

Finding Food in Hegewisch: Summary Report, December 11, 2007

Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment

The Project:

In fall, 2003, researchers at Chicago State University and UIC were funded by the Chicago Community Trust to perform a region-wide analysis of access to healthy food. This study, named the Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment, called for region-wide mapping and deep analysis of a number of case study areas. The Hegewisch Community Area was chosen as a case study area. Researchers partnered with the Hegewisch Community Committee to collect the Hegewisch data. Healthy Southeast Chicago partnered with us by helping set up this dissemination meeting.

The Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment measured access to food in Hegewisch through four techniques. First, Hegewisch was part of a broad mapping of food access sites in the six-county Chicago area. This data was analyzed by the number of stores in each community and also by a technique that looked at the mean distance from all street addresses in a community to stores of various types. Second, Hegewisch was one of six case-study areas where qualitative group interviews were performed. These interviews included consumers, store managers, emergency food system workers, service providers, and local activists. Third, a market basket study, where stores are assessed for the availability of foods on a standard list, was performed. Fourth, a door-to-door survey, focusing on hunger and accessing healthy food, was performed.

Store Mapping:

Key Findings of the GIS Study include include:

- Overall, the number of supermarkets in Hegewisch is very low. There is just one large local chain supermarket, Pete's Market, and one small supermarket, Hart's.
- Pete's Market is not located in the main residential area of Hegewisch, so Hegewisch residents, on average, must travel almost two miles to the nearest large supermarket, the second highest distance of any Chicago community.
- There are no national chain supermarkets in Hegewisch. Hegewisch residents must travel on average over 3½ miles to the nearest full-service chain supermarket (the Jewel in East Side or in South Holland), and a similar distance to the nearest discount supermarket (Aldi).
- Other retailers, such as chain drug stores, are also not located in the main residential area of the community. There is one Walgreen's, near the Pete's market, which is, again, almost 2 miles from most residents.
- Hegewisch is also the furthest away of any community in the city to the nearest farmers' market, as well as specialty stores such as Whole Foods, and there are few chain fast-food restaurants.
- Changes since 2005 are small. A closer Aldi has opened, while Dominicks' became Pete's Market.

The Geography of Hegewisch:

For this study, we use the borders for Hegewisch that set by the city. This includes the residential area commonly referred to as Hegewisch, plus the surrounding industrial, park, and water areas, including Hegewisch Marsh, the area between the Calumet River and I-94, and Wolf Lake. Most importantly, it also includes the southernmost part of what is commonly referred to as East Side, south of 116th St. and east of Avenue O. This is important because this is the location of Pete's Market, as well as a Walgreen's, both of which are officially in the Hegewisch community area, although this area is usually referred to as East Side.

Hegewisch is one of the two most isolated communities in Chicago (neighboring Riverdale is perhaps the most isolated). Compared to other Chicago communities, it has a small population (9781 in 2000). There are few services in the main residential area, and it is difficult to get to services in surrounding areas, particularly by public transportation.

Hegewisch neighbors Indiana, where many residents shop. Unfortunately, this study includes suburban Illinois stores, but not Indiana stores, so distance calculations do not include Indiana stores. However, while many residents do shop in Indiana, the stores are generally a few miles away, so the error from this omission is less than it might be.

Qualitative Analysis:

Five qualitative interviews were held in Hegewisch across four food system sectors, retail food stores, community members, community gardeners and the emergency food system. Perspectives were sought from a range of food sector stakeholders ranging from community members to retail food store owners and food pantry staff. Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were coded for each food sector then the Atlas-ti software program was used to examine the data across the food system sectors to determine the issues that were common as well as unique to each food system sector in response to the interview questions. The complete results are presented in the Report with the Key Findings described here.

Key Findings

- Food security does not seem to be a salient issue among most interview participants except for vulnerable groups such as seniors and homeless residents.
- Emergency Food Programs need more financial support and structure to be more effective.
- Transportation seems to be a barrier as retail food outlets and emergency food programs were noted to be difficult to reach by foot or public transportation.
- There was a perception that non-community members were taking advantage of Hegewisch's limited emergency food programs.
- Retail food outlets seem better equipped, informed and interested in serving both healthy food and culturally appropriate foods than other Chicago community areas in this food assessment study.
- Clearly there is room to make improvements on how Retail Food Outlets and Emergency Food Programs handle their expired or damaged products.

Emergent Themes

The Emergent Themes fall into nine major categories.

- Barriers to Food Assistance Programs
 - Inconveniently Located
 - High Demand for Services
 - Inconvenient Times
 - Embarrassment in Accessing Services
 - Food Offered is Undesirable

- Community Area Food Retail Outlets Ability to Offer Healthy Food
 - Access to Food Retail Outlets
 - Challenges of Retail Food Outlet: Competition from Chain Stores
 - Challenges of Retail Food Outlet: Barriers to offering Healthy foods choices
 - Challenges of Retail Food Outlet: Locally grown foods

- Strategies to Access Food by Needy Community Residents.
- Threats to Family-level Food Security
 - Sporadic employment
 - Inadequate Transportation
 - Homelessness or Inadequate Housing

- Potential Solutions
 - Improve Transportation Options
 - To Restrict Access to Emergency Food Programs to Only Eligible Residents
 - To Improve Access to Healthy Food
 - Improve the Variety of Healthy Food available at the food pantry

- Vulnerable Groups
- Strengths of Emergency Food Programs in Hegewisch
- Barriers to Community Gardening in Hegewisch
- Food Waste

The Appendix delineates interest on behalf of the food sector interviewees in becoming involved in a community-driven food security initiative.

Contact Information:

For more information, please contact:

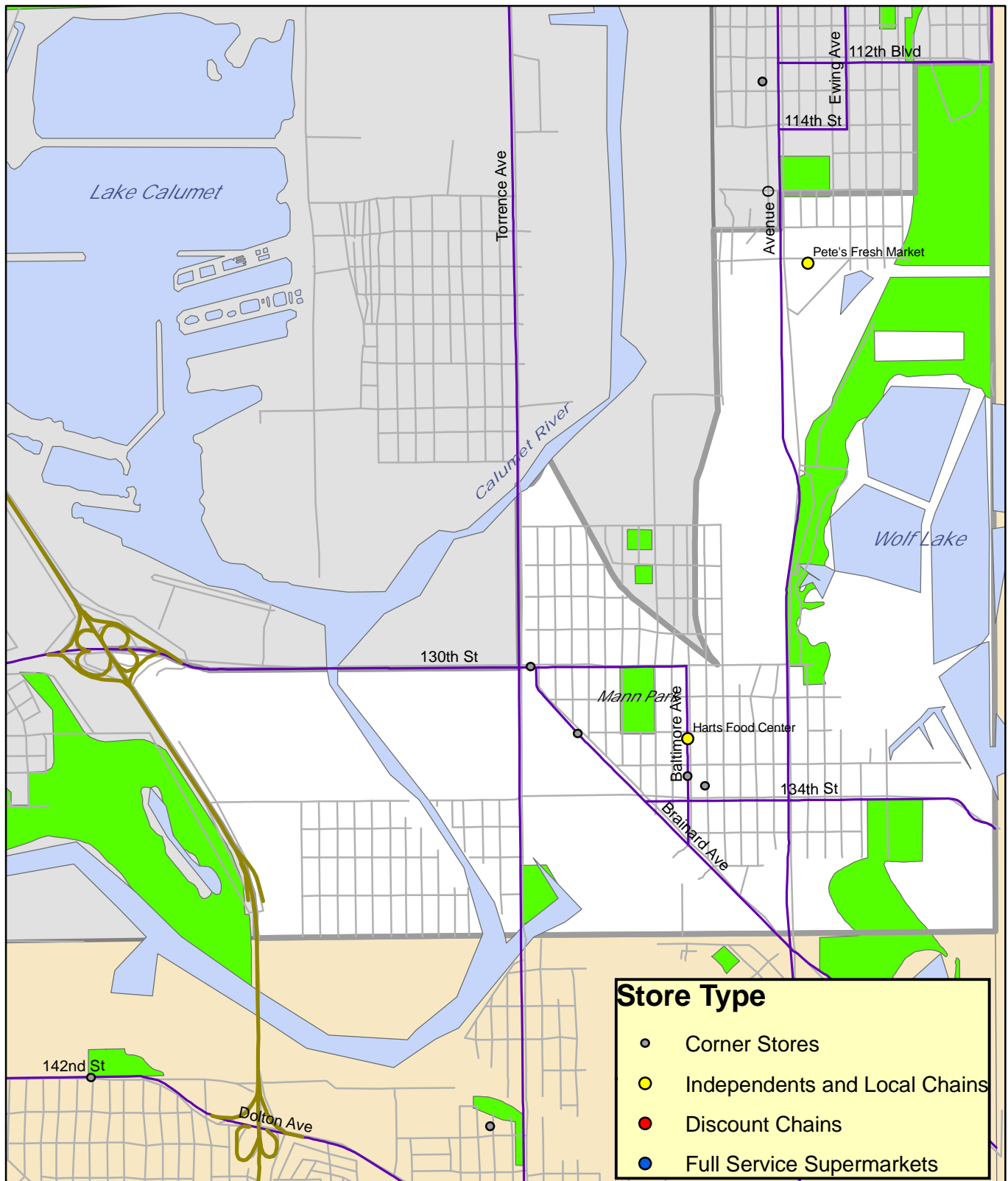
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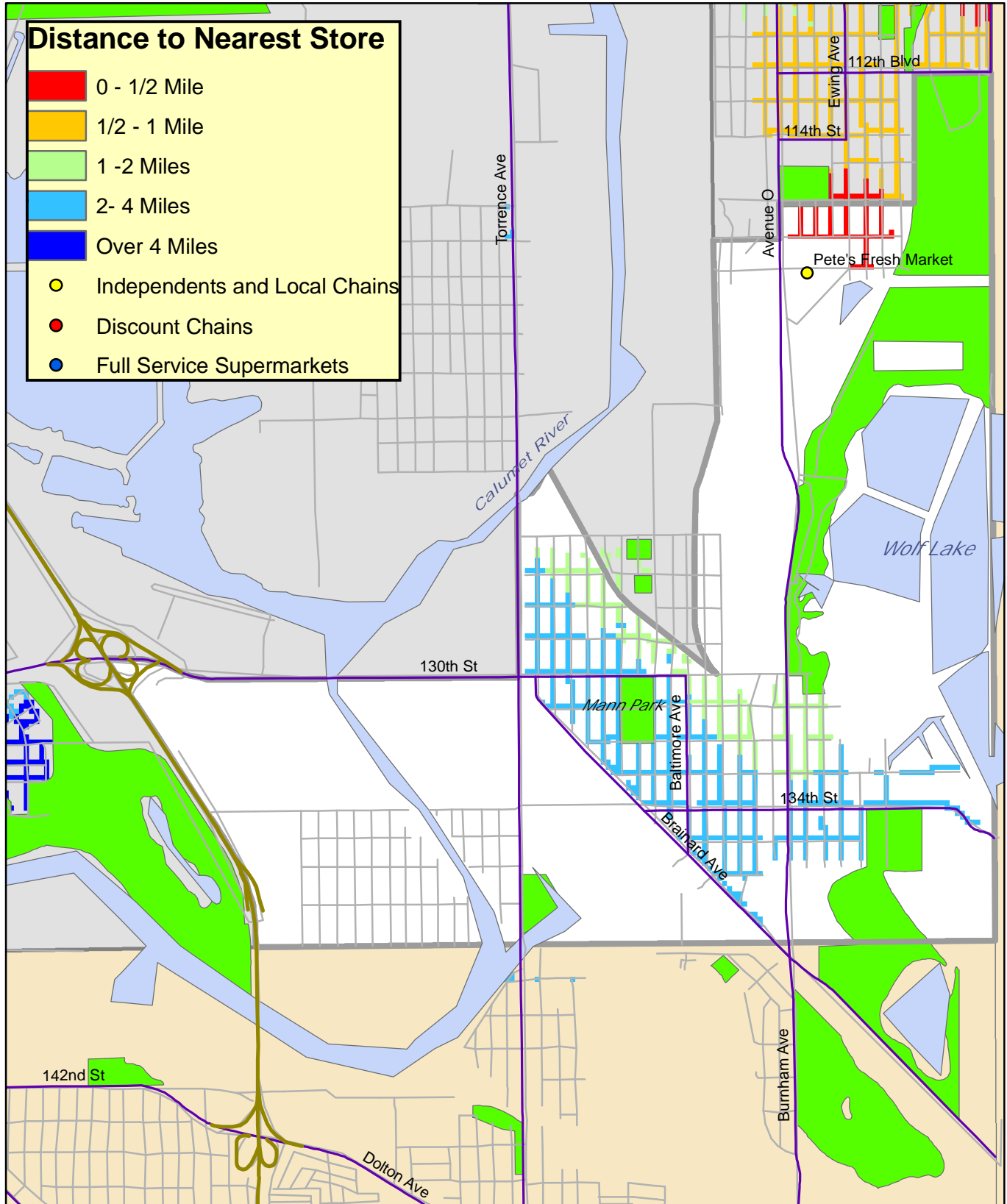
Supermarkets and Corner Stores in Hegewisch



Sources:
 Supermarkets: Company Websites and In-person Surveys, Summer, 2007
 Corner Stores: InfoUSA, 2003

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Distance to Nearest Large Supermarket Hegewisch, 2007



Sources:
 Supermarkets: Company Websites and In-person Surveys, Summer, 2007;
 Streets and Land Use Data: Chicago Metro Agency for Planning, ESRI

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