

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHRONIC DISEASE DIRECTORS

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Community Action Guide: **Changing Food Deserts into Food Oases**

Health Equity Council 2011

Improving Lives through **Policy, Programs** and **People**



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Community Action Guide: Changing Food Deserts into Food Oases: A Resource for States and Communities

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

Food Desert Defined:

In 2008 US Congress defined food deserts as “areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominately lower income neighborhoods.”

In 2010 the CDC provided the following definition: “Food deserts are areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk, and other foods that make up the full range of a healthy diet.”

Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group (2010) defines food deserts as “having an *imbalance* of food choice, meaning a heavy concentration of nearby *fringe* food that is high in salt, fat, and sugar. Many fringe locations also offer “quick meals” that are very convenient but cannot support a healthy diet on a regular basis. The study of Food Deserts is important for every type of community – urban, suburban and rural – because findings from our studies reveal that residents of Food Deserts suffer worse diet-related health outcomes, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, heart disease and premature death. These effects are independent from other contributing factors such as income, race, and education. For diabetes and obesity, we have found these relationships to be statistically significant.”

Food Desert Resources:



National Food Desert Awareness Month website Available at:

<http://www.fooddesert.net/>

Food Desert Awareness month, which takes place each September, is a project of the *National Center for Public Research (NCforPR)*.



CDC Features: Food Deserts. Available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/FoodDeserts/>

Background Articles:



Beaulac J, E Kristjansson and S Cummins (2009). A Systematic review of food deserts, 1996-2007. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 3(3). Available at:

www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2009/jul/08_0163.htm

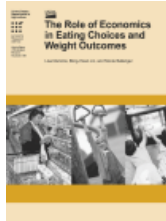


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Dunbar M. In a food oasis, residents don't have to hunt for fruits, vegetables. Howard University News Service. Available at: <http://www.hunewsservice.com/projects/food-deserts/in-a-food-oasis-residents-don-t-have-to-hunt-for-fruits-vegetables-1.1481321>



Mancinio L, Lin B-H, Ballender N. (2004). *The role of economics in eating choices and weight outcomes*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Agricultural Information Bulletin, No. 791. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib791/aib791.pdf>



Michimi A & Wimberly MC. (2010). Associations of supermarket accessibility with obesity and fruit and vegetable consumption in the conterminous United States. *International Journal of Health Geographics*, 9:49. Available at: <http://www.ij-healthgeographics.com/content/pdf/1476-072X-9-49.pdf>



Pearson T, Jean Russell J, Campbell MJ, Barker ME. (2005). Do 'food deserts' influence fruit and vegetable consumption?—a cross-sectional study. *Appetite*, 45(2):195-197. Available at: http://gis.sheffield.ac.uk/Library/Downloads/Publications/2005_FoodDeserts.pdf



Tarnapol Whitacre P, P Tsai and J Mulligan. *The public health effects of food deserts-Workshop summary*. The Institute of medicine and the National Research Council-National Academies Press. Available at: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/FoodDeserts.aspx>

STEP I: DATA GATHERING, MEASUREMENT & ASSESSMENT

Tool for Measuring Food Deserts:



Most of the work on 'food deserts' is community or place specific and therefore, somewhat unique to communities and/or places. This GIS mapping tool can be utilized to identify communities and areas that lack healthy, affordable foods. The map can help communities start to identify multiple factors that will indicate geographic areas of focus: <http://maps.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/foodenv5.aspx>



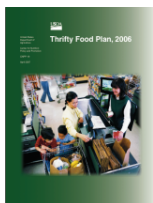
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In May 2011, the USDA released an online tool for locating food deserts. The new tool identifies food desert areas as well as the number of low-income people without access to healthy, affordable foods. Other important community factors, such as how many children have limited or no access are also available through the tool: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/>

Additional Steps to Identify Food Deserts in Your Community:

- Reference USDA guidelines:

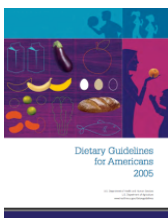


USDA's Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) guidelines:

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/FoodPlans/MiscPubs/TFP2006Report.pdf>

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/FoodPlans/2007/costoffooddec07.pdf>

- Evaluate food costs, as compared to the income of families, and the percentage of community members under the federal poverty line
- Evaluate community rates of obesity and other nutrition related chronic diseases; such as, diabetes and heart disease.
- Perform an environmental scan to determine what food resources are available in your community, and a market basket analysis to identify the availability, cost and nutritional value of foods sold at local stores (Sheldon, M., Gans, K., Tai, R., & George, T. et al., 2010).



USDA dietary recommendations:

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/DGA2005.pdf>

(Availability, Affordability, and Accessibility of a Healthful diet)

- Determine if healthful food locations are within 1 block of bus routes stop (Sheldon, M., Gans, K., Tai, R., & George, T., et al., 2010).
- Evaluate the food environment as a whole, factoring in fast food restaurants, and other related food sources.

Measurement Articles:



Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and their Consequences. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2009. Available at:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036fm.pdf>



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Alternative Measures of Food Deserts: Fruitful Options or Empty Cupboards?

Kowaleski-Jones L, JX Fan, I Yamada, CD Zick, KR Smith and BB Brown (2009).

Alternative measures of food deserts: Fruitful options or empty cupboards? USDA/NPC conference on access to affordable foods. Available at:

http://www.npc.umich.edu/news/events/food-access/kowaleski-jones_et_al.pdf



Raja S, Ma C, and Yadav P. Beyond food deserts: Measuring and mapping racial disparities in neighborhood food environments. *Journal of Planning Education and Research Summer 2008 vol. 27(4):469-482*. Available at:

http://localfoodsystems.org/system/files/Raja_SaminaBeyondFoodDeserts.pdf



Ver Ploeg M, Breneman V, Farrigan T, Hamrick K, Hopkins D, Kaufman P, Lin B, Nord M, Smith T, Williams R, Kinnison K, Olander C, Singh A, Tuckermanty E. (2009). *Access to affordable and nutritious food—Measuring and understanding food Deserts and their consequences: Report to congress*. USDA, Economic Research Service. Administrative Publication No. (AP-036). Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/>

Toolkits and Other Resources:



Prevention Institute Toolkit: Mikkelsen L, S Chehimi and L Cohen (2007). *Health eating & physical activity: Addressing inequities in urban environments*. Prevention Institute. Available at:

http://www.preventioninstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=192

USDA Food Environment Atlas

The Atlas assembles statistics on three broad categories of food environment factors:

- Food Choices—Indicators of the community's access to and acquisition of healthy, affordable food, such as: access and proximity to a grocery store; number of foodstores and restaurants; expenditures on fast foods; food and nutrition assistance program participation; quantities of foods eaten; food prices; food taxes; and availability of local foods
- Health and Well-Being—Indicators of the community's success in maintaining healthy diets, such as: food insecurity; diabetes and obesity rates; and physical activity levels
- Community Characteristics—Indicators of community characteristics that might influence the food environment, such as: demographic composition; income and poverty; population loss; metro-non metro status; natural amenities; and recreation and fitness centers

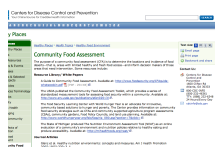


The Atlas currently includes 90 indicators of the food environment. The year and geographic level of the indicators vary to better accommodate data from a variety of sources. Some data are from the last Census of Population in 2000 while others are as recent as 2009. Some are at the county level while others are at the State or regional level. The most recent county-level data are used whenever possible. Available at: <http://ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/>



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Community Food Assessment

The purpose of a community food assessment (CFA) is to determine the locations and incidence of food deserts—that is, areas with limited healthy and fresh food access—and inform decision makers of those areas that need intervention. Available at:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/healthyfood/community_assessment.htm

STEP II: DEFINE AUDIENCE / IDENTIFY PARTNERS

Define Audience / Identify Partners:

“Community groups, residents, researchers, and government agencies should work together to identify areas that lack access to healthy food and to understand local economic conditions and regional food systems.” (Treuhaft & Karpyn, 2010)

- Define the stakeholders in the community; policymakers, agencies, organizations, community members that can partner to develop solutions based on your community’s specific needs.



Coveney J, O'Dwyer LA. (2009). Effects of mobility and location on food access. *Health & Place*, 15(1):45-55. Available at:

<http://www.ana.org.nz/documents/Effectsofmobilityandlocationonfoodaccess.pdf>

STEP III: ACTION – POLICY DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Examples of policy development and community action:



Treuhaft S and A Karpyn (2010). *The grocery gap: Who has access to healthy food and why it matters*. Policy Link and The Food Trust. Available at:

http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5860321/k.A5BD/The_Grocery_Gap.htm

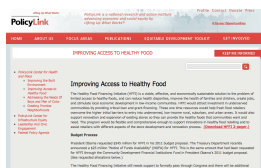
- Attracting or developing grocery stores and supermarkets;
- Developing other retail outlets such as farmers’ markets, public markets, cooperatives, farmstands, community supported agriculture programs, and mobile vendors (and ensuring public benefits can be used at these venues);
- Increasing the stock of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods at neighborhood corner stores or small groceries;
- Growing food locally through backyard and community gardens and larger scale urban agriculture; and
- Improving transportation to grocery stores and farmers’ markets.



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Current national legislation:



The proposed legislation for the Health Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is based on a Pennsylvania \$500 million dollar initiative to provide start-up monies in the form of federal loans and grants to corner stores, supermarkets, co-ops, and farmers markets in low income and underserved areas. The legislation will not only assist in combating food deserts and increasing access to healthy foods, but also increase jobs in low-income areas. For more information:

http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136643/k.1E5B/Improving_Access_to_Healthy_Food.htm?msource=fooddeserts&auid=7428398



Local Strategies and Policies: Strategic Alliance ENACT-An online resource of local policies that provide strategies for healthy eating and activity. Available at:

<http://eatbettermovemore.org/sa/enact/members/index.php>

Community-Based Examples:



Ard JD, S Perumean-Chaney, R Desmond, B Sutton, TL Cox, WS Butsch, DB Allison, F Franklin and ML Baskin (2010). Fruit and vegetable pricing by demographic factors in the Birmingham, Alabama metropolitan area, 2004-2005. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 7(4). Available at: www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2010/jul/09_0180.htm



Bassford N, Galloway-Gilliam L, Flynn G. (2010). *Food desert to food oasis: Promoting grocery store development in South Los Angeles*. Community Health Councils Food Resource Development Workgroup. Los Angeles, CA: Community Health Councils, Inc. Available at: <http://www.chc-inc.org/downloads/Food%20Desert%20to%20Food%20Oasis%20July%202010.pdf>

Milwaukee, WI and Chicago, IL Growing Power:

Created in 1993 as an opportunity for teens to work to renovate green houses and grow food for the community, the project has gained national recognition in urban food production. The organization provides greater community access to healthy foods, and provides multiple generations of community members the opportunity to connect to where food comes from. With more people moving into cities, the project is focused on how food can be grown closer to where people live. The project delivers boxes of fresh foods and vegetables to local community members for a low-cost and can be delivered into any food desert community where there are no available grocery stores. Growing Power also teaches workshops to aspiring urban food producers on the many facets of producing healthy foods and increasing community access to them: <http://www.growingpower.org/>



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Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative:



Utilized State seed funds, and formed a public-private partnership to improve access to healthy foods, and encourage economic development. For more information:
http://www.trfund.com/resource/downloads/Fresh_Food_Financing_Initiative_Comprehensive.pdf



Giang T, Karpyn A, Laurison HB, Hillier A, Perry RD. (2008). Closing the grocery gap in underserved communities: the creation of the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 14(3):272-9. Available at:
http://www.community-wealth.org/_pdfs/articles-publications/state-local-new/article-giang-et-al.pdf



Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group (2006). *Good Food: Examining the Impact of Food deserts on Public Health in Chicago*. Available at:
<http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/ILOFFTaskForce/ChicagoFoodDesertReportFull.pdf>



Sheldon M, KM Gans, R Tai, T George, E Lawson and DN Pearlman (2010). Availability, affordability, and accessibility of a healthful diet in a low-income community, Central Falls, Rhode Island, 2007-2008. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 7(2). Available at: www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2010/mar/08_0257.htm



Larson NI, Story MT, Nelson MC. (2009). Neighborhood environments disparities in access to healthy foods in the U.S. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 36(1):74-81.e10. Available at: <http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/0749-3797/PIIS0749379708008386.pdf>

ARTICLES

Glanz K and Yaroch AL. (2004). Strategies for increasing fruit and vegetable intake in grocery stores and communities: Policy, pricing, and environmental change. *Preventive Medicine* 39: S75–S80. Available at: http://www.med.upenn.edu/nems/docs/-7-Glanz_Yaroch_2004.pdf

Turning a food desert into a food oasis: is the first step limiting fast food restaurants? Patt Morrison, Podcast on Southern California Public Radio, November 12, 2010. Available at: <http://www.scpr.org/programs/patt-morrison/2010/11/12/fast-food-restrictions/>



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