COVID-19 FOOD INSECURITY RESPONSE
GROCERY AND PRODUCE BOX DISTRIBUTION SUMMARY

April – June, 2020

Prepared by the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative developed an Emergency Food Strategy. An Emergency Food Planning team, comprised of City agencies and critical nonprofit partners, convened to guide the City's food insecurity response. The strategy includes distributing meals, distributing food, increasing federal nutrition benefits, supporting community partners, and building local food system resilience. Since COVID-19 reached Baltimore, public-private partnerships have been mobilized; State funding has been leveraged; over 3.5 million meals have been provided to Baltimore youth, families, and older adults; and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Online Purchasing Pilot has launched. This document provides a summary of distribution of food boxes (grocery and produce boxes) from April to June, 2020, and reviews the next steps of the food distribution response.

GOAL STATEMENT

In response to COVID-19 and its impact on health, economic, and environmental disparities, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative has grounded its short- and long-term strategies in the following goals:

- Minimizing food insecurity due to job loss, decreased food access, and transportation gaps during the pandemic.
- Creating a flexible grocery distribution system that can adapt to fluctuating numbers of cases, rates of infection, and specific demographics impacted by COVID-19 cases.
- Building an equitable and resilient infrastructure to address the long-term consequences of the pandemic and its impact on food security and food justice.

RISING FOOD INSECURITY DUE TO COVID-19

- **FOOD INSECURITY:** It is estimated that one in four city residents are experiencing food insecurity as a consequence of COVID-19[1]. New statewide estimates suggest a 124% increase in household food insecurity across Maryland[2].
- **SNAP:** One indicator of food insecurity is the number of residents on SNAP. As of May 12th, approximately 83,000 households in Baltimore City received SNAP benefits, a 5% increase since the first case of COVID-19 was identified locally in March.

PHASE 1: COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE, GROCERY & PRODUCE BOXES

SUMMARY: From April to June the City activated established emergency food plans and provisions while building additional distribution strategies, acting as an emergency triage response to acute food shortages in the face of COVID-19. As of May 16th, five main operations were in place: public grocery box distribution, grocery box home delivery in partnership with Amazon, nonprofit grocery box home delivery, public produce box distribution, and nonprofit produce box home delivery (Figure 1). The grocery boxes are provided through a contract with the Maryland Food Bank while the produce boxes

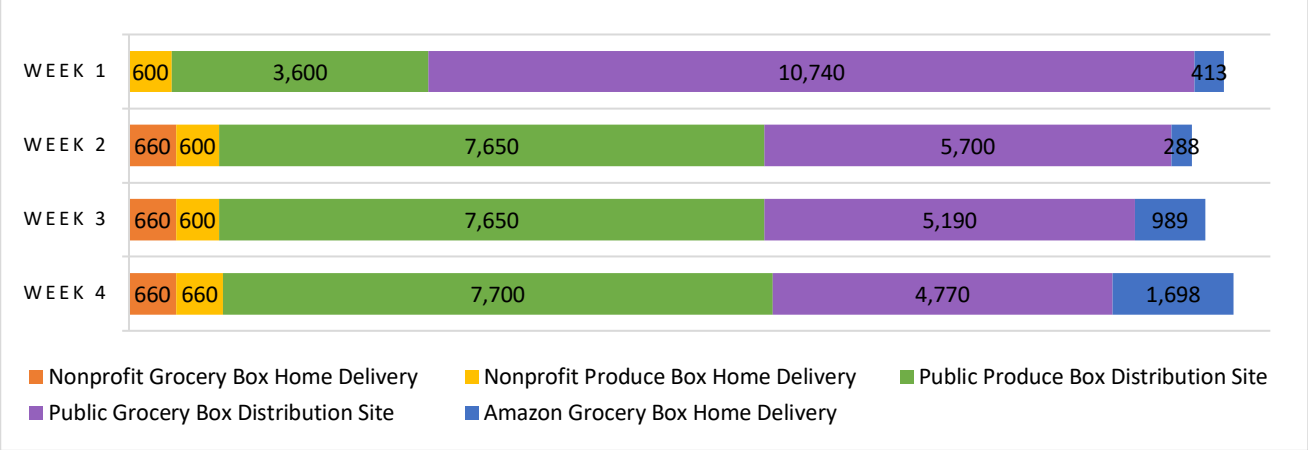
[1] Maryland Food System Map, Project Food Insecurity Rate 2020. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from https://gis.mdfoodsystemmap.org/map/#x=-8552691.9688827&y=4548003.1829668&z=6&ll=2,3

[2] Schanzenbach, D., & Pitts, A. (2020, June 10). State-by-State Estimates of Food Insufficiency and Insecurity. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/news/2020/state-level-estimates-census-pulse-data.html

are provided free of cost from Coastal Sunbelt through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Farmers to Families program.

COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS: In this initial emergency response, providing food to residents experiencing food insecurity was paired with the importance of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 and flattening the curve. Distribution guidelines were created by the Health Department and other agencies to maintain social distance, wear PPE, and minimize the number of days residents needed to leave their homes to acquire food. Outreach and targeted referral mechanisms for home delivery of food boxes were implemented in COVID-19 hot spots and among particularly vulnerable populations to minimize the need for residents to access public distribution sites.

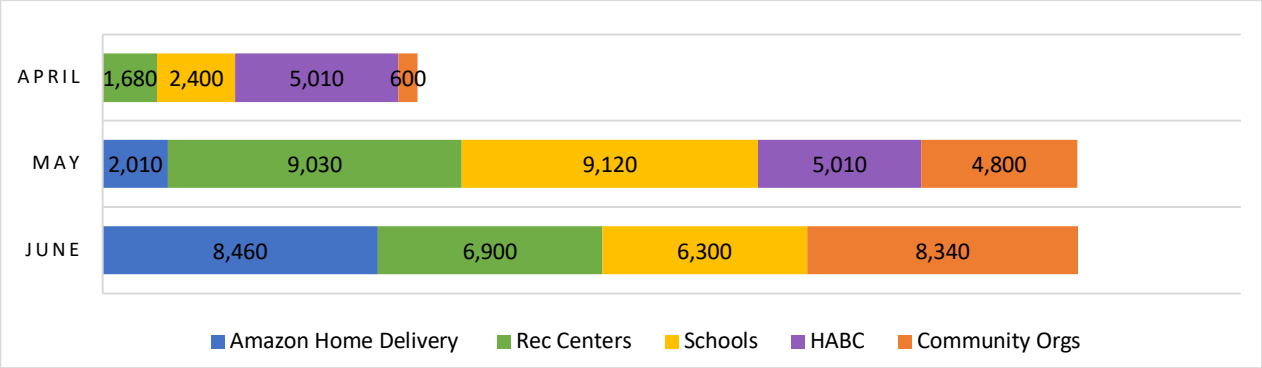
Figure 1: Total Food Distribution Over Four Weeks, May 16th – June 12th, 2020



1. **PUBLIC GROCERY BOXES**
   - **OVERVIEW:** In April, to triage the broken food supply chain that made food hard to find, the grocery box program partnered with schools, recreation centers, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), and a few community organizations. In May, to increase coverage in SNAP hot spots and areas with a large population of immigrant families, the food response team added a few schools and rec centers and more than doubled community organization sites. The initial community organization distributions in April showed that these sites were high-demand spots and that the organizations were good partners in maintaining safe operations**.** In June, to continue to respond to fluctuations in food availability, the food response team maintained the same sites but revised quantities to better match distribution.
   - **DEMOGRAPHICS:** Over 95% of the grocery boxes were distributed at sites serving neighborhoods where one in four households receive SNAP, with 65% of boxes distributed in neighborhoods where one in two households receive SNAP. Of all grocery boxes distributed, 19% were through community sites, 18% through HABC, 31% through rec centers, and 32% through schools.
   - **IMPACT:** Since April, 56,000 grocery boxes have been distributed through public distribution sites. In June, over 5,000 grocery boxes were distributed each week, feeding the equivalent of approximately 20,000 residents (Figure 2).
   - **PARTNERS:** Distribution is made possible through a contract with Maryland Food Bank in addition to the frontline work from the Maryland National Guard, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, HABC, and many community based organizations including: Arch Social Club, CASA de Maryland, CHAI, Charm City Land Trust, Cherry Hill Coalition, the

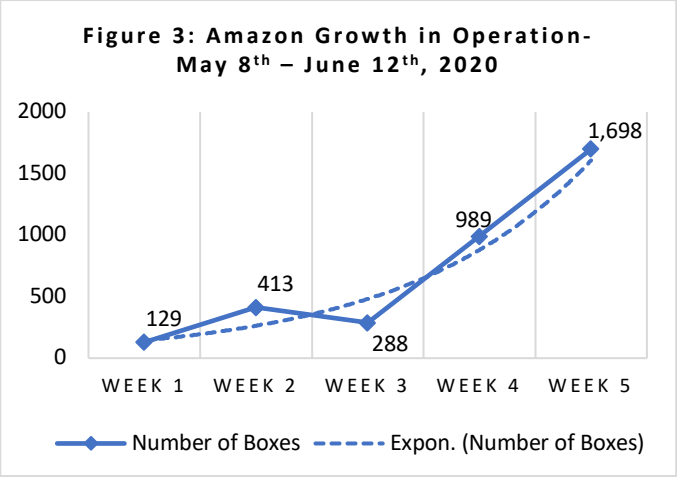
Children's Guild, Fallstaff Improvement Association, Greater Paradise Christian Center, Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Monarch Academy, Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, Park Heights Renaissance, Victorious Ministries, and Zion Hill Baptist Church.

Figure 2: Number of Grocery Boxes Distributed by Site by Month



2. GROCERY BOX HOME DELIVERY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMAZON

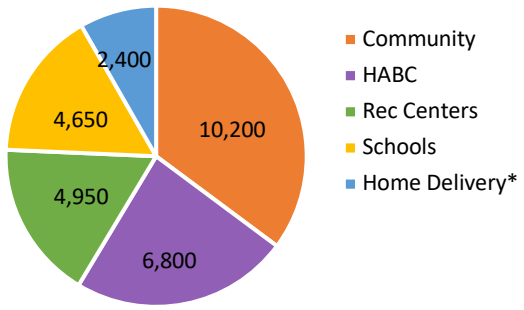
- **OVERVIEW:** In May, the City leveraged Amazon's transportation and logistics network to deliver grocery boxes to individuals in households who are unable to access food themselves and are either COVID-19 positive or quarantining. Amazon home delivery has significantly increased to help vulnerable populations stay home, for their health and for the public's.
- **DEMOGRAPHICS:** One in three grocery boxes were delivered within a COVID-19 hot spot from May to June. New partnerships with healthcare organizations, nonprofits serving the immigrant community, and the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) allowed for direct referrals to be made by providers and COVID-19 contact tracers. Over 3,000 older adults received a grocery box through Amazon home delivery. Referrals directly from organizations serving the Latinx community increased as that community has been particularly vulnerable to contracting COVID-19. As referrals from healthcare organizations continue to increase, the demographics of the program are expanding to include more families and younger adults.



- **IMPACT:** Over 3,500 grocery boxes were delivered over the first five weeks of the program, feeding the equivalent of approximately 14,000 residents. The largest volume of home deliveries was achieved the week of June 8th, with nearly 1,700 grocery boxes delivered to residents' doorsteps. Over the first month of operation, Amazon home delivery saw a greater than 1,000% growth (Figure 3).
- **PARTNERS:** Distribution is made possible through a contract with Maryland Food Bank in addition to transportation provided by the Maryland National Guard and free home delivery offered by Amazon.

3. **PUBLIC PRODUCE BOXES**
   - **OVERVIEW:** In May, Baltimore City began a partnership with Coastal Sunbelt to distribute over 8,000 24-pound boxes of produce. This program is fully funded by the USDA's Farmers to Families program. The produce boxes provide a vital resource for nutritional health and have been in high-demand by residents, including many at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19.
   - **DEMOGRAPHICS:** Nearly 60% of produce boxes were distributed in neighborhoods where over one in two households receive SNAP benefits. Of all boxes distributed, 38% were through community sites, 26% through HABC, 19% through rec centers, and 17% through schools.
   - **IMPACT:** Since May 16th, over 26,000 produce boxes have been distributed through public sites (Figure 4). In June, 7,650 boxes were distributed through sites each week, feeding the equivalent of approximately 30,000 residents.
   - **PARTNERS:** This program is fully funded by the USDA's Farmers to Families program, with produce provided by Coastal Sunbelt, and frontline distribution by Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, HABC, and many community based organizations including: Bnos Yisroel, Breath of God Lutheran Church, CASA de Maryland, CHAI, City of Refuge, Fallstaff Improvement Association, Franciscan Center, Greater Paradise Christian Center, Haven City Church, Italian Cultural Center, Monarch Academy, Park Heights Renaissance, The Food Project, and The Well.

Figure 4: Produce Box Distribution by Site Type, May 16th - June 11th, 2020



**Two community sites provide home delivery to all residents served.*

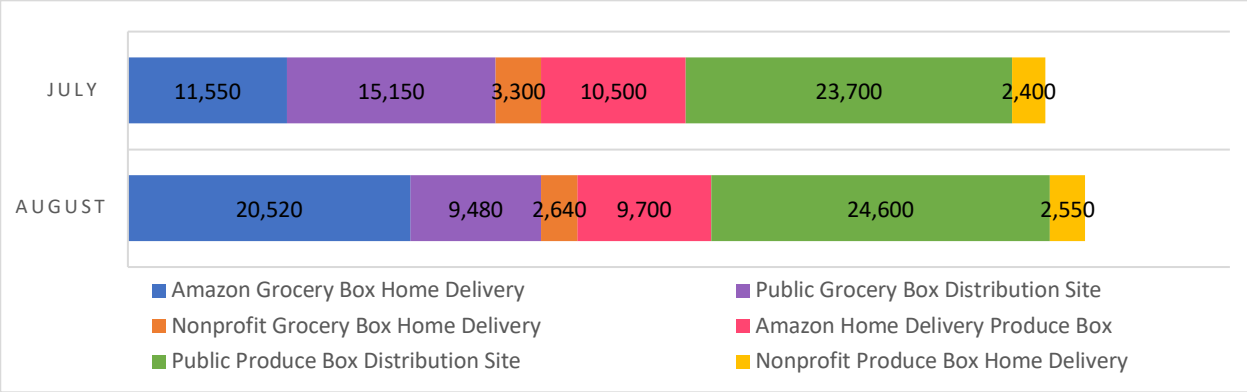
4. **GROCERY BOX AND PRODUCE BOX HOME DELIVERY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NONPROFITS**
   - **OVERVIEW:** In May, two community organizations serving the Latinx communities of Baltimore began distributing all grocery boxes and produce boxes allocated via home delivery coordinated and operated by the organizations. Other community organizations also deliver some boxes allocated to their sites via home delivery, but the majority of distribution is through public sites.
   - **DEMOGRAPHICS:** As of June 22nd, there were 19.3 cases of COVID-19 per 1,000 people in the Hispanic and Latinx communities in Baltimore City. Reaching this vulnerable population through home delivery is vital.
   - **IMPACT:** Since May, nearly 2,000 grocery boxes and 2,400 produce boxes have been delivered to the Latinx community served by Centro Sol and CASA de Maryland. Each week Cento Sol and CASA de Maryland home deliver 660 grocery boxes and 600 produce boxes to this vulnerable population, feeding the equivalent of approximately 2,600 residents.
   - **PARTNERS:** This home delivery effort is made possible by Maryland Food Bank, Maryland National Guard, USDA, Coastal Sunbelt, Centro Sol, and CASA de Maryland.

NEXT STEPS: PLANNING TO ADDRESS LONG-TERM FOOD INSECURITY

The City must build an equitable and resilient nutrition safety net to address the long-term consequences of this alarming level of food insecurity, as an emergency food system is not equipped to address either the alarming levels of food insecurity or a long-term need. This strategy will readily respond to surges and declines in COVID-19 cases as long-term food insecurity remains persistent due to predicted sustained high unemployment rates. Mechanisms, such as referrals through community

organizations and healthcare providers, will be in place to ensure vulnerable, food insecure residents living in COVID-19 hot spots have access to food boxes via home delivery to keep residents safe.

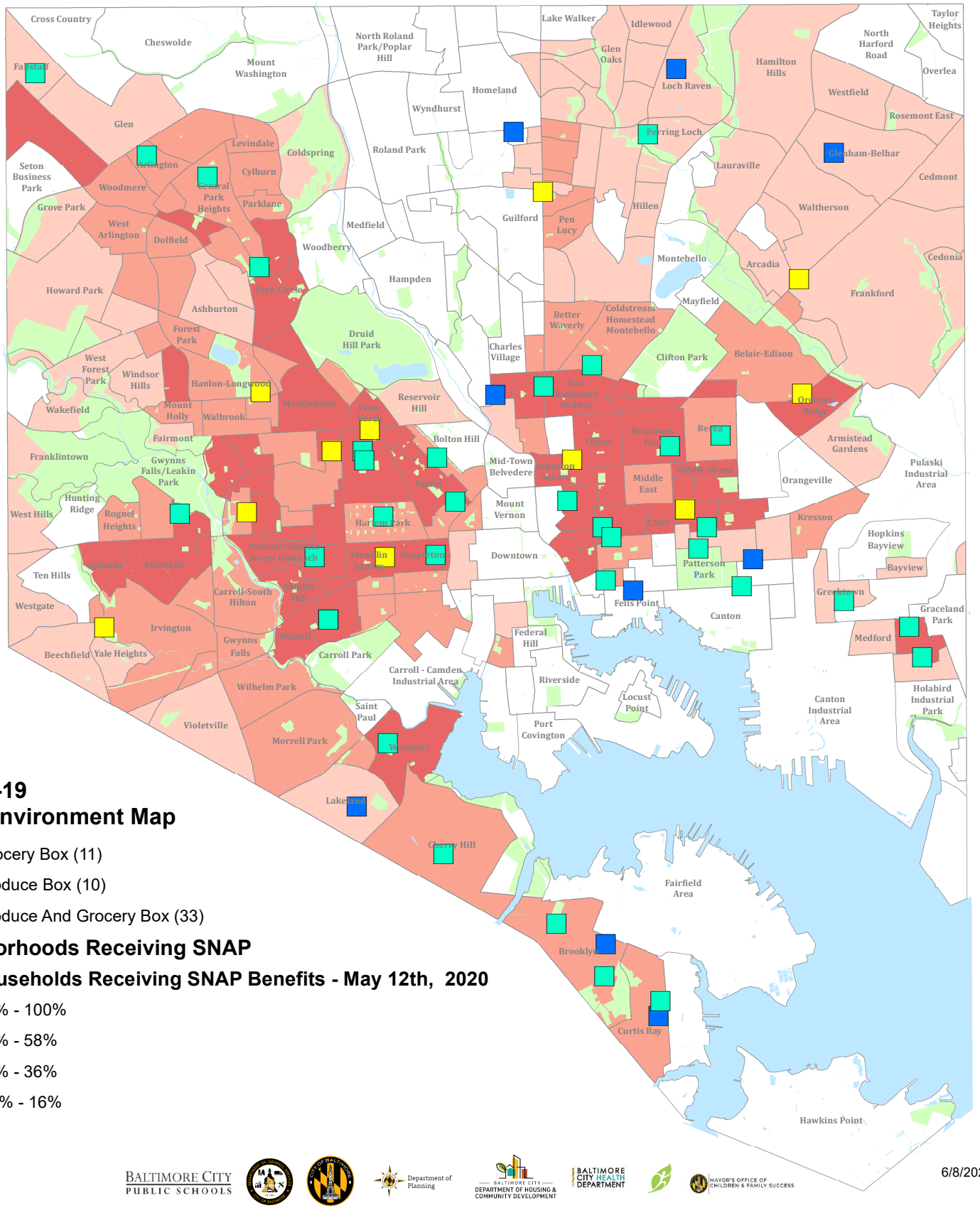
Figure 5: Planned Food Box Distribution, July – August, 2020



1. **REALLOCATING GROCERY BOXES TO HOME DELIVERY:** To best serve the vulnerable, grocery boxes will be incrementally reallocated from schools and rec centers to the home delivery operation in July and August (Figure 5). Community organization sites will continue, as they are serving many food insecure residents who do not call 2-1-1 or Maryland Access Point (MAP) for assistance.
2. **EXPANDING HOME DELIVERY:** Grocery box distribution will primarily be home delivery to COVID-19 restricted households, older adults, and HABC residents. There was a 1,000% increase in home deliveries in the first month, and an increase in referrals from BCHD and the healthcare community is expected as COVID-19 testing and contact tracing increases. Home delivery will be accomplished through the City's partnership with Amazon and community organizations doing direct delivery. Referrals to the program will be collected from MAP, 2-1-1, healthcare providers, COVID-19 contact tracers, and community organizations serving residents who are vulnerable to contracting COVID-19. The referral mechanism will be expanded and adapted as fit to ensure residents living within COVID-19 hot spots can be easily referred to the program if eligible.
3. **CONTINUING PRODUCE BOXES:** The USDA Farmers to Families program will continue with Coastal Sunbelt through August or until the contract ends. Boxes assigned to HABC will be reallocated to community partners as well as the Convention Center for home delivery.
4. **BUILDING FOOD RESILIENCY AND EQUITY:** The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative will convene virtual roundtables with stakeholders of the Baltimore City food system to discuss successes and areas for improvement throughout the first three months of the City's food response. These virtual convenings will inform food resiliency and food equity strategies to address long-term food insecurity and achieve food justice in Baltimore City.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

HOLLY FREISHTAT, MS
Baltimore City Food Policy Director
Baltimore Food Policy Initiative
holly.freishtat@baltimorecity.gov
https://planning.baltimorecity.gov/baltimore-food-policy-initiative



COVID-19
Food Environment Map

- Grocery Box (11)
- Produce Box (10)
- Produce And Grocery Box (33)

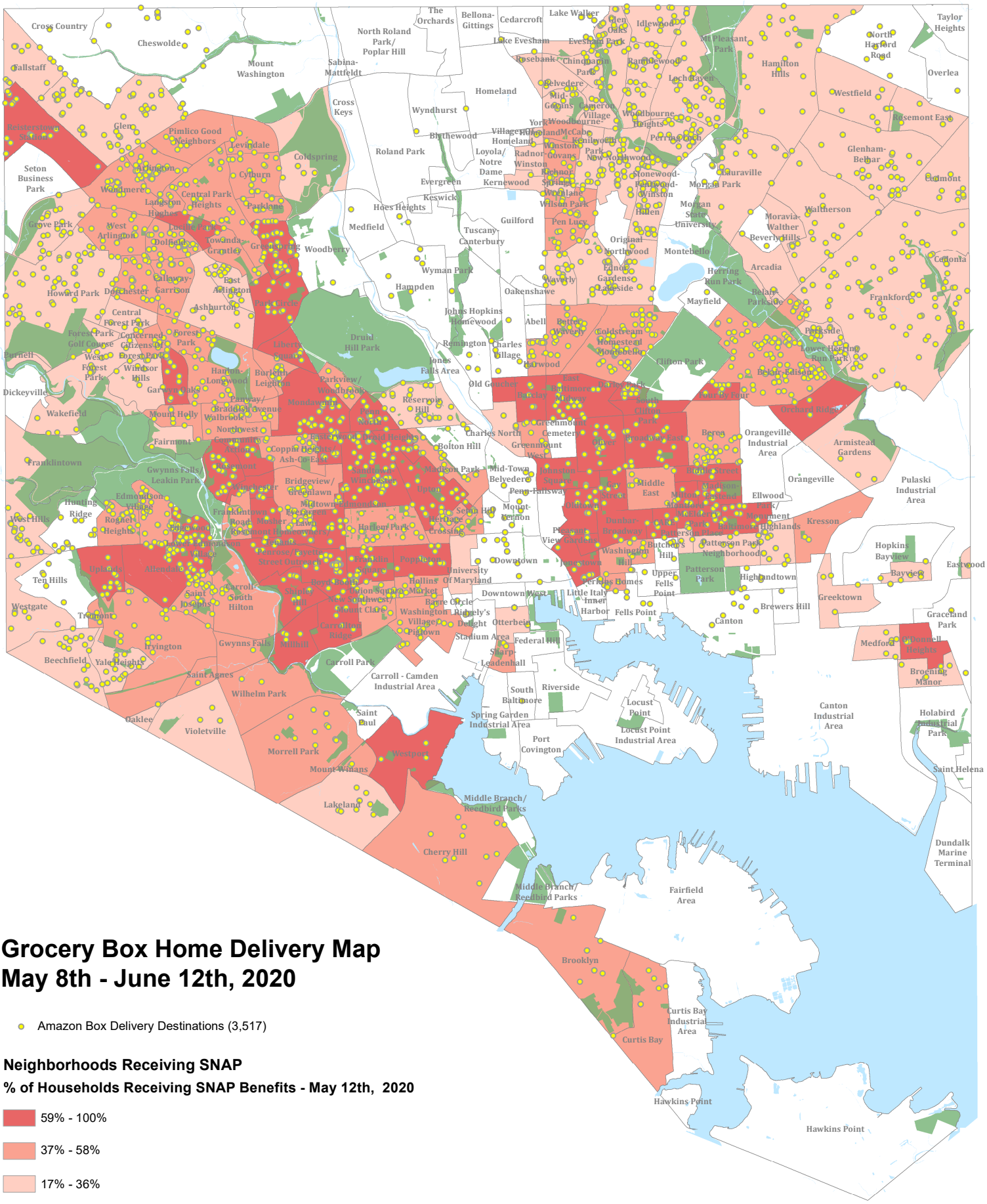
Neighborhoods Receiving SNAP

% of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits - May 12th, 2020

- 59% - 100%
- 37% - 58%
- 17% - 36%
- 0.5% - 16%

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS · Department of Planning · BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT · BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT · MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SUCCESS

6/8/2020


Cross Country
Cheswolde
Mount Washington
Sabina-Mattfeldt
North Roland Park/ Poplar Hill
The Orchards
Bellona-Gittings
Cedarcroft
Lake Walker
Lake Evesham
Evesham Park
Glen Oaks
Idlewood
Pleasant Park
Taylor Heights
North Hanford Road
Overlea
Hamilton Hills
Westfield
Rosemont East
Glenham-Belhar
Edmont
Waltherson
Moravia-Walther
Beverly Hills
Cedonia
Frankford
Belair-Edison
Orchard Ridge
Armistead Gardens
Pulaski Industrial Area
Orangeville
Orangeville Industrial Area
Kresson
Hopkins Bayview
Bayview
Eastwood
Greektown
Graceland Park
Medford
O'Donnell Heights
Broening Manor
Holabird Industrial Park
Canton Industrial Area
Saint Helena
Dundalk Marine Terminal
Fairfield Area
Hawkins Point
Curtis Bay Industrial Area
Curtis Bay
Brooklyn
Locust Point
Locust Point Industrial Area
Port Covington
Spring Garden Industrial Area
South Baltimore
Riverside
Middle Branch/ Reedbird Parks
Cherry Hill
Lakeland
Westport
Mount Winans
Morrell Park
Violetville
Oakleé
Saint Agnes
Wilhelm Park
Carroll - Camden Industrial Area
Carroll Park
Leadenhall
Sharp-Leadenhall
Federal Hill
Stadium Area
Otterbein
Pigtown
Washington Village/
Ridgely's Delight
Baltimore Peninsula
Canton
Brewers Hill
Fells Point
Little Italy
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Upper Fells Point
Highlandtown
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Patterson Park Neighborhoods
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University Of Maryland
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Baltimore Peninsula
Poppleton
Franklin Square
Carrollton Ridge
Millhill
Gwynns Falls
Carroll-South Hilton
Saint Josephs
Shipley Hill
Southwest/ Mount Clare
Union Square
Barre Circle
Ten Hills
Westgate
Trenton
Hyington
Beechfield
Yale Heights
Uplands
Allendale
Edgewood
Edmondson Village
Rognel Heights
West Hills
Hunting Ridge
Franklintown
Franklintown Road
Mosher
Rosemont
Harlem Park
Penrose/Fayette Street Outreach
Lafayette Square
Heritage Crossing
Sandtown-Winchester
Bridgeview/ Greenlawn
Midtown-Edmondson
Winchester
Upton
Madison Park
Mid-Town Belvedere
Peng-Fairway
Mount-Vernon
Seton Hill
Pleasant View Gardens
Johnston Square
Greenmount West
Greenmount Cemetery
Oliver
Broadway East
Berea
Middle East
Gay Street
Dunbar-Broadway
Madison-Eastern
Milton-Montford
Ellwood Park/ Monument
Highlandtown
Elder Park
Gilmor Homes
Fairmount
Franklintown
Gwynns Falls/ Leakin Park
Wakefield
Mount Holly
Northwest Community Action
Coppin Heights/ Ash-Co-East
Mondawmin
Reservoir Hill
Druid Hill Park
Bolton Hill
Charles North
Jones Falls Area
Old Goucher
Barclay
East Baltimore Midway
Dallas Park
South Clifton Park
Northy Fair
Clifton Park
Harwood
Remington
Charles Village
Abell
Better Waverly
Coldstream Homestead Montebello
Waverly
Oakenshawe
Hampden
Wyman Park
Druid Hill Park
Medfield
Woodberry
Tuscany-Canterbury
Guilford
Hoes Heights
Keswick
Evergreen
Kernewood
Roland Park
Blythewood
Cross Keys
Homeland
Wyndhurst
Loyola/ Notre Dame
Radnor-Winston
Richnor Springs
Wilson Park
Pen Lucy
Original Northwood
Edmondson Gardens
Lakeside
Montebello
Morgan State University
Morgan Park
Cauraville
Stonewood-Pactolus-Winston
Hollen
Mayfield
Herring Run Park
Lower Herring Run Park
Belair-Parkside
Arcadia
Belair-Edison
Frankford
Parkside
Belair-Edison
Glen
Pimlico Good Neighbors
Levindale
Coldspring
Cylburn
Central Park Heights
Parklane
Langston Hughes
Lucille Park
Dolfield
Towanda-Grantley
Greenmount
Woodmere
Seton Business Park
Reisterstown Station
Grove Park
West Arlington
Arlington
Howard Park
Dorchester
Callaway-Garrison
East Arlington
Ashburton
Pen Circle
Central Forest Park
Forest Park Golf Course
Concerned Citizens Of Forest Park
Forest Park
West Forest Park
Windsor Hills
Garwyn Oaks
Hanlon-Longwood
Burleith-Leighton
Parkview/ Woodbrook
Pimlico
Pamlico
Mondawmin
Pamway/ Bradford Avenue Walbrook
Northwest Community Action
Fairmont
Franklintown
Dickeyville
Furnell
Cedonia
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Chinquapin Park
Ramblewood
Lochraven
Belvedere
Mid-Govans
Cameron Village
Woodbourne Heights
Woodbourne-McCabe
Kenilworth Park
Perring Loch
Woodland
Winston-Govans
Radnor-Winston
New Northwood
Stonewood-Pactolus-Winston
Hollen
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Cauraville
Morgan State University
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Oakenshawe
Hampden
Wyman Park
Druid Hill Park
Medfield
Woodberry
Tuscany-Canterbury
Guilford
Hoes Heights
Keswick
Evergreen
Kernewood
Roland Park
Blythewood
Cross Keys
Homeland
Wyndhurst
Loyola/ Notre Dame
Radnor-Winston
Richnor Springs
Wilson Park
Pen Lucy
Original Northwood
Edmondson Gardens
Lakeside
Montebello
Morgan State University
Morgan Park
Cauraville
Stonewood-Pactolus-Winston
Hollen
Mayfield
Herring Run Park
Lower Herring Run Park
Belair-Parkside
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Parkside