

## Introduction

Feeding America defines "food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life". Currently, Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap* study estimates that 11.0% of Fort Bend County is food insecure as of 2020. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there is strong evidence between lack of access to healthy food and academic achievement; therefore, tracking the dimensions of food insecurity within FBISD is incredibly important to eliminate barriers to success. One intervention that is proven to decrease food insecurity is SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families.

**11.0 %**  
Food Insecure

This research attempts to map the geographic distribution of food insecurity and differences in SNAP utilization by school zone in order to identify which populations most need targeted interventions.

## Methodology

This study analyzed USDA ERS (Economic Research Service) data from the Food Access Research Atlas for Fort Bend county and Fort Bend ISD's high school zoning map to chart the geographic distribution of food insecurity within the school district. By comparing the two maps, each census tract studied by the USDA ERS was visually assigned a high school zone, then an aggregate percentage of the LILA (Low-Income Low Access) population and SNAP utilization was found for each school zone.

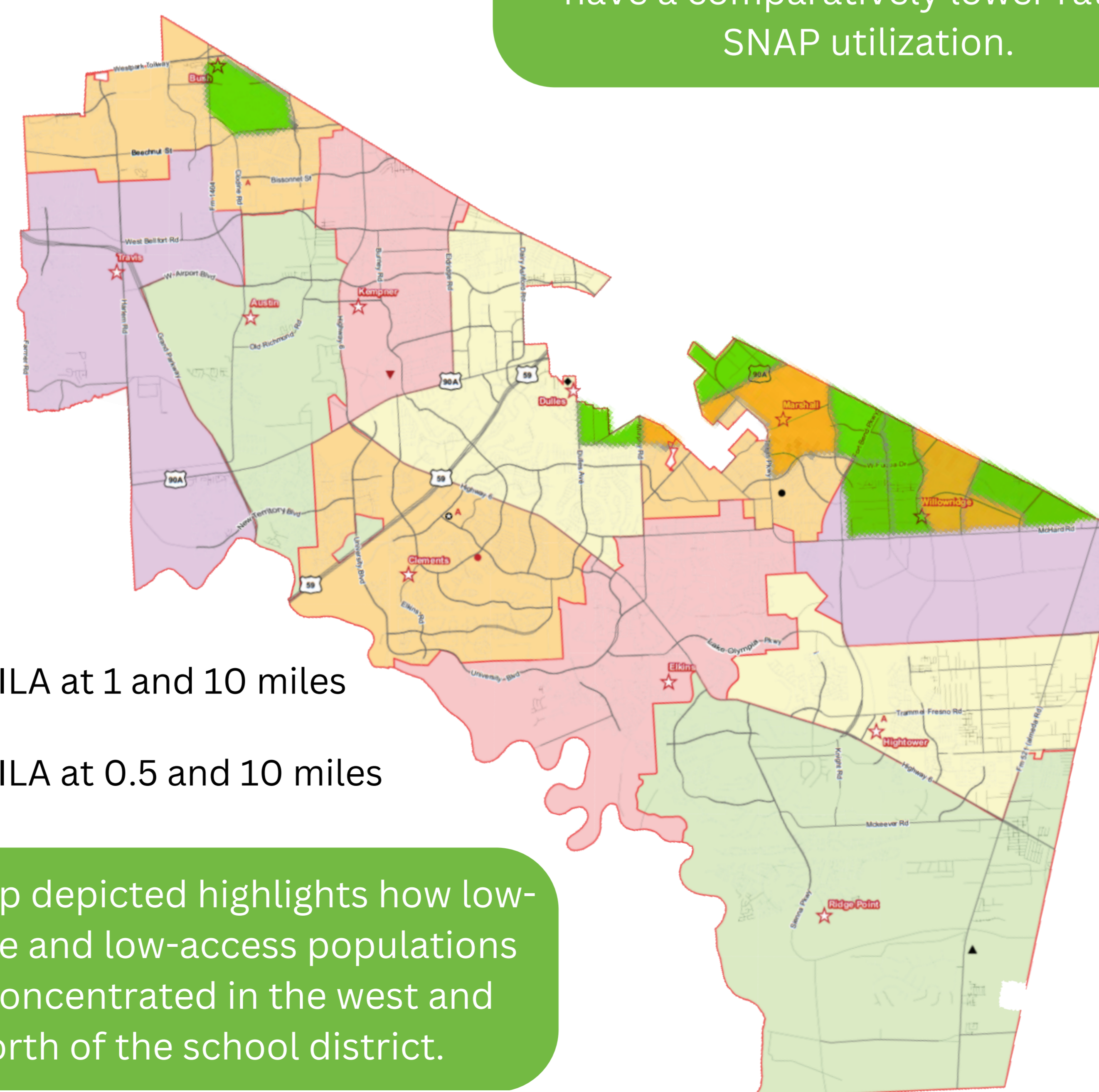
The USDA ERS uses the term Low-income and low-access (LILA) instead of food desert because it is more neutral and more accurate to what is statistically measured.

In this study, LILA refers to the low-income population 1/2 mile away from a supermarket for urban areas or 10 miles for rural areas.



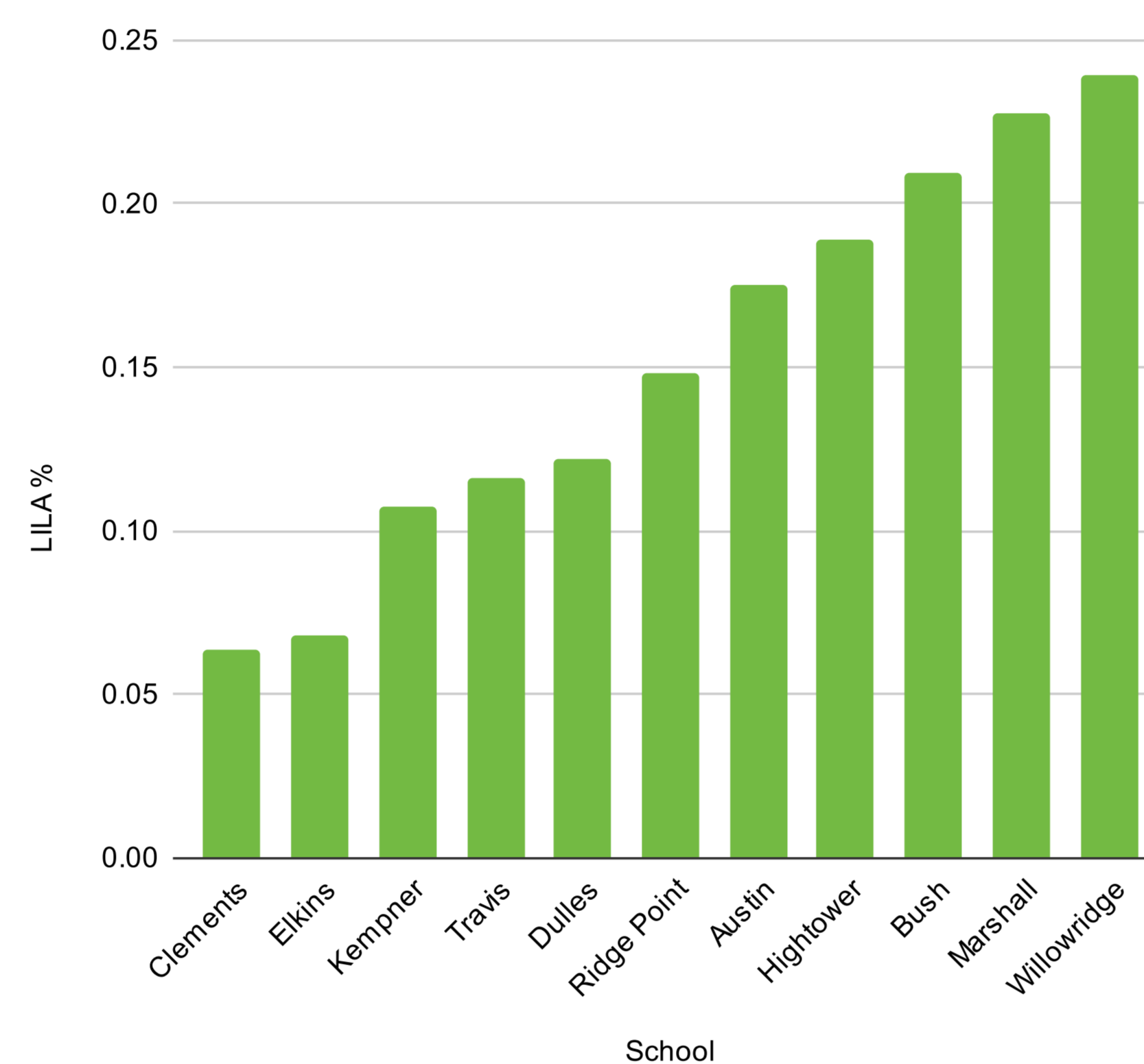
■ LILA at 1 and 10 miles  
■ LILA at 0.5 and 10 miles

The map depicted highlights how low-income and low-access populations are concentrated in the west and north of the school district.



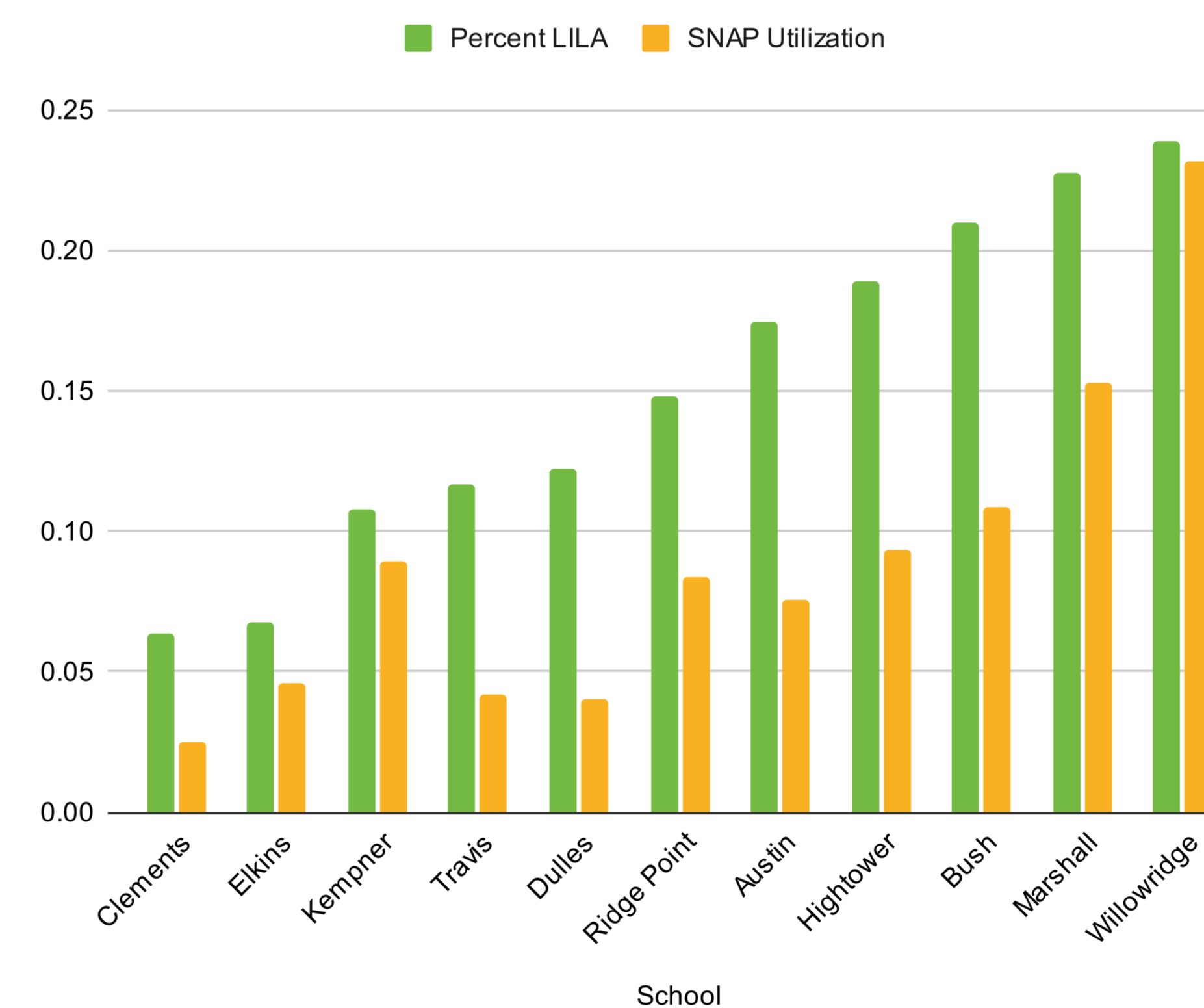
## Results and Findings

Percent Low Income Low Access vs. School Zone



Overall, the data indicates that the Willowridge school zone has the greatest amount of food insecurity, while Clements has the least.

Percent LILA and SNAP Utilization vs School Zone



For most school zones, SNAP utilization follows a trend relatively proportional to the LILA population, however, the Travis and Dulles zoned populations have a comparatively lower rate of SNAP utilization.

## Discussion

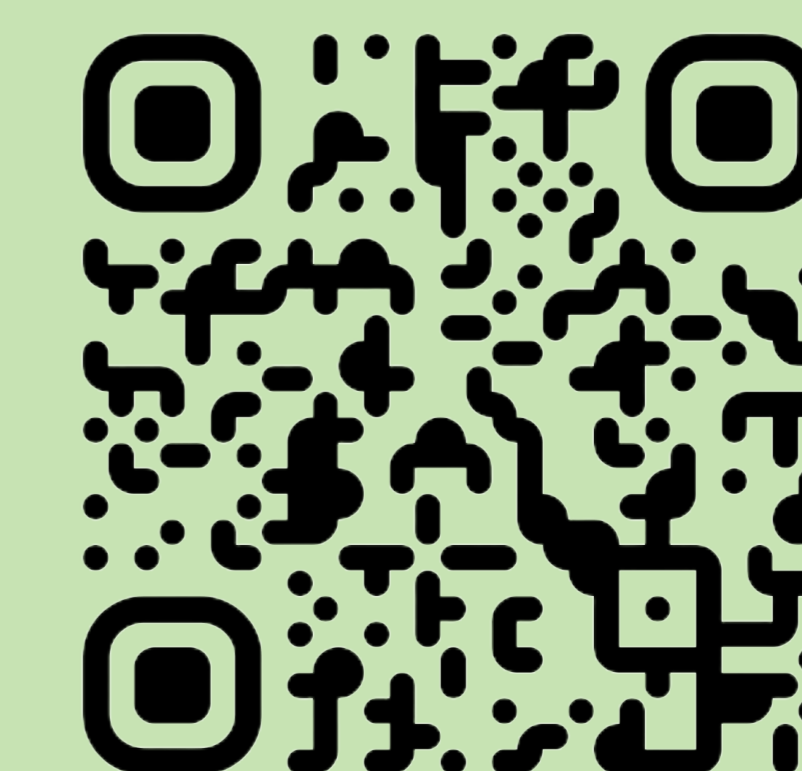
There are two key limitations of this study. First, high school zones are fundamentally political boundaries that often deviate from the geographic and community divisions that the census uses to determine its tracts. This study assumes homogeneity and counts any significantly split tracts twice, which does not necessarily reflect reality. Second is recency: the USDA ERS and FBISD maps use data from 2019 and 2017 respectively, both of which are now outdated due to recent changes.

## Next Steps

Currently Fort Bend's Collaborative Communities program has targeted food insecurity by providing access to food on breaks for designated students, partnering with the Houston Food Bank, and working with other community members/organizations. However, there is a lack of data specific to geographic area, creating a risk for resource misallocation.

This data could be utilized by both FBISD and community organizations to better target food-insecure populations within the school district. By determining target populations, this study could aid in future research to identify the determinants of food insecurity and SNAP underutilization, which is instrumental in designing policy interventions to address the problem.

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