

FOOD ENVIRONMENT IN THE FIRST WARD OF PATERSON, NJ

Together North Jersey NGO Micro-Grant Project



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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF PASSAIC COUNTY

The United Way of Passaic County (UWPC) is a community-based non-profit organization with a 75-year history of responding to the needs of the community. It is the mission of UWPC 'to improve the lives of people in Passaic County by mobilizing the caring power of our community.' To fulfill this mission UWPC functions as a community impact organization that develops partnerships and collaborative with other organizations to provide needed and impactful direct services to the community.

UWPC currently works to address community needs in the areas of *Health, Income* and *Education*. It is the long-term goal of UWPC to, increase the number of individuals who are healthy and avoid “risky behavior”; increase the number of individuals who are financially self-sufficient; as well as increase the high school graduation rates for the county.

To meet these goals UWPC operates several exciting programs that seek to address these specific impact areas, they include:

- Nutrition Matters: an innovative program that partners with children centers to teach good nutrition and fitness habits to pre-school children and their parents.
- Hunger-Free Communities: A county-wide planning and assessment process to address food insecurity, create a Hunger-Free Plan and organize a Food Policy Council, funded by the USDA.

- Hunger-Free Seniors: nutrition program for at-risk seniors that will provide deliver of a bag of non-perishable groceries each month and determine food stamp eligibility and help with enrollment.
- Financial Empowerment Zone: free tax preparation services, help with enrollment in income supports and financial literacy workshops to increase the financial stability among lower-income working families
- Back Packs for Kids – a annual initiative that provides new school supplies to over 1,800 needy children each year



United Way of Passaic County is a unique organization within the non-profit landscape: part funder, part community planner/organizer, and part service provider, UWPC assumes the roles necessary to accomplish community change and address emerging needs. Within the past two years UWPC has made significant progress toward advancement of the agency’s vision and responding to community needs.

One of the agency's most significant accomplishments in this period has been the receipt of the prestigious Hunger-Free Community planning grant from the USDA. UWPC was one of only 14 grant recipients selected nationwide. This \$100,000 grant award provided UWPC with the resources to conduct a county-wide planning and assessment process to address food insecurity, as well as organize a Food Policy Council. In February, 2012 UWPC released the *Where's the Food? : A Report on Food Insecurity and Food Access in Passaic County, New Jersey*. This report comprehensive report revealed sobering facts about hunger in Passaic County particularly among the typically inaccessible Ramapo Indian Tribe, Muslim community members, and rural up-county municipalities. This assessment found that over 32,000+ individuals in Passaic County are food insecure, have difficulty meeting the food needs of the individuals in their household. Other key findings included: 35% of those surveyed say "it is harder to get enough food now" than it was a year ago, only 7% of those who are "at risk" for food insecurity receive garden produce from their own garden or someone else; 17% of those surveyed buy most of their food from corner stores/bodegas.

This critical data informed UWPC and the members of the Council as they worked to create the *Passaic County United to Stop Hunger (PUSH) Report: A Community Vision to Create Food Security for All*, an action plan publicly released on October 24, 2012. This plan will serve as template to guide legislators, stakeholders and members of the community in addressing the key issues affecting food insecurity in Passaic County.

During the same time period UWPC launched the Financial Empowerment Zone (FEZ). This initiative is aimed at increasing financial stability of families and seniors with low/moderate income in the County's urban centers. The program model of the FEZ is based on research from the Annie E.

Casey foundation that shows participants experience better outcomes in financial stability when they received “bundled” services. Through the FEZ low-income families can access free tax preparation services, financial education, credit counseling, benefits screening as well as assistance completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and other financial aid documents. On average, annually 500 low income adults, seniors and youth participate in FEZ services. During two years of operation FEZ generated a \$779,467 economic impact for the County of Passaic.

UNITED WAY OF PASSAIC COUNTY NGO MICRO-GRANT PROJECT

As the United Way of Passaic County strives to create lasting change that improves the lives of Passaic County residents, a key component of the agency's work includes convening diverse individuals to identify needs and develop solutions to community problems. In 2008 the United Way of Passaic County, conducted a county-wide needs assessment entitled Passaic County Voices aimed at identifying the most pressing unmet needs for County residents. This process which included convening several community forums and surveying 650 county residents, was the catalyst for the implementation of UWPC's Financial Empowerment Zone. Recent examples of UWPC's capacity as a convening agency have been the completion of a county-wide food security assessment as part of UWPC's Hunger Free Community initiative in 2012. This assessment process engaged over 970 county residents including Ramapo Lenape Native American community, Arab-American community members, and rural up-county residents. Additionally during 2012 over 300 diverse residents have taken part in financial education seminars hosted by UWPC's Financial Empowerment Zone.

A key to UWPC's success convening diverse and underrepresented residents is UWPC's strong collaborative relationships with non-profit, civic, cultural and religious organizations throughout Passaic County. Through these relationships UWPC has been able to engage residents from diverse background in a variety of UWPC initiatives and projects.

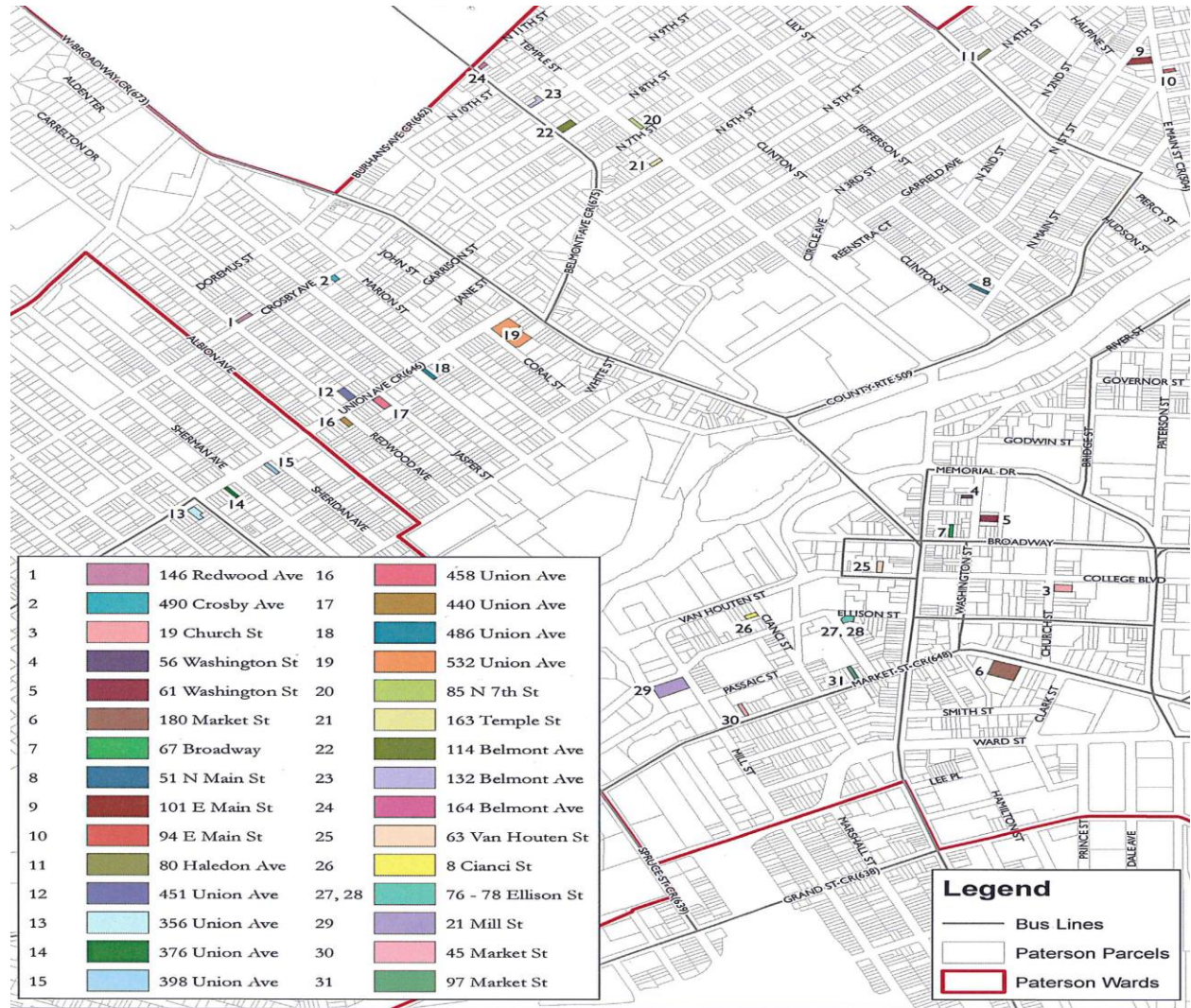
For the "Discovery" Phase Workshops, the Hunger Free Communities Project Director, served as a trusted "liaison". The Director also served as UWPC's lead staff member during the execution of the Hunger Free Communities Project, funded by the USDA in 2011-2012. During

this period the director organized 7 focus groups, key informant surveys at 27 locations, 3 community engagement events, and over 12 coalition meetings. Outreach to the Passaic County Food Policy Council in June yielded a venue for the Discovery Workshop – BridgeHope Community Church in Paterson NJ. Close to 40 people participated in this workshop and 13 people participated in the Community Food Access dot-survey that UWPC staff members conducted at the event.

To complement the regional sustainable and equity focus planning process being conducted by Together New Jersey, and advance the Hunger-Free Communities initiatives of UWPC, a GIS assisted, participatory mapping project to identify community assets that support food access within the City of Paterson and their relationship to existing transit systems was conducted. A visual representation of the food environment in Paterson’s first ward that identifies gaps in food access to assist in the development of strategies to increase access to healthy foods is seen below..

To achieve this goal UWPC engaged three local college students will be recruited to conduct field surveys and interviews to document the locations and usage of food access sites such as grocery stores, food retailers, and farmers markets. This data gathered by interns was provided to the Passaic County Department of Planning and Economic Development, for input into a GIS Map that provides visual representations of the food environment in the City of Paterson and its relationship to existing transit systems. Next steps include the analysis of this GIS Map, UWPC along with its partners on the Passaic County Food Policy Council will identify transportation gaps and advocate strategies that will increase access to healthy food.

FOOD RETAIL MAP WITH TRANSIT ROUTES



PASSAIC COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This map was developed using NJDEP GIS digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state authorized.



0 220 440 880 Feet

**United Way
Corner Food Locations**
11/18/2014

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LESSONS LEARNED

United Way staff learned several lessons during this reporting period while embarking on this project, specifically in relation to the planning for the Discovery Workshop event.

The location we picked for the event was ideal in many respects however it was not accessible by public transportation. The closest city bus stop was down steep hill from the venue, making it difficult for those without personal transportation or those with physical limitations to participate.

Ensuring that all language support personnel was on-hand at the Discovery Workshop would have been ideal. In future, it will be optimal to advertise that these service providers (i.e., Spanish, Arabic, Bengali and sign language interpreters) would be available instead of waiting to see who needs it. Residents are motivated to come out to events when they know for sure they can understand and participate. UWPC staff have learned through conversations with Passaic County Food Policy members that this is the best practice in Paterson.

All United Way stakeholders were notified of the Discovery Workshop date. Going forward, it will be important to have discussions with a select group of Passaic County Food Policy Council members to ensure that all share a similar understanding of how to actively support community meetings such as these. Currently, most organizations support events through flyer distribution

to the target population. However, in future, it will be helpful if organizations add to this practice, active support of such events through leveraging available resources to provide transportation for those in need, and strong promotion of the community event/encouragement of community members to attend.

The day/time scheduled for the Discovery Workshop proved challenging because it was a back to school night for a local elementary school. It was not discovered until the date was established that this conflict was present. It is very likely that participation was attenuated as a result, however school/parent coordinators at the local high schools were asked to engage parents with children in the high school who may still have been able to participate. In future, greater attention will be paid to the local school calendar.

CORNER STORE SURVEYS

All corner stores in Paterson (47) were surveyed using a modified Nutritional Environmental Measures Surveys. All the in store surveys were conducted in the hours of 10 am to 2 pm. This time was chosen because of staff and volunteer availability and safety. It was very clear from the products that were available which community was being catered to. For example: Hispanic stores had limited varieties of fruits and vegetables but a large variety of processed food, sodas and canned foods. Asian and Bangladeshi stores on the other hand carried fruits and vegetables that were native to their culture like bottle gourd, bitter melon as well as imported frozen seafood (types of fish and shell fish not easily found or eaten in USA). One interesting find in an Asian corner store was 2lb bags of MSG (Mono sodium glutamate).

While food safety practices were beyond the scope of this project a number of unsafe food handling practices were observed including stocking cleaning supplies and food on the same shelf, no gloves while preparing meat cuts for sale, improper refrigeration and general unsanitary store conditions. A map of all corner stores surveyed along with bus lines is attached. No train lines run in the area.

Of the 47 stores only 31 stores were open for business at the time of the survey. All stores with the exception of 2 were located in the first ward of Paterson. Almost all stores had only one cash register (30) and had over 50% of store space devoted to food and food items (23).

Healthy Food items sold at these corner stores were as follows:

- Milk (28); 22 of these stores had low fat varieties of milk (2% or less)
- Fruit (28); common fresh fruits were bananas (22), apple (14), and oranges (12); common frozen fruits were strawberry (3) and mango (3); and common canned fruits were pineapple (9).
- Vegetables (27); common fresh vegetables were onion (23), tomatoes (22), lettuce (19), and peppers (17); common frozen vegetables available were peas (12), carrots (12) and potatoes (10); and common canned vegetables were beans (23), green beans (18), and corn (14).
- Whole wheat bread (18) was available in 18 stores.
- No baked potato chips were available at any of the stores.

SURVEY TOOL

The food, or nutrition environment, is widely believed to contribute to the increasing epidemic of childhood and adult obesity in the United States.

Nutrition environments are the places in a community where people buy or eat food. In order to identify and describe community nutrition environments, there is a need for well-defined and reliable tools to measure these environments, and for trained observers who can use the measures in their communities. The nutrition environment measurements survey (NEMS) is one such tool and its components were used for the assessment in the 1st ward in Paterson.

1. Surveyor name

Surveyor name

2. Store Name

Store Name

3. Date

	MM		DD		YYYY
Date /	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>
Time	Date	Date /	Day	Year	
	Time	Month			

4. Start time

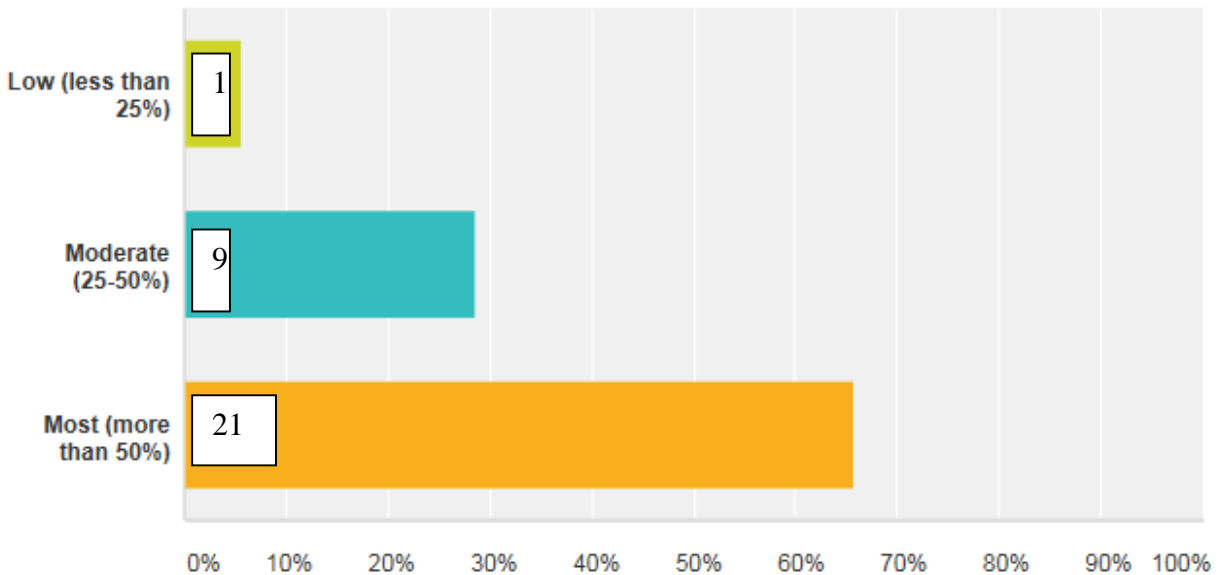
	HH		MM		AM/PM
Start	<input type="text"/>	:	<input type="text"/>	-	<input type="text"/>
Time	Start	Minute	AM or		PM
	time	Start			
	Time	Hour			

5. Number of Cash Registers

Number of Cash Registers = 1 (n=30)

Number of Cash Registers = 2 (n=31)

6. How much of the store space is for FOOD?



7. Is milk sold at this store?

- Yes (n=28)
- No (n=3)

8. Reference Brand with the most shelf space

Reference Brand with the most shelf space

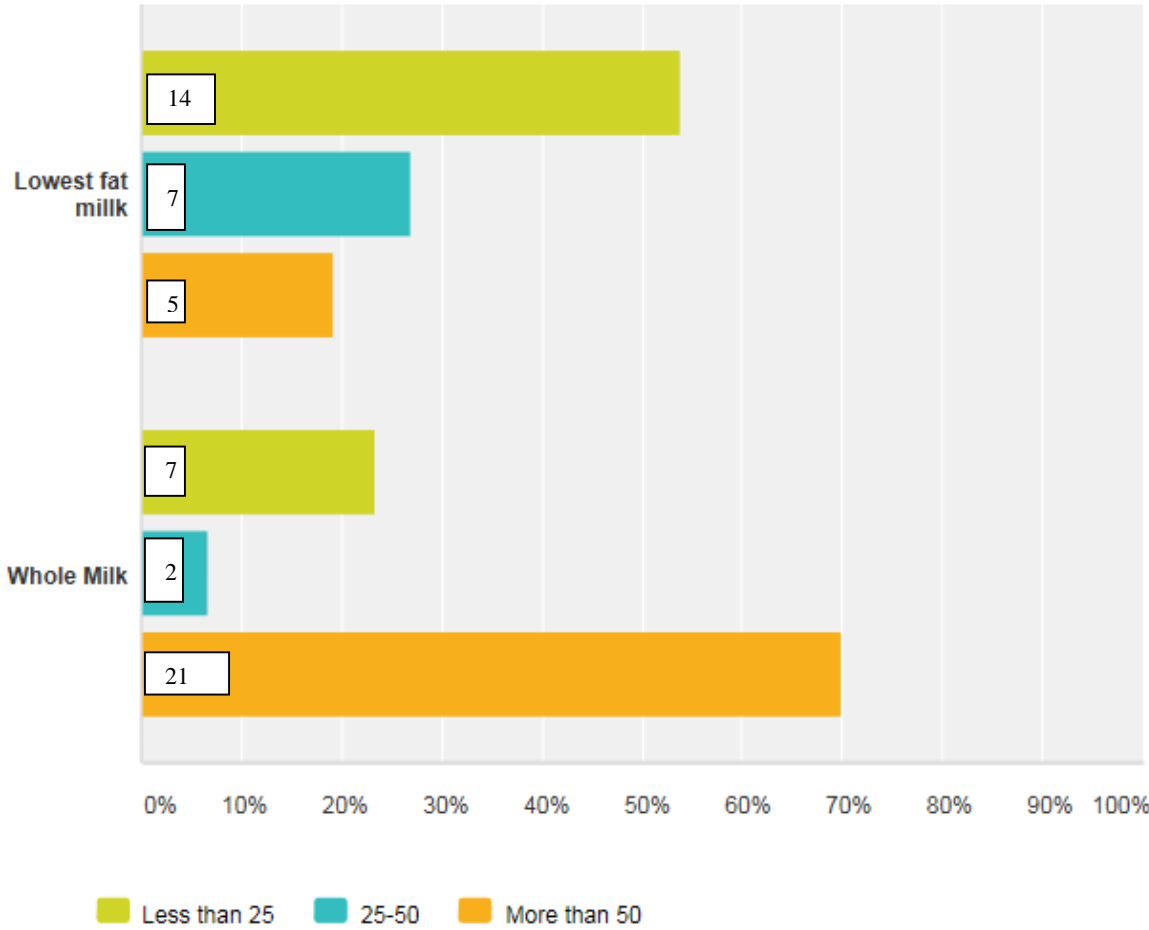
9. What is the lowest fat milk available?

- Skim (n=2)
- 1% (n=2)
- 2% (n=18)

10. Shelf space based on type

Shelf space based on type

Answered: 31 Skipped: 4



11. Is fruit sold at this store

- Yes (n=28)
- No

12. Number of fruits sold

Average = 9

13. Which of these fruits were sold

	Yes	No
Bananas	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Apple	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Oranges	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Grapes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Cantaloupe/Melon	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Peaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Berries	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

14 Other fruits available

15. Are frozen fruits available (no sugar added)?

- Yes (n=3)
- No

16. What types of frozen fruits are available?

17. Are canned fruits available (in natural juice or water)?

- Yes (n=9)
- No

20. What types of canned fruits are available?

21. Are vegetables sold at this store?

- Yes (n=27)
- No

22. Number of veggies sold

23. Which of these veggies are sold

	Yes	No
Onions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Tomatoes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Broccoli	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Carrots	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Peppers	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Lettuce	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Cucumber/Celery	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

25. Other veggies available

26. Are frozen veggies available (in water/without sauce)?

- Yes (n=10)
- No

27. What types of frozen veggies are available?

28. Are canned veggies available (in water/without sauce)?

- Yes (n=24)
- No

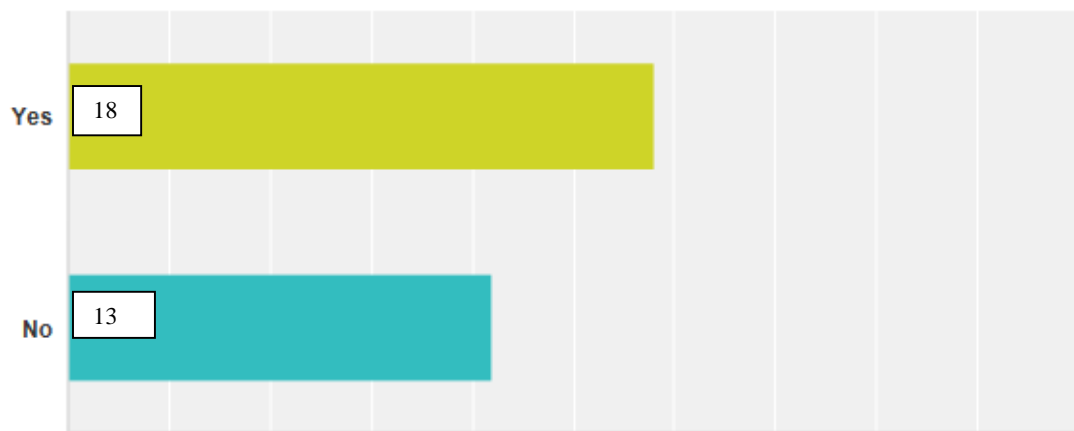
29. What types of canned veggies are available?

30. Whole wheat bread

- Yes
- No

Whole wheat bread

Answered: 31 Skipped: 4

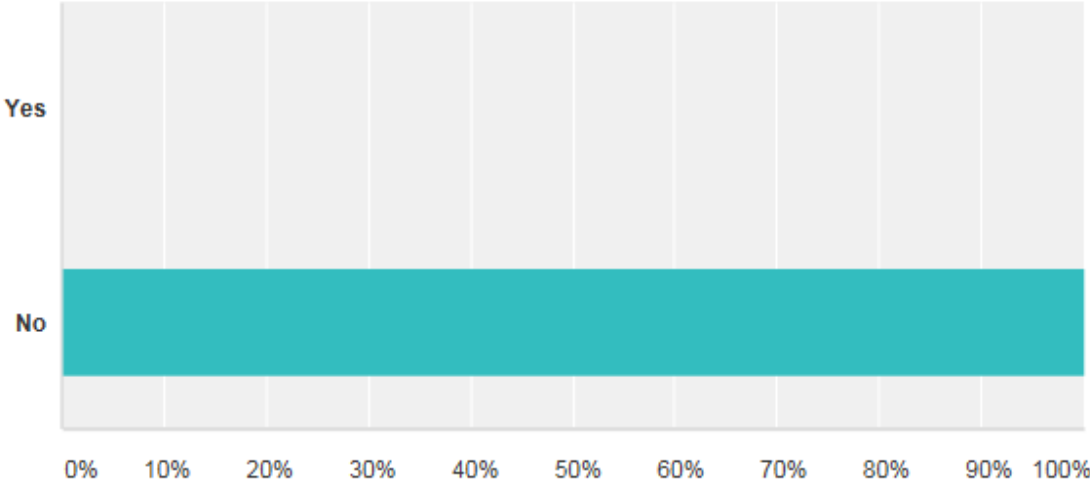


32. Are Baked potato chips available?

- Yes
- No

Baked potato chips

Answered: 31 Skipped: 4



PICTURES OF SOME OF THE FOODS CORNER STORES IN PATERSON SELL



Example of produce being sold at a corner store



Large bags of MSG for sale



Variety of canned foods



Bottle gourd- a Bangladeshi vegetable



Canned foods sold at corner stores in Paterson



Produce sold outside a corner store

FOOD ACCESS SURVEYS

The original plan was to survey individuals while they are shopping at the corner stores that are being assessed. However at the time of the surveys very few shoppers were available and none of them agreed to do the survey without receiving any incentives or gift for doing the survey. Further due to volunteer retention difficulties as well as in order to keep them safe it was decided that we try and contact Paterson residents from our other programs in United Way of Passaic County i.e. the Winter Wishes program as well as the Free Tax prep program participants. Individuals were contacted via in-person and telephone surveys. An intern from Montclair translated the survey in Spanish and administered most of the surveys.

One hundred residents were surveyed to assess the food environment in Paterson. The average age of the residents was 45 years. Most of the participants were female (57%) and majority of them lived in household of up to 4 individuals. Most of those surveyed indicated that they prepare meals at home 5-7 days of the week (57%). Corner stores (53%) and Supermarket/grocery stores (63%) were the two primary shopping destinations for this population. A-third of the residents also indicated that they shop at farmers markets in their community. Most individuals believe that the quality of fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products and breads they have available were of high quality. The top three concerns with regard to food access for these individuals were: Cost of food (87%), time for shopping (50%), and distance to the store (50%). Main means of transportation to do grocery shopping were driving own vehicle (45), walking (34), using public transportation i.e. bus (21) and/or riding

along with friends and neighbors. While most individuals indicated that they were satisfied with their food environment one in four of those surveyed indicated that they would like to see a major chain grocery store like Walmart, ShopRite or Pathmark in their neighborhoods. A small number also indicated that they would like to see increased varieties of various ethnic food selections (Peruvian and Puerto Rican foods). More and two-thirds of the participants used wither Food Stamps or WIC as supplemental income to shop for groceries and provide food for their families.



UNITED WAY FOOD ACCESS SURVEY

1. What is the nearest intersection near your home?

2. Do you identify yourself as:

- a. Male
- b. Female

3. Where do you go to buy your groceries?

4. Including yourself how many people live in your household?

- a. 1-2
- b. 3-4
- c. 5-6
- d. 7-8
- e. >8

5. How long does it take you to get to your usual grocery store?

- a. 0-5 minutes
- b. 5-10 minutes
- c. 10-20 minutes
- d. 20-30 minutes
- e. 30-45 minutes
- f. >45 minutes

6. Which of the following other places do you get your food from?

- a. Farmers Market
- b. Home gardens
- c. Community gardens
- d. School Cafeteria
- e. Food Bank
- f. Senior meal site
- g. Fast food

- h. Church
 - i. Home delivered meals
 - j. N/A
 - k. Other (please specify)
7. cómo llega a los lugares en los que compra la comida?
Como se traslada o transporta a los sitios donde compra la comida?
- a. Own vehicle
 - b. Walk
 - c. Bike
 - d. Bus/Public transportation
 - e. Other (please specify)
8. On average, how many days a week do you prepare meals at home?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3-4
 - d. 5-7
9. How would you rate the quality of the fresh food sold in the store you shop in most frequently?
1. Worst 2. 3. 4. 5. Best
- a. Frutas
 - b. Vegetales
 - c. Carnes/Proteína
 - d. Pan
 - e. Productos Lácteos
10. Are there any foods that you need but are difficult to get in your neighborhood?
-
11. What are the three main problems in getting the foods you need?
- a. Cost of Food
 - b. Quality of Food
 - c. Safety
 - d. Time for shopping
 - e. Distance to the store

- f. Other (please specify)
- g. N/A

12. How often do you eat fresh fruits or vegetable?

- a. Rarely
- b. Most days of the week
- c. one time a day
- d. 2 -4 times a day
- e. 5 or more times a day

13. What would you like to see change in your neighborhood and the community in terms of food?

14. How old are you?

15. Do you use?

- a. SNAP/Food stamps
- b. WIC



16. Cuál es la intersección más cercana a su casa
Cuál es la principal calle o avenida más cercana a su casa.

17. Como se identifica usted mismo

- c. Masculino
- d. Femenino

18. Donde compra sus alimentos?

19. Incluida usted cuantas personas viven en su casa?

- f. 1-2
- g. 3-4
- h. 5-6
- i. 7-8
- j. >8

20. cuánto tiempo le toma llegar a su habitual tienda de víveres, comestibles, supermercado, marqueta o tienda local?

- g. 0-5 minutos
- h. 5-10 minutos
- i. 10-20 minutos
- j. 20-30 minutos
- k. 30-45 minutos
- l. >45 minutos

21. De cuál de los siguientes sitios usted compra alimentos?

- l. Mercado de agricultores, cultivadores
- m. Jardín o huerto de su casa.
- n. Jardines Comunitarios
- o. Bancos de comida o víveres

- p. Sitio que provee comida para los ancianos.
- q. Comida rápida
- r. Iglesia
- s. Entrega a domicilio
- t. Otro (Por favor especifique)_____
- u. N/A

22. cómo llega a los lugares en los que compra la comida?

Como se traslada o transporta a los sitios donde compra la comida?

- v. Su Propio auto
- w. Caminando
- x. Bicicleta
- y. Bus/ transporte publico
- z. Otro (Por favor especifique)_____

23. En promedio ¿cuántos días a la semana usted prepara comidas o cocina en su casa?

- e. 1
- f. 2
- g. 3-4
- h. 5-7

24. ¿cómo calificaría la calidad de los alimentos frescos que se venden en la tienda donde usted comprar con mayor frecuencia?

1. Muy malo 2. 3. 4. 5. El mejor

- f. Frutas
- g. Vegetales
- h. Carnes/Proteína
- i. Pan
- j. Productos Lácteos

25. Hay algún alimento que usted necesita, pero es difícil de conseguir en su vecindario?

26. ¿cuáles son los principales problemas en conseguir la comida que necesita?

- h. Costo de la comida

- i. Calidad de la comida
- j. La higiene de comida
- k. El tiempo que se gasta en ir de compras
- l. La distancia de la tienda o supermercado
- m. Otra razón (Por favor especifique) _____
- n. N/A

27. Con cuanta frecuencia usted come frutas o vegetales?

- a. Casi nunca
- b. La mayoría de días de la semana
- c. Una vez al día
- d. 2-4 veces al día
- e. 5 o más veces al día

28. Cuales cambios le gustaría que ocurrieran en su vecindario en términos de comida?

29. Cuantos años tiene?

30. Usted tiene?

- c. SNAP/Food stamps
- d. WIC

NEXT STEPS FOR FOOD ENVIRONMENT AND UNITED WAY OF PASSAIC COUNTY

The completion and analysis of this GIS Mapping will support the continued work of UWPC's Hunger Free Communities Initiative and the Passaic County Food Policy Council. The *Where's the Food? : A Report on Food Insecurity and Food Access in Passaic County, New Jersey*, completed by UWPC in 2012, revealed Paterson, NJ to be a municipality in the County facing significant food access challenges, characterizing the municipality as a food desert. As UWPC and the Passaic County Food Policy Council begin to implement interventions and initiative to address food access across Passaic County, it will be critical that they gain additional information about high needs areas such as Paterson.

The UWPC and Passaic County Food Policy Council are committed to ending hunger in Passaic County. Currently the Food Policy Council is comprised of 19 non-profit organizations and public officials how are actively dedicating resources in elimination of hunger. These organizations will serve as champions and supporters of the GIS Mapping Project, as the data gathered will advance but the work of the Food Policy Council as well as the mission of each individual organization.

The information and insight gained by the proposed GIS Mapping Project will also complement and support the goal of Together North Jersey's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. In keeping Together North Jersey's Neighborhood Revitalization goals, UWPC is seeking to identify strategies that will improve neighborhood health through improved access to healthy food and transit. The lessons and insights gained through a visual representation of Paterson's Food Environment coupled with key informant surveys, will provide valuable data to inform sustainable

development that will improve transit to provide equity to food access for urban residents across northern New Jersey.

DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOME

The goals of the GIS participatory mapping project is identify community assets that support food access within the City of Paterson and their relationship to existing transit systems. The Passaic County Food Policy Council along with United Way of Passaic county will now work toward identification of a minimum of three strategies to support or improve access to healthy foods in the City of Paterson.