

SOUTH APOPKA

Community Food Assessment



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Prepared By:



The Farmworker Association of Florida
La Asociación Campesina
Asosiyasyon Travayé Laté

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SOUTH APOPKA COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 2011 to 2013, the Farmworker Association of Florida partnered with the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to conduct a community food assessment of the South Apopka area. Funding for the project was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The planning team is grateful for the generous and helpful support of the Kellogg Foundation that extended beyond simply allocating funds, but also provided guidance and capacity building resources along the way.

Goals of the South Apopka Community Food Assessment included:

1. Better health and nutrition for local farmworker and low-income families
2. Improved access to affordable and fresh food within the community
3. Educational opportunities for local families to assess and respond to their needs for better health and quality food
4. Strong and efficient relationships among local business, non-profit organizations, and government to build a more resilient local food system

SURVEY RESULTS

According to a survey of over 300 South Apopka residents, price, nutrition, and freshness were identified as the three most important factors in fresh produce purchases.

- 61% of respondents sometimes or always do not have enough to eat
- 72% of respondents eat two or less servings of fruits and vegetables per day
- 92% of respondents sometimes or always have to compromise on their purchases of fresh produce due to cost
- 51% of respondents reported that affordability presents difficulty in their ability to obtain fresh produce
- 38% of respondents reported that a lack of transportation or distance to stores presents difficulty in purchasing produce
- 33% of respondents reported that the availability of a community garden would encourage them to grow their own fruits and vegetables
- 30% of respondents reported that free educational classes on starting and maintaining a home garden would encourage them to grow their own fruits and vegetables

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon stakeholder input, community survey data, and background research on the South Apopka area, the following recommendations are proposed to further improve the local food system:

- Maintain and enhance the existing community garden and develop a second community garden site to better serve the needs of the residents of South Apopka
- Continue to offer educational workshops on organic gardening techniques, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle choices
- Organize a weekly farmers' market in South Apopka that provides affordable and culturally appropriate foods
- Promote small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture opportunities
- Hold regular meetings with community partners to discuss and advance healthy food initiatives
- Work with the City of Apopka to attract and facilitate a mobile farmers' market

INTRODUCTION

In late 2010, the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF) was awarded a grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to partner with the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to lead the Rebuilding Local Food Systems in Central Florida project.

The project framework was presented to the Kellogg Foundation with three objectives:

- 1) Implement a community farm in the City of Fellsmere, Florida
- 2) Conduct a community food assessment in South Apopka
- 3) Provide training on organic production and sustainable agriculture to community members in Fellsmere and Apopka

With those objectives in mind, the long-term goals of the project included:

- An increase in low-income community members' access to and consumption of quality, affordable, fresh foods
- Improved nutrition and health among farmworker and low-income communities
- An increase in farmworkers' and low-income community members' knowledge of how to assess and identify opportunities to improve the delivery of quality fresh food to South Apopka
- Development and maintenance of healthy, working relationships with local business, government, and nonprofit organizations



The South Apopka Community Food Assessment documents the progress of the project and details accomplishments achieved in South Apopka during the three year effort. The report summarizes the need for local and regional food systems in Central Florida and discusses the implications related to food security in the neighborhoods of South Apopka.

The report also highlights collaborative efforts that support the community food assessment process and includes snapshots of other local food initiatives in the region. Finally, the report proposes recommendations and strategies that can be implemented in the future to ensure that the long term needs of the South Apopka community are met.

FOOD SYSTEMS

A food system is holistic and includes multiple stages of food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management (Figure 1). This system contributes significantly to a community's economic development, environmental impact, and overall health, safety, and welfare. The food system also directly influences other aspects of the urban and rural landscape, including housing, transportation, and land use decisions.

Figure 1: Food Systems



For many decades, the food processing industry has relied on a small number of mega-corporations to provide food for the majority of the country. Consequently, countless local farmworker and food production jobs have been eliminated and carbon emissions related to the transportation of food has drastically increased due to shipping distances. These “food miles,” along with corporate agriculture’s heavy dependence on pesticides, pose serious threats to both environmental and human health.

FARMWORKERS AND PESTICIDES

Farmworkers perform some of the most difficult work in our country and yet are among the least protected people in the nation. More than 1.1 billion pounds of pesticides are applied to crops annually in the United States, with farmworkers facing greater health risks from exposure to these chemicals than any other sector of society. Every year tens of thousands of farmworkers and their children are impacted by exposure to pesticides. According to a U.S. government study, the pesticide poisoning incidence rate among U.S. agricultural workers is 39 times higher than the incidence rate found in all other industries combined. The Worker Protection Standard, which establishes basic protections, hasn’t been updated in more than 20 years and is currently under revision, thus resulting in thousands of preventable exposures, illnesses, and injuries every year for farmworkers and their families.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Over the past decade there has been an increased awareness that a strong correlation exists between fresh food access and consumption and health disparities, including childhood diabetes. There is a growing demand for healthier food choices and access to fresh, locally grown, and chemical-free products. Regional and local food system proponents include a broad variety of stakeholders including farmers, planners, community gardening and urban agriculture practitioners, neighborhood groups, food citizens, and public health organizations. Their goals tend to be long-term, viewing food as an individual and community right and promoting the health, economic, and social gains linked to a strong local and regional food system.

These individuals and organizations focus heavily on community, relying on both urban and suburban bases to better serve surrounding rural areas. Advocates of regional food systems argue that decentralized production, distribution, storage, and purchasing of agricultural products reduces the distance traveled by food products, allowing for increased freshness and natural ripening. Efficient food systems also reduce the amount of energy lost during the food distribution process.

A regional food system includes not only grocery stores, but also ethnic food stores, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs, farm stands, and community gardens. This study addresses these components of the local food system in the South Apopka area.

SOUTH APOPKA CONTEXT

The City of Apopka has a rich agrarian tradition, including a large citrus industry prior to severe damage from freezes in the mid-1980s which resulted in citrus growers moving south. A robust vegetable industry also existed until the late 1990s when approximately 15,000 acres of vegetable farms were closed on the shores of Lake Apopka for environmental restoration purposes. This was necessary due to severe water quality deterioration caused by pesticide runoff in Lake Apopka. In recent decades Apopka has transitioned from food production to ornamental crops. Apopka is home to hundreds of indoor foliage plant nurseries and many multigenerational farmworker families including nursery workers and former vegetable workers. The City's slogan is "The Indoor Foliage Capital of the World".

South Apopka is an unincorporated enclave in Orange County that is surrounded by City of Apopka properties. The area has never been annexed into the City, likely due to its low tax base and the need to provide public infrastructure to annexed lands. Although South Apopka has numerous food sources (including grocery stores, ethnic food stores, convenience stores, and restaurants), these establishments are often inaccessible or unavailable to low-income community members due to transportation and/or cost barriers. The community food assessment process allowed South Apopka's key stakeholders to assess the availability and accessibility of fresh, healthy food to disadvantaged and underserved populations; to determine gaps in the local food system, including mobility issues; and to identify and prioritize potential interventions to improve the local food system.

SOUTH APOPKA SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The following organizations and programs provide a snapshot of healthy lifestyle initiatives serving South Apopka.

Big Potato Foundation

Through cultural and educational programming, the Big Potato Foundation is working to cultivate healthy neighborhoods in South Apopka. The foundation currently manages the Apopka Community Garden and is dedicated to engaging local residents in healthy food habits through hands-on gardening experience. The foundation also leads the Extended Hands Outreach program, which provides baby products, non-perishable foods, clothing, hygiene products, and toys for children throughout the year. This program is supported entirely through donations and volunteer efforts to help provide for the needs of South Apopka residents.

Apopka (Billie Dean) Community Garden

Located on the corner of Park Avenue and 9th Street in the City's downtown, the Apopka Community Garden is a one-acre plot managed by the Big Potato Foundation and dedicated to providing local residents the opportunity to grow their own produce. A four by sixteen foot bed in the garden can be leased for \$20 per year. Garden member benefits include access to seeds, soil and compost, water, and informative workshops on organic gardening. The garden has become a unifying space as South Apopka residents begin to foster the communitbuilding needed to strengthen the local food system.

Apopka Farmers' Market

In 2012, a farmers' market opened in the City of Apopka. Each Saturday, residents can purchase fresh, locally grown food and foliage at the Apopka Farmers' Market in Kit Land Nelson Park on North Forest Drive. Local vendors such as Dansk Farms, Lone Wolf Growers, Liner Patch, Grower Jim, and Rex Begonias work to provide the public with healthier food options and a stronger sense of community through this city-led initiative. Unfortunately for residents of South Apopka, access to this farmers' market is difficult and requires crossing a major highway (US 441). Additionally, prices at the Apopka Farmers' Market are much higher than South Apopka residents are accustomed to and an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) payment option is not currently offered for participants in the state's Food Assistance Program (SNAP).

Apopka Family Learning Center

The Apopka Family Learning Center (AFLC) provides a family-centered, nurturing learning environment to families of varying races and economic backgrounds. Placing strong emphasis on self-sufficiency and community service, the AFLC empowers families socially, academically, and civically through an all-inclusive and education-based support system. Classes range from English, Parenting, Literacy, and Job Readiness to Family Counseling and Health and Nutrition Workshops. The center is committed to lifelong learning and the ethical development of each participant.

Apopka Family Health Center

With the understanding that a racially and economically diverse population of uninsured and underinsured residents exists in South Apopka, community health centers like the Apopka Family Health Center work with at-risk and low income populations to provide citizens with the dignified care and medical attention they require. Located on East 7th Street in Apopka, highly qualified professionals from a wide range of disciplines work closely with patients in the community who might otherwise not receive the careful attention and healthcare options they deserve.

Farmworker Association of Florida

For over thirty years, the Farmworker Association of Florida has organized and assisted farmworkers in improving working and living conditions in the Apopka area. To meet the needs of local residents, FWF employs community organizing, social services, and research efforts to address issues such as pesticide exposure, worker protections, and immigration policy. Rooted in the principles of agroecology, food sovereignty, and alternative food production, FWF creates opportunities to meaningfully engage farmworker families in experiential at neighborhood community gardens, where they can produce fruits, vegetables, and herbs locally and without chemicals.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida

Committed to providing fresh fruits and vegetables to its clients, Second Harvest Food Bank coordinates with a growing network of farmers and distributors to effectively populate the shelves of food banks, soup kitchens, and other similar programs serving those in need. Relying on donations of excess produce, Second Harvest has collected over 15 million pounds of locally grown food in an effort to better serve the health and nutritional needs of Central Florida communities. Second Harvest serves the Apopka community through several initiatives, including the Summer Food Service Program that provides free nutritious breakfasts, lunches, and snacks every weekday to children 18 and under during what is often a particularly vulnerable time for students dependant upon school lunch assistance programs.



COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In 2011, the Community Food Assessment (CFA) process began with the goals of being community-led, engaging multiple stakeholders, and utilizing the USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit, as well as other resources. The process included an assessment of local food production and accessibility, a series of public meetings, and a community survey; the results of the survey have driven the subsequent phases of the project. Feedback from community members and stakeholders has allowed the study team to determine local food assets, needs, and opportunities. The results of the feedback provided a foundation for the development of recommendations for interventions to strengthen South Apopka's food system.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT?

A Community Food Assessment is the collection of information to identify gaps and needs in the community and the resources, services, and systems that could be used to fill those gaps in order to meet the food needs of residents. Generally, a CFA will assist in:

- Understanding local food systems
- Setting goals to enhance the local food systems
- Decision-making regarding policies and actions to ensure food security
- Establishing a long-term monitoring system with a clear set of indicators



Community Food Assessments may address:

- 1) Persons in poverty: Based upon income and usage of food assistance programs
- 2) Barriers to purchasing healthy food: Accessibility and prices of local markets and healthy food options and the availability of transportation
- 3) Availability of locally grown and culturally appropriate foods
- 4) Maps of community food assets: Maps depicting the number of community and private gardens, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture programs, food co-ops, or other alternative food production and distribution models
- 5) Regulations Barriers: Details food policies affecting food and health related issues

SOUTH APOPKA COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The South Apopka Community Food Assessment began with the identification of stakeholders, including local government representatives, leaders from community-based organizations, health and nutrition providers, educators and mentors, religious leaders, local food retailers and manufacturers, community residents, farmworkers, farmers, and non-profit organizations.

STAKEHOLDER DEVELOPMENT

Local support and involvement in a CFA process was critical in determining the ultimate direction of the project. A diverse and strong stakeholder group allowed the process to thrive within the South Apopka community. Participating stakeholders included:

1. Long and Scott Farms
2. Redlands Christian Migrant Association
3. Florida Organic Growers
4. John Bridges Community Center
5. Apopka City Commissioner Billy Dean
6. Hope CommUnity Center
7. Local Supermarkets
8. The Big Potato Foundation
9. La Taxqueña food store
10. Former Florida Senator Gary Siplin
11. LYNX Bus System
12. Apopka Hospital- Heart of Apopka
13. Florida Nursery Growers Association
14. National Farm Worker Ministry
15. Apopka Family Health Center
16. Orange County Health Department
17. Community Trust Federal Credit Union
18. Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
19. Small Local Farmers
20. Rural Coalition
21. United States Department of Agriculture- Rural Development
22. University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Stakeholder meetings were held throughout the process to discuss and prioritize potential food system interventions. During the meetings participants were engaged in conversations to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the local food economy and to discuss the potential direction of the project.

Attendees also discussed state, county, and local government resources that could assist in agriculture, such as: educational assistance, technical assistance to construct or improve infrastructure, and financial assistance (farm credits) for small scale famers. During these meetings, a lack of knowledge of food resources amongst members of the local community became apparent.



Rollins College students volunteering at the Apopka Community Garden

While certain suggestions proved beyond the scope of the project, the meeting generated trust amongst residents and other stakeholders in the initiative and its ultimate goal to enhance the local food system. Recognized opportunities and challenges in the local food system included:

- Expansion of the Apopka Community Garden through community partnerships
- Education on growing food and the nutritional benefits of produce over fast food
- Creation of a community farm for production of fresh, affordable food for the local community
- Re-introduction of a more sustainable farmer's market with community involvement and utilizing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) payments
- Affordability issues in the low-income community
- Lack of broad community involvement in local projects such as community garden and past farmers' markets
- Local government decisions being made without local resident involvement
- Engagement of major entities (such as Disney, the Catholic Church, SeaWorld, and Orange County) in creating a local model food project to promote agricultural activities
- Designation of property as an educational farm project to encourage family participation and in organic food production



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A community-wide Public Kickoff Meeting was held on April 2, 2012. The meeting allowed the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and Farmworker Association staffs to interact with the public, share ideas developed during stakeholder meetings, and to receive feedback on those ideas.

Florida Senator Gary Siplin and former Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (LYNX) representative, Jerry Bryan, were among the speakers in attendance for the Public Kickoff Meeting. Senator Siplin discussed the efforts of his healthy food initiative and his desire for increased access to fresh, affordable foods for underserved families.

Mr. Bryan emphasized the importance of these initiatives and the significance of mobility and access for low income communities to sources of healthy, affordable food. Both speakers highlighted the efforts of the Farmworker Association of Florida and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to educate the South Apopka community. Several members of the community described a need for better access to affordable fresh foods and a desire to grow their own fruits and vegetables.

The meeting was well-attended, attracting over one hundred participants. A large number of Haitian and Latino community residents were present, and translations into the Creole and Spanish languages were provided. After the presentation, FWA staff assisted more than seventy participants with completing the food assessment survey, which served as a pilot test of the instrument that was later administered to over 300 South Apopka community members.

This meeting was a significant step toward collaborating with local residents to identify food system challenges. Most notably, the need for access to healthy foods, a community garden, and education regarding the growing of fruits and vegetables were expressed.

BUILDING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Following revision of the survey instrument, the Farmworker Association of Florida engaged over a three hundred community members on food access, limitations and barriers, and food consumption patterns. Latino and Hatian community members were hired and trained to conduct these surveryys, and the data gathered provided greater insight into challanges residents face in accessing sufficient fresh foods for their families and the need to connect diet and health among low-income community members.

When the South Apopka Community Food Assessment process began, the direction of the project was uncertain. Through stakeholder input, public meetings, and surveys completed by members of the local community, the needs of residents could be better understood and goals began to develop. The community prioritized a lack of affordable healthy foods and transportation options, a desire for agricultural education, and a need for additional community garden space. While previous efforts allowed relationships to form between local businesses and non-profits, the City of Apopka, and the Farmworker Association of Florida, further collaborative initiatives would be required.



Local residents participate in survey to help identify community needs

Many of the individuals surveyed expressed that the availability of a community garden would encourage them to grow their own fruits and vegetables (33%); and fourteen percent of respondents identified access to a community garden as an encouragement to consume more locally grown fruits and vegetables. This information emphasized the need for the enhancement of the Apopka Community Garden and outreach to low-income residents.

However, potential issues regarding the community garden were also identified, including a lack of local involvement, a need for enhanced collaboration between City government and low-income community members, and a disconnect between garden members and the governing board.

Throughout the community food assessment process, the Farmworker Association of Florida worked to increase the number of minority, low-income residents involved in the garden. In collaboration with the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Big Potato Foundation, FWAF has organized several workdays with garden members and volunteers.

FOOD SECURITY

The USDA defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Food security has an impact on the health and well-being of everyone: children, adults, families, and communities.

Coined by the USDA, the term “food desert” describes areas of the industrialized world that lack easily accessible, healthy, and affordable food options. Another related term gaining popularity is “food swamp,” described as “a geographic area where the overabundance of less healthy, energy-dense foods (e.g., high-calorie snacks sold at convenience stores) inundate healthy food options.” While these two phenomena do not necessarily arise in the same geographic location, it can be argued that, with an ever-growing abundance of fast food options, food deserts and food swamps can potentially overlap in some areas. A “food mirage” can be defined as a geographic area where there is an overabundance of unhealthy foods **and** where nutritious, affordable food is difficult to obtain. Food mirages appear as a misrepresentation of reality.

For the purposes of this study, Geographic Information Systems software was utilized in the identification of a potential food desert within the study area. The analysis uncovered possible food insecurities within the South Apopka community, including the availability of and access to healthy food.

METHODOLOGY

ECFRPC’s analysis followed the methodology employed by the USDA Food Desert Locator developed for their Healthy Food Financing Initiative. The USDA’s Food Desert Locator offers three main objectives that coincide with the needs of the South Apopka community: to present a spatial overview of where food desert census tracts are located; to provide selected population characteristics of food desert census tracts; and to offer data on food desert census tracts for community planning and research purposes.

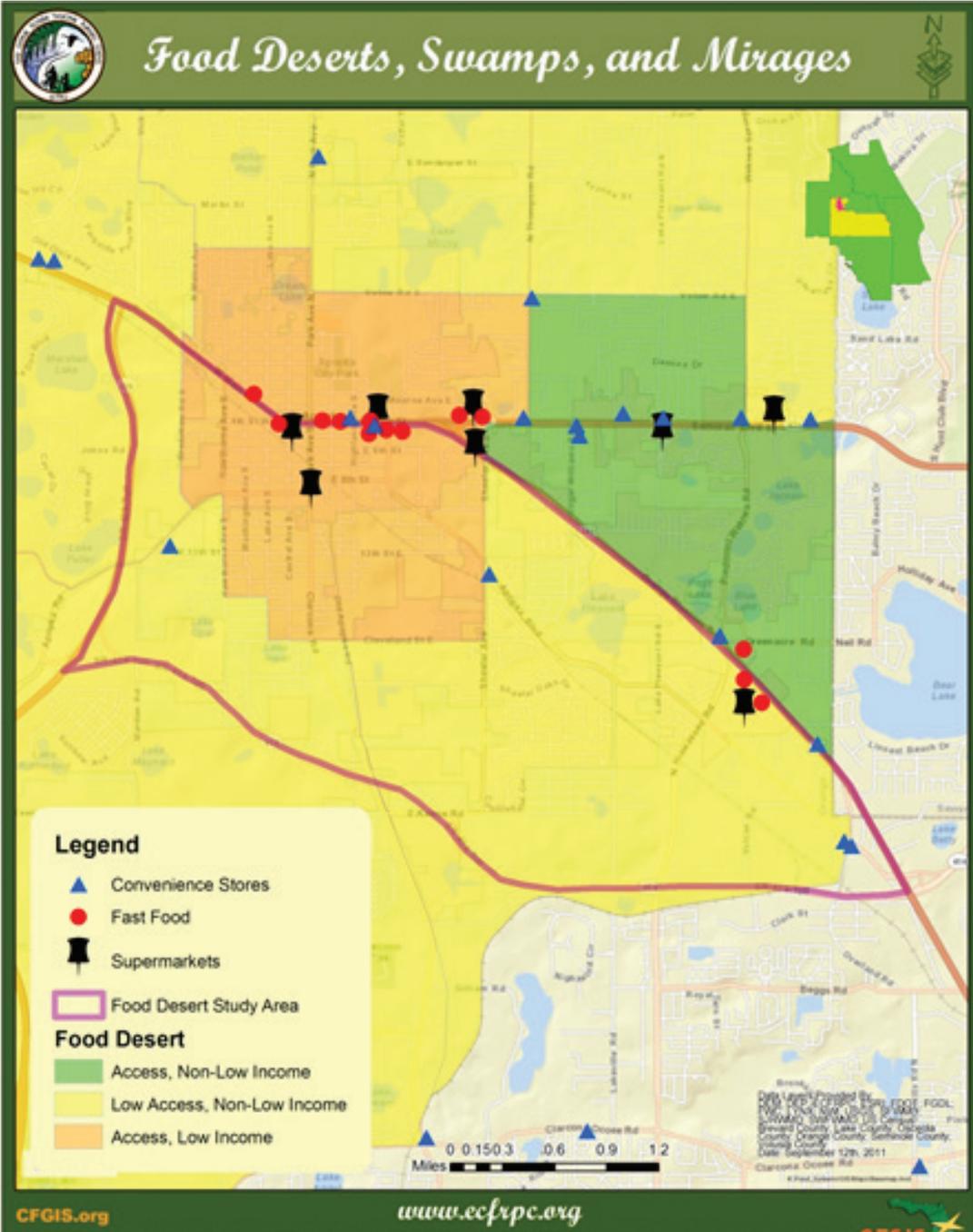
This study employed the same methodology that was used in USDA research to recreate the food desert analysis, but supplemented more current and correct local data for supermarkets and large grocers to complement the USDA maps and datasets. Next, less healthy food providers were analyzed to determine the presence of a food swamp. After completing these food desert and food swamp analyses, the two data sets were compared to identify areas of overlap considered food mirages.

While there is a large tract containing a low income population in the study area, there is access to a local grocery store or supermarket within one mile for most residents (Figure 3) when supplementing the USDA methodology with local knowledge and data. This discovery suggests that there is no food desert present in South Apopka. The outcome of the analysis contradicts USDA findings, which depict portions of the study area as a food desert. This is likely due to a more detailed set of local data than currently available at the national level.

As of January 1, 2013, there are at least ten fast food restaurants and convenience stores located along State Road 441 in the northern portion of the study area that are sited within one mile of each other. While this area may constitute a food swamp, a food mirage does not exist due to the availability of at least five local grocers or supermarkets within the same one-mile area.

Further consultation and outreach with community members and analysis of survey results provided a more accurate and in-depth understanding of additional food access concerns. An analysis of the local food economy is also included as Appendix II.

Figure 2



FINDINGS

The community food assessment process highlighted several significant areas of need within South Apopka. Meetings and a community survey allowed for greater understanding of the population and the socioeconomic difficulties faced on a daily basis.

The economic disadvantage of South Apopka was clearly evidenced through survey results (Appendix I.) More than 88 percent of respondents have a household income of less than \$25,000; and nearly 40 percent reported a household income less than \$10,000. Sixty-seven percent identified as Mexican or Hispanic descent. Roughly three quarters of those surveyed named their place of birth as somewhere other than the United States. Over half of respondents had not earned a high school degree.

Most of the population surveyed also indicated that they typically travel more than one mile for their produce (67%) and over 30% travel more than three miles. However, almost 30% stated that they did not have adequate public or private transportation available to meet their daily needs. Deeper analysis of responses (Figure 4) showed that the younger population, including the Under 18 and the 18–34 cohorts, has greater problems with transportation and the distance to fresh produce. Unfortunately, over half of respondents identified that even when fresh food is accessible, the high costs of food prevents them from acquiring sufficient provisions for their families.

Figure 3

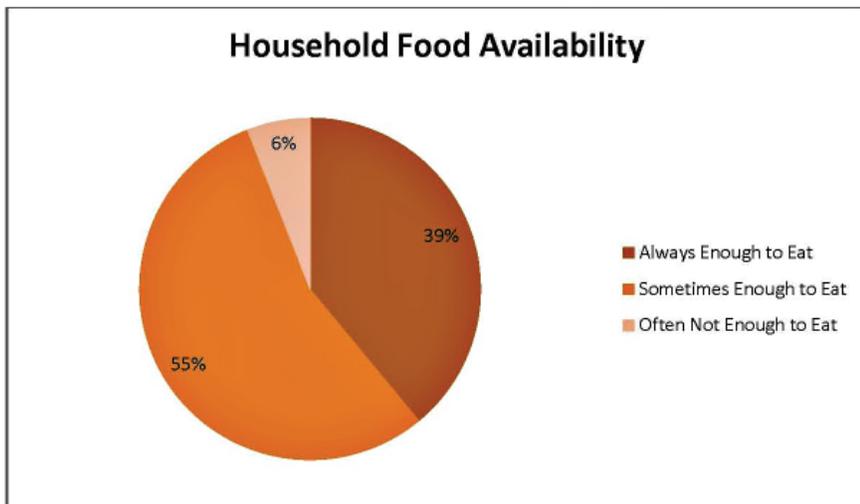


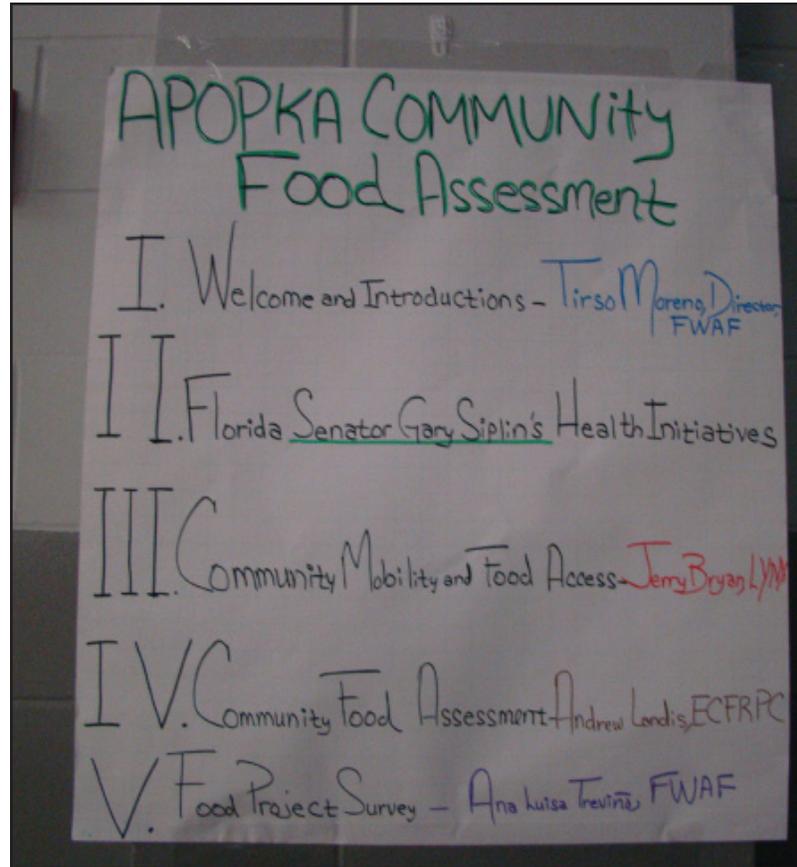
Figure 4

Which of the following, if any, make it difficult for you to purchase/obtain fresh produce?	Under 18		18 - 34		35 - 64		65 and Over	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Distance to store	4	31%	35	32%	41	23%	5	24%
Lack of transportation available	5	38%	21	19%	32	18%	5	24%
Affordability/cost	9	69%	66	60%	109	61%	10	48%
Physical disabilities	0	0%	1	1%	6	3%	0	0%
No time available	0	0%	8	7%	21	12%	1	5%
Other	0	0%	2	2%	2	1%	0	0%
Total Respondents	13		110		178		21	

INTERVENTIONS

In May 2012, a local non-profit, the Big Potato Foundation partnered with the Apopka Community Garden to assume management of the garden previously handled by the City. The Big Potato Foundation, founded by Matt and Peter Jordan, promotes a mission to “cultivate healthy Central Florida community through charitable, educational, and cultural programs. These programs will strive to inspire the members of our community and engage those around us with a sense of gratitude and a heart of service.”

As a new program under the Big Potato Foundation, the community garden gained leadership and a vision for future growth and sustainability. The Farmworker Association worked with the Big Potato Foundation to diversify garden membership and engage more low-income and farmworker families. The garden has now expanded as new beds have been built, growing in capacity from 23 original beds to over 80 plots. This growth has allowed the garden to accommodate additional members from surrounding neighborhoods.



April 2, 2012 Public Meeting Agenda

Additionally, FWAF, ECFRPC, and the Big Potato Foundation organized a series of meetings and workshops to educate garden and community members on topics ranging from growing fruits and vegetables without pesticides, simple irrigation techniques, food preparation and storage, nutrition, active living, and healthy lifestyles.

To date, meetings and workshops have generated substantial interest from residents and have been well attended. The Apopka Community Garden, FWAF, the Apopka Family Learning Center, and the Hope Community Center have all provided easy, close access for residents to attend each event, as well as served food and provided the necessary tools, starter plants, and/or seeds to get participants engaged.

The Big Potato Foundation and the Farmworker Association of Florida have also worked with local businesses such as Loaves and Fishes, Bravo Supermarket, and Panera Bread to provide donated food to low-income residents, students, and the homeless.

These collaborations among organizations in South Apopka resulted in significant benefits for community members. The necessity of these efforts is emphasized through survey data that indicated a large majority of respondents want the availability of a community garden, an accessible farmers' market, and/or free classes on starting and maintaining a home or community garden.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon stakeholder input, community survey data, and extensive research on the South Apopka area, the following recommendations are proposed to further strengthen the local food system:

- Maintain and enhance the existing community garden and develop a second community garden site to better serve the needs of the residents of South Apopka.
- Continue to offer educational workshops on gardening with organic techniques, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle choices
- Organize a weekly farmers' market in South Apopka that provides affordable and culturally appropriate foods
- Promote small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture opportunities
- Hold regular meetings with community partners to discuss and advance healthy food initiatives
- Work with the City of Apopka to attract and facilitate a mobile farmers' market



Students volunteers in the Apopka Community Garden

This study provides foundational data to support food system initiatives in the South Apopka area. The community food assessment highlights existing conditions in the area and offers a solid baseline against which to measure future interventions in the local food system. The partnership among the ECFRPC, the Farmworker Association of Florida, and project stakeholders helped unite the community and foster support for healthy food choices.

A possible next step to empower farmworker families involves developing a community education center focused on food and agricultural pursuits. Although discussed early in the project, the stakeholder group prioritized access and availability of fresh foods and the need for baseline data before undertaking this effort.

The support and resources offered by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation significantly impacted the neighborhoods of South Apopka. With gratitude, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Farmworker Association of Florida express deep appreciation for the funding assistance and guidance of the foundation to ensure the project's success. We look forward to future collaborations with community partners to improve the South Apopka Food System and to positively impact the well-being of Apopka residents.

APPENDIX - SURVEY RESULTS

1. What is your zip code?	Total	Percent
32703	241	75.3%
32712	76	23.8%
Other	3	0.9%
Total	320	

2. What is your gender?	Total	Percent
Male	97	30.7%
Female	219	69.3%
Total	316	

3. What is your age group?	Total	Percent
Under 18	13	4.0%
18 - 34	110	34.2%
35 - 64	178	55.3%
65 and Over	21	6.5%
Total	322	

4. Including yourself, how many people currently live in your household?	Total	Percent
1	18	5.6%
2 - 3	105	32.6%
4 - 5	125	38.8%
6 - 7	56	17.4%
8 or more	18	5.6%
Total	322	

5. What is your household income?	Total	Percent
Less than \$10,000	127	39.8%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	89	27.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	66	20.7%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	21	6.6%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11	3.4%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	4	1.3%
\$75,000 or more	1	0.3%
Total	319	

6. Language(s) spoken?	Total	Percent
English	150	37.2%
Spanish	220	54.6%
Creole	27	6.7%
Other	6	1.5%
Total	403	

7. How many members of your household are under the age of 18?	Total	Percent
0	81	25.2%
1	51	15.8%
2	86	26.7%
3	56	17.4%
4 or more	48	14.9%
Total	322	

8. What is your race/ethnicity?	Total	Percent
White	40	12.0%
Black/African-American	35	10.5%
Mexican, Mexican-American, or Chicano	100	30.0%
Other Hispanic or Latino	123	36.9%
Haitian	32	9.6%
Other	3	0.9%
Total	333	

9. What is your place of birth?	Total	Percent
Chile	1	0.3%
Columbia	4	1.4%
Cuba	2	0.7%
Dominican Republic	4	1.4%
Ecuador	3	1.0%
El Salvador	5	1.7%
Guatemala	23	7.9%
Haiti	26	8.9%
Honduras	5	1.7%
Italy	1	0.3%
Mexico	141	48.3%
Puerto Rico	5	1.7%
United States	71	24.3%
West Indies	1	0.3%
Total	292	

10. What is your highest level of education?	Total	Percent
No formal schooling	55	17.4%
Some schooling, no high school degree	106	33.5%
High school graduate/GED	93	29.4%
Trade School	21	6.6%
Some college, no degree	20	6.3%
Associate's or bachelor's degree	11	3.5%
Graduate or professional degree	10	3.2%
Total	316	

11. What is your marital status?	Total	Percent
Single	112	35.3%
Married	162	51.1%
Single and living with partner	43	13.6%
Total	317	

12. Where do you typically purchase/acquire produce?	Total	Percent
Supermarket/grocery store	233	55.6%
Ethnic market/ethnic food store	110	26.3%
Produce stand/roadside market	26	6.2%
Farmers' market	14	3.3%
Food assistance program (food bank, pantry, or other donations)	18	4.3%
Other	18	4.3%
Total	419	

13. Approximately how far do you live from where you purchase/acquire produce?

	Total	Percent
One to five blocks (less than a half-mile)	15	4.7%
1/2 mile to 1 mile	90	28.3%
1 mile to 3 miles	114	35.8%
3 miles to 5 miles	52	16.4%
5 miles to 10 miles	34	10.7%
More than 10 miles	13	4.1%
Total	318	

14. How do you typically travel to obtain most of your produce?

	Total	Percent
Car	254	65.0%
Walk	67	17.1%
Bike	16	4.1%
Public transportation/bus	40	10.2%
It is delivered	2	0.5%
I grow my own fruits and vegetables	3	0.8%
Other	9	2.3%
Total	391	

15. What do you define as locally grown?

	Total	Percent
Grown/made in Apopka area	151	45.6%
Grown/made in Lake/Orange/Seminole County Area	50	15.1%
Grown/made in Florida	77	23.3%
Grown/made in the United States	52	15.7%
Other	1	0.3%
Total	331	

16. What would make it easier for you to consume more fruits and vegetables?

	Total	Percent
More affordable prices	227	42.9%
Closer access to supermarket or grocery store	69	13.0%
More or better selection at supermarket or grocery store (e.g. more ethnic variety)	39	7.4%
More street vendors/mobile vendors/produce stands/farmers' markets in my area	30	5.7%
More bus stops near places that sell produce	25	4.7%
Access to a community garden or personal garden in my neighborhood	35	6.6%
More food assistance programs	27	5.1%
More time available to cook and prepare produce	20	3.8%
Knowing how to prepare foods and more knowledge about nutrition & health benefits	49	9.3%
Having someone to cook for/eat with	8	1.5%
Total	529	

17. What would encourage you to consume more locally grown fruits and vegetables?

	Total	Percent
More affordable prices	223	43.4%
More available at supermarket or grocery store	72	24.7%
More bus stops near places that sell fresh produce	26	8.9%
Access to a community garden or home garden	42	14.4%
More farmers' markets/produce stands/ roadside markets in my area	38	13.0%
More provided by food assistance programs	23	7.9%
Knowing how to prepare foods and more knowledge about nutrition & health benefits	36	12.3%
Knowing where to find locally grown produce	43	14.7%
Clearly labeled locally grown produce	10	3.4%
Other	1	0.3%
Total	514	

18. Do you have adequate public or private transportation available to meet your daily needs?

	Total	Percent
Yes	222	70.3%
No	94	29.7%
Total	316	

19. Which best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months?

	Total	Percent
Always enough to eat	123	38.8%
Sometimes not enough to eat	175	55.2%
Often not enough to eat	19	6.0%
Total	317	

20. Do you compromise on fresh fruits and vegetables because of cost?

	Total	Percent
Always	50	15.7%
Sometimes	241	75.8%
Never	27	8.5%
Total	318	

21. How many servings of fruits and vegetables do you personally eat on a daily basis?

	Total	Percent
None	22	7.0%
1 - 2	202	64.1%
3 - 4	72	22.9%
5 or more	19	6.0%
Total	315	

22. How many times each week do you and/or your family members eat fast food or take out?

	Total	Percent
0	117	37.0%
1 - 2	179	56.6%
3 - 4	17	5.4%
5 or more	3	0.9%
Total	316	

23. In deciding which foods to purchase, which factors are the most important to you?

	Total	Percent
Freshness/quality	164	31.5%
Health/nutrition	177	34.0%
Prices	134	25.8%
Convenience/ease of preparation	22	4.2%
Taste/familiarity	23	4.4%
Total	520	

24. What type of produce do you typically buy/obtain?

	Total	Percent
Fresh	282	69.8%
Frozen	68	16.8%
Canned	54	13.4%
Total	404	

25. Where would you prefer to get most of your produce?

	Total	Percent
Supermarket or grocery store	202	48.3%
Ethnic market/ethnic food store	91	21.8%
Produce stand or roadside market	44	10.5%
Farmer's markets	57	13.6%
Food assistance program (food bank, pantry, or other donations)	19	4.5%
Other	5	1.2%
Total	418	

26. Which of the following, if any, make it difficult for you to purchase/obtain fresh produce?

	Total	Percent
Distance to store	85	22.1%
Lack of transportation available	63	16.4%
Affordability/cost	194	50.5%
Physical disabilities	7	1.8%
No time available	31	8.1%
Other	4	1.0%
Total	384	

27. What would encourage you to grow your own fruits and vegetables?

	Total	Percent
Availability of a community/neighborhood market	130	33.4%
Accessible farmer's market nearby	79	20.3%
Free educational classes on starting and maintaining a home garden	118	30.3%
Provision of materials to start a home garden	12	3.1%
I already grow my own fruits and vegetables	14	3.6%
I do not wish to grow my own fruits and vegetables	36	9.3%
Total	389	

28. Are culturally appropriate fresh foods that your family desires available in your neighborhood?

	Total	Percent
Yes, I am able to access all of the foods I desire for my family	105	33.2%
Sometimes, but not always	190	60.1%
Culturally appropriate foods are not available for my family	21	6.6%
Total	316	

29. Does your household participate in any food assistance programs, such as SNAP or WIC?

	Total	Percent
Yes	148	46.7%
No	169	53.3%
Total	317	

purpose of this analysis, food businesses were grouped into three main categories: Agriculture, Processing and Distribution, and Retail and Access. A more comprehensive description of each category is provided below.

Agriculture

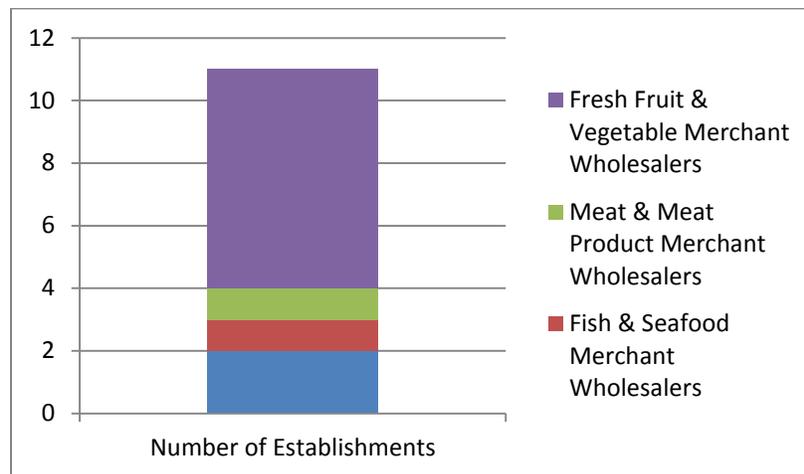
This category is comprised of establishments that grow crops, raise animals, and/or support day-to-day farm operations. Historically, agriculture was an important economic sector in Northwest Orange County. Commercial foliage nurseries began locating in the area in the early 1880s, and the industry continued to prosper for the next hundred years. The area also was a big producer of winter vegetables with most of the farms located along the northern shore of Lake Apopka. Suburbanization and the closure of the muck farms due to environmental concerns have contributed to the decline of the area's agricultural economy.

According to Infogroup, there are currently more than 200 farms within the study area. However, most of these establishments specialize in growing ornamental plants like ferns and other types of foliage. The area is home to several horse ranches and an aquaculture company that specializes in producing koi fish for aquariums. Because none of these farms produces food, they were not counted for this analysis. Currently, there are only 13 crop farms in the study area. These include large producers like Long Scott Farms (corn, Kirby cucumbers, and other vegetables) and Monterey Farms (mushrooms) that export most of their products to other parts of the country.

Processing and Distribution

There are 20 businesses within the processing and distribution category, which includes establishments dedicated to the manufacture and wholesale distribution of food products. The study area's Food Manufacturing (NAICS 311) industry is mainly comprised of retail bakeries (7). The area is also home to the headquarters of Simply Orange Juice Inc. Founded in 2001, this company specializes in producing a variety of pasteurized juices.

Figure 2. Number of the Food Wholesale Trade Establishments in the Study area



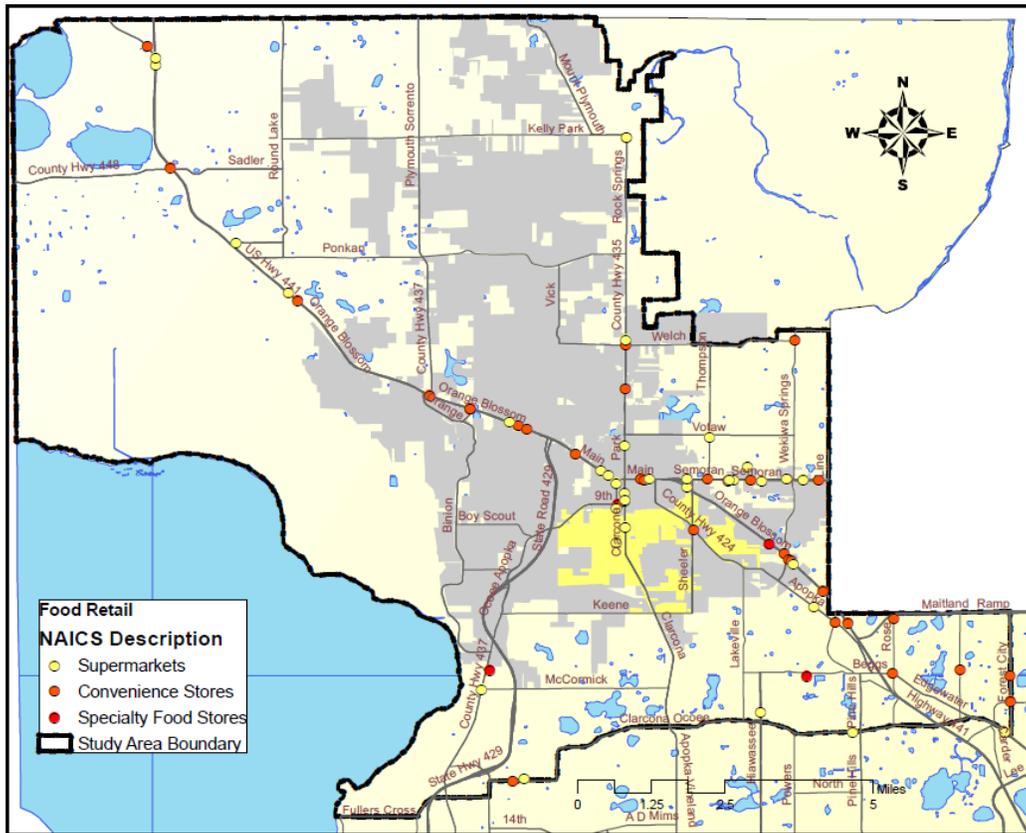
Source: Infogroup ReferenceUSA.gov

The majority of the businesses in this category are Grocery and Related Products Merchant Wholesalers (NAICS 4244). These establishments specialize in the wholesale distribution of food products. Figure 2 depicts the distribution of food wholesale companies within the study area. The majority of these firms are fresh fruit and vegetables distributors, and some of them might be growers themselves. The area also contains distributors of meat, seafood, and frozen foods.

Retail and Access

The food retail and access category is comprised of businesses within the Food and Beverage Stores (NAICS 445) and Food Services Places (NAICS 722) sectors. These include establishments such as supermarkets, convenience stores, and restaurants. Perhaps no other category is more influential to the development of local food systems. While important, food producers and distributors operate on a much larger scale than our study area alone. On the other hand, food retail establishments cater exclusively to the local area and determine the price and types of foods available to residents.

Figure 3. Distribution of Food Stores in the Study Area by Type



Source: Infogroup ReferenceUSA.gov

There are approximately 165 businesses within the food retail and access category. About 35 percent of these establishments are food stores², which can be seen with more detail in Figure 3. The food retail

² This number excludes liquor stores which in this area do not retail food.

establishments are divided by type, and they mainly differ on the selection of items available for purchase. While supermarkets sell a high variety of grocery goods, convenience stores retail a limited line of food staples such as milk, bread, soda, and snacks. In many cases, these convenience stores are an accessory use to a gas station. Specialty food stores retail only special lines of food and include establishment like butcher shops, produce markets, and gourmet food shops.

Most food retail establishments in the study area are convenience stores located along major roads including Orange Blossom Trail and Semoran Boulevard. Another attribute that determines the variety of foods available to the community is establishment size. According to Infogroup, only twelve of the 34 supermarkets in the study area have more than 2,500 square feet of space. The small size of these establishments may limit the amount of fresh foods available to customers. The South Apopka area (yellow) is served by two of these small supermarkets and one convenience store. Therefore, access to fresh food might be limited within this area.

There are 108 restaurants and eating places³ within the study area. Figure 5 details the number of restaurants by type of cuisine. The area is dominated by American fast food chain restaurants, which represent 47 percent of the area’s eating places. Many of these establishments specialize in serving burgers, pizza, fried chicken, and fries.

Figure 5 Study Area Restaurants by Type of Cuisine

Cuisine Type	Number of Establishments
American	51
Asian	12
Deli	10
Italian	5
Mexican	9
Other	21

Source: InfogroupReferenceUSA.gov

The rest of the establishments are comprised of sandwich shop and ethnic food restaurants serving Chinese, Mexican, and Italian foods among others. The majority of these food retail establishments are scattered along major road corridors including Semoran Boulevard, Main Street, and Rock Springs Road. The only exception is the Mexican restaurants, which are all concentrated near downtown Apopka.

Conclusion

The Northwest Orange County food system is comprised of 207 establishments which makes it an important but small part of the local economy. The area has been a producer hub for ornamental plants, and as a result there are very few food producers remaining in the area. While some of the wholesale

³ This number includes both Full-Service Restaurants (NAICS 722511) and Snack and Non Alcoholic Beverage Bars (NAICS 722515). These establishments provide a variety of food services to sitting customers and specialty snacks and beverages such as frozen yogurt or coffee.

distributors appear to trade foods produced in the area, there does not appear to be a direct connection between the local agricultural sector and the area's food manufacturers. For the purposes of this project, the food retail and access category provides the most valuable information. Most of the food retail operations within the larger study area are located along major roads and tend to be very small. This is especially true in the South Apopka area, which is only served by three small stores. The size of these establishments certainly limits the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in South Apopka, some of which ironically are grown only a couple of miles away. The area does contain an abundance of fast-food businesses that specialize in selling unhealthy food. The overall picture provided by this profile is of a food system that is in need of interventions to provide healthy alternatives to the area's population.

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