

What's Cooking in Your Food System?

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

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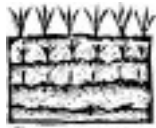


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CHAPTER 3

Community Food Assessment Case Studies

1. Introduction

This chapter highlights examples of Community Food Assessments conducted in nine communities nationwide between 1992 and 2001. Each case study briefly describes the background, goals, actors, process, resources, and outcomes for that assessment. These cases illustrate some of the different ways that groups have shaped assessments to address local concerns and resources, and provide a sense of the flexibility and power of the Community Food Assessment approach for understanding and acting on local food issues.

For simplicity, we have applied the term Community Food Assessments to this collection of case studies, but the groups who implemented them have taken various approaches and used different terms to describe their assessments. The overall approach to Community Food Assessment conveyed in this Guide is generally informed by the work of the case study groups, but it is not based on one particular model. Although the cases include most of the elements of an assessment presented in Chapter 2, not all of them include all these elements. For example, the case studies involve varying degrees of community participation in the planning and implementation of the assessment, while this Guide encourages an approach that integrates substantial community participation.

Community Food Assessment is a relatively new field, and the approach is still being developed. We present these case studies not with the idea that they are perfect models to be replicated. Rather, we present them as examples of valuable and pioneering work, with the understanding that it is important for us to learn from each others' experiences, especially in a young field like Community Food Assessment. We encourage you to share the stories and lessons from your assessment, to continue this learning process.

Communities Addressed by Case Studies

Case Study	Assessment Area	Population of Study Area
Austin	East Austin, Texas	East Austin: 24,000
Berkeley	West and South Berkeley, California	West and South Berkeley: approximately 35,000
Detroit	City of Detroit; Southeastern Michigan region (six counties); and Michigan at large	Detroit: 970,000
Los Angeles	South Central Los Angeles, California	South Central LA: 53,000
Madison/Dane County	City of Madison, Wisconsin, and Surrounding Area	City of Madison: 207,000; County: 400,000
Milwaukee	Near-north and near-south sides of the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Milwaukee County	Milwaukee: 959,275
The North Country	Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties of New York state	Six-county area: approximately 431,000
San Francisco	Southeast San Francisco, California—Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood	Bayview Hunters Point: 34,000
Somerville	Somerville, Massachusetts	Somerville: 77,500

This information was derived from surveys completed by case study contacts.

In this chapter and elsewhere, tables and charts with summary information derived from these case studies are included. These tables provide an overview of the communities, participants, funding sources, and research questions for these assessments. We developed these tables based on information provided by case study contacts. They are meant to be illustrative, rather than an exhaustive representation of each assessment's characteristics.

2. Community Food Assessment Case Studies

✿ AUSTIN, TEXAS

Access Denied: An Analysis of Food Access in East Austin

East Austin is an inner-city community of about 24,000 people, primarily Hispanic and African-American. The area covers about six square miles, and encompasses strong neighborhoods and well-established minority-owned businesses. However, poverty and diet-related diseases are widespread.

In 1994, the Sustainable Food Center (SFC) initiated a study of food access in East Austin, with the goals of raising awareness and forming a food policy council to help address food access issues. SFC is a non-profit organization that works to develop sustainable food systems through local, state, and national initiatives. The study was planned and implemented over a period of eight months by SFC's then-Director, Kate Fitzgerald, and VISTA volunteer Jon Schragg with the support of the SFC board of directors. The Eastside Advisory Board, a group of community stakeholders, also provided project guidance.

Key project expenses included staff time and printing for the report. SFC paid for the study through their core funds, plus federal government support for the VISTA volunteer's salary. SFC requested donations to help cover printing costs for the report.

Extensive community input was gathered through interviews with over 200 residents. The SFC staff were both bilingual and lived in the neighborhood, and they made it a high priority to gather information in ways that would build trust and yield meaningful responses. They conducted extensive community outreach designed to engage residents in settings in which the residents felt comfortable. The staff worked through trusted community leaders who would introduce them and encourage community members to talk to them. (Of all the people they asked to help in this way, everyone agreed.) Outreach was conducted at churches, health clinics, elementary schools, public housing, neighborhood associations, grocery stores, farmers' markets, restaurants, bus stops, and by going door to door.

In these interviews, SFC staff focused on engaging community members in a conversation to identify their concerns about the local food system, and recorded notes afterward. SFC staff felt that these informal conversations conducted by local residents were more effective at soliciting honest responses than a survey administered by an outsider would have been.

In addition to these interviews, the project also analyzed census data and conducted detailed surveys at neighborhood grocery and convenience stores. The researchers compared selection and prices in East Austin with stores outside the neighborhood. Like similar studies in other cities, these surveys demonstrated that low-income East Austin residents generally paid higher prices and had a narrower selection of groceries available than people in other parts of the city.

The Austin study was conducted with modest resources by people who had a solid base in the community, and using methods that were sensitive to the community context. They successfully built on these strengths to create an accurate and compelling picture of food access that generated impressive outcomes.

The assessment results were published in a 1995 report titled *Access Denied: An Analysis of Problems Facing East Austin Residents in Their Attempts to Obtain Affordable, Nutritious Food*¹. The report proposed that a food policy council be established to address these problems, and recommended practical solutions for improving food access in East Austin. About 2,000 copies were distributed.

Sponsoring Organizations for Case Studies

Case Study	Sponsoring Organizations
Austin	– Sustainable Food Center
Berkeley	– San Francisco State University – Northern California Food Systems Alliance
Detroit	– Department of Urban Planning, Wayne State University – Hunger Action Coalition of Michigan
Los Angeles	– Department of Urban Planning, University of California Los Angeles – The Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Madison/ Dane County	– Madison Food System Project – Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Milwaukee	– Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee – Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee – Wisconsin Food System Partnership
The North Country	– Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University – The New York State Department of the State – New York State Community Action Association – Cornell Cooperative Extension
San Francisco	– San Francisco Department of Public Health – San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners – Literacy for Environmental Justice
Somerville	– Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University – Massachusetts Health Research Institute

This information was derived from surveys completed by case study contacts.

Other outcomes include:

- ▶ A new bus route that provided transportation from the Eastside to the two biggest supermarkets
- ▶ Legislation that allows state land to be used free of charge for community gardens or farmers' markets
- ▶ Complete renovation of a grocery store in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Increased awareness about food access
- ▶ Establishment of a food policy council with in-kind support from the city and county

For more information, contact:

Sustainable Food Center
PO Box 13323
Austin, TX 78711
512-236-0074

Copies of the assessment report are available from:

http://www.main.org/sfc/access_denied/

🌿 BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Berkeley Community Food Assessment

The city of Berkeley is located just a few hours' drive from the heart of California's legendary agricultural sector. Yet Berkeley residents are subject to some of the same challenges faced by municipalities across the country—inadequate retail service in poorer neighborhoods, a financially struggling school food system, and food “education” dominated by TV ads. At the same time, Berkeley is home to exciting pilot initiatives to foster sustainability, nutritional health, and equity in the food system.

Between 1998 and 2001, members of the Northern California Food Systems Alliance and faculty from San Francisco State University came together with a committed group of community organizations to take fresh look at how to link local farmers and urban consumers. They wrote a report that chronicles and analyzes Berkeley's efforts to build a healthy and equitable food system, titled *Good Farming, Healthy Communities: Strengthening Sustainable Agriculture Sectors and Local Food Systems*².

The report focused on five sectors of the Berkeley food system in which organizations were working to create change, and identified the kinds of projects these organizations were pursuing (in parentheses):

1. The food production sector (cooperative ownership, marketing strategies for family farms, and land trusts)
2. The retail food sector (direct marketing, inner-city greening projects, neighborhood markets)
3. Urban agriculture (mini-farms, community gardens, agricultural research)
4. The role of educational institutions (farm-to-school, community nutrition education, and community-driven urban agricultural research)
5. Public policy (advisory groups, public health, coalitions between green space and housing advocates)

The major sponsors of the project were the Northern California Food Systems Alliance, the San Francisco Foundation, and San Francisco State University. The principal leadership came from Raquel Pinderhughes, a professor at the university, with graduate student research assistance. The project was closely tied to community-based organizations such as the Ecology Center, the Berkeley Farmers' Market, the Berkeley Food Policy Council, and Berkeley Youth Alternatives. Five members from participating organizations formed a Community Advisory Board, which served as the steering committee for the project. Researchers working on the project and the Community Advisory Board held regular meetings and strategy sessions.

Community activists and residents were integral to the project. Community participation was generated through information sharing between local councils, neighborhood projects, and non-profit organizations at meetings and through involvement in project activities. Local high school students were trained in data collection. Further community input came from interviews and surveys of business owners, school children, farmers, market coordinators, and emergency food system staff.

The direct funding for the assessment consisted of two grants of \$25,000 each, from the San Francisco Foundation and California Urban Environmental Research and Action Center. In-kind donations were valued at \$100,000 and included the lead investigator's time, the research work of university students, the voluntary efforts of Community Advisory Board members, and additional guidance from other members of the community.

In addition to the above-mentioned report, outcomes from the Berkeley Community Food Assessment include:

- Formalized collaboration between the Berkeley Food Policy Council, farmers' markets, community-based organizations, and the Berkeley Youth Alternatives project
- Linkages between local growers and Berkeley school cafeterias
- Survey instruments provided for inclusion in the *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*³ recently published by USDA

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Copies of the assessment report are not available at this writing.

✿ DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The Detroit Food System Assessment

Detroit is home to many individuals and organizations working in low-income communities to increase access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate choices in food. However, when this study began in the late 1990s, these were disparate efforts without common goals, a broadly shared knowledge base, or a conceptual framework for action. Wayne State University Professor Kami Pothukuchi initiated the Detroit Food System Assessment to bring community food security concepts and systematic research into a community-based discussion that was already underway. The form of the assessment was shaped by discussions with representatives from the Hunger Action Coalition and other organizations that participated in the planning process to create the Detroit Food Security Council, but it was completed almost entirely within the university.

The goals of the assessment were to:

1. Develop a handbook of basic information about Detroit's food system to support actions and policies that foster community food security
2. Demonstrate how university faculty could partner with community members to conduct research on local issues

Wayne State University provided cash and in-kind support by funding Kami Pothukuchi's time and a student assistant to work on the study over two summers. Although community organizations were supportive, their efforts were not yet developed to the level of raising funds for systematic assessment work. Hence the assessment progressed more slowly than some others, developing over multiple cycles of initial assessment, community presentations of findings, discussion of further research questions, and additional research. Community partners played key roles in brainstorming research questions, identifying data sources, networking with key informants, helping build support for the assessment, and planning for program development based on the assessment's findings.

The initial assessment (conducted in 1999) was organized into sections based on links between food and the community goals of health, community economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. Initial presentations were made in community forums to provide an overview of basic statistics, and a more detailed assessment program emerged from the ensuing discussions. The report expanded to include sections on hunger and food insecurity, regional farmland, and small pilot studies that would provide more qualitative glimpses of the area's food system. For example, one pilot study examined the availability of a healthy basket of food in stores in an especially underserved neighborhood, while another documented the benefits of a youth nutrition garden in a Latino neighborhood.

The assessment was not the product of a systematic planning process of one organization or coalition; instead it emerged from an ongoing set of relationships that increased in size and complexity over time. Accordingly, local organizations use it as they see fit, to educate new members about Detroit's food system, to tell the story of the organizing efforts, and to raise more complex questions about unexplored issues. Because the assessment was initiated and carried out by a university faculty member, many of the outcomes are university-related.

The report on the Detroit Food System Assessment is still being finalized at this writing. The assessment has contributed to the following outcomes:

Hunger and Food Insecurity in Detroit

Household food security status by household type and race in Northwest Detroit, 1997

Household food security status	Total House holds	Food Secure		Food insecure, hunger not evident		Food insecure, moderate hunger evident		Food insecure, severe hunger evident	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ALL HOUSEHOLDS		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All household types	352	217	61.6	35	9.9	79	22.4	21	6.0
Households w/children under age 18	210	108	51.4	23	11.0	65	31.0	14	6.7
Households w/elderly, no children	63	51	81.0	3	4.8	5	7.9	4	6.3
Households w/no elderly, no children	77	57	74.0	9	11.7	8	10.4	3	3.9
BY RACE									
All Black households	309	191	61.8	29	9.4	71	23.0	18	5.8
All White households	21	11	52.4	3	14.3	5	23.8	2	9.5
All other race households	19	12	63.2	3	15.8	3	15.8	1	5.3

Source: Pothukuchi, 2002.⁴

The table reports on household food security status in a Northwest Detroit neighborhood, derived from a survey of 352 households selected randomly. It identifies four categories of food security status and helps compare between different types of households and racial groups. In this neighborhood, nearly four out of 10 households are food insecure with varying degrees of hunger evident.

- ▶ The formation of the Detroit Food Security Council, consisting of representatives from many area organizations, private sector groups, and public agencies, including Hunger Action Coalition, Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Neighborhood Partnership, and Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice
- ▶ A firm basis for university-community collaboration on food system research and program development, with collaborations related to a youth nutrition garden, grocery store investigation, the Community Food Projects (CFP) grant process, etc.
- ▶ At least two CFP proposals from area organizations and numerous other grant proposals written by organizations and partnerships
- ▶ Efforts to inform city agencies and local policy makers on specific issues such as the links between food and land use and economic development planning, and local advocacy to improve allocation of public land for urban agriculture initiatives
- ▶ Greater interest among university students, faculty, and administrators in community food issues and related university-community partnerships

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Copies of the assessment report will be available from Professor Pothukuchi starting December 2002.

✿ LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Seeds of Change Food System Assessment

In 1992, Los Angeles emerged from a period of civil unrest that had wreaked economic and social havoc on the city. Los Angeles faced serious food security problems, including significant levels of hunger, inadequate government support programs, and an overwhelmed emergency food network. These problems were made worse by the lack of basic infrastructure in the inner city, where there were few supermarkets, generally high food prices, limited public transportation options, and no integrated policy framework to address these problems.

Researchers at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Department of Architecture and Urban Planning and the Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition (IHC), a nonprofit advocacy and education organization, joined forces to undertake a comprehensive study of a low-income community of color in South Central LA.

The purposes of the study, called Seeds of Change, were to:

1. Evaluate problems of food security in the inner city, in both local and national contexts
2. Describe and assess the adequacy of the federal government's response to these problems
3. Analyze how the structure of the food industry has contributed to food insecurity
4. Identify and evaluate community-based strategies for change
5. Propose a framework for food security planning that is equitable, economically efficient, and environmentally sound

The Seeds of Change project was carried out with no cash budget, but with major in-kind support, especially from UCLA. Six principal researchers, two supervisors, and more than a dozen research assistants participated in the year-long study (1992-1993). Collaborators and non-profit groups contributed additional in-kind support, and students covered the cost of mileage and telephone calls.

The researchers divided the project into three areas: local, regional, and state/national. The local study included a telephone survey; extensive demographic, land use, and spatial analysis using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software; a profile of food outlets; and a comparative price survey at outlets in the case study area and two suburban communities. Community members participated through a series of household surveys, market surveys, and interviews.

At the regional level, the researchers conducted surveys of consumers and growers at farmers' markets, interviewed low-income community gardeners, reviewed policy and agency activities, examined the structure of the food system from grower to grocery store, surveyed land use and transportation routes, and conducted comparative demographic analysis. At the state and national level, the study gathered data on existing food support programs, examined food policy council initiatives, and analyzed trends of the supermarket industry over the past several decades.

The research from the project was compiled and published as *Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City*⁵. Other outcomes included:

- ▮ Formation of the LA Community Food Security Network and the LA Food Security and Hunger Partnership (a food policy council)
- ▮ Further growth of community gardens and farmers' markets, and increased food stamp outreach at farmers' markets
- ▮ Examples and inspiration that helped spark food assessments in other cities
- ▮ Increased awareness that catalyzed the movement for food security in the United States, including establishment of the Community Food Security Coalition in 1994

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Copies of the assessment report are available from:

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html>

🍂 MADISON, WISCONSIN

Madison / Dane County Food System Assessment

*Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison / Dane County Food System*⁶ was the result of a 1997 planning workshop for graduate students in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning (URPL). Students and faculty members took on this project because they believed that the state of the food system could act as a barometer of the well-being of the community. The goals of the study were:

1. To develop a better understanding of the food system in Madison/Dane County
2. To build strategies for improving food security
3. To establish university/community partnerships

The class described the conventional food system in Dane County, evaluated how well this system was working, and spelled out how to develop alternative food systems. The study covered both the City of Madison and surrounding Dane County, a primarily agricultural region in South-Central Wisconsin. The Madison Food System Project (MFSP) and its Director, Jerry Kaufman, provided overall sponsorship and leadership for the project. The research team comprised Professors Kaufman and Kami Pothukuchi (then a visiting faculty at URPL), teaching assistant Mark Stevens, and more than 20 graduate students. Funding for the project came from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (through MFSP) and in-kind donations from the university.

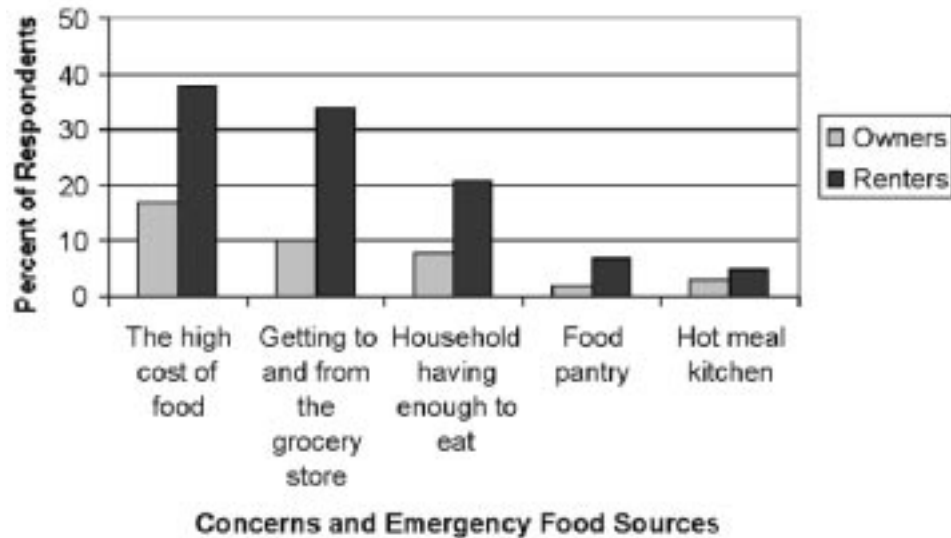
A 20-person advisory committee, consisting of 12 community members and eight academics, provided guidance for the project. The community groups represented included the Northside Planning Council, the Madison Community Gardeners Coalition, the Community Action Coalition, and the Hunger Prevention Council of Dane County. Between phases of the project, the students presented their research projects to the advisory committee and other key informants.

The researchers held focus groups with low-income adults and children in Madison's Northside and Southside neighborhoods to better understand the strategies low-income people used to stretch food budgets. They gathered information on location and number of food stores, restaurants, food pantries, farmers' markets, WIC sites, community gardens, and other establishments. The students also collected data about local businesses through a food-related business survey and a food pricing study in selected supermarkets.

The workshop culminated in the publication of *Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison/Dane County Food System* in August of 1997. Over 400 copies have been distributed to individuals and organizations in the U.S. and other countries. Other outcomes include:

- ◆ Development of the Dane County REAP (Research, Education, Action, and Policy) Food Group, which focuses on promoting food security through joint projects, networking, analytical work, and by organizing the annual Food for Thought Festival
- ◆ Greater visibility of food system issues in Madison

Differences in food security concerns by respondent's housing tenure, Madison, Wisconsin, 2000 (n=372)



Source: Stevens and Raja, 2001.⁷

The chart compares the food security concerns of and the use of emergency food by homeowners and renters in Madison, Wisconsin. About twice as many renters as owners are concerned about the high cost of food, getting to the store, and having enough to eat.

This chart was excerpted from one of a series of working papers that were developed after the Fertile Ground study, as a way to address questions that were raised but not resolved in that study.

- ▶ Increased networking and contacts among individuals and organizations involved in various aspects of the food system
- ▶ Presentation of a session developed by the faculty instructors and three student researchers at the annual conference of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association
- ▶ The start of a Madison Food System Partnership Working Paper Series

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Copies of the assessment report are available from:

Professor Marcia Caton Campbell at the above address for \$10.00. Several working papers from the Madison Food System Project are available at <http://www.wisc.edu/mfsp/pubsf/pub.html>.

✿ MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Milwaukee Food System Assessment Study

Milwaukee's Food System Assessment Study (FSAS) was a broad, five-year collaborative campaign (1995-2000). Its goals were:

1. To examine the root causes of hunger
2. To develop partnerships to promote food security and systemic change in Milwaukee County

An important objective of the study was to create projects that would promote affordable food access while addressing the lack of economic resources that cause families to experience hunger. The study developed a comprehensive picture of food security in Milwaukee and highlighted the links between poverty and food insecurity in the city.

The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee collaborated with the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research (CUIR) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to oversee and conduct the research. The Hunger Task Force was the main sponsor, under the leadership of Michael Salinas, then Director of Advocacy. Two researchers from the University of Wisconsin, Olmedo Varela and Stephen Percy, developed the research protocol. These collaborators sought input from the Community Food Security Coalition, Cornell University staff, and local community contacts. Students from the university participated in the third phase of the project (described below).

The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee established a Food System Advisory Council to guide and review the research and to make recommendations in response to the study's findings. The Council, which met quarterly, represented diverse interests in the food system, among them city and state government, non-profit organizations, food pantries, farmers, community activists, and university staff. For detailed decision-making and coordination of the research, the CUIR and the Hunger Task Force staff conducted planning and operational meetings as needed.

The total budget for the study was close to \$20,000, which included research assistance, printing, and labor. Cash support was provided by the Wisconsin Food System Partnership (\$10,000) and Kraft Foods, Inc. (\$4,500). In-kind support (estimated at \$5,000) included staff time, reduced rates from printers and graphic artists, and university support for survey work and photocopying.

The assessment's target areas were located in the near north and near south sides of Milwaukee, both high poverty areas. Community members participated in telephone surveys and focus groups. Phone surveys were conducted to determine what foods were purchased by residents and where. Focus groups were held with clients at food pantries and meal sites.

The study gathered a broad range of information in four phases. The first phase compiled data on population density, income, race and ethnicity, transportation access, as well as the location of emergency food providers, community gardens, farmers' markets, and other indicators. The second phase collected information on food retailers, including location, food availability, and pricing. The third and fourth phases compiled data from surveys and focus groups on perceptions and experiences of the food system among inner-city individuals and families using emergency food programs.

The study developed a thorough picture of food insecurity in Milwaukee and its relationship to poverty. Researchers found that the number of people living below the poverty line had increased dramatically since 1970, and that demand for emergency and non-emergency food programs exceeded their capacity. They also found that Milwaukee's low-income residents paid more for their groceries and had fewer stores located in their communities. The Hunger Task Force identified strategies for improving food access, promoting economic development, and decreasing poverty. These strategies included promoting public markets, establishing a micro-credit program to help low-income people start food-related enterprises, coordinating transportation routes to grocery stores, developing a food-buying cooperative for small inner city convenience stores, and starting a kitchen incubator for community-based food enterprises.

Problems identified in using “best” stores, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1997 (n=514)

Responses	All Areas
Distance or transportation	40.6%
Long lines	25.0%
Too crowded	9.4%
Items too big	6.3%
Child care	3.1%
Parking	3.1%
Coupon items not available	3.1%
Not consistent	3.1%
Credit card system out of order	3.1%
Time machine out of order	3.1%
Employee attitudes about coupons	3.1%
Bad neighborhood	3.1%

Source: Varela, Haider-Markel, and Percy, 1998.⁸

This table reports on the problems respondents (who were randomly selected for a phone survey) had with shopping at stores they considered to be the best for them. Eighty-eight percent of respondents defined “best” stores as large supermarkets with good quality, prices, and variety. By far the most commonly reported problem related to distance and transportation.

Four reports, one for each stage of the study, were published:

- ▶ *Perceptions and Experiences of Consumer Access to Food in Milwaukee’s Inner City Neighborhoods*⁸
- ▶ *Socio-Spatial Relationships and Good Programs in Milwaukee’s Food System*⁹
- ▶ *Comparative Study of Food Pricing and Availability in Milwaukee*¹⁰
- ▶ *Food Insecurity in Milwaukee: A Qualitative Study of Pantry and Meal Program Users*¹¹

Other outcomes include:

- ▶ Formation of the Milwaukee Farmers’ Market Association to develop and promote new markets in the inner city
- ▶ Development of the Fondy Food Center Project, a \$5 million year-round food center, market, and kitchen incubator
- ▶ Overhaul of the Emergency Food Pantry Network and Community Meal Program Coalition, including new types of technical assistance and guidelines
- ▶ Expansion of the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program to all of Milwaukee’s farmers’ markets
- ▶ Increased partnerships between the university and non-profit groups, leading to new courses, new research, and greater university involvement in the community

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Copies of the assessment report are not available at this writing.

Types of stores where commonly used items are purchased most often, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1997 (n=514)

Item Purchased	Large Stores	Medium Stores	Small Stores	Don't Buy	No Response
Milk and Dairy Products	83.1%	4.7%	9.7%	1.4%	1.2%
Canned Food and Vegetables	86.2%	6.4%	1.4%	4.9%	1.2%
Fresh Food and Vegetables	89.3%	7.4%	0.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Meat	80.9%	13.8%	1.4%	2.3%	1.6%
Frozen Food	84.2%	6.6%	1.2%	6.6%	1.4%
Coffee	62.3%	4.7%	4.7%	25.9%	2.5%
Bread	73.2%	11.5%	11.9%	1.4%	2.1%
Bakery Items	68.5%	8.0%	6.4%	15.2%	1.9%
Beer and Alcohol	16.7%	2.3%	14.0%	65.2%	1.8%
Cigarettes	12.3%	1.9%	18.5%	65.4%	1.9%
Ethnic or Specialty Food	23.3%	14.0%	1.8%	57.4%	3.5%

Source: Varela, Haider-Markel, and Percy, 1998.*

This table reports on the type of stores where 514 respondents most often purchased commonly used items. Store size was defined by examples of specific stores. Corner stores and convenience stores were defined as small. Large stores were used most often for purchasing all products except cigarettes.

🍁 NORTH COUNTRY REGION, NEW YORK

The North Country Community Food and Economic Security Project

The North Country of New York State spans six counties near the Canadian border. These counties are primarily rural, and agriculture is an integral aspect of the history and identity of the area. Unemployment is roughly twice the state average, and the region faces high rates of poverty and social isolation.

The North Country Community Food and Economic Security Project was conducted between December 1996 and May 1998, with follow-up work still continuing at this writing. The primary goal of the project was to engage and mobilize a broad network of county residents and improve access to healthful, locally produced foods while strengthening the economic viability of regional agriculture.

The project used a community-centered approach to identify residents' key concerns about the food system. A broad range of North Country residents—including dairy farmers, local processors, market managers, local agency staff, religious leaders, teachers, low-income parents, and county legislators—participated in two-day conferences in each county. Participants engaged in a series of open-ended questions, selected by local advisory committees in the search conference model. The search conference is a structured process that engages the community in reviewing the past and present, creating ideal future scenarios, identifying common ground, and developing action plans. Questions included:

1. Who's feeding you and what are you eating?
2. How can we build a stronger community through better management of local food resources?
3. How should our local food system look and work in the next five years?
4. How should our local food system work in 2020?

Conference participants also reviewed county-specific data on demographics, health, the economy, agriculture, and food availability. Residents provided qualitative data such as first-person accounts of historical shifts in local agriculture, trends in community development, and changing industries. Additional data were gathered through the workshop evaluation form.

The project was implemented through the North Country Community Food and Economic Security Network, which included a small campus-based team in the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell and representatives of the county offices of Cooperative Extension and Community Action Programs in each of the six North Counties. In addition, county representatives from the regional network formed separate advisory committees with local residents to steer each of the county search conferences.

The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The USDA provided tuition and a stipend for a graduate student and CDC provided a budget of \$184,000 over a two-year period for staff salary, office expenses, search conference fees, and other operating costs. In-kind resources of staff time from Community Action Agencies and facilities and food from Cornell Cooperative Extension amounted to approximately \$4,000 per county.

Outcomes include:

- ▶ Development of a Cornell Cooperative Extension position to continue and further work group efforts started during the conferences
- ▶ Increased networks among community and agency members
- ▶ Creation of a fellowship kitchen to serve all community members including the hungry, elderly, disabled, and single-parent families in Essex County
- ▶ Implementation of a system to provide donations of venison and beef to local food pantries in Lewis and St. Lawrence counties
- ▶ Establishment of a weekly regional farmers' market in Jefferson County
- ▶ Improved food distribution networks between the Community Action Programs of Jefferson County and Franklin County
- ▶ Increased storage and trucking facilities through joint efforts of a Food Security Committee.
- ▶ Numerous publications targeted at a variety of audiences

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Copies of the assessment report are available from:

The Journal *Agriculture and Human Values*, Volume 17, Issue 1, 2000¹².

🌿 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Youth Envision: Bayview Hunters Point Food Study

The Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood is located in Southeast San Francisco. It is one of the fastest growing and most ethnically diverse areas in the city, and also among the poorest. The goal of the Bayview Hunters Point Food Study was to identify and promote strategies for improving access to nutritious food in the neighborhood, while also providing job training for community trainees and youth interns.

In March 2001 the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Section (EHS) began a partnership in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood with a community-based organization, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG). EHS approached SLUG because they had long been active in urban agriculture and food security projects in this neighborhood. In turn, SLUG engaged in a collaboration with

Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) to develop a youth program around food security issues in the Bayview Hunters Point. A participatory action model was used to train youth in the skills and resources needed to investigate food security in their neighborhood. EHS provided technical instruction and assistance, as well as support to SLUG and LEJ project staff on action research methods. SLUG and LEJ coordinated the youth interns.

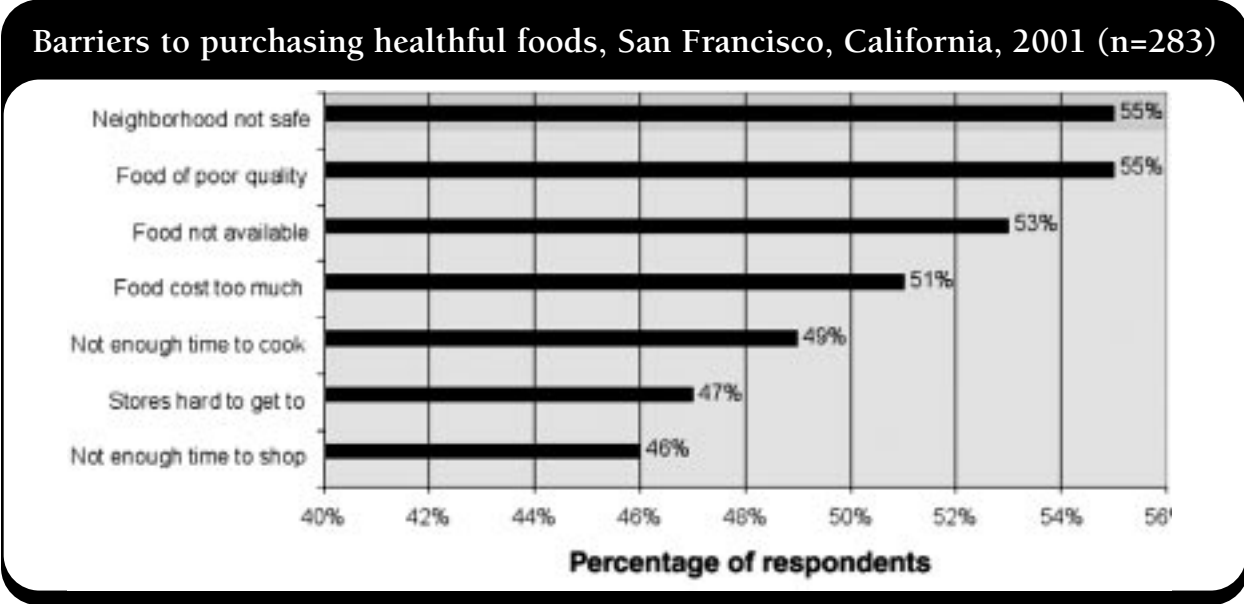
The total budget for the study was approximately \$20,000, plus significant in-kind time from EHS and SLUG's Youth Internship Program. The assessment project was funded by the Department of Public Health, while additional funding for the youth interns was provided by other city agencies. The steering committee consisted of the Director of Urban Agriculture at SLUG and members of the Department of Public Health's Environmental Health and Nutrition Sections. Decisions about data and reports were made by the steering committee.

Project staff working with EHS and the youth participants created a questionnaire focused on identifying ways to increase access to nutritious food. The survey sought information on where people were getting their food, the barriers to purchasing healthy foods, and changes that would help people to purchase healthy foods.

Youth empowerment was a significant aspect of the project. The youth developed their own recommendations, work plan, and deliverables with the help of project staff. The youth program combined learning about the food system with community actions such conducting outreach for a new farmers' market in the neighborhood, and community mapping of food assets. Youth were trained in survey methods, data analysis, health impact assessment, public communications, and other areas. Seventeen youth advocates collected survey responses from more than 280 individuals in their neighborhood. Survey locations included grocery stores, churches, community colleges, a post office, and a fast food restaurant.

The youth then worked with staff to analyze the survey data and create a list of recommendations to improve food access in Bayview Hunters Point. The four strategies identified as most helpful by survey respondents were the following:

- 1. Creation or improvement of a grocery store/supermarket
- 2. Creation of a neighborhood farmers' market



Source: Bhatia, Calandra, Brainin-Rodriguez, and Jones, 2001.¹³

In this project, youth conducted a survey of 283 non-randomly selected residents of Bayview Hunters Point, a neighborhood in San Francisco, and asked what keeps them from purchasing healthful foods. The respondents identified a variety of barriers related to access and availability, food quality and costs, and time constraints.

3. Better quality food on shelves of corner stores
4. Healthy fast food retailers

The youth interns shared their research findings widely through meetings and presentations with residents, community organizations, and service providers. At this writing, action plans have been developed for the local farmers' market and corner stores, and a plan for a new or improved grocery store is underway.

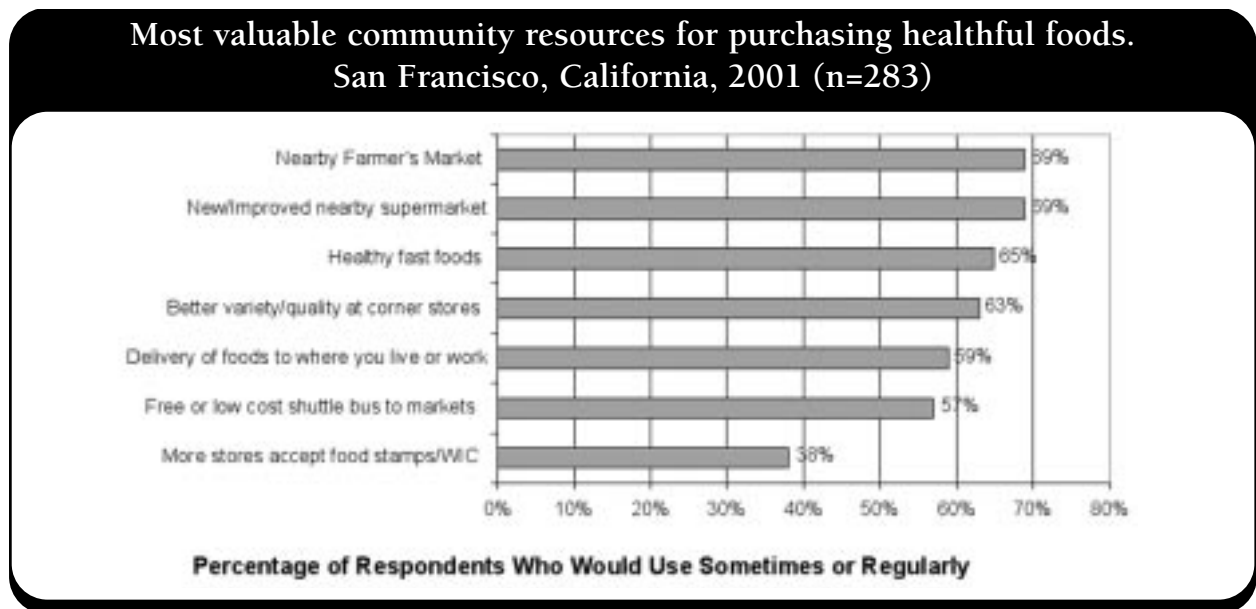
Other outcomes include:

- ▶ SLUG youth interns and staff created a new Bayview Community Farmers Market as a community development project. Youth have assisted with outreach, vendor relations, and market operations.
- ▶ Some corner store owners have made a commitment to stock a minimum amount of fresh food. Youth interns have conducted healthy snack taste tests at the farmers' market, and the results have been incorporated into an action plan for the corner stores. The Department of Public Health awarded a \$100,000 grant to the Youth Envision Project to continue the youth work with the corner stores.
- ▶ The city's transit authority agreed to provide new shuttle routes directly from the community to food sources.
- ▶ Neighborhood youth gained new skills and empowerment through job training and by working to educate and serve their community.

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Copies of the assessment report are not available at this writing.



Source: Bhatia, Calandra, Brainin-Rodriguez, and Jones, 2001.¹³

In this survey of 283 residents of Bayview Hunters Point (selected non-randomly), respondents were asked which of the above resources would most help them purchase healthful foods. The percentages indicate how many respondents said they would use each resource "sometimes or regularly."

☛ SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

Somerville Community Food Assessment

The Somerville Community Food Assessment (SCFA) was a one-year initiative started in late 1999 to take a comprehensive look at food and nutrition resources in the city. The goal was to strengthen planning and policy for community-based food and nutrition resources for low-income residents in Somerville, Massachusetts, a largely working class and ethnically diverse community north of Boston.

The SCFA was sponsored by the Massachusetts Health Research Institute (MHRI) in Boston, working in collaboration with Hugh Joseph at the Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy. It was funded by a \$49,000 Health and Human Services/Community Food and Nutrition Program grant. Two part-time staff and a steering committee of 18 professionals and unaffiliated residents collaborated to collect the data. The organizations involved were principally providers of food and nutrition services in Somerville, including emergency food programs, community gardens, elder services, school food services, public health services, WIC, and Head Start. In addition, there were participants from other social services and from academic institutions (Tufts and University of Massachusetts at Amherst).

The steering committee met monthly and made all major decisions regarding data collection, community input, and determination of needs and responses to them. Subcommittees helped with collecting information, contacting community leaders, and other activities. Staff coordinated activities between meetings, collected data, prepared reports and carried out other administrative tasks; four interns from Tufts University also assisted with activities. Interviews were held with dozens of community leaders and other stakeholders, particularly those representing ethnic communities and the public schools.

A significant component of the Somerville Community Food Assessment was to model participatory food systems planning. Project participants attended a Participatory Action Research workshop to learn how to involve the community in this process. They then met with city agencies and citizens' groups to identify community priorities in relation to food, health, and nutrition. From these meetings, the assessment participants determined that many food and nutrition resources were underutilized due to a lack of awareness about their existence or a lack of understanding of eligibility requirements. As a result, project participants decided to create a guide to food and nutrition resources in Somerville.

Outcomes of the assessment include the following:

- ▶ An extensive community food and nutrition resource guide was published. The 89-page guide lists a wide range of programs and services, primarily targeting low-income and ethnic minority residents. It includes retail food stores, government and private food assistance programs, nutrition and health services, community gardens, farmers' markets, and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms. Several hundred copies were distributed and the guide was posted online (see web address at the end of this case study).
- ▶ A group of organizations, including Head Start and Project Soup, joined together to offer a series of cooking classes for low-income residents through the Operation Frontline program. The group is seeking funds to offer more cooking classes in Somerville.
- ▶ A Community Kitchen Task Force is examining the feasibility of setting up commercial kitchen facilities and resident cooking programs. The group is conducting a focused needs assessment—collecting technical assistance information, surveying potential sites and resident and commercial interest, and determining sponsorship, development costs, and operational strategies.
- ▶ A Public Health Nutrition Task Force was formed after nine months, and now has over 20 participants. It has carried out an extensive strategic planning process and made addressing obesity its primary focus. Additional activities in planning, research, and fundraising for a healthy weight campaign for children are underway.

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<http://nutrition.tufts.edu/publications/somerville/>

Conclusion

These case studies are a tribute to the skills and resourcefulness of their organizers, and to the power of the Community Food Assessment approach. The case study groups were successful in organizing assessments, gathering a wide range of data, and using the results to generate tangible outcomes. They demonstrated that assessments in diverse settings can generate a range of powerful results, both tangible outcomes such as new policies and programs, and process benefits such as new partnerships and capacity development. That these results were achieved at a time when almost no guidance or resources were available to support Community Food Assessments is especially remarkable. To us, it is indicative of the depth of concern about local food issues and an optimistic sign of the potentially rich future of this approach to addressing them. Our hope is that this Guide and other emerging resources, along with the growing body of knowledge from assessments that are being conducted, will further support—and speed up!—the development of many more successful Community Food Assessments all over the country.

Information Gathered by Assessment Case Study Groups

	HIGH	LOW	NO
COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS			
Broad community demographics	LA, BK, SM, SF, TX	DT, MD, NY,	MW
Population make-up	DT, LA, NY, BK, SM, SF	MD, MW, TX	
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEMOGRAPHICS			
Incomes, employment, related data	DT, MW, NY, BK, SM, TX	LA, MD	SF
Focus on low-income/ disadvantaged populations	DT, LA, MD, MW, NY, BK, SF, TX	SM	
Hunger/food insecurity	DT, LA, MD, MW, BK, SF, TX	NY, SM	
ANTI-HUNGER RESOURCES/SERVICES			
Emergency food assistance	DT, LA, MW, NY, SM	MD, BK, TX	SF
Government food assistance	LA, NY, BK, SM	DT, MD, MW, TX	SF
Other anti-hunger services and outreach programs	LA, NY, SM	MD, MW	BK, SF, TX, DT
PUBLIC HEALTH AND NUTRITION			
Diet-related diseases	DT, LA, NY, SM, SF	SM, TX	MD, MW, BK
Community public health	NY, SF, TX	LA, MD, SM	MW, BK
Quality of diets / nutritional status	SF, NY, BK, TX	DT, LA, MD, MW, SM	
Exercise, lifestyle habits	NY, SM	SM	DT, LA, MD, MW, BK, SF, TX
CONVENTIONAL FOOD SYSTEM			
Broad food system characteristics	DT, LA, MD, MW, NY, BK, SF, TX		SM
Retail food sector data	DT, LA, MD, MW, BK, SM, SF, TX	NY	
Wholesale, other food system data	DT, LA	MD, NY, BK, SM, SF, TX	MW
Restaurants/institutional food service data	DT, BK, SF, TX	MD, MW, NY	LA, SM
COMMUNITY-BASED AND/OR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS			
Local/regional agriculture—status	DT, MD, NY, BK, SF, TX	LA, MW	SM
Local/regional agriculture links to community (e.g. CSA's, farm mkts)	LA, MD, NY, BK, SM, SF, TX	DT, MW	
Community-based food production (e.g. gardens)	DT, LA, MD, BK, SM, TX	MW, NY, SF	
INFRASTRUCTURE/TRANSPORTATION			
Public transportation access	DT, LA, MW, NY, SM, TX	MD, SM, SF	BK
Vehicle access	DT, LA, MW, TX	MD, SF, NY	BK, SM
Comprehensive transportation access	DT, TX	NY, SM	LA, MD, MW, BK

Information Gathered by Assessment Case Study Groups - continued:

	HIGH	LOW	NO
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS / INSTITUTIONS			
Community institutional resources (broad)	BK SF, TX	MD, MW, NY, SM,	DT, LA
Community leadership and power	SF	MD, NY, BK, SM, TX	DT, LA, MW
Labor issues, roles		LA	DT, MD, MW, NY, BK, SM, SF, TX
COMMUNITY FOOD HEALTH AND NUTRITION RESOURCES			
Health/nutrition outreach/referral services	MW, NY, BK, SM, SF	MD, TX	DT, LA
Food / nutrition related projects	MW, NY, BK, SM, SF	LA, TX, DT	MD
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT / ECONOMIC			
Food system related (business, job training)	DT, MD, NY, BK, TX	LA, SM, SF	MW
ENVIRONMENTAL (FOOD SYSTEM RELATED ISSUES)			
Waste disposal, recycling, composting	MD	NY, BK, SM, SF	DT, LA, MW, TX
Water quality		MD, NY, SM	DT, LA, MW, BK, SF, TX
Land contamination, hazardous waste		MD, NY	DT, LA, MW, BK, SM, SF, TX
Open space, land use or access	DT, BK, TX	LA, MD, NY, SM, SF	MW
POLICY			
Legislation, funding, regulations	LA, NY, TX	MD, BK, SM	DT, MW, SF
MEDIA			
Coverage of issues, food ads, etc.	DT	MD, NY, SM	LA, BK, SF, TX
ANY OTHER DATA			
Hunting, fishing and trapping licenses / game deer take		NY	SF, TX
Physical activity resources	SM		SF, TX

KEY

- BK:** Berkeley Community Food Assessment, Berkeley, CA
- DT:** Detroit Food System Assessment, Detroit, MI
- LA:** Seeds of Change Food System Assessment, Los Angeles, CA
- MD:** Madison/Dane County Food System Assessment, Madison, WI
- MW:** Milwaukee Food System Assessment Study, Milwaukee, WI
- NY:** The North Country Community Food and Economic Security Project, NY
- SF:** Youth Envision: Bayview Hunters Point Food Study, San Francisco, CA
- SM:** Somerville Community Food Assessment, Somerville, MA
- TX:** Access Denied: An Analysis of Food Access in East Austin, Austin, TX

Note: This table was assembled based on information provided by case study contacts. Not all rows contain information related to all cases because of incomplete responses.

- ¹ Sustainable Food Center. 2001. *Access Denied: An Analysis of Problems Facing East Austin Residents in Their Attempts to Obtain Affordable, Nutritious Food*. Austin, Texas: Sustainable Food Center. http://www.main.org/sfc/access_denied/ (Date accessed: 3 Sept 2002).
- ² Pinderhughes, R., and J. Miner. 2001. *Good Farming, Healthy Communities: Strengthening Sustainable Agriculture Sectors and Local Food Systems*. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University, Urban and Environmental Studies Program.
- ³ Cohen, B. 2002. *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02013/> (Date accessed: 3 Sept 2002).
- ⁴ Pothukuchi, K. 2002. *The Detroit Food System: A Handbook for Local Planning*. Detroit: Wayne State University.
- ⁵ Ashman, L., J. de la Vega, M. Dohan, A. Fisher, R. Hippler, and B. Romain. 1993. *Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning.
- ⁶ University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Urban and Regional Planning. 1997. *Fertile Ground: Planning for the Madison/Dane County Food System*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison Food System Project. <http://www.wisc.edu/mfsp/pubsf/pub.html> (Date accessed: 3 Sept 2002).
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- ⁸ Varela, O. J., D. P. Haider-Markel, and S. L. Percy. 1998. *Perceptions and Experiences of Consumer Access to Food in Milwaukee's Inner-City Neighborhoods*. Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research.
- ⁹ Varela, O. J. 1996. *Socio-spatial Relationships and Food Programs in Milwaukee's Food System*. Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research.
- ¹⁰ Johnson, K., S. Percy, and E. Wagner. 1996. *Comparative Study of Food Pricing and Availability in Milwaukee*. Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research.
- ¹¹ Varela, O. J, K. Johnson, and S. Percy. 1998. *Food Insecurity in Milwaukee: A Qualitative Study of Food Pantry and Meal Program Users*. Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Urban Initiatives and Research.
- ¹² Pelletier, D. L., V. Kraak, C. McCullum, U. Uusitalo and R. Rich. 2000. Values, Public Policy and Community Food Security. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17(1): 75-93.
- ¹³ Bhatia, R., C. Calandra, L. Brainin-Rodriguez, P. Jones. 2001. *Food Access Study of the Bayview Hunters Point*. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Department of Public Health; San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners.