Lower Ninth Ward

Food Action Plan

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SECTION 1
Background

Introduction

In recent years, the fight for food access for all Americans has increased dramatically. Gaining momentum as a fundamental human right, communities and organizations around the country are working to promote food security as a matter of personal health and economic development. Access to healthy food is vital to the redevelopment of our communities, promoting the health of individuals and encouraging sustainable economic development within these neighborhoods.

The Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, a low to middle income area with African-American majority, has struggled with poor food access for decades. Making matters worse, the levee failure during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 battered the neighborhood. Redevelopment has been slow, and food access has been a contentious issue. Currently, the Lower Ninth Ward lacks a full service grocery store, and the residents must travel nearly double the city's average neighborhood-to-supermarket distance to purchase groceries.[1] Access to fresh and nutritious food is critical to the health, sustainability, and economic redevelopment of the neighborhood, and these beliefs are at the core of the struggle for food access in the Lower Ninth Ward.

The Lower Ninth Ward demands access to quality food for two primary reasons: to promote sustainable economic growth, and to ensure the availability of proper nutrition for its residents. Studies show that limited access to supermarkets may reduce consumption of healthy foods, resulting

[1] Foster A, Boder N, Ulmer V, Rose D. (2010). Re-storing the Crescent City: Food Access in Three New Orleans Neighborhoods. Congressional Hunger Center. Retrieved December 2012 from http://www.hungercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Restoring_the_Crescent_City_Foster.pdf

in poor nutrition and an increased prevalence of obesity.[2] Hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, as well as obesity, are all diet-related illnesses that disproportionately affect the African-American community.[3,4,5,6] Therefore, a lack of access to healthy food, and high access to unhealthy and processed food, pose severe risks to the health of the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward. Access to quality food is also critical to the revitalization and economic development of the neighborhood. Nationally, grocery shopping represents the largest segment of retail activity after automobile and auto parts sales, accounting for more than 16% of retail sales. Full-line grocery stores are high-value magnets that attract complementary stores and services, creating opportunities for additional private sector investment.[7] New stores also contribute to the physical revitalization of communities, providing jobs and infrastructure vital to a community's success.

In April 2012, the Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED) launched a Food Action Planning Initiative, organizing Lower Ninth Ward community leaders and residents to develop a Neighborhood Food Plan. The Lower Ninth Ward CSED is a Lower Ninth Ward based non-profit devoted to restoring the neighborhood as a safe, environmentally just, and economically vibrant community. The initiative entailed a series of eight planning meetings, each focusing on a different set of issues agreed upon by Lower Ninth Ward residents. Professionals in the areas of planning, business and food, as well as representatives from the City, were invited to serve in support and advisory roles. To ensure that the food action plan reflected the needs and desires of the neighborhood, all Lower Ninth Ward residents were invited to these meetings, and only Lower Ninth Ward residents had decision-making powers in regards to the Food Plan.

What is Food Security?

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life".[8] Food security, therefore, refers to both the concept of physical and economical access to food. According the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), food security includes at a minimum, (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).[9]

Food security is built on three pillars:

1. Food availability: sufficient quantity on a consistent basis
2. Food access: having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet

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[2] Michimi A, Wimberly M. (2010). Associations of supermarket accessibility with obesity and fruit and vegetable consumption in the conterminous United States. International Journal of Health Geographics. 9:49, doi: 10.1186/1476-071X-9-49.
[3] Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Adult Obesity Facts.* http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html#Groups (December 2012)
[4] US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. *Heart Disease and African Americans.* http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?ID=3018 (December 2012)
[5] State of Louisiana, Department of Health and Hospitals. *Highlighted Diabetes Facts.* http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/ index.cfm/page/580 (December 2012)
[6] State of Loisiana, Department of Health and Hospitals. *Health Status.* http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/672/n/241 (December 2012)
[7] US Census Bureau. *Estimated Annual Sales of US Retail and Food Services Firms by Kind of Business: 1992 through 1997.* http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/artstbl.html (December 2012)
[8] World Health Organization. *Food Security.* http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/ (December 2012)
[9] US.. Department of Agriculture. *Food Security in the U.S.http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx* (December 2012)

3. Food use: appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care

What is a Food Desert?

The USDA defines a food deserts as any low-income area with a population greater than 500 that lacks a full service grocery store within one mile. In the map shown below **(Figure 1)**, the red areas indicate the neighborhoods in New Orleans that meet the USDA food desert criteria. The Lower Ninth Ward falls in the center of a very large food desert area.

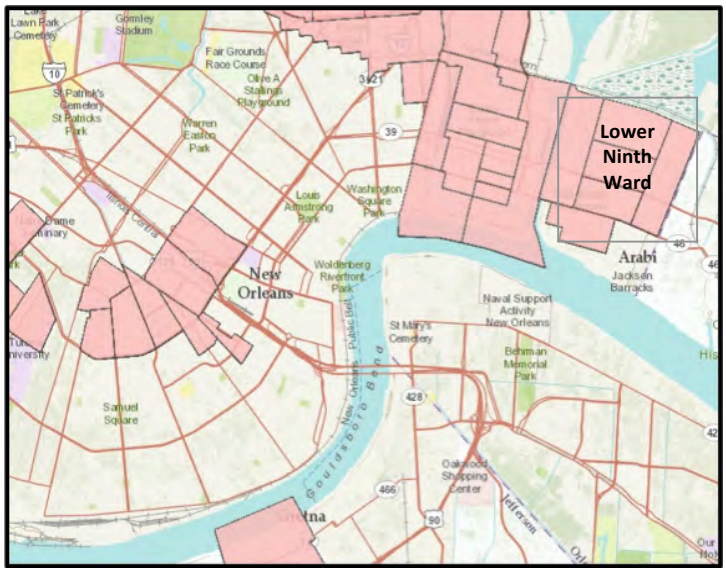


Figure 1: Food Deserts in Orleans Parish *(Source: USDA ERS)*

What is Food Justice?

Food justice seeks to ensure that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed and eaten are shared fairly. Food justice represents a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities.[10]

What is a Sustainable Food System?

A sustainable food system, whether it is local or regional, brings farmers closer to consumers by producing fruits and vegetables or raising livestock or fish closer to the places they are sold. Advocates of this system believe that when it comes to food security, the closer producers are to homes and neighborhoods, the greater the access to more nutritious and affordable food.

The Lower Ninth Ward

The Lower Ninth Ward was among the last of the New Orleans neighborhoods to be developed. Downriver from the rest of New Orleans, the boundaries of the neighborhood are the industrial canal to the west, the Mississippi River to the south, Florida Avenue and marshes to the north, and St. Bernard Parish to the east.[11]

Like much of New Orleans prior to development, the area was mostly cypress swamps and marshlands. In the early 1800s, most of what is now the Lower Ninth Ward was either swampland or sugarcane plantations. However, wealthy New Orleans residents started to build homes on the natural levee occurring along the river in what is today areas of the Upper and Lower Ninth Ward.[11] Those unable to afford land on higher ground, immigrants and free people of color, moved into the swampy flood-prone expanse further from the river.[12] From 1830 to 1860, the population of New Orleans grew 366%

[10] Gottlieb, R. & Joshi, A. (2010). *Food Justice.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
[11] Landphair, Juliette. *The Forgotten People of New Orleans: Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward.* Journal of American History. Dec. 1, 2007
[12] *Ibid*., 298-300; Peirce F. Lewis, New Orleans: The Making of an Urban Landscape (Santa Fe, 2003), 51-52

due to immigration, mostly from Germany and Ireland, and many of these people settled in what is now the Lower Ninth Ward.[13] In 1852 the city of New Orleans officially designated the Ninth Ward. At the same time, with a desire to modernize New Orleans, the city concentrated money on drainage systems and flood protection for the wealthier, already naturally protected areas of town. Therefore, from its start as an official ward, the Ninth Ward faced an uphill struggle to address municipal neglect and vulnerable terrain.[14]

During the 1900s a tremendous shift occurred in the Lower Ninth Ward. From 1918 to 1923, the industrial canal was built, dividing the Ninth Ward into "upper" and "lower" areas. The canal further reinforced the isolation and detachment of the Lower Ninth Ward from the rest of New Orleans while simultaneously providing jobs and development in the area.[14] Even as late as the 1950s, the majority of development in the area was either along the canal or near the river.

In the decades following WWII, federal incentives supported "white flight" across the United States. During this time, millions of whites moved from the cities to suburbs, and along with them went resources and retail services. From the 1930s through the 1980s, twice as many federally backed homeowner loans went to suburban, mostly white, residents. From 1940 to 1970, the non-white population in the Lower Ninth Ward increased from 31% to 73%. In the Lower Ninth Ward, the "white flight" was accelerated by the backlash over racial desegregation of schools and the effects of Hurricane Betsy in 1965.[14] The disinvestment and loss of businesses that accompanied the "white flight" devastated the Lower Ninth Ward, signaling the beginning of the decline of resources and infrastructure within the neighborhood. The last mid-size grocery store in the neighborhood closed its doors in 1987. Still, prior to Hurricane Katrina, the neighborhood had small businesses, barber and beauty shops, corner stores, eateries, day care centers, public schools, and many churches.

On August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast. Due to the failure of the levee system, the Lower Ninth Ward was completely devastated and the entire neighborhood flooded. Six months after the disaster, the neighborhood was still under curfew. A resident of the Lower Ninth Ward gave a personal account about this time, stating, "The National Guard stopped every car at the foot of the St. Claude Bridge. [They] treated us like criminals, checking everyone in the car. [It was] like martial law." Resources and residents were slow to return, and even today, seven years after the storm, the population of the Lower Ninth Ward remains a quarter of pre-Katrina levels.

With its history of resilience, survival, and activism the Lower Ninth Ward Community continues to advance. Community leaders fought against City plans to convert much of the neighborhood into green space and to severely delay the reopening of the only public elementary school in the neighborhood after Katrina. Several organizations led by Lower Ninth Ward activists have emerged to combat blight, help residents return home, and revitalize the neighborhood. Despite the population loss, the homeownership rate remains a high 61%, indicating a strong investment by residents and commitment to the neighborhood. Furthermore, the two main corridors of the Lower Ninth Ward, St.

[13]Fussel, Elizabeth. (2007) Constructing New Orleans, Constructing Race: A population history of New Orleans. Journal of American History.

[14]Landphair, Juliette. (2007). The Forgotten People of New Orleans: Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward. Journal of American History.

Claude Avenue and N. Claiborne Avenue, remain active transportation routes. It is clear that the potential for community redevelopment in the Lower Ninth Ward is high.

History of Food Access in the Lower Ninth Ward

The history of the Lower Ninth Ward, from its beginning as sugar cane plantations, through the decades of farming to supply New Orleans with produce, has been tied with food. Although access to food may currently be limited, this has not always been the case. To better understand what food access was like in the past, and how it affected the community, interviews were conducted with five lifelong residents of the Lower Ninth Ward: Mr. Henry Irvin, Ms. Beverly Jackson, Ms. Gail Woods, Ms. Augustine Greenwood, and Ms. Leeonise Smith.

Ms. Jackson spoke of a time when corner stores were abundant and each one served a purpose. She reminisced about a Lower Ninth Ward where access to food was plentiful, stores were locally owned, and competition was friendly.

Q: Were there many more corner stores then compared to now?

Ms. Jackson: "Absolutely, a lot of mom and pop corner stores so to speak…smaller markets. It is strange that because at that time there wasn't a lot of competition. Everyone accommodated the corner grocery stores because the larger grocery stores were open from a certain time to a certain time, but corner grocery stores stayed open later so if you needed stuff in excess from your making groceries per say, those are the stores you would use. Everybody made a living. There really wasn't a whole lot of conflict."

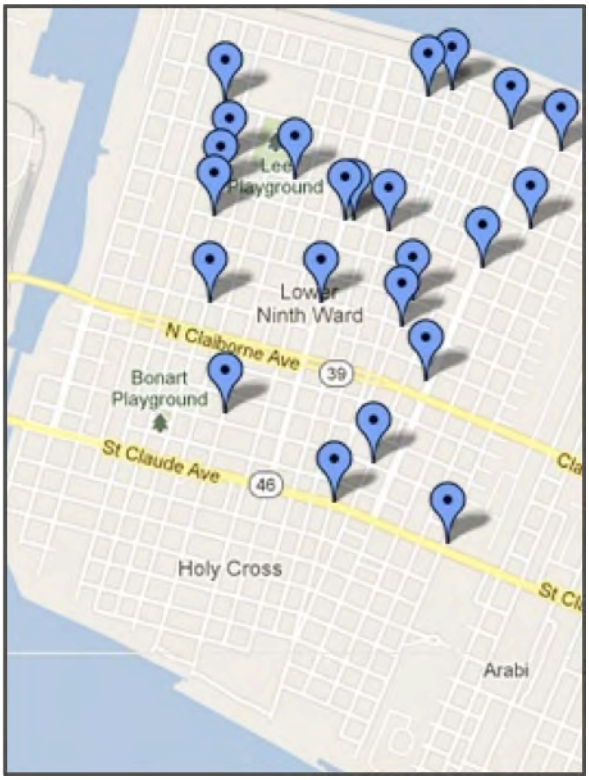


Figure 2: Historical Map of Food Vendors in the Lower Ninth Ward Obtained via Residential Narrative - Representative only of businesses north of St. Claude Avenue *(Source: Google Maps)*

Q: Did the community support the stores?

Ms. Jackson: "If one store didn't have it in, they would tell you to go to another store who had it. It wasn't like a competition because this one thought they would make more than another. It was like a community net."

Mr. Irvin: "We had an awful lot of places down there. When I look over my mind and remember how many grocery stores we had…well, a lot of them moved away and Katrina wiped out a whole lot of things."

Ms. Smith, Ms. Greenwood, and Ms. Woods provided these anecdotes about past food access:

"Corner stores were abundant. We used to do lots of our shopping at a meat market and a store across the street from me"

"There were so many!"

"Healthy corner stores where everybody knew everybody."

"The decline started with Hurricane Betsy. Places came back, but not everything."

To better illustrate the abundance of past corner and grocery stores, Mr. Irvin and Ms. Jackson made a map showing the locations of stores often frequented during their time living in the Lower Ninth Ward. This map indicates that access to food was never more than a few blocks away **(Figure 2).** These interviews suggest a largely self-sufficient Lower Ninth Ward that had an abundance of Black-owned and locally owned grocery stores. These testimonials, in addition to a history of "white flight," subsequent losses in business and resources, and devastation from Hurricane Betsy indicate a gradual decline in community food access since 1965. The last full service grocery store closed in 1987 and the neighborhood remains without one today.

Current Food Access in the Lower Ninth Ward

Food access in the neighborhood is poor. The current population of the Lower Ninth Ward (including Holy Cross) is just over 5,500 according to the 2010 Census, and yet the closest grocery store is roughly three miles away in neighboring St. Bernard Parish. In the neighborhood itself, the following businesses represent the only current food retail **(Table 1):**

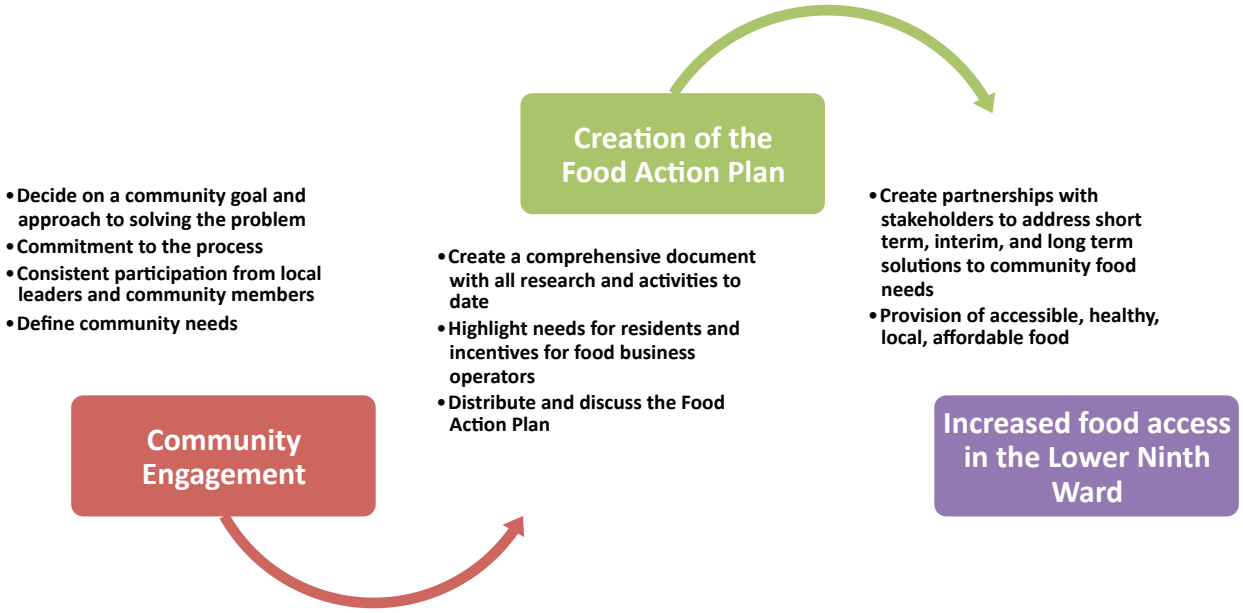
LOWER 9TH WARD CURRENT NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD OPTIONS					
Store Name	**Fresh Produce**	**Fresh Meats**	**Packaged Foods**	**Prepared Foods**	**Junk Food**
Magnolia Discount Supermarket		Cold cuts, sausages, fish, beef by the pound, steaks, etc.	Limited amount of frozen, packaged grocery items like okra and corn	Food items like prepared breakfast, poboys, sandwiches, wings, fries, etc.	A lot of junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
St. Maurice Grocery	Limited fresh produce like lemons, onions, bell peppers.		Packaged frozen grocery store items like frozen pizzas, hot pockets, etc.	Hot prepared foods	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
Brothers Gas Station and Food Mart				Hot prepared foods: fried chicken, fries & side items	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
NOLA Village Market		Cold cuts, sausages, pork cuts	Canned goods, cheese, milk, bread, sugar, cooking oil	Hot prepared foods: wings, onion rings fried fish and chicken	Junk food: chips and candy
Fuel Xpress Minimart	Limited fresh produce like bananas, onions, potatoes	Cold cuts, pork cuts, steaks, etc.	Packaged frozen grocery store items like frozen pizzas, hot pockets, etc.	Hot food: french fries, chicken, poboys	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
Cast Iron Rose*				Creole Soul Food	
Cajun Joe's Seafood				Prepared seafood, Cajun dishes	
Café Dauphine*				Southern Fusion Food	
St. Claude Internet Café *				A variety of sandwiches and Hot Dogs	Chips, nachos, and candy
Daynell's One Stop/Randolph's Open 24 hrs*			Frozen items and canned goods, grocery items	Sandwiches & plate food	Junk food: chips and candy
SUMMARY:	10 food businesses:	4 Black/Locally owned* 7 sell junk food 3 sell fresh meats 2 sell limited fresh produce		3 urban farms grow fresh produce	

Table 1: Existing Food Vendors in the Lower Ninth Ward (January 2013)

As these figures demonstrate, there is a tremendous need for increased food access in the neighborhood. Furthermore, these figures show that although food access is low, access to junk food and unhealthy food is relatively high, increasing health concerns for all residents.

A Framework for Action

Over the course of eight months, the Lower Ninth Ward community has come together, committed to exploring issues contributing to limitations in neighborhood food access, and in the process, articulating food-based needs. Exhaustive research and community participation has led to the creation of this Food Action Plan. It is our hope that this document will be used to engender dialogue and represent the voice of the residents in a vibrant community, a community that seeks solutions to basic needs such as improved access to healthy and diverse food options. The Food Action Plan builds a strong foundation for development and provides a direction for growth of the food system in the Lower Ninth Ward.



SECTION 2

Demographics & Neighborhood Characteristics

Demographics of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood

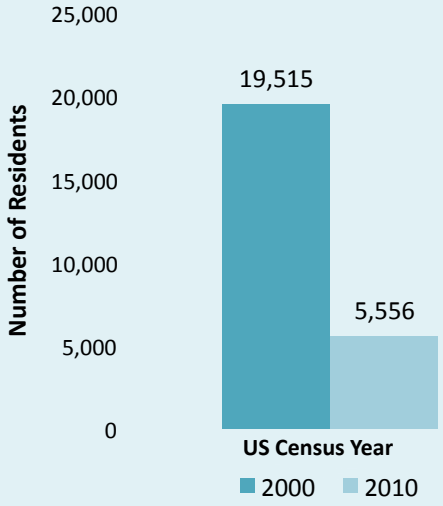
The Lower Ninth Ward offers a unique set of challenges and opportunities to food retailers. The demographics of the Lower Ninth Ward, as shown in the graphs below, demonstrate both the highs and lows of the neighborhood. The challenges facing the neighborhood's redevelopment are vast, with poverty high, income low, and a population a quarter of pre-Katrina levels. However, the demographics also suggest immense demand for food access and other resources, great potential for development, and a population dedicated to their neighborhood and neighbors.

While the diminished population and high rate of unoccupied housing units may concern investors, it also suggests room for growth as resources are invested in the neighborhood. There are many reasons people have not returned to the Lower Ninth Ward since Katrina, one of which is a lack of food access and the limited availability of other resources. As these resources come back to the neighborhood, so will people. Furthermore, while high poverty rates and low incomes may be a cause for apprehension, they also suggest that people are likely to shop in their own neighborhood rather than spending time and money driving miles away to "make groceries." Lastly, the rate of home ownership should encourage food retailers. Well above the city average, this statistic is remarkable, especially given the challenges residents have overcome to redevelop the Lower Ninth Ward post-Katrina. Home ownership substantiates great pride and investment in the neighborhood, and economic development, including food retailers, would surely be met with strong demand and community support.

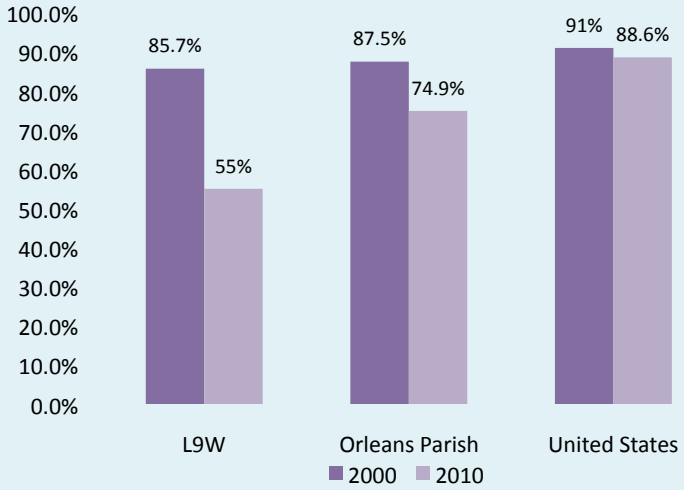
Lower Ninth Ward Statistics

Includes Holy Cross *(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

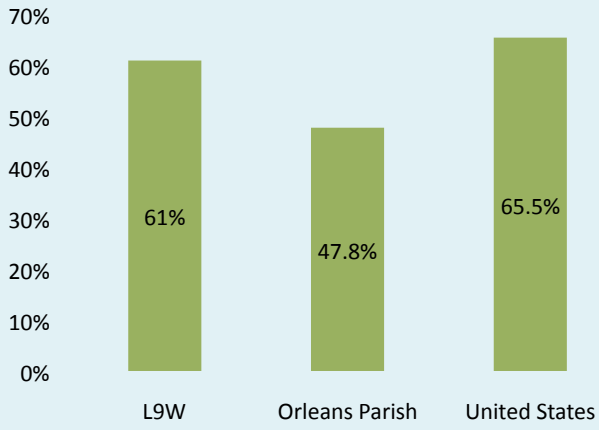
Neighbornood Population



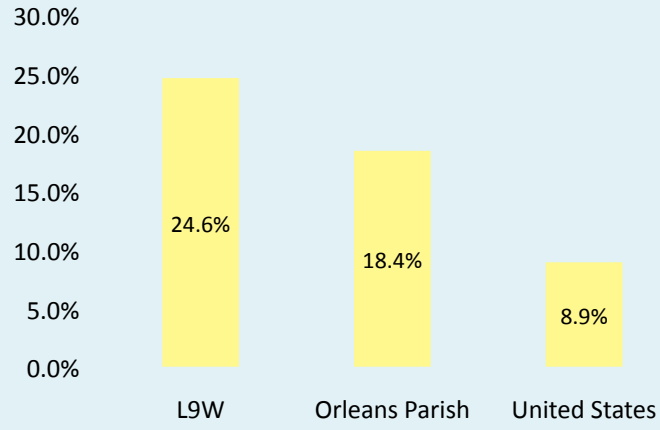
Occupied Housing Units



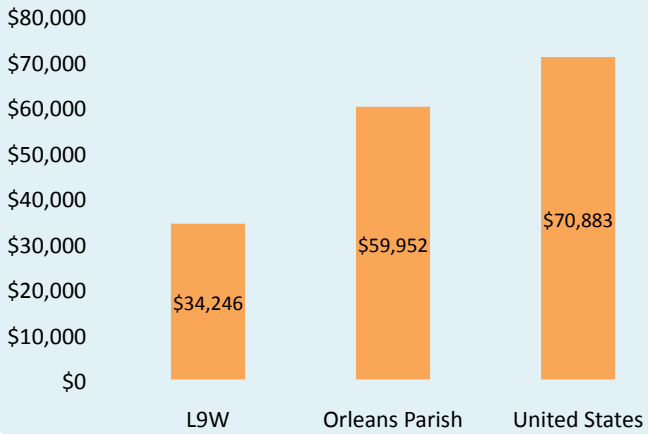
Home Ownership 2010



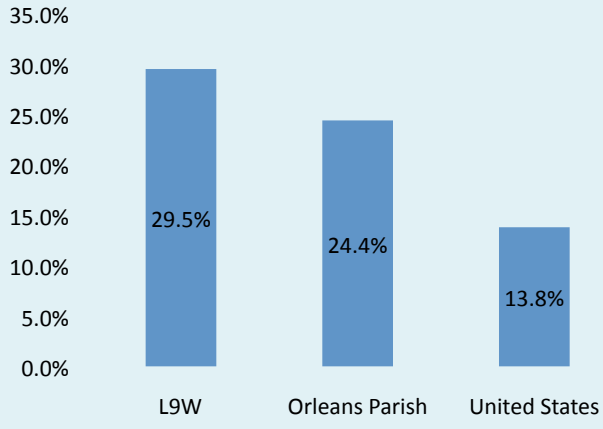
No Vehicle Available 2010



Average Household Income 2010



Poverty Level 2010



Neighborhood Characteristics

Barriers to Health and Nutrition

The residents of the Lower Ninth Ward face numerous challenges when it comes to their health and nutrition. The health of an individual is tied to many different factors, but some of the most influential are access to services, health care, and environment. In a neighborhood lacking resources the health risks are great.

Racial Health Disparities

Black Americans are at a higher risk for most major diseases in the United States compared to other races, including higher levels of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. These differences are primarily driven by issues such as income, education, work status, poor housing, neighborhood segregation, and environmental factors, all of which are deeply rooted in historic and systemic racism.[15]

Food Access

Access to food, whether it is to healthy food or unhealthy food, contributes to one's health risk. A study conducted in New Orleans found that the availability of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores correlated with an increased risk of obesity, whereas supermarkets within neighborhoods correlated with a reduced risk of obesity.[16] Currently, out of the ten food stores operating in the Lower Ninth Ward, seven sell junk food and only two sell limited fresh produce. In addition to these stores, there is one fast food restaurant. The access to unhealthy food and lack of access to healthy food puts the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward at an increased risk of obesity and other health concerns.

Access to Health Care

Access to health care, whether be it clinics, insurance, or other services, contributes to one's risk of disease.[15] The Lower Ninth Ward lacks heath-based facilities and has very limited healthcare resources.

Of these factors jeopardizing the health of the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward, food access is the easiest to address. Not only is proper access to food a matter of public health, it is also an issue of social justice that is deserved in all neighborhoods in the United States.

Demand for Food

The residents of the Lower Ninth Ward understand that there must be sufficient demand to construct a grocery store in any neighborhood. Many operators measure demand by population, among other

[15]The Commonwealth Fund. (2008). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in U.S. Healthcare http://www.commonwealthfund.org/usr_doc/Mead_racialethnicdisparities_chartbook_1111.pdf (December 2012)
[16] Boder, J, Rice, J., Farley, T., Swalm, C., Rose, D. (2010). The Association Between Obesity and Urban Food Environments. Journal of Urban Health. 87(5). http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2937132/

factors. Lower Ninth Ward residents want grocery store operators to consider factors beyond population when measuring demand.

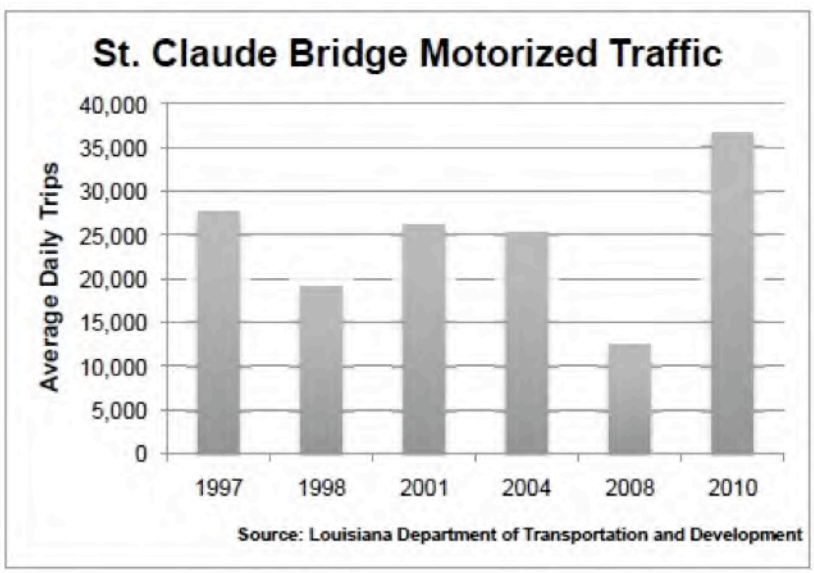


Figure 3: Average daily trips into New Orleans across the Industrial Canal *(Source: Nance, Earthea, "Connect the 9: Bridging St. Claude for All Users" (2012). Planning and Urban Studies Reports and Presentations. Paper 13.*

Demand for access to food is demonstrated by a number of statistics. Purchasing groceries within neighborhood boundaries is the most economically feasible for Lower Ninth Ward residents. Poverty is high, income is low, and a quarter of the Lower Ninth Ward population does not have personal transportation. Given the opportunity to purchase groceries at home, residents will likely greatly reduce the frequency of purchases elsewhere. Furthermore, the Lower Ninth Ward is a major thoroughfare for commuters from the 'bedroom communities' of St. Bernard Parish into downtown New Orleans. Each day, over 35,000 trips are made into the city via the Lower Ninth Ward **(Figure 3).** Investors should consider the amount of thru traffic that may greatly increase the potential consumer base within the area during the day.[17]

A Committed Community

Since Hurricane Katrina, the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward have fought with passion and vigor to rebuild the neighborhood they love. The dedication, resiliency, pride, and sense of community found in the Lower Ninth Ward is the best indicator of why access to food in the neighborhood would be met with great demand and support. In interviews conducted with lifelong Lower Ninth Ward residents, Ms. Greenwood, expressed her frustration at the situation: "I don't like not being able to make purchases down here because I want to spend the money where I live. I resent all the stores in Chalmette because I want stores down here". Ms. Beverly Jackson, another lifelong resident of the Lower Ninth Ward, exclaimed, "I just see no reason why one major grocery store can't be done in the Lower Ninth Ward. They are forcing us to go to other parishes and to other areas, and that is their economic development with our money!" The residents of the Lower Ninth Ward are passionate about having a grocery store in their neighborhood, and there is no doubt that it would be supported enthusiastically when opened.

Market Potential in the Lower Ninth Ward

In 2009 a group of DePaul University, Louisiana State University, and University of New Orleans students partnered with the Lower Ninth Ward CSED and the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association in

[17] "5523 St. Claude Avenue: Bringing Fresh Food to the Lower Ninth Ward." (2009). Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Holy Cross Neighborhood Association.

the development of a proposal for the establishment of a full service grocery store on the St. Claude Avenue commercial corridor. In the proposal, the team emphasized the physical and community characteristics that afforded promise for food operator success. Among these, the existence of pre-existing physical infrastructure, public works road improvement projects, proximity to mixed-use corridors, and continual housing development programs. In particular, grocery retail capacity statistics associated with a primary and secondary markets within a geographic radius are noteworthy **(Figure 4)**.

- *Utilizing U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and demographic data the proposal suggests that an estimated 2,000 households would potentially spend more than $5,000,000 per year on food consumption purchases. (The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that there are 3,775 households in the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross neighborhoods combined).*
- *More than 30% of residents do not own a car, this suggests consumer retention within a mile radius.*
- *In 2008 the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development estimated through traffic across the bridges over the inner harbor navigation canal of over 12,000 cars per day at St. Claude Avenue and over 26,000 cars per day at Claiborne Avenue, suggesting the potential for additional expenditures from the commuters.*
- *Based on 2009 demographics and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for consumer expenditure levels, one can estimate an expected customer base of over 35,000 individuals and annual household expenditures on food consumption to exceed $35,000,000 within a 6-minute drive from the proposed site location.*

Although the project was unable to garner adequate financial support to carry out activities detailed within the proposal, it allowed the greater community, potential investors included, to engage in a dialogue about the potential for retail success in the Lower Ninth Ward.[18]

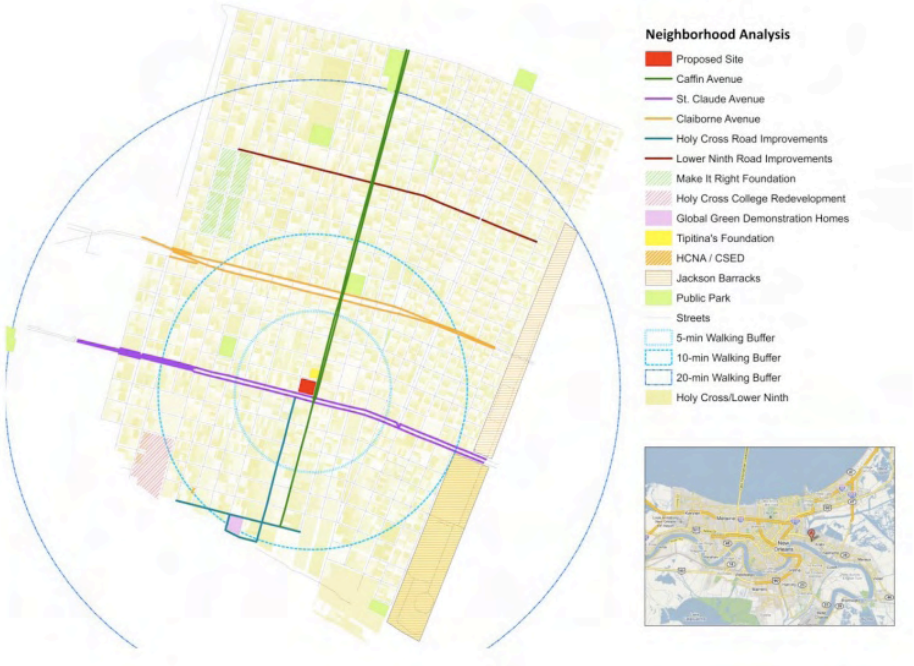


Figure 4: 5523 St. Claude Avenue Market Proposal Consumer Buffer Zones

[18] "5523 St. Claude Avenue: Bringing Fresh Food to the Lower Ninth Ward." (2009). Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Holy Cross Neighborhood Association.

SECTION 3

State of Food Access in the Lower Ninth Ward

Food in the Lower Ninth Ward

Studies demonstrate that individuals will purchase food readily available in their community, and that improving the variety of healthy foods can increase the consumption of fresh produce. Unfortunately, many neighborhoods in New Orleans, including the Lower Ninth Ward, do not have full service supermarkets. Following Hurricane Katrina the city lost 15 of its 38 grocery stores, defined by the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee as having three or more registers and offering fresh produce. Furthermore, the remaining 23 supermarkets were concentrated in more affluent neighborhoods upriver.[19]

Disparities in geographic and financial accessibility to food items, and fresh foods in particular, have been shown to have negative effects on health that disproportionately affect low-income minority groups. In a city where the number of individuals served per grocery store is more than twice the national average, the physical isolation of the Lower Ninth Ward puts the neighborhood at a

[19] Congressional Hunger Center. (2009). Healthy Corner Stores for Healthy New Orleans Neighborhoods. Healthy Corner Stores Network. Retrieved from http://healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/NOLA_Healthy_Corner_Stores_Toolkit.pdf

disadvantage for healthy food consumption opportunities and diet-related disease.[20] Furthermore, purchasing power in the Lower Ninth Ward is strained by income levels, and is compounded by the increased cost to access healthy grocery items, such transportation and local small market prices.[21]

A survey of existing food vendors in the Lower Ninth Ward indicates that there are limited food options for residents, and amongst these, few opportunities exist for purchasing healthy items such as fresh fruits and vegetables **(Figure 5)**. Currently there are ten food-based businesses in the neighborhood, four of which are locally owned. Of the ten businesses, two are gas station marts and four are traditional corner stores that are generally stocked with high calorie, pre-packaged snacks and junk food. Additionally, environment mapping studies indicate that the Lower Ninth Ward contains half the number of corner stores than the average New Orleans Neighborhood.[16]

Figure 5: Existing Food Vendors in the Lower Ninth Ward (as of December 2012)

Lifelong residents of the Lower Ninth Ward recall a time when the landscape of food vendors in the neighborhood was substantially different. Grocers and corner stores comfortably served the community needs and were easily accessible by most residents. Competition was friendly, and the majority of small stores were locally owned. According to residents, the decline of full service grocers and small food businesses in the Lower Ninth Ward began after Hurricane Betsy and were further exacerbated by damages and the subsequent flooding following Hurricane Katrina.

Urban Agriculture

In recent years community gardens and urban farms have garnered increased attention and support in New Orleans as a grassroots effort to improve fresh food access, particularly in underserved areas of the city. Networks of farming organizations have formed and continue to grow as urban agriculture is increasingly considered a conducive element of community redevelopment and a means to address health disparities and community food security. The Lower Ninth Ward is home to a number of urban agriculture projects.

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[20] Foster A, Boder N, Ulmer V, Rose D. (2010). Re-storing the Crescent City: Food Access in Three New Orleans Neighborhoods. Congressional Hunger Center. Retrieved December 2012 from http://www.hungercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Restoring_the_Crescent_City_Foster.pdf

[21] Rose, D. (2010). Access to Healthy Food: A Key Focus for Research on Domestic Food Insecurity. The Journal of Nutrition. 140:1167-1169. doi:10.3945/jn.109.113183

The *Our School At Blair Grocery (OSBG)* urban farm was founded at the site of a former Lower Ninth Ward grocery store, owned and operated by the local Blair family. OSBG functions as an experiential learning center for local at-risk-youth, incorporating the concepts of sustainable practices and environmental justice to develop long-term food sustainability and security for the Lower Ninth Ward community. OSBG will require expansions in their current operations to meet such goals, nonetheless OSBG has made strides in the provision of produce to the local food co-op and nearby restaurants.

Lamanche Urban Farm is a community-farming project operated by the non-profit organization lowernine.org. The farm was initiated as a vehicle for the community to address food insecurity, utilizing vacant lots with the consent of local proprietors for small farming ventures. The produce resulting from community growing efforts is then sold at the weekly Sankofa farmers market.

Whipple Urban Farm is an agriculture project in the Lower Ninth Ward that seeks to incorporate community involvement and education in the production of fresh local groceries specifically for residents of the Lower Ninth Ward.

The *Sankofa Community Development Corporation* has begun work on the development of a vegetable garden on the St. Claude corridor in the Lower Ninth Ward to provide residents with fresh "farm-to-table" produce options. The organization utilizes community green space for residents to participate in growing and harvesting efforts.

Food Access in the Master Plan

In 2010 the New Orleans City Planning Commission adopted an official citywide master plan, aptly named the *Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030*. The Master Plan is rooted in public participation and proposes strategies for overcoming development obstacles in a 20-year period. The Master Plan envisions New Orleans in 2030 as a resilient community that enhances quality of life for all and provides for equitable economic opportunities. The Master Plan provides an extensive review of the challenges faced by the collective public and actionable steps to encourage positive change.

Amongst the goals for health and human services within the Master Plan is the provision of "access to fresh, healthy food choices for all residents" through the establishment and support of healthy food retailers in accessible locations for underserved populations. Following the identification of areas in

need, the Master Plan proposes minimizing zoning and policy barriers to temporary or mobile food vendors, providing incentives for small stores to increase fresh food inventory, encouraging local farmer's markets to accept government food assistance vouchers, and support for community gardens. The city-wide Fresh Food Retailer Initiative (FFRI), sourced by federal disaster community development block grants, is cited as the funding source for incentive programs to improve food access.[22]

Grocery Store for a Day

In association with National Food Day, the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition hosted a Grocery Store For-A-Day event in the Lower Ninth Ward on October 20, 2012. The Grocery Store For-A-Day provided a unique opportunity for people to "make groceries" in the Lower Ninth Ward. The event drew approximately 300 people from all over the city of New Orleans to support the Coalition's efforts to get better food access in the neighborhood. The all-day event also included a kids' breakfast, educational workshops, a neighborhood food vendor, health screenings/ information, and entertainment.

Contributors included Grow Dat Youth Farm, the New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans Food Coop, Hollygrove Market and Farm, Second Harvest, New Orleans Food and Farm Network, Tulane Prevention Research Center, A Community Voice, Tulane Medical Center, Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association, and more. Sponsors included Austin Badon, Ashe Cultural Arts Center, Jerry Brown, Jr., Sierra Club, Wesley Bishop, and Jaye Brodsky.

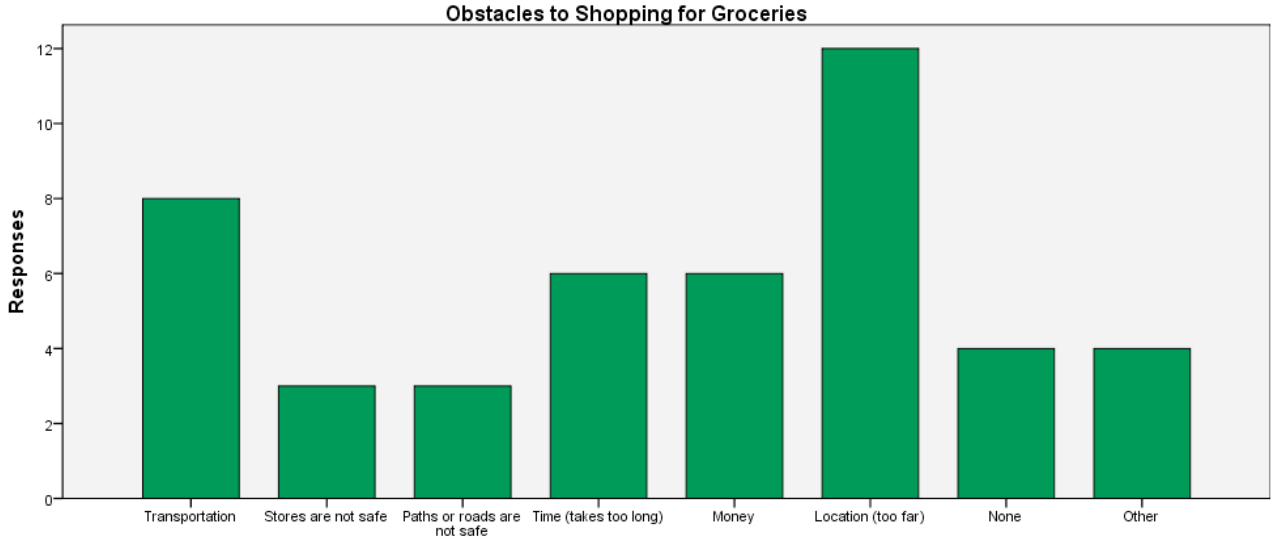
With this event, the Coalition successfully drew attention to the Lower Ninth Ward's "food desert" status and the Coalition's community efforts, while encouraging more people in the community to join, and raising over $2700 towards the Coalition's first project. By bringing people together for the grocery store experience, food, fun and dialogue, the Coalition put a spotlight on the need in the Lower Ninth Ward, a segment of New Orleans - a city known as a food capital in this country, yet many residents do not have access to fresh, affordable food.

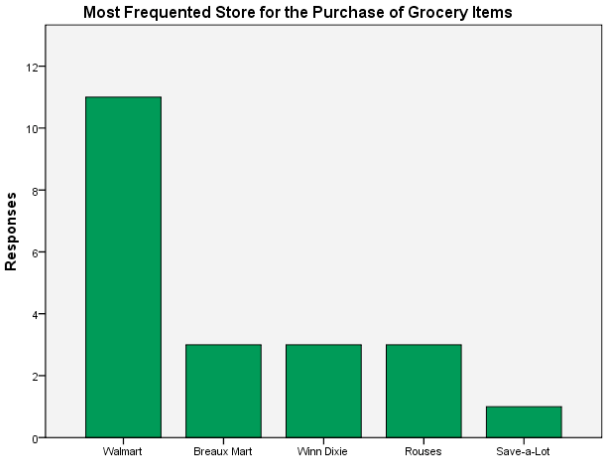
Survey of household food access in the Lower Ninth Ward at the Grocery Store for a Day event:

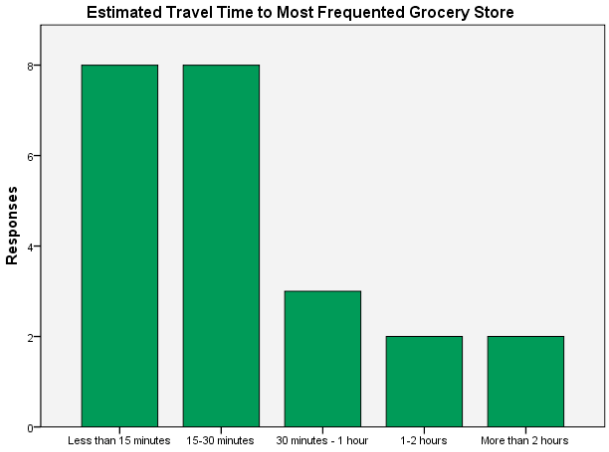
- Respondents ate out an average of two times per week and spent an average of $16 per week on fast food or prepared food items. Most respondents cited that they chose to eat out due to time and convenience of location.
- Respondents indicated that they spend an average of $260 dollars per month on groceries
- 71% of respondents did not live within walking distance to a grocery store.

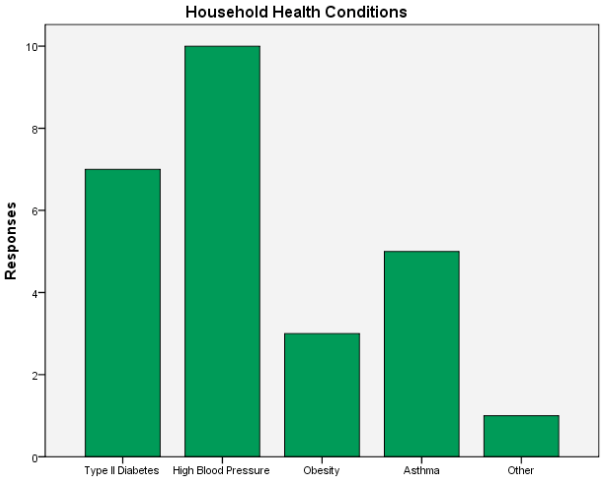
[22] New Orleans City Planning Commission, Volume 2: Chapter 8 Health and Human Services: in *Plan for the 21st Century: New Orleans 2030*. (City Planning Commission, New Orleans LA), 25-26.

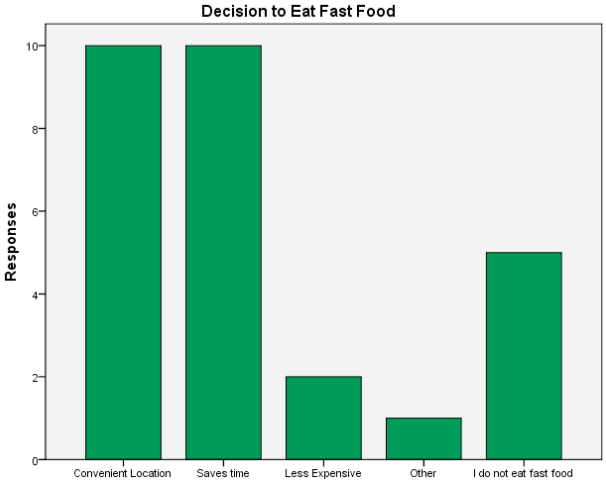
- For most respondents, the estimated travel time to the closest grocery store was less than 30 minutes, however distance and location were also noted as the greatest obstacles to shopping for grocery items.
- High-blood pressure and type II diabetes were the most common household health conditions amongst respondents.











Healthy Corner Store Initiative

The Food Trust, Philadelphia based nonprofit, was founded in 1992. The Food Trust began by providing nutrition education to inner city children and aimed to improve the availability of healthy food options for underserved populations in the metropolitan area. The Food Trust approaches access issues in a holistic and comprehensive manner, working amongst community members, grocers, farmers, and policy makers to develop substantive and sustainable solutions.

Initiated by the Food Trust in 2004, The Healthy Corner Store Initiative (HCSI) capitalizes on the idea that smaller markets often fill a niche for underserved communities where full service grocers are lacking. Many of these corner stores contain few healthy food options or fresh produce. HCSI aims to provide resource incentives for existing small stores to increase the quantity of healthy foods and fresh produce available to patrons. In addition, youth education and social marketing schemes are also employed to encourage nutrition related behavior change. The HCSI pilot program began in Philadelphia communities and overwhelming success has led to efforts have advanced on a national level amongst the Healthy Corner Stores Network. A healthy corner store presents a viable option as an interim solution to a full service grocery store in the Lower Ninth Ward.

SECTION 4

The Food Action Plan

History, background, and purpose of the Food Action Plan

Since the levee failure during Hurricane Katrina that devastated much of the Lower Ninth Ward in 2005, the community has struggled with redevelopment, and a lack of food options remains a core issue. In 2012, seven years after Katrina, the Lower Ninth ward continues to be food insecure; there are no venues in the neighborhood to access quality grocery items, such as fresh produce, meats and healthy packaged items. The Lower Ninth Ward is considered a "food desert" by the United States Department of Agriculture. There is no grocery store (defined as a store with 3 or more registers that carries fresh produce), and the stores that do sell food items offer a limited variety of junk food, processed foods, and prepared foods. Businesses are hesitant to open in an economically depressed neighborhood with a drastically decreased population. And yet, the residents remain in need of access to quality food to maintain and grow a strong, healthy community.

The Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED) decided to address the issue of food security to work toward restoring this critical element in the neighborhood's overall recovery and resilience. In 2012, CSED began organizing Lower Ninth Ward community leaders and residents to develop a Neighborhood Food Plan. The first meeting was held on Friday, April 27, 2012 at All Souls Church in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Jenga Mwendo, CSED Food Security Coordinator and Lower Ninth Ward native and resident, articulated, “Our vision is to have the Lower Ninth Ward speak as one voice regarding what we want for food access in our neighborhood. As a community, we must define what it is that we want, whether it be a grocery store, an urban farm, or better food policy, and then take the steps to attain it.”

Access to quality food is critical to the sustainability of a neighborhood. Studies show that limited access to supermarkets may reduce consumption of healthy foods, resulting in poor nutrition and increased prevalence of obesity. Hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, are all diet-related illnesses that disproportionately affect the African-American community. The neighborhood-to-supermarket distance for the Lower Ninth Ward, a low to middle income majority African-American neighborhood, is nearly double the city average.

Despite the health implications of poor diet, the goal of CSED was not to control what people eat. Beverly Jackson, the CSED Food Planning Committee Coordinator and Lower Ninth Ward native and resident, insisted, “How can we make choices, if we don't have options?” Jackson, like many other Lower Ninth Ward residents, strongly believes that her community deserves to have options, including quality fresh produce, meats, dairy, packaged foods, and other grocery items. Former CSED Executive Director, Tracy Nelson, was integral to the launch of the Food Planning Initiative and emphasized that increased food choices would empower residents to make diet-related decisions. More importantly, the food plan would allow residents to define their own needs and develop a course of action to address such needs.

The CSED launched a series of 8 planning meetings where Lower Ninth Ward residents crafted a Food Action Plan. Professionals in the areas of planning, business and food, as well as representatives from the City were invited to serve in support and advisory roles. All Lower Ninth Ward residents were invited to these meetings, and only Lower Ninth Ward residents had decision-making powers in regards to the Food Plan. The Food Plan will be used as a foundation to progress, as a community, towards collective food security goals.

Creating a Community Dialogue

The Food Planning Initiative began as an opportunity for Lower Ninth Ward residents to participate in the creation of a plan to facilitate action, firmly rooted in the belief that only the community itself can decide what the community wants and needs with regard to food access. Throughout a series of planning meetings, Lower Ninth Ward residents articulated the need for improved access to healthy and affordable food by defining the

“We deserve as much as any other neighborhood: a grocery store within walking distance, good jobs, and black-owned, neighborhood-owned businesses.”

–

Many of the elders speak of what the neighborhood used to be like and reminisce about the days when there were several small corner groceries with “fresh food! Not the fried chicken which is all you can get today.”

–

“I notice there are always a lot of meetings in the Ninth Ward, but we can’t just talk about it. When are we actually going to *do* something? We’ve got to demonstrate, we’ve got to show the world we’ve had enough.”

–

“Owning a business is tough. It takes a lot of money. If it doesn’t sell, you lose money. If the community doesn’t support it, why would a business sell it? Whatever we decide, we have to support the local businesses.”

–

“We need to come together, and we have to take some of the onus on ourselves – what does it say about us when we allow ourselves to be treated this way?”

issues, creating a process to address such issues, analyzing the current situation, proposing potential solutions, and dictating minimum quality standards for food operators.

A Proposed Process

The Food Planning Initiative was envisioned as a cooperative effort amongst the community with the following structure:

- Series of 8 planning meetings
  - 2 hour meetings
  - 1 planning meeting per month
- Decisions made by consensus or majority vote
  - Decision-making powers rest with Lower Ninth Ward residents
  - Non-residents are invited as advisers or supporters

An 11-step process was defined as a working structure for the creation of a food action plan as a community.

a. Define a healthy food system
b. Assess our needs
c. Explore what other similar communities have done
d. Review existing plans
e. Examine how racism has shaped our current situation
f. Develop a community food vision
g. Understanding the obstacles
h. Determine what we want and need
i. Brainstorm solutions
j. Produce a detailed plan
k. Outline actions and plans to reach a goal of improved food access

Defining the Issues

A discussion about community food security was utilized to frame the issues of inadequate food access in the Lower Ninth Ward. According to the World Health Organization, "Food security in a global context exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life."[23] This definition is characterized by the principles of availability (sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis), access (having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet), and use (knowledge of basic nutrition and care). However, defining food security at a local level is best described by the domestic organization Community Food Security Coalition, who states, "Food security is a

Components of a Healthy Food System as determined by Lower Ninth Ward residents

Self-determination
Respect for culture and history
Youth participation and involvement
Job creation
Locally owned businesses
Affordability
Collaboration

[23] World Health Organization. *Food Security.* http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/ (December 2012)

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."[24]

Following this discussion, residents decided that a healthy food system in the Lower Ninth Ward is defined by **"a community-controlled environment that is planned strategically by the community, where we have the food we want and need, and where the market is sustained by educating vendors and consumers, involving the youth, creating jobs, and respecting our culture."**

Community Visioning

Early in the Food Planning Initiative residents participated in a community visioning exercise as a means of articulating ideas about the desired landscape of food access in the Lower Ninth Ward. Through this visioning activity residents were provided an opportunity to share ideas, develop possibilities for change, and establish a set of common goals to work toward. The results of the exercise describe a healthy and vibrant future for the Lower Ninth Ward community and serve as the foundation of the Food Planning Initiative objectives.

What do you want to see in the Lower Ninth Ward in 10 years in regards to food?

- Fresh food, quality food
- Stores within walking distance
- Locally owned and community-run stores with fresh produce and meats
- Supermarkets that employ local residents
- A full service grocery store
- Organic vegetables, fruits, and meats
- Gardening as a part of school curriculum
- Fresh produce from neighborhood farms
- A food market cooperative
- Fewer liquor stores
- Healthy stores and restaurants
- Reasonable prices
- Money spent within the community
- Employment opportunities for young people
- More backyard gardening
- Small entrepreneurs
- A community that understands the value of healthy food and healthy lives

Racism and Access to Food

"We are aware of the tough situation in which the Lower Ninth Ward finds itself. We are also aware that the neighborhood had its struggles even prior to Hurricane Katrina. Understanding how we got to this place is an important step toward feeling empowered to change circumstances and create a better future."

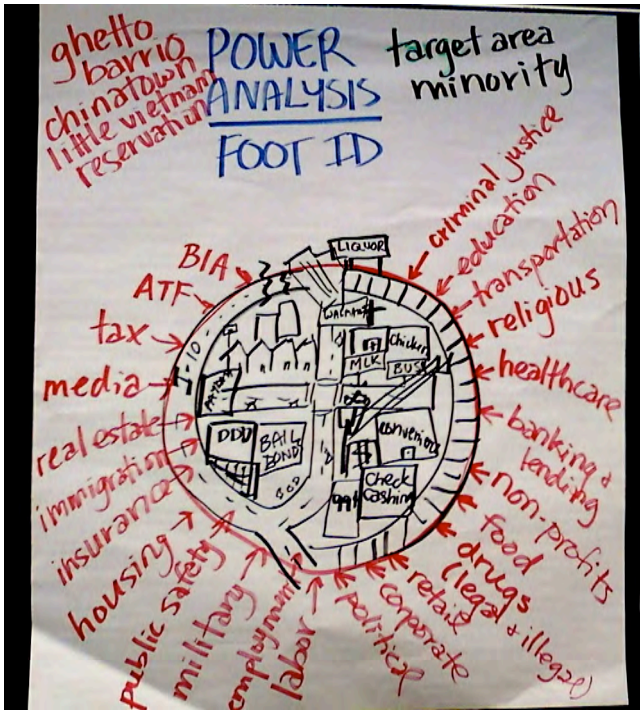
[24] Community Food Security Coalition. *What is community food security?* http://foodsecurity.org/what-is-community-food-security/ (December 2012)

The issues that persist in the community are directly linked to race, class and power. As a vital part of the Food Action Planning Initiative, the Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED) partnered with New Orleans Food and Farm Network to put on an Undoing Racism In The Food System workshop. The workshop was offered free to residents of the Lower Ninth Ward who were participating in the Food Action Planning initiative and took place from June 29 to July 1, 2012. Led by The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB), the workshop's purpose was to examine racism as a strong factor in why the neighborhood has poor food access today, and more broadly, to explore the reasons behind the glaring inequities in the New Orleans' food system and food justice movement.

New Orleans Food and Farm Network is a food justice organization that sees food security as a basic human right and its primary goal is to ensure that everyone can live with enough food, regardless of economic constraints or social inequalities. PISAB is a New Orleans based organization that focuses on understanding what racism is, where it comes from, how it functions, why it persists and how it can be undone. The aim was to create a safe environment to explore and deduce the reasons behind the glaring inequities in our food system and in the food justice movement here in New Orleans.

The Lower 9th Ward Food Action Planning Initiative delegation included: Rev. Willie Calhoun, Nilima Mwendo, Arletta Pittman, Leeonise Smith, Bertha McFadden, Summer Moore, Rosemary Etienne, Sonia Saxon, Laurence Copel, India Bush, Raynesha Jordan, Aaliyah Marrero, and Jenga Mwendo.

Though most of the Lower 9th Ward participants were already quite familiar with the way racism affected their lives and their community, the workshop presented an opportunity to frame the issues and come to common understandings about racism and how it appears specifically in the food system.



PISAB offered the following definition of racism:

Racism = Race Prejudice + Power
Power means legitimate access
Race - a specious classification of human beings invented by Europeans establishing themselves as the height of human value

With that foundation, the group discussed ways in which Whites benefit from unearned privileges afforded by this system of racism. And participated in a Power Analysis exercise, which uncovered the external factors that negatively affect Black communities. In relation to the food system, this shows up as poor access to quality food, decreased ability to afford healthy food, lack of nutrition-related education, and increased diet-related health problems as a result.

On a deeper level, PISAB offered that the majority Black community of the Lower Ninth Ward must continuously examine its own Internalized Racial Oppression (accepting a definition of self given by a system based on racial inferiority.) PISAB offered to work with the community post-workshop.

The Lower Ninth Ward offers a stunning example of how racism has affected access to quality food in the area. As the neighborhood's population became increasingly black, access to food simultaneously diminished. Although institutionalized racism may not exist today in the same form it did fifty years ago, when examining the food deserts of New Orleans compared to the racial demographics of the city, it becomes extremely clear that the predominantly white areas are far more likely to be food secure **(Figure 6)**. According to a 2002 study, only 8% of Black Americans lived in a census tract with at least one supermarket, compared to 31% of White Americans.[25]

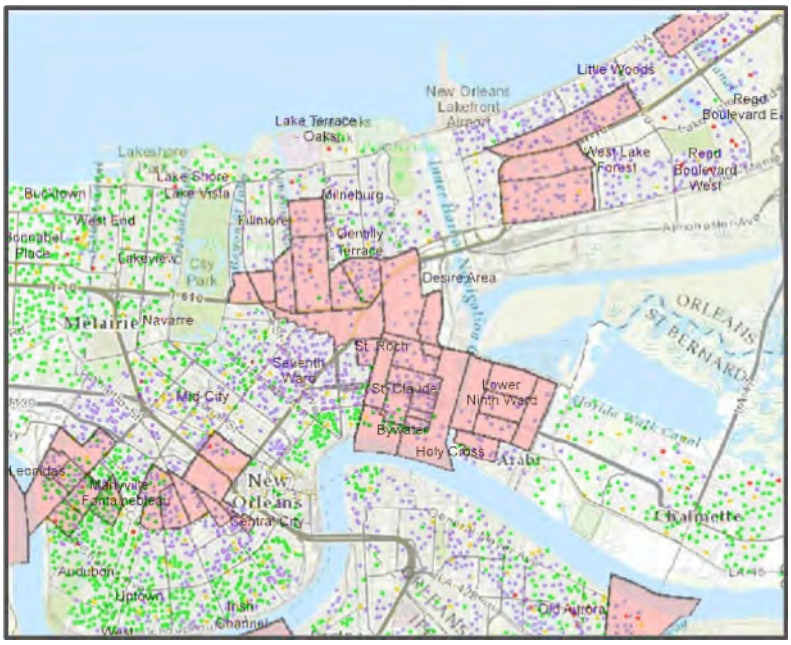


Figure 6: Overlay of Orleans Parish Food Desert and Racial Breakdown Maps (Green dots represent White populations and purple dots represent Black populations, pink areas represent USDA-defined food deserts)

Racial health disparities amongst Americans are staggering, and are intrinsically linked to diet. Across the board, black Americans have poor health statistics in comparison to white Americans, even when taking into account age and income. Environmental and historical factors play a large role in these differences, as issues such as education, income, inadequate housing and infrastructure, spurred and compounded by historic and current institutional racist practices, contribute to these disparities. Therefore, given the poor infrastructure and lack of proper food access, the citizens of the Lower Ninth Ward have a much higher risk for a number of health issues.

Assessing Our Current Situation

As outlined in the planning process and discussed amongst community members, an emphasis was made on the importance of setting goals and utilizing resources that already exist within the community to achieve these goals. Therefore, an assessment of existing food providers was deemed an essential component of the process. As detailed below, the ten businesses and three urban agriculture operations are insufficient to provide for the food-based needs and desires of Lower Ninth Ward Residents **(Table 1)**. Seven of the businesses are either corner stores or gas station marts, offering unhealthy prepared foods, packaged foods of poor nutritional quality, and a severely limited variety of produce and fresh foods. One is a fast food restaurant, specializing in fried seafood. While the urban agriculture operations are beneficial features of the community, and contribute to the provision of fresh produce to Lower Ninth Ward residents, they are not large enough to serve the community in a self-sustaining manner.

[25] Morland, K., Wing, S., Diez Roux, A. (2002). The Contextual Effect of the Local Food Environment on Residents' Diets: The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study. American Journal of Public Health. 92(11): 1761-1768 http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447325/

Table 1: Existing Food Vendors in the Lower Ninth Ward (December 2012)

LOWER 9TH WARD CURRENT NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD OPTIONS					
Store Name	**Fresh Produce**	**Fresh Meats**	**Packaged Foods**	**Prepared Foods**	**Junk Food**
Magnolia Discount Supermarket		Cold cuts, sausages, fish, beef by the pound, steaks, etc.	Limited amount of frozen, packaged grocery items like okra and corn	Food items like prepared breakfast, poboys, sandwiches, wings, fries, etc.	A lot of junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
St. Maurice Grocery	Limited fresh produce like lemons, onions, bell peppers.		Packaged frozen grocery store items like frozen pizzas, hot pockets, etc.	Hot prepared foods	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
Brothers Gas Station and Food Mart				Hot prepared foods: fried chicken, fries & side items	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
NOLA Village Market		Cold cuts, sausages, pork cuts	Canned goods, cheese, milk, bread, sugar, cooking oil	Hot prepared foods: wings, onion rings fried fish and chicken	Junk food: chips and candy
Fuel Xpress Minimart	Limited fresh produce like bananas, onions, potatoes	Cold cuts, pork cuts, steaks, etc.	Packaged frozen grocery store items like frozen pizzas, hot pockets, etc.	Hot food: french fries, chicken, poboys	Junk foods typical of a gas station like chips candy as well as many cold drink options.
Cast Iron Rose*				Creole Soul Food	
Cajun Joe's Seafood				Prepared seafood, Cajun dishes	
Café Dauphine*				Southern Fusion Food	
St. Claude Internet Café *				A variety of sandwiches and Hot Dogs	Chips, nachos, and candy
Daynell's One Stop/Randolph's Open 24 hrs*			Frozen items and canned goods, grocery items	Sandwiches & plate food	Junk food: chips and candy
SUMMARY:	**10 food businesses:**	**4 Black/Locally owned* 7 sell junk food 3 sell fresh meats 2 sell limited fresh produce**		**3 urban farms grow fresh produce**	

Creating the Coalition

A volunteer core group, made up of Lower Ninth Ward residents committed to attending each planning meeting and joining or leading work groups, emerged in May 2012. The core group began to inform the direction of the Food Action Planning Initiative and sought to define itself. Out of these planning meetings the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition was officially formed in July 2012. The formulation of the Coalition has enabled residents to come together and organize around a common vision. The Coalition's efforts in regards to the Food Action Plan are supported fully by the Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development through December 2012.

The Coalition defines itself by the following vision and mission:

- **Vision:** The Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition envisions a neighborhood where availability to fresh, quality food is convenient and affordable to everyone in the Lower Ninth Ward.
- **Mission**: The Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition's mission is to invest in the health of our community by supporting the development of sustainable food systems in the Lower 9th ward directed by and for its residents.

Participatory Processes:
Advocating for Standards in the L9W
CHICKEN MART REPORT

On July 14, 2012 Lower Ninth Ward residents visited Chicken Mart, a food retail business operating on Simon Bolivar Avenue, to assess the quality of the store prior to potential expansion in the Lower Ninth Ward. While at the store residents made the following observations:

- Health Code Violations
- Poor layout, appearance, and maintenance
- Limited fresh produce and inadequate products for family consumption

Residents determined that this store was not acceptable for the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, and emphasized that they will continue to advocate for standards in their community. A copy of the report was made available to administrators of the Fresh Food Retail Initiative. See appendix for full report.

Proposing Solutions and Identifying Barriers

A key component of the community planning process involved identifying potential solutions that would be appropriate, feasible, and accepted by the Lower Ninth Ward community. The Coalition emphasized that, in realizing a vision for improved food access, it is particularly important that the solutions and plans are actionable and aligned with existing plans for the district and the City of New

Orleans. Consequently, Lower Ninth Ward residents began a process of identifying potential time-bound solutions to improve the availability of fresh, healthy, quality, and affordable food options for their community. Residents considered a number of different options and voted on what they wanted most in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Short Term (less than 6 months) 2 Votes per person		Pros	Cons	Number of Votes
Food Stand or Truck (Mobile Grocery Store)	Farmers sell directly to consumers	Flexible; fresh produce; direct sale	Limited variety; usually fresh produce only	Bus/truck: 14 Stand: 8
Buying Club	Consumers pool resources to buy collectively in bulk	Builds strong community relationships; can save a lot of money	Requires a lot of time and planning; may also have limited choice of foods	5
Existing Farm Partnership				1
Intermediate (6 months to 1 year) 1 Vote per person		**Pros**	**Cons**	**Number of Votes**
CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)	Consumers buy "stock" in farm; pay up front and receive produce throughout season	Fresh food; relationship with farmer(s) and other folks in community; Get to decide what farmer plants	May be risky—if crop fails can't guarantee "return on investment"; prices may be higher	6
Healthy Corner Stores	Existing stores that are incentivized to stock fresh produce and other nutritious foods	Store already exists; convenient	Owners may lack knowledge about selling perishables; prices may be higher	8
Community Investment Club				1
Long Term (>1 year) 2 Votes per person		**Pros**	**Cons**	**Number of Votes**
Community-Owned Farm	Community pools resources and invests in farm (hires farmer; etc)	Tailored to community needs; can hire locally; youth involvement	May be difficult to raise money for upfront costs; food prices may be higher	6
Food Cooperative	Members work in and help operate store	Tailored to community needs; can hire locally	May be difficult to raise money for upfront costs; food prices may be higher	0
Community-Owned Store	Similar to cooperative, but "corporation" in which community members buy stock	Tailored to community needs; can hire locally	May be difficult to raise money for upfront costs; food prices may be higher	3
School-based Grocery Store (may be connected to Edible Schoolyard; Garden Education, etc)	Students operate store and/or farm as part of their education	Collaboration between schools, families, other groups (builds community); great for students	Small in scale; may have limited hours; prices may be expensive depending on how it's run and funded	13
Franchise Grocery	Existing "chain grocer" opens franchise store	Already established brand	Limited flexibility to change	3
Independent Grocery				6

Short Term Solution: Mobile Grocery Store

By majority vote amongst Lower Ninth Ward residents, a mobile grocery store was voted the most appropriate and feasible short-term solution to improving neighborhood access to fresh foods.

Intermediate Solution: Healthy Corner Store

The implementation of a healthy corner store was determined to be an opportune intermediate intervention due to the existence of infrastructure and evidence of success from similar initiatives in other resource-poor communities.

Long Term Solution: School-Based Grocery Store

Lastly, a school-based grocery store was voted as the preferred long-term intervention by the community due to the potential for sustainability, collaboration, learning, and growth in the endeavor for a resilient and healthy Lower Ninth Ward.

"Our representatives don't go to bat for us. The perception is: 'you don't have the population; you're going to flood; y'all are poor.' We need to work with leadership to change the perception. We need policies that steer things to this area. Policy drives a lot of things."

A franchise grocery store was an appealing long-term solution for a number of residents due to assumption of risk, as well as ease and convenience. However, residents are well aware that there is concern among grocery store operators that the current population of the Lower Ninth Ward may be too small to sustain business, or that the neighborhood characteristics pose perceived risk to business. More importantly, many residents feel that there is a lack of political will to increase incentives for quality businesses to open in the neighborhood.

On July 12, 2012 the Coalition explored potential barriers and opportunities to improving food access in a meeting with the food operator Sterling Farms, the Food Trust, and Hope Enterprise Corporation/Hope Credit Union. The Food Trust and Hope Credit Union act as technical advisors and fiscal administrators to the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative (FFRI), a citywide measure aimed at facilitating the opening of grocers or other healthy food outlets in neighborhoods like the Lower Ninth Ward. The Coalition also advocated for participatory input from residents on future administration of FFRI funds in the Lower Ninth Ward, detailing a requisite for minimum quality standards and providing evidence of current food operator conditions that the community deemed unacceptable. The Coalition and representatives from the organizations participated in a substantive discussion revealed valuable information for the Lower Ninth Ward community and resulted in the following key points:

Understanding the obstacles for grocery store operators

- Funding: Profit margins in the grocery business are generally low and it can be hard to obtain adequate capital to open a new store
- Land: Finding enough space in an urban setting
- Workforce development – Often more difficult in an area new to business
- Leakage: Loss of patrons to non-traditional stores such as corner stores or discount stores
- Population Density: Finding a location with enough people to support the store
- Neighborhood perception: Outsiders may perceive low-income Black neighborhoods as dangerous and/or unprofitable, which may make it harder to find interested operators and investors

Advantages for the Lower Ninth Ward community

- Hope Credit Union and the Food Trust reinforced and supported the trajectory of the Food Action Planning Initiative
- Existing and future community organization, communication with local and federal officials, and creation of demand for healthy foods through education and youth involvement will likely reduce barriers and result in improvements to fresh food access
- Additional funding sources such as the Healthy Food Financing Initiative and Community Development Block Grants could increase incentives for fresh food retailers
- Potential for collaboration with other successful communities who have created solutions to limited food access
- A positive and sustained relationship between the Food Trust and the Coalition

Learning from Others: Food access solutions in U.S. food deserts

Fresh Moves: Chicago, IL

In 2006 community activists in Chicago sought to address limited accessibility to fresh food within inner city neighborhoods. Through business and community partnerships Food Desert Action established Fresh Moves, a mobile produce market created from repurposed Chicago Transit Authority buses. Today, Fresh Moves operates on a regular schedule to provide fresh food options to underserved communities while continuing to advocate and educate for improved health outcomes.[26]

National Mobile Market: Nashville, TN

National Mobile Market initially began as a social enterprise in Nashville, Tennessee, where a converted truck trailer stocked with fresh produce and meats served residents of food desert communities at pre-defined stopping points. The program also included cooking demonstrations and nutritional education at stopping points. National Mobile Market has built upon the foundation and success in Tennessee to provide a model and technical support for the creation and implementation of additional mobile markets in food insecure areas. Today there are National Mobile Market programs in Memphis, Atlanta, and Oklahoma City.[27]

[26] Fresh Moves. *About Us.* http://www.freshmoves.org/ (December 2012)
[27] The National Mobile Market. http://www.nationalmobilemarket.org/ (December 2012)

Healthy Bodegas: New York, NY

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in New York implemented the Healthy Bodegas policy following studies indicating that lower income areas have reduced access to fresh foods due to a lack of availability. The program operates on two levels, increasing the supply of diverse fresh foods by working with corner stores (known as "bodegas" in NY) to stock store shelves, and partnering with community groups in the affected neighborhoods to improve demand for healthier food options through nutritional education. The Healthy Bodegas Initiative operates under the premise of the Healthy Corner Store Network.[28]

Bulldog Express: Leeton, MI

An economic recession in Leeton led to the closing of multiple businesses, including the town's remaining grocery store over ten years ago. Prompted by the need for improved access to food and capitalizing on a practical learning opportunity for students, local high school teachers opened a **school-owned, student-operated, and community-supported grocery store**. For five years the store has helped scores of students learn valuable business and management skills and alleviated some of the community's limited food access.[29]

Community-Defined Quality Standards

Communities are rarely offered the opportunity to participate in business planning processes, businesses in which the community itself produces the customer base and is considered the primary beneficiary of services. Following a visit to a local business with what the community believed to be substandard practices (see the Chicken Mart report in the Appendix), the Coalition sought to create community-defined quality standard recommendations for potential food operators that may solicit business opportunities in the Lower Ninth Ward. These recommendations are meant to be an advocacy tool for the Lower Ninth Ward community; furthermore, they serve as a platform for support by a well-informed local community seeking out participatory business practices.

[28] City of New York. *Food Policy: Healthy Bodegas.* http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/html/programs/bodegas.shtml (December 2012)

[28] CBS News. *Teacher Brings Grocery Store Back to Small Town.* http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7388337n&tag=mncol;lst;1 (December 2012).

Category	Non-Negotiable Standard	Preferable Standard	Ideal Standard
Jobs, Hiring Practices, Job Training	20% of all employees must be Lower 9th Ward residents. Lower 9th Ward staff must be distributed throughout all business levels.	Of the 20% of neighborhood residents, at least 20% must be 16-17 year old residents employed through an educational job-training program.	
Product variety, organic vs. conventional		Business must aim for equal representation of organic and conventional products, both fresh and prepackaged.	
Overall Store Cleanliness (Interior and exterior)	Store must remain presentable, both inside and out. Store must adhere to all state and federal food safety regulations.		
Community involvement, engagement, cultural sensitivity	Willing to have/form a community advisory board. Advises on issues like store cleanliness, product offerings, and quality standards. Willing to allow neighborhood unemployed to make money doing small tasks.	Willing to donate supplies or money to churches and community organizations. Willing to partner with schools, churches, and community organizations to conduct fundraisers on site.	Willingness to provide a space for community use.
Employee / community owned		Willingness to allow employee and/or community buy-in option.	
Locally grown and neighborhood grown product requirements	Require 5% as a starting percentage be purchased from local neighborhood sites or vendors. Require 51% or more of the products sold be Louisiana grown, produced, and manufactured. Business' products must be considerably fresh.		
Overarching business principles and practices	Business accepts a role in the education and training process of all residents in the entire food business cycle. Businesses should be green and willing to participate in recycling and sustainability in the Lower 9th Ward. (Green practices to be detailed by Core Group) Preparedness plans must be in place to ensure food access to Lower 9th Ward residents during emergency situations.		

To date, the community of the Lower Ninth Ward has successfully participated in meaningful and productive discussions and planning processes addressing food insecurity within the neighborhood for the greater part of 2012. The Food Planning Initiative has engendered a wholesome dialogue and has prompted the formation of a committed coalition of residents in search of sustainable solutions to improving the quantity, quality, and variety of food in the Lower Ninth Ward. Residents are motivated to create change, to advocate for themselves, and to build collaborative partnerships that facilitate progress toward actionable solutions.

SECTION 5
Vendor Resources & Incentives

Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Amidst growing concerns regarding United States obesity rates and associated chronic disease, experts in public health and policy have consistently encouraged environmental changes associated with improved dietary options for underserved populations. Research suggests that individuals with access to a grocer are often healthier and consume a greater amount of fresh foods, thus increased access to healthy food retail has been advocated as a potential strategy to reduce obesity, and a source of individual and familial support for dietary improvement.[30]

In 2010 the Obama Administration announced the creation of a $400 million nation-wide Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) to engage the private sector in substantive solutions to improving access to nutritious foods for low-income and underserved communities.[31] HFFI has far reaching implications, not only for reducing diet-related diseases, but also for improving local economies. The initiative is a partnership between the Department of Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services and seeks to promote interventions that develop and equip grocers, retailers, corner stores, and farmers markets in selling healthy and nutritious food.[32]

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[30] National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2011). State Initiatives Supporting Healthier Food Retail: An Overview of the National Landscape. US Center for Disease Control. http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/Healthier_Food_Retail.pdf

[31] US Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). News Release: Obama Administration Details Healthy Food Financing Initiative. http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/02/20100219a.html

[32] US Department of Health and Human Services. (2011). Healthy Food Financing Initiative FAQ. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/healthy-food-financing-initiative-0

- The **Treasury Department** supports private sector financing of healthy food access in USDA identified 'food deserts' through $250 million in authority for the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) and $25 million in financial assistance to Treasury-certified community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that invest in local healthy food options.
- The **Department of Agriculture** is tasked with the responsibility of promoting economic development in rural communities by creating business opportunities for farmers and through nutrition assistance programs with $50 million to support and supplement existing public and private investments.
- The **Department of Health and Human Services** controls the $20 million fund for the Community Economic Development (CED) program which funds competitive grants to community development corporations that finance and support fresh food vendors.

Organizations eligible to receive HFFI funding and technical assistance include:

- Businesses
- Local and Tribal governments
- Non-profit organizations
- Cooperatives and universities
- State Department of Agriculture
- Colleges and Universities
- Treasury-certified Community Development Financial Institutions and Community Development Entities
- Community Development Corporations

New Markets Tax Credit Program

Established by Congress in 2000, the NMTC Program began as an incentive to increase business and real-estate investments in low-income communities. Through the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI) of the US Treasury, the program has allocated 664 awards totaling $33 billion in tax credits in 12 years. The program functions by granting investors tax credits against their Federal income tax if they provide capital to Community Development Entities (CDEs). The tax credit is worth 39 percent of the original investment over a period of seven years, five percent for the first three years and six percent for the latter four.[33]

CDEs are specialized financial institutions that must exhibit the following eligibility criteria:[4]

- Be a domestic corporation or partnership at the time of the certification application;
- Demonstrate a primary a mission of serving, or providing investment capital for, low-income communities or low-income persons; and
- Maintain accountability to residents of low-income communities through representation on a governing board of or advisory board to the entity.

For more information visit the CDFI Fund website at: **www.cdfifund.gov**

[33] US Department of Treasury: Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. (2012). New Markets Tax Credit Program. http://www.cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/programs_id.asp?programID=5

Community Economic Development Program

Operating through Office of Community Services within the Administration for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services, Community Economic Development (CED) functions as a federal grant program that provides technical assistance and funds to community development corporations (CDCs) working to create sustainable solutions to solve economic difficulties in low-income areas. Projects funded through the CED program engender self-sufficiency by producing sustainable opportunities for employment and business development.

Community development corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations whose primary objective is to develop or manage community development projects or housing for low-income areas. CDCs must be governed by a board of directors consisting of local civic and business leaders in addition to individuals residing in the community to be served.

CED funds may be utilized to purchase equipment or property, cover allowable operating costs, or make equity investments. Projects funded through the CED program include, but are not limited to, shopping centers, manufacturing businesses, and agriculture initiatives.[34]

For more information visit the Office of Community Services Community Development website at: **www.ocscommunitydevelopment.org**

Community Development Block Grant

Established in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides annual funds to local and state government and operates under the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program primarily funds affordable housing projects, services for vulnerable communities, and job creation through business expansion. Allocations are made to entitlement communities by local government (metropolitan cities greater than 50,000 and urban counties with a population of at least 200,000) and non-entitlement communities by state government (all other localities).

Eligible activities must take place over a 1, 2, or 3 year period and 70 percent of funding must benefit low and moderate-income individuals. Activities must also be aligned with national objectives, which include prevention or elimination of blight, and addressing urgent development needs that pose a threat to health or welfare of the community. Grantees must develop and provide details of a plan for community participation to ensure local contributions and involvement, particularly from residents living in the areas where CDBG funds are intended to be used.[35]

CDBG also offers a Disaster Recovery Assistance program in which additional flexible grants are provided to cities, counties, and states following a Federally declared disaster to help affected areas

[34] US Department of Health and Human Services: Office of Community Services. (2012). Community Economic Development. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/community-economic-development
[35] US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2012). Community Development Block Program. http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs

rebuild and recover. Disaster Recovery grants cover a wide range of activities in communities and neighborhoods with limited resources.[36]

For more information visit the following websites:

US Department of Housing and Urban Development - CDBG Program:
http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs

US Department of Housing and Urban Development - CDBG Disaster Recovery Assistance:
http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/drsi

State of Louisiana, Office of Community Development - Disaster Recovery Unit:
www.doa.louisiana.gov/cdbg/dr/dradmin-manual.htm

New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee

As a broad collection of community partners, the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) works to improve access to healthy foods within the city, producing recommendations for policies and programs to the New Orleans City Council since its inception in 2007. Policy recommendations detailed in FPAC's 2008 report, "Building Healthy Communities: Expanding Access to Fresh Food Retail," resulted in the creation of the Fresh Food Retail Initiative, a city-wide program providing grants and loans to food retailers operating in underserved areas. FPAC also provides information, tools, and resources for active community members to address food access issues.[37]

FPAC community partners include:

- Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana
- The Prevention Research Center at Tulane University
- Louisiana Public Health Institute
- The Edible Schoolyard New Orleans
- Share Our Strength Louisiana
- Marketumbrella.org
- New Orleans Food and Farm Network
- Seedco Financial
- The Food Trust
- The Emeril Lagasse Foundation (advisory member)
- New Orleans City Council (advisory member)

Access to the New Orleans FPAC's 2008 report, *Building Healthy Communities: Expanding Access to Fresh Food Retail* can be found here: **http://nolafoodpolicy.org/files/FPAC_Report_Final2.pdf**

For more information about FPAC visit: **www.nolafoodpolicy.org**

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[36] US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2012). CDBG Disaster Recovery Assistance. http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/drsi

[37] The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee. (2012). About Us. http://nolafoodpolicy.org/aboutus.html

Fresh Food Retailer Initiative

Created by the City of New Orleans, the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative (FFRI) is a financing program that aims to improve access to fresh food by increasing the number of fresh food retailers in low-income and underserved communities within the parish. Hope Enterprise Corporation (HOPE), a CDFI, and the Food Trust Funders, an advocacy organization, are non-profit entities that act in concert with the City to administer CDBG Disaster Recovery funds that enable food service operators to open new markets or renovate and expand existing outlets that sell fresh foods. The funds are administered in the form of low-interest and/or forgivable loans to fresh food retailers. Under FFRI the City provides CDBG funds that are matched 1:1 by HOPE, and Food Trust Funders provides technical assistance and reviews applicant eligibility.[38]

Applications and information are available via the HOPE website:
http://www.hope-ec.org/index.php/new-orleans-fresh-food-retailer-initiative

Additional information about the FFRI program can be accessed via the City of New Orleans website:
http://www.nola.gov/HOME/FreshFoodRetailersInitiative/

New Orleans Redevelopment Authority

The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) has been operational since the late 1960s, previously existing as the City Improvement Agency (CIA). NORA was tasked with assisting the City in the reduction and prevention of blight through redevelopment projects, and in 1994 NORA was provided CDBG funding to carry out blighted property acquisition. After Hurricane Katrina NORA became an agent for redevelopment and was identified as a key candidate for the implementation of recovery initiatives such as the Lot Next Door ordinance. Within this extension of the agency's mission was an increasingly active role in the redevelopment of commercial corridors and economic development projects.

In 2010 NORA sought additional resources and was awarded funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through phase two of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP2). NORA explicitly seeks to use this funding to support housing revitalization and increased commercial real estate in New Orleans neighborhoods. Projects are solicited through a NORA consortium of 11 non-profit members and funds are dispersed directly by HUD.[39]

For additional information about NSP2 funds and solicitations from NORA consortium visitors visit the NORA website at: **http://www.noraworks.org**

[38] Hope Enterprise Corporation. (2012). New Orleans Fresh Food Retailer Initiative. http://www.hope-ec.org/index.php/new-orleans-fresh-food-retailer-initiative
[39] New Orleans Redevelopment Authority. (2012). About: Past, Present, & Future. http://www.noraworks.org/about/history

SECTION 6

Conclusion

Where do we go from here?

Convenient access to quality, affordable food, one of our most basic needs, should be available to everyone, regardless of race, background, or income levels. The Lower Ninth Ward has not always been a "food desert," there was a time when food was plentiful and stores were locally owned and Black owned. Through the work and research via the Lower Ninth Ward Food Action Planning Initiative, we believe that it doesn't have to continue being a desert. In this plan, we have highlighted several neighborhood characteristics that serve to benefit potential food business operators.

According to the 2010 Census, the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood (bounded by the Mississippi River, Bayou Bienvenue, the Industrial Canal and Jackson Barracks) has a population of 5,556 people in 2,101 households. While the number itself may be low, it represents more than $5,000,000 in potential food spending per year. Additionally, communities beyond the Lower Ninth Ward must be included in the consumer buffer zone. St. Bernard Parish, which is adjacent to the Lower Ninth Ward, is considered a "bedroom community," indicating that its residents more often commute out of the parish, and through the Lower Ninth Ward for the purposes of work. Each day, over 50,000 trips are made into the city via the Lower Ninth Ward. This amount of thru traffic greatly increases the potential consumer base for a food business. Approximately 30% of Lower Ninth Ward residents do not own a car, suggesting consumer retention within a mile radius. The majority (61%) of homes in the Lower Ninth Ward are owner-occupied. This suggests a high level of neighborhood pride and investment, as well as a long-term consistent consumer base for a food business.

Since the April 2012 launch of the Food Action Planning Initiative, we have:

- Completed 8 community planning meetings, attended by a total of 75 Lower Ninth Ward residents.
- Organized an Undoing Racism In The Food System Workshop to examine the role of racism in the current food access situation, attended by 13 Lower Ninth Ward residents.
- Hosted a roundtable discussion with the Food Trust, Hope Credit Union (Fresh Food Retailer Initiative), and Sterling Farms regarding improving food access in the Lower Ninth Ward.
- Completed the Food Action Plan, which includes creative short-term, intermediate, and long-term food access solutions that community participants discussed and selected.
- Established the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition, a group of 6 Lower Ninth Ward residents and community leaders committed to addressing the food access issues of the Lower Ninth Ward.
- Successfully planned and implemented a Grocery Store For A Day event, a one-day pop-up grocery store designed to draw attention to the issue of poor food access in our neighborhood and obtain support for our efforts to improve the food landscape.

Thus far we have achieved our goal of producing this community-created food plan, raised awareness, and brought citywide attention to the issue. Such activities can be used to leverage the kind of support required to move forward. Furthermore, we are developing a structure for the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition to guide the implementation of our Food Action Plan.

The main goal of the Coalition moving forward will be to support the development of projects outlined in the Food Plan by partnering with stakeholders to address the short-term, interim, and long-term solutions to our community food needs. Such activities include seeking out potential businesses, fundraising towards projects, working with other entities to implement projects, and continued advocacy for convenient access to quality food in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Short-term Solution: Mobile Grocery Store
Intermediate Solution: Healthy Corner Store
Long-term Solution: School-Based Grocery Store

This Food Plan will be distributed directly to our community leaders, elected officials, and national supporters. The Lower Ninth Ward Food Action Plan will also be accessible as a web-based document. We encourage the readers of this plan to use it to progress our underlying goals of increased food access in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Appendix 1: Chicken Mart Report

CHICKEN MART FIELD TRIP REPORT

FIELD TRIP DATE: JULY 14, 2012
2200 Simon Bolivar Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70113

TIME: approx. 2pm

ATTENDEES: Beverly Jackson, Summer Moore, and Jenga Mwendo

Background:
Chicken Mart is a food retail business that currently operates one store in New Orleans at 2200 Simon Bolivar Avenue. Owned by Rahim Ebrahimpour, the store offers a variety of meats, seafood, packaged foods, and produce. The owner is planning to open a Chicken Mart in the Lower Ninth Ward at 5601 St. Claude Avenue. Jenga Mwendo had a phone conversation with the owner on Thursday, July 12th to inquire about his plans for opening a store in the neighborhood. Mr. Ebrahimpour told Jenga that he was trying to get help from Hope, but is facing challenges (such as property tax problems). According to the Louisiana Secretary of State's website, Chcken Mart, Inc. is also "Not In Good Standing for failure to file Annual Report." At the July 13th community Food Planning meeting, Jenga invited participants to take a field trip to the Chicken Mart on Simon Bolivar to assess the quality of the store. At least two participants said, "You don't want that store." at the meeting.

Agenda or Purpose of Field Trip:
To assess the quality of the Chicken Mart store

Observations:

A. Many health code violations:
- Prepping/packing meat for sale in open and exposed area by employee not properly dressed: in street clothes with no hair net and wearing only vinyl gloves.
- Watermelons stored on the floor tucked under food coolers, one of which being a raw meat cooler.
- Raw meat blood on the floor that was never cleaned up and being tracked all over store by patrons. Rather than cleaning it up, a shopping cart was placed over it.
- Dirty meat coolers.

B. Ambiance
- Exterior of store dirty and rundown, with litter.
- Smells of rotten meat and sour dairy products upon entering the store and persists.
- Unfinished floors that makes store look more dirty; uneven floors cause patrons to have to lift their carts to move them around certain parts of the store.
- Poorly designed layout makes it very hard to move through aisles. Note: the store is bigger than proposed site on St. Claude Ave., so it would potentially be worse at new location.

C. Products
- Limited amount and variety of fresh produce: mostly potatoes, onions and garlic
- Most veggies frozen and pre-cut: okra, pre-breaded okra, chopped spinach, chopped collards, corn, chopped bell peppers, chopped onion and green onion.
- Fresh meat (chicken and beef), processed meats, and frozen seafood

Most packaged items in economy size so wouldn't be serviceable to households of 4 or less

See attached photos illustrating some of these items. The photos were taken with a cell phone camera.

Assessment: This store is not acceptable for the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood, given the numerous health code violations, poor quality, and limited variety and amount of fresh produce.

CONTACT: Jenga Mwendo, Food Security Coordinator
Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development
(504) 994-7745
foodsecurity@sustainthenine.org

Appendix 2: Community Participant List

Lower Ninth Ward Residents

The following Lower Ninth Ward residents contributed to the creation of this Food Action Plan. Whether they participated in one community planning meeting or all eight meetings, their contribution was the crux of this planning process

REV. MILDRED ALCORN - Mt. Nebo BBC
AUSTIN ALLEN – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
CHARLES ALLEN – City of New Orleans
WELDON ANTOINE
EUNICE ANTOINE
WARRENETTA BANKS – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
NORMAN BARTHOLOMEW
MELANIE BARRAM
VANESSA BOURGEOIS
REBECCA BROWN
HAROLD BROWN - Kingfish
WILLIE CALHOUN – New Life I CDC
TYEISHA COLE – Global Green USA
ALTON COLEMAN
EMMA COLLINS
PATRICIA COLLINS
LAURENCE COPEL – Street Liberty
VINCENT COPELIN
MONICA CROOM – Lower Ninth Ward Health Clinic
ALVIN DECAY – Caffin Avenue International Seventh Day Adventist Church
SHAWN DUBOSE
ESTER DURNAN
DOROTHY ELLIS
ROSEMARY ETIENNE – Lower 9/Holy Cross
MARY FONTENOT – Lower Ninth Ward Health Clinic
VERGA FORTENBERRY SCOTT
CHE' GILLILAND
AUGUSTINE GREENWOOD
VANESSA GUERINGER – A Community Voice
HENRY IRVIN – Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association
BEVERLY JACKSON – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
PATRICIA JONES – Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association
RAYNESHA JORDAN – NOLA Green Team
LONNIE KENT
DIEGO LARGUIA – Holy Cross
GERON "TWIG" LEBEAU – Our School at Blair Grocery
ALLEN LEFORT – Our School at Blair Grocery
JOANN MADISON – Lower Ninth Ward Dreamers
STEVEN MARTIN – Lower Ninth Ward Homeowners Association

LEE MCCLENDON – Backyard Gardeners Network
WARD "MACK" MCCLENDON – Lower Ninth Ward Village Community Center
BERTHA MCFADDEN – Holy Cross
ALPHONS MICHAEL
SUMMER MOORE
LESTER MORNAY – Ninth Ward Housing Development Corporation
JENGA MWENDO – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
NILIMA MWENDO – Good Work Network
TRACY NELSON – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
VERONICA NOLAN – Holy Cross
THOMAS PEPPER – Common Ground Relief
MARLENE PETE
ARLETTA PITTMAN – Serenity Senior Garden
LINDA RHODES – Lower Ninth Ward Health Clinic
DEBRA ROBERTSON
JACQUELINE ROBINSON
STEVEN ROBINSON
LINDA SANTI – Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
SONIA SAXON – Whipple Urban Farm
ALFRED SCOTT
FRANCES SHENNA
KELLY JEAN SHERMAN
LEEONISE SMITH – Holy Cross
BETTY STEWART
RONALD THOMAS
DELOUSIA THOMAS
SYLVIA THOMAS – Holy Cross
DIANNE WASHINGTON
DAVID WILLIAMS
VERONICA WILLIAMS
EULA WILSON
GAIL WOODS – Renaissance Project

Core Group

The Core Group was made up of Lower 9th Ward residents who volunteered their time and expertise between community planning meetings to guide the creation of the Lower Ninth Ward Food Action Plan. They ultimately formed the Lower Ninth Ward Food Access Coalition with a mission "to invest in the health of our community by supporting the development of sustainable food systems in the Lower 9th Ward directed by and for its residents." The Core Group also played an integral role in the planning and implementation of the Grocery Store For A Day event on October 20, 2012.

BEVERLY JACKSON – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
JENGA MWENDO – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development
NILIMA MWENDO – Good Work Network
SUMMER MOORE
ARLETTA PITTMAN – Serenity Senior Garden

SONIA SAXON – Whipple Urban Farm
LEEONISE SMITH – Holy Cross

Supporters

The following individuals participated in the community planning meetings, lending their support and assistance to the Lower Ninth Ward community in the creation of this Plan.

MORRIS BIGGS
RAY BOLLING – City of New Orleans
PAMELA BROOM – Women and Agriculture
JERRY BROWN, JR. – Acry Farm
INDIA BUSH – NOLA Green Team
ALEXIS CASTRO – Sankofa Community Development Corporation
GNORVELL DANIELS
NANA FALL – University of Copenhagen
SIMONE FELDIUS – University of Copenhagen
MICHAEL HANSSON – University of Copenhagen
CATHERINE HAYWOOD – Tulane Prevention and Research Center
ERROL HUGHES
REV. JOHNNY HUGHES, JR.
ARTHUR JOHNSON – Lower Ninth Ward Center For Sustainable Engagement and Development
DEVIN JOHNSON – Our School at Blair Grocery
RON LOUGAND – Our School at Blair Grocery
FABAYO MANZIRA – Nsoroma Institute, Detroit Black Community Food Security Network
AALIYAH MARRERO – NOLA Green Team
DEVON MCGUINNESS – WHODATA
JESSICA MEEHAN – Louisiana Academy for Collective Enterprise
EBONY MILES
CHUCK MILLS – People's Institute for Survival and Beyond
UKALI MWENDO – Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika
HENRIETTA OLSEN – University of Copenhagen
CATARINA PASSIDOMO – University of Georgia
CARL PRICE
MICHELLE PYNE – Global Green USA
MARY RICHARD – Global Green USA
JESSIE SMALLWOOD – Lower Ninth Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development
ROBERT SWIGGENS – Franklin Avenue Baptist Church
DIANA SWIGGENS – Franklin Avenue Baptist Church
NADA TOUEIR
SAM TURNER – Our School at Blair Grocery
AUDREY WASHINGTON
NAOMI WASHINGTON – Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association
MEGAN WEBBEKING – NOLA Tilth
JOHN WILLIAMS – Williams Architects
MALIK YAKINI – Detroit Black Community Food Security Network

Interns

AIMEE EDMONDO – Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine
MARK KNAPP – Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine
CHRISTIAN MONLEZUN – University of New Orleans

Special Thanks

CSED Staff and Board
SONIA BRISTER – Hope Credit Union
JIM HATCHETT – Sterling Fresh Foods
NAOMI KING – Tulane Prevention Research Center
JULIA KOPRAK – The Food Trust
ERIC KUGLER – NOLA Green Team
MAY LOUIE – Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
CATARINA PASSIDOMO – University of Georgia at Athens
AIMEE QUIRK – City of New Orleans
MICHELLE THOMPSON – University of New Orleans
JOHN WEIDMAN – The Food Trust
SHELIA WEBB – Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center, Dillard University
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