grade one. You can tell because if you put it in the icebox overnight, it stinks! These people don’t have a choice, they can’t get out.”



*Both photos above are from the Portland Farmers Market.*

These statements are representative of what people living in West Louisville and East Downtown experience when shopping at their local supermarkets. Given that these supermarkets are the best shopping options within the two areas, the poor quality of meat and produce that they carry attests to the difficulty of finding good food in West Louisville and East Downtown.

We also conducted a survey to gauge attitudes that residents of West Louisville and East Downtown held about food access and came up with similar results. When asked if their neighborhood food store has a wide range of fresh produce 66% of respondents said “no.” When presented with the statement, “When I visit a store on the other side of town I am struck by how clean the store is and how attractive the fruits and vegetables are,” 60% strongly agreed.<sup>14</sup>

### ***What Else is There to Eat? Fast Food.***

While West Louisville and East Downtown lack supermarkets and other sources of affordable, healthy foods, these areas have more than their share of fast food restaurants. Fast food chains do little to fill the healthy food gap created by the lack of supermarkets. They provide unhealthy foods, high in saturated fat,<sup>15</sup> and are more of a risk to community nutrition than an asset.

Harmful fast food restaurants abound in West Louisville and East Downtown. Map 5 shows Broadway, a street stretching from East Downtown through the West End. This 2.8 mile stretch, a main artery, is clogged with the highest concentration of fast food restaurants in the state, with 24 fast food restaurants – meaning that, on average, one never has to walk much more than 1/10 of a mile to find a cholesterol-packed hamburger or its equivalent on Broadway. Along this stretch there are two Long John Silver’s, three McDonald’s, two Indi’s Fried Chickens, two Rally’s Hamburgers and two Taco Bells, in addition to numerous other fast food chains including but not limited to Pizza Hut, KFC, White Castle and Wendy’s.

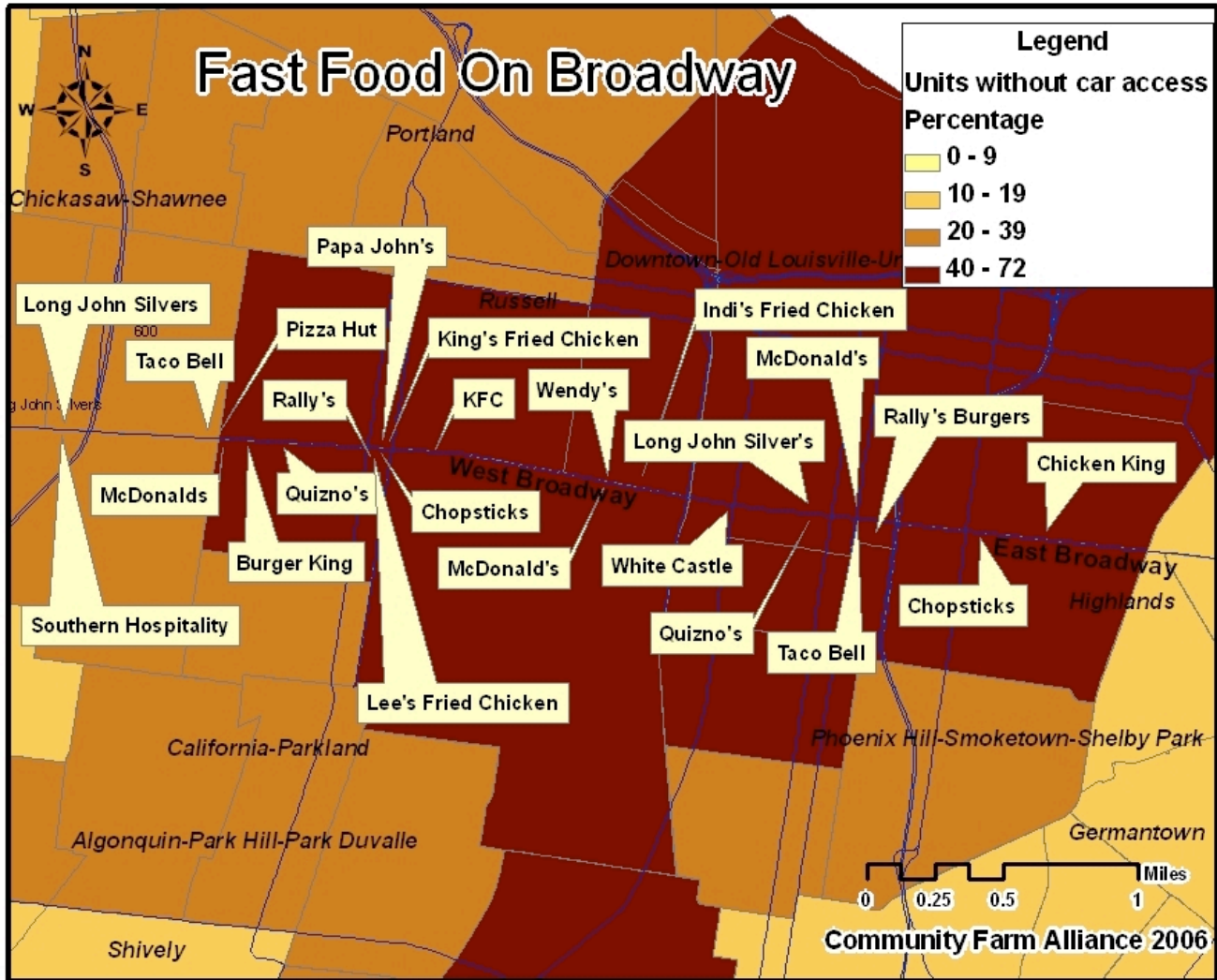
A study published in the October 2004 issue of *The American Journal of Preventive Medicine* titled: "Fast Food, Race/Ethnicity, and Income: A Geographical Analysis," found that predominantly black neighborhoods have 2.4 fast food restaurants per square mile compared to 1.5 restaurants in predominantly white neighborhoods. The authors concluded that, "the link between fast food restaurants and black and low-income neighborhoods may contribute to the understanding of environmental causes of the obesity epidemic in these populations."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hot Seat Survey, Stacy Brooks, September 2005 Healthy Foods Local Farms Conference, Community Farm Alliance

<sup>15</sup> Ebbeling, Cara B.; Pawlak, Dorota B.; Ludwig, David S. *Childhood Obesity: public-health crisis, common sense cure* August 10, 2002 *The Lancet* Vol. 360

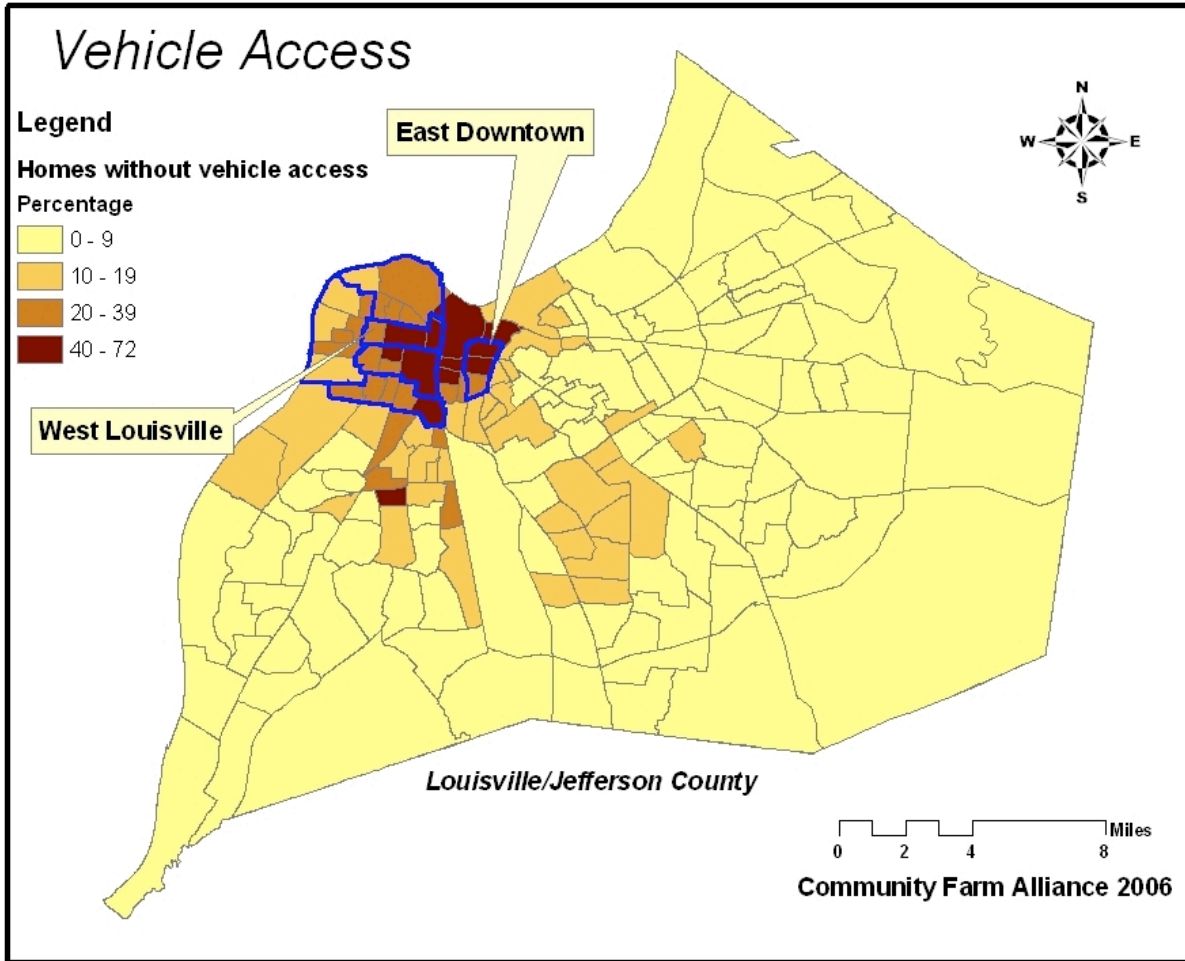
<sup>16</sup> Block JP, Scribner RD, DeSalvo KB. *Fast food, race/ethnicity, and income: a geographical analysis.* *Am J Prev Med* 2004;27(3):211-217.



Along with high-priced convenience stores, these fast food restaurants are the only accessible food seller to many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown.

***Vehicle access: Getting to the food store***

If residents of West Louisville and East Downtown could simply get into a vehicle and drive to their preferred food store, the lack of high quality, affordable foods in their neighborhoods would be less of a problem. Unfortunately, many of them cannot. The high price of gas notwithstanding, many poor people in West Louisville and East Downtown do not have access to a vehicle.



Residents of the West Louisville and East Downtown have far less access to vehicles than residents of any other part of Jefferson County. The percentage of households without access to a single vehicle varies by neighborhood in the West Louisville and East Downtown, but is high throughout. In the *least* impacted neighborhoods of the study, 17% of households do not have access to a vehicle, and in those most impacted, that number jumps to over 70%.<sup>17</sup> In the rest of Jefferson County, percentages of households without vehicle access are rarely over 10% and are often below 5%. Map 6 shows how West Louisville and East Downtown have much higher concentrations of households without vehicle access than any other part of Louisville/Jefferson County.

<sup>17</sup> 2000 Census Summary File 4 (SF4) HCT32

*Table 4*

**Comparing Percentage of Households without Vehicle Access<sup>18</sup>**

Area	Households Without Vehicle Access (%)
<b>Jefferson County</b>	12.94
<b>West Louisville</b>	28.38
<b>East Downtown</b>	50.93

Within West Louisville and East Downtown, residents of traditionally underserved populations are likely to have even less vehicle access than others. The traditionally underserved include low-income mothers, non-English speakers, disabled people, the elderly and people of color. In West Louisville, members of these groups are twice as likely as others to not have access to a vehicle.<sup>19</sup>

*Table 5*

**Vehicle Access for Members of Traditionally Underserved Populations by Region of Louisville<sup>20</sup>**

	<b>West Louisville (%)</b>	<b>Central Louisville (%)</b>	<b>East Louisville (%)</b>	<b>South Louisville (%)</b>
<b>Percentage without vehicle access</b>	49.1	50.0	11.1	18.8

<sup>18</sup> 2000 Census Summary File 4 (SF4) HCT32

<sup>19</sup> Kentuckiana Regional Transportation Agency (KIPDA) *KIPDA Household Travel Survey: Traditionally Underserved Populations* Table 5-25

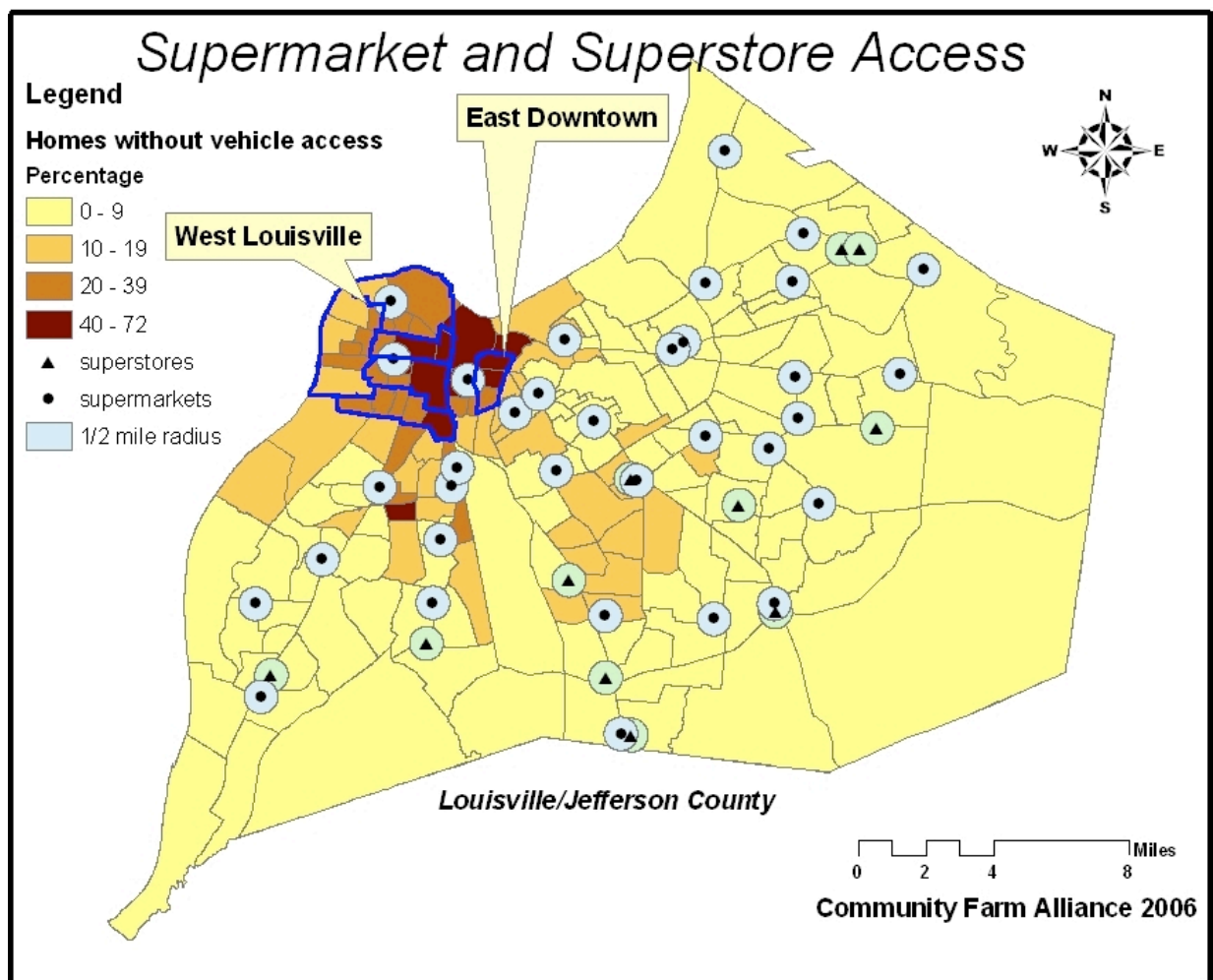
<sup>20</sup> (Ibid)



## ***These Problems Combine to Create Food Insecurity***

These studies clearly indicate that for many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown, it is hard to get good, healthy food at reasonable prices. There are not enough food stores in their communities and the food that is available is usually either low in quality, high in price or both. To make matters worse, many people living in West Louisville and East Downtown do not have access to vehicles, so they cannot drive to one of the few adequate food stores on their side of town, or to another part of Louisville where there are better food buying options (*See Map 7*).

***Map 7***



Map 7 shows all of the supermarkets and superstores in Louisville with circles of one-half mile radii drawn around them. As stated earlier, our research shows that supermarkets and superstores are currently the two best places to shop because they offer the best combination of affordability, availability and quality. One-half of a mile is considered a reasonable walking distance for a trip on foot to buy groceries, so the areas within the small circles show the parts of Louisville where residents have walking access to an acceptable food retailer. This map shows that across Louisville, the bulk of addresses are not within such areas. In most of Louisville, however, the vast majority of residents have access to vehicles, so they can easily drive to the food store of their choice if they do not live within walking distance. This is not at all the case in West Louisville or East Downtown, where a significant number of the city-wide population do not live within walking distance of an adequate food seller or have access to a vehicle. Not only are there fewer stores in these areas, and stores of poorer quality at that, but there are also many more people living there, intensifying the severity of the problem.

For people living in this situation, the main food buying options are either to shop at food retailers with inferior goods or to buy fast food. These are two unacceptable options. Low-income people cannot and should not have to pay more for lower quality groceries than higher income people on the other side of town. People in West Louisville and East Downtown deserve a variety of healthy food options, but aside from two farmers markets, they do not have them. **Residents of West Louisville and East Downtown can choose where they want to buy their cholesterol-packed fast food hamburgers or from which store they want to buy second-rate food products, but many do not have the option to buy quality food at a reasonable price.**



*Mural at the Smoketown Farmers Market*



## **BUILDING HEALTH AND WEALTH: WEST LOUISVILLE, EAST DOWNTOWN, AND HEALTH**

Without affordable healthy foods available, people tend to eat foods high in fats and sugars but low in nutrients. When faced with the decision of how to spend very limited resources on food, the options that win out most often are those most affordable, filling and flavorful – highly processed and packed with calories. Unfortunately, the healthy options necessary for proper nutrition and development are the least chosen. Too often it is assumed this purchasing pattern results from ignorance.

In reality, this choice is the more rational due to the many constraints faced by low-income consumers. If a mother of two has ten dollars to spend on food for her family, it makes more sense for her to buy pasta, hot dogs, bologna, eggs, bread and cheese, than it does to buy broccoli, greens, tomatoes, carrots, apples, green beans, etc. The fresh fruits and vegetables are hard to find in low-income neighborhoods, cost more, are not covered by WIC benefits, go bad faster, and don't feed as many people for as long of a time. In other words, the short-term need beats the long-term need. If this behavior is repeated over and over, it becomes a pattern that neglects the long-term need altogether.

The consequences of this behavior are destructive to the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and perpetuate similar behavioral patterns in future generations. To blame those who fall into the trap of acting out these behavioral trends is to misunderstand the situation. The real injustice lies in the fact that people are forced to make choices that destroy their health and the health of their children and future generations because of structural problems within our food system. When such a large percentage of our city's population is unable to make food choices that are both rational and healthy, it is clear that our food system is failing us.

However, the situation is not completely hopeless. The barriers to healthy food choices, once identified, can be addressed. (Two of the greatest of those barriers are the lack of access and the affordability for low-income citizens to fresh fruits and vegetables.) Recent studies confirm that for every additional grocery store located in low-income neighborhoods, residents in these areas increase their vegetable intake by 32 percent. Conversely, a lack of vegetables in the diet correlates to increased rates of cancer and heart disease.<sup>21</sup>

Fresh fruits and vegetables are a necessary part of the human diet. Without them, our bodies are much more vulnerable to a number of diet-related illnesses and trends, including but not limited to cancer, heart

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<sup>21</sup> Arteriosclerosis of Health, November, 2001 Risk in Communities Study, American Journal, Dr. Steven B. Wing, Ana Diez Roux.



disease, stroke, diabetes, and most commonly, obesity. The Louisville Metro Health Department reports that West Louisville residents, predominantly African Americans, suffer disproportionately from the effects of poor diets.<sup>22</sup> Only 14 percent of black men in West Louisville eat the recommended 5 or more servings of fruits and/or vegetables (and 23 percent of black women) as compared to 24 percent for white men and 34 percent for white women in the rest of Louisville. Some 14.5 percent of Louisville’s African Americans reported having diabetes compared to only 8.6 percent of whites.

Nationwide, the mortality rates for diabetes per 100,000 are 40.6 for African Americans while 23.3 for whites. Similarly, the mortality rates for heart disease for blacks are 359 per 100,000, but only 279 for whites. Stroke mortality rates per 100,000 were also disproportionate at 92.8 for blacks and 55.9 for whites. Obesity is very common in low-income areas and West Louisville is no exception. (Adult obesity rates here are staggering. 53 percent of white women in West Louisville are obese, 68 percent of white men are. For black



Health screening at Smoketown Farmers' Market

men it’s 67 percent and for black women, an alarming 74 percent obesity rate.) There are no childhood obesity rates for Kentucky, but national childhood obesity rates show that over 17 percent of 2, 3, and 4 year-olds are overweight.

It is undeniable that the state of Kentucky is unhealthy, but when compared to the health of West Louisville and East downtown, state statistics don’t even begin to show the gravity of the situation. We need to find ways to reverse this spiraling trend from within our state’s largest city. The focus should be on

diet and nutrition – first for our most vulnerable citizens within Louisville Metro, creating a model for the state as a whole. Government services exist for combating poor nutrition and obesity in low-income areas, but why leave the responsibility of looking after our own citizens entirely to our federal government without first examining our own ability to affect change on the local level? Inevitably, this poor judgment leaves too many of our citizens overlooked. We need to take a look at the way in which our government services are provided, namely the Food and Nutrition Service that governs food stamps and WIC services. For example, Louisville is home to over 25 percent of Kentucky’s population and the majority of its WIC recipients, yet Jefferson County is left out when it comes to the WIC Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program.

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<sup>22</sup> The figures in this section were taken from the 2005 Health Status Assessment Report produced by the Louisville Metro Health Department.

## ***WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program***

Congress established the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in 1992 to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC recipients and to expand the awareness, use of, and sales at farmers markets. The supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children, popularly known as WIC, provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding post-partum women, and to infants and children up to five years of age who are found to be at nutritional risk.

The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, or SFMNP, was established later for low-income Senior Citizens at nutritional risk. Both programs are federally funded through competitive grants allocated by the USDA and administered by the state (Kentucky Department of Agriculture in Kentucky).

In 2005, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) administered the FMNP grant to 43 of

Kentucky's 120 counties. Louisville Metro, home to over 12,800 WIC families and by far the largest concentration of WIC recipients in the state, is one of the 77 counties that were not awarded funding for the program. In fact, the number of WIC families in Jefferson County alone far outnumbers the total population currently served by the FMNP in the state.

One reason for this discrepancy lies in the methods used by KDA to



*Chef Nancy performs a cooking demonstration at the Smoketown Farmers' Market*

determine which counties receive the federal money. The grant is awarded based on the redemption rates in a particular location after a season-long pilot program. One such pilot program for the FMNP was conducted in Jefferson County in 2000; however, the market chosen for the pilot serves a middle class to upper class community in an affluent section of Louisville where there are relatively few WIC recipients. It was not a

surprise then that the redemption rates for the WIC coupons at this market did not make the case for the introduction of the FMNP in Jefferson County. In 2004, the redemption rate for the entire state was 43 percent.

In 2003, a group of farmers worked with KDA to expand the Senior FMNP in Jefferson County in collaboration with the Commodities Distribution program, in which low-income seniors receive non-perishable food items from the federal commodities program. In 2004, coupons were redeemed at a rate of 60 percent. The farmers' cooperative worked to alleviate the transportation issues many seniors have getting to the 16<sup>th</sup> and Rowan Street location by making deliveries to senior homes. The cooperative has since succeeded in greatly increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables to seniors, and providing a new market for several of Kentucky's family farmers.

**Under the circumstances, too many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown can't afford to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. The effects of this reality are already apparent and if left unchanged, will have unthinkable consequences for the future generations who face them.**

West Louisville and East Downtown house at least 80,000 residents of Louisville Metro. The median household income in West Louisville ranges between below \$10,000 to \$20,900, and East Downtown averages \$14,333 against the Metro average of \$39,457. The vast majority of WIC recipient households exist in these most underserved areas of our city.

Among WIC participants, 90 percent do not eat the minimum five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. The reasons for not eating well are: high cost of food, limited access to healthy food, taste and preferences, and extremely low food budgets.

Louisville Metro has 72 "full service" food retailers for 686,000 people (one per 9,527 people); West Louisville and East Downtown have 5 retailers for 80,000 people. Outside of that category there are also several discount stores that offer lower quality goods and serve less people. Metro has 52 food retailers for 686,000 people (one per 13,192 people) and the two neighborhoods have 3 retailers for 80,000 people.

The obvious conclusion in response to these ratios is that West Louisville and East Downtown lack supermarkets and health food stores. To make matters worse, on average, 30.7 percent of households in these areas lack access to a vehicle (70 percent in some pockets). Distance to these few stores and lack of transportation form a double disadvantage. The outlets that are accessible in these low-income areas are smaller convenience stores that carry only hard food with long shelf life (potatoes, carrots, onions). The quality and nutrition of produce available in convenience stores is especially poor due to longer shelf time, and the price of these items are 10-40 percent higher, making the food appear even less appetizing.

Food affordability among the West Louisville and East Downtown population is meager. Under the circumstances, too many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown can't afford to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. The effects of this reality are already apparent and if left unchanged, will have unthinkable consequences for the future generations who face them. Without a doubt, children bear the burden of food insecurity. Children in food insecure households are twice as likely to report poor health. They are 30 percent more likely to have a history of hospitalization. They have an increased risk of obesity and type II diabetes, and a higher risk of low cognitive development and behavioral problems. Dietitians, nutritionists, and schoolteachers are among those most aware of the secondary effects of poor health in children. West Louisville alone is home to 13,000 children under 18 years of age. Thirty-five percent of low-income children between 2 and 5 years of age in Kentucky are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.<sup>23</sup>

Yet to date, Kentucky has not deemed Jefferson County as eligible to receive WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program funds. The federal government is not adequately funding this program even though it improves and supplements the food budgets of low-income citizens living in food deserts, directly impacts the eating behavior of people who could shop at farmers markets that provide nutrition education, could improve the nutrition of people's diets and could help grow new low-income farmers markets. The state, therefore, deems some counties eligible to receive funds and some ineligible. The solution is adequate funding, rather than pitting one low-income group of women against another. The fact that Jefferson County has the highest number of African American women affected and yet is left out of the program is egregious.



*Portland Farmers Market*

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<sup>23</sup> CDC PedNSS, 2003

## *Youth Food Diaries*

The CFA's Research Advisory Team (RAT) was eager to incorporate a youth perspective into the Community Food Assessment. They aimed to understand how the food system in West Louisville and East Downtown, low-income urban neighborhoods with an over-abundance of fast food outlets and too few supermarkets and grocery stores, impacted the eating habits of local youth. A lack of access to affordable nutritious foods can certainly impacts kids' health. The Health Department's recent Health Status Assessment



Report evidences the declining health of children in the Metro area as well as major health disparities.<sup>24</sup> In addition to impacting children's health, poor nutrition also affects students' educational achievement and development. CFA board member and recipient of Kentucky's Teacher of the Year Award, Bonnie Cecil, who is also a former teacher at the Roosevelt School, located in the Portland neighborhood says, "Any teacher will tell you that children that are not well fed will not learn, and proper nutrition is one of the biggest obstacles teachers in the West End face."

The Youth Food Diary Project originated from the RAT's idea to utilize a community-based research model that merged food-based education with the assessment effort. The Team, consisting of University of Louisville Professors and students, Jefferson County Public Schools personnel and leading Public Health officials, worked to develop a project that would offer a learning opportunity to students and also provide data for the food assessment. Angelique Perez, a student in the Master of Public Health Program at the University of Louisville, was recruited to lead the project as part of a service-oriented Master's practicum while working with RAT members, Lisa Markowitz and Barb Mercer, as well as School of Public Health and Information Sciences faculty advisors, David Tollerud and Irma Ramos. The purposes of the project were:

1. To collaborate with JCPS teachers to provide students with nutrition presentations and food diary and writing assignments that supported and enhanced middle grades core content learning objectives, while at the same time providing students with valuable life skills.
2. To characterize and identify patterns in the eating and meal preparation habits of middle school students by analyzing student food diary and writing assignments.

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<sup>24</sup> LMHD. 2005. *Health Status Assessment Report*.



The project was approved by U of L's Institutional Review Board, as well as by Jefferson County Public Schools' Office of Accountability, Research and Planning, and also became affiliated with the Partnership for a Green City's Environmental Education Committee. These approvals and affiliations were instrumental in helping us connect with middle school teachers to deliver the nutrition education presentations and coordinate the three-day food diary and writing assignment for students.

The project centered on middle school kids because these students fall into an important age group in terms of the development of healthy or unhealthy eating habits. The CDC's 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Report asserts that many health-risk behaviors, which contribute to the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among youth and adults, are established during youth and extend into adulthood.<sup>25</sup> Research also suggests that there is a particular need for nutrition intervention for students in the middle grades. Moreover, based on consultations with Jefferson County teachers, it was estimated that middle school students would have the most interest in the assignment, as well as useful insight into their own eating habits and preferences.

The food diary we used is an original instrument, but resembles a *Food Tracking Worksheet* suggested by the Department of Agriculture (USDA).<sup>26</sup> Food diaries are commonly employed in nutritional research and have proven especially reliable when used with children and adolescents. However, in order to overcome some of the well-documented issues with self-reporting among kids, we aimed to engage students in a learning process that commanded their interest. The objective was not to perform a nutritional assessment, but rather to gain an overall sense of what kids in these food desert areas were eating on a day-to-day basis, to discern patterns in their eating habits and preferences, and to gain insight into their perceptions of the meaning of food in their lives.



Presentations covered nutrition basics such as the food pyramid and food groups, and emphasized important qualities of a healthful diet such as fruit and vegetable and whole grain consumption. After hearing

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<sup>25</sup> Graunbaum JA, Kann L, Kinchen S, et. al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States- 2003. *MMRW Surveillance Summary*. 2004. 53(2):1-96. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm>

<sup>26</sup> USDA. *Food Tracking Worksheet*. [http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/food\\_tracking\\_wksht.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/professionals/food_tracking_wksht.html) USDA

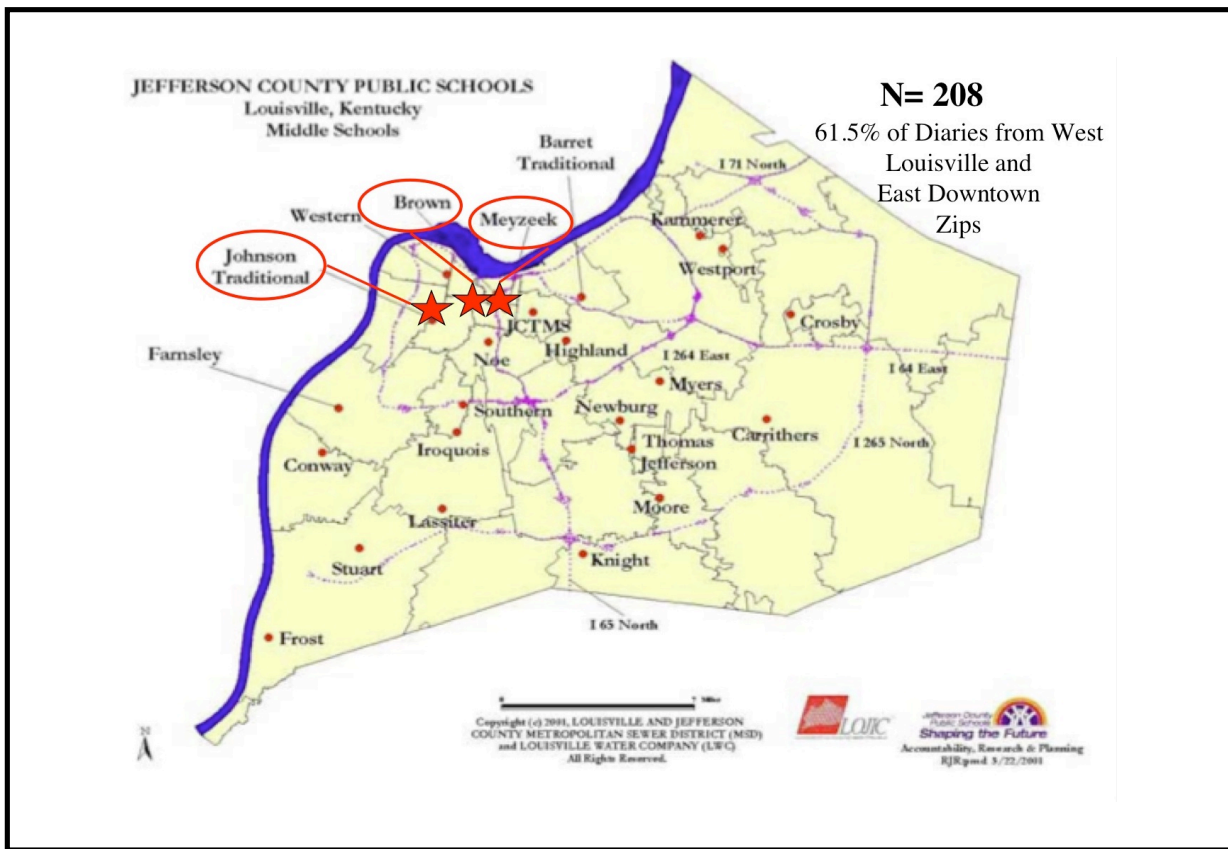
the nutrition presentations, students completed the diary assignment by recording what they ate, when they ate, whom they ate with, who prepared their food, and where the food they ate was procured for three consecutive days. They also indicated their favorite meal and why they liked it for each day of the diary. As part of the written portion of the assignment, students imagined their favorite meal and wrote an essay about it. They were prompted to include things such as what they would eat, whom they would eat with and what else they might like to do while they ate. In terms of demographic information, students provided zip codes in order to ensure that a representative sample was collected for the food assessment.

This project had benefits for student participants and children in general. First, the diary assignment was educationally valuable. By completing the assignment students had the opportunity to gain insight into their own eating habits and other food-related behaviors. Moreover, they learned from considering the social role and value of food in their families, schools and peer networks. In addition to educational benefits, the data generated by these student assignments also has research value with potential benefit to children's health. The CDC reports that the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children aged 6-11 years has more than doubled in the past 20 years and among adolescents aged 12-19 has more than tripled.<sup>27</sup> Poor diet and inactivity are implicated in this increase. As a result, children today suffer higher rates of type II Diabetes and are at higher risk for high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Honing in on the social factors, such as lack of access to fresh healthy foods, that contribute to poor health outcomes in children of this age group is key to developing more effective ways to promote healthy lifestyles among today's youth.

We connected with interested and respected teachers at three area schools to complete the project. Presentations and diary assignments were successfully incorporated into Practical Living and Science classes at Brown, Johnson Traditional and Meyzeek Middle Schools. While the Diary Project is still underway, a total of 208 three-day diaries have currently been collected and reviewed, and over 200 more diaries have been distributed. The diaries are serving as an extremely valuable tool in assessing eating patterns among middle school kids. Zip code demographics confirm that a representative sample from West Louisville and East Downtown neighborhoods has been achieved.

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<sup>27</sup> CDC. *Nutrition and the Health of Young People*. <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/overweight/index.htm>



The most striking diary findings relate to respondents’ fruit and vegetable and fast food consumption habits. Fruit and vegetable consumption rates were dismal. In an initial pilot study involving 81 diaries, we found that fifty percent of students had neither a serving of fruit or a serving of vegetables in all three days of the diary. The results did not improve as the project unfolded. Out of a sample of 208 diaries, 93% of students averaged one or fewer servings of fruit and one or fewer servings of vegetables per day. The USDA’s dietary guidelines recommend eating 2-3 cups of vegetables and 1.5- 2.cups of fruit per day for children in this age group depending on gender and physical activity levels. Only 13 students reported consuming five servings of fruits and vegetables in any of the three days of the diary and no students had five per day on all three days. Among those students that did report eating fruits or vegetables, these servings most commonly came in the form of fruit juice and fried potatoes. The food diaries revealed that middle school aged respondents are not reaching recommended levels in terms of the amounts or the variety of fruits and vegetables they are eating. The three-day diary process spanned across weekend and weekdays in order to reflect what these kids were eating in home, community and school contexts. Unfortunately, students fared even worse in terms of fruit and vegetable consumption on schooldays.



Chart 1

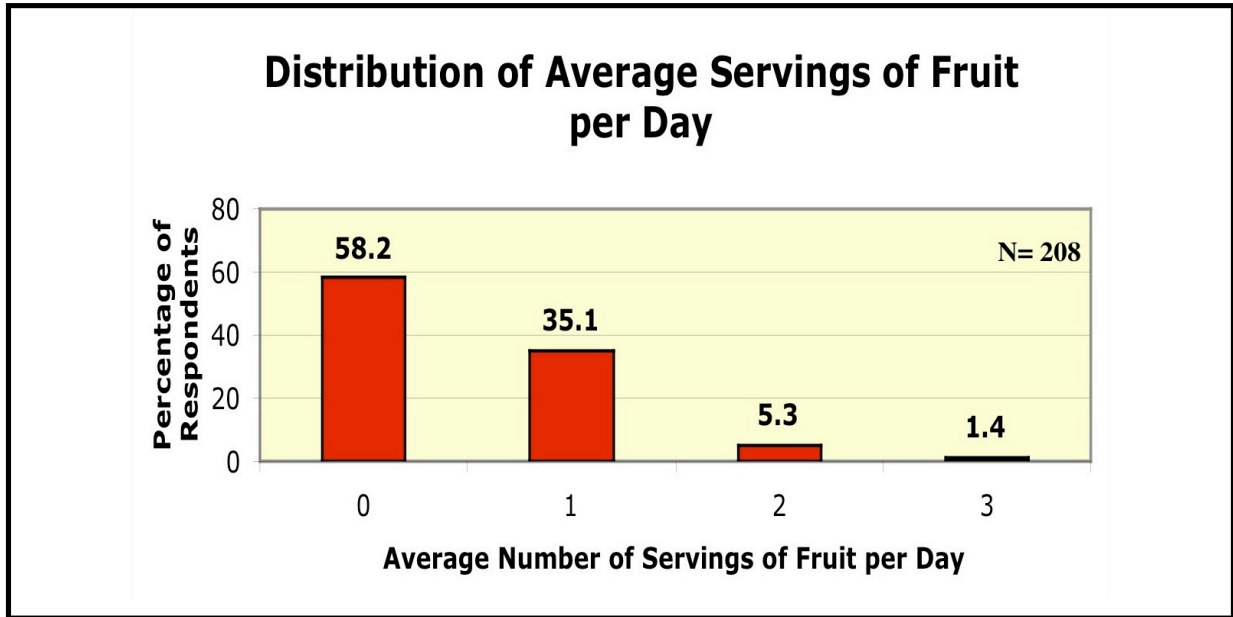


Chart 2

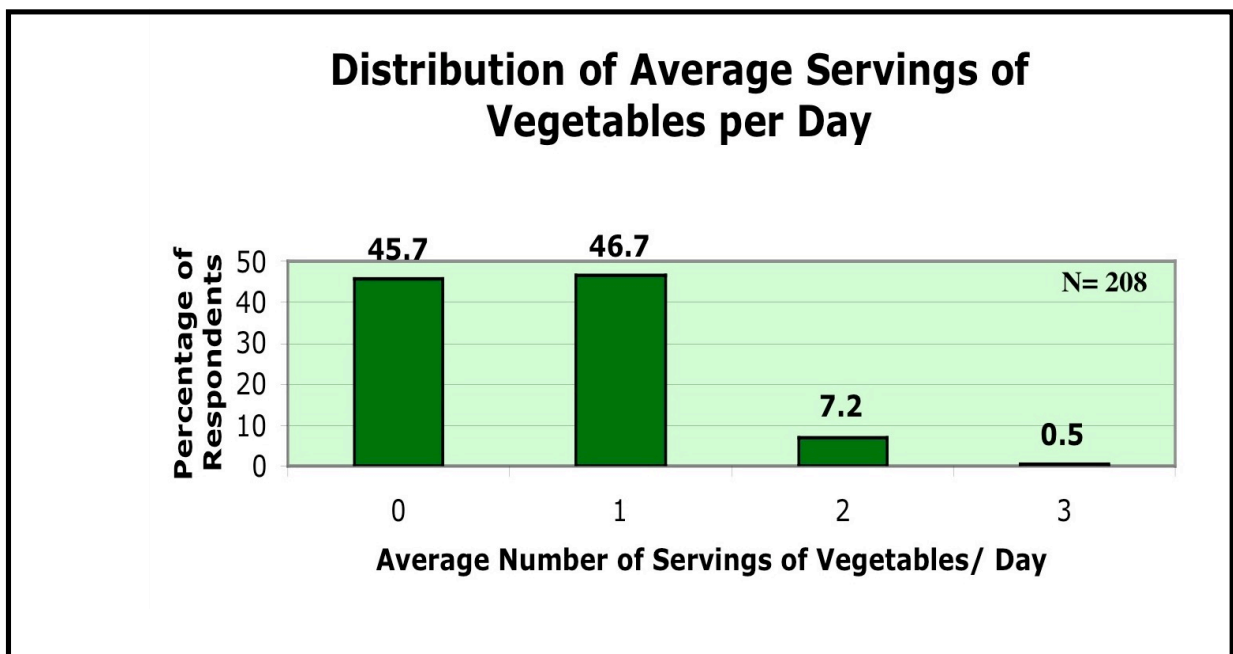
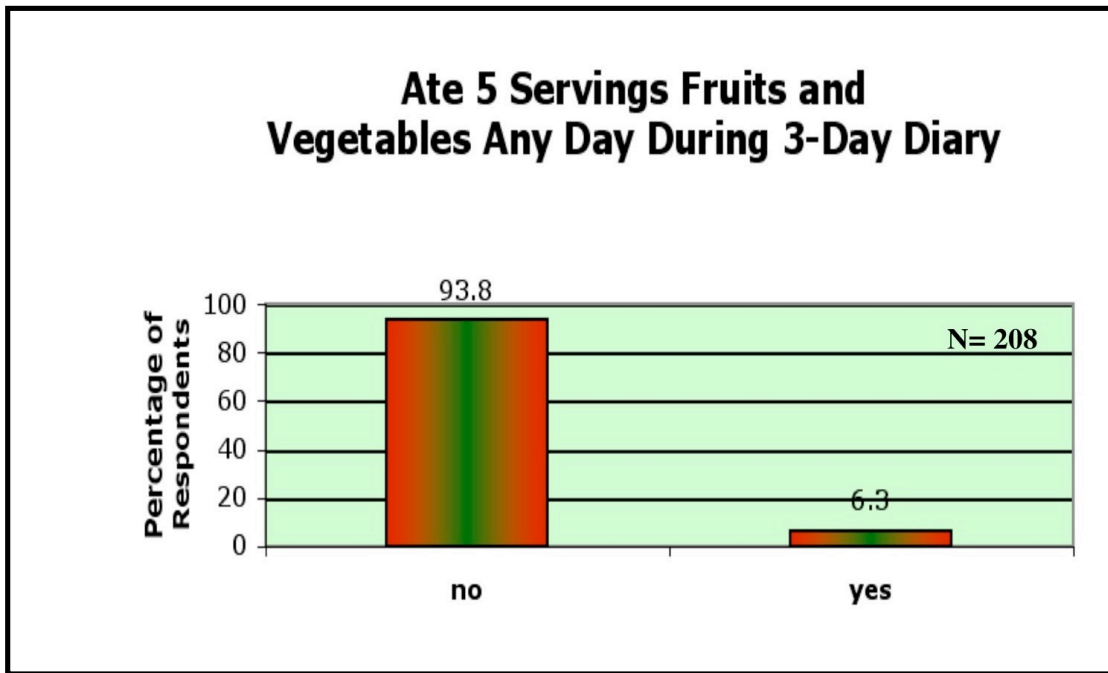
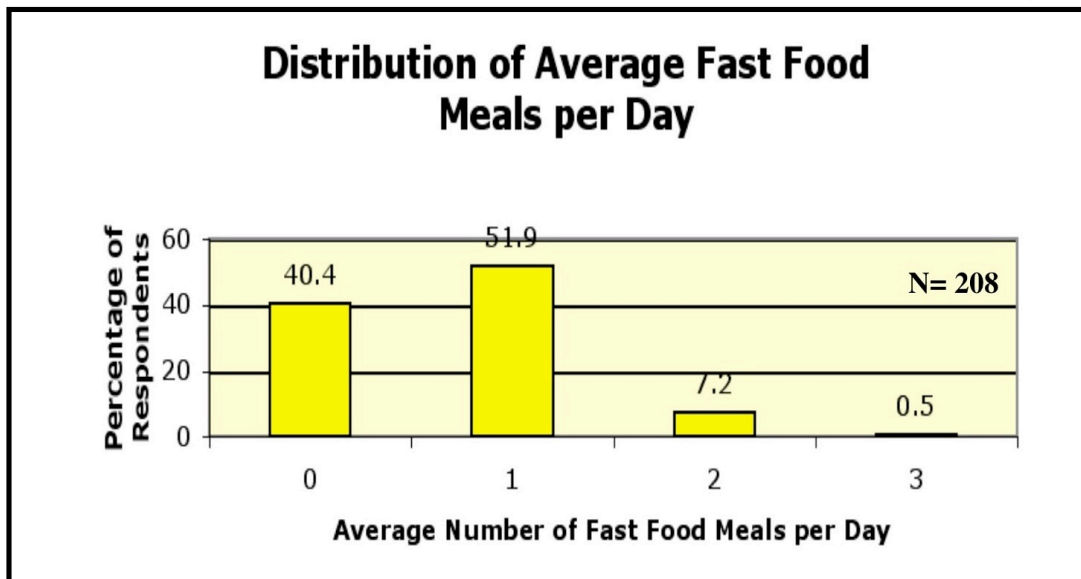


Chart 3



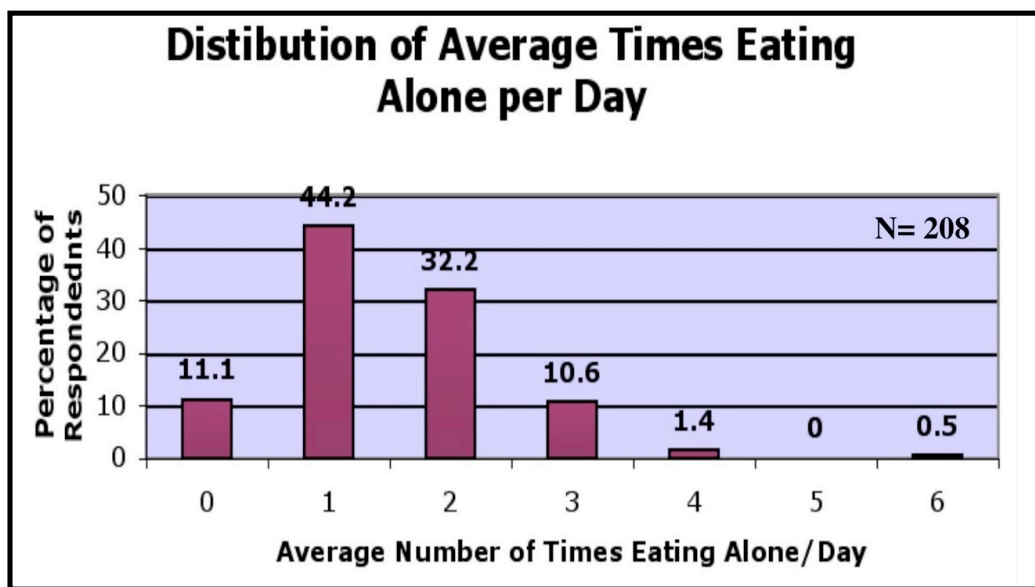
In addition to insufficient fruit and vegetable consumption, the diaries also point out alarming patterns in terms of the fast food and fried food consumption habits of these middle school kids. 124 students, 60%, averaged one or more fast food meals per day of the diary, with students eating up to three per day. These fast food meals included high calorie, high fat-foods like cheeseburgers, French fries and chocolate shakes. Student essays about their favorite meals suggested they enjoyed eating out in general and especially at fast food spots. As expected, pizza emerged in the diaries as a common fast food favorite.

Chart 4



The food diaries also revealed that students are consuming many of their foods by themselves each day, as 89% of students averaged at least one meal or snack alone per day of the diary. This statistic is especially sad because students’ essays reveal how much they value food for the social bonds and connections that surround eating. Many student essays also expressed that choice and personal taste were highly valued in their food selections. When asked to describe why they liked a certain food each day, students commonly responded, “Because I chose it.” Student essays also touched on themes such as preparing food, trying new things, food as a source of emotional comfort and relaxation, and the connection between food and cultural and religious identity.

*Chart 5*



Combined, these individual patterns paint quite a disturbing profile of the eating habits of middle school aged kids in West Louisville and East Downtown. The health impacts and outcomes associated with unhealthy eating are well documented. In our community, overweight, obesity and incidence of type II diabetes are on the rise among young people. The preliminary results of the Youth Food Diary Project indicate the need for a community food infrastructure that supports better eating habits and nutrition among local youth. One of the key predictors of fruit and vegetable consumption among youth, even above parental habits, is availability and accessibility of these foods. In other words, children are most likely to eat fruits and vegetables if they are readily accessible, even if their parents don’t. Unfortunately, ready access to affordable healthy foods in these areas is undermined by the lack of supermarkets, small grocers that stock fresh foods and vehicle access, as well as by an over abundance of fast food retailers that direct intense marketing efforts towards today’s youth. These kids are living within a community food system that makes it difficult to make a healthy choice. We need to

support healthier kids in Metro Louisville by creating a scenario in which it is easier for children in our community to choose and access fresh, affordable, healthy foods.

Unfortunately, this local trend is not unique to Louisville, but is represented throughout low-income areas of the country. In fact, the problem is so apparent that it has demanded the attention of the USDA, the governmental department in charge of regulating WIC food packages. The Institute of Medicine released a report calling for the first substantial change to the WIC program since its inception in 1974.<sup>28</sup> The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service answered that call by accepting the proposed regulation changes almost exactly as they were proposed. The changes show an effort to make the WIC food packages more nutritious and sensitive to the cultural needs of its over 8 million recipients in the United States. Based on the proposed regulations, the new food packages would have reduced amounts of dairy, egg and fruit juice and for the first time, include fruits and vegetables. The regulations give almost \$500 million a year in fruit and vegetable buying power to WIC recipients, allowing the produce to be bought and sold at farmer's markets in addition to the current FMNP operating in certain counties.

**We need to support healthier kids in Metro Louisville by creating a scenario in which it is easier for children in our community to choose and access fresh, affordable, healthy foods.**

***Proposed WIC changes:***

- Women and children would receive coupons only to purchase fruits and vegetables at WIC eligible retail food vendors;
- Women would receive \$8 per month and each eligible child \$6;
- Vouchers can be used for fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen or canned, unsweetened fruits and vegetables;
- Vouchers can be redeemed at eligible WIC vendors: supermarkets, small food stores and farmers markets; and
- Farmers markets need to be authorized as eligible vendors and USDA is not eliminating or downgrading the current WIC FMNP program.

These proposed regulations, if utilized to their potential, will have an enormous impact on the health of our state's low-income mothers and children, and will help provide stability for the uncertain future of Kentucky's family farms and rural communities.

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<sup>28</sup> National Academy of the Sciences, Institute of Medicine, "WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change," Report Brief, April 2005, 12 July 2005, 16 December 2005. [www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/28/119/wic%208%20pager--with%20tables.pdf](http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/28/119/wic%208%20pager--with%20tables.pdf)



## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY**

*Community Farm Alliance members identified three primary principles as essential to the development of a long-term comprehensive plan for a local food system in Kentucky:*

### **I. Rural Communities Need Urban Communities and Urban Communities Need Rural Communities**

A long-term comprehensive plan for the development of a local food economy:

- Builds upon the food needs of our urban communities and expands outward.
- Evolves over time, as local markets develop for locally produced products.
- Meets local neighborhood needs first, providing consistent accessible and affordable local food to the neighborhoods that need it the most, with the greatest returns to the community and farmers.
- Ensures a fair income for the people who produce our food.
- Integrates the needs of the whole community, rather than developing agriculture in isolation or thinking of urban economic development as separate from the surrounding countryside.

### **II. Economic Development Must be Resident Led**

A long-term comprehensive plan for the development of a local food economy:

- Begins with and is driven by local people, who plan their own future.
- Recognizes that local people have the most knowledge of local resources and existing successful models.
- Recognizes that the people who take the risks and reap the rewards are the most committed to achieving success.
- Spreads wealth throughout the community rather than concentrating it in the hands of a few.

### **III. Each Generation is Responsible for the Health and Cultural Vitality of the Next**

A long-term comprehensive plan for the development of a local food economy:

- Places a premium on fresh, high-quality food.
- Makes fresh food affordable and accessible in underserved areas.
- Ensures support and accountability for healthy communities from government services and local institutions.
- Invests in the skills and knowledge of Kentucky farmers and urban residents, creating learning opportunities and resources for them.



## **CREATING CHANGE: POWER = RESPONSIBILITY**

Responsibility literally means the ability to respond. Those who have the ability to respond, the power to respond, therefore have the responsibility. There are many levels of power within our community that can be used to influence change. Some members of the community hold more power than others, but it must be realized that all members of a democratic society hold the potential for realizing their own power. Although the people that make up governing bodies within our community have the most responsibility, their power is dependant upon those whom they represent. We literally employ our public officials and bestow our own powers to them to make decisions based upon the assumption that they are best suited to represent us. We always maintain the power to hold them accountable for their decisions, and in fact it is our responsibility to do so, as their employers. We believe that in every community, those who live the problems own the solutions, or in other words, residents know what's best for their communities. When residents of a community come together in an effort to solve problems that affect them as a whole, their collective power is much greater than that of any elected official. For that reason, we feel that those public officials responsible according to their individual and collective authority must address the community demands that follow.







## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of the West Louisville Food Working Group respectfully request that the appropriate policy makers consider, improve upon and act on the following policy recommendations:

### ***1) Investing in a Community-Based Food Infrastructure:***

The Mayor and the city council need to find sites and funding for a community kitchen to serve all of Louisville, but particularly low-income entrepreneurs in West Louisville and East Downtown.

Redevelopment plans for downtown, in particular, should consider the need for and benefits of a community kitchen to be included in projects as part of a local food infrastructure. This would build entrepreneurial opportunities in the communities, and assist direct marketing efforts that benefit both farmers and the community through value added products, and processing capabilities. Funding is needed for training and technical assistance to neighborhood-based entrepreneurs in marketing their products and services, developing business plans, and accessing credit and other sources of public and private investment in order to grow food business and local food retail and distribution opportunities for West Louisville and East Downtown residents, particularly youth. The West Louisville Food Working Group would like to establish a food store owned by residents as the next step in developing a local food economy after a community kitchen is established. The effort to establish a community owned store will require the nurturance and support of the City and entities like the Economic Development Department (formerly MDA). The Portland and Smoketown Farmers Markets have been the initial incubators of a community controlled food system for West Louisville. The City through The Mayor's Healthy Hometown Movement, Active Louisville and the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness has been wonderfully supportive of our West Louisville and East Downtown farmer's markets. Their continued support is both necessary and appreciated.

### ***2) Promoting Democracy:***

The Kentucky legislature dedicated \$1.7 billion dollars in settlement funds to help tobacco dependent communities transition to a diversified farm economy. House Bill 611<sup>29</sup>, passed in 2000, created County Councils comprised of locally elected farmers and gave them a great deal of power over how funds are spent. We recommend that the City of Louisville should empower an equivalent neighborhood council,

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<sup>29</sup> HB 611 establishes a process for distributing a significant portion of the settlement money to counties based on their economic dependency on tobacco production. Those local funds will go to diversification projects, submitted to and approved by county councils made up of local farmers, subject to final distribution through a state Agricultural Development Board. That board also has control over distribution of funds earmarked for state agricultural projects.

in a similar way with some funding allocated according to food security needs to form and fund grassroots led solutions.

***3) Buy Local Policies:***

Under HB 669, Kentucky's state institutions are required to purchase from local producers when products meet price and quality standards. The City of Louisville should consider a similar policy, giving local producers and vendors priority at all city events and festivals.

***4) Incentives for Low-Income Retailers:***

Kentucky currently provides incentives to retailers who agree to provide consistent and prominent shelf space to promote Kentucky grown food products. The City of Louisville should consider a similar program for retailers located in empowerment or enterprise zones, which also correspond to the food desert communities. We specifically recommend a pilot program that would work directly with 25 grocers in those areas providing financial incentives to increase the availability of local fresh fruits and vegetables.

***5) Protecting the Health of our Children:***

Assess the potential of a Farm-to-School program in Jefferson County Public Schools and specifically look at the prospect of Kids' Café purchasing from Kentucky producers year-round, in order to improve the health of our children and the regional economy. Given that children are more dependent upon school food during the week than food at home, the skyrocketing rates of obesity and diet-related disease among our children, and the astronomical future costs of treating these conditions, the City should make substantial investment today in school food service budgets so that food service directors have the means to purchase more fresh and unprocessed foods and prepare them in a wholesome way. Furthermore, the priority of incorporating locally grown and processed food into schools, as a means of protecting the health and welfare of the community, should be reflected as an integral component of the facilities plan for Jefferson County. Farm-to-School also offers many opportunities to impart valuable lessons to students in a multitude of subjects including nutrition, science, math, regional history, and economics. Jefferson County Schools should develop curricula that incorporate Farm-to-School on a variety of levels.

**6) WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program:**

Extend this program to Jefferson County, while simultaneously pursuing a united request by all state officials to our federal officials for adequate funding for this program so that all eligible low-income families are covered in the Commonwealth.

**7) Promoting Public Health:**

City should ban the use of trans fat in all restaurants and fund nutrition education and cooking demonstrations for markets that serve primarily low-income communities. The Transit Authority of River City (TARC), who has been wonderfully supportive of the Portland and Smoketown Markets, should regularly review bus routes and schedules in light of food needs in a systematic fashion, taking into account new outlets that sell local foods such as Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC, and the operating hours of the farmer's markets, including the new California Markets scheduled to open in the summer of 2007.

**8) Department of Public Health Regulation of Farmers Markets:**

Kentucky has made vast strides in modernizing our health department regulation of farmer's markets through the passage of HB 120 and HB 391.<sup>30</sup> Both pieces of legislation only apply to farmers who are selling products produced on their own farms. We need a thoughtful scheme of regulation that protects the public health, while also allowing entry into the marketplace for low-income urban entrepreneurs who wish to sell food made with local farm products.



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<sup>30</sup> HB 120 created a new section of health department regulations specifically for farmers markets, allowing farmers to sell cooked foods and give samples. HB 391 allows farmers to sell value-added products made from ingredients grown on their farms at farmers markets and provides for in state certification for acid-based foods such as salsa made from tomatoes.



## **CONCLUSION:**

### **IT TAKES A COMMUNITY TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OWNED FOOD SYSTEM**

The West Louisville Food Working Group cannot build a community food system without the diligent and thoughtful work of the many agencies and organizations that strive to build a better future for the people of Louisville. In the process of creating a new food system that is driven by and reactive to our communities, it is essential to call upon all of the resources that are available to us.

An outgrowth of all this work is a new collaborative – the Food Security Task Force, consisting of the University of Louisville, Muhammad Ali Institute, the Mayor’s Healthy Hometown Movement, Center for Health Equities, Louisville Metro Economic Development Department, Active Louisville, Louisville Metro Department of Health and Wellness, and Community Farm Alliance – whose purpose is to tackle food security issues in Louisville. Not only do we have twice the number of institutions participating in the creation of a local food economy, we have totally new institutions. The Center for Health Equities (a non-profit started by the Department of Public Health and Wellness), the Mayor’s Healthy Hometown Movement (started by the Mayor’s Office), and Active Louisville (Department of Public Health and Wellness, Public Housing Authority and Transit Authority) are all organizations that have emerged since CFA began this work, and are all focused on healthy eating and exercise.

**We exist in an environment where our food choices impact our health, economy, and culture more than ever, and it is our responsibility to shape the food system to be inherited by future generations.**

The West Louisville Food Working Group acknowledges the great challenges we face in the process of creating a local food system, and we believe in the power and potential that we hold as citizens devoted to a democratic food system that works for people and communities. We exist in an environment where our food choices impact our health, economy, and culture more than ever, and it is our responsibility to shape the food system to be inherited by future generations. Our greatest assets in the development of a local food economy are the relationships between farmers and inner city residents that serve the needs of both simultaneously. Community Farm Alliance has a special role in building relationships in both rural and urban areas, bringing opportunity for shared efforts towards building stronger communities throughout the state, and strengthening the processes for democratic decision-making.

Our state is unique in that so many of our farming communities have survived great hardships and are transforming themselves to build the capacity to produce our food supply. With the help of tobacco settlement

funds through HB 611, our farmers are transitioning out of tobacco cultivation and into the development of a wide range of food products. The future of farming in Kentucky is fragile, but with the right set of policies and strategies, we can build the economies of our rural and urban communities while addressing our state's health crisis. Kentucky's health problems rank us among the worst in the nation, largely because of our diet. The residents of West Louisville and East Downtown bear the highest burden of these diet related illnesses for reasons that we hold the power to change. We can no longer ignore the food access issues that affect our citizens.

Once armed with the knowledge of these problems, and recommendations for solutions, we have no excuse but to act on them. The community members have given us a set of recommendations that will improve the ability of neighborhoods to solve community problems in our cities, strengthen rural communities, and substantially contribute to the physical and economic health of West Louisville and East Downtown. A unified and diverse grassroots leadership dedicated to creating new community led economic activity can build political power and improve the civic and cultural life of individual neighborhoods. **If our public officials recognize the potential behind our state's farmers and urban community members in creating a new food system, we can proceed together in building a better future for Kentucky.**



*Smoketown Farmers Market*



## APPENDIX: WEST LOUISVILLE FOOD WORKING GROUP

### *History*

Members recognized that building new markets in urban access-deprived neighborhoods is an essential part of L.I.F.E. In 2003, CFA established the state's first low-income farmers market. Since that time, CFA assisted in the development of Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC, a farmer owned local food distribution business that will begin operations in April 2007, delivering to 52 restaurants and food stores initially; The Rowan Street Co-op, which delivers produce to low-income seniors who use Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) coupons; Smoketown/Shelby Park Farmers Market, the second low-income urban farmers market in the state accepting food stamps, serving over 3,000 low-income residents; and *Urban Fresh*, urban youth aged 16 to 26, who will operate the new California Farmers Market, eventually managing the mobile markets.

By 2006, the markets served over 8,000 low-income residents with fresh food, previously unavailable, and provided additional income for 23 farmers. Both farmers markets accept food stamps.

CFA involved the community in developing new markets and in setting up governance systems as an equal partnership between farmers and community. The markets include farmers in economic partnership with community members to organize neighborhood events under a new cultural paradigm. The markets provided a critical entry point to bring diverse groups of people together. CFA markets have been pioneers on two counts for certifying all vendors as a group with USDA and training and using residents as market managers.

Advertisements and publicity for the markets was done with the help of various volunteer groups (mainly Friends of Smoketown/Shelby Park and Friends of Portland Farmers Market) and support from sponsors. The Friends of the Market Group planned community events around the markets designed to attract low-income customers to the markets. The markets sponsor cooking demonstrations, distribute recipes and run a WIC demonstration project. Weekly surveys in the markets revealed the following trends: 25% of customers tried a recipe they got from the market, 25% tried a new vegetable, and 25% said that they spent more on fruits and vegetables. These responses were distributed among the population and correlation was to the extent that half the people who tried a new recipe





also tried a new vegetable. As per comparative market records from 2004 and 2005 the spending per customer has doubled in the Portland market and quadrupled in the Smoketown market.

**In 2004, with the impetus from CFA, the West Louisville Food Working Group emerged. The group, guided by a vision of greater food-access and self-sufficiency, has a mission to build new commercial structures that allow farmers and low-income city residents to create new wealth together.** The group aspires to provide the opportunity for collective ownership of part of the food economy by creating new alliances that reach across racial and cultural barriers. Upon its formation, partners included Champions of West Louisville, an organization of African American leaders dedicated to economic development in West



Louisville, both the Smoketown and Portland Farmers Markets, the Rowan Street Cooperative, and CFA. By 2005, the group expanded to include some 20 farmers and 15 entrepreneurs with food-related businesses interested in cooperatively marketing in West Louisville. The entrepreneur group participated in food handling and licensing classes as a prelude to joining the markets as vendors.

Today, the West Louisville Food Working Group (WLFWG) has grown

*Dorcilla "Dee" Johnson, Market Manager of Portland Farmers' Market, CFA board member*

to take on the many challenges related to their mission, with additional partners. They are: Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC, the first farmer-owned local food distribution business in Kentucky; Muhammad Ali Institute, a non-profit at the University of Louisville empowering young people to address the factors that lead to violence in their communities; and *Urban Fresh*, a youth-run local food delivery business operating the new California Farmer's Market (opening 2007).

## *Plans*

The West Louisville Food Working Group is embarking on a new set of strategies to build a community-driven local food economy. With the release of this document, a new wave of energy is beginning to pour into the work of L.I.F.E. in West Louisville. There are two new shining stars of the movement to make local food mainstream and accessible to all communities – Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC and *Urban Fresh*.

Grasshoppers Food Distribution, LLC, is the very first farmer-owned local food distribution business in Kentucky. The idea for a farmer-owned distribution business surfaced in a WLFWG meeting, and in March 2007, became a reality. The business is owned by four local family farmers, and will provide a means for many small farmers across the state to market their product. This fresh idea grows out of the harsh realities that small farmers face when struggling to balance time in the field with time spent at a



*Ivor Chodkowski (left), CFA board member and tenant farmer, owner of Grasshoppers*

farmers' market, or searching for other outlets to sell through. With Grasshoppers, there is now an option for farmers to market their products while building their capacity to produce more with more time in the field. The business is in its start-up phase, but is already turning heads among local restaurant owners and eager chefs. Eventually, Grasshoppers hopes to turn a specialty market reserved for the privileged, into a mainstream market by which every community has access to affordable, fresh local food, and there is one group of young entrepreneurs who will see to it.

*Urban Fresh* was born out of the partnership between CFA and the Muhammad Ali Institute, as a way for several socially minded young inner city residents to attack the long term crisis of food access in their neighborhoods while creating wealth for themselves and small farmers. These young people define the city's greatest challenges as youth violence, gangs, food-security, and unemployment.

*Urban Fresh* is designed to bring locally grown fresh food products to underserved neighborhoods in West Louisville. Formerly of the 700 block in Clarksdale, *Urban Fresh* members are dedicated to transforming

their lives and their communities by establishing outlets for healthy food in urban neighborhoods. A business owned and operated by young people, *Urban Fresh* will process and deliver orders of locally grown fresh food to the homes of its customers. In addition, they will run a new farmers market in the California neighborhood of Louisville. These two revenue sources are only the beginning for *Urban Fresh*, as there are ideas to grow the business with related products and services.

Through *Urban Fresh*, everyone wins. Young people make an honorable living that will help heal their lives and their communities; citizens in our urban neighborhoods gain access to affordable healthy food; and local farmers develop new markets for their products. *Urban Fresh* is the newest partner in a unique partnership to address the economic challenges of our urban and rural communities.



*Members of Urban Fresh*



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