INTRODUCTION: Fruit and vegetable cost may influence consumption. Because the contextual environment influences food outlet type and availability, we wanted to determine whether neighborhood demographics were associated with prices of fruits and vegetables.

METHODS: We surveyed 44 grocery stores in the Birmingham, Alabama, metropolitan area to determine prices of 20 fruits and vegetables. Stores were geocoded and linked to the corresponding Census 2000 block group to obtain data for the independent variables - percentage African American, percentage with at least a high school diploma, and percentage of households below the poverty level. We conducted multiple linear regressions to estimate these predictors for each fruit and vegetable's mean price per serving during 2 seasons (fall/winter 2004, spring/summer 2005).

RESULTS: In the fall, we found no significant relationships between the predictors and prices of any fruits and vegetables in the survey. In the spring, the percentage who had at least a high school diploma was a predictor of price per serving for potatoes (beta = 0.001, P = .046).

CONCLUSION: Neighborhood demographics have little consistent influence on fruit and vegetable prices in Birmingham, Alabama, which
may be a function of grocery store density, transportation patterns, and shopping patterns. The regional setting of the food environment has implications for food availability, variety, and price.