WALNUT HILLS KROGER
RECOMMENDATIONS
REPORT

DECEMBER 12, 2012

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI
MASTERS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

ANDY BADINGHAUS    ALEXIS BARNES
TIFFANY LACOUR (MARTIN)
BRENDEN REGAN    YUE WU

PLAN 7007 PLAN-MAKING
WORKSHOP
REPORT BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared by the Walnut Hills Food Access Team (hereinafter called the Food Access Team)—a group of students in the University of Cincinnati’s Master in Community Planning Program as part of Graduate Plan-Making Workshop. Students were advised by Dr. Marisa Zapata, Ph.D. and Teaching Assistant Sagar Shah. The report focuses on providing a set of recommendations to the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation that will help the food access situation in Walnut Hills. These recommendations are based on two scenarios—the store is seen as an asset to the Walnut Hills Kroger and remains open, or Kroger Company no longer sees a benefit to keeping the store open, and therefore shuts down the store upon its lease expiration.

In this report, first a brief background on the Walnut Hills neighborhood is provided. An executive summary introduces the idea of food deserts and food access in relative terms concerning Walnut Hills, and also illustrates the issues surrounding the Kroger store. Next, a methodology section details the research process that these recommendations arrived from. Finally, research is divided into sections of this report discussing recommendations to address the two above-described scenarios. These sections focus on encouraging Kroger to keep their store in Walnut Hills, and hopefully make the location more profitable so that the speculation of closure does not continue, but also address the reality that Kroger might close their store in Walnut Hills. Options for fresh food access that are discussed in this report include: alternative food retail options, facilitating a farmer’s market within the neighborhood, and visioning a healthy food center on and nearby the existing Kroger site. Overall, this report is intended to strategize a set of both visionary and realistic innovative options concerning maintaining food access in the Walnut Hills neighborhood. This report is therefore as a set of guidelines for further action to assist the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation, Walnut Hills community members, and other relevant stakeholders and interested parties.
NEIGHBORHOOD BACKGROUND: WALNUT HILLS

Situated on the east side of Cincinnati, Walnut Hills is a socially and economically diverse neighborhood laden with historical significance. According to U.S. Census data, median family income has risen from $20,915 in 2000 to $40,557 in 2010. However, the population of the area has declined by 53% since 1970; as of 2010 it was 7,847. In the study area 69.8% of the population is black, 26.2% white, and 4% other races. The census data shows the percentage of white and other races in this area increased from 22.8% in 1990 to 30.2% in 2010 (US Census, 2010).

In addition to socioeconomic characteristics, the history of Walnut Hills plays a role in the current plight facing the Kroger location in the neighborhood. Walnut Hills has changed significantly in the last 200 years, transitioning from farmland to bustling streetcar/incline suburb, to a declining inner city neighborhood attempting to revitalize itself. The Walnut Hills Kroger is located in an area that is known for substantial pedestrian and transportation traffic. Peebles Corner, at McMillan and Gilbert, was once a walkable shopping and cultural center. Many of the city’s heavily trafficked streetcar lines passed by Peebles Corner. Now a shadow of its former self, Peebles Corner lacks significant economic development, and the Walnut Hills Kroger leaving the area could be a considerable setback to the revitalization efforts going on in Walnut Hills. Many current and potential shoppers of the Walnut Hills Kroger have concerns about their safety when visiting the site and when visiting the neighborhood in general. Based upon perception or reality, those concerns affect the profitability of the store.
The lack of convenient and healthy food options in urban centers is an issue that academics, politicians and citizens have begun to address. One of the key axioms associated with this trend is “food desert.” The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food deserts as, “areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food” (US Department of Agriculture, 2012). For purposes of this research report, the definition of “food access” is adapted from one provided by PolicyLink—a national research and action institute. Food Access is therefore described as an area where, nutritious, affordable, and high quality food is available; supermarkets are accessible, and transportation is adequate (Treuhaft & Karpyn, 2012). There is concern that multiple food deserts will pop up in major American cities, accelerating the deterioration of health and making redevelopment more difficult. Why is this happening? Family owned independent grocers are fewer and farther between and large grocery chains are moving from small or even medium size stores to large ‘big box’ stores. For example, the Kroger Company has gone from having approximately 5,000 stores nationwide to 2,500 stores. They make two to three times the profit from those 2,500 stores than they made from the 5,000. Larger stores, requiring larger footprints that shoppers use to make comprehensive, less frequent shopping trips, are what US consumers have come to prefer. Unfortunately this trend leaves some urban areas in the US behind as their smaller neighborhood grocery models no longer fit the larger grocery business model. The larger models preferred by the grocery companies literally and contextually do not fit into the fabric of older dense urban neighborhoods. The Walnut Hills Kroger is an example of the consequences experienced by an urban neighborhood trying to support a larger store.

The Walnut Hills Kroger scenario is an excellent case study of an urban neighborhood adjusting to changing trends in grocery business models and threats to food access should the store leave. The storescenario is therefore described in the subsequent two pages of this report. The Kroger store in Walnut Hills has been open since 1983 and has operated at a loss every year except for 1984. There was concern in 2008 that the store would be shut down. Cincinnati City Council studied the issue and decided not to intervene financially in the situation. However, Kroger elected to extend its lease on the land. Additionally, Kroger spent approximately $250,000 in improvements to the interior of the store, and changed management with the goal of making the store profitable. However, those measures have not helped the situation and the store continues to lose money, more than $10,000 a month.

Many residents and community stakeholders fear that the Kroger location in Walnut Hills will close in a similar fashion as other former urban Kroger locations in the Roselawn and Westwood neighborhoods of Cincinnati. Both of these former urban stores did not fit the current business model of Kroger, had below-average square-footage (under 30,000 square feet) and were no longer competitive with the company’s larger, suburban models. Kroger is currently renovating and expanding their Corryville store, which is in close proximity to the Walnut Hills location. Neighbors and neighborhood activists in Walnut Hills fear that their neighborhood grocery will be shut down once the renovations to the Corryville location are finished.

The Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation has energetically taken on the challenge of making the store profitable. Their ‘Buy 25’ initiative asks that area shoppers come to the Walnut Hills Kroger twice a month and spend at least twenty five dollars during each of those visits. In addition to asking for increased patronage from area residents, Buy 25 is an outlet where the community can submit feedback and suggestions to store management, and show the Kroger Company that there is neighborhood support for the store. Walnut Hills cannot be successful in their efforts to keep the
store open without the support of the Walnut Hills Area Council and the residents of Walnut Hills themselves.

If the Walnut Hills Kroger does not become more profitable, and the company chooses to close the store, the neighborhood must find alternative methods of purchasing fresh and healthy foods. Aside from personal vehicle travel to other area stores, Walnut Hills residents benefit from living in a neighborhood conveniently situated on bus routes that provide direct access to nearby Kroger grocery stores. The Walnut Hills resident survey conducted by the Food Access Team suggested that the majority of customers visiting the Walnut Hills Kroger travel to the store via personal vehicle; the second largest group of customers is pedestrians. With nearby bus routes, access to food could be maintained for people who do not have a vehicle should the Kroger close.
# Table of Contents

1. **Table of Contents**  
2. **Methodology**  
5. **Scenario 1 Kroger Stays**  
   5.1 Strategy 1: Engaging Community Support for the Store  
   11. Strategy 2: Promote a Safe, Secure, and Lively Street Life at Peebles Corner  
   13. Strategy 3: Redesign of the Current Kroger Site  
16. **Scenario 2 Kroger Leaves**  
   16.1 Alternative 1: Attracting a New Grocer to Walnut Hills  
   22. Alternative 2: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market  
   29. Alternative 3: Redevelop the Kroger Site into a Healthy Food Center  
36. **Conclusion**  
40. **References**
METHODOLOGY

The Food Access Team simultaneously evaluated two scenarios: the Walnut Kroger stays in the neighborhood, or the store closes. The evaluation involved quantitative and qualitative data collection. Data was primarily collected through in-person interviews, surveys, social media outreach, academic research, site visits, and census data collection. Collectively, these methods were used to investigate alternatives for addressing the two primary scenarios. Numerous alternatives were considered, but the process progressed to the following alternatives that encourage the store to stay, or plan for the future of food access in Walnut Hills in absence of the Kroger:

- **ENCOURAGING** the store to stay by depicting the store as a community asset.
- Redesigning the current store site, and **REPURPOSING** it to meet the changing needs and demographics of the neighborhood.
- **EVALUATING AND PROPOSING** food retail options to serve the Walnut Hills neighborhood.
- **INVESTIGATING** farmers markets, and assessing feasibility of developing a model to fit the Walnut Hills neighborhood.
- **ENVISIONING** a Healthy Food Center that comprehensively meets the health, wellness, and nutrition needs of the neighborhood.

These alternatives shape the foundation of this report. The Food Access team was tasked with developing goals and recommendations throughout the progression of this project, and the data collected throughout the process shaped these goals and recommendations.

**Existing Conditions Report**

An Existing Conditions Report was first compiled to assess the existing conditions of the Walnut Hills Kroger, the area around it, general issues with food deserts and providing food in urban neighborhoods. Key data sources used to compile the report included:

- US Census data (including the American Community Survey)
  - Demographic data from tract, block group, and block level data
  - Block-level vehicle accessibility data
- Historical data from secondary sources.
- Newspaper articles (local and national sources)
- US Department of Justice
- Federal Bureau of Investigations
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Case study examples of urban grocers collected from primary and secondary sources
- The Cincinnati Area Geographic Information System (CAGIS)
- The City of Cincinnati
The Preliminary Survey

A preliminary survey was administered between September 24, 2012 and October 3, 2012. Primarily, the Walnut Hills Food Access Team administered surveys in-person in front of the Walnut Hills Kroger, within the Kroger parking lot, and along the streets surrounding the store. Initially, our team planned to administer the survey five days a week for a period of two weeks. However, after obtaining a considerable amount of responses during the September 25th Buy $25 event, we limited our survey to 150 respondents. In total, the Walnut Hills Food Access Team visited and administered surveys at the Walnut Hills Kroger site over a two-day period, and additionally gathered responses from social media outlets. Facebook and Twitter were utilized to distribute the survey online, but our reach was limited to the social network of the following people: The Walnut Hills Food Access Team, Dr. Marisa Zapata, and the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation. A total of 146 responses were obtained, and results were analyzed using software on Google Forms and Microsoft Excel.

Engaging Community Support for the Store

Data sources to evaluate this alternative were largely qualitative, and collected through various community engagement efforts. These sources included: in-person interviews with key stakeholders. Stakeholders surrounding food access in Walnut Hills, and researched for this project, consisted of: the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation Board, Lee Chapel A.M.E. Church, Buy 25 Tuesdays staff and Participants, Kroger customers, Cincinnati’s Center for Closing the Health Gap, documented participation in the November 13th Buy 25 postcard initiative, and verbal feedback from the community engagement exercise at Lee Chapel A.M.E. Church. Content was analyzed from the data sources to extract common themes that guided recommendations for this alternative.

Current Store Site Redesign

In order to properly illustrate needed improvements at the current store site, data about the current site environment and site innovations were collected. The method for collecting this data largely involved numerous site visits to the current store, taking photographs of the site, and obtaining a site map. Mitigating loitering was the primary problem to address with site redesign, and data on this subject was collected through meetings with key stakeholders and data from the preliminary survey directly from loiterers. This data was then used to develop a site redesign, and also create a set of recommendations for mitigating loitering on and near the site.

Food Retail Options

To assess additional food research options in absence of the Kroger, the Food Access Team gathered data on current grocery options in Cincinnati. Retailers who currently operate in comparable neighborhoods to Walnut Hills in Cincinnati were examined. Sources of data included: ALDI Einkauf GimbH & Company oHG (ALDI), Save-a-Lot, CAGIS data on current grocery options, and interviews with Kroger Officials and the Cincinnati Center for Closing the Health Gap to gain information on the current store and options for corner stores and financing options. From the data gathered on ALDI and Save-a-Lot, profiles of those grocers were created that included information on their business models, locations of operation, and site requirements for new stores. Additionally, maps were
examined and site visits to potential parcels for food retail development were completed. These parcels were located along Gilbert, Taft, and McMillan streets. From the interviews with stakeholders, potential incentives to bring a new grocery store to Walnut Hills were also researched. This information was compiled to make a recommendation for a potential new grocery store site, including incentives for development.

Investigating Farmers Markets
To determine the feasibility of a farmers market, data on potential sites and different models were collected. Potential sites for a farmers market in Walnut Hills were investigated through an inventory of vacant parcels along the Gilbert and East McMillan corridors. The Paramount building was selected as a viable site for a farmers market through this process. Graphical software was used to illustrate what a redeveloped Paramount building utilized as a farmers market would look like. Existing farmers markets in Cincinnati were researched and visited to extract elements of these markets that would benefit the Walnut Hills Community. These markets included: Lettuce Eat Well (Cheviot), Findlay Market (Over-the-Rhine), and Gabriel’s Corner (Avondale). Key questions on these markets’ operating, funding, and challenges were documented to compile a recommendation for creating a farmers market in Walnut Hills.

Healthy Food Center
Various organizations and programs that would fit the proposed uses and functions of a healthy food center in Walnut Hills were researched. A cataloging of similar programs, models, and also potential partners for development within Cincinnati and elsewhere were key sources of inspiration for the Center. The most viable elements of these examples, and other ideas through the creative process were compiled together to recommend a Healthy Food Center in Walnut Hills.

Methodology Conclusion
The methodology described in this report outlines how the research was completed for assessing the food access situation in Walnut Hills based on the future of the Kroger. In subsequent sections of this report, the two scenarios are researched. In the first scenario, Kroger stays in Walnut Hills; three strategies are therefore presented to make the store more viable. Following the first scenario, a second scenario is presented that details three alternatives should the Kroger close and become vacant. The strategies and alternatives for the two scenarios provide a set of guidelines for community stakeholders and interested parties concerned about food access in the Walnut Hills neighborhood.
SCENARIO 1: KROGER STAYS

This report section is divided into three strategies: engaging community support for the store, promoting a safe, secure, and lively street-life at Peebles Corner, and redesigning the current Kroger site. Each strategy is introduced, and has individual goals. Given each strategy’s goals, findings and recommendations are presented based on completed research.

Strategy 1: Engaging Community Support for the Store

Introduction
An affordable and fresh grocery retailer within the neighborhood is critical to the vitality of the Walnut Hills neighborhood. Healthy food options within a neighborhood promote healthy lifestyle choices and promote a sense of community. A community store, where most everyone shops for groceries, ensures the highest rate of accessibility for residents. Additionally, a thriving fresh food retailer is a beneficial community asset to urban neighborhoods, and helps attract additional residents and economic development.

Community support and engagement is the vehicle for directing attention to the Kroger Company that the Walnut Hills store is a community asset, and its existence is also critical for preventing the neighborhood from becoming a technical food desert. The Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation has already identified this connection, and these overarching concepts are the foundation for the Buy 25 community effort. As noted in the Existing Conditions Report, Walnut Hills is a diverse neighborhood. Their population features varying incomes, races, and ages. While the area surrounding the Kroger store is principally low-income, and also hosts a large senior population, census tract 20 (also includes East Walnut Hills) is more affluent and has experienced a conspicuous amount of gentrification. The core issue with harvesting community engagement, and mobilizing support for the Walnut Hills Kroger, involves bridging the gap between these diverse groups of residents. Further, Walnut Hills has an extensive network of community businesses, associations, and supporters who should be utilized to draw substantial support for the store. Therefore, this first objective of the scenario for if the store remains, largely focuses on employing this community network, in association with and building on the foundation of the Buy 25 initiative, to assist in making the store more financially viable, and draw attention to the Kroger Company that the store is a valuable asset.
Goals: Engaging Community Support for the Store

- Extend the Buy 25 Tuesday campaign’s reach beyond social media outlets, and utilizing other community associations to reach a larger segment of the neighborhood.
- Assure the Kroger Company that the Walnut Hills store is a community asset through increased community support and engagement.
- Use current and potential customers as the drivers and encouragers of overall store improvements including: product selection, product freshness, store management, and overall levels of customer service.

Buy 25 Tuesdays—Previous and Current Efforts

The Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation (WHRF) developed “Buy 25 Tuesdays” in the spring of 2012 to boost revenue for the financially struggling store that has only made a profit one year since it opened in 1983. Kevin Wright, Executive Director of the WHRF, stated in an August 6, 2012 newspaper article by local Cincinnati television station WCPO that the goal of Buy 25 Tuesdays is to generate additional revenue for the store, roughly $10,000 a month ($120,000 a year), attract the entire neighborhood’s demographic to the store, and leverage Kroger customers to support other Walnut Hills local businesses and elevate the overall economic health of the neighborhood. At that time the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation thought an additional $10,000 a month in sales would make the store profitable. However, that figure is inaccurate and the store’s exact losses are not known. The Buy 25 Tuesday event quickly gained neighborhood and media attention at its inception, and built a solid foundation for community participation to influence the store’s product selection, freshness, staff accountability, and management concerns. For example, on Buy 25 Tuesday’s social media page on Facebook, photos are frequently uploaded to note production additions which have been made to appeal to the Buy 25 participants. Still, the overall reach of this initiative has not made the larger impact that reflects the entire diverse demographic of the Walnut Hills neighborhood.

Buy 25 Tuesdays Effect on the Future of the Walnut Hills Kroger

Facebook and other social media outlets such as Twitter are a suitable and quick way to garner support for grassroots initiatives such as Buy 25 Tuesdays. But social media has a limited audience. According to the survey conducted by the Food Access Team, everyday residents who travel to the store on non-Buy 25 days are mostly unaware of the campaign facilitated by the WHRF (60% of respondents indicated they were not familiar with Buy 25 Tuesdays). However, when informed of the campaign’s objective and long-term goals, residents are extremely welcoming to the idea and are quick to make comments and suggestions for store improvements. Our survey asked participants to name specific changes they would like to see in the store, and most responses revolved around the idea of product selection, freshness, and perception of the store’s safety. When dealing with this scenario, our goal was to assess the reach of Buy 25, and assist the WHRF with expanding the initiative’s marketing efforts. This goal reflects the overarching idea that Buy 25 enables community engagement and support around the store, and is the primary tool for the customers to voice their concerns and suggestions. Current and potential customers’ perception and opinion of the store affect the financial health and future of the Walnut Hills Kroger.
Marketing Efforts Implemented by the Food Access Team to Support Buy 25 Tuesdays

During the time-frame of this project, the Food Access Team has tested new marketing efforts to gain further attention and support for Buy 25 Tuesdays. Primarily, two goals of extending the campaign’s reach beyond social media outlets, and utilizing other community associations to reach a larger segment of the neighborhood were in mind when testing these marketing tools. First, a postcard campaign to attract new Buy 25 participants within the Walnut Hills neighborhood was tested in preparation for the November 13, 2012 Buy 25 Tuesday. Secondly, the Food Access team planned and promoted the November 13th event and tested new incentives for gaining attention to the Buy 25 table in front of the store.

The Buy 25 Tuesday postcard campaign evolved around the idea of taking advantage of the grassroots aspect of the initiative, and extracting it from the social media component. Our preliminary survey gave the assumption that a large segment of Buy 25’s potential participants were unaware or could not access the Facebook pages or Tweets advertising Buy 25’s accomplishments and upcoming events. Postcards (3.5 inches by 5 inches in size) were distributed to two key community locations: the two Easter Seals Work Resource sites in Walnut Hills and the Lee Chapel A.M.E. church. Although Lee Chapel is not located within the neighborhood, a large number of the church’s parishioners reside in Walnut Hills. A total of 100 postcards were printed and distributed to these two venues. In addition to distributing postcards to staff, the Easter Seals Work Resource Center coordinated an email announcement alerting its larger network about Buy 25 Tuesdays, and specifically the November 13th event. Lee Chapel generously allowed the Food Access Team to visit the Sunday service prior to the November 13th event to distribute postcards, and make an announcement in front of the presiding parish. To measure the responsiveness of the postcards, a raffle was orchestrated by the Food Access Team to incentivize participants to bring their postcard to the November 13th event. Suzie Wong’s Asian Easts restaurant in East Walnut Hills donated a $50 giftcard to be raffled off. Further, the Food Access team measured the reach of the postcard by the number that was returned the day of the event. Unfortunately, only one postcard that was distributed prior to the event day was returned, so our reach measured one-percent. Event-day and pre-event day postcards were distinguished by the medium they were printed on to measure this effect.

Planning the November 13th event initially involved potential healthy food vendors and/or chefs to facilitate a healthy food demonstration during Buy 25 Tuesday. The Food Access Team reached out to University of Cincinnati Dieticians to possibly solicit volunteers during the event. Although our contact reached out to other dieticians and current students to volunteer at the event, our lack of an operating budget for the event proved to be a barrier to developing this idea further. Our idea for the event therefore evolved into having a healthy restaurant provide food samples during the event. Alabama Que’s Barbeque is a healthy southern soul food restaurant located in the Corryville neighborhood. Owner, Dwan Ward was pitched the food sampling idea by the Food Access Team, and graciously agreed to provide samples during the November 13th event. As part of the pitch, the Food Access Team agreed to pass out marketing materials for Alabama Que’s Barbeque while the samples were distributed at the event. While the samples at the event drew additional attention on the Facebook page prior to the event, and in-person interactions, our reach measured one-percent.
during Buy 25, the measurable impact of this effort did not appear to be any greater than previous Buy 25 events.

**Findings: Engaging Community Support for the Store**

While the above-described marketing efforts garnered community engagement and support, it is unclear the difference in impact to Buy 25 Tuesdays compared to prior events coordinated exclusively by the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation. However, the timeframe of our project and financial limitations of our marketing efforts must be acknowledged when assessing these results. Soliciting in-kind donations from local area restaurants (Suzie Wong’s and Alabama Que’s Barbeque) was an easy undertaking by the Food Access Team. Pitching the concept and fundamental goals of Buy 25 Tuesdays allowed these businesses to easily grasp why the campaign is important to the overall vitality of the neighborhood. Once again, it is unclear how to assess the long-term success of this approach because it is assumed that the longevity of this type of enthusiasm is short-lived. Similarly to soliciting donations, speaking engagements at a local church and social service organization provided a positive response and generated verbal support for Buy 25 Tuesdays. The warm response by Lee Chapel and the Easter Seals Work Resource Center prior to the November 13th event signal that community outreach should be further attempted. In contrast, Buy 25 is a labor and time-consuming campaign to manage. Additionally, as colder months approach, holding outdoor events become less practical. The WHRF is already short-staffed, and the programming and planning of Buy 25 Tuesdays is not an easy task to undertake. However, the Food Access Team was able to test new marketing techniques as a result of a dedicated amount of time to accomplish these tasks.

**Summary of Findings: Engaging Community Support for the Store**

- The measurable impact of Buy 25 events and marketing efforts are difficult to quantify.
- Buy 25 events and marketing efforts require a substantial level of coordination, staffing, and time commitments that may be better utilized in other arenas to facilitate increased customer levels and experiences.
- In-person community engagement efforts convey the message to Walnut Hills that the store is a community asset.
- Walnut Hills has a diverse network of community associations (businesses, churches, schools, social service providers, and other associations) that can be utilized to gather support for the store.

**Recommendations: Engaging Community Support for the Store**

A more extensive community engagement approach is necessary to assemble this diverse neighborhood around its grocery store. The key recommendation the Food Access Team is making concerning the longevity of the store is extending community engagement beyond social media and capitalizing on the existing outreach network (community associations, businesses, neighborhood councils, faith-based organizations, and residents) to speak about the importance of keeping the Kroger open. Current and potential customers of the store are the primary indicators to the Kroger Company of the support for the Walnut Hills store. These
customers will undoubtedly play a crucial role in the company’s decision on the future of the store. This network therefore can be primarily employed to encourage community members to voice to management what products they want to see at the store, and address concerns about quality and freshness. However, fully diagramming and utilizing this network is the first step to building support for the store, and community engagement efforts are will be the fundamental tool driving this effort.

Acknowledging that community engagement operations are labor and time intensive, our team suggests the recruitment of University students and neighborhood volunteers to speak on behalf of the WHRF. Based on our initial findings from planning the November 13th event, it is clear that the community supports the Buy 25 campaign, and we are confident WHRF could find surrogate representatives to assist in future campaigns beyond or under the umbrella of Buy 25. Volunteers can continue to build communication network to community-based organizations and groups to spread the word about issues facing Kroger and the Buy 25 effort. If the store continues to struggle and the idea of its closure becomes a more vivid reality, it is the diverse residents of Walnut Hills that must gather around its store to ensure Walnut Hills does not become a food desert.

Aside from harnessing the vast network of community associations within Walnut Hills, the Food Access Team recommends greater outreach and development efforts that shape Walnut Hills sense of place with the Kroger as the center as a community asset. Examples of further community outreach efforts include public meetings to gain insight and feedback from loiterers and other community members that have had frictional relationships with Kroger store management and residents. Walnut Hills should also consider issuing a Request for Proposals for ideas for the site redesign of the Kroger property. With implementable ideas, the WHRF can begin to actively plan for the future of the site while funding and other coordination efforts are in flux. A final consideration to help encourage the future existence of the store is the programming and organization of community events on or near the Kroger property. For example, the WHRF commenced the first-annual Street Food Festival in October 2012. Future event programming on, or very near, the store site can further draw attention to the store for Kroger management to see the need and purpose of the store as a community asset. Possible programming events include: health and wellness screenings, food-drives, school spirit events, and seasonal celebrations. While these suggestions have not been fully investigated during the course of this project, they are applications developed through the course of this process.

**Summary of Recommendations: Engaging Community Support for the Store**

- Extend community engagement by visiting and working in collaboration with community associations including: churches, neighborhood schools, and businesses to cultivate understanding that the Walnut Hills Kroger is a community asset.
  - Implement this recommendation by recruiting University students and neighborhood volunteers to speak on behalf of the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation.

- Employ the extensive community network to improve the quality of products

---

**SCENARIO 1: KROGER STAYS**
at the Walnut Hills Kroger:
  ◦  Hold coffee-hour style meetings between community members and Kroger management.
  ◦  Effectively manage responses from Kroger’s corporate product request service, and work with management to incorporate improved and new products.
• Increased signage and announcements directing customers to where their suggestions can be documented.

• Investigate and implement further outreach efforts that shape the Kroger as a community asset including:
  ◦  Holding public meetings with loiters and other community members that have had frictional relationships with Kroger store management and residents.
  ◦  Consider the programming and organization of community events on or near the Kroger property including:
    a.  Health and Wellness Screenings
    b.  Food-Drives
    c.  School-Spirit Events
    d.  Seasonal Celebrations
**Strategy 2: Promote a Safe, Secure, and Lively Street Life at Peebles Corner**

**Introduction**
Loitering is a frequent problem activity at the Walnut Hills Kroger, particularly on the walkway directly in front of the store and on the sidewalk between Kroger and CVS on East McMillan Street. The Walnut Hills resident survey results indicated that a fear of loitering contributed to an opinion that the neighborhood is unsafe, and fear of loitering was a top reason why potential customers did not shop at the Kroger. Previously, loiterers were associated with unmarked taxis parked at meters on McMillan. The opening of East McMillan Street to two-way traffic in November eliminated these parking meters, and briefly reduced loitering. However, the loitering has continued and resurfaced in alternative locations at the Kroger site. Moreover, peddlers’ tables are set up on the sidewalk on both sides of the Kroger entrance off of Gilbert Ave. Those tables do not contribute to the vitality and perception of safety of the Kroger.

In 2003, the City of Cincinnati passed an ordinance prohibiting loitering with the intent of engaging in “unlawful drug-related transactions” (Ordinance No. 152-2003). This ordinance permits “police officers to intervene in situations in which they reasonably believe that individuals are loitering with the intention of engaging in unlawful drug-related activity, even if probable cause does not exist for a stop or arrest for a drug offense.” Loitering is therefore perceived as a problem activity because it is associated, but not directly related, with prostitution and drug-related crimes. However, especially in low-income areas, loitering is seen as a nuisance, and enhances a perception of insecurity and danger—especially for visitors and people unfamiliar with the culture of the area. Interviews with community stakeholders in Walnut Hills and the resident survey reaffirm this idea; revealing that fear of loiterers and perceived insecurity are large deterrents to attracting new customers to the Walnut Hills Kroger, particularly the growing middle class in the area. Our recommendations for mitigating loitering center on the following goals.

**Goals: Mitigating Loitering near Peebles Corner**
- Minimize the negative effects of loitering – perceived insecurity and assumed criminal behavior – through a comprehensive mitigation strategy.
- Develop a better understanding of the underpinnings of the loitering issue.

**Mitigating Loitering near Peebles Corner**
Researchers at the University of Cincinnati completed a report for the City of Cincinnati in 2005 on solutions to “open-air drug dealing,” an activity commonly associated with loitering. This report recommended a comprehensive strategy for dealing with this issue, including several that are pertinent to Walnut Hills. Our recommendations are drawn from this report and center around a comprehensive solution that combats the problem from multiple angles rather than simply arresting individuals for criminal or supposedly criminal behavior.
Recommendations for Mitigating Loitering near Peebles Corner

Initiate a comprehensive strategy to combat problems with safety and security associated with loitering that includes:

• Hosting a public forum about the loitering issue.
• Organizing street clean up and neighborhood beautification events.
• Establishing an Adopt-A-Block program and block watches to empower residents to participate in reducing crime.
• Building relationships with convenience store owners and operators and other local businesses to help them be advocates for a safer neighborhood.
• Publicizing names of drug dealers and buyers.
• Publishing resources for drug treatment.

Kroger and community stakeholders (such as the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation) can work to mitigate loitering near the Kroger store by organizing and participating in these recommended activities. By working with law enforcement, business owners, and community members, these community stakeholders can be leaders in the reduction of open air drug dealing and the negative impacts of loitering.
Strategy 3: Redesign of the Current Kroger Site

Introduction
A well-designed grocery-anchored commercial area can be a catalyst for further investment, job creation, overall economic growth, and neighborhood revitalization. Walnut Hills is advantaged by already having an existing grocery. However, the results of the grocery survey indicate that site design issues along with product selection and concerns of safety and security are significant reasons why people choose to shop elsewhere. Enhancing the design of the current site would create a welcoming sense of place and signify Kroger as a center of activity for the neighborhood. With additional investment, the site has potential to unify the neighborhood business district. The impact of the Walnut Hills Kroger therefore extends beyond the physical health of its residents with healthy and fresh foods to the health of the surrounding neighborhood economy. Redesigning the site, therefore, has the potential to not only attract new customers to Kroger but also to spur economic development in the surrounding area.

The site redesign pays special attention to traffic issues, walkability, and urban regeneration. The Kroger site consists of the Kroger building and surrounding parking lot. Given that the entrance to the building is near East McMillan Street, it is accessible to walkers and bus riders, and the large parking lot provides adequate access to drivers. There are nearby bus stops on McMillan and Gilbert Avenue with a crosswalk on McMillan for safe access to the site. However, the site does have some problems relating to walkability and aesthetics. Currently, the site has inadequate walking paths for people who park their vehicles in the parking lot or have to walk through the parking lot to walk to the store. There are no walking paths from the northwest or east entrances to the site while dozens of parking spaces go unutilized. Currently, there are a few planted medians dotted throughout the parking lot, but they are sparsely planted with only a few trees and bushes. Our recommended changes to the site center on the following goals.

Goals: Redesign of the Current Kroger Site

- Improve walkability of the site, creating safe walking paths for people to navigate to the store.
- Create a more welcoming and interesting environment at the site through adding green space and space for activities in order to attract new customers.
**Recommended Functions for the Redesign of the Current Kroger Site**

**Small Civic Squares**
Two small civic squares will be added on McMillan and Gilbert with new bus stops and bicycle racks. By providing more space for bus stops, people will feel more comfortable and welcomed at the site with more benches to sit at and more green space surrounding them. Also, the civic squares can provide a rest area for residents and customers.

**Sidewalks**
More sidewalks will be created from bus stops and parking lots to the store to increase walkability. The added sidewalks will provide clearly demarcated paths for walkers, separating them from automobile traffic. A green space in the middle of the parking lot has paths connecting sidewalks around the CVS and Kroger buildings. This central space provides a separated, safe place for pedestrians walking from the parking lot to the store.

**Kroger Building and Signage**
Currently, the Kroger building has a long blank wall along the sidewalk on McMillan. This wall provides an opportunity for a more colorful design or mural that adds interest and visibility to the store. Furthermore, signs for the store are currently inadequate with only one small sign on Gilbert and no street-facing sign on McMillan. Large signs placed where the current sign is located on Gilbert and at the corner of McMillan and Kemper Lane will increase the visibility of the store.
SCENARIO 1: KROGER STAYS

**Rain Gardens**
There will be two main rain gardens. One will be located on the north edge of the site. Another will be the green space in between rows of parking spaces in the center of the site. Rain gardens add aesthetic value through their landscaped design while also providing a useful service in managing stormwater directly.

**Compost Area**
The compost area will be built on the north side of the Kroger building. The compost facility will serve the Kroger Store and residents in the surrounding area. Compost facilities break down food scraps and other organic matter into nutrient rich compost, a valuable resource for gardeners. The compost product of this facility could be used by the Walnut Hills Community Garden. This small facility would increase interest in the site and build ties within the community.

**Food Truck Area**
This area could provide a daily lunch spot to host food trucks and stands every day. This function would serve to attract more customers to the site and further solidify Kroger’s role as a center of activity for the area’s economy.

These recommended functions would serve to provide a safer and more welcoming environment for customers of Kroger. By increasing walkability, creating better spaces for activity, drawing more attention to the store, adding landscaped green space, and adding functions that interest middle-class people, Kroger would draw more interest to the site and attract more customers thereby making the store more economically viable in the future.
This report section is divided into three alternatives: attracting a new grocer to Walnut Hills, encouraging a neighborhood farmers market, and redeveloping the Kroger Site into a Healthy Food Center. Each alternative is introduced, and has individual goals. Given each alternative’s goals, findings and recommendations are presented based on completed research.

**Alternative 1: Attracting a New Grocer to Walnut Hills**

**Introduction**

The Kroger store located on East McMillan and Gilbert currently meets Walnut Hills’ neighborhood grocery needs, and is approximately 32,000 square feet. Recently, speculation has surfaced that the Kroger Company will close the store once their Corryville location is renovated. The Walnut Hills store has not turned a profit since 1984, and has not shown signs of positive growth in years. Kroger operates roughly 2,500 stores nationwide; the financial performance of the Walnut Hills store was once described by a Kroger executive as “in the low 2,400s.” In 2008 a public discussion about the future of the store eventually led to Kroger renewing their lease on the space and investing in improvements for the interior of the store. Unfortunately that investment has not paid off for Kroger. The store continues to lose money. Kroger has not made a final decision about the store, but unless they have a moral imperative to keep the store open, it will inevitably close. The timing of that closure could potentially be delayed by the situation with the Corryville Kroger. The Corryville site has two tenants that are holding out on Kroger and stalling their redevelopment plans. They have refused buy-out offers which leaves Kroger unable to start the redevelopment until their leases expire (the lease information was not disclosed). It is therefore reasonable to expect Kroger to keep the Walnut Hills store open for at least a few more years since they will have to wait for the leases to expire before beginning redevelopment efforts at the Corryville site.

If the Kroger were to close, the residents of Walnut Hills would lack easy access to fresh food and other staples only found in grocery stores. One option the neighborhood might pursue is a new grocery store model that might fit the neighborhood better than the existing, unprofitable Kroger. This section covers information that the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation could use to evaluate and attract another grocery model.

**Goals: Attracting a New Grocer to Walnut Hills**

- Gather information to assess the feasibility of bringing new grocery options to Walnut Hills should the Kroger leave.
- Evaluate the Walnut Hills neighborhood to determine a potential site for
• Research organizations in Cincinnati that would be able to partner with the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation to incentivize a grocer building or renovating a store in Walnut Hills.

ALDI
ALDI Einkauf GmbH & Co. oHG, more commonly known as ALDI, is a German based discount grocery chain that operates over 1,000 stores in 31 states. Over 95% of the products sold at ALDI are ALDI select brand products and are some of the more popular grocery staples, including canned vegetables, produce, fresh meat, baked goods, dairy products and paper products. Their hours are more limited than Kroger’s, opening at 10am and closing at 8pm.

ALDI does not provide customers with shopping bags. Customers can bring their own bags or purchase them for a small amount at the store. ALDI also requires a twenty five cent deposit to check out a shopping cart. They do not accept credit cards; they do accept debit cards and EBT. They do not allow customers to take carts into the parking lot, avoiding the costs of bringing the carts back in and keeping their parking lots cleaner and more attractive. All of these policies (and their non-unionized employees) are aimed at keeping their prices as low as possible. ALDI also claims that these policies, along with their smaller stores, lead to a smaller carbon footprint and a more ‘green’ business model.

All of their Cincinnati locations are in areas considered ‘first ring’ suburbs: Delhi, Pleasant Ridge, North College Hill, Erlanger and Cheviot. Many of the stores are in larger shopping centers. These neighborhoods are not the wealthiest, and many have experienced population decline. It is necessary to do a future demographic analysis to see if the Walnut Hills Area is suitable for ALDI’s model, which is conveniently listed on their website. It should be noted that an ALDI moved out of the Avondale Town Center in November of 2008.

Below are the criteria for available locations that can be submitted for consideration. ALDI requires a site plan, property boundary information, city map with property marked on the map and, if available, aerial photography. They have a district office at 4400 S Charleston Pike in Springfield, 45502 where they take submissions for new proposals.

Specific location criteria
Development lots or pads preferred – will purchase, lease or ground lease
Lot size should be 2.0 acres or larger for development lots
16,476 square feet buildings with a minimum of 85 dedicated parking spaces
Inline or end-cap space also considered - 112’ 4 frontage, 137’4 depth preferred
Signalized, full-access intersection preferred
Trade area population of 35,000+ within 3 miles, cities of 20,000+, counties of 40,000+
Sites located in community and regional shopping districts with convenient access to population
Sites zoned to allow grocery use

Area locations
5033 Delhi Road, 45238 – In Delhi in the Delhi shopping center, sells beer and...
Save-a-Lot

Save-a-Lot has more than 1,300 stores in the US in urban, suburban and rural areas. Save-a-Lot is also a low cost grocery aimed at providing essential items at a low price. The stores accept cash, checks, food stamps, EBT/QWEST; some stores accept credit cards. Their hours are usually 8am to 9pm every day. They aim to locate stores within walking distance of customers or near established public transportation routes. Save-a-Lot carries a mix of national brands (43 listed on their website) as well as 78 of their own brands. Items vary by store; it is possible to look online to see the items that a specific store carries before visiting. They also offer recipes for ‘meals under $5’ on their website.

Save-a-Lot has a few green initiatives as well. They carry a carefully selected assortment of items in one size only to promote efficiency in production and shipping. They have energy efficient refrigeration and lighting controls in their distribution centers and have implemented paper, plastic, cardboard box and aluminum recycling programs. Save-a-Lot favors reserving the resources of existing buildings and minimizing new construction by opening a majority of new stores in established buildings. They have committed to the procurement of locally grown produce in several distribution centers, reducing the impact of shipping product across the country.

Below are Save-a-Lot’s site requirements for a new store. Location greatly matters. To ensure a new store reaches its potential, Save-A-Lot has developed suggested guidelines for prospective sites:

- A population of at least 35,000 in the primary trade area
- A high percentage of families with children
- A total building size of approximately 10,000 to 20,000 square feet
- Freestanding or in-line locations, primary position on pylon sign or freestanding monument sign
- Parking ratio of 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet
- Receiving area suitable for 53 foot semi-trailers
- Traffic counts of 15,000 minimum
- Land required for ground up development +2 acres
- Excellent line of sight for good visibility with good ingress/egress
- Co-tenancy with other value oriented retailers desired

**Area Locations**

15 Donnermeyer Drive in Bellevue, 41073
1717 Madison in Covington, 41011
4145 Apple St in Northside, 45223
2435 Harrison in Westwood, 45211
5021 Vine in St. Bernard, 45217
1864 Seymour in Roselawn, 45237
6700 Hamilton in North College Hill, 45224
Site/Feasibility

Attracting a new grocer might require some incentives. The Food Access Team researched two programs that could help the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation attract a new grocer option to the neighborhood. The Cincinnati-based Center for Closing the Health Gap is working on a pilot program to incentivize grocery stores to open in lower income neighborhoods in Cincinnati. They are also developing a program to incentivize smaller corner and convenience stores to offer fresh produce and meat.

The Center for Closing the Health Gap is in the process of establishing the Cincinnati Fresh Food Retail Fund, based on the Fresh Food Financing Initiative in Pennsylvania, outlined in the Food Access Team’s Existing Conditions report. This fund is largely concerned with attracting food retail chains which are Grocery Association members to invest in urban neighborhoods. The Center for Closing the Health Gap proposed the Cincinnati Fresh Food Retail Fund in September to the Cincinnati City Council, and is currently working to grow the initial seed fund. Should Walnut Hills become a food desert and lack significant investment from a mainstream grocery retailer, this Fund could significantly assist with attracting another food retailer to the neighborhood. Aside from larger square-footage stores, seed money could be utilized to develop smaller, independent corner stores that provide an adequate stock of fresh and healthy foods.

The Center for Closing the Health Gap, in cooperation with the Avondale neighborhood, is actively changing convenience stores that depend on alcohol, tobacco, and junk food sales to stores that can provide healthy and fresh food options in a food desert. The Food Access Team believes this pilot program can have a definite application in the Walnut Hills neighborhood in the event that the Kroger closes. However, as this program is in its pilot stage, many barriers to its coordination and operation exist. Primarily, wholesale produce prices and delivery are extremely expensive and difficult to coordinate at the corner-store level. CCHG staff is vigorously working to assemble corner stores to create a network. That network will generate economies of scale and lower produce prices across the board for smaller retailers. Additionally, the lack of a point of sale system in most corner stores makes measuring sales effects and inventory losses difficult to quantify.

The Existing Conditions Report created by the Food Access Team outlines existing convenience stores located in Walnut Hills and their current selection of fresh foods. Therefore, a definable potential network of corner stores has already been identified in the neighborhood, and can be harnessed to facilitate healthy food adoption via the Do-Right! Campaign should the Kroger close.

The Ohio State Auditor has also recently allocated a significant amount of money for demolition of vacant, nuisance and tax delinquent properties in the state. That funding is being managed locally by the Hamilton County Land Bank. In two years’ time, if the Walnut Hills redevelopment foundation is attempting to attract a grocer that wants to build on a vacant lot, it would be possible to use the State Auditor’s demolition money to tear down a tax delinquent property on a lot that could be designated for a new grocer. The land bank is most easily able to demolish buildings that are condemned or tax delinquent, so maintaining a list of properties
in both of those categories is beneficial. The demolition money could be a cost saving measure for a grocer wanting to construct a new building.

**Recommendations: Attracting a New Grocer to Walnut Hills**

Walnut Hills is a historic, urban, dense neighborhood with a very limited amount of available developable space that could suit a new grocer. Walnut Hills does not have an existing space adequate for a ‘value oriented grocery anchored shopping center.’ According to the traffic statistics cited in the site requirements by grocers, only Taft, Gilbert and McMillan have enough traffic to warrant a grocery store. The first site the Food Access Team examined and determined to be the most appropriate for a potential new grocery store development is the northeast corner of Taft and Gilbert. The parcel is one block north of the current Kroger site and is occupied by a vacant fast food drive thru and a one story building housing the LifeSkills Center, a youth outreach service. The parcel runs approximately 400 feet along Taft and 200 feet up Gilbert. The building that the LifeSkills Center occupies is quite old and the LifeSkills Center is obviously not the original occupant. Finding a space that better serves the LifeSkills Center would be necessary before the site could be demolished. The parcel does not require the demolition of existing historic structures or neighborhood businesses. It will be necessary to reevaluate these recommendations if the current Kroger store closes. As mentioned before, the store is not guaranteed to close. If it does close, it will not be for a few years. By that time, the physical makeup of Walnut Hills could change and currently ideal sites may no longer be appropriate. It is also worth noting that a lower cost, smaller size grocer might be interested in occupying the building that Kroger currently leases, should they leave.

This information is meant to help the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation solicit a low cost, smaller footprint, lower selection grocer to the neighborhood. This option seems the most feasible given the trajectory of the neighborhood over the last few decades. A lower income renter population has moved into the neighborhood and that population has been unable to sustain the Kroger’s current larger, medium income grocery model. However if the WHRF believes that this trajectory might change, they could attempt to attract a grocer with a different model. If they believe that the higher income, less vacancy, owner occupied trends seen in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood will continue to spread to the rest of the neighborhood, they could attempt to attract a smaller, higher income grocer that could be part of the development they are planning on East McMillan. Projecting the future economic and population makeup of the neighborhood will be crucial when deciding what type of grocery store can be successful. Trends in the time leading up to the redevelopment of the Corryville Kroger could help them decide.

**Summary of Recommendations: Attracting a New Grocer to Walnut Hills**

- Monitor the current Walnut Hills Kroger and Corryville Kroger redevelopment. The timeline for the redevelopment of the Corryville Kroger is unknown and no final decision has been made about the status of the Walnut Hills Kroger.
- Contact local ALDI and Save-a-Lot representatives to establish relationships.
and share information.

• If the Walnut Hills Kroger leaves, evaluate sites along Gilbert, Taft and McMillan for a new grocery location. Start with the location at Taft and Gilbert but also keep an eye out for vacant and tax delinquent parcels within walking distance to some of Walnut Hill’s larger residential buildings.

• If attracting a new grocer is not feasible or not necessary, work with the Center for Closing the Health Gap to provide fresh produce and meat options at smaller neighborhood corner stores.
Alternative 2: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market

Introduction

If the Walnut Hills Kroger closes its doors, the neighborhood will need a viable option for access to fresh food. Surveys in the Existing Conditions report determined that there is a need for a grocery store in the Walnut Hills neighborhood. Closing the neighborhood Kroger will decrease access to fresh foods. Adding a farmers market as an alternative to a grocery store will provide residents of this community access fresh produce locally without having to travel long distances to acquire them.

The structure of farmers markets vary based on need and location. Center cities oftentimes provide larger farmers markets because the center city acts as a large gathering space. Vendors from the region are most likely to participate in the larger farmers markets because of the large amounts of consumers in attendance. Community farmers markets tend to be much smaller, attracting local vendors and artisans. Supporting a local farmers market is beneficial not only to the community, in which the market is located, but visitors and shoppers will benefit as well. Purchasing from local farmers, urban gardeners, and farm stands also has the ability to grow the local economy.

The location that was chosen for the farmers market was the Paramount building located on Peebles Corner. The Paramount building is ideal for a farmers market because it is located close to the site of the Kroger. Residents would not have to travel far from the Kroger location to get fresh produce. Built in 1931, the proposed building sits on three quarters of an acre and the building itself is over 26,000 square feet. The Paramount Building is located close to the Walnut Hills business District. The business district is currently in the process of being rehabbed in hopes of bringing in businesses to stimulate the local economy.

Three models of farmers markets were chosen from the Cincinnati area as prospects for the Walnut Hills market. Each market model is different, but possesses qualities that would work well in the Walnut Hills community. Farmers markets are places where a community can come to interact and socialize with one another. As the demographics are changing in the neighborhood, it is important to create another community food source that can meet the needs of every household as well as attracting others from outside of the community to shop.

Goals: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market

- Implement another fresh food source in the Walnut Hills area when the neighborhood Kroger closes
- Redesign the Paramount Building to be used as the neighborhood farmers market
- Determine which local model of farmers markets would be useful in the Walnut Hills neighborhood
Local Farmers Market Models

Findlay Market
Opened in 1852, Findlay Market is a year round indoor/outdoor urban farmers market located in the historic Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. It is the oldest continuously operated farmers market in Ohio. Findlay Market is a large-scale market open year round. As the last of the large public markets in Cincinnati, Findlay Market provides the region with produce and meats grown and sold by local businesses. Findlay Market not only offers fresh produce and meats, there are several other businesses located in the market such as a candy store, ethnic groceries, and other household goods. Findlay Market takes pride in serving diverse groups of people through their diverse selection of ethnic food and products along with several vendors accepting the Ohio Benefits Transfer (EBT) as a method of payment.

The land in which Findlay Market operates was donated to the city from the estate of General James Findlay for the specific use of a public market. The market is still owned by the City of Cincinnati and managed by a non-profit organization called The Corporation for Findlay Market. To operate, the market receives funding through several sources including but not limited to tax deductible contributions from foundations, the City of Cincinnati, private donations from individuals, sponsorships, and grants.

Findlay Market is open six days a week and does not operate on Mondays and holidays. It also offers shoppers the option of shopping both inside and outside when the weather permits. During the winter months, the outside portion of the market is typically closed due to inclement weather. Since the indoor portion is operable during the winter months, vendors are able rent space inside or outside as it suit their needs.

Not only is Findlay Market a historical landmark in the city, its revitalization in the recent years has provided a ripple effect throughout Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. As the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood is being revitalized, Findlay Market serves as a major artery to the neighborhood by attracting consumers making it a top destination in the city to live and shop. With the help of 3CDC, Over-the-Rhine has undergone a major transformation. The neighborhood that was once notorious for crime and blight is now buzzing with rehabbed buildings with new stores, restaurants, and housing.

The Findlay Market model offers several services that would be beneficial to the Walnut Hills neighborhood if the Kroger leaves. Having an indoor full time farmers market in Walnut Hills after the Kroger leaves will eliminate the concern of the neighborhood having access to fresh food. Residents of the neighborhood will have access locally produced fruits and vegetables, meats, and other food items without travelling downtown or to a grocery store outside of the neighborhood. Operating an indoor market will be beneficial to the Walnut Hills area because vendors will be able to sell their product year round regardless of the weather. Like Findlay, the market that will copy its structure and will also encourage vendors to accept the Ohio Benefit Transfer (EBT or Food stamps) to encourage residents to buy fresh food.
Operating a farmers market on a large scale like Findlay Market in Walnut Hills poses several challenges. The first challenge is determining if there is a need for another large-scale market in the city. Findlay serves a population base in the community; opening another farmers market has a risk of taking a portion of profit away from Findlay. Assessing the need of another grocery source can pose as an issue in Walnut Hills. If the Kroger closes, developers may be hasty to invest money into alternative food source in a location that a major grocery chain could not make a profit. Another major challenge is finding funding sources. Basing a farmers market off of the Findlay Market structure can be difficult because the funding sources would be similar, if not, the same. The City of Cincinnati owns Findlay Market; it may have no interest in owning and funding another full time market.

**Lettuce Eat Well**

Lettuce Eat Well (LEW) is located west of Cincinnati in Cheviot, Ohio. The goal of this organization is to provide the community with fresh and healthy food as well as spotlight local farmers and artisans within the community. Founded in 2010, LEW operates in Harvest Home Park during the summer months and inside of Cheviot United Methodist Church during the winter months. Lettuce Eat Well was created by a group of people interested in providing fresh food to the west side area of Cincinnati.

Although the farmers market is open year round, it only operates on Friday afternoons for four hours. There is a noticeable difference in capacity from the summer location and the winter location for the Lettuce Eat Well farmers market. The summer market is reported to have at least 18 vendors whereas the winter location operates at only half of the summer’s capacity. This change in capacity is due to a smaller indoor venue and colder months that farmers do not grow crop.

Profit making is not a concern for this organization. Lettuce Eat Well does not make any profit and is run strictly on a volunteer basis. The city of Cheviot supports the efforts of Lettuce Eat Well. The city, as well as the Cheviot United Methodist Church, charges the organization minimal rent to operate the farmers market on their grounds. This allows LEW to charge the vendors small amounts for rental space to sell their goods. Lettuce Eat Well is thoroughly invested in healthy food options for the community. To ensure that customers are receiving the best possible product, they only accept vendors who have a chemical free growing process.

The LEW farmers market has just begun taking EBT as a method of payment. To maximize benefit for lower income families, they are in the progress of creating a “Double Up” program. “Double Up” is an initiative that allows EBT recipients to local farm to create an increase in sales of locally grown healthy foods. They will be basing their program off of an initiative in Michigan called “Double up Food Bucks”. This initiative was created in 2011 as a means to provide family’s dependent of food assistance with greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Still in its beginning phases of development, LEW is experiences issues with marketing. In a study conducted in conjunction with marketing students at the University of Cincinnati, LEW found that many of the residents in the areas surrounding both Lettuce Eat Well market venues were unaware of its existence. Lettuce Eat Well does not have a marketing plan; this can be very difficult.
because there is no set blueprint that the volunteers can follow. Marketing efforts are imperative to community farmers markets because it generates business and encourages vendors to rent space and participate annually.

The Lettuce Eat Well market model has few benefits to the community if it were implemented. The first benefit is that the market would need very little funding to operate. A part-time farmers market, like the LEW model, can be organized by organizations groups already established within the community such as the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation or the Walnut Hills Community Counsel. There are many people who are already aware of the need for a fresh food source in the neighborhood. Volunteers can be recruited through the email lists and the publications about Buy $25 Tuesdays that were sent to supporters of the local Kroger.

This part-time model can also benefit the Walnut Hills community because there is a place for an outdoor market can take place for the summer months. The parking lot for the Paramount building is large and connected to the parking lot for the Kroger. Holding the market in the parking lot during the summer will bring the residents out and also has the potential to attract customers passing through the area. Today, Peebles Corner has a negative perception because of the large amounts of loitering that happens on the street. As the neighborhood is revitalized, a farmers market can reclaim the space and turn the negative perception of loitering into a positive view of open space in which the community gathers.

Several challenges are posed with conducting a part-time farmers market like the LEW model. The first issue is securing funding. Basing it off of the Lettuce Eat Well model, funding is a major concern because there is no set budget to pay for necessities such marketing. To operate, a marketing strategy will need to be created. Surveys completed in the Existing Conditions report shows residents of the Walnut Hills area are rarely informed about the food access issues happening within their community. Marketing is the best plan for residents to stay informed and support the fresh food access in the community. Another challenge of the part-time model is volunteer dependability. Volunteers are the engines that make that Lettuce Eat Well model work best. Since volunteers do most of the work for the organization, dependability is crucial to the market’s operation. For this model to work, the organization putting the market together must recruit people that are dependable and willing to work with no pay weekly.

Gabriel’s Place
Gabriel’s Place is located in the Avondale neighborhood of Cincinnati. Gabriel’s Place provides several beneficial programs pertaining to fresh food that helps the local community. The location, once St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, houses a community garden, market place, Hoop House, and a Community Kitchen. Each of these programs provides the neighborhood with access to fresh food whether they are purchasing them from the Market Place or Hoop House or receiving free food from the Community Kitchen’s daily free lunches.

Upon the closing of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in 2008, the ministry desired to have a presence in the community. Use of a portion of the church grounds was granted to the Avondale Community Council for a teen garden facilitated by The Center for Closing the Health Gap. The project titled Do
Right! educates Avondale teens about nutrition and healthy eating as well as taught them garden provided fresh vegetables. The success of the garden resulted in the establishment of a Farmers Market stand managed by the Avondale Youth Council. Several large groups in Cincinnati fund Gabriel’s Place. The Diocese of Southern Ohio Trustees is the largest benefactor for the community garden. Other well-known benefactors for this initiative are County Community Action Agency, Chase Bank, Children’s Hospital, and LISC. These partners along with others gave funds to provide industrial equipment needed for a kitchen and funding for a paid staff. Gabriel’s Place also receives donations from local business and individual donations from private individuals.

Avondale, much like Walnut Hills, is a community that has issues with fresh access. Avondale has no grocery store. ALDI closed its doors in 2008 leaving the area a food desert. Avondale also has a large population of lower income families and elderly who rely on a local grocery store to get groceries. Much like Walnut Hills, the community also has countless small convenience stores that offer less healthy choices of snacks and non-perishable food items. Through a recent initiative with the Center for Closing the Health Gap, some stores have begun to sell small amounts of fruits and vegetables. Due to the small spaces that convenience stores have, carrying a large amount of produce is difficult. Although this is a step toward having healthier options for families, the neighborhood needed a larger fresh food source.

Gabriel’s Place is much different than the other three models. Unlike the other farmers markets, this market was built and is maintained by the community members. Implementing a community market in Walnut Hills can be multi-beneficial to the community. The community garden model, much like Gabriel’s Place, can provide residents with much needed education on nutrition while providing them with the skills to garden. The community garden would act as the lone vendor at the market. All of the fresh produce grown would be sold for a profit. The community market model will offer a part-time market in which all of the proceeds would go back to the market and the neighborhood garden.

A challenge that a community market model will have in the Walnut Hills is finding space for the model. The Paramount Building will not suit the community market model because it lacks growing space for the produce. To determine which spaces in the neighborhood will be suitable for the community market model, developers will have complete a suitability analysis on the soil of available parcels as well as checking with the current land use map to see which open parcels will allow a business allow a garden. Funding a community garden will also be a challenge for the Walnut Hills community. The developers of the community garden would have to find several sources of funding to build and maintain a community garden and market. Stakeholders in the community such as the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation and the Walnut Hills Community Counsel may have the professional connections to other civic organizations that would be willing to fund this project. Further research needs to happen to determine if another community garden can be funding through the same organizations that funded Gabriel’s Place.
Findings: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market

Upon losing the community Kroger, Walnut Hills will be faced with finding another food source that will provide the community with access to fresh produce for healthy eating. Each model offers several benefits that would enhance the food access in the neighborhood. The models also have several challenges that can make it difficult to open and operate a farmers market. Funding was the most common challenge listed for each model listed above. Opening a public market would require the developers to ask for funds. Requesting funds from civic organizations in the city may be a challenge because many of them are already supporting one of the markets above. Securing funding for the community farmers market would be the initial step for all three models above. Funding is initially required for the purchase of the Paramount building and for redevelopment to transform the blighted storefronts into a market.

Additional funding would be needed for tools such as branding and marketing. Small businesses rely on marketing as an instrument to attract a customer base and highlight products with a very limited budget. Opening a neighborhood farmers market in Walnut Hills would pose a significant challenge with marketing to the neighborhood in its entirety. The ever-changing demographic in Walnut Hills made it difficult for the neighborhood Kroger to attract a variety of customers because of their limited selection of products offered were mostly geared toward families with lower incomes. Any model of farmers market built in Walnut Hills will be tasked with the challenge of attracting a diverse group of patrons within the neighborhood and those who live outside of the neighborhood.

Recommendations: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market

To determine which model would be most beneficial in the Walnut Hills neighborhood, an extensive market analysis should be conducted to identify the needs of the neighborhood in relation to healthy food access. Fresh produce may not be the only form of food that residents want or need. A balanced diet requires more food categories than fruits and vegetables. Meats, dairy products, along with several other food categories will also need to be made available once the residents leave. The elderly and those who relied on walking to the Kroger would need to have other products available to them at a farmers market that serves as a substitute
for a community grocer. The study of product selection should be inclusive to everyone in the community. The changing demographics of the neighborhood should have a significant role when determining the products that would be sold in the market.

In addition to product research, a feasibility analysis should be completed to determine whether the city needs another farmers market. Cincinnati already has several community farmers markets as well as the city-owned Findlay Market. The feasibility analysis should determine if a farmers market in Walnut Hills would be in competition with surrounding farmers markets as well as grocery stores surrounding the neighborhood. If there is in fact competition, developers must follow a model that can meet the immediate needs of the neighborhood in terms of fresh fruits and vegetables without market share from previously existing markets and grocers in the city.

The analyses above would determine if a farmers market would thrive in Walnut Hills. A farmers market will not provide the community with all of the groceries and household necessities that a chain grocery store would. Using analyses above, research can show if there is a general public interest in having a market, and if residents would be interested in purchasing their produce there and getting their normal grocery items from a nearby store. Residents could choose to shop at a grocery store because of the conveniences of one stop shopping. To compete with surrounding grocery stores, the Walnut Hills farmers market would have to offer more products then produce. To do this, a farmers market would have to be a small entity in a larger food system.

**Recommendations: Encouraging a Neighborhood Farmers Market**

- Implement a market analysis to determine what products should be sold at the market
- Conduct research to determine which model would be feasible in Walnut Hills based on community support and competition.
- A farmers market does not satisfy the need for all of the basic food necessities. To ensure that a market would provide most grocery needs, it must act as a small entity of a larger food and grocery center.
Alternative 3: Redevelop the Kroger Site into a Healthy Food Center

Introduction
The Walnut Hills Healthy Food Center is a conceptual idea for redeveloping the current Kroger site should Kroger leave. The Healthy Food Center would be a physical hub for healthy living and the local foods movement in the Cincinnati region that repurposes existing spaces to create a one of a kind center for healthy food. This redevelopment project would include: a farmers market and space for offices in the Paramount Theatre building, a cooking school, a community garden, green roof, edible and living walls, an indoor garden in the Kroger building, a locally-sourced restaurant on the first floor of 975 East McMillan Street, an urban chicken and goat farm, an open space public square, and rain gardens/detention basins. An innovative food stamp incentive program would also be developed to encourage people with low-incomes to buy their groceries at the Healthy Food Center.

The plan for the Healthy Food Center seeks to build on the other ideas presented in this report, providing a conceptual ideal solution to the problem of food access in Walnut Hills. This project will seek to meet the following goals:

Goals: Redevelop the Kroger Site into a Healthy Food Center
• Improve access to affordable and healthy food for all residents of Walnut Hills and the surrounding neighborhoods.
• Increase education about the origin of food and promote healthy lifestyles for the whole community.
• Provide jobs for local residents, opportunities for entrepreneurs, and spur further economic development in the area.
• Act as a demonstration site for sustainable and healthy urban living practices.
Recommended Functions for a Healthy Food Center

Farmers Market
While a daily operating farmers market may not be viable in Walnut Hills, as part a market portioned in a larger food center would serve as the main avenue of food distribution to the neighborhood. The market would include vendors selling produce as well as meats, cheeses, breads, and other local food products. Typically customers at farmers markets tend to be middle-income. Therefore the market would attract a customer base that is currently under-served by the Walnut Hills Kroger.

In order to also serve low-income customers, the farmers market would implement an innovative food stamp incentive program. Wholesome Wave is a non-profit organization that supports small farms and works to make fresh produce accessible to people of all incomes. Their Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) provides incentives to people who use federal food benefits by matching the amount spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. This incentive can then be used to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables. A DVCP increases access to fresh produce and supports a more local, healthier, and more sustainable food system.

Resources
- Wholesome Wave – http://wholesomewave.org/dvcp/
- Produce Perks (Cleveland) – http://cccfoodpolicy.org/blog/2012-double-value-produce-perks-ebt-incentive-program-kick-check-out-which-markets-will-partici
Potential partners
• Wholesome Wave

Sustainable Food Systems Education Center
Much of the inside of the current Kroger building would be used as an education center for sustainable food systems with a concentration on workforce development in this growing field. This center would educate students about topics such as entrepreneurship, the food service and hospitality industries, and urban and organic agriculture. With a location at the Healthy Food Center, students would have the opportunity for hands-on experience in growing produce using a variety of methods, raising livestock in an urban area, sales and advertising of food, and working at local restaurants.

The Sustainable Food Systems Education Center would have a workforce training program modeled from a similar program at the Center for Economic and Workforce Development at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn. In this program, young adults are educated in urban agriculture practices and entrepreneurship through hands on experiences at local farms and community gardens. The education center would provide workforce development opportunities for residents of the neighborhood, learning marketable skills that could be used to find jobs.

Resources
• Center for Economic and Workforce Development – http://cewd.net/articles/view/00000013

Local Foods Restaurants
These restaurants would also be located across East McMillan Street from the Kroger building in the buildings recently acquired by the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation. Naturally, a restaurant that uses locally-sourced produce and food would be a great fit for the Healthy Food Center. We also recommend options that are priced for a wide demographic—serving items that are affordable to people with a wide range of incomes. These restaurants would additionally provide opportunity for employment for residents of the neighborhood.

One Bistro in Miamisburg, Ohio, provides a framework for a “pay-as-you-can” restaurant model that could work well in the Healthy Food Center. This non-profit restaurant lists a suggested price – meals are typically $6-$9. If someone cannot afford to pay the suggested price, they can pay what they can or help out around the restaurant as payment. By serving fresh, high-quality food in this model, the restaurant is able to attract and serve “privileged and non-privileged” alike creating a community atmosphere for all people. One Bistro is based off of the One World Everybody Eats Foundation model.

This restaurant model could serve people with a wide range of incomes, source their food locally, and provide opportunity for meaningful work to residents of the neighborhood. Furthermore, with a mission of building community, the restaurant
would also serve as one avenue to bridge the racial and wealth divide in the neighborhood.

**Resources**
- One Bistro – onebistro.org
- One World Everybody Eats Foundation – www.oneworldeverybodyeatsfoundation.org

**Potential partners**
- One Bistro
- One World Everybody Eats Foundation
- Neighborhood/area churches
- Center for Closing the Health Gap

**Community Garden**
The community garden would be located on top of the current Kroger building, creating a green roof. Installing a green roof provides many benefits to the building as well as the community such as reducing energy costs. An added insulation mass on the roof and reduces water pollution by capturing rainwater at the source would be the mechanism for reducing energy costs. The community garden would attract residents of all income levels to tend garden plots, increasing access to fresh produce for these residents and engaging them in a cross-class community activity.

**Potential partners**
- Civic Garden Center

**Indoor Gardens**
A portion of the interior space of the Kroger building would be used as an indoor garden area. This garden would be used to grow fresh produce all year long that could then be sold at the proposed farmers market. Many indoor growing techniques could be effectively and efficiently used in this space including: hydroponics – using nutrient enriched water as a medium in which to grow plants (instead of soil); or aquaponics – similar to hydroponics but utilizes nutrients produced as a byproduct of growing fish. Large skylights put into the roof and windows above the edible wall (on the south-facing wall) would provide necessary light.

**Kitchen Garden**
Green space would be added between the Kroger and CVS buildings providing space for a kitchen garden. Kitchen gardens are used to grow vegetables and herbs. The garden could be operated and used by one of the restaurants across the street or by the Sustainable Food Education Center.

**Urban Chicken and Goat Farm**
The vacant lot to the north of the Kroger building and some of the existing parking lot would be converted into an urban chicken and goat farm. The farm would consist of two distinct areas enclosed with fencing – one for chickens and one for goats. The farm could be operated by one of the vendors at the farmers market in partnership with the Sustainable Food Systems Education Center, harvesting eggs from the chickens and milk from goats. The chickens and goats could also be processed for meat.
Living and Edible Walls
The Kroger building’s south-facing wall runs over two hundred feet directly along the sidewalk on McMillan Street. This is a lost opportunity. The wall faces south meaning that it has adequate sunlight to sustain edible plant life. Turning this wall into an edible wall, in which a structure is installed to hold soil that can grow fruits and vegetables, would turn it into an asset for residents and also a small attraction for visitors.

In Los Angeles, an organization called Urban Farming began the Global Food Chain project by installing four vertical edible walls to provide direct access to fresh produce in areas lacking access to healthy food. The Kroger building’s edible wall would serve a similar purpose – being available to people in need of fresh produce. Additional produce could be harvested by the restaurant or education center on site or by the Walnut Hills Food Pantry (located on Gilbert Avenue).

There is also an opportunity for a living wall along the currently bare north-facing wall. Due to lack of sunlight along this wall, non-edible, shade-tolerant plants would be planted. Benefits of both of these living walls include reduced energy costs to the Kroger building, beautification, and opportunity for community involvement in the installation, management and harvesting of the walls.

Resources

Potential partners
• Civic Garden Center
• Center for Closing the Health Gap
• Urban Farming Global Food Chain
• Walnut Hills Food Pantry

Civic Square
A small civic square would be put into the space between the Kroger and CVS buildings along East McMillan Street. A bus stop at the civic square would be removed from the street by a small island creating a safer and more welcoming entrance to and exit from the bus. The civic square would also include bicycle racks and benches and serve as a gathering node for pedestrians and riders of public transit.

Food Truck Area
The Food Truck Team in the Masters Plan-Making Workshop is recommending a food truck pod to locate near the current Kroger site. A food truck pod is a designated area for food trucks and their customers. If the pod is not feasible at this recommended location, it could be incorporated into the Healthy Food Center. In addition to the civic square and kitchen garden, the area between CVS and the Kroger building could also include a food truck pod. This area would have permanent tables and chairs for customers. The pod is another function that adds interest to the Healthy Food Center, builds interest in the local food system, and attracts additional customers to the site.

Parking Lots
Three small parking lots will be located at the Healthy Food Center. One is located adjacent to CVS; another is centrally located. Both will service the farmers market and the Sustainable Food Systems Education Center. The last is located across McMillan on the site of a building currently set for demolition. This lot will service the proposed restaurants. The parking lots will be reconstructed with semi-permeable surfaces to reduce storm water runoff that can cause dangerous pollution in natural waterways.

**Rain Gardens**

Rain gardens will be created on the northern edge of the Healthy Food Center site and immediately adjacent to the food truck area. Rain gardens provide additional storm water management for the site, reducing pollution from storm water runoff by naturally filtering the water at the source.

**Potential partners:**

- Metropolitan Sewer District

**Office Space**

Space for offices would be available above the farmers market in the Paramount building. Given the location at the Healthy Food Center, these offices could be marketed to organizations that are invested in the local foods movement, healthy living, and environmental causes. Most of the office space would be market-rate, while some space could be reserved for use of the restaurant or farmers market purveyors.

The proposed Healthy Food Center would increase access to healthy and affordable food for area residents by creating a physical hub of local food activity in the neighborhood. The Center is located at the current Kroger site, maintaining physical accessibility in that it is centrally located in the neighborhood and accessible by car, bus, or foot. The Center also provides multiple options for purchasing healthy and affordable food and opportunities for getting involved with and informed about the growth and production of food. This not only provides improved access to healthy and affordable food by also presents education opportunities about healthy food systems, promoting a healthy community.

Furthermore, the Healthy Food Center creates excitement by bringing several green initiatives to the site, attracting people from nearby neighborhoods and beyond. It is meant to serve people of all incomes with programs and activities that encourage low-income customers, such as the food stamp incentive and pay-as-you-can restaurant, while also attracting middle- and upper-income customers with a wide variety of fresh food and dining options and innovative sustainable practices on site. In developing this hub for the local foods movement, the area would be a center of activity in Cincinnati, stimulating further economic development in the neighborhood and creating new jobs and opportunities for entrepreneurs.

The goals of the Healthy Food Center are reachable given the scope and uniqueness of the project. However, that scope is also the biggest challenge to implementation. The wide range of uses and nature of many of the endeavors necessitate a broad, well-organized community effort to promote and raise funds for development.
A mix of grants, public, and private funds would surely be necessary. Furthermore, broad community support should be mobilized for a project like this – a project that is meant to engage the community with its uses and activities, that is this large, and that has the potential to transform the community. Therefore, management of the site development should include analyzing the feasibility of the project and individual uses, organizing broad community support, building partnerships with relevant organizations and neighborhood stakeholders, and raising funds for each project – a time- and money-consuming endeavor in its own right. The biggest challenge of implementing this project, then, is to build financial and community support to dedicate time and resources into planning such a project.
As the Kroger in Walnut Hills threatens to leave the neighborhood, many questions arise about food access and the future of the neighborhood. Is it possible to build enough support to keep Kroger? How can Kroger and the community stakeholders lower perceived barriers for new customers? Where will residents buy their groceries if Kroger leaves? What type of food retailer is the best fit for Walnut Hills? How can the current site be utilized to improve access to affordable and healthy food and spur economic development in the surrounding business district? In this report, the Food Access Team begins answering these questions by addressing the two scenarios of Kroger staying and Kroger leaving. The three strategies to encourage Kroger to stay outline recommendations for making the store more profitable and viable in the neighborhood. For the scenario of Kroger leaving, the team identifies three alternatives to improve access to affordable and healthy food and attract a broad customer base.

The strategies to encourage Kroger to stay present approaches for keeping Kroger by increasing its customer base through creative marketing, mitigating perceptions of insecurity, and redesigning the Kroger site. These strategies present many challenges. Central to these challenges is the sufficient ability and time commitment to organize broad support for the overall vision of a safer and livelier Peebles Corner. True and sustained community support is necessary to create a thriving business district that serves the diverse population of Walnut Hills. Broad community support will only come through a community organizing effort focused on building consensus within the neighborhood. As Kroger is currently the center of activity for this area, keeping and enhancing the store is critical to sustained and meaningful economic development.
The above strategies present an opportunity to make Kroger more viable into the future. Any community building efforts toward this end serve another important purpose – they also set the stage for future efforts of increasing access to affordable and healthy food should Kroger leave. A community already engaged in advocating for Kroger to stay will be better suited to advocate for projects that improve access to food if Kroger leaves. Therefore, these efforts should not be viewed as fruitless or fighting an uphill battle because of the debatable inevitability of Kroger leaving. If Kroger does leave, it seems that it will occur only after the nearby Corryville store is renovated, which in its current situation seems to be at least a few years down the line. These efforts, therefore, should be viewed as the preliminary way to broadly engage the community around the issue of food access and neighborhood regeneration.

If Kroger does leave and the community is engaged, they will be more prepared to advocate for needed projects to improve access to affordable and healthy food. Our suggested alternatives with goals and challenges for the scenario of Kroger leaving are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Promote the store as a community asset. | - Extend the Buy 25 campaign’s reach beyond social media, utilizing other community associations to reach a larger segment of the neighborhood.  
- Assure the Kroger Company that this store is a community asset through increased community support and engagement.  
- Use current and potential customers as the drivers and encouragers of overall store improvements. | - Effectively quantifying the impact of Buy 25 and marketing efforts.  
- Sustaining a substantial level of coordination, staffing, and time commitments.  
- Receiving consistent product feedback and effectively utilizing it. |
| 2. Promote a safe, secure, and lively street life at Peebles Corner. | - Develop a comprehensive strategy to mitigate negative effects of loitering (perceived insecurity and assumed criminal behavior).  
- Develop a better understanding of the underpinnings of the loitering issue. | - Building broad community support for this can be a contentious issue.  
- Effectively communicating the importance of this strategy.  
- Building necessary organizational leadership. |
| 3. Redesign Kroger site to meet the needs of the community. | - Improve walkability and safety of pedestrians at the site.  
- Create a more welcoming environment through adding green space and space for activities that attract customers. | - Encouraging Kroger to invest further in the store and property.  
- Navigating the competing interests of the owners of the store and site. |
Each alternative has its own benefits and challenges. Ultimately, the alternative that is chosen will depend on the level of community engagement and the ability to build various partnerships within the community and outside of it. Attracting a new and smaller grocer to locate in Walnut Hills seems to be a viable option. Both ALDI and Save-A-Lot have demonstrated success with smaller urban stores – their models could work in Walnut Hills. However, the biggest challenge with this strategy will be convincing a grocer that their business model will succeed in the same market where the Walnut Hills Kroger failed for over 25 years. Organizing a successful farmers market in Walnut Hills may also pose significant challenges. While a farmers market would increase access to food, particularly fresh produce, it would require a significant amount of coordination and would have to compete with other similar markets in the surrounding area.

In order to make the farmers market idea more viable, it should be considered as part of a more comprehensive center for the local foods movement – the Healthy Food Center. While this strategy would also require a lot of coordination, it would create a destination in the neighborhood, attracting residents and visitors alike. This option is more viable because it packages the farmers market with other innovative functions and activities that give it a competitive edge over other markets. As is, the Healthy Food Center strategy is in a conceptual stage, outlining potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Attract a new grocery store to locate in Walnut Hills. | - Assess the feasibility of bringing new grocery options to Walnut Hills should the Kroger leave.  
- Evaluate the Walnut Hills neighborhood to determine a potential site for a new grocer.  
- Identify partner organizations to incentivize a grocer locating in Walnut Hills. | - Accurately assessing the future of Walnut Hills Kroger.  
- Convincing a grocer that their business model will succeed in the same market where Kroger has failed since 1984.  
- Finding an appropriate site for a new grocer that offers good visibility without displacing any existing neighborhood assets. |
| 2. Organize a farmers market in Walnut Hills. | - Develop a source for fresh food to replace Kroger.  
- Redesign the Paramount Building to be used as the neighborhood farmers market.  
- Determine which local model of farmers markets would be useful in the Walnut Hills neighborhood. | - Funding the market without taking funds from other area markets.  
- Creating adequate demand to sustain the market.  
- Competition with other nearby markets.  
- Lack of access to needed grocery items not sold at the market.  
- High cost of local produce and other items sold at markets. |
| 3. Redevelop site into Healthy Food Center. | - Improve access to affordable and healthy food for all residents.  
- Increase education about the food system and healthy lifestyles.  
- Create jobs and spur economic development.  
- Demonstrate sustainable and healthy urban living practices. | - Organizing effective leadership for this project.  
- Acquiring funding from various sources and building partnerships with local organizations for diverse set of projects.  
- Building broad community support for access to food and this project. |
uses and activities that could attract visitors and increase access to affordable and healthy food for the diverse neighborhood population. This concept can be looked at comprehensively as a preliminary vision for the future, or it can be taken piecemeal with each individual function carrying potential for positive community change on its own.

This project sheds light onto the situation of food access in Walnut Hills, a socially diverse neighborhood that seems to have big changes ahead of it in the near future. The fate of the neighborhood Kroger grocery store will certainly impact any future effort for redevelopment or other community change. If the store leaves without community stakeholders organizing broad support for food access, the neighborhood will be left in a preliminary stage for addressing the issue, and other efforts for neighborhood revitalization will also suffer greatly. If stakeholders are able to effectively organize the community around the issue of food access, whether or not Kroger leaves, the community will be in a better position. If Kroger stays, then the community would have been able to successfully advocate keeping the grocery store, improving the store and increasing access to food for all residents while also sparking interest in further neighborhood revitalization efforts in the process. If Kroger leaves, then the community would be in a good position to further advocate for improved food access. Thus, the strategies provided are avenues to a healthier and more involved community, and the alternatives are opportunities to utilize community support to improve food access should Kroger leave.
REFERENCES

