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| **Title of Research Presentation** Collaborating with consumers to improve the local food environment: The Detroit Healthy Grocer Initiative |
| **Background/Objectives**The population of Detroit is primarily African American (83%) and low income (40%). Many Detroiters are burdened with obesity (70%) and other chronic diseases. There has been a fair amount of research conducted on Detroit’s purported “food desert” and its grocery stores, but that research largely excludes community members. This study sought to gather information from community members to gain an accurate representation of the Detroit food environment and their thoughts on improvements. While there are 74 full-line grocers within the city, consumer spending outside Detroit continues to grow. To address the food access needs within Detroit, the Detroit Healthy Grocer Initiative (DHGI) was launched in 2016 with a collaborative of local agencies who work with grocers. The purpose of the DHGI is to improve the healthy food landscape within Detroit and promote healthy eating among consumers.**Methods**In 2014 a series of individual and group interviews were conducted at community sites (n=51) using a survey assessment of food purchasing and eating. In 2017, customer intercept surveys (n=200) were conducted at grocery store locations asking similar questions on food purchasing and eating habits. In 2018, focus groups were conducted within Detroit neighborhoods (n=70) to assess consumer perspectives of their food environments and needed actions for improvement.**Results**Survey participants were majority African American (2014:63%; 2017:78%) and female (2014:71%; 2017:53%) with many utilizing government food assistance programs (2014:30%; 2017:50%). Despite well documented transportation issues in Detroit, participants used personal vehicles for their grocery shopping (2014:77%; 2017:68%). A majority reported grocery shopping at chain stores in 2014 (57%), but just 30% reported the same in 2017. In both years, grocery store trips were reported to be within five minutes of a participant’s home. Focus group participants followed similar demographic patters as surveyed consumers. Most focus group participants discussed a need to improve the quality of healthy foods sold in their local stores and many wanted to assist store owners in making those improvements. **Discussion**Community perceptions of the local food environment present ample opportunity for improving the availability of healthy options and reducing chronic disease. Consumers reported preference in utilizing a neighborhood store for their groceries, as long as stores are clean and welcoming. **Keywords**Grocery Stores, Healthy Eating, Community Development |