

Access to Healthy Food in Trenton



Community Development Studio Spring 2005
Rutgers EJB School of Planning and Policy

Presentation Outline

- Client: Isles, Inc.
- Project: How to Provide Healthy Food to Trenton's Poor
- Access to food
 - Food distribution
 - Knowledge and behavior
- Recommendations

Our project: Isles asked us to develop a report about access to healthy food in Trenton

Research Goals and Questions

1. Determine the extent of hunger in Trenton
2. Explore whether people can get the food that they want/need
3. Document the use and availability of public food assistance

Research Goals and Questions

4. Document the food delivery system in Trenton
5. Explore what people know about food and how they behave

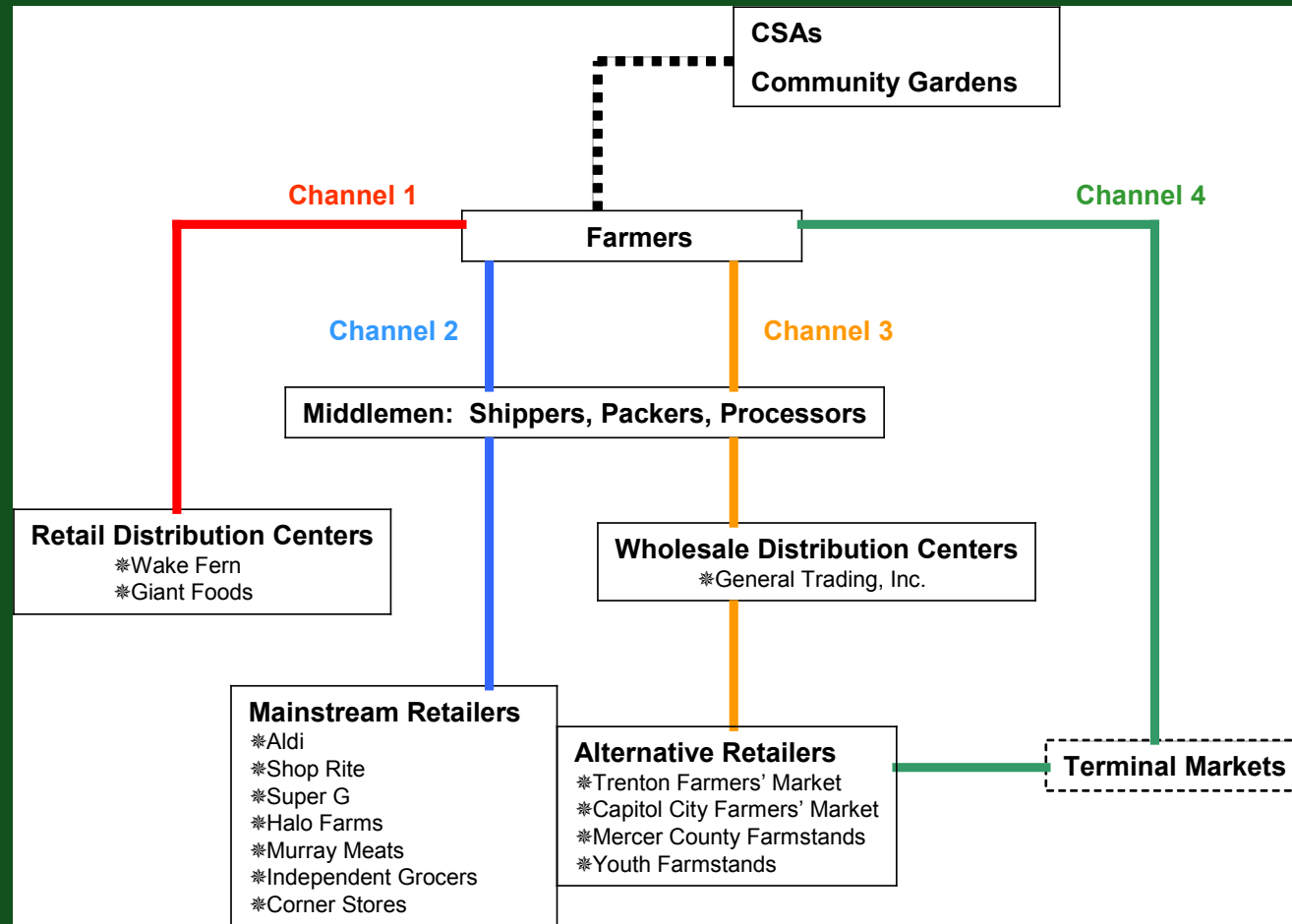
Research Methodology

- Literature review
- Field interviews
- Investigation of the points of food access
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Mapping

Trenton at a Glance

- Population 85,403
- 50+% Trenton is African-American, 33% white, 22% Hispanic
- Median Household income is \$31,074 (compared to NJ average of \$55,146)
- 21% of Trenton lives below the poverty level (compared to 9 percent in Mercer Co.)

Access to Food/Distribution

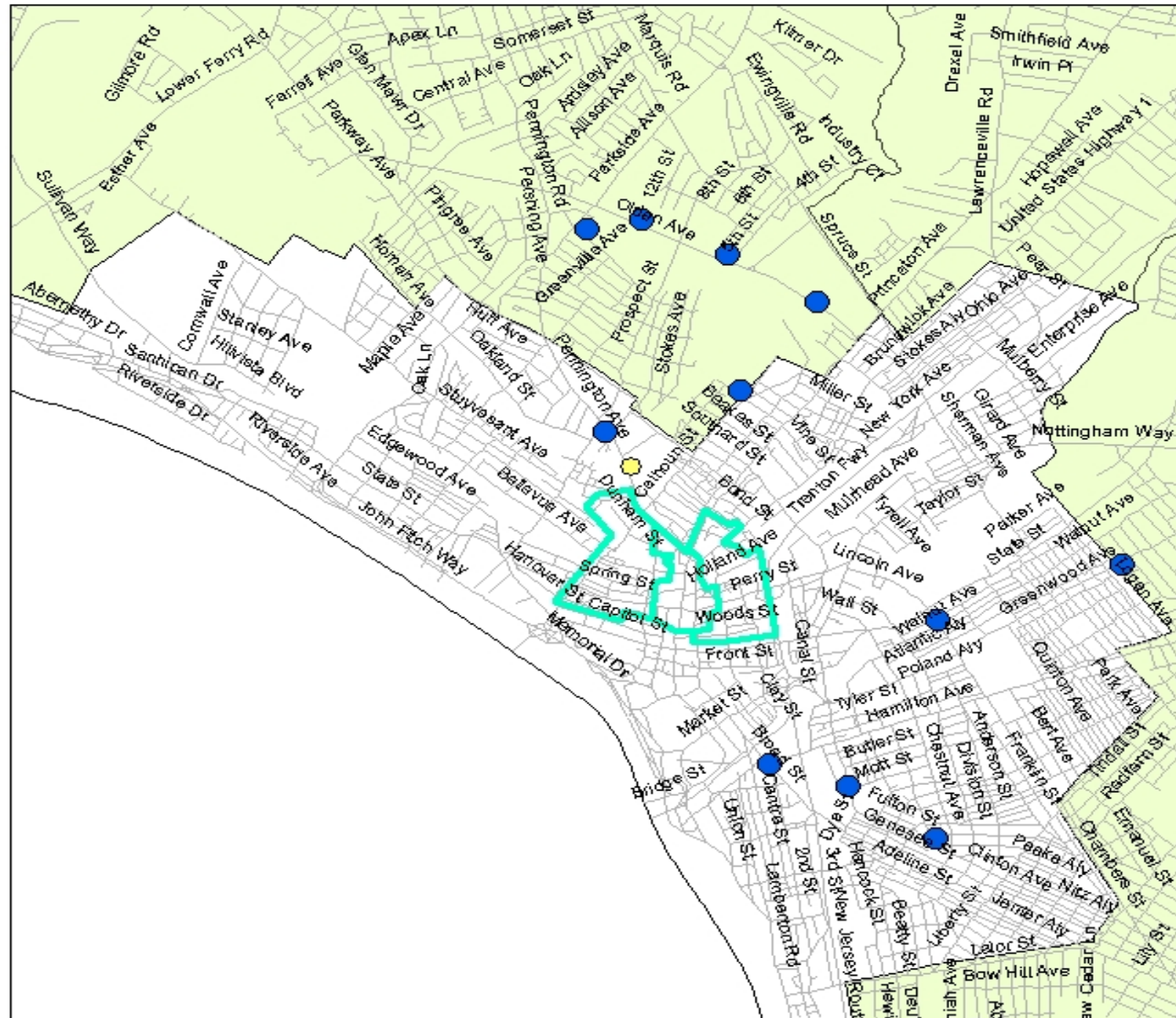


*Source: Modification of Van Vranken and Kumar, Long Range Planning

Mainstream Food Provision

- Chain supermarkets for “big” shopping
- Specialty/Independent grocers
- Corner stores for convenience items
- Fast food outlets

Trenton Area Supermarkets

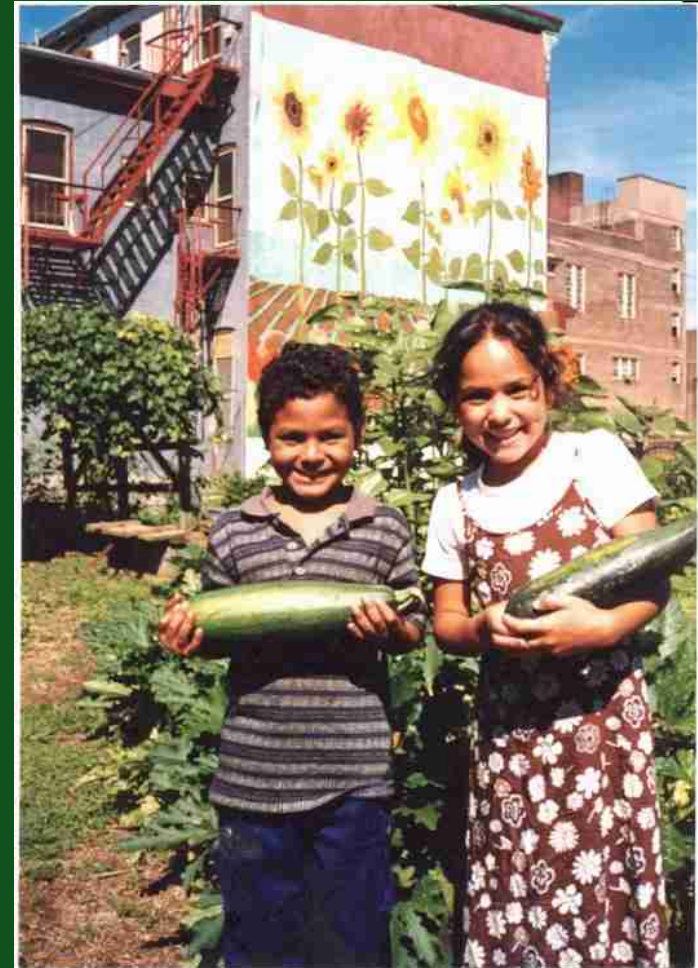


Mainstream Food Survey Results

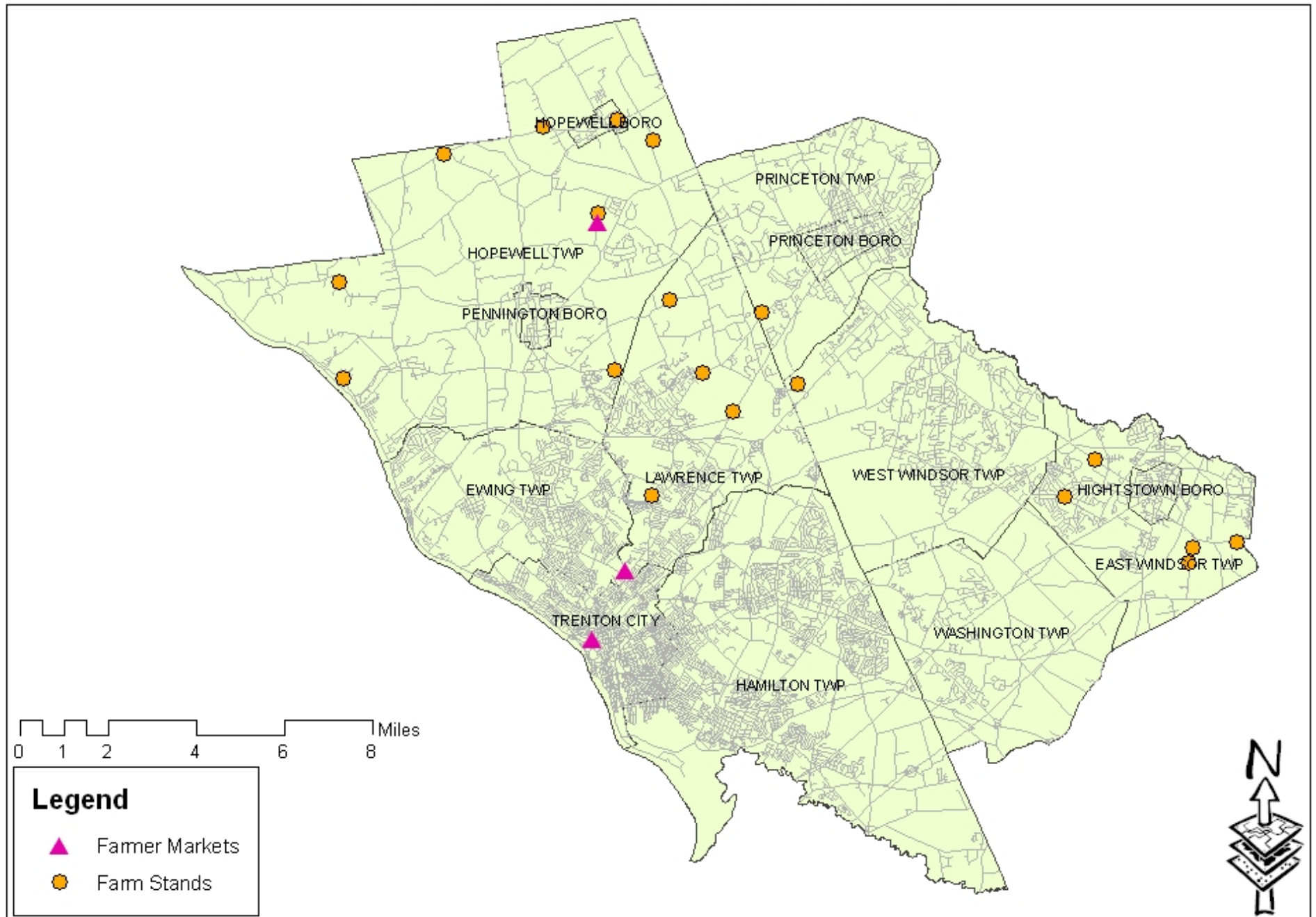
- Shop Rite and Super G had diverse, quality produce
- Aldi has limited produce/lesser quality and fewer healthy foods; Aldi had the lowest prices
- Independent grocers vary in quality
- Neighborhood corner stores have fewer healthy food options

Alternative Food Sources

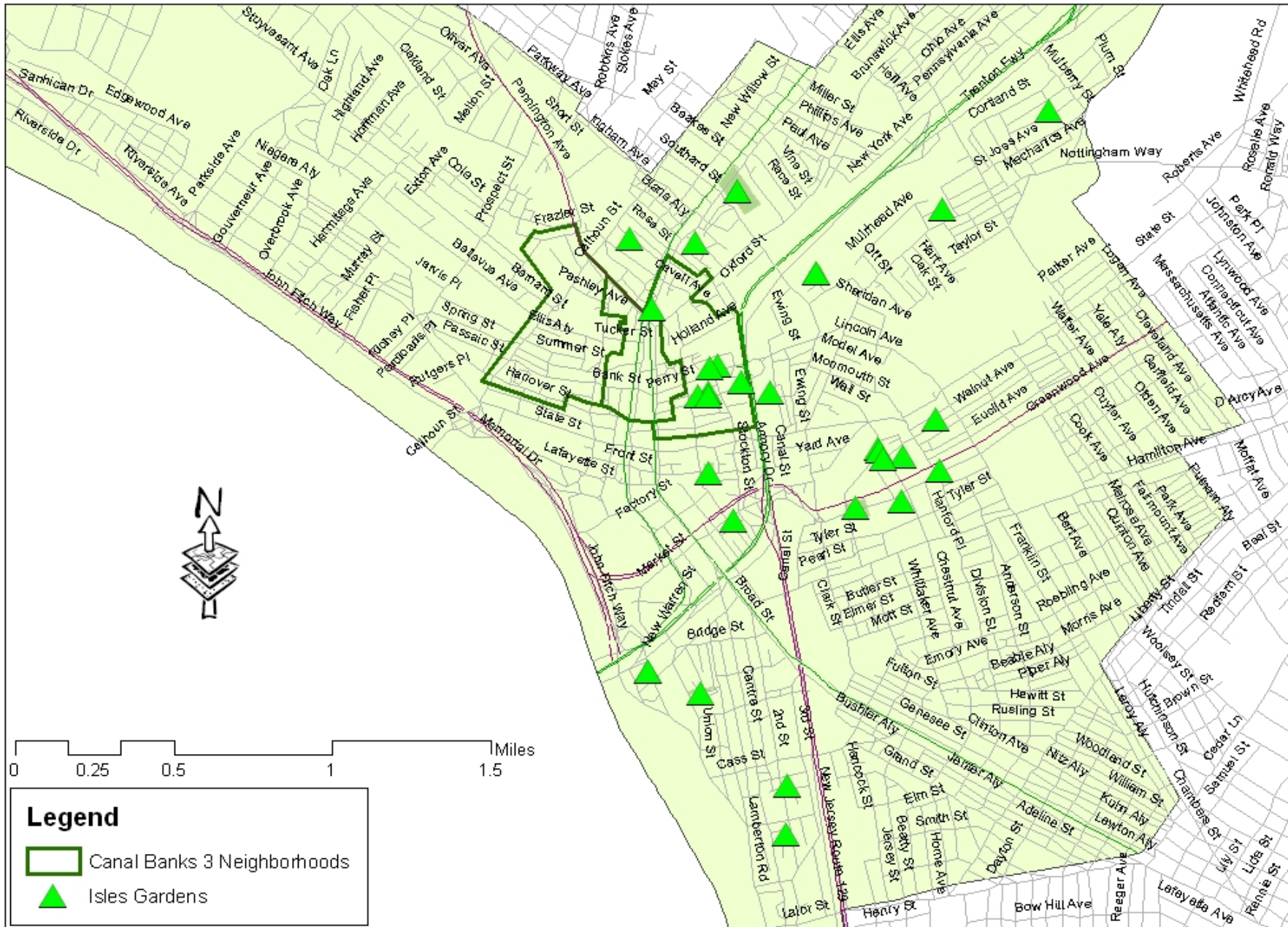
- Two Farmers' Markets in Trenton
- Twenty-three roadside farm stands in Mercer County
- Youth Farm Stand
- Community Gardens
- Community Supported Agriculture



Mercer County Farm Stands and Trenton Area Farmer's Markets



Isles Community Gardens



Food Assistance Programs

- National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs
- Emergency Food
- Food Stamps
- WIC
- Summer Food Service Program

Food in Schools

- 61% of students are eligible for free and reduced price breakfast and lunch

- Schools follow USDA guidelines and offer five- pyramid food groups to their students daily

APRIL 2005				
Toasted Cheese Sandwich	Chicken Nuggets	Cheeseburger on Bun	Meatloaf w/Gravy	Cheese Pizza
French Fries	Potato Stars	Seasoned French Fries*	Mashed Potatoes	Fresh Fruit
Orange Juice	Wacky Watermelon Applesauce	Fruit Punch	Apple Juice	Grape Juice
Catsup (2)	White Bread	Mustard	Dinner Roll	Mini Pretzels
Milk	Catsup (2)	Catsup (2)	Milk	Milk
	Milk	Milk		

Trenton elementary school lunch menu

Emergency Food Assistance

- Mercer Street Friends Food Cooperative (MSFFC) provides emergency food to local organizations
 - 17,000 people receive food per month
 - MSFFC distributes 1.5 million pounds of food per year
- Some local organizations provide emergency food outside of the MSFFC network

Other Food Assistance Programs

- NJ Food Stamp Participation rate is 53% of those eligible (2000)
- WIC is a supplemental nutrition program for “low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutrition risk”
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is one of most underutilized federal food assistance programs

Knowledge and Behavior

Interviewed many residents to find out their knowledge of food and what influences their food choices

- Adults
- Young Adults
- Children

Adult Focus Group

- Price and convenience are top priorities
- Eating habits had been influenced by warnings made by physicians and other (negative) health-related issues
- Aware that fast food is unhealthy, but still patronize fast food restaurants regularly
- Cooking at home limited

YouthBuild Focus Group (Young Adults)

- Convenience and taste as main influences for students
- Corner stores as a place of personal relationships
- Knowledge about nutrition seemed to come from informal sources (i.e. television)
- Some said that it was okay to eat fast food and other unhealthy foods as long as you were not overweight or had other health problems

Middle School Students

- Many feel that the lunch at school does not taste good (“tastes nasty”)
- Students interested in learning more about nutrition
- 48% said if more fruits and vegetables were available in school, they wouldn’t eat them
- Most kids do not eat fruits and vegetables on a daily basis

Recommendations

Short Term

1. Provide transportation to supermarkets and Trenton's Farmer's market
2. Increase use of existing federal food assistance programs
3. Newsletter and classes on cooking and nutrition
4. Increase community awareness of the availability of local food sources

Long-Term

1. Work with the schools to teach nutrition
2. Create links to local farms to introduce children to agriculture
3. Work with neighborhood food stores and to increase offering of healthy food
4. Create a Food Council and facilitate connections between Trenton leaders and local farmers

Thank You!

- Class Presenters: Ralph Coolman, Anne Bellows, Rick Van Vranken
- Teachers, Farmers, Food Assistance Staff Interviewed
- Citizens of Trenton
- Isles Staff, especially Elyse Pivnick and Katherine Lee
- Norm Glickman and Kathe Newman