

BALTIMORE FOOD POLICY INITIATIVE

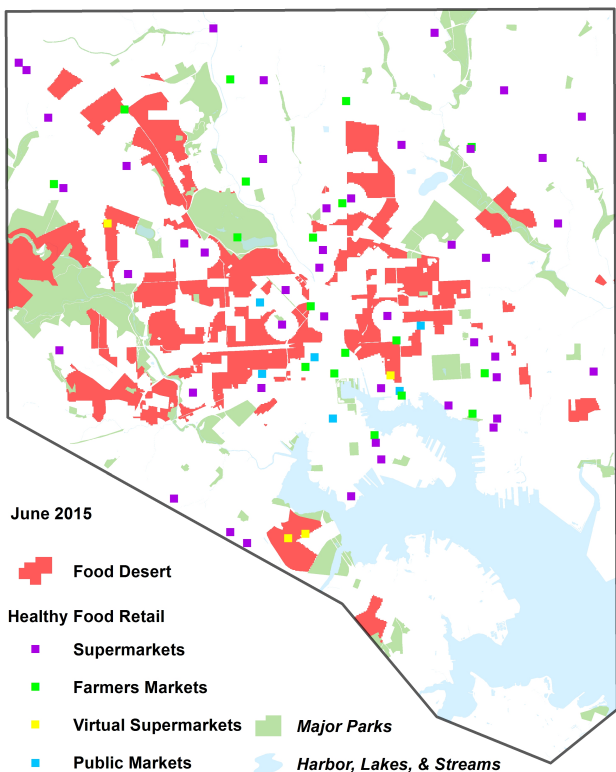
INCREASING FOOD ACCESS FOR BALTIMORE CITY

Baltimore City is the largest city in Maryland, USA, with a population of 622,000. A quarter of residents live in food deserts, including 30% of the city's children. To increase access to healthy affordable food, Baltimore takes a strong policy perspective and creates and implements food policies at the city, state and federal levels. Understanding that food does not fit into solely one government agency, the City of Baltimore takes an intergovernmental approach to collaboration on food issues. Baltimore serves as a leader in US food access solutions, and this document highlights many of the key innovations, policies and programs.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake is committed to addressing food issues, both as Mayor of Baltimore and as President of the United States Conference of Mayors.

“ *I believe that for Baltimore City to reach its true health and economic potential, all residents must have access to healthy, affordable food.* ”

- Mayor Rawlings-Blake



A Food Desert is an area where: 1) The distance to a supermarket or supermarket alternative is more than 1/4 mile, 2) The median household income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, 3) Over 30% of households have no vehicle available, and 4) The average Healthy Food Availability Index score for all food stores is low.

BUILDING A FOOD POLICY FRAMEWORK

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI): An intergovernmental collaboration between Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, Health Department, and Baltimore Development Corporation to increase access to healthy affordable food in Baltimore City food deserts.

Governance: Full-time Food Policy Director and dedicated staff from three agencies focusing on food access, plus the support of a coalition of 60 + stakeholders representing organizations with missions and visions related to food access and local food systems.

Food Environment Map and Report: In 2015, released a comprehensive report and map on the food environment to identify areas of greatest need and to drive policy and strategies. Part of an ongoing collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

Food Desert Retail Strategy: Based on the findings of the Food Environment Report, this five-point strategy aims to increase access to healthy affordable food through various types of retail, understanding that solutions must be adaptable to each neighborhood's needs and assets.

Food Desert Retail Incentive Areas: Based on the Baltimore-specific definition of a "food desert", these incentive areas are meant to specifically target supermarket development and renovation to the areas of highest need. The first incentive is a personal property tax credit.

Food and Race Training: Food stakeholders from multiple sectors underwent training to better understand the interplay between race and food access in Baltimore and strategies to address disparities.

STEPHANIE
RAWLINGS-BLAKE
MAYOR





LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Homegrown Baltimore – Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local: The City’s comprehensive urban agriculture strategy to transform vacant land into farms and gardens, increase local food supply, stimulate the local food economy, and improve the food environment.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Wellness: First City in US to incentivize CSAs as part of employee wellness plans.

Vacant Land Leasing: Low-cost, mid-term leases of City-owned vacant land for urban farms, with up to 20 acres available for leases over the next few years.

Urban Agriculture Tax Credit: A 90% credit on property tax for urban farms.

Animal Husbandry Regulations: Baltimore City allows for the keeping of bees, chickens, rabbits and pygmy goats, based on the amount of land.

Hoop Houses: The Building Code amended

to allow for hoop houses on urban farms, and Baltimore went from having just three to over fifty hoop houses in five years.

Great Kids Farm: A working farm operated by Baltimore City Public Schools that grows and processes produce for cafeterias, and provides students and teachers with hands-on experience and education on healthy eating, sustainable agriculture and the natural sciences.

Food Entrepreneurism: Small food businesses are economic drivers, and industries such as farmers markets, food trucks and food incubators are growing rapidly in Baltimore.

5-STAR Community: One of just three US cities to have a five-star rating through the Sustainability Tools for Assessing & Rating (STAR) Community Rating System, Baltimore’s food production policies and practices were specifically highlighted in its top rating.

FOOD ACCESS

Overview: With a high proportion of Baltimore residents receiving federal nutrition assistance, BFPI advocates for federal policy that will best support both recipients and retailers.

Virtual Supermarket: The first of its kind, the Virtual Supermarket allows residents in senior, disabled and public housing to order groceries online and have them delivered. Residents can pay with federal nutrition assistance benefits on-site.

Smartphone Technology for Double Incentives: Baltimore’s largest farmers market employs smartphone technology for vendors to accept and double federal nutrition assistance at their individual stalls.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): With high rates of children qualifying for free and reduced meals, Baltimore City Public Schools utilizes CEP to provide free meals through Federal Nutrition Assistance programs to all students and to reduce the burden of collecting paperwork.



Contact: Holly Freishtat, MS
Baltimore City Food Policy Director
443.928.3477
Holly.Freishtat@baltimorecity.gov

For more information, visit the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative website, Facebook and Twitter