

Understanding the Food Environment of Cleveland after the COVID-19 Pandemic

Samantha Bentley

MPH Candidate, Health Promotion and
Disease Prevention
Case Western Reserve University

Background

Food insecurity, as defined by the USDA, is a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity remains a prominent public health problem in the United States. Many factors influence food insecurity including immediate food environment, socioeconomic status, and education. This practicum examines the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the food environment of Cleveland.

This practicum was done at the Prevention Research Center for Health Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University, BioEnterprise Bldg. 4th floor, 11000 Cedar Ave, Cleveland Ohio

The mission of the PRCHN is to bridge community partners and university researchers to focus their collective expertise to develop, test, and implement sustainable strategies to improve health in underserved communities.

Each summer the PRCHN conducts data collection through Neighborhood Environmental Assessment Project (NEAP). The data collected provides updated data that helps to better understand the build environment within the city of Cleveland.

The NEAP project supports the mission of the PRCHN by providing data that can inform strategies and interventions to help prevent and reduce the burden of chronic disease in the community.

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze NEAP 2022 Dataset
2. Conduct research dissemination through literature review and analyses
3. Prepare for 2023 dissemination article
4. Prepare and plan for 2023 NEAP data collection

Activities

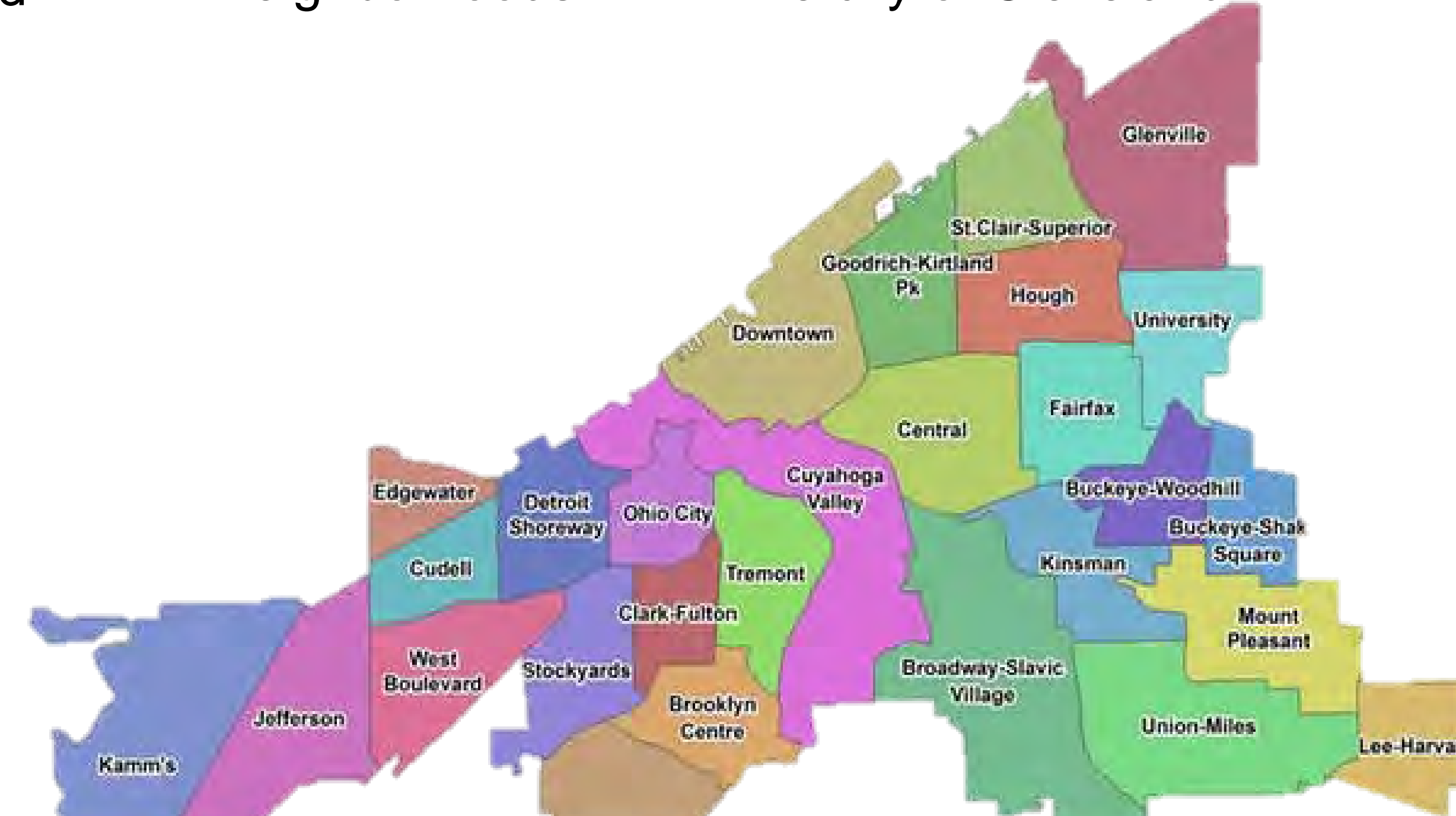
- Participated in 2022 NEAP data collection and data entry into Redcap
- Assisted in organization and cleaning of NEAP 2022 dataset
- Assisted in maintain and cleaning longitudinal NEAP dataset
- Conducted preliminary data analysis of NEAP data
- Contributed to research dissemination by conduction relevant literature reviews and assisting with analysis, data presentation and writing activities
- Assisted in planning and preparation of 2023 NEAP data collection

Deliverables

- In depth literature review on current available research on food and tobacco retail and the possible impacts the COVID-19 pandemic had on it.
- Preliminary analysis of NEAP data

Population

All neighborhoods within the city of Cleveland



Methods and Results

NEAP data is collected each summer by groups of students. Data collection is collected by ground-truthing and in-store audits of all retailers who sell food or tobacco products. Ground-truthing consists of driving up and down streets to see if any previously unknown retailers have opened. Store assessment collect data about types of food and tobacco products are sold.

Full analysis of the 2022 data has not been conducted. Preliminary analysis comparing the 2019, 2021, and 2022 data shows less open stores and less stores who have been audited since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. More analysis about the effects of this is expected in spring of 2023.

Lessons Learned

The food and tobacco retail environment in the city of Cleveland is vast and diverse. For many individuals living in Cleveland food shopping is done at the local corner or convenient store. The options are often limited with very few fresh food options to choice from. NEAP data collection allowed me to see this all first hand and gave me a greater appreciation for the necessity of food based interventions in Cleveland.

COVID-19 has had lasting effects on food retail including supply chain problems, ensuing the safety of staff and customers, and keeping customers as COVID changed the way people shop for food. These effects will continue to be seen in the future.

Public Health Implications

Millions of Americans are food insecure, understanding the food environment can be important in understanding how to help combated this public health problem. By understanding the types of foods available to individuals interventions can be created to help those most in need.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the food environment and those changes will continue to be seen for years. Understanding these changes is crucial for the development of strategies and interventions to try to reduce food insecurity in Cleveland.

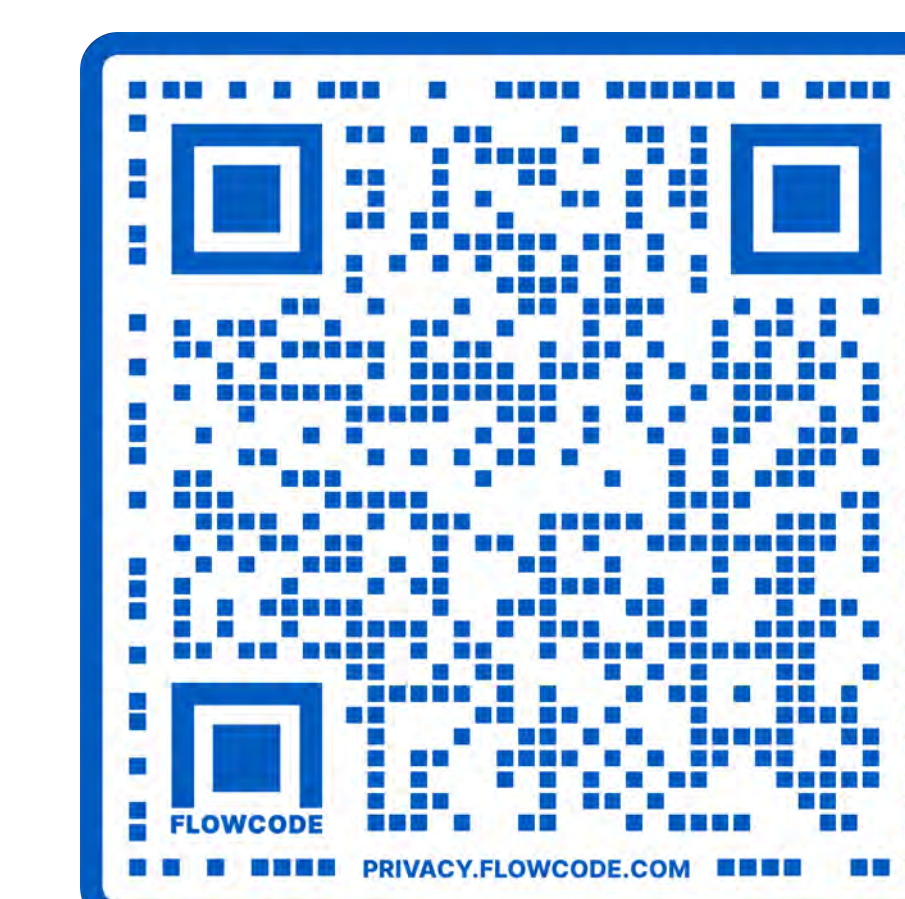
Future Directions

A more in-depth paper using the NEAP data is expected in the Spring of 2023 further exploring the effects the pandemic had on the food and tobacco environment of Cleveland.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be seen for years to come. The relationship between the pandemic and the food and tobacco environment of Cleveland should be continued to explored as new data is collected in future years.

Acknowledgements

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Scan the QR code or click the link below to watch the video presentation

flowcode.com/p/TUZqPAKrQ?fc=0