

2017

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Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership

WARREN COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN



INTRO- DUCTION



In 2016, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership's (TNP) Garden Resources of Warren (GROW) Program took on a year long Community Food Security Assessment funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Through this assessment, TNP has created this local foods plan to bridge local food gaps, increase food access and decrease food insecurity, and promote economic opportunities related to local food production and distribution in Warren, Ohio.

For this project and report, TNP uses the following definition of community food security:

“Community food security is a condition in which all the community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through sustainable food systems that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”¹

Community food security is a very complex condition that cannot be achieved from an individual perspective by a single organization. It will take a collaborative effort by public, private, government, and institutional entities, as well as the citizens of Warren, Ohio to achieve community food security and increase access to the foods and nutrients needed to live healthy and enriched lives. The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide guidance and recommendations to reach community food security in the city of Warren, Ohio.

1. Haering, Stephen A., and Shamsuzzoha B. Syed. "Community food security in United States cities: a survey of the relevant scientific literature." Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, USA.[online] URL: http://www.jhsph.edu/sebin/s/c/FS_Literature%20Booklet.pdf (2009).



Warren, Ohio's Southeast and Southwest neighborhoods are food deserts according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Access Research Atlas, this means that a majority of the residents live more than one mile from a grocery store with a full variety of fresh and nutritious meat, dairy, and produce. When access is examined at ½ mile, much of the Northwest, Northeast, and Central City Neighborhoods are also food deserts. As of 2017, according to the Robert Wood Johnson County Rankings which rank counties in all 50 states based on health outcomes, Trumbull County ranks 61 out of 88 overall. The aforementioned report also states that approximately 33% of adults in

Trumbull County are obese. The city of Warren and greater Trumbull County lack food security and this can be seen in the health outcomes of residents.

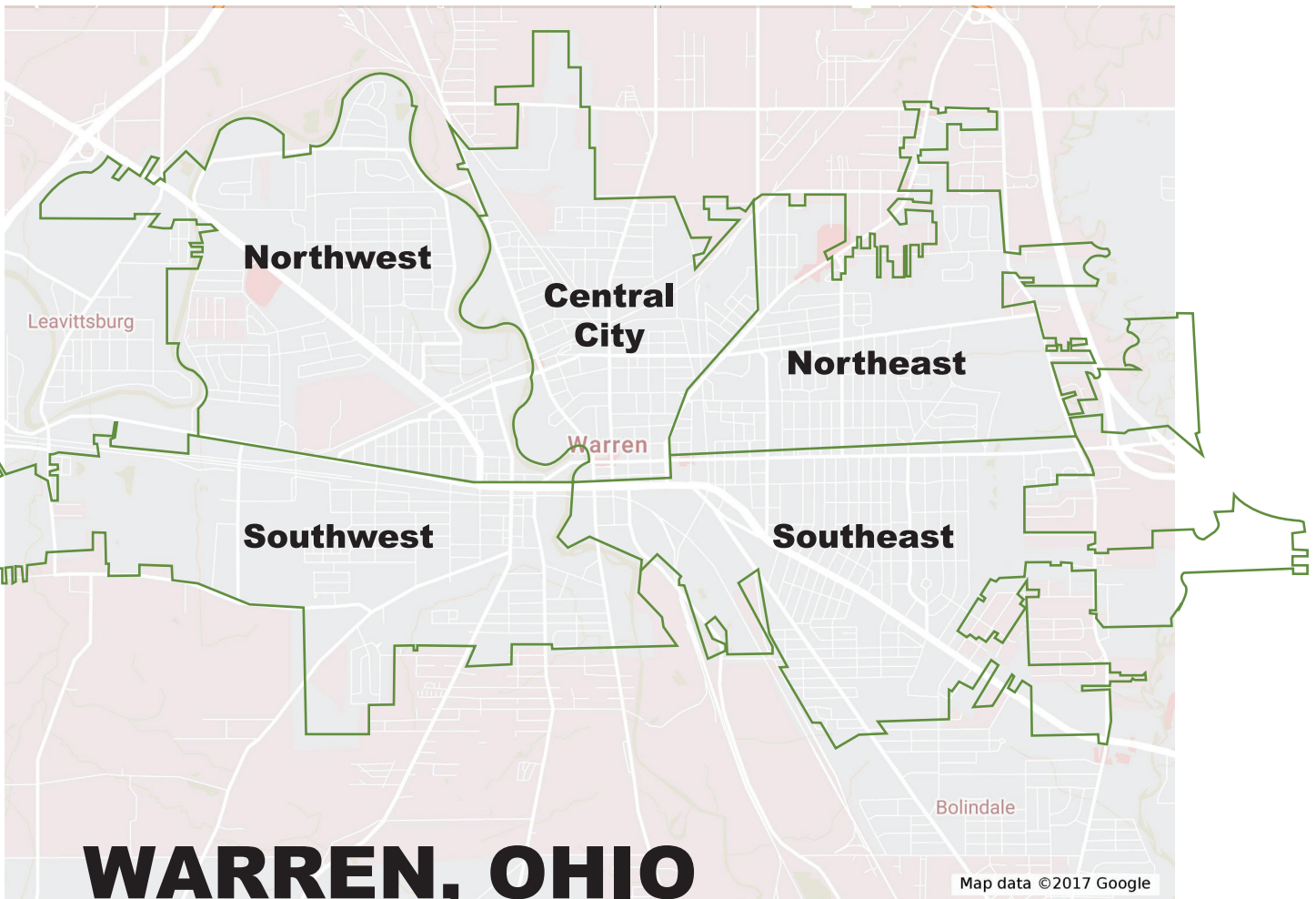


BACK-GROUND

In 2012, TNP was awarded a Community Challenge Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development on behalf of the city of Warren. This three-year project included an inventory of every residential parcel in the city and a highly engaged outreach process that connected residents to the data collected and sought their input. As a result of this work, five neighborhood plans were developed in May 2015, representing the city in its entirety. Each plan featured an assessment of the neighborhood with an emphasis on housing and market conditions,

summary of the input provided at the neighborhood meetings, and practical short and long-term solutions to address the concerns stated by residents for their neighborhoods with an acute focus on blight and vacancy. TNP subsequently began to successfully leverage funding to implement strategies identified in the plans, employing strategies from renovation for home ownership to demolition and land reuse. This process had overlapping value with local food efforts, and as such serves as an excellent launching point for the organization to develop a specific plan to address food insecurity.

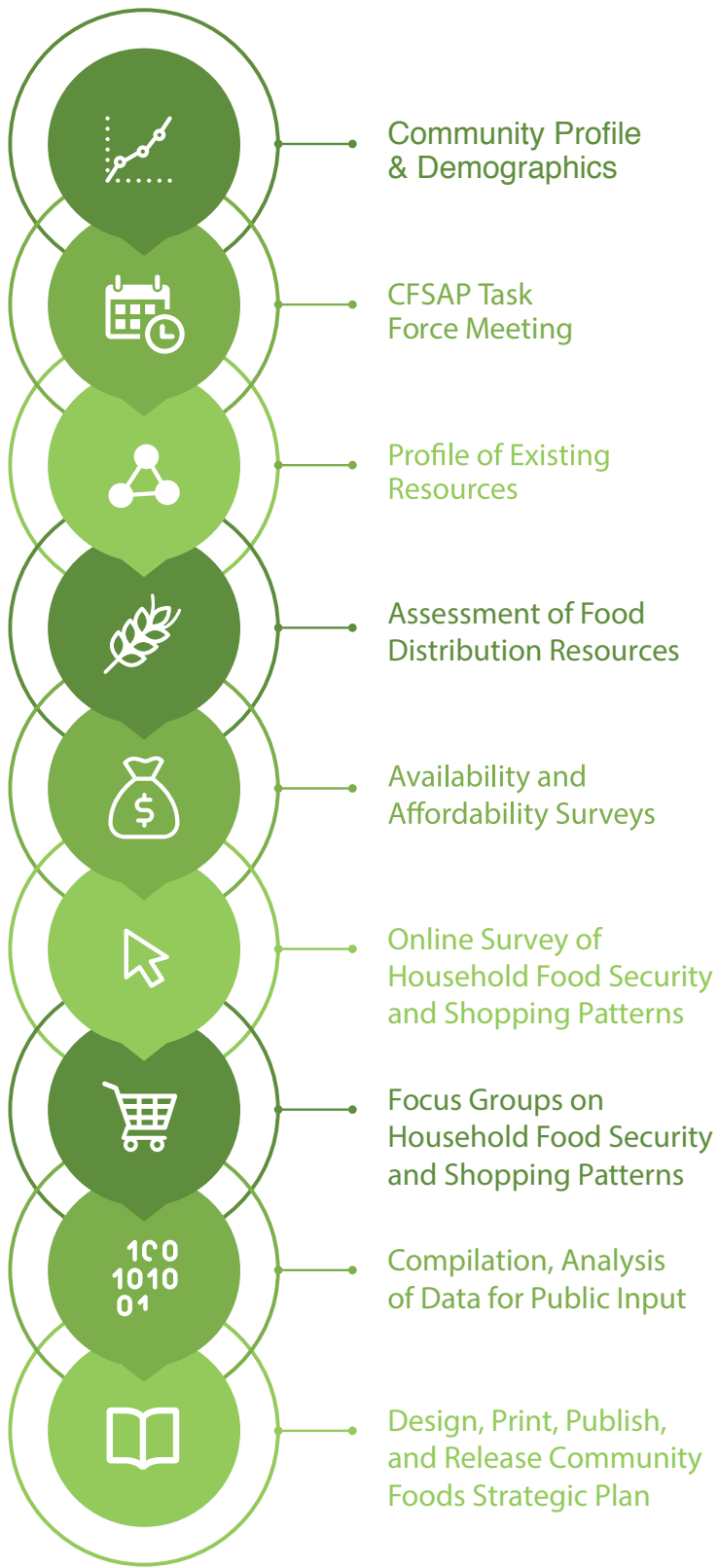
There are a number of efforts in Warren that seek to address challenges to food security and the limited access residents have through conventional market food resources. Warren is host to an assortment of both social service and community development resources including pantries, distribution sites, meal delivery services, a farmer's market, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) co-op delivery site, and community gardens, many of which have been developed within the past five years. TNP has supported local food efforts in an attempt to close the food gap in the neighborhoods it serves. Guided by 2009 data from the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative (MVOC) revealing significant portions of Warren as food deserts, TNP has offered programming that supports over a dozen urban agriculture sites, the farmers market, and the CSA. An additional MVOC survey from the same year revealed over 1,600 vacant houses and thousands of vacant lots, indicating the opportunity to utilize vacant land as a resource in the fight for local food production.



WARREN, OHIO NEIGHBORHOODS



THE PROCESS



ASSESS- MENT

Community Profile and Demographics

Analyzed federal census data to create a profile for the city of Warren.

CFSAP Task Force Meeting

Met with community stakeholders to investigate the current status of food security within the city, these meetings helped guide research that followed.

Profile of Existing Resources

Analyzed current food access resources in the city including but not limited to emergency services, federal programs, and other means to access food.

Assessment of Food Distribution Resources

Analyzed the distribution of retail food resources.

Availability and Affordability Survey

Surveyed 24 retail food outlets to analyze availability and affordability of 84 food items selected from the USDA Thrifty Meal Plan Food List.

Online Survey of Household Food Security and Shopping Patterns

Online survey for Warren residents to answer questions about topics such as hunger, weight loss due to lack of food, transportation, etc.

Focus Groups on Household Food Security and Shopping Patterns

A series of five public meetings where residents were able to address their food access concerns and share their personal experiences with food access.

Compilation, Analysis of Data for Public Input

Three public meetings where the information from the assessment was presented and residents were given an opportunity to brainstorm solutions for the issues presented.

Design, Print, Publish, and Release Community Foods Strategic Plan

Creation of a plan that will allow TNP, the City of Warren, and other organizations to leverage resources to enhance food access.



Warren Community Demographics

THE RESULTS

Median Age 38.8

Poverty Rate 35%

*2015 American Community Survey
United States Census Bureau*



**MEDIAN
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME**
\$29,376

*2015 American Community Survey
United States Census Bureau*



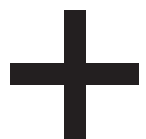
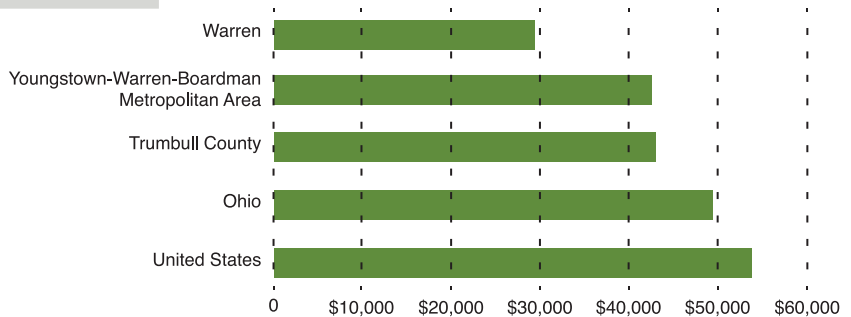
More than **3/4** of the population (**84.3%**) over the age of 25 have earned a high school diploma or GED.



Only **11.8%** have a bachelor's degree or higher.

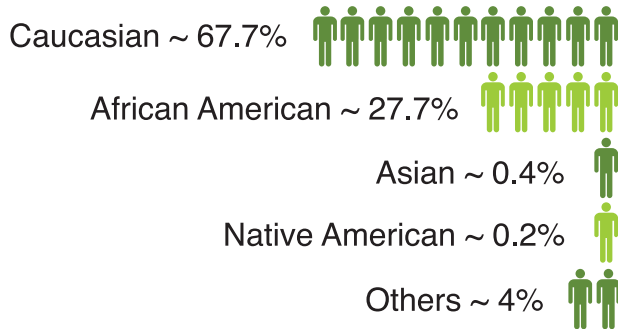
2015 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

*2014 American Community Survey,
United States Census Bureau*



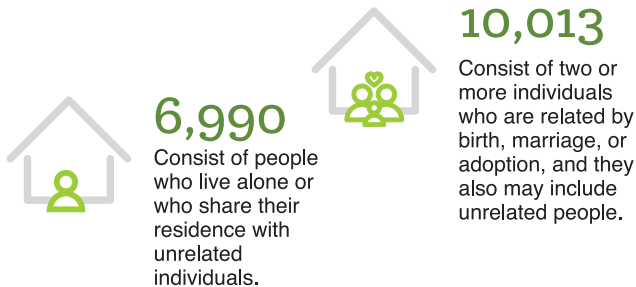
THE RACIAL DIVERSITY OF WARREN

2010 Census
United States Census Bureau



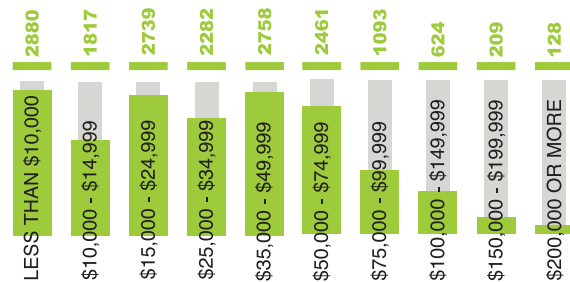
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS 17,003

2010 Census
United States Census Bureau



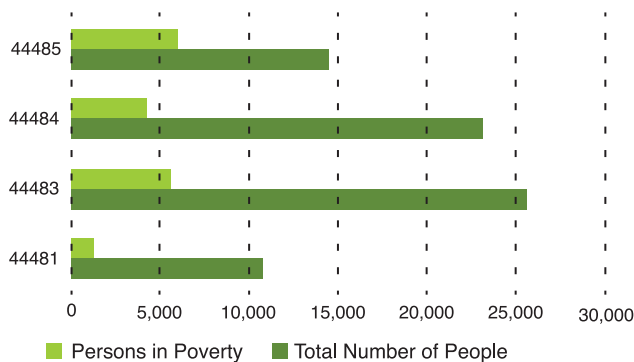
INCOME - TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS

2014 American Community Survey
United States Census Bureau



TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY BY ZIP CODE

2014 American Community Survey,
United States Census Bureau



TOTAL POPULATION WARREN OHIO - 40,705

2015 American Community Survey,
United State Census Bureau



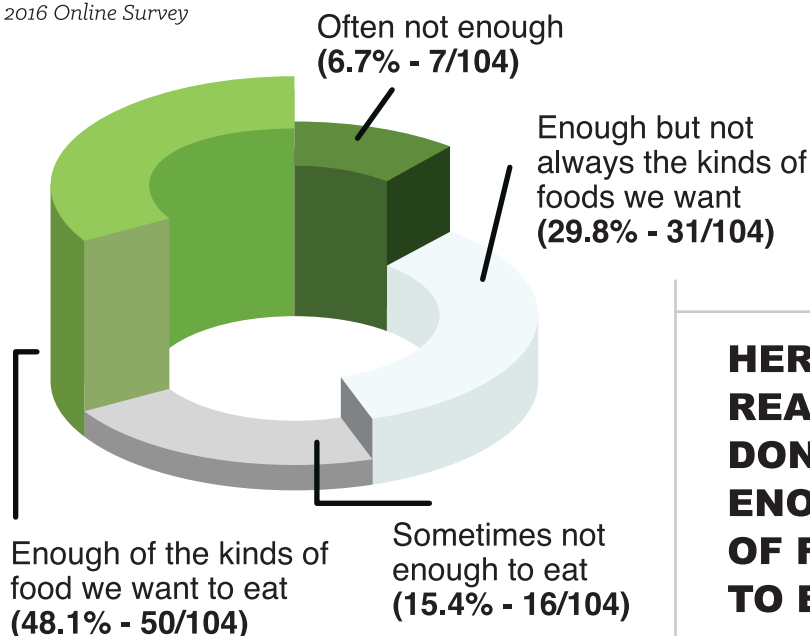
Obstacles to Food Security

Almost everyone that attended one of the Hunger and Food Security Focus Group meetings reported struggling themselves or knows someone in the city that is currently struggling with household food security. This fact was also echoed through the online Household Food Security survey.



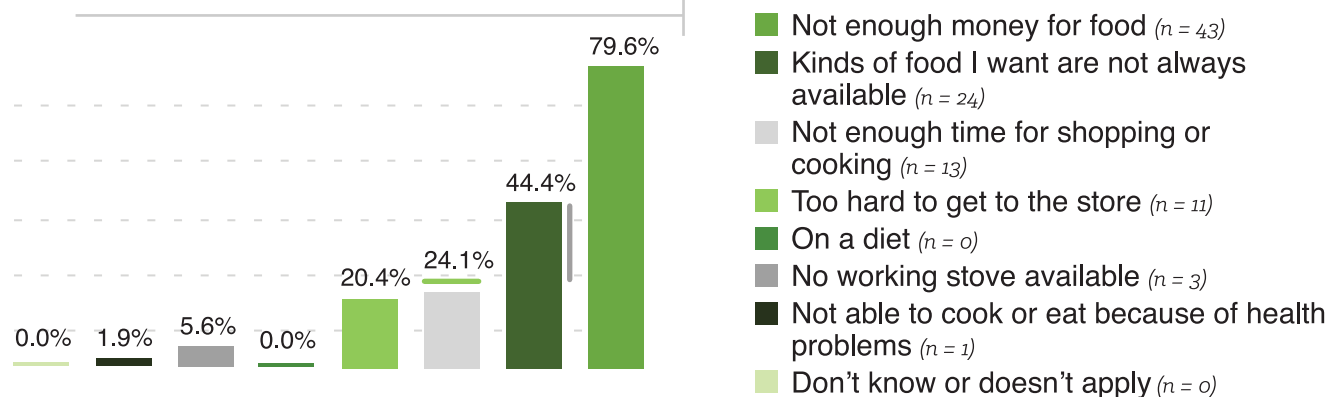
WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS BEST DESCRIBES THE FOOD EATEN IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

2016 Online Survey



HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY PEOPLE DON'T ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH OF THE KINDS OF FOOD THEY WANT TO EAT.

2016 Online Survey - 54 Answered



We asked residents that attended the Community Food Security and Shopping patterns focus groups, “What do you do when there is not enough money for food?”



Charities



Skipping Meals



Extra Small Servings



Free School Lunch Program



Free Community Meal Programs



Federal Programs (WIC, SNAP, etc)



Additional Work to Pay for Food



Eating Pet Food



Dumpster Diving



Fraud for Benefits



Family



Federal Programs to Relieve Hunger and Promote Nutrition

Meals on Wheels - Meals are delivered directly to the home. Eligibility is determined by age (seniors), disability status, and income. In the City of Warren there are two Meals on Wheels programs, also known as mobile meals.

Congregate Meals Program - Free prepared hot meals specifically for seniors. Seniors must drive to the place where food is being prepared and served as they will also eat on site.

Commodity Foods Program - Supplemental nutrition program for low-income seniors and those that are disabled where staple pantry items are delivered to the home monthly. A unique quality to the commodity food program in the City of Warren is that recipients receive shipments twice a month through additional statewide and local funding. This program is administered in the city of Warren through a mobile food pantry which is organized by SCOPE of Warren.

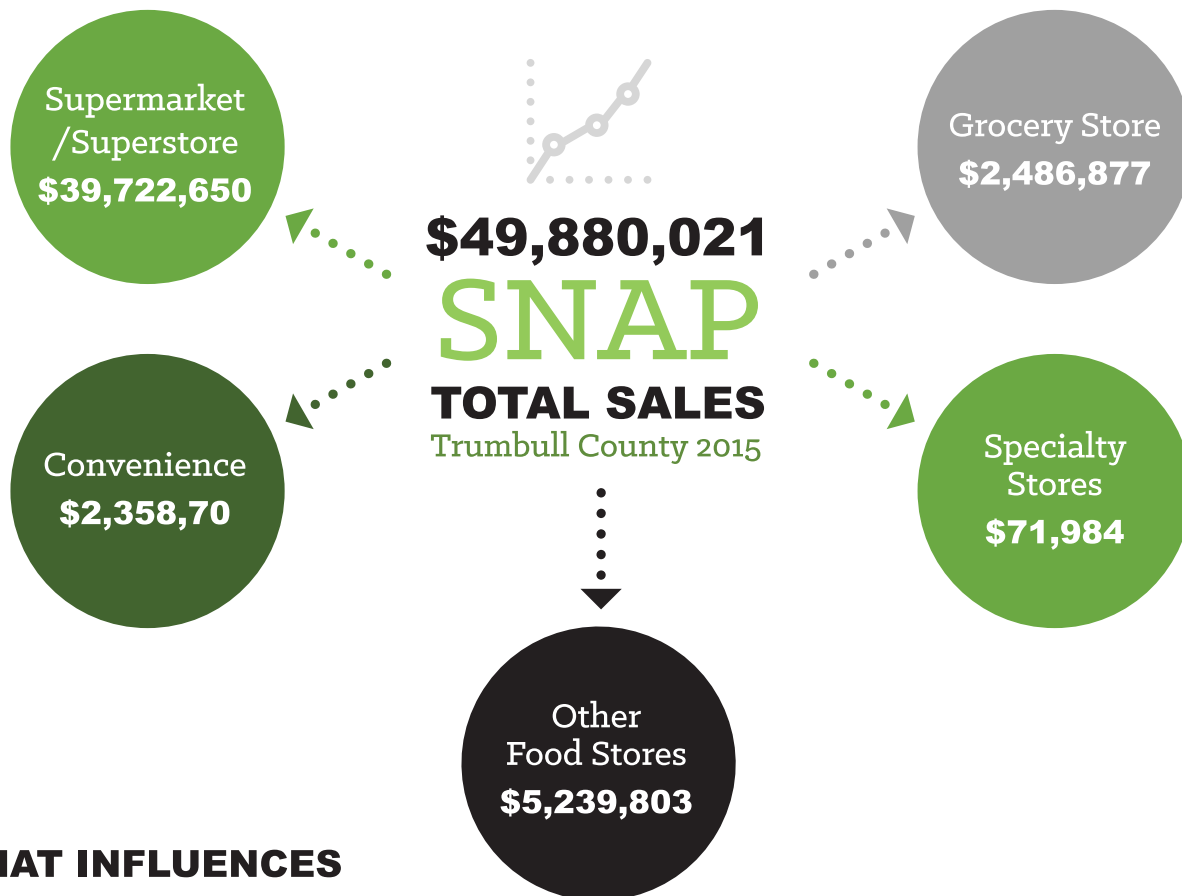
National School Lunch Program - Provides meal assistance for children in public and nonprofit private schools. The goal is of this program is to provide nutritional low cost or free lunches each school day. Most schools in the city of Warren offer this program. Under Provision 2, because of the high percentage of students that need the program and attend Warren City Schools, all enrolled students are eligible to participate in the program.

National School Breakfast Program - Provides cash assistance to states to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in public schools and not-for-profit private schools. This program is offered at most schools within the city.

Children and Adult Child Care Food Program - Provides aid for snacks and lunches at child and adult care institutions and family or group day care homes. The program is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture. Snacks must be healthy (low in sugar and salt) and promote the overall wellness of the target individual.

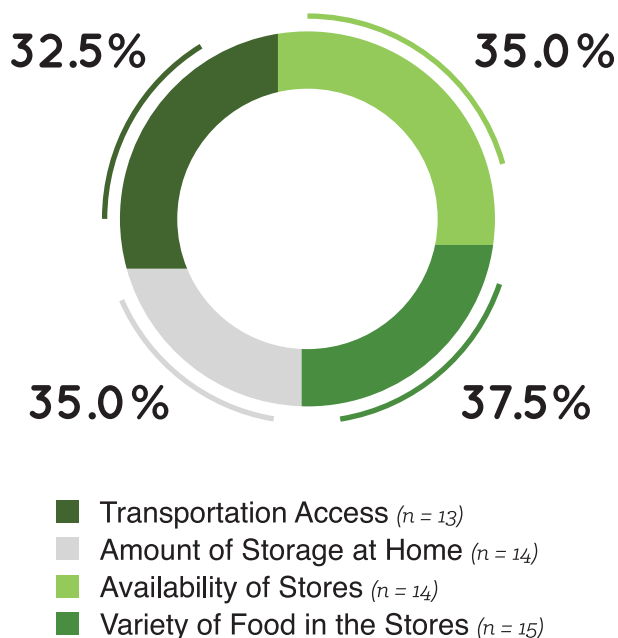
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program - Program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. The goal is to improve children's overall diet and create healthier eating habits to impact their present and future health. The program started localized in a few states and because of its popularity it is now available in all 50 states.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - Program offering nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families. It is the largest program that works to address domestic hunger. The program is administered through a Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that is scanned at the point of sale, just as a debit or credit card would be scanned.



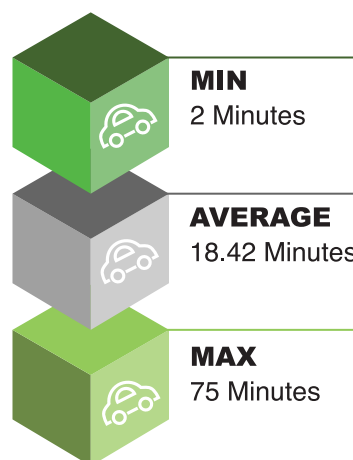
WHAT INFLUENCES HOW OFTEN YOU SHOP FOR FOOD?

2016 Online Survey - 40 Answered



TIME IT TAKES TO REACH PRIMARY FOOD RETAIL SOURCE

2016 Online Survey - 40 Answered



Transportation was discussed in every single community meeting as a significant obstacle to reaching food security.

When there is transportation available, many can reach the affordable food they need for their families. Much of Warren is a food desert with all its full-service supermarkets and grocers located in only the northern half of the city.

TRANSPORTATION OBSTACLES BY TYPE FROM COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY AND SHOPPING PATTERNS FOCUS GROUPS



Method: Buses

Obstacles: Wait times, food spoilage, and a limited route



Method: Walk and Bike

Obstacles: Safety, convenience, weather, access to a bike

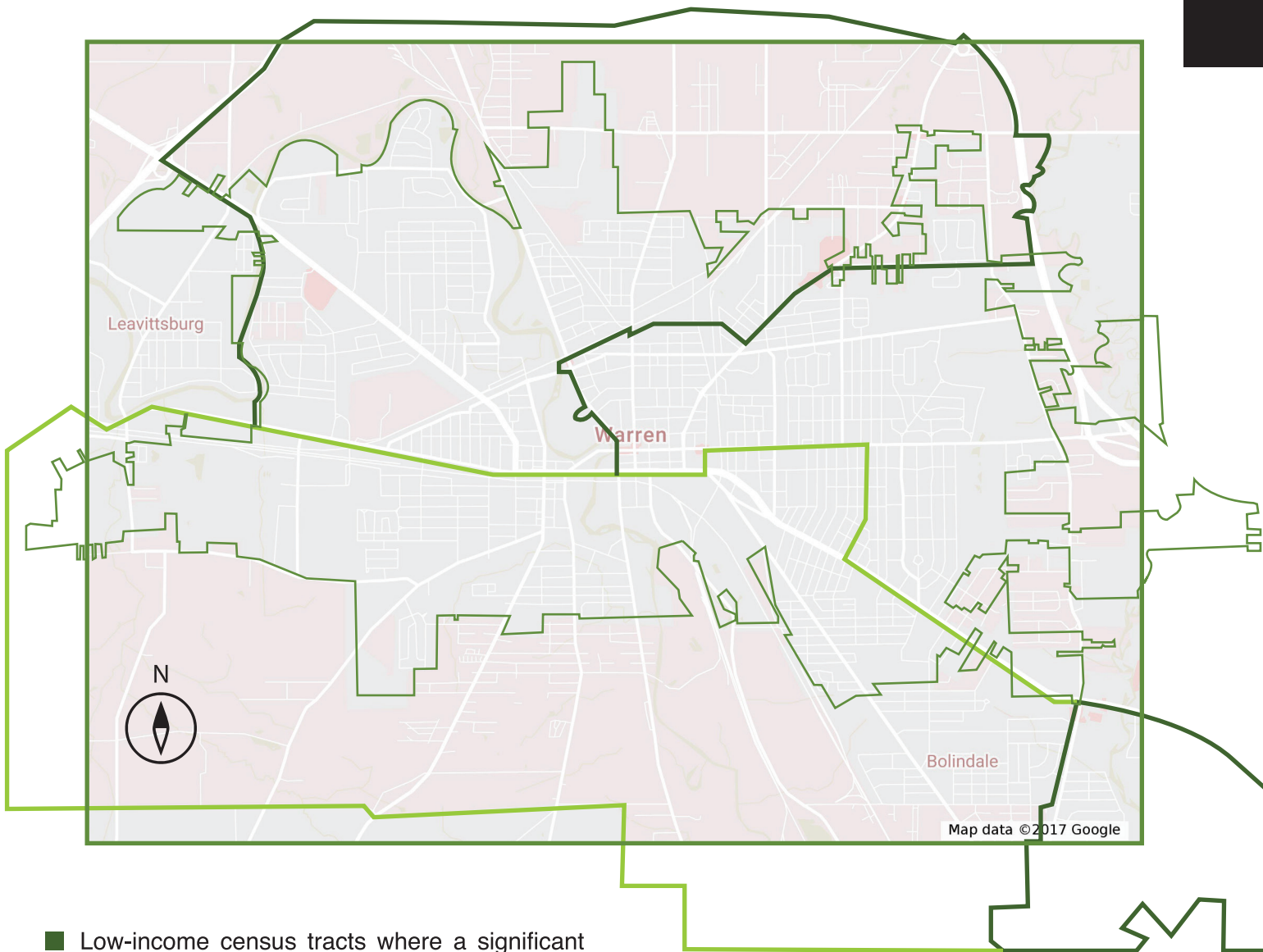


Method: Drive

Obstacles: Many participants did not have their own car and had to arrange rides, expensive to use a taxi, there are not enough drivers to meet Uber and Lyft demands, particularly during the day when one would like to shop.



WARREN, OHIO FOOD DESERT MAP



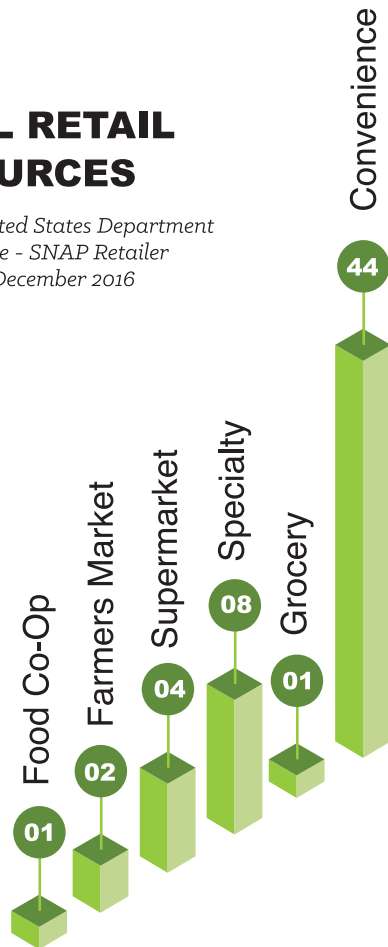
- Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents are **more than 1/2 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.**
- Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents are **more than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.**

*Data provided from United States
Department of Agriculture Food Desert
Mapping Tool.*

Availability and Affordability

TOTAL RETAIL RESOURCES

Google - United States Department of Agriculture - SNAP Retailer Database - December 2016

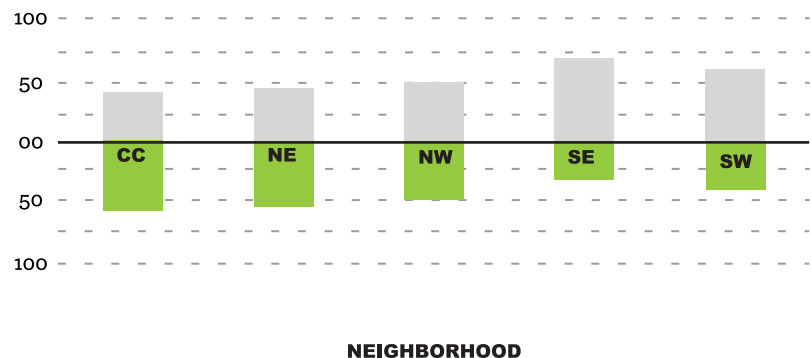


TNP performed availability and affordability surveys at 24 retail establishments in the city that accept SNAP EBT benefits looking at 87 food items from the USDA's Thrifty Meal Plan. The CFSA Toolkit provided a store inventory instrument based on the USDA's Thrifty Food plan guidelines. This Plan is intended to feed a family of 4 (one male, ages 19-50; one female, ages 19-50; one child, ages 6-8; one child, ages 9-11) for one week. The plan was based on both nutritional value (nutrition guidelines met per person over the course of the week) and affordability (cheaper substitutes encouraged). The USDA's anticipated cost of this plan is \$146.90/week. Availability of foods was a major issue in these Warren stores, and only four stores exceeded 90% of the shopping list (no one store reached 100%). Of these four stores, none were able to provide the grocery list under budget. In fact, the cost for these items ranged from 108-191% (\$159.01-\$279.93) of the weekly budget allowed by the USDA.

AVERAGE AVAILABILITY OF GROCERY ITEMS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

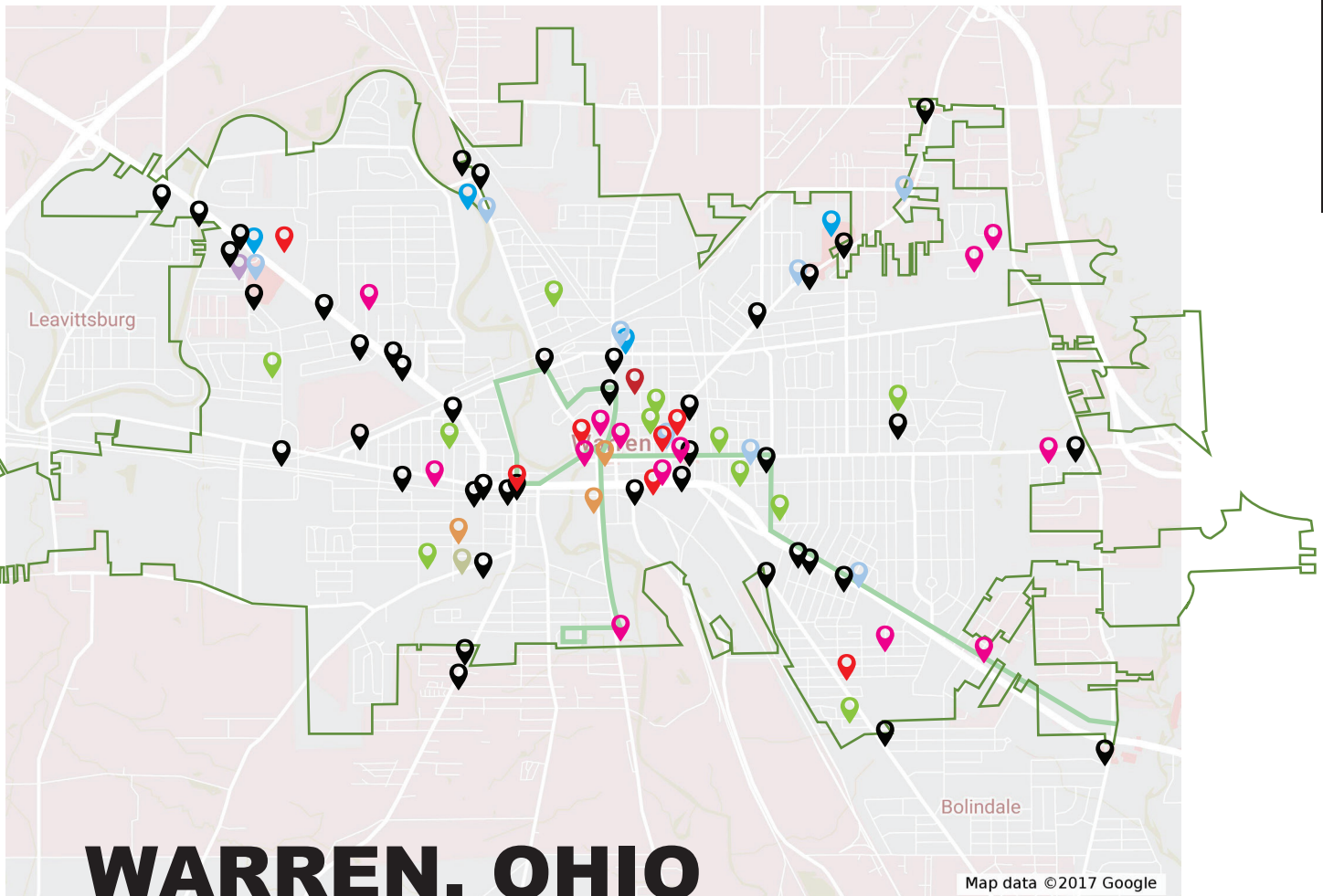
2017 Availability and Affordability Survey

■ Avg % of Items Not Present
■ Avg % of Items Present





0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



WARREN, OHIO

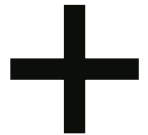
FOOD RESOURCES

LEGEND

Food Locations
Classifications

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 📍 Convenience | 🍅 Farmers' Markets |
| 🛒 Grocery | 🌱 GROW Community Gardens |
| 🏪 Specialty | 🏠 Emergency Grocery Pantries |
| 🏬 Supermarket | 🍽️ Emergency Prepared Meals |
| 🏡 Food Cooperatives | 🚌 WRTA Bus Route |
| | 📐 City of Warren Boundary |

RECOM- MENDA- TIONS



Transportation
Community Education
Urban Agriculture
Local Food Economy

Transportation

Strengths –

- A fixed transportation route that runs a consistent schedule into the city.
- On Demand Transportation service for pre-qualified individuals through various service providers.
- Existing sidewalk infrastructure in many parts of the city.
- Trumbull County Metro Parks Bike Path that connects parts of the city.
- Warren Farmers Market Transportation weekly service.

Challenges –

- Fixed route transportation is only available in 2 hour increments and does not pass a full service grocery store.
- There is a demand for rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft that cannot be met with current supply.
- Many streets and sidewalks in the city of Warren are currently not pedestrian friendly. In some neighborhoods throughout all parts of the city, sidewalks are incomplete. Streets are also of minimal use to cyclists due to lack of infrastructure such as bike lanes.
- The bike trail is sometimes used by criminals to evade authorities or for other nefarious purposes.
- “On-Demand” transportation only provides service to pre-qualified individuals and some users reported extended wait times when reserving rides.

Fixed route transportation is a bus or system of vehicles that make stops at a specific location on a routine and predictable basis. Active transportation makes it easier for residents to travel in the city, along with the creation of infrastructure that promotes walking and cycling. To create more equitable food access in the city of Warren, all forms of transportation must be enhanced to reach more people and more locations within in the city.

Recommendations –

- Reallocation of current resources to provide a greater reach of services to more communities.
- Greater analysis and strategic planning with a local university and the local government to create complete streets that include bike lanes, lighting, pedestrian crosswalks and sidewalks, sufficient parking and automobile use. This will open up areas of the city to those who don't have access to a car and make it easier for those people to reach food sources such as grocery stores, the farmers market, community gardens, etc.
- Lobby policy makers to help bring more transportation funding from the state and local government to the region to expand services and infrastructure to reach a greater number of communities.
- Greater collaboration amongst current service providers as to reach more people with current resources available.
- Demand for drivers during daytime hours through various online rideshare services has provided a business opportunity for qualified individuals.



Community Education

Education is the first step in making a healthy choice. When providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to communities and populations that have not had these foods readily available in the past, it is crucial that education is provided so people can learn how the food they eat affects their body, mind, and overall health.

Recommendations –

- Data exploration of consumer habits on a larger scale through a greater collaboration with service providers.
 - What are consumer routines?
 - Why do people run out of money for food?
 - What are people purchasing?
- Educational classes on budgeting, couponing, and household management
- Nutrition classes for young families at every income level
- Collaboration with the local schools in the city to provide farm fresh foods to students as part of their daily lunch.
- Collaboration with local churches to provide healthy snacks and nutrition education as part of their community outreach and food pantry programs.
- Providing nutrition education at the point of sale in current food retail stores.

Strengths –

- Nutrition education programs by Mercy Health, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership and the Warren Farmers Market, Community Volunteer Council, SCOPE, Trumbull County WIC, Ohio State University Trumbull County Extension, and various other organizations.

Challenges –

- Some programs currently operating to provide nutrition/consumer education are targeted in their demographic and income requirements, leaving parts of the population left behind.







Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is the act of growing your food, either for personal consumption or retail. At the time of publishing this report, there are currently 12 community gardens in the city that are dedicated to food production. Warren, Ohio has seen a significant shift in land use practices in its residential neighborhoods, a result of an aggressive and proactive approach to demolition of blighted properties and a rise in urban agriculture and recreational green space.



Recommendations –

- Make agriculture use a permitted Primary and Secondary Use in all Zoning Districts and define “agriculture use” as “land used for cultivation and harvesting of vegetables, fruits, plants, trees, flowers, and herbs.” Also, allow the following structures as accessories to agricultural use: green houses, hoop houses, cold frames, raised planting beds, trash containers, storage/tool sheds, plazas, walkways, benches, tables, bike racks, playground equipment, rain barrels, compost bins, fences, walls, and signs.
- Provide vacant space, training, and retail markets for those that would like to start an urban agriculture business.
- Work with community members to help them build gardens in their own yard/roof space so they can garden in a space closer to home that does not require transportation to reach.

Strengths –

- 12 community gardens dedicated to food production and counting.
- Over 41,000 sq. ft. of tilled production space where the community is actively growing food.
- Technical support and community garden leadership development provided by Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership’s GROW Program.
- Classes provided through Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership and OSU Extension Trumbull County to teach skills necessary for food production.
- Over 800 families in Trumbull County in the agricultural industry.

Challenges –

- It is currently a timely and costly process for community gardens to start with proper tools and infrastructure.
- No protections exist for urban agriculture efforts in Warren, in fact basic uses like gardens and other projects are potentially in violation of existing city code.
- Short growing seasons.
- Lack of insect pollinators in certain parts of the city, causing a decrease in yield.

Local Food Economy

The goal of a Local Food Economy is to connect local family farmers and producers to the people in the community through direct and indirect sales channels and the resources they need to build successful and sustainable businesses.



Recommendations –

- Creation of a space to incubate food based businesses, most of our current local producers are renting kitchen space in Cleveland and Youngstown.
- There are a multitude of food retailers in the city that could use their retail space to fill gaps in the types of foods offered that have been left by larger retailers as that have closed or moved, setting them apart from their competitors.
- Opportunities to provide a full service grocery store or food cooperative that would serve neighborhoods that lack fresh, unprocessed foods.
- Expand the Warren Farmers Market into more communities through pop up markets or similar models in order to provide more opportunities for local makers to sell their produce and value added products within the community.
- More collaborations between emergency food providers (such as churches and food pantries) in order to reach a broader area and not service the same areas, reducing food waste as well as reaching others that may need it more.

Strengths –

- 5 full service grocery stores in the northern half of the city.
- 2 seasonal and 1 year-round Farmer's Markets operating within the city which provide producers a place to market their products directly to consumers which is important for local, small scale producers.
- A centrally located local produce distributor that also opens to the public on select days and hours.
- Social service providers willing to distribute food
- A rich local history of food and family recipes and a general love of food that can be seen throughout the city.
- Some of the best restaurants in Northeast Ohio.

Challenges –

- "In a fast food market, how do you help people acquire a taste and will for healthy foods?" – Local Community Activist
- Consumer demand and price.
- Price of equipment to start providing fresher foods within a retail environment.
- Competition with fast food chains restaurants selling cheap, unhealthy, convenient food.

