

# Taking a Bite Out of Food Deserts

Caitlin Fisher

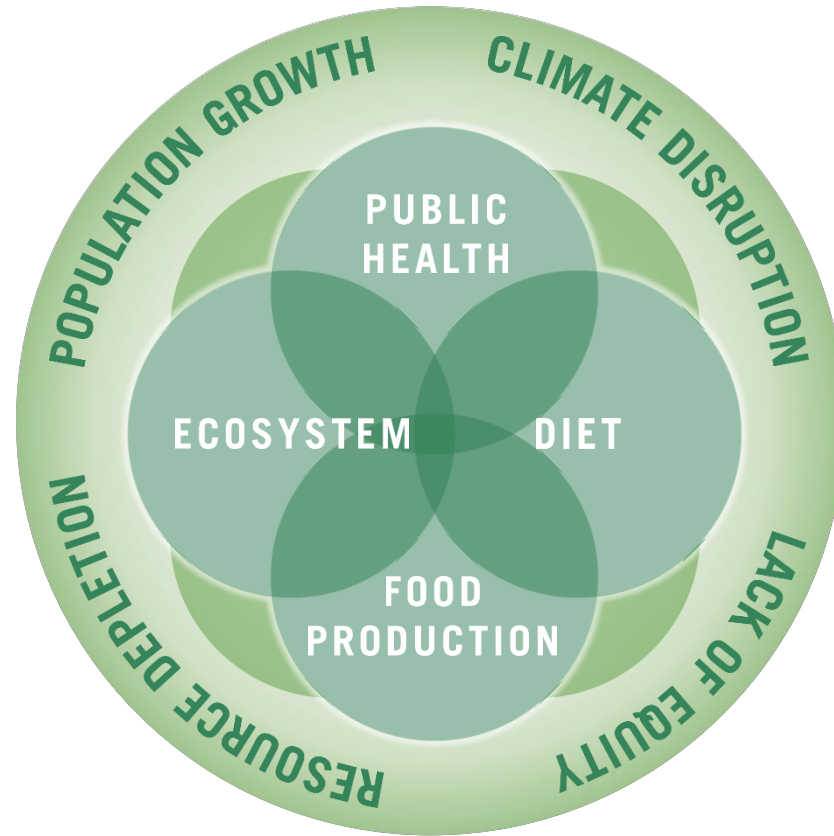
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Food System Mapping



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# Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future



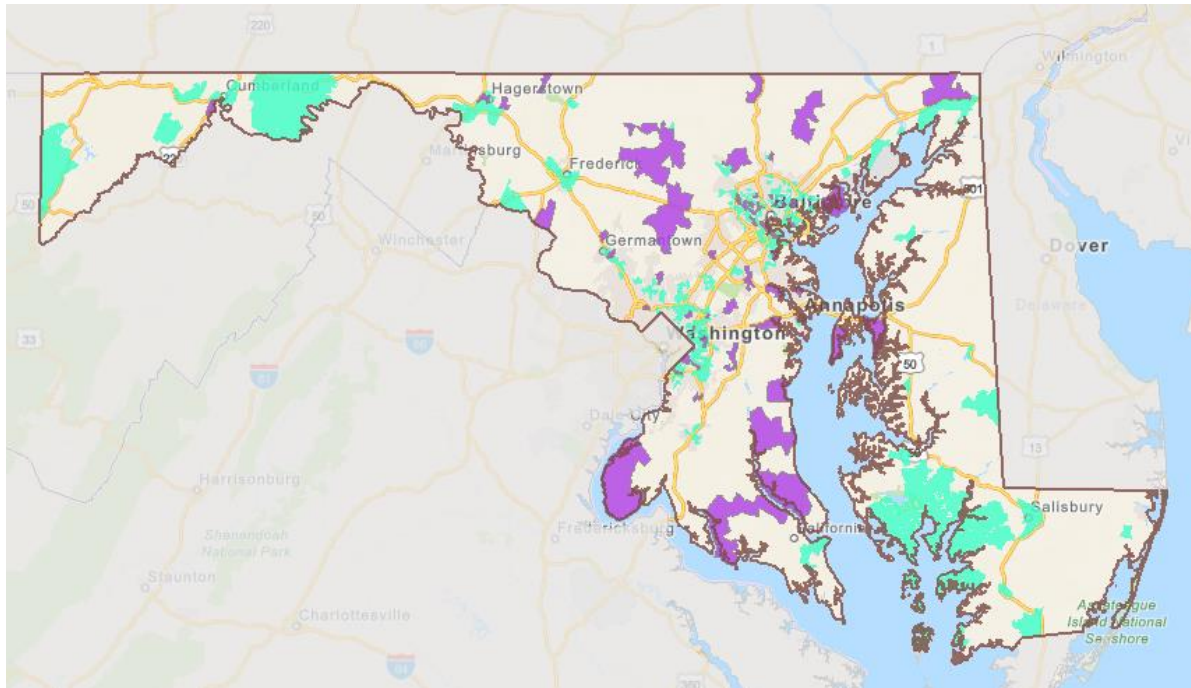
# What is a Food Desert?

**Food deserts are areas where the availability of affordable, healthy food is limited**



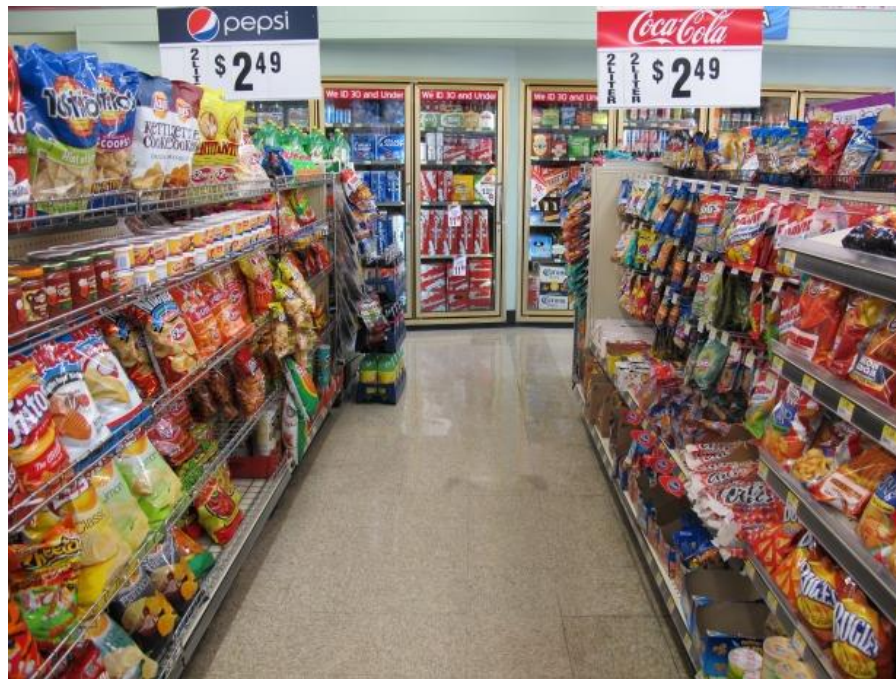
# Where are Food Deserts Located?

People often use income, proximity to healthy food and/or access to transportation to identify food desert areas.



# Why Worry About Food Deserts?

Diet-related health outcomes like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease tend to be more prevalent



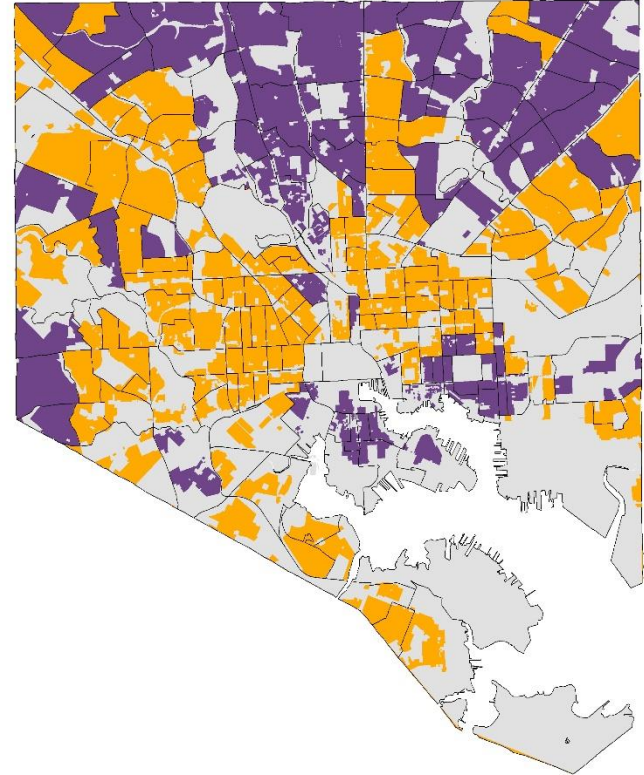
# Identifying Food Deserts in Baltimore

## Baltimore City Food Desert Definition:

- **Household income:** average household income is at or below 185% federal poverty level
- **Vehicle access:** more than 30% of households do not have access to a vehicle
- **Distance to supermarket:** more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from supermarket or supermarket alternative
- **Healthy food availability:** average Healthy Food Availability Index (HFAI) score is at or below 9.5

# Factor 1: Household Income

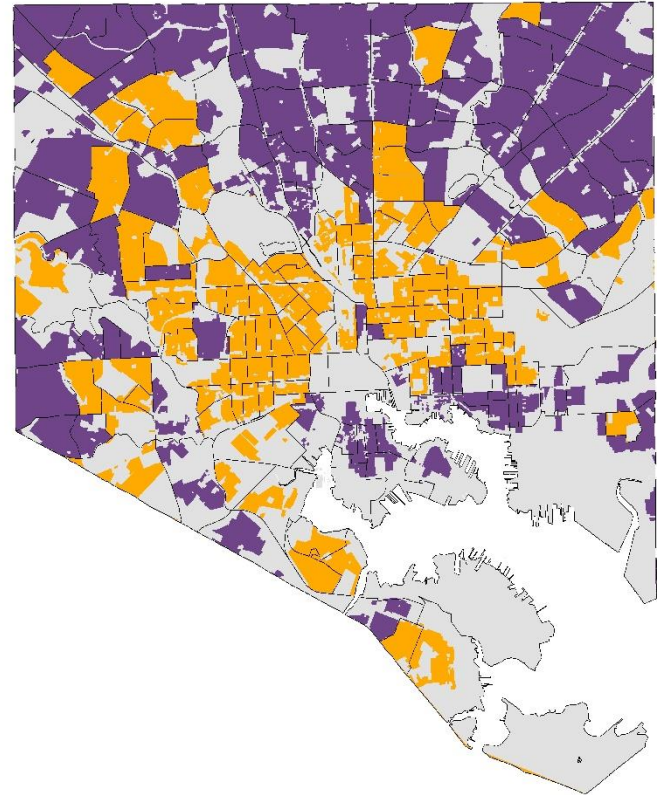
- Low-income areas: census tracts where average household income is at or below 185% federal poverty level
- In 2015, this is about \$44,862 for a family of 4



*Data source: American Community Survey 5-year averages for 2011-2015*

# Factor 2: Vehicle Access

- Low vehicle access: census tracts where 30% or more households don't have access to a vehicle

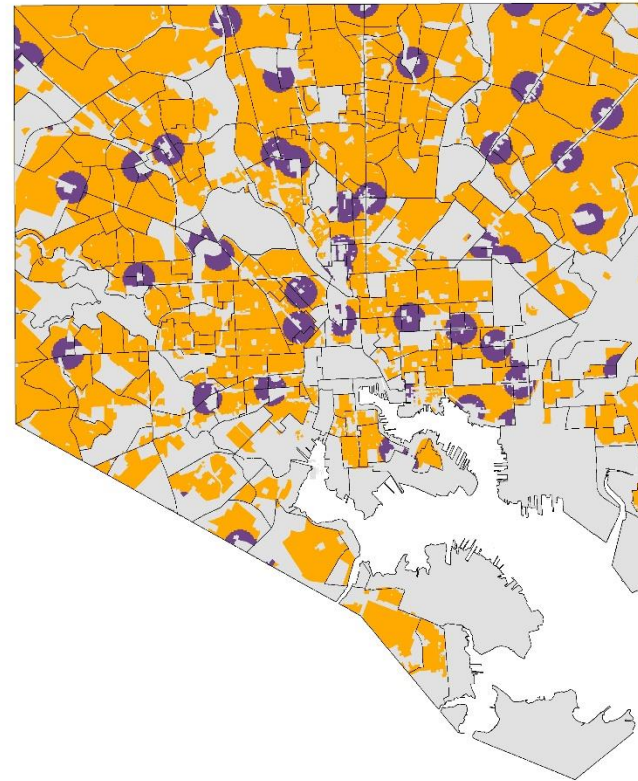


*Data source: American Community Survey 5-year averages for 2011-2015*



# Factor 3: Distance to Supermarket

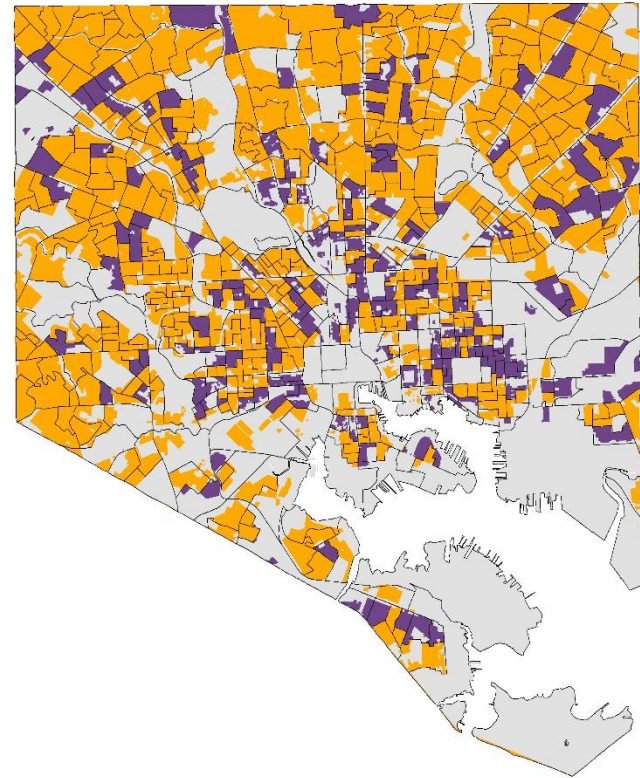
- Proximity to supermarket: areas more than ¼ mile from nearest supermarket



*Data source: Baltimore City Health Department, USDA SNAP retailer locator, CLF research*

# Factor 4: Healthy Food Availability

- Low Healthy Food Availability: block groups score in lowest third (0 - 9.5) of the HFAI survey
- Highest possible score = 28.5



*Data source: HFAI survey was developed and implemented by CLF*

# Healthy Food Availability Index

## Scored items

Vegetables: fresh, canned, frozen

Fruits: fresh, canned, frozen, juice

Dried beans

Milk: skim/low-fat, whole

Ground beef: lean, regular

Chicken

Fish

Bread: 100% whole wheat, regular

Corn tortillas

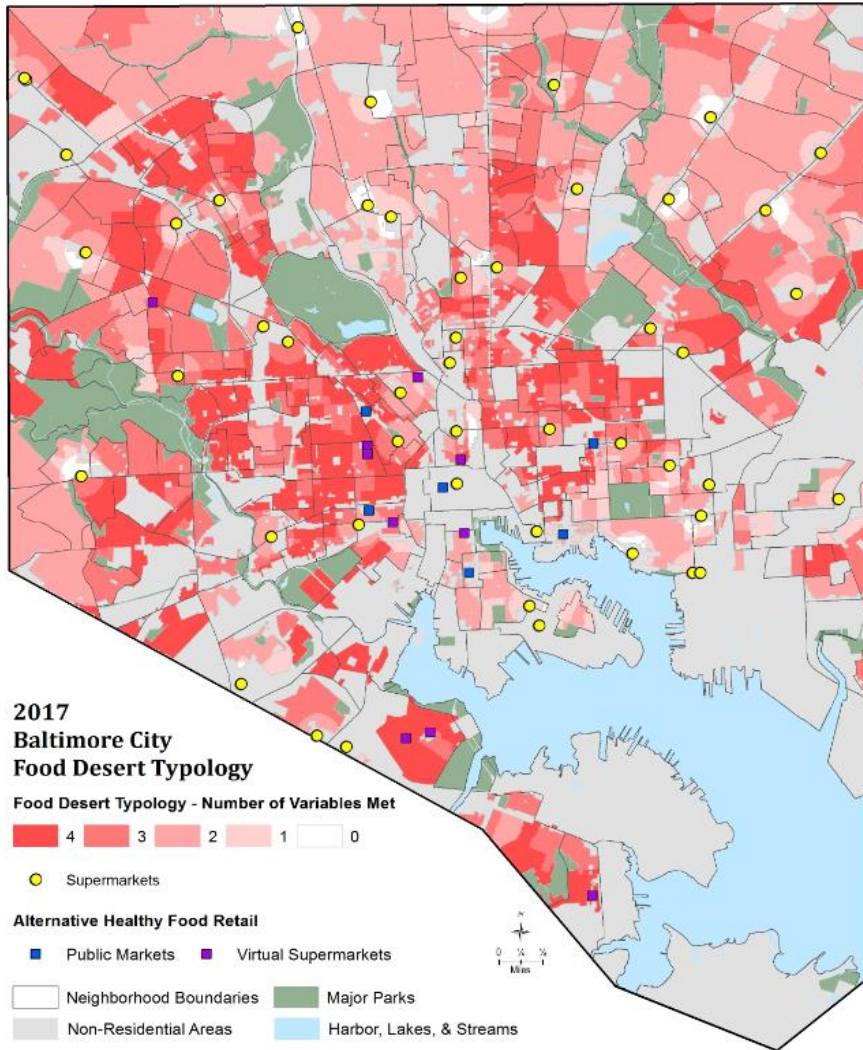
Low-sugar cereal

Rice

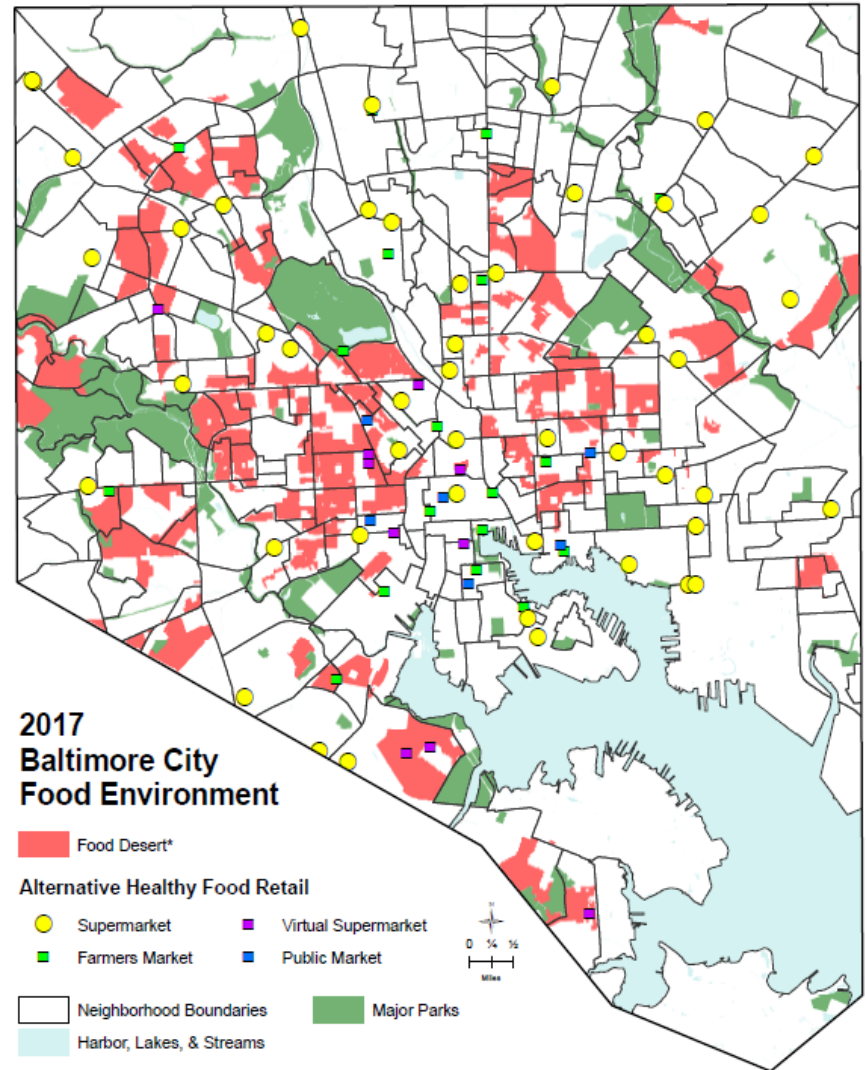
Pasta

Healthy frozen meals

Low-sodium soup



**DRAFT**



\* 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.

**DRAFT**

# What can we do about Food Deserts?

Examples from Baltimore City's food desert retail strategy:

- Retain and attract supermarkets
- Improve non-traditional grocery retail options
- Improve healthy food availability at public markets
- Expand urban agriculture and community gardening
- Address transportation gaps that impact food access

# What can we do about Food Deserts?

**Grocery Store Tax Incentive:** Baltimore now offers personal property tax credit to grocery stores locating or making significant renovations within targeted areas in the City.



# Thank you!

Please keep in touch:

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[www.jhsph.edu/clf](http://www.jhsph.edu/clf)

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