

# **Why it's Easier to Get a Burger than Broccoli on West Broadway:**

**The geography of food insecurity in Louisville, with a focus on  
the West End and East Downtown**

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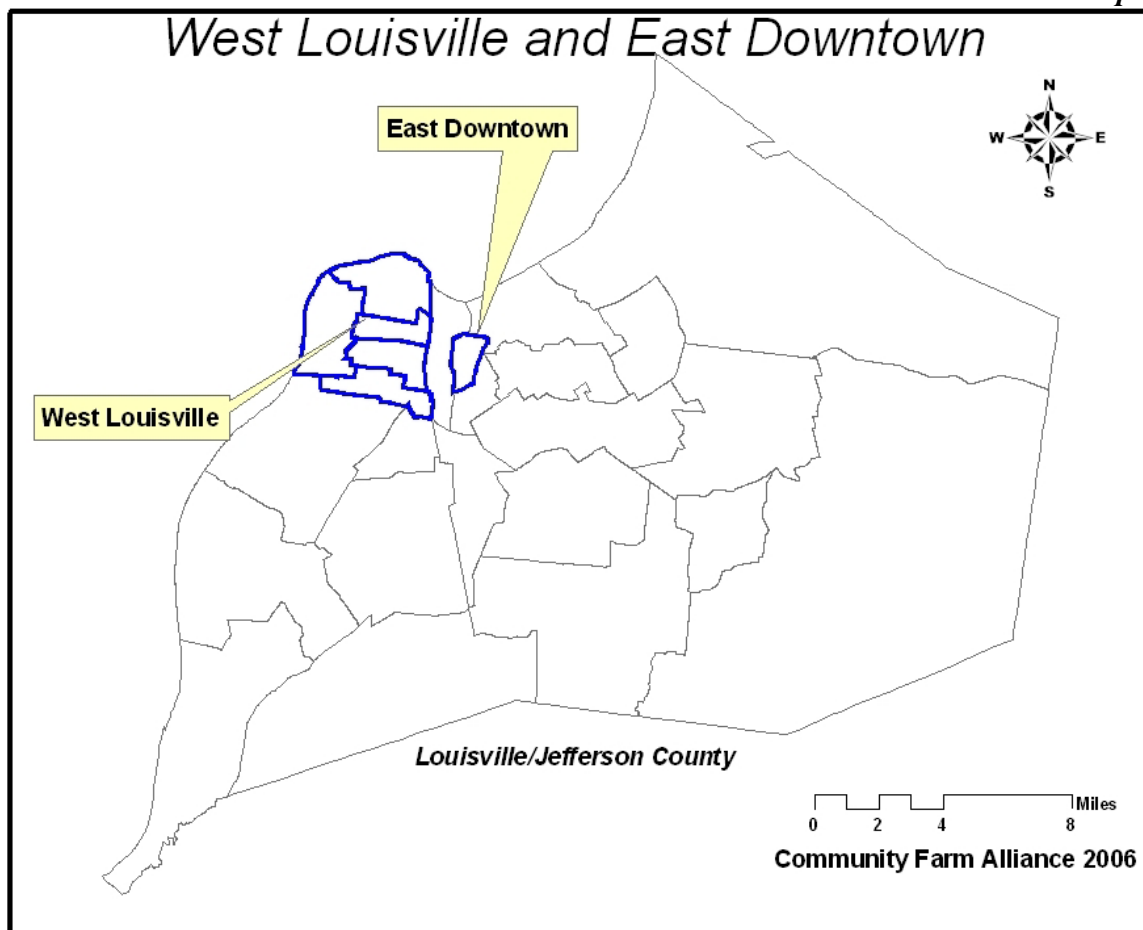


Community Farm Alliance

### ***Food insecurity exists here***

The communities that make up Louisville's West End and East Downtown are food insecure, meaning that many individuals and families living here do not have access to enough healthy food. This injustice is created by a related set of problems. Like other low income communities of color across the nation, the food retail sector in West Louisville and East Downtown does not meet local demand, leaving community members without good options for buying food within their neighborhoods<sup>1</sup>. Since many residents of the West End and East Downtown do not have access to vehicles, they become marooned within a food desert, where they cannot purchase the nutritious foods necessary for healthy living<sup>2</sup>. Often, the only remaining option for members of these communities is to buy the readily available unhealthy foods, especially fast food. As a result, the standard of living is lower in the West End and East Downtown than it is in other parts of Louisville, and residents are at risk for food related health problems<sup>3</sup>.

***Map 1***



<sup>1</sup> Nord, Mark; Andrews, Margaret *Putting Food on the Table: Household food security in the US* Amber Waves, Feb. 2003 Vol. 1, issue 1 ERS USDA

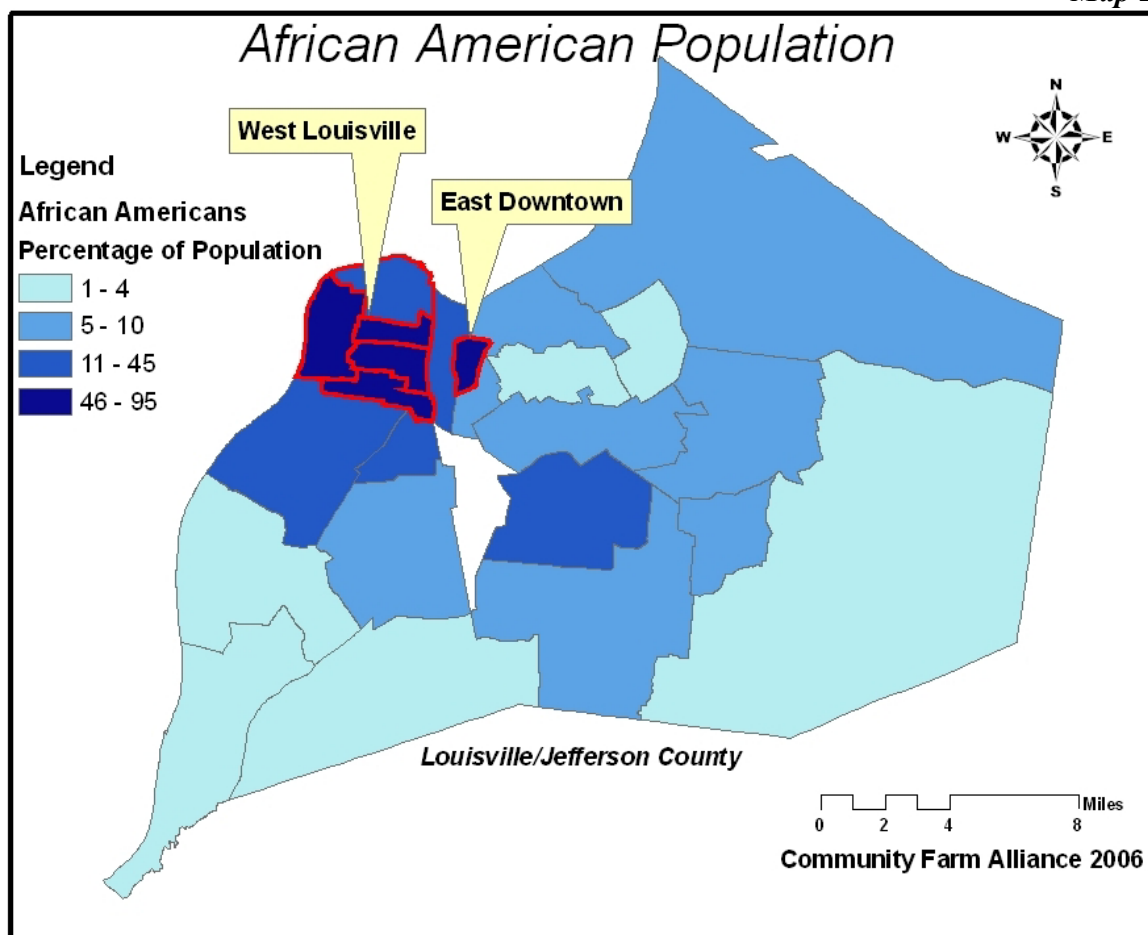
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fooddeserts.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Vosoris, Nichola T.; Tarasuk Valerie S. *Household Food Insufficiency is Associated with Poorer Health* 2003 [The American Society for Nutritional Sciences](#) J. Nutr. 133:120-126, January 2003

## *Geography and demographics*

West Louisville stretches north from the Algonquin Parkway and West from Roy Wilkins Drive. It includes the neighborhoods of Algonquin, Park Hill, Park Duvalle, Chickasaw, Shawnee, Portland, California, Parkland and Russell. According to the last census, about 51,000 of West Louisville's 64,741 inhabitants are African American. The region is also home to 12,282 White people, 9,779 of whom live in the Portland neighborhood<sup>4</sup>. West Louisville is very poor. By census tract the average median household income is \$20,900, about half of the Jefferson County-wide median of \$39,457<sup>5</sup>. In some parts of the West End, the median household income drops below \$10,000, less than ¼ of the county median.

*Map 2*



East Downtown is composed of the Phoenix Hill, Smoketown, and Shelby Park neighborhoods and its demographics are similar to the West End's. 10,224 people inhabit East Downtown. 6,971 of them are African American and 2,840 are White<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center

<sup>5</sup> Census 2000, Summary File 3, P53

<sup>6</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center

Poverty is especially striking in East Downtown where the median household income is only \$14,333 when averaged by census tract.

*Table 1*  
*Race and Income*<sup>78</sup>

<b>Region</b>	<b>African American Population (%)</b>	<b>Average Median Household Income by Census Tract (\$)</b>
<i>West Louisville</i>	79	20,900
<i>East Downtown</i>	68	14,333
<i>Jefferson County</i>	19	39,457

### ***Store locations and food prices***

The cost and quality of food available to Louisville residents depends on where they live within the city. Market basket research conducted in Louisville/Jefferson county in spring of 2005 confirms that food prices vary greatly depending on where food is purchased<sup>9</sup>. Researchers surveyed stores across the county for the price and availability of a 12 item market basket of foods that reflects the USDA's food pyramid eating recommendations<sup>10</sup>. Their findings were dismal. The research shows that residents of the low-income West End and East Downtown areas are likely to have to spend the most to buy healthy foods and to have the hardest time getting high quality foods.

The major problem for residents of the West End and East Downtown is that their areas are underserved by the types of stores that carry a good selection of high quality, low priced foods. The market basket research shows that supermarkets and superstores provide customers with the best combination of quality and affordability when compared to other types of food sellers (*see tables 2 and 3*). The West End and East Downtown are underserved by both supermarkets and superstores (*see map 3*). Neither of these areas has a superstore. Although there are some supermarkets in the West End, its residents are still significantly underserved<sup>11</sup>. Throughout the West End there is an average of only 1 full service grocer per 25,000 residents, compared to a Jefferson County wide ratio of 1 per every 12,500 residents<sup>12</sup> (*see map 3*).

<sup>7</sup> 2000 Census of population and housing, Kentucky State Data Center

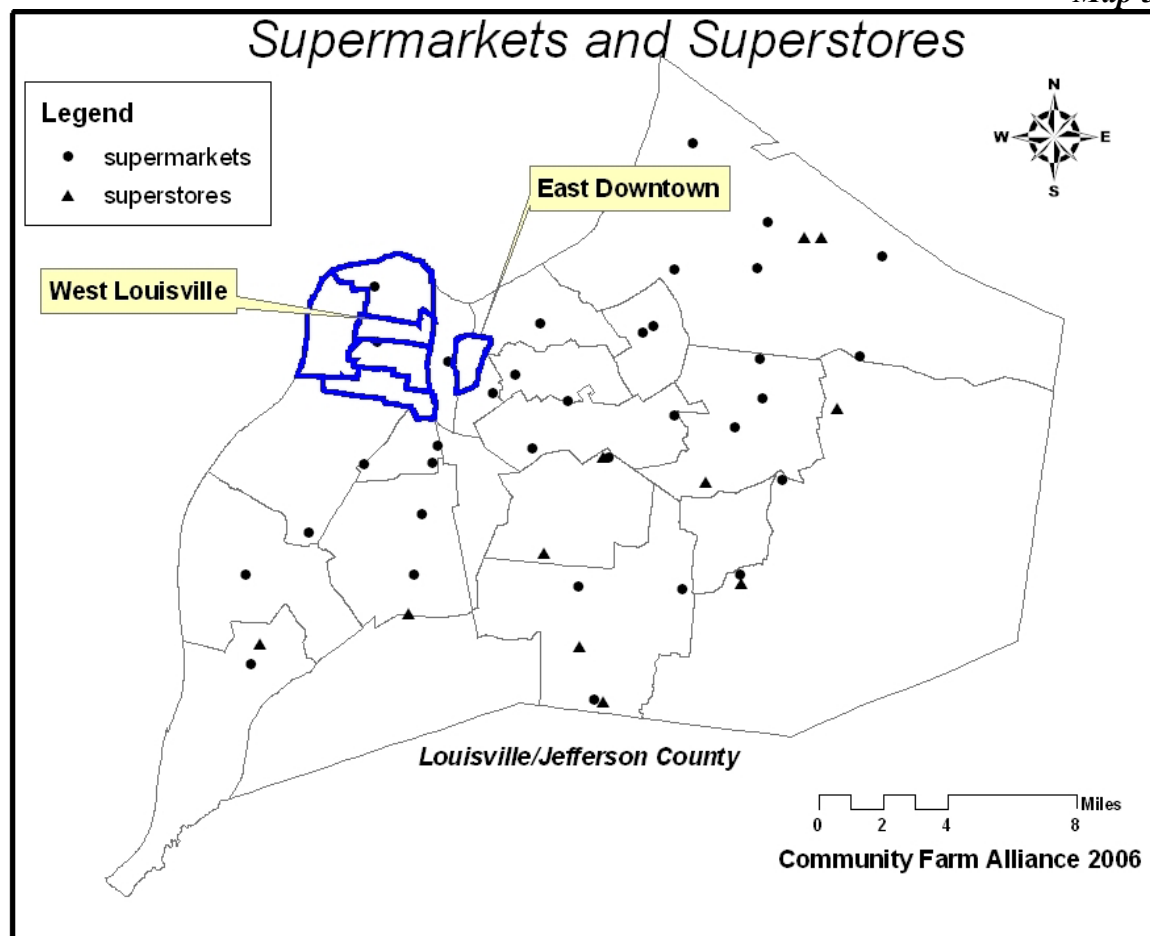
<sup>8</sup> <sup>8</sup> *Making Connections* Kentucky Population Research, Fall 2000

<sup>9</sup> Conducted by the West Louisville Food Assessment Research Advisory Team (RAT), Chair; Dr. Lisa Markowitz, Anthropology, University of Louisville

<sup>10</sup> [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

<sup>11</sup> Louisville Metro Health Department, a listing of all stores and restaurants licensed to sell food

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of this study we counted only superstores, supermarkets and natural food supermarkets as full service grocers



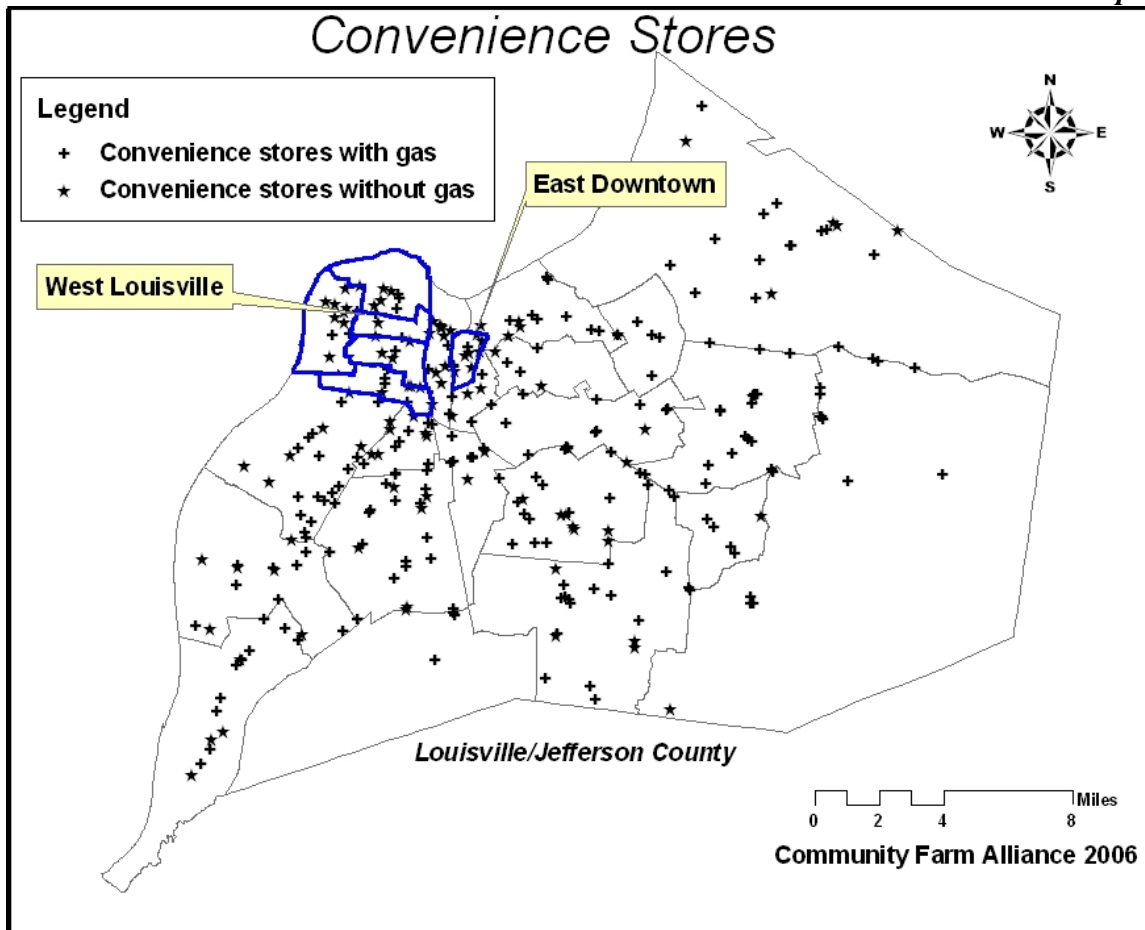
The other three store types that carried all, or almost all, of the market basket were natural foods stores, discount grocers, and convenience stores without gas. Like superstores, natural food stores are completely missing from the West End and East Downtown. Both of these areas do feature discount grocers, however the food and service at these outlets is of a lower quality<sup>13</sup>. Convenience stores are abundant in the West End and East Downtown (*see map 4*), but come with another set of problems.

<sup>13</sup> Shaffer, Amanda *The Persistence of LA's Grocery Gap* 2002 Center for Food and Justice Urban and Environmental Policy Institute; Occidental College

*Table 2*  
*Food Availability at different types of stores*

Store Type	Percentage of Market Basket Items Carried (%)
<b>Supermarket</b>	100
<b>Convenience With Gas</b>	58.3
<b>Convenience Without Gas</b>	100
<b>Health Food</b>	100
<b>Pharmacy/Drugstore</b>	25
<b>General Stores</b>	25
<b>Discount Grocers</b>	91.6
<b>Superstore</b>	100

*Map 4*



Convenience stores charge higher prices for food than any of the other store types, aside from the hyper-expensive natural foods stores. This is important because for many people living the West End and East Downtown convenience stores are the only accessible type of food retailer. Because of this, residents are forced to do a great deal of

their shopping at convenience stores, where the market basket costs roughly 50% more than at the supermarket (*see table 3*). Discount grocers are the store type that appears to have the lowest price, however this figure is misleading. At the discount grocery stores surveyed, researchers found only 11 of the 12 market basket items, and so the market basket price is lower because there is an item missing and its price is not accounted for.

*Table 3*  
*Market Basket Prices at Stores with Good Food Availability*

Store Type	Market Basket Price (\$)
<b>Supermarket</b>	16.09
<b>Convenience Without Gas</b>	23.89
<b>Health Food Stores</b>	40.05
<b>Discount Grocers</b>	15.07
<b>Superstores</b>	20.24

### *How's the food?*

Another problem is food quality. As previously mentioned, the discount grocers sprinkled throughout the West End and East Downtown carry inferior goods and offer an inferior shopping experience. They are messy, disorganized and have long, slow lines at the cash register. However, the discount grocers are not the only store type offering a second rate shopping experience to grocery buyers in the West End and East Downtown. Even first tier national chains sell lower quality goods at their low income outlets. These quotes from residents of the West End and East Downtown illustrate the poor quality of the food sold by chain stores located within their neighborhoods.

At the Portland (West End) farmers' market we asked an anonymous shopper who lived in the neighborhood,

*"Do you eat more fruits and vegetables because of the market?"*

And she responded, *"Yeah, cause it's available...it's hard to find good fresh produce at the store...I bought iceberg lettuce at Kroger and it looks good, and then when I cut it open it's not good inside, it's all brown and wilted"*.

The situation is much the same in East Downtown, as reported by a Community Farm Alliance (CFA) member who lives in Shelby Park

*"The Second Street store (Kroger) caters to a lot of elderly African American people, and that meat is not grade one. You can tell because if you put it in the ice box overnight, it stinks! These people don't have a choice, they can't get out"*.

These statements are representative of what people living in the West End and East Downtown experience when shopping at their local supermarkets. Considering that these supermarkets are the best shopping options within the two areas, the poor quality of meat and produce that they carry attests to the difficulty of finding good food in the West End and East Downtown.

We also conducted a small pilot survey to gauge attitudes that residents of the West End and East Downtown held about food access and came up with similar results. When asked if their neighborhood food store has a wide range of fresh produce 66% of respondents disagreed. When asked how they felt about the statement, "when I visit a

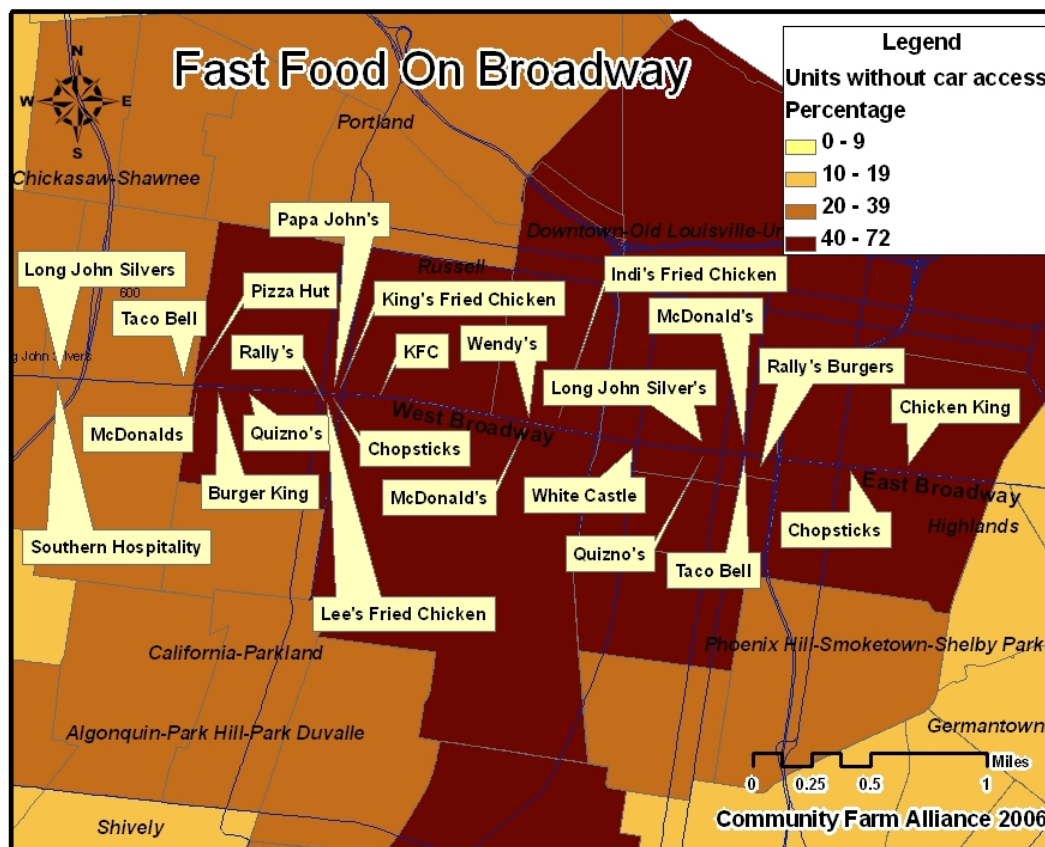
store on the other side of town I am struck by how clean the store is and how attractive the fruits and vegetables are” 60% strongly agreed<sup>14</sup>.

### *What else is there to eat? Fast food*

While the West End and East Downtown lack supermarkets and other sources of affordable, healthy foods, these areas have more than their share of fast food restaurants. Fast Food chains do little to fill the healthy food gap created by the lack of supermarkets. They provide unhealthy foods, high in saturated fat<sup>15</sup> and are more of a risk to community nutrition than an asset.

Harmful fast food restaurants abound in the West End and East Downtown. Map 5 shows Broadway Street, a main (clogged) artery stretching from East Downtown through West End. This 2.8 mile stretch features 24 fast food restaurants, meaning that on average one never has to walk much more than 1/10 of a mile to find a cholesterol packed hamburger or its equivalent on Broadway. Along this stretch there are 2 Long John Silver's restaurants, 3 McDonald's restaurants, 2 Indi's Fried Chicken restaurants, 2 Rally's hamburger restaurants and 2 taco bell restaurants in addition to numerous other fast food chains including but not limited to Pizza Hut, KFC, White Castle and Wendy's.

*Map5*



<sup>14</sup> Hot Seat Survey, Stacy Brooks, September 2005 Healthy Foods Local Farms Conference, Community Farm Alliance

<sup>15</sup> Ebbeling, Cara B.; Pawlak, Dorota B.; Ludwig, David S. *Childhood Obesity: public-health crisis, common sense cure* August 10, 2002 The Lancet Vol. 360

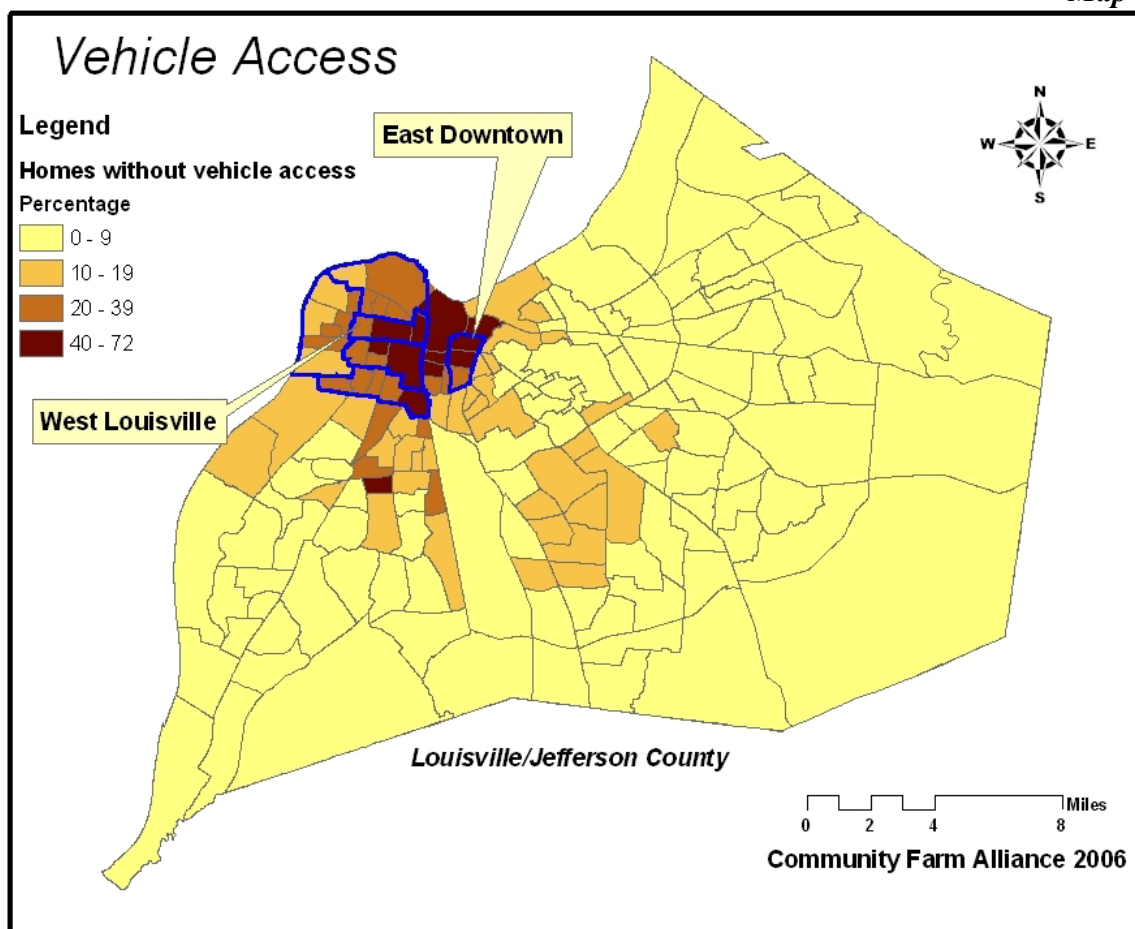


Along with high priced convenience stores, these fast food restaurants are the only accessible food seller to many residents of West Louisville and East Downtown.

### ***Vehicle access: Getting to the food store***

If residents of West End and East Downtown could simply get into a vehicle and drive to their preferred food store, the lack of high quality, affordable foods in their neighborhoods would not be a problem, unfortunately many of them cannot. The high price of gas notwithstanding, many poor people in West Louisville and East Downtown do not have access to a vehicle.

**Map 6**



Residents of the West End and East Downtown have far less access to vehicles than residents of any other part of Jefferson County. The percentage of households without access to a single vehicle varies by neighborhood in the West End and East Downtown, but is high throughout. In the least impacted parts of the West End, 17% of households do not have access to a vehicle, in the most impacted places in East

Downtown that number is over 70%<sup>16</sup>. In the rest of Jefferson County percentages of households without vehicle access are rarely over 10% and often below 5%. Map 6 shows how the West End and East Downtown have much higher concentrations of households without vehicle access than any other part of Louisville/Jefferson County.

*Table 4<sup>17</sup>*  
*Comparing Percentage of Households without Vehicle Access*

Area	Households Without Vehicle Access (%)
<b>Jefferson County</b>	12.94
<b>West End</b>	28.38
<b>East Downtown</b>	50.93

Within the West End and East Downtown, residents of traditionally underserved populations are likely to have even less vehicle access than others. The traditionally underserved include low-income mothers, non-English speakers, disabled people, the elderly and people of color. In the West End, members of these groups are twice as likely as others to not have access to a vehicle<sup>18</sup>.

*Table 5<sup>19</sup>*  
*Vehicle Access for Members of Traditionally Underserved Populations by Region of Louisville*

	<b>West Louisville (%)</b>	<b>Central Louisville (%)</b>	<b>East Louisville (%)</b>	<b>South Louisville (%)</b>
<b>Percentage without vehicle access</b>	49.1	50.0	11.1	18.8

### *These problems combine to create food insecurity*

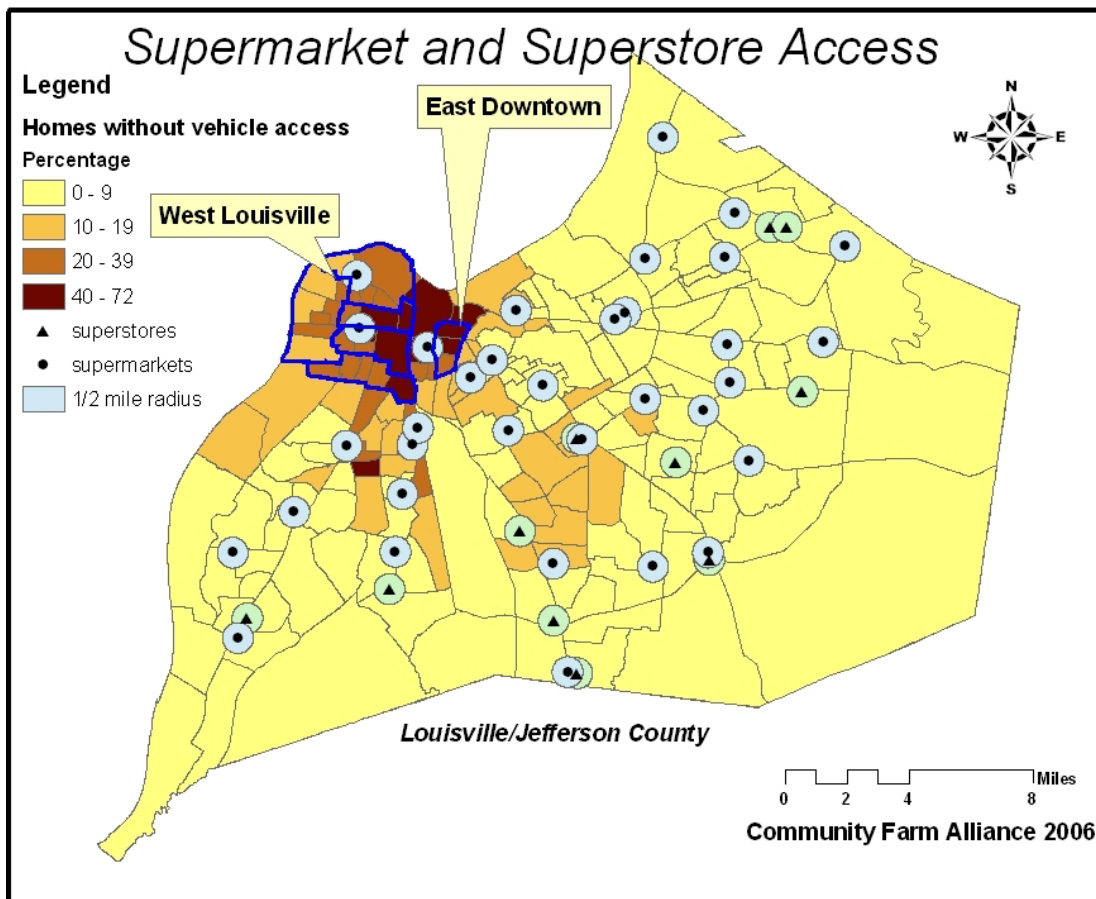
For many residents of the West End and East Downtown it is hard to get good, healthy food at reasonable prices. There are not enough food stores in their communities and the food that is available is usually either low in quality, high in price or both. To make matters worse, many people living in the West End and East Downtown do not have access to vehicles, so they cannot drive to one of the few adequate food stores on their side of town, or to another part of Louisville where there are better food buying options (*See map 7, below*).

<sup>16</sup> 2000 Census Summary File 4 (SF4) HCT32

<sup>17</sup> 2000 Census Summary File 4 (SF4) HCT32

<sup>18</sup> Kentuckiana Regional Transportation Agency (KIPDA) *KIPDA Household Travel Survey: Traditionally Underserved Populations* Table 5-25

<sup>19</sup> (Ibid)



The above map shows all of the supermarkets and superstores in Louisville with circles of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radii drawn around them. As stated earlier, our research shows that supermarkets and superstores are currently the two best places to shop because they offer the best combination of affordability, availability and quality.  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile is considered a reasonable walking distance for a trip on foot to buy groceries, so the areas within the small circles show the parts of Louisville where residents have walking access to an acceptable food retailer. This map shows that across Louisville, the bulk of addresses are not within such areas. In most of Louisville, however, the vast majority of residents have access to vehicles, so they can easily drive to the food store of their choice if they do not live within walking distance. This is not at all the case in West Louisville or East Downtown, where huge portions of the population do not live within walking distance of a good food seller and also do not have access to a vehicle.

For people living in this situation, the main food buying options are either to shop locally and get inferior goods or to buy fast food. These are two unacceptable options. Low income people cannot and should not have to pay more for lower quality groceries than higher income people on the other side of town. People in the West End and East Downtown deserve a variety of healthy food options, but they do not have them. West Enders and East Downtowners can choose where they want to buy their cholesterol packed fast food hamburgers from or from which store they want to buy second rate food products, but many do not have the option to buy quality food at a reasonable price.