

More food stores open, but areas still lack access

12 December 2012, by Naomi King Englar



Fresh fruits and vegetables are difficult to find for some New Orleans citizens. Many neighborhoods are still without full-service grocery stores, according to Prevention Research Center studies. Credit: Paula Burch-Celentano

Researchers and students at the Tulane Prevention Research Center mapped the Orleans Parish food environment this fall in their annual study of food stores and fast-food outlets. And for some of those stores, they also looked at what's on the shelves.

Researchers mapped where every fast-food restaurant and food store is located, from full-service grocery stores to corner stores. They also went inside some stores to survey the types and quantities of foods being sold on shelves and near cash registers and looked at availability and prices of an assortment of foods.

"We have found more than 25 new food stores in Orleans Parish for a total of 470 food stores in 2012," said Adrienne Rathert, program manager at the Tulane PRC. "But many neighborhoods are still without full-service grocery stores."

Rathert supervised nearly 20 public health master's students who were hired for the project. The students collected the food store and fast-food restaurant information, taking away many insights in the process.

"I was surprised to see how many people in Orleans Parish rely on smaller food [retail outlets](#) such as corner stores and gas stations for purchasing food, and the distance many must travel to truly have access to healthy foods," said Kate Wobbekind, a Tulane public health graduate student.

Fellow graduate student Steven Trapasso saw how difficult it is for families in underserved areas to meet national guidelines for [healthy eating](#). He said his time on the project taught him to be open-minded and nonjudgmental of people who don't have the resources to buy [healthy food](#) on a regular basis.

Provided by Tulane University

APA citation: More food stores open, but areas still lack access (2012, December 12) retrieved 17 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-food-areas-lack-access.html>

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