**APALI 2014 - Project Plan**

*Equal Accessibility, Allocation, and Distribution of Healthy Foods to East San Jose Neighborhoods*

By Bernadette Cooper, Brian Cheung, Melonie Drotts, Son Chau, and Yan Zhao

**I. Issue Identification, framing, and explanation**

Healthy food is currently not as accessible in the low-income neighborhoods of east San Jose as compared to more affluent neighborhoods in other regions of the South Bay.   
  
The lack of access to healthy food is a prevalent issue - along with the issue of childhood obesity - in low-income immigrant communities and communities of color across the nation. East side San Jose’s lack of access to healthy food mirrors this national issue. This side of San Jose is composed of a majority of the city’s working-class and immigrant population of Latinos and Vietnamese Americans that faces this challenge of healthy food access.

For instance, only 15% of low-income neighborhoods in San Jose (17% countywide) live within walking distance of farmers’ markets, community gardens, or community-supported agriculture drop-off sites.

Of the 201 corner stores in Santa Clara County, almost 30% are located in high-poverty census tracts. In addition to corner stores, the large concentration of fast food restaurants in low-income communities makes it convenient for residents to fall into unhealthy eating habits, especially at an early age.

One way to transform these communities is by compelling corner stores in low-income neighborhoods to begin selling healthier food options such as fruits and vegetables. In field research done by nonprofits Sacred Heart Community Service, Veggielution, and Working Partnerships USA, 85% of 284 surveyed low-income community members expressed the need for more healthier food options in their neighborhood. Likewise, 82% of 30 surveyed corner stores expressed that they would sell more healthier food options if policies were developed to healthier food options easier and profitable.

**Impact on Asian American and Latino American Communities**

Healthy food that is affordable, accessible, and equally distributed in East San Jose and San Jose, as a whole, will significantly benefit Asian American and Latino American residents by decreasing their risk for obesity and diabetes, improve their quality of life and productivity, and bolstering their local economy.

In Santa Clara County, obesity and diabetes are great challenges posed by both Asian and Latino communities. Based on the County of Santa Clara’s “A Health Profile for the City of San Jose - Focusing on Obesity” Study in 2010, 39% of Asian/PI adults are considered overweight /obese and 20% of Asian/PI Youth. “In 2007, more than a quarter (27%) of Latino adults in Silicon Valley were obese compared to … 13% of non-Latino adults in Silicon Valley.”1 “In 2009, 27% of Latino children in Silicon Valley were considered overweight, which was higher than the rate for non-Latino children in Silicon Valley (21%)“**1**. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Among Latino children, nearly half are likely to develop diabetes”1.

PolicyLink provides this research about access to healthy food**2**

* Accessing healthy food is still a challenge for many families, particularly those living in low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and rural areas.
* Living closer to healthy food retail is among the factors associated with better eating habits and decreased risk for obesity and diet-related diseases
* Healthy food retail stimulates economic activity.

We see that this research as consistent with our understanding of East San Jose neighborhoods and believe that improving the accessibility, allocation, and distribution of healthy foods can help Asian and Latino communities improve their health, quality of life, reduce medical costs, and productivity.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(1) The “Latino Report Card”

(2) http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35af0%7D/GROCERYGAP\_SUMMARY\_FINAL\_NOVEMBER2013.PDF

**II. Community Research focus and key questions:**

**Community Research Focus**

Our group seeks understanding and awareness in:

* *The underlying issues behind the inequality of access, allocation, and distribution of healthy foods in East San Jose.*
* *The most effective and sustainable methods for promoting equal healthy food access, accessibility, and allocation in East San Jose*

**Key Questions**

We are exploring this focus by asking

* (1) What is affordable and healthy food?
* (2) What are the causes of unequal accessibility, allocation, and distribution of healthy foods in a community?
* (3) How do we make healthy food appealing to the community?
* (4) What are the current projects and efforts towards promoting food justice?
* (5) How can efforts for promoting food justice be sustainable?

**Current Research**

This is data we have found addressing our questions:

(1) The Harvard School of Public health defines a healthy plate of food consisting of 50% of fruits and vegetables, 25% of whole grains, and 25% of protein (i.e. fish, poultry, beans, and nuts). This translates to a daily intake of about 9 servings (4½ cups) of fruits and vegetables each day, 2 or more servings of whole grains products, and 8 grams of protein per every 20 pounds of weight. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/>

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-plate/>

(2) As mentioned in component 1 of this plan, it is difficult for working class neighborhoods and communities of color to access healthy foods because only 15% of them live within walking distances of venues selling healthy goods (i.e. farmer’s markets, community gardens, and agricultural drop-off sites). Additionally, almost 30% of the corner stores in Santa Clara County and high concentrations of fast food restaurants reside in lower income neighborhoods. Consequently, unhealthy foods are significantly more convenient and accessible for these communities than healthy foods.

Research from Policy Link concludes that “Living closer to healthy food retail is among the factors associated with better eating habits and decreased risk for obesity and diet-related disease”.

(3) We can make healthy food appealing to the community by advertising its benefits and by collaborating with local agencies to promote healthy eating.

As mentioned in component 1, obesity and diabetes are alarming health issues faced by communities in East San Jose. Healthy eating greatly reduces the risk for obesity and diabetes. Furthermore, healthy food retail stimulates economic activity. Through sharing these incentives to the community we may be able to increase the public interest healthy foods and support for policies that bolster its accessibility. For specific details of how healthy foods decrease risk of diabetes and obesity, and how healthy retail stimulates economic activity, see the up-to-date report, *Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters*, developed by PolicyLink and The Food Trust.

Local agencies and nonprofits, such as the Health Trust and the 2nd Harvest food bank advertise and promote access to healthy food by partnering with over 300 local nonprofits, schools, service agencies, and business in Santa Clara County. Through its partnerships, the 2nd Harvest food bank is able to provide food to over 250,000 residents per month, 40% of the which is fresh produce. Many of these partners function as food distribution centers and disseminate literature about nutrition.

Partnership with school districts is highly relevant to promote awareness and facilitate other outreach programs in order to make "healthy food” eating attractive to kids. Currently, the “Let’s Move” campaign, sponsored by Whole Foods Market, United Fresh, Food Famiy Farming, and the National Fruit & Vegetable Alliance, is allowing school districts to apply for salad bars to be established in school cafeterias.

(4) These are a few among several groundbreaking initiatives and programs we have found in Santa Clara County that promote healthy food access, affordability, and allocation:

Sacred Heart Community Service, Veggielution, and Working Partnerships USA, have researched and discovered there is a strong demand of healthy food in neighborhoods and also great willingness of corner stores to provide healthy food, if there were policies that made selling healthy food easier and more profitable.

The Health Trust’s programs include:

* Fresh Carts Silicon Valley
* Healthy Corner Store campaign
* Small Farmers’ Markets
* Let’s Move Salad Bars to Schools
* [Silicon Valley HealthCorps](http://healthtrust.org/our-work/eat-well/silicon-valley-healthcorps)
* [Meals On Wheels](http://healthtrust.org/our-work/eat-well/meals-on-wheels)

The Second Harvest Food Bank’s programs include:

* [Family Harvest](http://www.shfb.org/familyharvest)
* [Brown Bag](http://www.shfb.org/brownbag)
* [Kids NOW](http://www.shfb.org/kidsnow) (Nutrition on Weekends)
* [Partners in Need](http://www.shfb.org/partnersinneed) (PIN)
* [Produce Mobile](http://www.shfb.org/producemobile)
* [Mobile Pantry](http://www.shfb.org/mobilepantry)

(5) We can achieve sustainable impact of increasing accessibility and consumption of healthy foods in East San Jose by advocating for policies that make selling healthy food easier and more profitable, advertising the research showing how significantly healthy eating and healthy retail can stimulate economic activity, and by partnering with local agencies and businesses.

As mentioned in component I, research from Sacred Heart Community Service, Veggielution, and Working Partnerships USA, have found that 85% of 284 surveyed low-income community members expressed the need for more healthier food options in their neighborhood. Likewise, 82% of 30 surveyed corner stores expressed that they would sell more healthier food options if policies were developed to healthier food options easier and profitable. Thus, policies supporting the accessibility and profitability of healthy foods could have long lasting repercussions.

**III. Action Component:**

Based on our research our group would like to participate in one of these actions:

* Engage Senator Jim Beall, a public decision maker, to lobby on policies that make selling healthy food easier and more profitiable, and policies that promote nutritious lunch programs in East San Jose school districts
* Use newspaper and radio to conduct a campaign to raise awareness of poor diet affects people’s physical health and consequently, socio-economic levels, and ultimately the quality of their lives.
* Use social media to conduct campaign to raise awareness
* Write a letter to the editor of San Jose Mercury News about our findings
* Contact a newspaper reporter to do a special interview on our effort to advocate on Equal Accessibility, Allocation, and Distribution of Healthy Foods to East San Jose Neighborhoods
* Turn one of the projects of the Health Trust into our project focus
* Create a mini documentary teaming up with the Health Trust regarding their current initiatives, obstacles, and our APALI group
* Run a food drive (food collection or financial donations)
* Advocate for policies that promote equal accessibility, affordability, and access to healthy foods

**IV Group Organization and Project Management:**

Our group has used google drive to share ideas and to share our ideas, research, and to develop this plan.

We assigned individual members to work one each of the components and to edit the overall document.

Over the next three weeks we plan to complete our action component and meeting as a group to practice for our presentation.