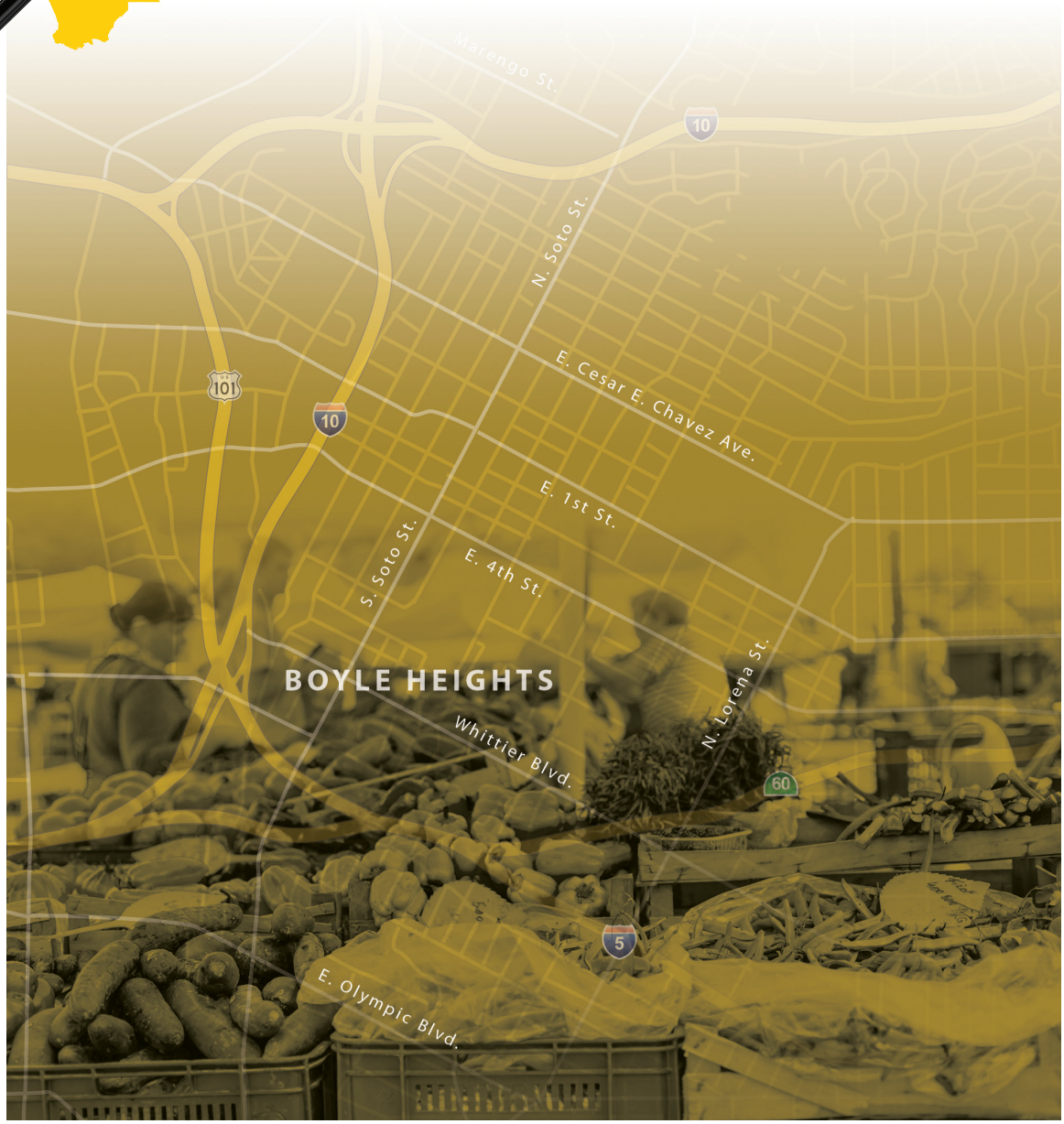
A RESEARCH SERIES OF THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE AT CAL STATE LA

IN FOCUS: BOYLE HEIGHTS



Facilitating Food Justice: The Food Landscape of Boyle Heights

MARLA A. PARKER PhD

CAL STATE LA
PAT BROWN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Unleashing the Power of Participation

Building Healthy Communities
Boyle Heights

IN FOCUS

IN FOCUS is a research series of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA, covering in depth timely issues of concern to neighborhoods, communities, and beyond throughout the greater Los Angeles region.

ABOUT THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE

The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs, a presidentially-chartered institute at California State University, Los Angeles, is dedicated to the quest for social justice and equality of opportunity, enlightened civic engagement, and an enhanced quality of life for all Californians.

The Institute is a non-partisan public policy center committed to sustaining the vision and legacy of former California Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown through convening public policy forums, engaging multi-sector stakeholders and diverse communities, and conducting timely policy research and community-driven initiatives.

ABOUT *BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES*

Building Healthy Communities is The California Endowment's ten-year, $1 billion comprehensive community initiative that is creating a revolution in the way Californians think about and support health in their communities. In 14 places across California, residents are proving that they have the power to make health happen in their neighborhoods, schools and with prevention—and in doing so, they're creating a brighter future for their children and for our state.

Building Healthy Communities has a simple strategy: work on a local scale to create broad, statewide impact. Where we live, our race, and our income each play a big part in how well and how long we live. We need to reshape the places that shape us—our neighborhoods.

Parents want to raise their children in neighborhoods with safe parks and quality schools, but many Californians don't get to choose where they live. Because the differences between neighborhoods are linked to differences in health outcomes, The California Endowment's ***Building Healthy Communities*** initiative includes a deep investment in place.

Building Healthy Communities partnered with 14 places in the state representing California's rich diversity.

Boyle Heights
Central Santa Ana
Central/Southeast/Southwest Fresno
City Heights
Del Norte County Adjacent Tribal Lands
Eastern Coachella Valley
East Oakland
East Salinas (Alisal)
Long Beach
Richmond
Sacramento
South Los Angeles
South Kern
Southwest Merced/East Merced County



A RESEARCH SERIES OF THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE AT CAL STATE LA
IN FOCUS: BOYLE HEIGHTS

Facilitating Food Justice: The Food Landscape of Boyle Heights

Marla A. Parker PhD
Assistant Professor
Political Science
Cal State LA

Goals and Objectives of This Report

- The overall goal of this report is to establish a foundation for further systematic data gathering that could inform better advocacy and facilitation of food justice for Boyle Heights residents. This brief provides an overall picture of the food accessibility landscape of Boyle Heights by using secondary data to describe the access residents have to primary and secondary food sources. It also discusses key data about conditions that could support small-scale food production (e.g. urban farming) in the community. Lastly, the report highlights pending legislation that could impact food production and accessibility.

Key Recommendations

- The primary recommendation is to focus on systematically gathering additional data that would provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of gaps in food access in Boyle Heights. In particular, it is recommended that data focus on several types of capital known to influence food justice: geographic, social, cultural, political, institutional, and economic.
- Identify and analyze cases of similar communities with food accessibility challenges and how they are addressing it.
- To facilitate data gathering, offer community dialogue sessions where residents can discuss the challenges they have with food accessibility and how they may overcome them with individual or collective action.
- Focus on how residents make food-based decisions in relation to other essential living priorities such as housing, finances, and health.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to help inform food justice efforts in Boyle Heights.[1] Generally speaking, "food justice" means ensuring the equitable access to, and the presence of, an abundance of healthy and affordable food choices. It can also entail ensuring that such choices are culturally relevant as well as providing important knowledge about nutrition and how to most effectively prepare food items. Although food justice has direct effects on individual health and quality of life, it also has critical links to areas including but not limited to economics, education, politics and social welfare for individuals and communities as a whole (Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2011; Drewnowski & Darmon, 2005; Troccoli, 1993). For example, food production and distribution may provide economic opportunities by establishing restaurants and stores. It is not uncommon for people to have to choose between buying food and paying rent. Positive correlations exist between nutrition and education. Access to food depends significantly on policy development and implementation.

Access to healthful food presents challenges for communities like Boyle Heights because of the socioeconomic status and demographics of its population. Research in government-supported food programs suggest that lower individual and family incomes, immigration status, and limited neighborhood economic activity can reduce the extent to which people can and will access viable food resources (Walter, Keane & Burke, 2010; Van Hook & Balistreri, 2006; Kasper et al., 2000). Additionally, with Boyle Heights becoming an increasingly attractive location for economic development, current residents face greater chances of marginalization. This can lead to changes in availability of and access to food. Thus, as Boyle Heights continues community development efforts, attention must be devoted to how food justice relates to other critical socio-economic outcomes.

[1] The encompassed geographical area that defines Boyle Heights for this report includes the following ZIP Codes: 90012, 90023, 90033, and 90063.

Food justice entails leveraging human, geographic, social, institutional, political and economic capital (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). More strategic approaches can enhance the prospects for food justice and thereby enhance the overall quality of life for Boyle Heights residents. This report provides important insights and a connected framework that can become the basis for short- and long-term action.

This brief report represents a first step leading to subsequent data collection. The food landscape will be measured using data specific to Boyle Heights. To the extent possible, data from the 2010 Census were gathered at the census tract level, which focused on distribution and location of food distribution entities, accessibility of food, environmental status and state-level legislation directly or indirectly related to food access.

This report examines the presence or absence of food distribution entities in Boyle Heights to provide insight into their accessibility for residents. Data also indicate the extent of government support for food access in Boyle Heights. Related data about land use and air quality will be provided to indicate how residents can have more to say about building pathways to better food access through urban farming. Finally, there is a review of proposed policy directions with possible direct and indirect effects on food access in Boyle Heights.

Key Dimensions in Boyle Heights Food Landscape

A food landscape includes the presence, distribution, and accessibility of key food sources. This can be measured by the extent to which a variety of healthful food sources are 1) economically affordable; 2) available on a range of scales and distributed to cover the population; and 3) available relatively close to where residents live.

Overall Cost of Food

Even after an exhaustive search, it was not possible to estimate average food expenditure data for Boyle Heights. However, food cost information for the

Table 1: Average Monthly Costs for Various Household Types in the Los Angeles/Long Beach Area

Household Type	Housing	Food*	Childcare	Transport	Health Care	Other Necessities	Taxes	Total
Individual	$896	$271	$0	$450	$258	$564	$469	$2,907
1 adult, 1 child	$1,398	$399	$689	$454	$389	$868	$936	$5,134
1 adult, 4 children	$1,890	$935	$937	$454	$785	$1,373	$1,431	$7,822
2 adults, 1 child	$1,398	$618	$689	$583	$646	$949	$722	$5,630
2 adults, 4 children	$1,890	$1,167	$937	$583	$1,042	$1,477	$877	$7,972

* Food costs derive from the Low-Cost Plan needed to fulfill nutritionally adequate diet. This plan is in *The Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels* written by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It assumes that most food will be purchased at a grocery store.

Source: Economic Policy Institute, Family Budget Calculator, *http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/*, July 2017

general Los Angeles area can provide some information about the value of food relative to other items. The Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator measures how much families need for a modest yet adequate standard of living and provides specific numbers for the Los Angeles/Long Beach area. Table 1 shows living costs for some specific types of households.

Food costs for a low cost plan generally represent between 7% and 14% of a household's monthly budget. For low-income families, managing costs is especially important in light of other critical needs. Thus, the limited share of a budget dedicated to food would probably not allow for expanded choices that can enrich a diet. Moreover, reduced resources can lead to tradeoffs to ensure that basic needs are fulfilled (e.g., reducing money spent on food to ensure that housing or healthcare costs are covered). These choices can compromise health. Ensuring that a food landscape provides a full range of options and support in a way that considers the resources of such low-income neighborhoods as Boyle Heights is critical. More specifically, an ideal food landscape supports low-income residents in their efforts to use their money wisely while providing a wide variety of healthful choices.

Presence and Distribution of Food Sources

This section describes the presence of retail entities (grocery stores, corner stores and farmers' markets) and non-retail (food banks and pantries) involved in food distribution. Important differences among these types provide insights into possible strengths and gaps in food landscapes. Supermarkets and other grocery stores typically provide consistent access and a variety of food options. They are stocked with healthful options that may include culturally relevant food. These stores tend to have relatively more stability than smaller stores.

Prices may be too high for low-income people, however. To mitigate cost obstacles, such government-supported programs as Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP), Women Infants and Children (WIC), and Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) subsidize food costs or offer supplementary food support. They may not offer quite enough support given that eligibility requirements can limit access based on income and citizenship status, which is particularly challenging for communities with significant numbers of undocumented immigrants. Although convenience stores provide consistent accessibility and have increasingly provided such nutritious options as fresh fruits and vegetables, variety

remains lower than that in larger supermarkets and grocery stores. As in larger stores, pricing in chain convenience stores may marginalize low-income residents (although that can also be mitigated through government-supported programs). Chain convenience stores are more stable than small mom-and-pop stores, which can face more challenges in keeping afloat in neighborhoods where they face competition.

Food banks and pantries have emerged as critical supplementary (and sometimes primary) sources of free food for neighborhood residents (Webb, 2013; Handforth et al., 2013). Over the last several years, economic downturns have resulted in more individuals and families (including those above low-income brackets) relying on these entities (Gentilini, 2013). Food banks are generally large-scale nonprofit operations providing food directly to individuals and supporting smaller operations, particularly food pantries. Unlike food banks, food pantries are smaller and operate as part of another mission (a homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, church, community center), with the exception being soup kitchens that focus only on food service but are not as large as food banks. Food pantries are generally members of food banks.

Unlike stores, food banks and pantries provide limited access to food resources. For example, they tend to limit the number of times an individual client can use them (often monthly). Although they aim to enhance the variety of food by including more fresh items, they typically restrict what clients can have, and choices may not include robust options for cultural foodstuffs. Food pantries often lack storage capacity and may not have adequate refrigeration to store frozen and fresh goods. Also, because food banks and pantries commonly operate as nonprofits with significant reliance on donations and grants, there is a risk of instability, which is compounded for food pantries because of their reliance on food banks.

Farmers markets are typically small to medium-sized operations with a collective of food producers, typically farmers or other local producers, selling to consumers. Vendors typically offer fresh items at affordable prices and many accept SNAP and WIC. However, they typically are not large, are active during only part of the year, have limited operations during the week, and can be limited in size and location by zoning laws, all of which limit their stability and accessibility.

Table 2: Approximate number of food distribution entities by type in Boyle Heights

Food Distribution Type	Number
Food Banks/Pantries	4
Supermarkets/Other Grocery Stores	55
Convenience Stores	11
Farmers' Markets	2
TOTAL	**72**

Sources: Food banks and pantries: Los Angeles Regional Food Bank website (*https://www.lafoodbank.org*); supermarkets and grocery stores: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 ZIP Code Business Patterns; and farmers' markets: LA Farmers Market Project website: *http://projects.latimes.com/farmers-markets/*

Table 2 shows the number and types of food distribution entities in Boyle Heights by ZIP code.

Although major food distribution entities appear to be in large supply, smaller ones that are critical in providing supplementary and sometimes primary support in low-income neighborhoods lack a stable presence in Boyle Heights. This is particularly true of food pantries and farmers markets.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of food distribution types by ZIP codes in Boyle Heights census tracts.

Based on these data, the approximate ratio of Boyle Heights residents to food resources can be calculated to indicate the capacity of food distribution entities to serve the population. Lower ratios are ideal because they suggest greater geographical capacity, which can reduce the transportation burden on residents. Table 4 provides the approximate ratios by

Table 3: Food distribution entities by ZIP code in Boyle Heights

Food Distribution Type	Number
ZIP Code 90012	
Food Banks/Pantries	0
Supermarkets/Other Grocery Stores	16
Convenience Stores	4
Farmers' Markets	0
TOTAL for ZIP code 90012	**20**
ZIP Code 90023	
Food Banks/Pantries	2
Supermarkets/Other Grocery Stores	15
Convenience Stores	1
Farmers' Markets	1
TOTAL for ZIP code 90012	**19**
ZIP Code 90063	
Food Banks/Pantries	2
Supermarkets/Other Grocery Stores	12
Convenience Stores	2
Farmers' Markets	1
TOTAL for ZIP code 90012	**16**
ZIP Code 90033	
Food Banks/Pantries	0
Supermarkets/Other Grocery Stores	13
Convenience Stores	4
Farmers' Markets	0
TOTAL for ZIP code 90012	**17**

Sources: Food banks and pantries: Los Angeles Regional Food Bank website (*https://www.lafoodbank.org*); supermarkets and grocery stores: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 ZIP Code Business Patterns; and farmers' markets: LA Farmers Market Project website: *http://projects.latimes.com/farmers-markets/*

ZIP code and is calculated by dividing the approximate population (using 2010 Census data) by the total number of food distribution entities from Table 2.

Tables 3 and 4 suggest that different Boyle Heights areas have differing capacities to provide food access to residents based on the number of food sources and the number of people served by them. Two Boyle Heights ZIP codes (90023 and 90033) have all types of resources available to residents, and the other two (90063 and 90012) do not. Oddly enough, the two with the lowest ratios are also the two without the full range of food resources. They also have smaller populations, which may suggest that available food sources are adequate. For the areas with larger populations and higher ratios, it is worth investigating whether the variety of food sources is being maximized to supplement food supplies for large populations.

Table 4: Food source-to-resident ratio by ZIP code

ZIP Code	Population	Resident-to-food source ratio
90012	11,010	551:1
90023	29,901	1,573:1
90033	45,973	2,873:1
90063	7,437	437:1

Proximity of Food

Although an optimal ratio of residents to food distribution entities ensures that a community has choices, the accessibility of locations is also a critical dimension of food justice. Ideally, distribution entities should be between half-a-mile and a mile of residential locations.[2] This is particularly important in areas without reliable or robust public transportation, where transportation of food requires access to vehicles.

Table 5 from the 2015 Food Atlas, which is generated by the United States Department of Agriculture-Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS), details the accessibility of supermarkets in Boyle Heights census tracts. The table provides demographic data including population, poverty rates and median income for each tract, which underscores the link between residents' income status and accessibility to major

[2] Association of Neighborhood Characteristics with Cardiovascular Health in the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis: *https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4172357/*

Table 5: Boyle Heights supermarket access by census tract Source: USDA Food Atlas, *www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/*

Census Tract No.	ZIP Code	Population (2010)	Poverty Rate (%)	Median Family Income ($)	Low-income low-access tract @ ½ mile	Low-income & low-access tract w/ vehicle access or low-income & low-access tract @ 20 miles	Vehicle access, tract with low rate or low-access tract @ 20 miles	Low-access tract @ ½ mile	% of low-access population @ ½ mile	% of low-access, low-income population @ ½ mile
06037204120	90063	2,650	21.1	40,486	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037204300	90063	4,787	37.6	29,448	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037203100	90033	4,839	44.7	21,110	●	●	●	●	100.00	76.72
06037203200	90033	4,844	32.9	42,652	●	●	●	●	100.00	68.19
06037203500	90033	3,064	26.9	35,867	●	●	●	●	99.64	57.78
06037203600	90033	5,394	31.3	36,542	●	●	●	●	92.96	61.85
06037203710	90033	3,259	30.8	33,333	●	●	●	●	94.33	63.32
06037203720	90033	4,001	41.4	27,975	●	-	-	●	15.43	13.67
06037203800	90033	4,589	24.1	46,042	●	-	-	●	25.33	17.25
06037204110	90033	3,078	25.4	38,193	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037204200	90033	3,303	35.1	32,446	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037204410	90033	2,363	53.4	25,563	●	-	-	●	26.09	20.32
06037204420	90033	3,138	53.1	27,067	-	-	-	-	0.62	0.50
06037204600	90033	4,101	25.2	39,105	-	-	-	-	1.53	0.99
06037203900	90023	2,944	31.0	33,893	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037204700	90023	4,972	22.8	47,544	-	-	-	-	1.52	1.00
06037204810	90023	4,478	26.6	37,769	-	-	-	-	0.30	0.17
06037204820	90023	2,274	20.7	49,813	●	-	-	●	47.31	21.80
06037204910	90023	3,105	39.0	25,486	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037204920	90023	2,598	27.5	41,429	-	-	-	-	0.00	0.00
06037205110	90023	3,766	46.4	29,464	●	●	●	●	67.35	55.66
06037205120	90023	3,618	38.9	27,743	●	●	●	●	90.80	70.69
06037206050	90023	2,146	49.3	25,667	-	-	-	-	23.17	16.49
06037206010	90012	3,127	44.0	22,364	●	●	●	●	38.23	19.72
06037206020	90012	7,883	10.7	88,750	-	-	-	●	32.11	5.90

food sources. In these data, only one Boyle Heights census tract was not flagged for low-income status, suggesting that the others have poor access and providing further detail about accessibility based on vehicle and income status. It also indicates the percentage of the tract population with low accessibility to food sources.

More than half (56.2%) of the residents in Boyle Heights have low access to grocery stores. Nearly half (47.7%) not only have low access to supermarkets but also have low incomes. Approximately one third (33.8%) of Boyle Heights residents are low income, have no access to a vehicle, and are beyond half a mile from a supermarket.

Another important factor is the presence of government-subsidized nutrition programs, which have been known to contribute to improved nutrition (Fox et al., 2004). In Boyle Heights, approximately 118 vendors accept SNAP benefits, which are also known as CalFresh in California. Table 6 shows how SNAP vendors are distributed in ZIP codes covering Boyle Heights census tracts.

Vendors accepting SNAP include markets and convenience stores; businesses whose primary goods are non-food items but that sell some foodstuffs (e.g. gasoline stations); and restaurants. Because Boyle Heights is generally characterized as having a relatively high rate of low-income residents, the availability of SNAP vendors is critical. However, the full value of SNAP in subsidizing access to healthful food relies on the vendor providing fresh and nutritious options, which is not a guarantee given that SNAP vendors include stores that may carry primarily processed food.

An increased number of SNAP vendors covering a wider geographical range can serve more residents and reduce hardship in accessing food. This brief report cannot provide a full analysis of SNAP vendors in Boyle Heights and about the types of subsidized food available. Nonetheless, the information in the table suggests that the accessibility of SNAP benefits may not be equitably distributed across Boyle Heights. Because of incomplete data, the number of WIC vendors in Boyle Heights could not be accurately determined.

Table 6: Approximate distribution of SNAP vendors in Boyle Heights

ZIP Code	Number of SNAP vendors
90012	1
90023	37
90033	58
90063	22

Sources: USDA SNAP Retail Locator, July 2017
www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailerlocator

Urban Farming as Small-Scale Food Production, Cultivation and Distribution

Smaller-scale food production, cultivation, and distribution can help fill gaps in food landscapes, thereby easing access to food. Small-scale mechanisms may also contribute to overall community development. For example, by creating their own food sources in their homes, families and individuals can enhance food choices and accrue savings in time and money. Small-scale mechanisms can encourage the development of food-based cooperatives in which groups of people and organizations can pool resources to produce and distribute food at lower costs, which can also encourage community residents to take more control of the food supply chain.

Urban farming acts as a common small-scale mechanism for food production and distribution. Although it offers opportunities to exercise personal agency in shaping food choices, the value of this mechanism depends on the availability of resources (e.g. land) and a healthy environment (i.e. quality air, water and soil). The most current data available from the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning show no formal land use zoning designations specifically for agricultural activity in Boyle Heights, although their presence could help to facilitate

Table 7: Assessment of environmental threats in Boyle Heights census tracts using California Environment Screen Score

Census Tract	ZIP Code	CES Score	CES Percentile	CES 3.0 Percentile Range
6037206020	90012	27.57	54.96	51-55%
6037206050	90023	79.03	99.90	96-100% (highest scores)
6037205120	90023	78.04	99.82	96-100% (highest scores)
6037204600	90023	73.13	99.57	96-100% (highest scores)
6037205110	90023	69.85	99.23	96-100% (highest scores)
6037204820	90023	68.47	99.04	96-100% (highest scores)
6037204700	90023	62.82	97.47	96-100% (highest scores)
6037204910	90023	60.12	96.47	96-100% (highest scores)
6037204810	90023	58.38	95.65	96-100% (highest scores)
6037203100	90033	71.05	99.45	96-100% (highest scores)
6037203500	90033	68.82	99.08	96-100% (highest scores)
6037203600	90033	55.95	93.88	91-95%
6037204410	90033	55.73	93.68	91-95%
6037204420	90033	54.72	93.03	91-95%
6037204200	90033	53.19	91.73	91-95%
6037204300	90033	52.02	90.76	91-95%
6037203200	90033	50.27	89.08	86-90%
6037203720	90033	47.40	86.00	86-90%
6037203710	90033	38.57	73.93	71-75%
6037204120	90063	45.34	83.39	81-85%
6037203900	90063	44.73	82.48	81-85%
6037203800	90063	32.88	64.70	61-65%
6037204110	90063	31.59	62.35	61-65%

Source: CalEnvironScreen 3.0, *https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen*, July 2017

traditional urban farming opportunities. According to this specific designation, agricultural activity can occur in one of the following areas or capacities: one-family dwellings, parks, playgrounds, community centers, golf courses, truck gardening, extensive agricultural uses, and home occupations.

However, even if zoning designations were changed to legally accommodate light agricultural activity, environmental conditions in Boyle Heights are not necessarily supportive of such activity across all parts of the community. Table 7 shows the latest data from the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool: CalEnviroScreen (version 3.0), which is operated by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. The data provide the CalEnvrionScreen (CES) score, which indicates the extent to which Census tracts in California experience environmental burdens, including but not limited to exposure to ozone, poor air quality, compromised water, and hazardous waste—all of which can negatively affect agricultural production (Conway & Pretty, 2013). High CES scores indicate higher exposures to environmental hazards and poor spaces for

food production. Percentile scores tell how a census tract ranks in relation to the rest of California. High percentiles indicate that the area is among California's most environmentally burdened areas. Boyle Heights census tracts have CES scores ranging from 27.57 to 79.03, with higher scores in the 90023 and 90033 ZIP codes and lower scores in 90012 and 90063. This suggests that despite these environmental issues in some parts of Boyle Heights, other areas may be conducive to agricultural activity. In short, potential opportunities exist to support urban agriculture in Boyle Heights that can fill gaps in the food landscape.

Although urban farming remains a popular mechanism for enhancing food supplies and promoting food choices, other options may be more attractive for Boyle Heights. For example, mobile food vendors provide an option that can mitigate environmental and accessibility burdens for residents. They can bring food closer to residents and limit their carbon footprint by reducing the need for individual transportation.

Future Policy Impact on the Boyle Heights Food Landscape

Addressing gaps in the food landscape requires consistent attention to current and proposed policies that can be supported or challenged through the political process. A few proposed actions at the federal level and multiple ones at the state level could affect California and subsequently Boyle Heights. The purpose of this section is to highlight some that Boyle Heights stakeholders might include in their advocacy efforts.

At the federal level, proposed cuts to safety net programs, particularly food stamps, could greatly limit the number of low-income individuals and families benefitting from CalFresh. Even though California aims to support and protect documented and undocumented immigrants, the anticipated direction of the federal government, characterized by a stricter stance toward immigrants, could have an unavoidable cascading effect at the state level. More specifically, policy rhetoric targeting immigrants has caused a general fear that prevents some from taking advantage of public or quasi-public support programs for which their personal information is on record. Recently, food banks have reported a drop in the number of immigrants seeking and using SNAP (Fessler, 2017). Thus, communities like Boyle Heights with a high population of immigrants could see negative outcomes in food access as a result of such policies.

At the state level, many proposed bills aim to directly or indirectly influence food production, distribution, affordability, and safety. For this report, approximately 200 state bills in the policy development pipeline as of May 2017 were reviewed for language that would affect land use, which could indirectly influence urban farming efforts.

Appendix A provides the detailed list of pending legislation with an accompanying link to the California Legislature. Current proposed legislation addresses the following key areas:

- Expanding the definition of food facilities to include smaller enterprises (e.g. home kitchens). Example: Assembly Bill 626A (AB626).
- Providing more technical assistance and incentives for urban farming, including incentives and support for minority, female, and veteran farmers. Example: Assembly Bills 376 and 465 (AB376 and AB465).
- Enabling social support programs (i.e. CalFresh and school food programs) to provide more targeted food assistance to certain populations and expand entities that can participate in those programs (e.g. restaurants). Example: Senate Bill 557, 138 (SB557, SB138); Assembly Bill 1520 (AB1520).
- Expanding the capacity and resources of CalFresh. Examples: Assembly Bill (AB563) and Senate Bill (SB282).
- Providing food and beverage labeling, handling, packaging, and transporting that promotes

safety and nutrition. Example: Senate Bill 300 (SB300)

- Creating policies that would encourage both private and public-sector food entities to provide more equitable access to healthful food. Example: Assembly Constitutional Amendment 2, Senate Bill 248 (SB248), Assembly Bill 956 (AB956).

Conclusion and Recommendations for Next Steps

The purpose of this report is to provide a broad description of the food landscape of Boyle Heights. The report focuses on primary food distribution entities in the ZIP codes and census tracts) of Boyle Heights and on the accessibility of food. Boyle Heights contains gaps in its food landscape because of the limited and disproportionate presence of major food distribution entities (supermarkets, grocery stores, and convenience stores) and smaller ones (food banks, pantries and farmers markets). Boyle Heights is largely characterized by limited accessibility to larger food stores that can provide a stable source of broad and healthful choices, and that scarcity is exacerbated by the relatively low economic status of its residents. However, the degree of accessibility can vary depending upon the specific area in Boyle Heights.

Smaller food distribution entities, including farmers markets and food banks, may help fill gaps. Their relative absence in Boyle Heights, however, limits the degree to which they can do so. Thus, it is useful to gain more insight into their current operations to assess whether they can be expanded and made more efficient. Smaller-scale food operations, such as urban farming, may also fill gaps, thereby promoting food accessibility and justice, but the general lack of agricultural zoning and, with few exceptions, the hazardous environmental conditions in Boyle Heights, would not adequately support urban farming.

Finally, this report provides insights into how some proposed policies and policy directions could affect food landscape dynamics. Paying attention to food-related policies at the federal and state level can allow development of precise advocacy strategies that can mitigate challenges deriving from gaps in the food landscape.

Limitations

Although this report attempts to provide insights into key elements of Boyle Height's food landscape, there are key limitations that can be addressed in future work, thus providing a more robust picture of the food landscape and the dynamics that affect it. These limitations include:

- No inclusion of school food programs.
- No qualitative data that can provide more insights into operational dynamics of food distributors as well as food banks and farmers markets.
- No quantification of smaller, grassroots, or alternative food production and operations.
- No data from Boyle Heights residents providing more nuanced insights into their food access and methods of resiliency addressing low access.
- No systematic data about current and future food advocacy efforts.

Framework for Recommendations

The report is a stepping stone for additional investigations that can inform food justice efforts. The primary recommendation as an immediate next step is to delve further into the Boyle Heights food landscape with a systematic approach. More specifically, inquiries should focus on qualitative data about food distribution entities; the role of other food businesses (e.g. restaurants) in the food landscape; data on smaller food distribution entities in Boyle Heights (e.g. schools and street vendors); information about food-related decision-making among residents; and the extent to which existing policies have affected equitable food access and how they may be leveraged in the future.

Based on the presented data and existing knowledge of food justice, the framework in Table 8 provides a basis for such an approach by focusing on geographic, social, cultural, political, institutional, and economic capital as ways to organize lines of inquiry.

Table 8: Recommended Boyle Heights food landscape framework with applications

	Key Area of Interest	Examples of Recommended Application
GEOGRAPHIC CAPITAL	Availability and use of land and other space for food production, cultivation, and distribution and the use of resources to mitigate environmental threats.	■ Assessment of land for future light agricultural activity. ■ Evaluation and assessment of the zoning code at the city level for refinements or rezoning to address future agricultural activity (with consideration also given to how that can be combined with commercial and housing development). ■ Evaluation of how resources have been used or underused to improve environmental conditions.
POLITICAL CAPITAL	Political resources that can affect policies related to food justice.	■ Evaluation of policy options and the extent to which they will be supported by elected representatives at all levels and constituents. ■ Assessment of the capacity of advocacy groups to propose and promote beneficial legislation at the local, state and federal levels related to food production, distribution and access.
COMMUNITY INSTITUTION CAPITAL	The capacity of institutions including food banks, stores, other food-related businesses, schools, and community centers, to individually and collectively produce, cultivate and distribute food.	■ Collection of qualitative and quantitative data about food bank operations, particularly strengths and challenges. ■ Determination of ways that other food distribution services and businesses are working to address food access through delivery services, donations of food, acceptance of food stamps, etc.
HUMAN CAPITAL	The ability and resources of individuals to obtain food.	■ Determination of how Boyle Heights residents obtain healthful food and assessment of the challenges they face in doing so. ■ Determination of how residents exercise resilience to overcome lack of access to food. ■ Determination of how residents learn about nutrition and how they apply that knowledge.
SOCIAL CAPITAL	The ability of residents to work cooperatively to create and use healthful food sources	■ Determination of whether residents pool resources and help one another enhance food access through bartering or other practices. ■ Determination of how cultural capital can be an asset to facilitate better food access.
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC CAPITAL	The role of community economic activity in facilitating equitable food access	■ Evaluation of ways to use institutional economic development opportunities to address food inequities through, for example, tax increment funding and community development block grants. ■ Evaluation of ways to use community economic development opportunities to address food inequities; examples include Community Land Trusts and land banking.

In applying this framework to data collection efforts, it would be useful to hold meetings with Boyle Heights residents and other stakeholders who can provide insights into these areas. Of particular importance is meeting with residents to learn how they deal with the lack of access to food the related challenges. Finally, considering that Boyle Heights mirrors other communities in Southern California and beyond, it would be useful to explore, extensively and systematically, how food justice solutions (e.g. micro-farming in Florida) have fared in those areas. This could more thoroughly inform Boyle Heights residents.

References

Conway, G. R., & Pretty, J. N. (2013). *Unwelcome Harvest: Agriculture and Pollution.* Routledge.

Drewnowski, A., & Darmon, N. (2005). Food choices and diet costs: an economic analysis. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 135(4), 900-904.

Fessler, P. (2017, March 28). Deportation Fears Prompt Immigrants To Cancel Food Stamps. Retrieved July 08, 2017, from *http://www.npr.org/sections/the-salt/2017/03/28/521823480/deportation-fears-prompt-immigrants-to-cancel-food-stamps*

Fox, M. K., Hamilton, W. L., & Lin, B. H. (2004). *Effects of food assistance and nutrition programs on nutrition and health: Volume 4, Executive summary of the literature review* (No. 33871). United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Gentilini, U. (2013). Banking on Food: The State of Food Banks in High-income Countries. *IDS Working Papers*, 2013(415), 1-18.

Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). *Food Justice.* MIT Press.

Handforth, B., Hennink, M., & Schwartz, M. B. (2013). A qualitative study of nutrition-based initiatives at selected food banks in the feeding America network. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 113(3), 411-415.

Kasper, J., Gupta, S. K., Tran, P., Cook, J. T., & Meyers, A. F. (2000). Hunger in legal immigrants in California, Texas, and Illinois. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(10), 1629.

Kirkpatrick, S. I., & Tarasuk, V. (2011). Housing circumstances are associated with household food access among low-income urban families. *Journal of Urban Health*, 88(2), 284-296.

Van Hook, J., & Balistreri, K. S. (2006). Ineligible parents, eligible children: Food stamps receipt, allotments, and food insecurity among children of immigrants. *Social Science Research*, 35(1), 228-251.

Troccoli, K. B. (1993). Eat To Learn, Learn To Eat: The Link between Nutrition and Learning in Children. National Health/Education Consortium Occasional Paper No. 7.

Webb, K. L. (2013). Introduction–food banks of the future: organizations dedicated to improving food security and protecting the health of the people they serve. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 8(3), 257-260.

About the Author

Marla A. Parker, PhD earned her doctorate degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2014 in public administration with an emphasis on public management as well as science an technology policy. She has a strong research and practice interest in public administration, particularly in the context of how diversity and inclusion can enhance more equitable social and education outcomes. Dr. Parker has also developed an interest in understanding food justice, particularly how the management of key institutions (e.g. food banks) impacts service delivery among populations with reduced access to healthy food.

Acknowledgments

This research was commissioned by the Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA with funding from The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative.

This work was made possible with the valuable input of the following:

Joel Perez and Cesia Lopez, Building Healthy Communities-Boyle Heights

Lou Calanche, Legacy LA

Luis Gutierrez, Leadership for Urban Renewal

Dr. April Jackson, assistant professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Florida State University



PAT BROWN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Unleashing the Power of Participation

THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT CAL STATE LA
5151 State University Drive
Los Angeles, California 90032-8002
PHONE: (323) 343-3770
www.patbrowninstitute.org