

# LA ALMA/LINCOLN PARK COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

February 2016

## HUNGER FREE COLORADO CONGRESSIONAL HUNGER CENTER

Andrew Wooyoung Kim

Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow

[akim@hungercenter.org](mailto:akim@hungercenter.org)

**HUNGER**  
**FREE COLORADO**  
[HungerFreeColorado.org](http://HungerFreeColorado.org)



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## INCREASE FOOD ASSISTANCE

**Increase emergency food assistance during times of shortage.** Expanding food assistance during periods of shortage will provide timely support to clients when food insecurity is most severe. These times include the middle to end of each month when SNAP benefits typically run out, and between October and February because of higher food prices and cold weather conditions, which prevent many clients, particularly disabled residents, from walking to the local supermarket. Hunger relief organizations should also identify what types of food are most desired during periods of shortage, the preferred hours of operation, and the best method of communication, including social media outlets.

**Expand reach of SNAP, WIC, and other federal assistance programs.** Hunger relief organizations should integrate SNAP outreach, enrollment, and recertification efforts with existing food assistance programs. Additionally, more staff and volunteers should be trained to properly enroll eligible recipients in SNAP and other federal assistance programs. All outreach materials must be available in Spanish, Somali, Arabic, and Vietnamese, and further research should be conducted to identify the best communication methods in LPLA and areas of the neighborhood that are not being reached.

## BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**Provide health, nutrition, financial education classes.** Hunger relief organizations should offer health and nutrition programs to teach healthy eating and cooking skills. Existing nutrition education programs that organizations can connect with include Cooking Matters, SNAP-Ed Connection, the Integrated Nutrition Education Program, and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. Additionally, hunger relief organizations must provide financial literacy classes to teach residents how to budget, particularly on a fixed income, and manage their money. Organizations should identify what information clients would like to learn prior to collaborating with any educational programs.

**Strengthen capacity of hunger relief organizations.** Expand the capacity of hunger relief organizations by conducting further research and developing infrastructure. More research around food preferences, affordability, and access should be conducted before new programs are initiated, and should continuously be conducted. Additionally, organizations should receive training on program assessments and conducting research. Food pantries must increase their refrigerated storage space to accept more produce and offer a greater selection and quantity of fresh and healthy foods.

## SUPPORT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**Create the space for community concerns to be addressed.** LPLA social service organizations must organize consistent, resident-accessible forums to develop a responsive ecosystem by listening to and addressing concerns. Crime and the lack of transportation are two large problems that residents identified as major barriers to food access. Organizations should host the Denver Police Community Resource Officer and Denver Parks & Recreation to hold listening sessions about factors influencing the sense of safety, particularly among the disabled and elderly, around Lincoln Park. LPLA residents should organize and advocate for expanded transportation routes and van services from Denver RTD.

**Provide resources and support to directly affected leaders.** Identify LPLA leaders and provide skills-based training and funding to support community-led initiatives. Considering that clients are the experts in hunger and food insecurity, residents interested in organizing their community to improve food security should be supported. Issues to organize around include local-level concerns, such as improving customer service at DHS and requesting accommodations on RTD buses for disabled residents, and national policies, including child nutrition reauthorization and raising the minimum wage.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## LINCOLN PARK-LA ALMA IN CONTEXT

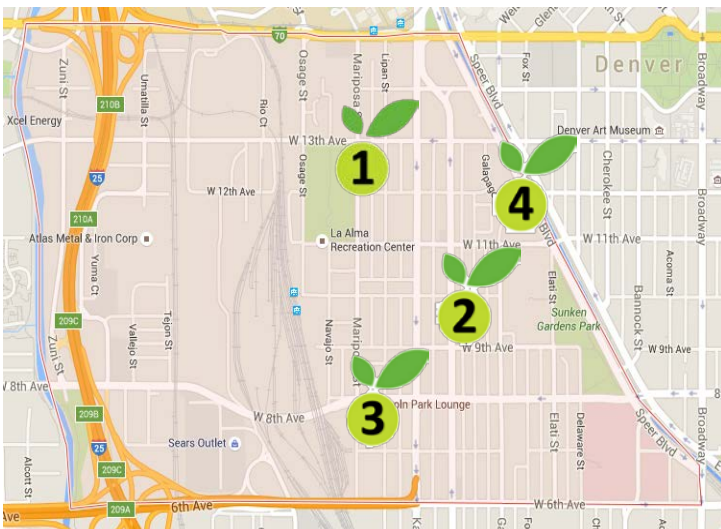


The **Lincoln Park-La Alma** neighborhood is one of Denver's oldest neighborhoods. Dating back to the 1850s, the historically Chicano neighborhood carries a strong sense of heritage and cultural pride that is ever-present. LPLA is centrally located in the city, proximally located next to downtown Denver and the Auraria campus, and is home to the thriving Santa Fe Arts District and a new RTD light rail station. The most recent demographic data show that **34% of the population was experiencing poverty** in 2014.

**Table 1. LPLA residents experiencing poverty**

LPLA residents in poverty (N=1961)	Percentage (%)	Persons in poverty	Total persons
<b>LPLA residents</b>	34%	1961	5749
<b>% Children (under 18)*</b>	42%	429	1030
<b>% Non-Latino Whites</b>	35%	1479	4201
<b>% African-Americans</b>	26%	136	520
<b>% Latinos</b>	46%	975	2119
<b>% Native Americans</b>	1%	1	106
<b>% Asian and Pacific Islanders</b>	3%	9	312

Source: Community Facts, Data Initiative, The Piton Foundation (2016)  
 \*Poverty prevalence rates not available for people >18



LPLA houses one food pantry, two soup kitchens, and one grocery store:

**FOOD PANTRY**

1) DENVER INNER CITY PARISH

**SOUP KITCHENS**

2) HIS LOVE FELLOWSHIP  
 3) FATHER WOODY'S

**GROCERY STORE**

4) KING SOOPERS

The *Lincoln Park-La Alma Community Food Assessment* was commissioned by Hunger Free Colorado to illuminate the challenges and opportunities for improving food security in the LPLA neighborhood in Denver. This report provides a snapshot of the needs and experiences of residents experiencing hunger and food insecurity, identifies barriers to food access, and presents recommendations to improve food insecurity in the Lincoln Park-La Alma neighborhood. The food assessment was conducted from September 2015 to January 2016 and draws from the perspectives of a sample of residents and service providers in the community.



# FOOD ACCESS IN LINCOLN PARK-LA ALMA

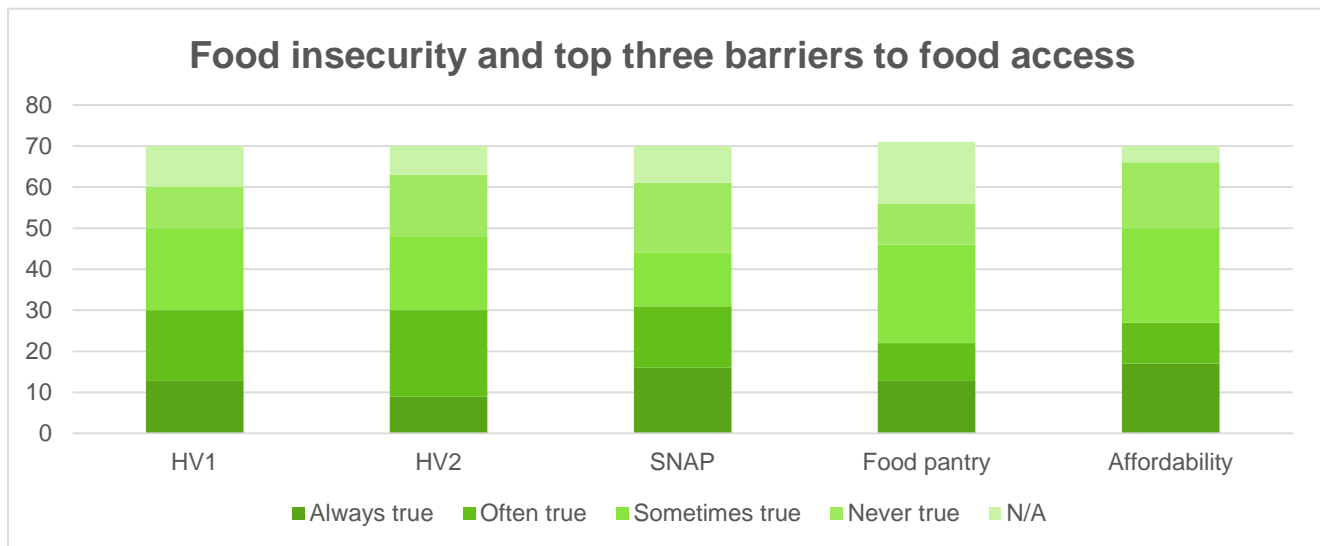
## SNAP PARTICIPATION AND FOOD ACCESS

	People on food assistance	Eligible but not enrolled (SNAP)	Low income & low access to store*
<b>LPLA residents</b>	1789	917	2798

Sources: Colorado Department of Human Services (2016); USDA Food Access Research Atlas (2010)

\*Low income & low access to nearest supermarket: USDA ERS Food Access Research Atlas (2010)

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING FOOD



The top three barriers to accessing food included **1) enrolling and staying on SNAP, 2) food pantry selection, and 3) food prices at the grocery store**. Approximately **43%** of surveyed residents are at risk of experiencing food insecurity, according to the Hunger Vital Sign food insecurity screener.

	Always true	Often true	Sometimes true	Never true	N/A
I worried whether our food would run out before I got money to buy more. (HV1)	19%	24%	29%	14%	14%
The food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more. (HV2)	13%	30%	26%	21%	10%
It's too hard to get on and stay on food stamps.	23%	21%	19%	24%	13%
The food pantry I go to doesn't have the food I want	18%	13%	34%	14%	21%
I cannot afford the food at my local grocery store.	24%	14%	33%	23%	6%

# COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

## FOOD INSECURITY IN LINCOLN PARK-LA ALMA


LPLA residents participated in surveys, interviews, and focus groups between September and December 2015. Service providers were also interviewed to understand perspectives on the availability of food, barriers to food security, and ongoing and potential solutions. Below are the most salient themes from residents' interviews and focus groups as well as service provider interviews.

RESIDENTS	SERVICE PROVIDERS
<b>Availability of food in the neighborhood</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 Not enough emergency food assistance in the neighborhood</li> <li>🌱 Lack of fresh, cheap, and healthy food at food pantries and local convenience stores</li> <li>🌱 Shortage of food at the end of the month and between October and February</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 Lack of nutritious and affordable food that is accessible</li> <li>🌱 Food donations are inconsistent, limited; not enough produce</li> <li>🌱 Not enough capacity to accept more donations and increase efficiency of pantries</li> </ul>
<b>Barriers to accessing food resources</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Poor transportation</li> <li>2) Food prices</li> <li>3) Limited SNAP benefits &amp; fixed incomes</li> <li>4) Unaware of available resources</li> <li>5) Poor accommodations for disabled &amp; elderly</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Poor transportation</li> <li>2) Poor customer service</li> <li>3) Unaware of culturally-specific needs</li> <li>4) Limited outreach efforts</li> <li>5) Lack of accessible community space</li> </ol>
<b>Community assets used to cope with hunger and food insecurity</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 Accessing food pantries and soup kitchens</li> <li>🌱 Watching for sales at King Soopers</li> <li>🌱 Learning about resources through flyers and word of mouth</li> <li>🌱 Sharing food among friends and neighbors</li> <li>🌱 Community gardens at Mariposa complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 Strong sense of community and pride</li> <li>🌱 Numerous community organizations</li> <li>🌱 Community gardens at Mariposa complex</li> </ul>
<b>Proposed solutions to improving food insecurity</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 More food pantries</li> <li>🌱 Cooking and health eating classes</li> <li>🌱 Expanded transportation options</li> <li>🌱 Closer and cheaper grocery store</li> <li>🌱 Better customer service at Denver County Department of Human Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌱 More research on barriers to accessing food</li> <li>🌱 Stronger SNAP outreach</li> <li>🌱 Expanded outreach efforts</li> <li>🌱 More wrap-around service programs</li> <li>🌱 More fresh produce vendors (farmers' market, community gardens, food truck)</li> </ul>



# PROPOSED PLAN TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY

## TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

	0-3 MONTHS	3-6 MONTHS	1-3 YEARS
<b>RESIDENTS</b>	Continue to voice concerns about crime, transportation, and poor customer service at the Department of Human Services	Collectively advocate for expanded transportation routes & accuracy and timeliness with SNAP applications and recertification	
<b>COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<p>Provide immediate food assistance for LPLA residents</p> <p>Increase food assistance during times of shortage</p> <p>Translate all materials in Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Vietnamese</p> <p>Organize community listening sessions to understand and address residents' needs and concerns</p>	<p>Offer health, nutrition, and financial education classes</p> <p>Integrate enrollment &amp; recertification help with direct service</p> <p>Expand outreach across LPLA through multiple outlets</p>	<p>Increase refrigerated storage space at food pantries</p> <p>Research food preferences, best strategies for outreach, and preferred hours</p> <p>Evaluate programs and services</p>
<b>HUNGER FREE COLORADO</b>	<p>Train organizations to enroll eligible client on SNAP and expand outreach efforts</p> <p>Disseminate food assessment report to LPLA community</p> <p>Connect hunger relief organizations with evaluation trainers</p>	<p>Identify main barriers to enrollment and recertification process among clients</p> <p>Identify main barriers to accurate and timely case management at Denver Co. DHS</p>	<p>Strengthen capacity and participation of the Colorado Food Pantry Network</p> <p>Conduct research on food preferences, affordability, access</p>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the kind and constant support of Kathy Underhill, Albert Ramirez, the entire staff at Hunger Free Colorado and the Congressional Hunger Center, Todd Clough and Larry Martinez at the Denver Inner City Parish, Shaina Burkett, Elizabeth Rumbel, and Lynne Picard at the Denver Housing Authority, Mingming Zhang at the Piton Foundation, Wendy Peters Moschetti at LiveWell Colorado, Caitlin Lowell at 9to5 Colorado, and most importantly, the residents of the Lincoln Park-La Alma residents who graciously gave their time and energy to share their stories.

