

Healthy eating & active living community assessment

Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers in partnership with Dunamis Life Church,
Evangelism Today Christian Church, New Life Ministries, Parkside United Methodist Church,
Parkside Business & Community in Partnership, and The New Community Baptist Church
January 2020



Camden Coalition
of Healthcare Providers

Background

This project is funded by NJ Partnership for Health Kids through the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network Community Grants Program.

The New Jersey Healthy Communities Network (NJHCN) brings together local, regional and statewide leaders to support communities in developing healthy environments for people to live, work, learn and play. The NJHCN funding collaborative has provided grants to prevent chronic disease and obesity by enhancing the built environment and developing policies to support healthy eating and active living. This NJHCN Community Grants Program aims to:

- Advance local policies that create healthy environments and support healthy behavior,

- Engage communities that face socio-economic barriers to health, and
- Increase funds allocated toward primary prevention locally.

Community Assessments for Healthy Eating and Active Living are one of the program's strategies to achieve these aims. Community assessments for healthy eating and active living are used to provide key stakeholders / decision-makers and community members with information that can be beneficial in planning and improving access to healthy eating and active living at the policy, system and environment level. Example assessments for healthy eating and active living include food environment audits; walkability, bikeability and safe parks audits; and assessments of school environments.

Methods

Planning

The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (Camden Coalition) identified and invited eight faith-based organizations who had completed the Faith in Prevention program to be a part of planning and executing the assessment. Of the eight, five agreed to participate and were located in close proximity to one another. Since they were rooted in the Whitman Park and Parkside

neighborhoods, and Parkside Business & Community in Partnership (PBCIP) is known for similar healthy eating efforts, the Camden Coalition asked this community-based organization to join the planning team.

Each organization identified two champions to represent them. The planning team met in April to review PBCIP's Parkside Healthy Eating and

Active Living action plan to determine which types of data would be most useful in completing the plan. At this time, the team determined it was best to administer a walk audit to observe and an individual survey to ask residents about the factors required for healthy eating and active living.

In May, they reconvened to draft the tools that would be used to collect the data. The planning team used similar community tools as references and worked in small groups to craft questions.

Data collection

The six organizations recruited volunteers to assist with a walk audit of Parkside and Whitman Park neighborhoods. On the afternoon of Saturday, June 29th, 2019, 18 people gathered at New Life Ministries on Haddon Avenue for a brief orientation. Volunteers were asked to record data related to walkability barriers, recreational spaces, healthy food accessibility at mini

markets/bodegas, and available fitness activities. They were then sent out with clipboards containing maps with block assignments, packets to be completed for each block they walked, and surveys to administer to individuals they encountered along the way. Volunteers were also instructed to take photos of things they were documenting for visual evidence.

In addition to the walk audit, members of the team collected surveys at their food pantries, congregations, and in the neighborhood. These surveys asked questions about healthy eating habits, food shopping and access, and physical activity.

Volunteers observed over 50 blocks on the walk audit. They collected over 75 individual surveys. All materials were submitted to Camden Coalition, which performed data entry and analysis. This report summarizes our findings.

Respondents' age (77 responses)	
Under 25	5.2%
26-54	44.2%
55+	50.6%

Location where survey was completed (77 responses)	
Food pantry	66.2%
During the walk audit	18.2%
Church	14.3%
Other	1.3%

Respondents' neighborhood residence (77 responses)	
Parkside	45.5%
Whitman Park	26.0%
Other neighborhood in Camden	20.8%
Outside Camden	7.8%

Cooking and eating healthy meals

Despite 90% of respondents reporting that they have the means to cook meals at home, one out of three people do not eat a balanced meal every day.

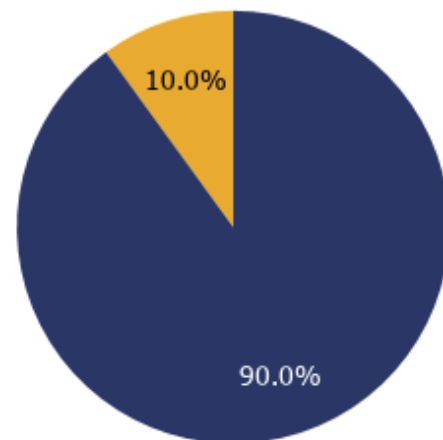
Half of people said they had two or more healthy meals per day.

For those who did not have the means to cook meals at home, they cited reasons such as homelessness, not having food, and not being able to afford it.

Do you have the means to cook meals at home?

70 Responses

● Yes ● No



Food access

The majority of those surveyed shop for food at a grocery store even though there are none in the Whitman Park or Parkside neighborhoods.

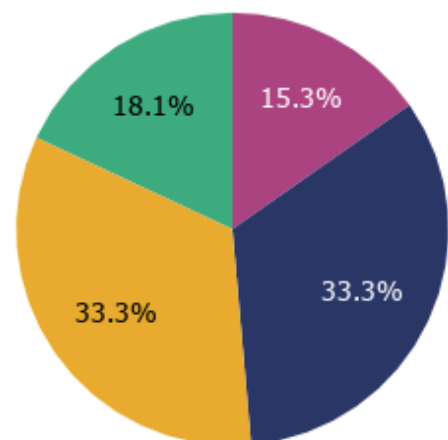
This seems to be a challenge since only about 40% of respondents use a car to access food while over 60% walk to get groceries.

Over half of the respondents reported visits to the food pantry as a part of their food shopping routine. Food pantries were the second highest source for food –just behind grocery stores.

How often do you eat a healthy, balanced meal?

72 Responses

● 3x/day ● Not every day ● 2x/day ● 1x/day



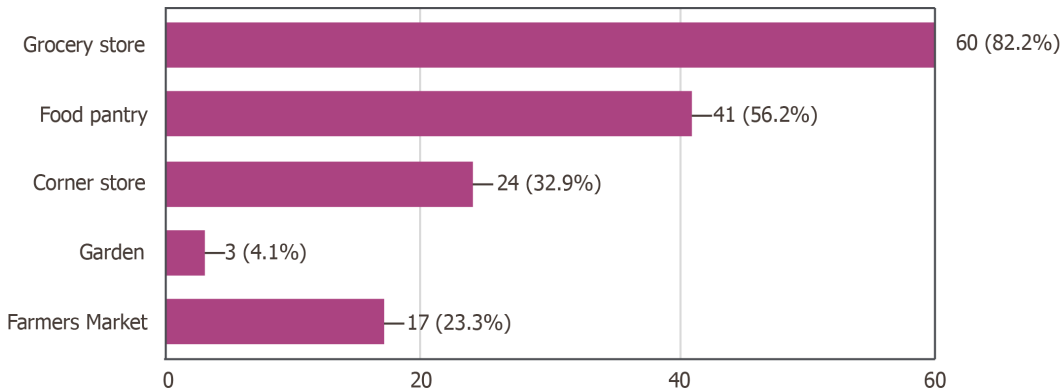
Survey participants use the following food pantries:

- Evangelism Today Christian Church
- Ferry Avenue Church
- Food Bank of South Jersey
- Kaighn Avenue Baptist
- Kenwood Church
- Koinonia Family Life
- Hope Community Outreach Center
- Parkside United Methodist Church

Auditors identified nine Corner Stores in the Whitman Park and Parkside neighborhoods. Most accepted food stamps while only three accepted WIC benefits. Of these stores, less than half had fresh vegetables in stock and only three had fresh fruits in stock. Most carried meat with expiration dates at least two days in the future.

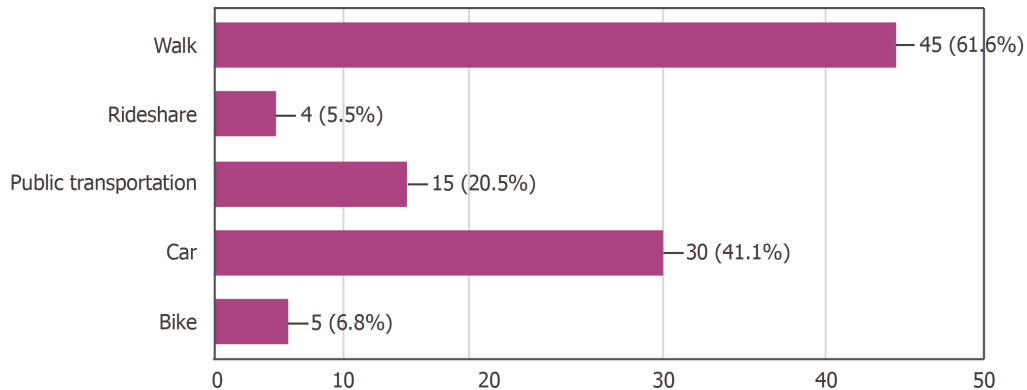
Where do you shop for food? Check all that apply.

73 Responses



How do you access food? Check all that apply.

73 Responses



Walkability

Considering one of the primary modes of transportation to access food includes walking, the walkability of the neighborhoods is not only important for active living, but also access to healthy eating.

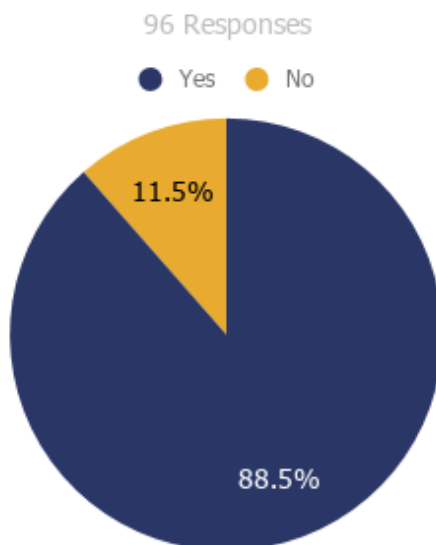
Almost 90% of the blocks walked by auditors had at least one barrier to safe walking. The top observations that put safety at risk included:

- Broken or cracked sidewalks
- Dirty, with large amounts of litter or trash

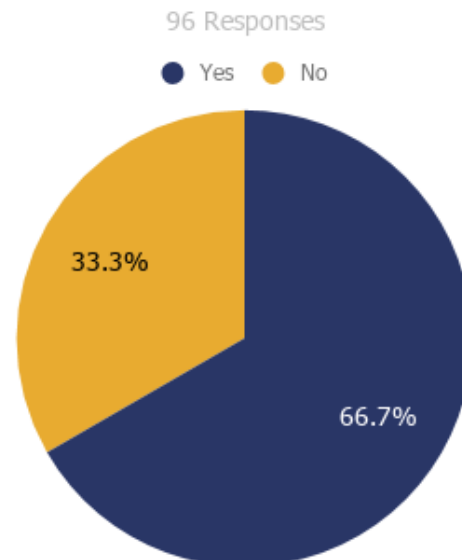
- Not well lit
- Blocked or interrupted walking paths
- Curb cuts are not textured or marked.

Intersections were slightly less concerning; however, auditors observed about half of the reason a street was not safe to cross was due to lack of crosswalk or needed traffic signals. Two other factors that made it challenging to cross the street were: (1) drivers not yielding to pedestrians and (2) trees or plants that blocked the view of someone trying to cross.

Were there barriers to safe walking paths?



Was it easy to cross streets?





Photos taken during walk audit, demonstrating walkability barriers and areas identified as "green space" for active living.

Active living

Walk Auditors looked for the following amenities to record something as a recreational space:

- Playground equipment (e.g., swings, slides, play sculptures, etc)
- Outdoor exercise equipment (e.g., pull-up bars, stretching bars, etc)
- Sand box
- Open area for free play (e.g., large grass space, rubber padded area, etc)
- Courts or fields for sports (e.g., basketball, tennis, soccer, etc)
- Concrete path for wheeled toys and bicycles
- Small wading or spray pool
- Water fountain
- Structure that provides shelter (e.g., gazebo)
- Benches

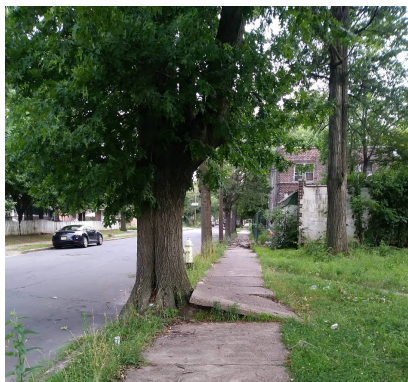
- Picnic tables

In total, 27 spaces were identified as potential recreational areas:

- 18 were vacant or open lots
- 5 were lots that could be cleared of abandoned property or cars, or had potential as future recreational space
- 2 spaces were associated with schools and had locked gates
- 2 spaces were public parks

Of the 27 spaces:

- 2 had courts or sports fields
- 1 park had both benches and picnic tables
- 5 were fenced
- 2 were staffed



Photos taken during walk audit, demonstrating need for increased investment in walking paths and access to healthy food.

Recommendations for Action



Secure funding for bigger projects

- Leverage a Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit
- Apply for Camden City Community Grant Program due Nov 8



Produce marketing materials for the community (i.e. videos) to share the findings

- Message: "Volunteers rebirthing the inner city neighborhoods"



Repave sidewalks block-by-block

- Coordinate with Mayor's neighborhood clean-up initiative
- Participate in further conversations with Parkside Redevelopment, LLC about Haddon & Euclid and Haddon & Atlantic projects



Share these findings broadly by holding a community meeting and sending this report to

- Chris Collins - Anointed newspaper
- City administration
- Cooper's Ferry Partnership
- Locally-based businesses (i.e. Subaru, Holtec, American Water, etc)



Use food pantries as a connection point to provide

- Carts to wheel groceries home in
- Cook plates or toaster ovens
- Basic cookware essentials
- Classes on maximizing ingredients and kitchen for cooking at homes



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About the Camden Coalition

We are a multidisciplinary nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of **complex care** by implementing person-centered programs and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and wellbeing. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals **in Camden** and **regionally**.

Through our **National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs** (National Center), the Camden Coalition's local work also informs our goal of building the field of complex care **across the country**. Launched in 2016, the National Center exists to inspire people to join the complex care community, connect complex care practitioners with each other, and support the field with tools and resources that move the field of complex care forward.