



FDW 2025

Innovative Teaching Award

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A stylized eagle is depicted on the left side of the image, facing right. Its wings are spread wide, composed of numerous overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and orange. The eagle's body is rendered in brown and tan tones, also using geometric shapes. Its head is turned slightly towards the viewer, showing a yellow beak and dark eyes. The background consists of a light blue and white geometric pattern of triangles and polygons.

Food Deserts Scavenger Hunt

*ENVR 5131 Foundations of
Sustainability*

Learning Objectives

- Obtain an up-to-the minute perspective on key topics related to community sustainability
- Learn the...practical aspects of community sustainability, including...foo

Assignment Elements

Mapping

Site visit and
photodocumentation

Slide presentation

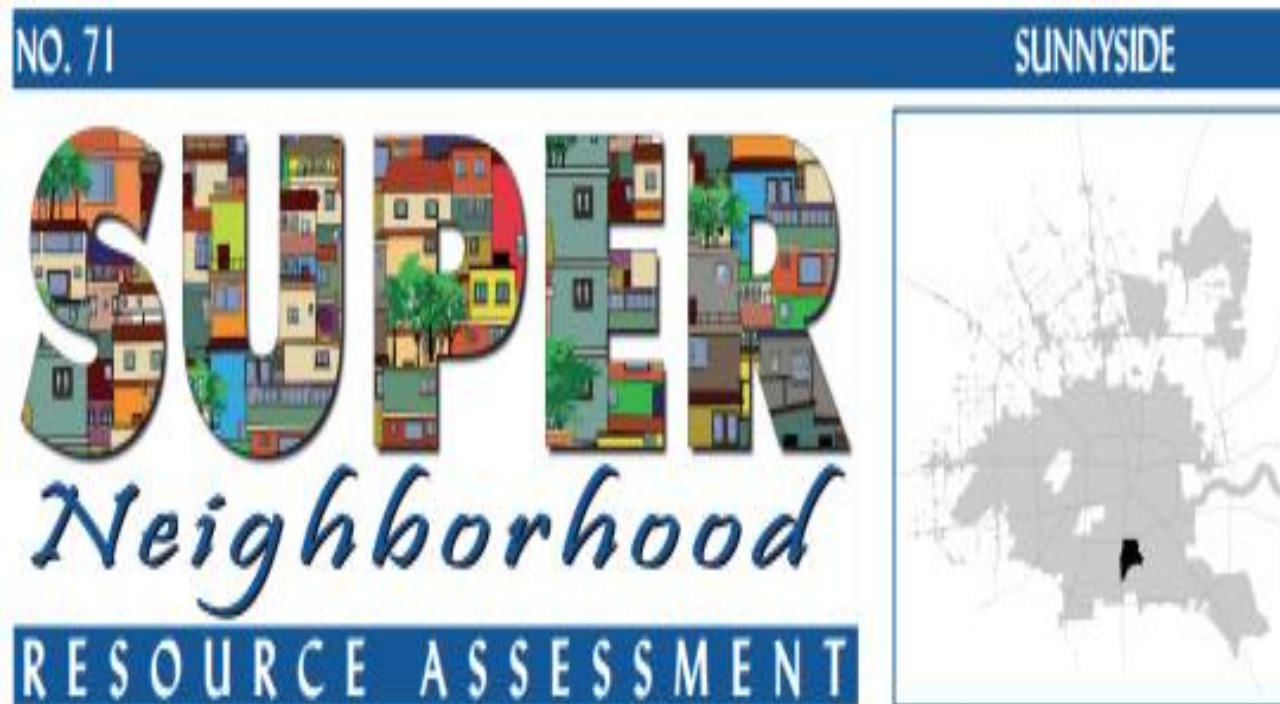
Reflective discussion

Food Deserts Scavenger Hunt: Sunnyside





Sunnyside Demographics



	Super Neighborhood		Houston	
Pop. characteristics	2000	2015	2000	2015
Total population	18,629	20,071	1,953,631	2,217,706
Persons per sq. mile	2,934	3,162	3,166	3,314
Age of Population				
Under 5 years	8%	9%	8%	8%
5- 17 years	23%	17%	19%	17%
18- 64 years	52%	59%	64%	65%
65 and over	18%	15%	9%	10%
Ethnicity				
Non Hispanic Whites	1%	1%	31%	26%
Non Hispanic Blacks	93%	88%	25%	22%
Hispanics	4%	10%	37%	44%
Non Hispanic Asians	1%	0%	6%	7%
Non Hispanic Others	1%	1%	1%	1%
Income				
Under \$25,000	59%	55%	33%	27%
\$25,001 to \$50,000	25%	24%	31%	25%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	12%	16%	24%	26%
Over \$100,001	3%	5%	12%	22%
Median Household Income	\$20,383	\$35,990	\$36,616	\$46,187
Educational Status				
No Diploma	37%	23%	30%	23%
High School Diploma	32%	38%	20%	23%
Some College	23%	30%	23%	24%
Bachelor's or Higher	7%	9%	27%	31%
Housing and Households				
Total housing units	7,611	9,114	782,378	909,336
Occupied	90%	81%	92%	88%
Vacant	10%	19%	8%	12%
Total households	6,839	7,358	717,945	799,714
Family households	4,591	4,589	457,549	491,778
Median Housing Value	\$38,419	\$91,786	\$79,300	\$131,700

Description

Sunnyside is the oldest African-American community in south central Houston. It was originally developed to provide homes outside the city, but close enough for residents to commute. It includes a number of tract home subdivisions on typical suburban streets, as well as the original frame homes interspersed with small churches of the original neighborhood. New developments revived parts of the community, especially along Cullen.

Highlights

- ✓ Houston City Council District D
- ✓ Houston Independent School District
- ✓ 5 Police beats (includes bordering beats)
- ✓ 4,063 acres (6.35 sq. miles)



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



This Farmer's Fresh Meat offered an array of options for meat and seafood. What was noticeably missing was fresh veggies. You will see (bottom right picture) the vegetable section is limited. But nevertheless, not surprising as the name speaks for itself. The store was very crowded, I learned from one of the supervisors that it is one of the very few store options in the area.

Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



Healthy food options were non-existent. This will be a common theme throughout this presentation. The options available were fast food restaurants, food trucks and gas stations. “Fresh” foods came far and few, however, there are a plethora of fried and/or prepackaged foods available for purchase or order.

Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



In terms of healthy options, I did find a Subway. Although there are some healthy menu options at Subway, there are also less-balanced choices as well. [In a study published](#) May 6 in the Journal of Adolescent Health, researchers found that adolescents who purchased Subway meals consumed nearly as many calories as they did at McDonald's. Meals from both restaurants are likely to contribute toward overeating and obesity, according to the researchers.

Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



As I traveled to the main roads, there were more food options and convenience stores. The store illustrated in this slide had no healthy offerings, only pre-packaged foods like chips, deli meat, dairy products and typical local store options.



Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



I visited a Walgreens and observed no fresh food (not surprising) and only pre-packaged offerings.



Sunnyside: Stores, Markets & Food Options



No fresh food options offered. I never saw this collaboration between Family Dollar and Dollar Tree, I didn't even know this was a thing!

Sunnyside Stores, Markets & Food Options



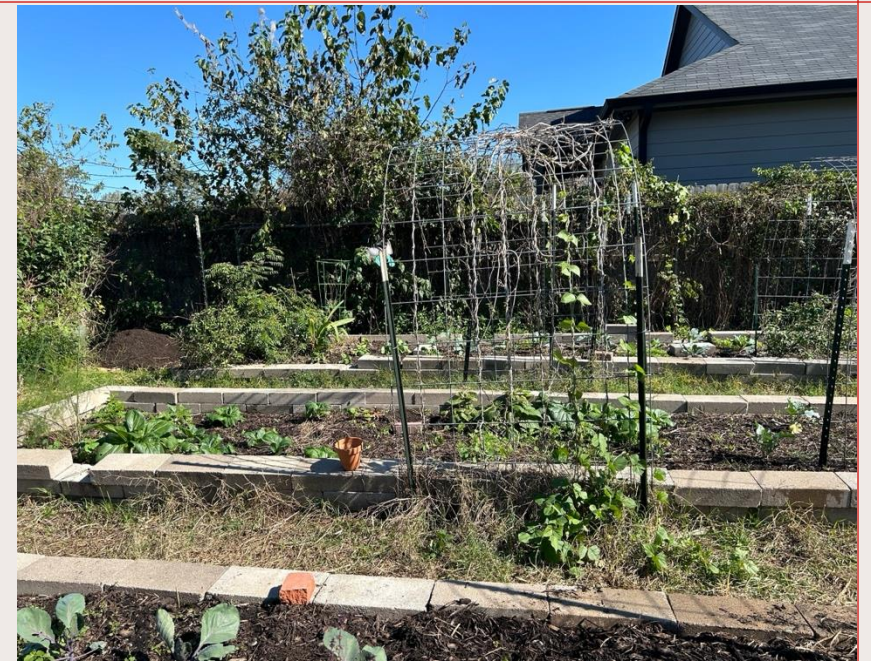
I observed mostly fast-food options like KFC, Taco Bell, Popeyes, Little Caesars, etc. Challenges I observed was lack of access to nutritious food, what I observed was primarily fast-food options. Even the food trucks did not have healthy or fresh food options.



Community Garden: Happy Place



Happy Place



Happy Place, an affiliate of Urban Harvest, is indeed a happy place! I met the organizer and some volunteers. It is located on a plot of land wedged between two homes in a residential neighborhood. This was centrally located in the food desert with no nearby stores. The closest gas station was a few minutes away. Residents are open to enjoy the garden's harvest. The organizer is planning on doing outreach to increase visibility and use year-round. I got to eat a slice of watermelon grown in Happy Place (left bottom picture)!!



Summary

- Limited Access to Nutritious Food: Healthy/nutritious food selections were nonexistent/limited access. There is a heavy reliance on convenience stores and fast-food outlets that primarily offer processed and unhealthy options.
- Health Issues: The lack of access to fresh produce and healthy foods contributes to higher rates of diet-related health problems such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and even kidney failure. Poor nutrition can also affect cognitive development in children and lead to academic disparities.
- Economic Barriers: Many food deserts are located in low-income neighborhoods like Sunnyside where residents may not have the financial means to travel long distances to grocery stores that offer healthier options. Additionally, the cost of nutritious food can be prohibitive for those with limited incomes as often residents are on restrictive incomes (i.e. social security) or government assistance.
- Transportation Challenges: In this area, residents often face significant transportation barriers. In urban areas, grocery stores may be miles away, while in rural areas, the distance can be even greater, making it difficult for those without reliable transportation to access healthy food. I observed several people walking or riding bikes, public transportation is heavily relied upon as I observed several bus stations full of people waiting.
- Social and Racial Inequities: Food deserts disproportionately affect black and brown communities, exacerbating existing health disparities and perpetuating cycles of inequality. Historical practices like redlining and systemic racial inequality have contributed to the creation and persistence of food deserts.

Thank
you

