

Understanding the Changing Food Landscape in Cleveland Neighborhoods

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Public Health Implications

Background

With 18 million U.S. households considered as food insecure, taking the time to understand the current food landscape is important in centering the lived experience of these individuals and in addressing this public health issue. By taking inventory of the local foods available to communities, interventions can be made relevant and targeted, benefiting those most in need. Further analysis to explore the loss or change in store classifications may also expose gaps in addressing food insecurity with current food processes and policies.

Additionally, CIFTR's tobacco/THC data collection has been referenced in past Ohio public health efforts for safer tobacco policies. The rich data collection can be a valuable resource in food security efforts as well.

Lessons Learned

For many Cleveland residents, food shopping is typically done locally, at the corner or convenient store. While Cleveland boasts diverse food retailers, local stores often have limited options, with minimal fresh, nutritious food. The CIFTR project gave me first-hand knowledge of the city's food landscape, demonstrating the need to center lived experiences in addressing food insecurity and prioritizing targeted, food-based interventions.

Future Directions

A more in-depth paper and analysis of the CIFTR data is expected in the Spring of 2025, further exploring what led to changes in the food and tobacco environment of Cleveland.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my preceptor Dr. Elaine Borawski, as well as Samantha Bentley, MPH and Laura Fernandez, MPH.



Scan the QR Code for a list of references and resources.

Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University

A leading public health issue in the United States is food insecurity. Food insecurity, as defined by the USDA, is a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is worsened by a number of factors, including immediate food environment, the general built environment, socioeconomic status, and more.

The practicum site was the Prevention Research Center for Health Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University. The mission of the PRCHN is to bridge community partners and university researchers. In focusing their collective expertise, they hope to develop, test, and implement sustainable strategies which ultimately improve health in underserved communities. As such, the PRCHN is home to a number of diverse, well-developed public health projects.

The Cleveland Inventory Food and Tobacco Retail (CIFTR) project is conducted each summer at the PRCHN. The data collected is analyzed and added to an online, interactive map, FreshFinder, which is accessible to Cleveland residents to find healthy foods locally. Additionally, this project and tool helps key stakeholders better understand the built environment within the city of Cleveland.

The CIFTR project follows the mission of the PRCHN, collecting data to better inform strategies and interventions targeted at minimizing chronic disease in the community.

Activities

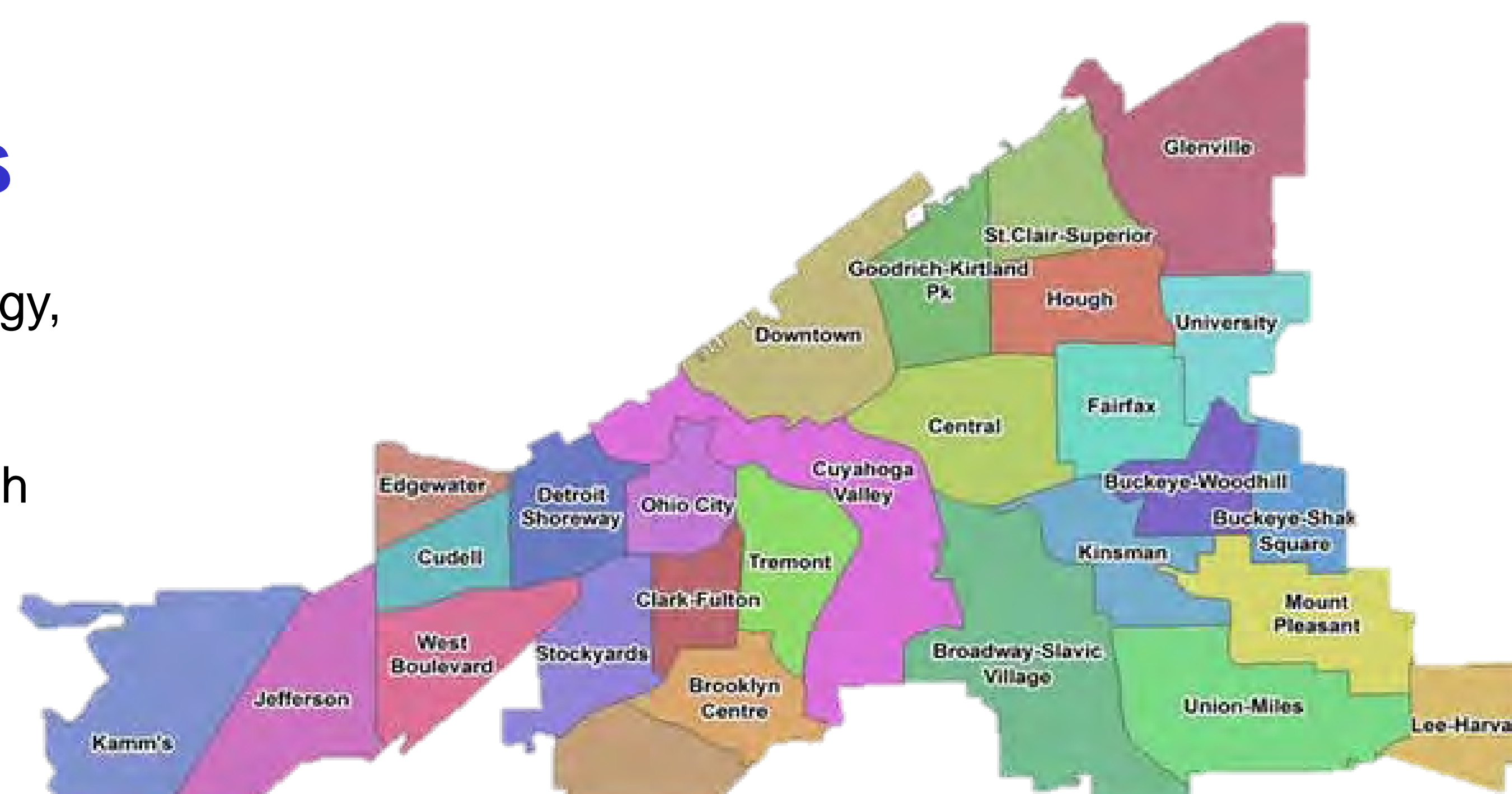
- Operated as Intern Coordinator, determining and monitoring data collection assignments
- Participated in 2024 CIFTR field data collection and data entry into REDcap
- Assisted in organization and cleaning of CIFTR 2024 dataset
- Conducted preliminary data analysis of CIFTR data
- Contributed to research dissemination by conducting relevant literature reviews and assisting with analysis, data presentation and writing activities

Deliverables

- Literature review on current available research on food and tobacco retail, as well as relevant policies in Cleveland area
- Preliminary analysis of CIFTR data: Changes in Store Classifications from 2023

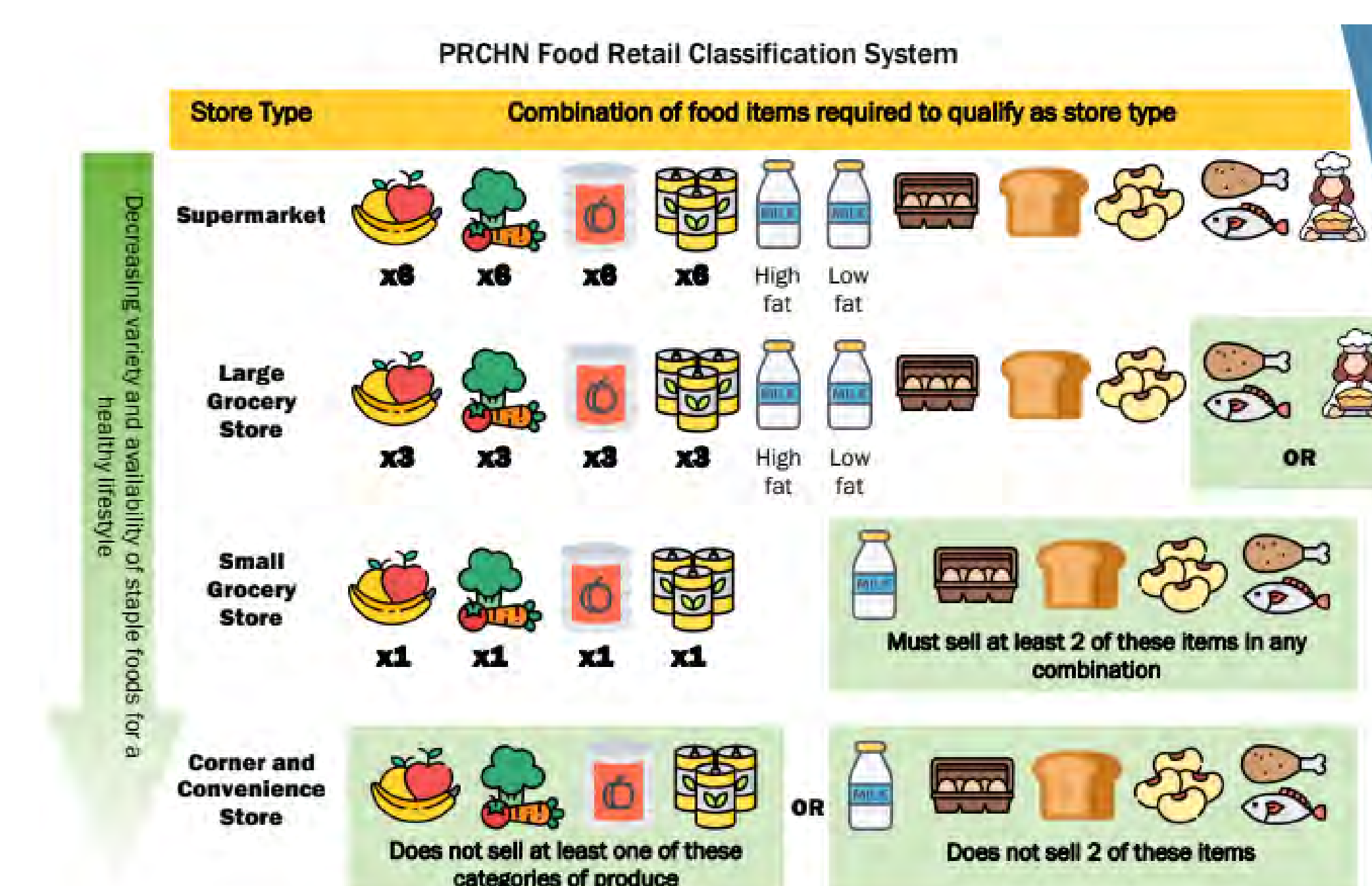
Population

All neighborhoods within the city of Cleveland.



Methods and Results

Each summer, groups of students perform CIFTR data collection via two processes: (a) ground-truthing, which involves driving or walking to identify newly opened retailers, and (b) in-store audits of each food or tobacco/ THC retailer, which involves an assessment to collect data on food categories, what types of products are sold, and pricing. Additionally, this year, data on menstrual products and baby items were collected too.



Full analyses of the 2024 data has not been conducted. However, preliminary analysis comparing the 2023 and 2024 data shows fewer open stores and a shift in types of stores available, especially between the large and smaller grocers. More analysis about the effects of this is expected in spring 2025.

Store Classification	2023	2024
Supermarket	11	11
Large Grocery	26	22
Small Grocery	55	59
Corner / Convenience	476	451
Total:	568	543

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the surveillance methodology, protocols and analytic needs.
2. Analyze CIFTR 2024 Dataset
3. Conduct research dissemination through literature review and analyses
4. Develop a better understanding of the Cleveland food environment
5. Prepare and plan for 2025 CIFTR data collection