

Community Food Assessment

Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition
Food Policy Brief



The Problem:

Many neighborhoods across Cuyahoga County are considered “food insecure” communities, where residents lack access to the foods needed to sustain a healthy diet. These “food desert” communities are concentrated in urban neighborhoods in Cleveland, due to a historic trend of urban supermarket closures, followed by an increase in the prominence of fast food establishments, convenience stores, and even gas stations. These limited service establishments began to fill a gap in the food retail market, and are providing an increasing role in supplying the daily diets of many families. As the retail grocery landscape has changed, access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods has become increasingly limited in many neighborhoods. Although a community may have access to numerous fast food restaurants and corner stores, none of these establishments can provide an individual with a healthy diet needed to sustain overall health and well-being. These very same communities face rising challenges from chronic diseases such as Type II diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, making the lack of access to healthy foods a detriment to the long-term health and productivity of many residents.

In professional planning journals, more articles are talking about food, the need to provide people who are separated from fresh food with fresh food, and the resolution to the question: what to do with all of the vacant land?
-Norm Krumholz
Cleveland State University

Goals:

The Community Food Assessment working group emerged to assess food security across Cuyahoga County, identifying target communities where healthy food access is a rising problem. The primary goals of the group are to assess food security and access in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County through quantitative methods such as analyzing census data, as well as through qualitative methods such as conducting interviews with Cleveland and Cuyahoga County residents. With this information, the working group can begin to target communities within Cleveland and Cuyahoga County that can be identified as food deserts or areas where there is a food gap, and begin to improve the retail food environment in these communities.

Progress to Date:

The Community Food Assessment Working Group has conducted a Northeast Ohio Local Food System Assessment and Plan, in partnership with LAND Studio, Neighborhood Progress Inc., and Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative. The assessment and plan identified business strategies and investments to strengthen the regional economy through local food production,

