

Grocery Accessibility in Austin

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to identify inequities in food accessibility with a focus on differences between access to high-end and affordable grocery stores. Access to fresh, healthy food within the Central Austin area is affected by physical and social barriers created by major freeways and waterways, especially Interstate 35. These boundaries reinforce historically inequitable patterns of resource distribution in Austin that align with racial and socioeconomic disparities. The analysis uses a comprehensive list of grocery stores in Austin along with CapMetro bus routes and walkability indices, all represented as vector data. A buffer zone analysis is used to determine which areas of Austin have convenient access to different types of grocery stores. The results show grocery access disparities between West and East Austin. Affordable grocery stores are more commonly located in East Austin but are spatially infrequent, while high-end grocery stores are more densely concentrated in West Austin, providing broader spatial access. Additionally, residents in East Austin rely more heavily on walking and public transportation (such as bus routes) to reach grocery stores than residents in West Austin. These findings highlight the important relationship between infrastructure, spatial accessibility, and food equity in Austin.