Report on healthy food availability and assessment of Seattle’s Food Bank Network
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Overview

1. What is “access” to healthy food and what do Seattle maps show?
2. Price and availability of healthy food in Seattle stores
3. Meeting the need: the food bank network
“Food desert” term introduced in Scotland

Food desert defined in US Farm Bill

Healthy Food Financing Initiative to address food deserts

Research suggest food desert limited association with diet & health outcomes

Multiple dimension of healthy food access;

Healthy food priority area index (Baltimore Report)

It’s not just physical distance to a supermarket
Mapping access to healthy food

Map at right: Healthy Food Priority Areas (HFPA) show where three food access factors overlap

Factors
1. At least 25% of households live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
2. Time to nearest healthy food retailers is at least 10 minutes
3. High percentage of food retailers without produce section


Public Health – Seattle and King County, Assessment, Policy Development, and Evaluation, 2018
SECTION 3:
Price and availability of healthy food in Seattle stores
THE GOALS
★ Assess the price and availability of healthy food in Seattle by neighborhood characteristics (e.g., race, income).

THE BASICS
★ In-person surveys of food stores throughout Seattle to measure the availability and price of healthy food items.
FOOD PRICES AND AVAILABILITY DATA COLLECTION

- Warehouses & superstores
- Supermarkets
- Grocery stores
- Drug stores
- Small stores
FOOD PRICES AND AVAILABILITY STORE SAMPLE

134 Seattle food stores surveyed

27% of all food stores in Seattle
FOOD PRICES AND AVAILABILITY DATA COLLECTION

Fruit
Apples
Bananas
Oranges

Vegetables
Broccoli
Carrots
Green Lettuce
Tomatoes
Onions

Grains
Wheat bread
White bread
Frosted flakes cereal
Cheerios
Rice

Protein
Beans
Eggs
Lean meat

Milk
1% milk
2% milk
Fat-free milk
Whole milk

Health Food Availability Score = 1-2 points for having each of these foods
Range 0-25
FOOD AVAILABILITY AVERAGE SCORE BY STORE TYPE

- **Warehouse & superstores**: 20.6 pts
- **Supermarkets**: 19.0 pts
- **Grocery stores**: 16.2 pts
- **Drug stores**: 9.5 pts
- **Small stores**: 6.8 pts
FOOD AVAILABILITY AVERAGE SCORE BY INCOME

Stores in **high income neighborhoods** had **4 more healthy foods** on average, i.e. **50% more healthy foods**
Food Availability: Average Score by Race

Stores in neighborhoods with fewer black or Hispanic residents had ~3 more healthy foods, i.e. 30% more healthy foods.
FOOD AVAILABILITY BY COUNCIL DISTRICT

Map credit: Seattle.gov/CityClerk
FOOD PRICES RESULTS SUMMARY

Except for fruit, the average price of healthy foods tended to be lower in lower income & neighborhoods with higher proportion Black or Hispanic. Most differences likely not statistically significant.
Lower-income & neighborhoods with more Black or Hispanic residents had fewer supermarkets and superstores and more small stores.

There was lower availability of healthy foods in lower-income & and neighborhoods with more Black or Hispanic residents.

Mean healthy food availability scores varied by Council District, with District 5 & 2 having lowest scores.

The price of healthy foods tended to be lower or similar in lower-income & neighborhoods with more Black or Hispanic residents. Differences likely not statistically significant.
Meeting the need: The food bank network
**FOOD BANK NETWORK**  THE GOALS

1. **Estimate need**
   - Who in Seattle is experiencing food insecurity?

2. **Assess capacity**
   - To what extent is the food bank network able to serve this population?

3. **Identify opportunities**
   - How can the network improve equitable access to health food?
Who is experiencing food insecurity?

While estimates vary across data sources, we saw consistent patterns among groups commonly reporting food insecurity:

- People of color
- Lower income
- Less educated
- LGB identified
- Families with young children
- Older adults
30 FOOD BANKS MET INCLUSION CRITERIA

Actively operating
Distributing food on-site more than once a month
Located within Seattle limits or serving many Seattle residents
FOOD BANK NETWORK  DATA COLLECTION

- electronic survey: 25
- client discussions: 7
- staff interviews: 13

Non English:
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Cantonese
- Russian

English:
- Young adult
- African-American
- General
FOOD BANK NETWORK  DATA COLLECTION

TOPICS COVERED

Resources  Sufficiency  Accessibility  Impact
FOOD BANK NETWORK  RESULTS

Impact

The network provides a critical food safety net, while also providing a connection to services and a sense of community.

Each year

15,000 individuals are served per food bank

&

22 million Lbs. of food provided by the network
FOOD BANK NETWORK RESULTS

Demand

The network is seeing a rise in need, particularly: older adults, homeless, and those further north and south of Seattle.

60%
FOOD BANKS REPORT
increase in client visits

We’re seeing an increase from rising cost of rent & healthcare, aging population, more people experiencing homelessness.”

- Food bank staff member

Resource constraints result in reduced quality & quantity of food
Ability to meet demand

The food bank network lacks necessary resources to meet demand, namely staffing, vehicles, food, funding, and space.

84%

FOOD BANKS REPORT

Funding difficulties

• predictable long term funding
• finding opportunities
• operational expenses
• resource heavy fundraisers

average of 3 full-time staff
Client Priorities

Food bank clients emphasize wanting a dignified experience, food safety, quality and convenient access.

“It’s useful if food banks are open on Friday because then I know at least from Friday to Tuesday or Wednesday I will have food. Most places aren’t open on weekends so from Friday [on], I am trying to ensure I can make it at least through the weekend if not a little longer.”

-Food bank client (Council District 3)
Gaps in Access

Analysis of distribution hours revealed:

- Weekend and evenings hours are limited
  - Lack of morning access in Districts 4, 5, and 6
  - Lack of afternoon access in Districts 1 and 5
  - Lack of evening access Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7

- Council Districts 5 and 4 have fewest hours
  (proportional to need)
Comparing Council Districts by distribution availability and level of adult food insecurity
FOOD BANK NETWORK  KEY TAKEAWAYS

Opportunities to improve equitable access

Expand client choice
through the grocery store model to create a more dignified experience

Increase purchasing power
to improve cultural relevancy of healthy food provided

Increase mobility
Coordinated systems of distribution to target areas of most need

Invest in operational costs:
• Staffing and salaries
• Building space
• Purchasing power
We’re open 8 hours a week to serve 1,000 visitors which makes it difficult to replenish food. Expanding hours would improve access but require more staffing and potentially more food. Our home delivery program has had a waitlist for years but we just don’t have capacity.”

– Food bank staff member

“Expand client choice

The grocery style gives more dignity, [you’re] not alienated. To pick out what you want and not feel like you’re just a number in a line is a lot more dignified than being handed a box”

– Food bank client (CD 4)

“Increase purchasing power

“It’s less having enough food as it’s having the right kind. When you rely on donations that’s hard. Which is why we say [prioritize] purchasing budget. That’s what gives the autonomy.”

– Food bank staff member

“Increase mobility

“It doesn’t have to be that everyone goes the extra mile to get [food] exactly to their door. Maybe it is just getting it someplace that’s more convenient for them. Maybe a mobile Food Bank in a parking lot, or getting food to their place of worship or community center.”

– Food bank staff

Invest in operational costs:

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– Food bank staff member

FOOD BANK NETWORK  KEY TAKEAWAYS

Opportunities to improve equitable access

Expand client choice  Increase purchasing power  Increase mobility  Invest in operational costs:
THANK YOU