

Access to Healthy Food

**M-NCPPC
Prince George's County
Planning Department**

Presentation to the

Prince George's County Council

*Planning, Housing, and Economic
Development Committee*

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Accessing healthy food is an issue in the County, but it is not because of the USDA identified "food deserts."

It is because physical, economic, and cultural access to healthy food is **not equitable**.

Prince George's County Food System Study

Healthy Food for All Prince Georgians

An assessment of access to healthy food
in Prince George's County, Maryland

Accessibility

Affordability

Cultural Variety

Customer Service

Quality Assurance



Prince George's County Food
System Study

November 2015



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department



Consumer survey with **600** residents and discussions with **7** focus groups revealed that:

- County residents are having difficulty accessing quality, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food within a reasonable distance from where they live.

- Food access challenges are more related to the quality of local stores and what they carry than the physical access to food outlets.
- Many residents do not patronize nearby supermarkets but travel elsewhere, even to other jurisdictions, where more variety and better quality food are sold for less.





- Healthy foods are not widely available in the study area food retail outlets.
- **Carry-out places** are the most prevalent type, comprising 45 percent of prepared food service and 25 percent of all food retail outlets.
- Full-service restaurants had the second highest number followed by gas station stores and fast-food restaurants.

- There are more supermarkets in the study area than this market would normally support. Therefore, opening new supermarkets may not solve the problem.
- It is not the lack of supermarkets but the spatial distribution of them and the quality and price of products they carry that create inequity in accessing healthy food.

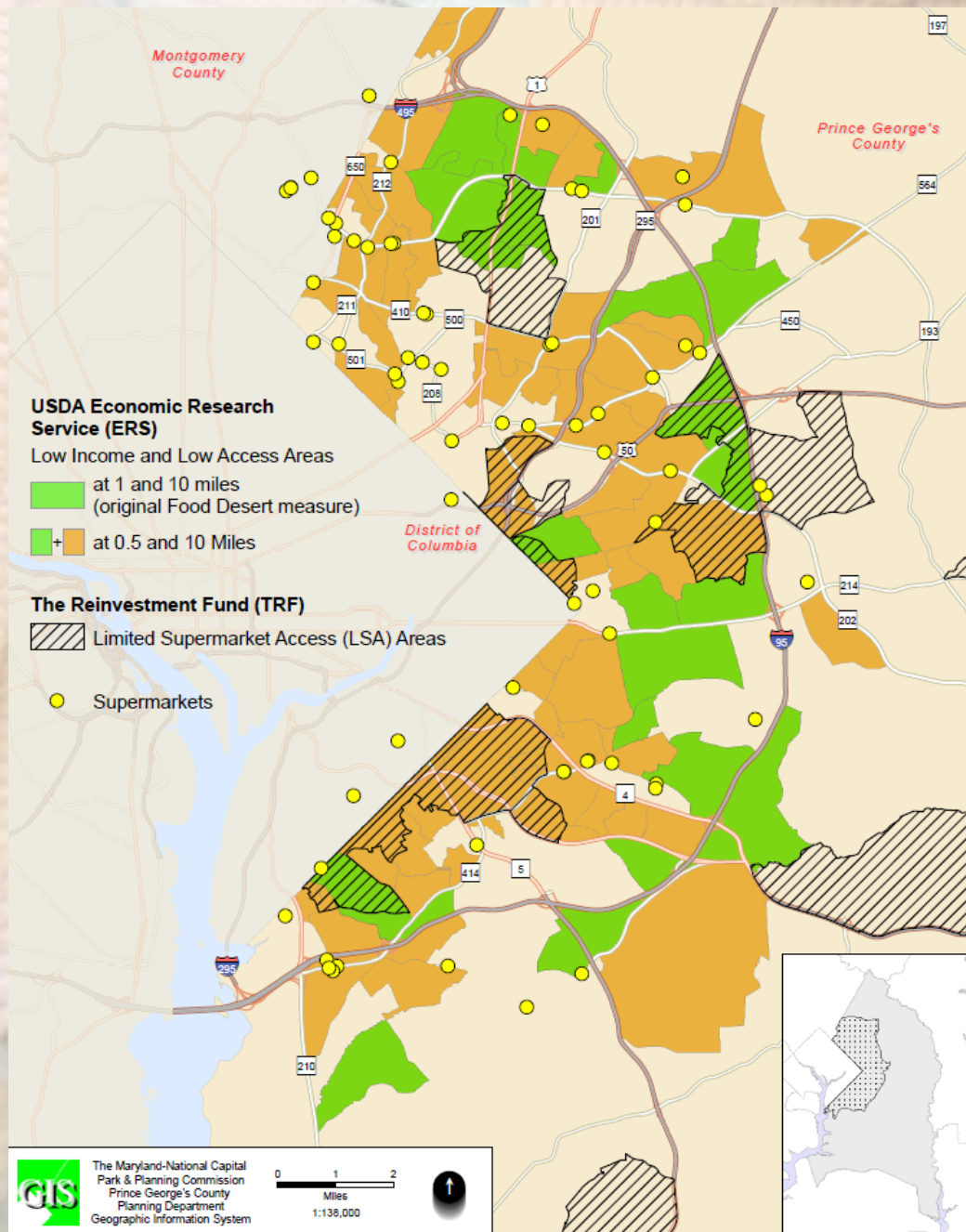




Nationwide studies to identify Low-Income and Low-Access Areas (i.e. food deserts) have shortcomings:

- They do not reflect the essence of the healthy food access problem in the County. Hence, policy decisions should not be based on these studies.
- Methodology, data, and assumptions used put the County in unfair position.
- The County has more USDA-identified “food deserts” not because of the availability of fewer supermarkets compared to other Low-Access Areas in the region but due to the presence of areas with Median Family Income (MFI) less than or equal to 80 percent of the Metro area’s MFI.

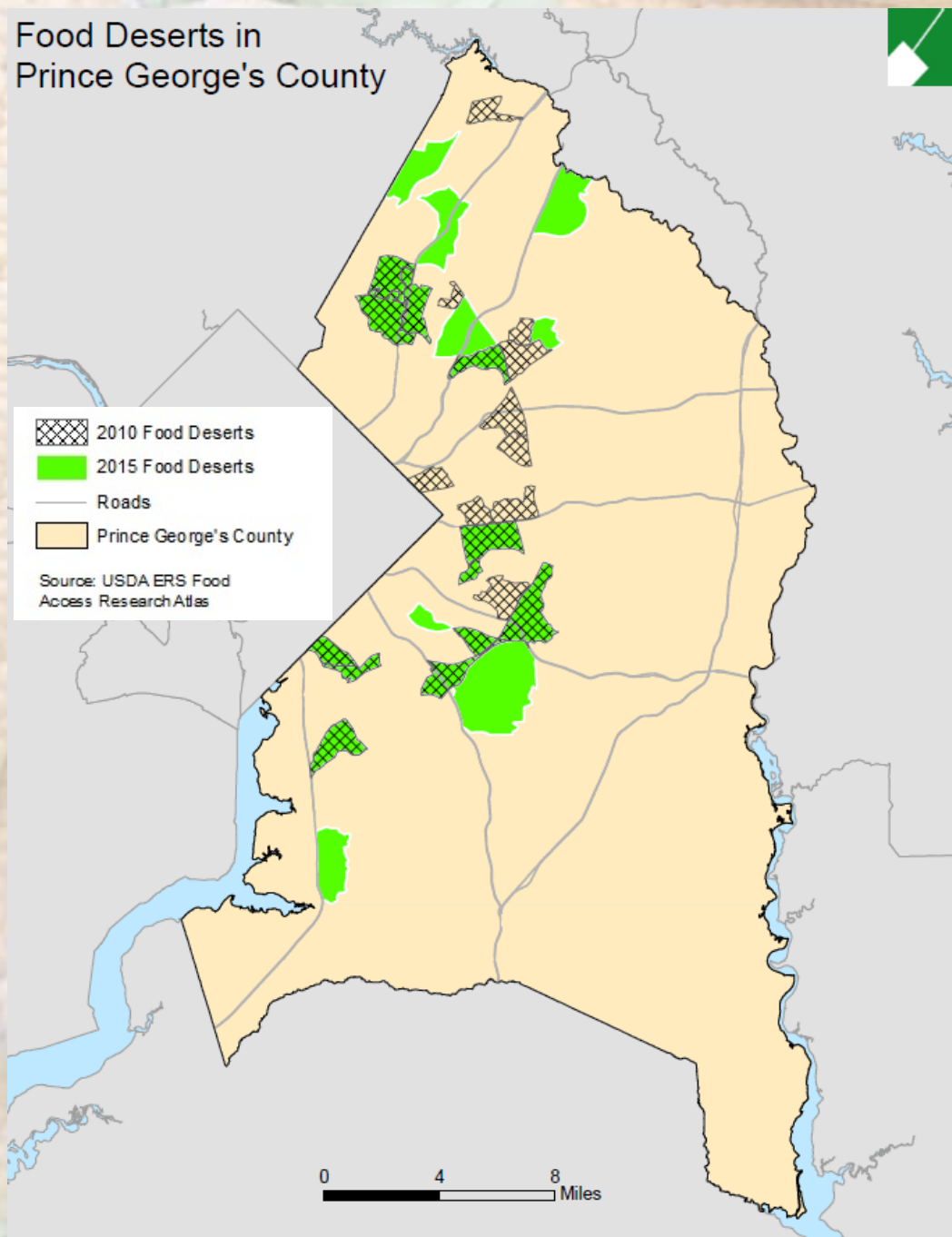
Comparison of USDA and TRF limited access areas



Significant observations

- Limited access areas identified by USDA and TRF do not overlap.
- There are several existing supermarkets inside the identified areas.
- Several nonresidential areas are included in the limited access areas.

Food Deserts in Prince George's County



USDA Low-Income and Low-Access Areas 2010 & 2015

*A low-income census tract is where its poverty rate is 20 percent or greater or its median family income is less than or equal to 80 percent of the metropolitan area's median family income.

** A low-access census tract is where at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, live more than 1 mile (in urban areas) or more than 10 miles (in rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store.

Significant observations

- Several areas where accessing healthy food is a major issue are no longer considered "food deserts."
- Several nonresidential areas, including Joint Base Andrews, are identified as "food deserts."

Areas with limited access to healthy food

Place matters for food equity in the County...

- Healthy food availability, quality, and cost varies by location, even among the stores of the same retailer.
- The cost of a typical market basket for a balanced diet varies considerably by geographic area.
- Unequal spatial distribution of supermarkets contributes to the inequitable food access.
- Supermarkets are generally located along major roads, away from where people live, causing hardship to access to healthy food for residents who cannot drive .



Recommendations



Policy 1:

Develop an overarching food policy framework for the County.



Strategies

- **Create a shared vision for food and a local food system involving the community.**
- **Develop and implement a food system plan.**
- **Encourage appropriate County agencies to collaborate and implement necessary strategies to achieve common goals related to the local food system.**

Policy 3:

Launch an integrated healthy eating and food-health connection awareness campaign.

Strategies

- Promote healthy food marketing.
- Expand health and nutrition education programs.
- Develop partnerships with faith-based organizations to launch a program to **educate people on healthy eating.**



Policy 4:

Encourage local food consumption, and support the local food economy.

Strategies

- **Revise procurement policies**, and require that County agencies purchase food from local producers.
- Encourage supermarkets to buy a certain percent of their produce from local farms.
- Promote and **support direct marketing** to consumers.
- Support and promote farmers' markets.



Policy 5:
Increase sustainable local food production in rural and urban areas.

Strategies

- Provide incentives to local farmers who produce sustainably grown food for local consumption.
- **Promote and support urban farms.**
- Support new farmer education programs.
- Establish a farm incubator.
- Allow sales of produce grown at community and home gardens.



Policy 8:

Increase sale of quality, healthy fresh foods at existing food retail outlets, and decrease unhealthy options.

Strategies

- Encourage supermarkets to stock a certain amount of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Launch a “**healthy small markets**” program.
- Partner with food retailers to promote healthy foods.
- Create a healthy carry-out program.
- Provide tax incentives to food retail outlets that carry healthy food items in underserved communities.

Policy 9:

Encourage alternative food retail models to improve healthy food access.

Strategies

- Allow and promote **mobile healthy food markets**.
- Establish an indoor, daily food market that operates year-round close to a Metro station.
- Pilot an innovative grocery store model that provides smaller size stores.
- Encourage **food co-ops in underserved areas**.
- Increase **on-line food shopping** alternatives.



Policy 10:

Ensure good quality food, a safe and clean environment, and excellent customer service at supermarkets.



Strategies

- Encourage chain supermarkets to provide **quality of food at all stores, and avoid geographic inequalities.**
- Create communication channels between customers and supermarkets.
- Provide tax incentives to supermarkets to improve store environment.



Policy 11:

Launch a “mini healthy neighborhood grocery store” initiative to make healthy foods accessible within residential neighborhoods.

Strategies

- **Allow mini grocery stores that sell healthy foods within residential neighborhoods.**
- **Consider zoning incentives that would encourage the provision of land for mini grocery stores in areas at least one mile from the nearest grocery store.**
- **Use the tax credit incentives to attract mini healthy neighborhood grocery stores.**
- **Encourage co-ops to operate in the neighborhoods as mini stores.**



Policy 12:

Looking through an equity lens, rethink zoning with food and health in mind to make access to healthy food easier.

Strategies

- Define various types of food retail outlets, reevaluate zones where they are permitted to **ensure an equitable distribution of healthy food retail outlets.**
- Create “Healthy Food Zones” within a certain distance of schools and playgrounds.
- Limit drive-through fast food restaurants and concentration of fast food and carry out places.

Policy 13:

Improve transportation options to healthy food outlets.

Strategies

- Design bus routes to facilitate access to healthy food retailers.
- Increase frequency of buses, and arrange bus schedules to accommodate consumer needs.
- Develop shuttle services to supermarkets, especially for elderly and disabled.
- Create safe routes to healthy food markets by ensuring pedestrian and bicycle safety.

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Policy 14:

Make healthy food affordable.

Strategies

- Encourage **food co-ops and food buying clubs**.
- Teach people how to shop for healthy food with a limited budget.
- Start **food recovery** and **gleaning** programs.
- Create fruit orchards in public parks, and plant edible landscaping in public spaces.
- Encourage people to grow, preserve, and cook their own food.
- Prepare a guidebook for residents on how to access affordable healthy food.





Thank you!

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