

I. BACKGROUND

The lack of healthy food options and physical inactivity is making America's youth at risk for numerous health problems that follow them well into adulthood. Millions of people die every year as a result of nutrition-based health issues; furthermore, in some parts of the country, entire communities also lack the awareness, open space, and assistance to counteract these effects. The specific communities of Hays county are suffering from the obesity epidemic as residents of all income levels struggle to keep healthy food on the table. That being said, obesity and lack of adequate spaces for physical activities is the most pressing issue that the community faces. It's a problem when the rates of obesity among America's youth has steadily increased at an alarming rate and is projected to keep increasing for years to come. A proposition to implement awareness programs as well as get fit/active programs that are safe to access and within a desired distance are much needed within the community to improve the quality of life among teens and adults alike.

II. NEED FOR PROJECT

Demographic information on Targeted Geographic Area of Hays County Residents

_____The target communities are within the boundaries of Hays county and include the cities of Buda, Dripping Springs, Kyle, San Marcos, and Wimberley; there are smaller sub-divisions of communities within Hays county that also include Bear Creek, Driftwood, Hays, Mountain City, and Woodcreek. The United States Census Bureau (USCB) in 2015 indicated that 194,739 people live within the target area. The median age is 31.3 years old, with 23.3% under the age of 18. The majority population (55.5%) identify as white. Hispanics and Latinos make up 36.7% of

the population, and Black/African Americans make up 3.5% of the target area population. Of the target population, 19.6% under the age of 65 do not have health insurance; the median household income is \$58,878 with 17.5% of the population below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The majority (89.1%) of the population 25 or older are high school graduates and 36.8% of the population have a Bachelor's degree or higher (USCB 2015). The unemployment rate as of 2016 is a solid 3.7% and is below the national average of 4.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016).

The obesity prevention project would service the entire population (194,739) of Hays county. The project will target schools and neighborhoods with high rates of obesity as well as implement education programs on healthy lifestyle choices. Age appropriate physical activities would also be a considerable option for implementation; the programs would allow children and adults of all income levels to reconnect with the community in a healthy way.

Environmental Risk Factors affecting Hays County

The risk factors plaguing Hays county include lack of nutrition-based education and awareness, lack of physical activity, and more access to fast food rather than healthy food (food deserts). These factors put the whole population of 194, 739 people at risk for long-term health problems. According to State of Obesity, as of September 2016, Texas is ranked as the 10th most obese state in the nation (State of Obesity 2016). In Hays county alone, the percentage of students who are "very overweight" is higher than the national average of 31% and continues to be consistently above the national average. Alternatively, 15% of students did not eat for 24 hours just so they can lose weight or to keep from gaining weight. Experts attribute much of the high rates of obesity to nutritional ignorance stating that "consumers do not know enough about

the role that foods play in health” (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine 2012). And seemingly while the nutritional consumption for children and young adults are at an all-time low with 18% not consuming any fruit whatsoever during the 7 days prior to the survey in 2014, only 34% consumed 2 or more servings of vegetables a day (YRBS 2014). The American Heart Association (AHA) and multiple experts agree that “consuming an average of 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day” is a healthy requirement for the body to receive a low sugar/ low sodium nutrition (AHA 2016).

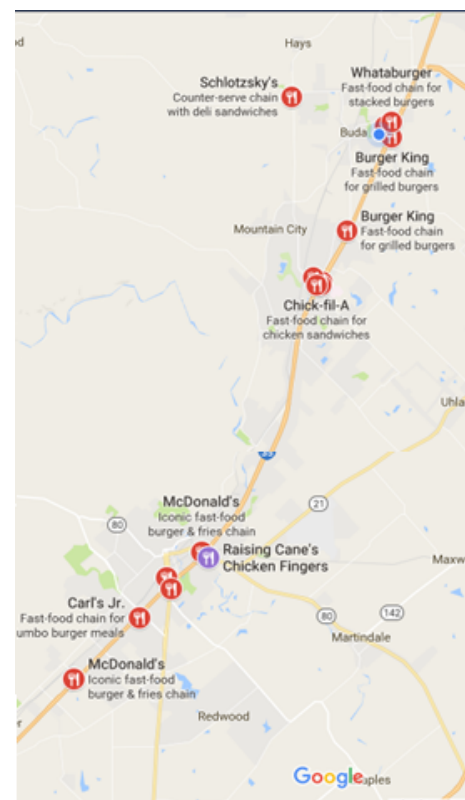
Need for Access to Open Spaces for Physical Activities

Unhealthy behaviors and little knowledge about what goes into their bodies, young adults have also adapted to becoming inactive. According to the Hays county survey 47% of these students did not attend physical education class within the average week, which is not too far off from the national average of 52%. Doctors are stating that parents play a very important role in their child’s healthy eating and activity habits and if a parent is overweight and has poor diet and exercise habits, the child is also likely to adopt the same habits; “many parents have abandoned their responsibility to make the right decisions regarding their children's health in exchange for expediency” (Kahn 2015). Inactivity can cause severe health problems in the long run. Physical inactivity can lead to Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, asthma, hypertension, some cancers and even death; “a study last year linked physical inactivity to more than 5 million deaths worldwide per year” (Jaslow 2013). Children and young adults are perceptive enough to see their parents acquired habits that would inhibit healthy development and research shows that “children who are obese are more likely to become obese adults” (Kahn 2015). Almost half of the students

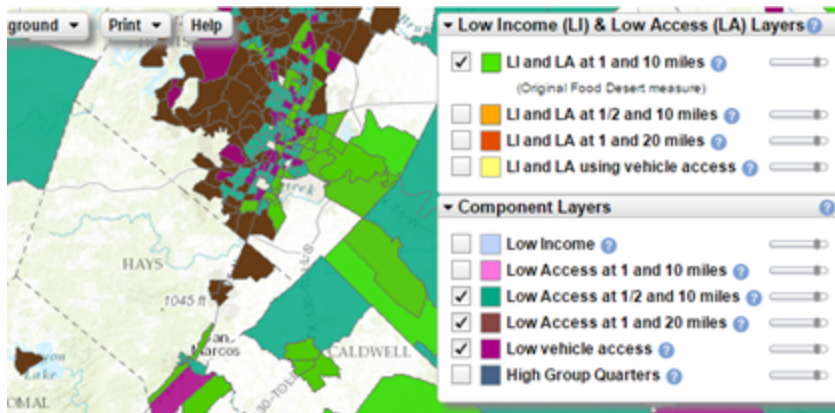
(48%) stated that they did not play on a sports team that was either run by their school or community 12 months prior to the evaluation (YRBS 2014). According to the CDC, half of the children in the United States do not have a park, community center, or even a sidewalk in their neighborhood and “only 27 states have policies directing community-scale design” (CDC 2010). In the year 2000, there was a call to need for adequate access to parks, recreation, and open space in the Hays county community. The survey conducted that year stated that the number one need for the community was to have open space and playgrounds available, “The survey also asked residents to agree or disagree with a series of questions about parks and open space... And residents overwhelmingly disagree – 70 percent – that Hays County has enough parks and recreation opportunities” (The Scripps Howard Texas Poll 2000).

Need for More Access to Transportation to
Healthy Food Options and/or Closer Access

_____Lack of suitable physical activity are visible and contribute to a wide array of health problems, but none more so than the increased access to fast food instead of healthy food options. These places that have little to no access to healthy food like fresh fruits, vegetables and whole foods are due to the lack of grocery stores, farmers market/supermarkets are called food deserts. The USDA indicates that instead [of healthy food options], they are heavy on local quickie marts that provide a wealth of



processed, sugar, and fat laden foods that are known contributors to our nation's obesity epidemic" (American Health Association 2011). According to the CDC, parents are finding it

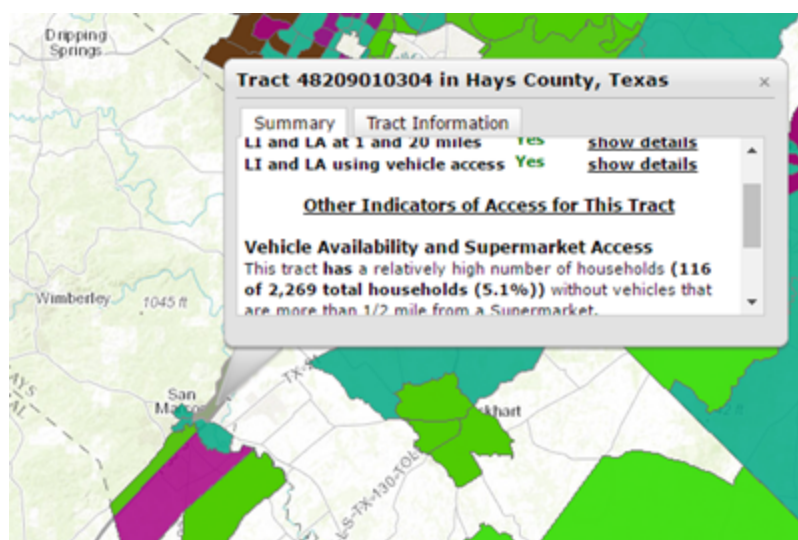


difficult to find healthy food options for their children, especially when access to fast food is only less than a mile away from their current household, these parents "live in areas with an overabundance

of food retailers that tend to sell less healthy food, such as convenience stores and fast food restaurants" (CDC 2016). When accessing the food research atlas, one can see the numerous amounts of communities that go without fresh food on a daily basis. In the communities along

the Hays county corridor, fresh food is a further distance than fast food. The map also shows how many residents do not have transportation to the grocery stores and farmer's markets that are seemingly farther away than burger king and McDonald's.

Without adequate roads for



bikers and safe transportation to and from grocery stores, the healthy state of one's body is that much harder and further to achieve. When clicking onto the food atlas, the tract information pulls up to say "Vehicle Availability and Supermarket Access This tract has a relatively high number of households (116 of 2,269 total households (5.1%)) without vehicles that are more than 1/2 mile from a Supermarket" (USDA food Atlas 2016). When asked if students eat fast food, more than 46% have had fast food more than one day in a week and as much as 40% also drink soda. The student population who surveyed, as much as 51% say they are trying to lose weight.

References

Abraham, A. (2016). *Why are Americans Obese?* | PublicHealth.org. Retrieved October 02, 2016, from <http://www.publichealth.org/public-awareness/obesity/>

American Heart Association. (2011). *Suggested Servings from Each Food Group*. Retrieved October 03, 2016, from http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/HealthyDietGoals/Suggested-Servings-from-Each-Food-Group_UCM_318186_Article.jsp#.V_GfzPArK00

American Nutrition Association. (2011). *USDA Defines Food Deserts*. Retrieved October 3, 2016, from <http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *Childhood Obesity Causes and Consequences*. Retrieved October 3, 2016, from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/causes.html>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). *State Indicator Report on Physical Activity*. Retrieved October 1, 2016, from

http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/PA_State_Indicator_Report_2010.pdf

Jaslow, R. (2013, May 03). *CDC: 80 percent of American adults don't get recommended exercise [Obesity Sweeping the Nation]*. Retrieved October 03, 2016, from

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-80-percent-of-american-adults-dont-get-recommended-exercise/>

Kahn, R. (2015, August 26). *69% of Doctors Say Parents Are Completely or Mostly to Blame For Childhood Obesity [Parental Correlation to Childhood Obesity]*. Retrieved October 4, 2016, from

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/69-of-doctors-say-parents-are-completely-or-mostly-to-blame-for-childhood-obesity-300133266.html>

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. (2012). *Survey Finds Americans Lack Basic Nutrition Information*. Retrieved October 02, 2016, from

<http://www.pcrm.org/health/reports/survey-americans-lack-basic-nutrition-info>

The Scripps Howard Texas Poll. (2000). *Hays County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Survey*. Retrieved October 3, 2016, from

<https://www.co.hays.tx.us/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=264&mid=301&fileid>

=62

7

United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2016). *Food Access Research Atlas*. Retrieved October 03, 2016, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

U.S. Department of Labor. (2016). *The Employment Situation*. Retrieved October 03, 2016, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empst.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Population estimates*. Retrieved October 04, 2016, from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/48209>

*Hays County
Dietary Behaviors and Weight
Control Project*