

SEEDS OF CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF FOOD INSECURITY & ACCESSIBILITY IN BROOKLYN

URBS 402

Submitted by: Rachel Layvey

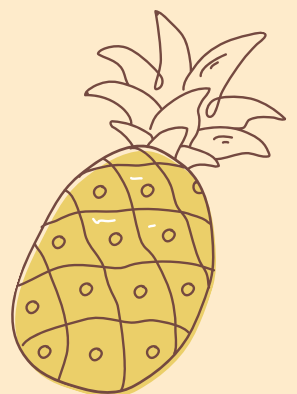
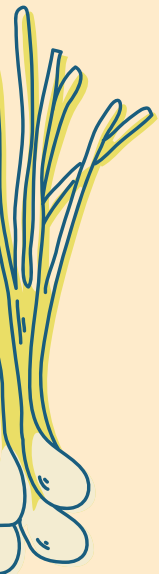
Professor Wolf-Powers

CUNY Hunter College



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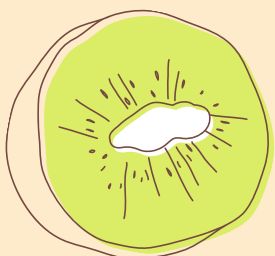
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THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT

Food insecurity is a complex and pressing issue facing many low-income and minority communities across the United States, and Central and East Brooklyn are no exception. Despite being located in one of the world's wealthiest cities, these neighborhoods face high rates of poverty and limited access to healthy and affordable food options, resulting in significant health disparities. In recent years, efforts have been made to address this issue through various programs and initiatives, but much work remains to be done to ensure that all residents have access to the food they need to lead healthy and productive lives. This zine aims to explore the extent and causes of food insecurity in Central and East Brooklyn, as well as the potential solutions and policies that have been implemented to address this pressing issue. By highlighting on this important cause, this zine seeks to illustrate the ongoing efforts to promote food justice and equity in our communities.



ANALYZING FOOD INSECURITY

The issue of food insecurity and access is a pressing concern that affects millions of people in the U.S. Food insecurity defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is “a household level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food”. People who are food insecure may not have enough money to buy sufficient food, may live in areas without grocery stores or other sources of healthy food, or may have limited access to transportation to reach such stores. Food insecurity can have serious negative impacts on health, education, and overall quality of life. It is a complex issue that affects millions of people in the United States and around the world. The USDA describes food insecurity at several levels, ranging from low to high levels of severity.

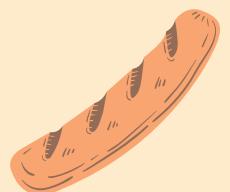
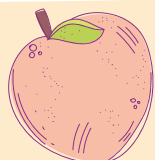
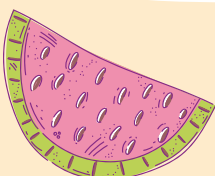
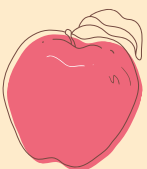
High Food Security: No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.

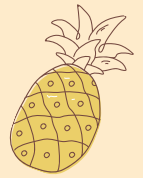
Marginal Food Security : One or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.

Low Food Security: Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

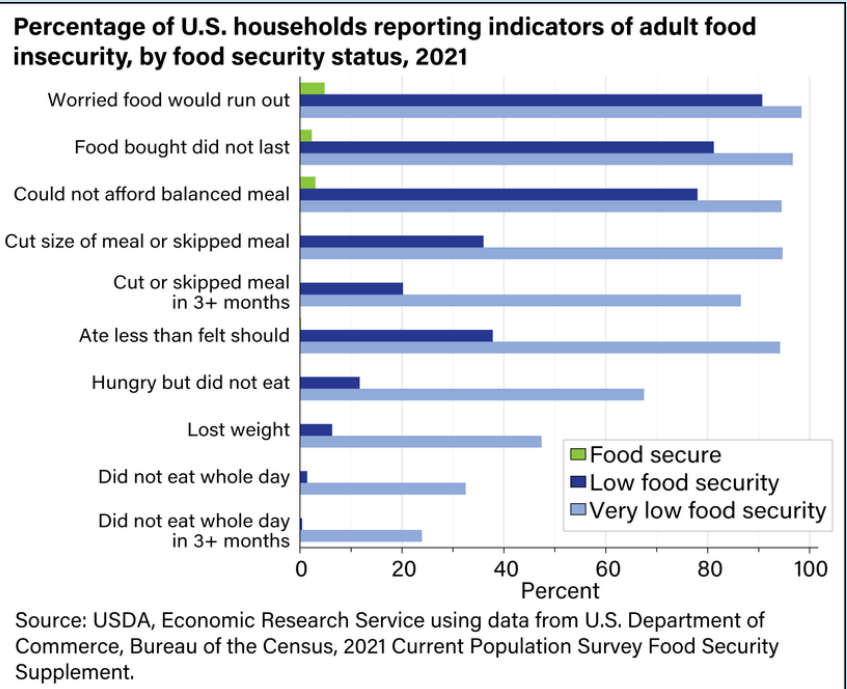
Very Low Food Security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Source: USDA





The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implements food and nutrition assistance programs to enhance food security among low-income households by granting them access to nutritious food as well as nutrition education. The USDA is responsible for monitoring the extent and severity of food insecurity in U.S. households through an annual nationwide survey, which is sponsored and analyzed by the USDA's Economic Research Service. The report, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2021," provides statistics gathered from the 2021 survey, covering household food security, food expenditures, and the use of federal nutrition programs. The data is collected through the December supplement to the monthly Current Population Survey, an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. The survey consisted of 30,343 households, which represents a sample of the U.S. civilian population of about 132 million households. The food security survey was administered to one adult per household, inquiring about experiences and behaviors that indicate food insecurity in 2021, such as being unable to afford balanced meals, reducing the size of meals, or experiencing hunger due to lack of funds for food. The household's food security status was determined based on the number of food-insecure conditions reported.





LINKS BETWEEN POVERTY AND FOOD

Poverty and food insecurity are closely connected, with low-income individuals and families in NYC facing a greater risk of food insecurity. The city has implemented various programs and initiatives to address this issue, such as food pantries, emergency food assistance programs, and community gardens. However, the root causes of poverty and food insecurity must also be addressed through policies and programs that support economic and social mobility, and affordable housing.

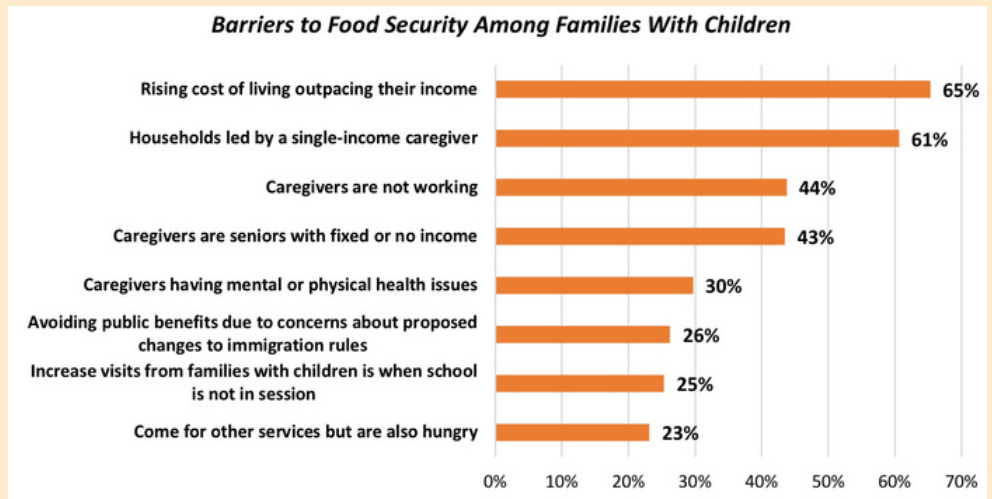
The "New Yorkers Don't Live Single-Issue Lives: The Intersections of Hunger" report from the Food Bank NYC discusses the complex ways in which hunger intersects with other issues faced by low-income individuals and families in New York City. The report aims to highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to addressing hunger that takes into account the complicated web that contributes to food insecurity in NYC.

The report also examines various intersecting factors that contribute to hunger, including poverty, employment, housing, health, and immigration status. It also notes how these factors are interconnected and can create a cycle of food insecurity that is difficult to break. For example, the report details that low-income individuals may have difficulty affording healthy food options, which can contribute to health issues such as obesity and diabetes, further exacerbating food insecurity.



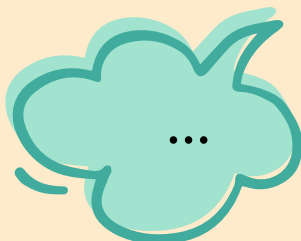
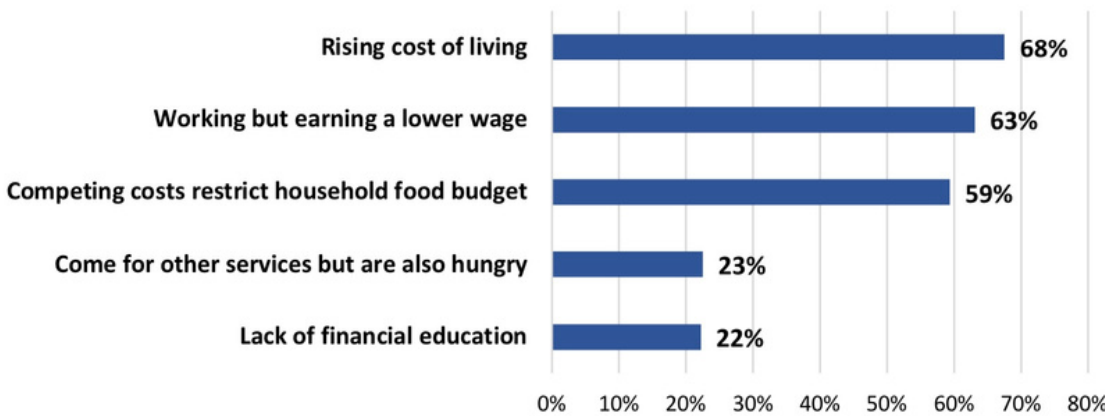
Increased Visitor Snapshot: The demand for food reported by food pantries and soup kitchens appears to be driven by increases in specific populations seeking assistance, such as:

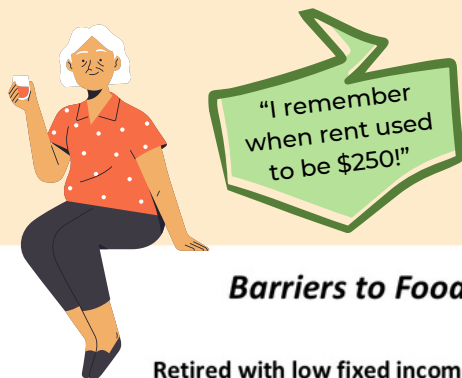
- families with children (76%)
 - older adults (60%)
- immigrant families (58%)
- college students (16%)



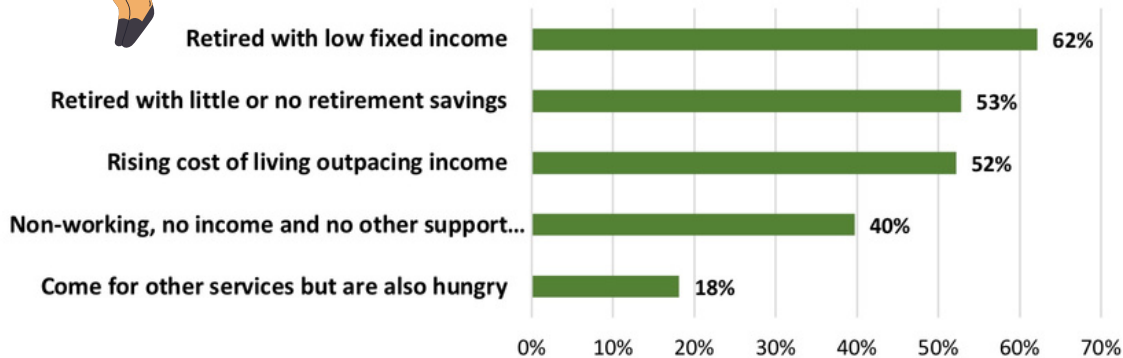
Source: Koible, William-Guillaume. *New Yorkers Don't Live Single-Issue Lives: The Intersectionality of Hunger*. Food Bank NYC, Feb. 2020.

Barriers to Food Security Among Working Individuals



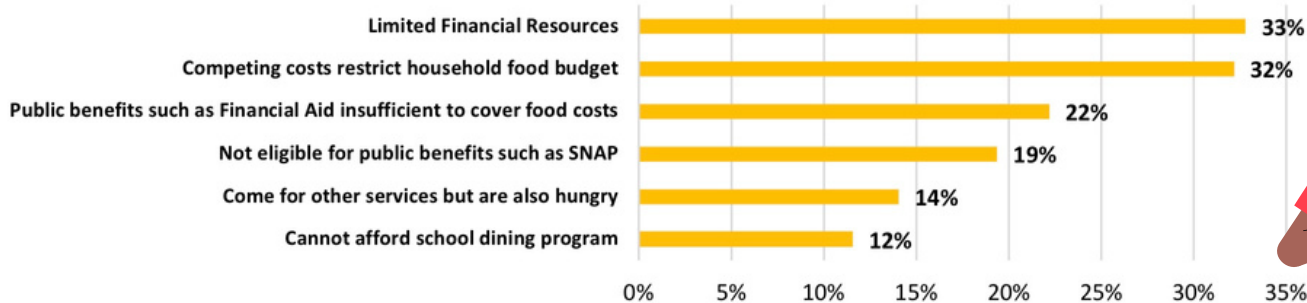


Barriers to Food Security Among Seniors



Source: Koible, William-Guillaume. *New Yorkers Don't Live Single-Issue Lives: The Intersectionality of Hunger*. Food Bank NYC, Feb. 2020.

Barriers to Food Security Among College Students



An in-depth analysis of food insecurity among some of New York City's most vulnerable populations, including families with children, working individuals, seniors, and college students, reveals that limited financial resources and necessary expenses such as rent, healthcare, transportation, and school costs often compete with and reduce the amount of money available for food budgets. As a result, families and individuals have no choice but to turn to emergency food programs for assistance.

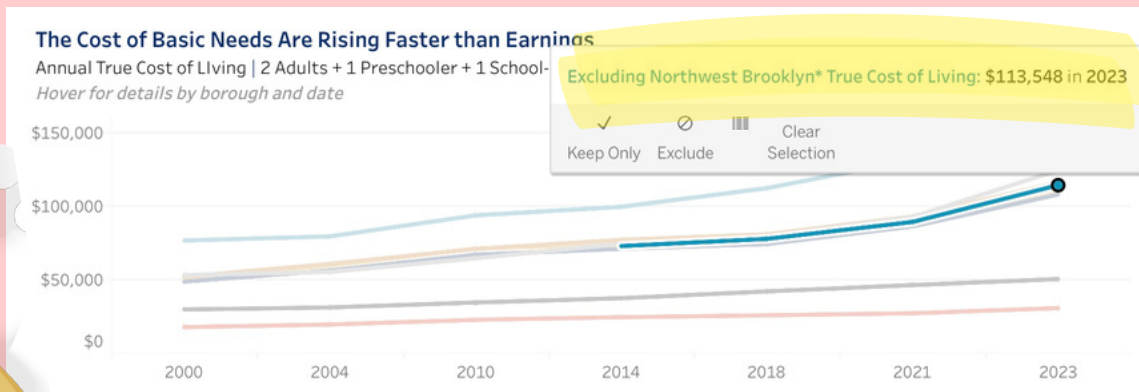
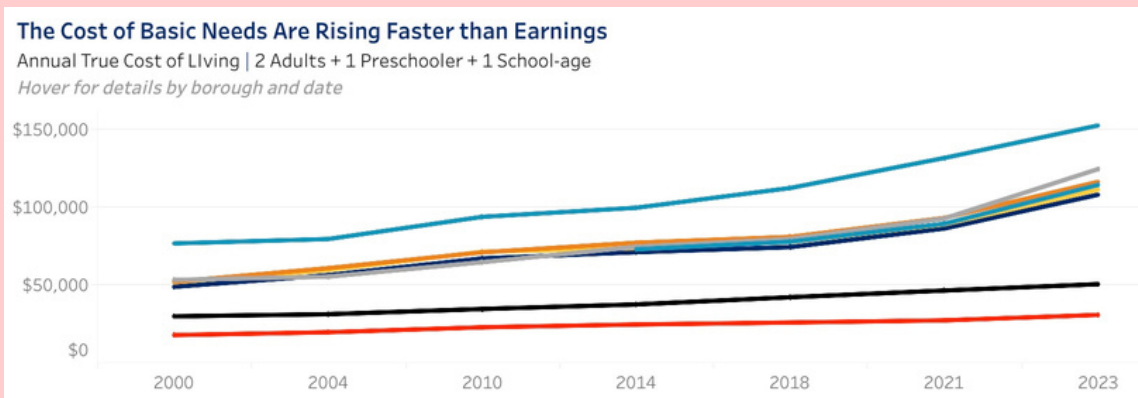




The United Way of New York City recently released the "2023 NYC True Cost of Living Report," which aimed to evaluate the economic security of New York City residents. The report collected data from households in 2023 and analyzed the amount of income necessary for working-age families to cover basic needs, such as housing, food, child care, health care, transportation, miscellaneous expenses (including taxes and tax credits), without any public subsidies or private assistance.



The report found that the Annual True Cost of Living for two adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child has increased by an estimate of 131% across NYC boroughs since 2000. In Southeast Brooklyn, for instance, the TCL was approximately \$113,548.



Source: Kucklick, Annie, and Lisa Manzer. *Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City* 2023 NYC True Cost of Living Apr. 2023



"Comparing NYC Supermarkets: Evaluating Food Access and Quality" is an article that illustrates the state of food access and quality across New York City supermarkets. Between February and April of 2021, 30 undergraduate students in the Hunter College Nutrition Program visited 41 supermarkets and farmers markets in different neighborhoods in NYC to compare and contrast the differences of food products. Of the 41 supermarkets and farmers markets included in the study, 19 of them were located in non-poverty neighborhoods and 22 were in poverty neighborhoods (concluded from NYC's Poverty Tool). The assignment was to collect data on 15 pre-selected food items in all of the five major food groups. This article presents the findings of a study that evaluates the availability and quality of food in supermarkets across New York City, with a particular focus on the disparities between neighborhoods of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. The research reveals significant disparities in food access and quality, indicating a need for action and intervention to address these issues and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to not only healthy food, but affordable healthy food.



This chart illustrates the average cost of food items from the 35 supermarkets they surveyed (not including farmers markets because food is typically more expensive there). Some limitations they faced were grocery stores that did not sell certain food items. For example, 100% whole grain bread was not sold at 30% of the supermarkets they included.

	Manhattan	Brooklyn	Bronx	Queens	Staten Island
Bread (16 oz, 100 percent whole grain)	\$3.44	\$3.73	\$2.92	\$3.92	\$2.99
	(n=3)	(n=10)	(n=4)	(n=6)	(n=1)
Milk (½ gallon, 1 percent)	\$4.36	\$3.81	\$4.19	\$3.94	\$3.79
	(n=7)	(n=15)	(n=4)	(n=8)	(n=1)
Apples (1lb)	\$2.84	\$2.39	\$1.62	\$1.63	\$2.74
	(n=7)	(n=15)	(n=4)	(n=8)	(n=1)
Green beans (1lb)	\$2.64	\$3.32	\$2.25	\$2.16	\$5.66
	(n=7)	(n=15)	(n=4)	(n=8)	(n=1)

Source: Cather, Alexina . "The Price of Food in NYC: A Comparison of Supermarkets." NYC Food Policy Center 31 May 2018,

The next chart is from the data derived from several supermarkets in Brooklyn. The supermarkets were divided into "Non-Poverty Neighborhood" and "Poverty Neighborhood", based on the NYC Poverty Tool. This tool is unique in that it goes beyond the official federal poverty guidelines by taking into account the high cost of housing in NYC, and incorporating a broader range of factors in its calculations. The tool considers the impact of income and payroll taxes, as well as the value of government programs that are designed to alleviate poverty, such as SNAP, and the availability of housing subsidies in the area.

Food Item	FOOD COST (Non-Poverty Neighborhood)	FOOD COST (Poverty Neighborhood)
Vegetables		
Potatoes (1lb)	\$1.63	\$1.81
Lettuce (1 head)	\$2.25	\$2.73
Green beans (1 lb)	\$3.30	\$3.35
Onions (1 lb)	\$1.56	\$1.28
Tomatoes (1 lb)	\$2.81	\$2.44
Fruit		
Bananas (1 lb)	\$0.76	\$0.81
Oranges (1 lb)	\$2.09	\$1.55
Apples (1 lb)	\$2.26	\$2.55
Grains		
Whole grain bread (16 oz loaf)	\$3.92	\$3.44
Cereal (12-14 oz box)	\$4.08	\$4.68
Dairy		
1% milk (½ gallon)	\$3.49	\$4.18
Plain yogurt (32 ounces)	\$4.87	\$4.88
Meat/Eggs		
Beef (1 lb)	\$7.79	\$6.47
Chicken (1 lb)	\$6.14	\$5.60
Eggs (1 dozen)	\$4.10	\$3.80

Source: Cather, Alexina. "The Price of Food in NYC: A Comparison of Supermarkets." NYC Food Policy Center 31 May 2018

"Most consumers, especially low income consumers, skip 3 or 4 stores before they go to the supermarket that they prefer to shop in. And that can be because of mobility patterns, like they may have a kid they drop off at school and there is a supermarket near the school. People shop using circulars, and especially low income people pay very close attention to where the bargains are and will go to stores that have things that are on sale that they like to buy."
 Nevin Cohen, Hunter College Food Policy Center

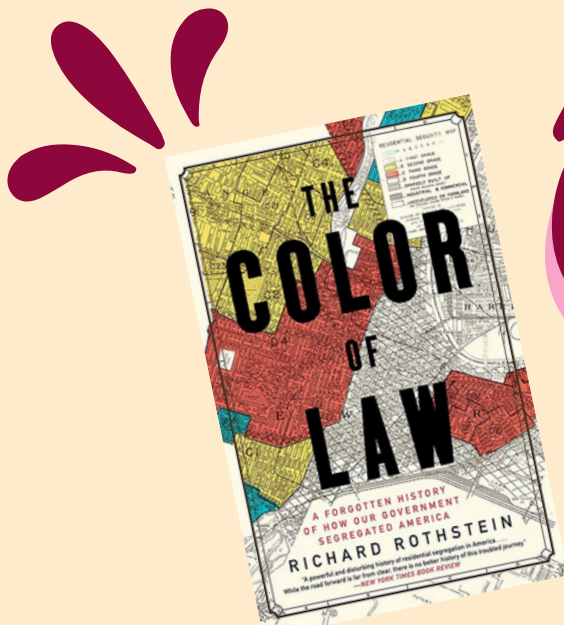




RACIST POLICIES AND SUPERMARKET REDLINING

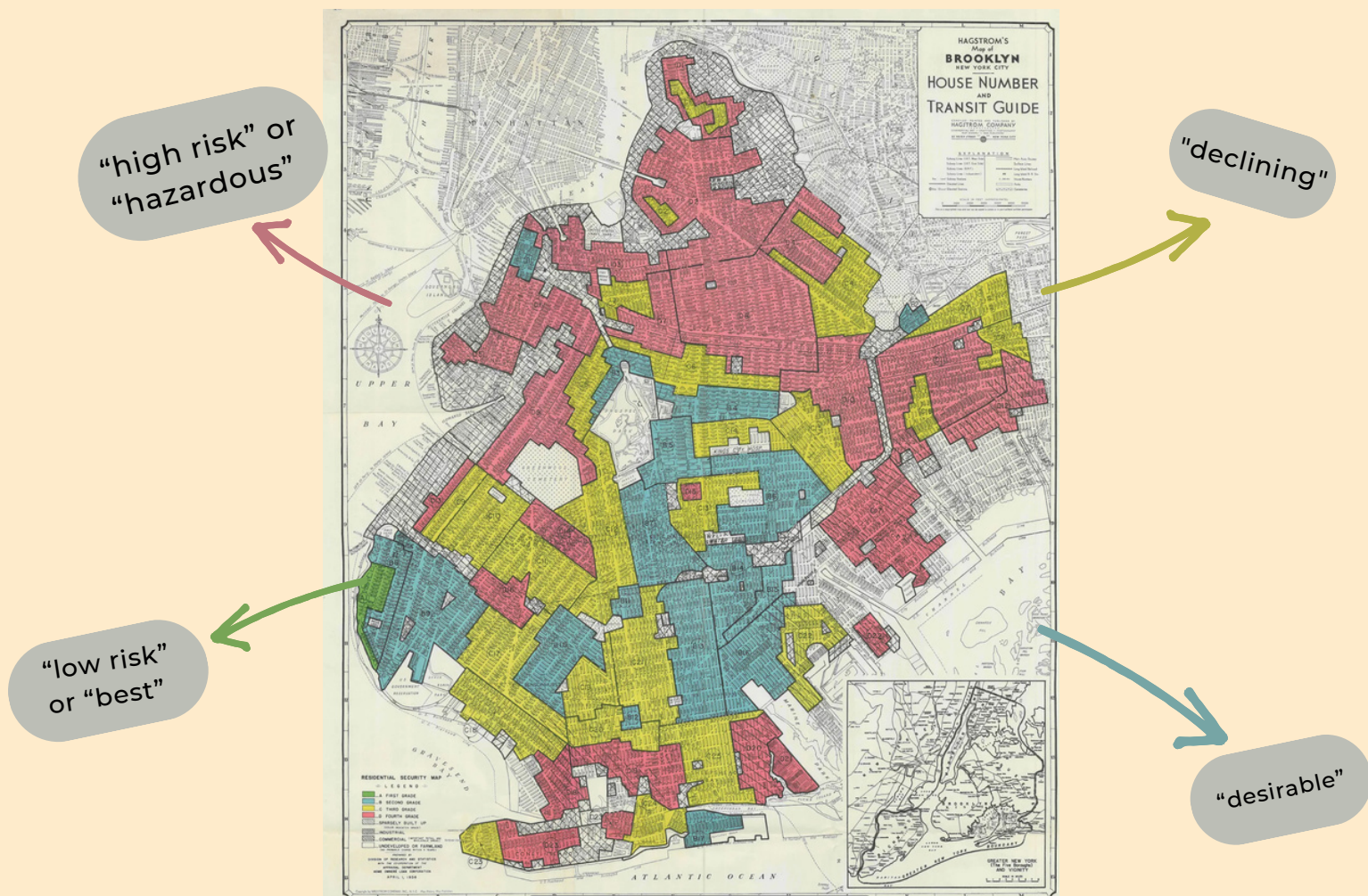
Understanding that poverty is the root cause of food insecurity, it is important to highlight where the disparities that low-income individuals may face when discussing food accessibility lie. The United States has a legacy of disinvestment in Black and Brown neighborhoods, and history has illustrated how these areas were seen as dispensable to developers and city planners.

In "The Color of Law," Richard Rothstein argues that food deserts, areas where there is limited access to affordable and nutritious food, are a result of government policies that created and enforced housing segregation in urban areas. Redlining is a practice of the federal government and banks that systematically denied loans and insurance to residents of certain neighborhoods, particularly those with high percentages of Black residents. This prevented the development of grocery stores and supermarkets in these areas. This also left residents with few options for accessing healthy food, as they were forced to rely on convenience stores and fast food restaurants that offered limited and often unhealthy options.



Neighborhoods were ranked from least risky to most risky — or from “A” through “D.” The federal government deemed “D” areas as places where property values were most likely to go down and the areas were marked in red — a sign that these neighborhoods were not worthy of inclusion in homeownership and lending programs. Not coincidentally, most of the “D” areas were neighborhoods where Black and Hispanic residents lived.

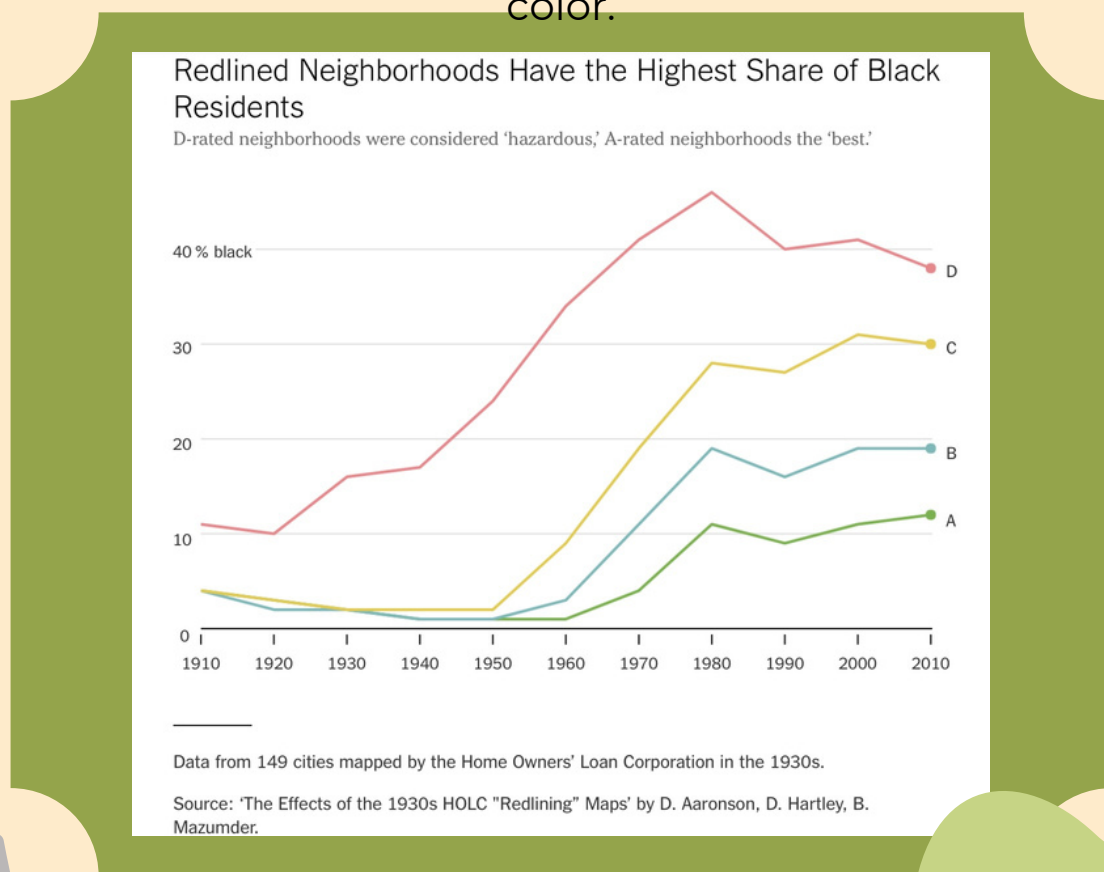
Moreover, the zoning laws that were used to enforce segregation also limited the types of businesses that could be established in certain areas, which often included restrictions on the types of food establishments that could operate there. This made it difficult for entrepreneurs, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, to establish food businesses in these areas and contribute to the development of healthy and culturally relevant food options.



Source: NYT (The 1938 Home Owners' Loan Corporation map of Brooklyn.Credit..National Archives and Records Administration, Mapping Inequality)

“The Color of Law” shows that supermarket redlining is not just a market phenomenon, but rather a result of government policies that created and enforced housing segregation and perpetuated racial inequality. The book demonstrates the importance of recognizing the systemic roots of food deserts and the need for policies that address the underlying causes of poor nutritional access.

Rothstein argues that the lack of access to healthy food in many communities of color is a direct result of government policies that were designed to create and maintain racial segregation. The lasting effects of these policies continue to contribute to the prevalence of food deserts in urban areas and perpetuate health disparities among communities of color.



“Food insecurity is the result of public policies that perpetuate poverty and racial oppression. Food insecurity happens to be one consequence.”
-Nevin Cohen, Hunter College Food Policy Center



“What used to be a small, family-owned grocery store, is now a vacant building and on one end of it, they have a liquor store. That’s typical of South and North Memphis.

Nobody is going to be attracted, in terms of grocery store retail, to an area that is sparsely populated and looks and feels ‘dangerous’”

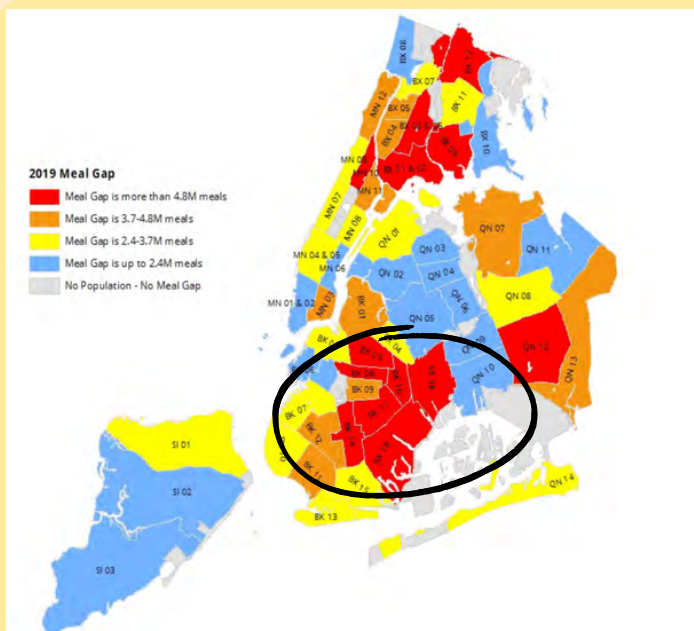
The Guardian about food deserts in Memphis, Tennessee



MEAL GAPS AND THE IMPACT OF COVID

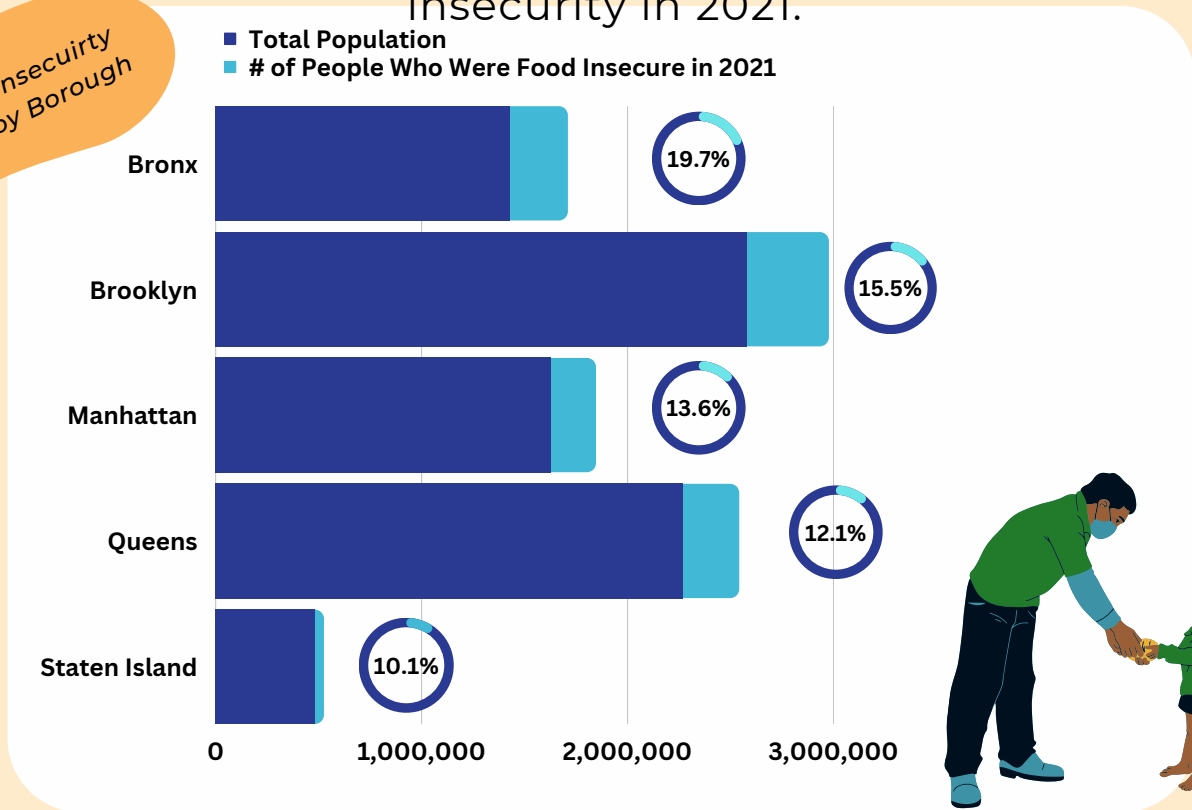
Food insecurity is particularly prevalent in Central and East Brooklyn neighborhoods, with one in four residents in Bed-Stuy (25.7%), one in five residents in East New York (21.8%), and almost one in three residents in Brownsville (32%) being affected. The Food Bank of NYC and Feeding America measure food insecurity by identifying the meal gap, which is the number of meals missing from the homes of families and individuals struggling with food insecurity. To summarize, the Meal Gap is a measure of the difference in the number of meals between a household being food insecure and food secure, accounting for variations in food costs across different regions.

By mapping the Meal Gap, we can identify areas where hunger is most prevalent, allowing public and private anti-hunger efforts to direct food and services to communities in greatest need. The Meal Gap can estimate food insecurity at different levels, ranging from the state level to community districts or neighborhoods, as is the case in New York City. Brooklyn was ranked the number one county in New York State in terms of the meal gap, and Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, and East New York each had some of the highest meal gaps in the borough.



The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 highlighted the issue of food insecurity among families and households in New York City (NYC), as food pantries and soup kitchens across the city struggled to maintain their inventory and often ran out of food. Factors that contribute to food insecurity include low-income, unemployment, high housing costs, inflation, and disability. Even before the pandemic, food insecurity was a major issue, with just over 15% of NYC residents being affected. However, prior to the pandemic, the city's food insecurity rate had been decreasing steadily, with just over 1 million individuals being affected in 2019. Unfortunately, the pandemic has upended much of this progress. The most recent data available from Feeding America shows that over 1.2 million New Yorkers (14.6%) experience food insecurity. More recent data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2021 Community Health Survey indicates that approximately 2.2 million people, or more than a third of NYC adults, lived in households at risk for food insecurity in 2021.

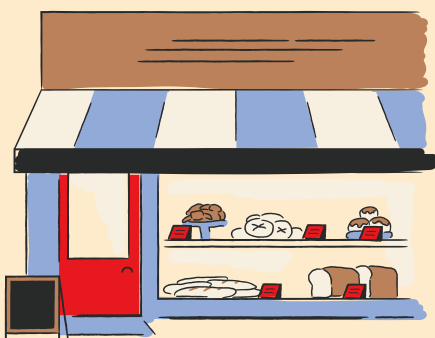
Food Insecurity Rate by Borough



WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, and East New York neighborhoods are both food insecure and considered to be food deserts.

A food desert is an area where residents have limited access to affordable, healthy food options, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. The neighborhoods mostly have convenience stores and small food markets that sell fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy items at a higher price compared to supermarkets, which are more commonly found in higher income neighborhoods in Brooklyn and other parts of the city. These convenience stores often sell common fruits like bananas and apples individually at a high cost, instead of buying them in bulk at a lower price from a supermarket. Additionally, it may be difficult for residents to find foods that fit their dietary needs; such as gluten or dairy free options, or vegan alternatives. And when they are available, the prices are marked up tremendously. The NYC Dept of City Planning analyzed each neighborhood's supermarket to bodega ratio, and found that one supermarket for every three bodegas is the healthiest environment for healthy options. However, each neighborhood has poor supermarket to bodega ratios, with Bed-Stuy being the worst with 57 bodegas for every one supermarket. Researchers from the Hunter College Food Policy Center also conducted a study in 2018, which found that residents from low-income poverty neighborhoods had to travel to wealthier moderate to high-income neighborhoods for more affordable, healthier food options.



1 Supermarket in
Brownsville to 15 bodegas
1 Supermarket in *East New
York* to 13 bodegas
1 Supermarket in *Bed-Stuy*
to 57 bodegas



Brownsville and East New York are also characterized as food swamps, which are areas that have a large number of readily available unhealthy foods like fast food and junk food, in comparison to readily available healthy food options. East New York has the largest food swamp in New York City, with over 27 fast-food chains in the 11207 zip code and an additional 14 in the 11208 zip code. The 11212 zip code, which makes up the majority of Brownsville, had a total of 21 fast-food chain businesses.



Source: Rob Rogers, 2012 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

HEALTH OUTCOMES



	East New York & Starrett City	Bed-Stuy	Brownsville	Brooklyn	NYC
 Obesity	35%	29%	41%	27%	24%
 Diabetes	14%	13%	13%	12%	11%
 Hypertension	34%	34%	33%	29%	28%

Source: NYC DOHMH Community Survey 2015-16

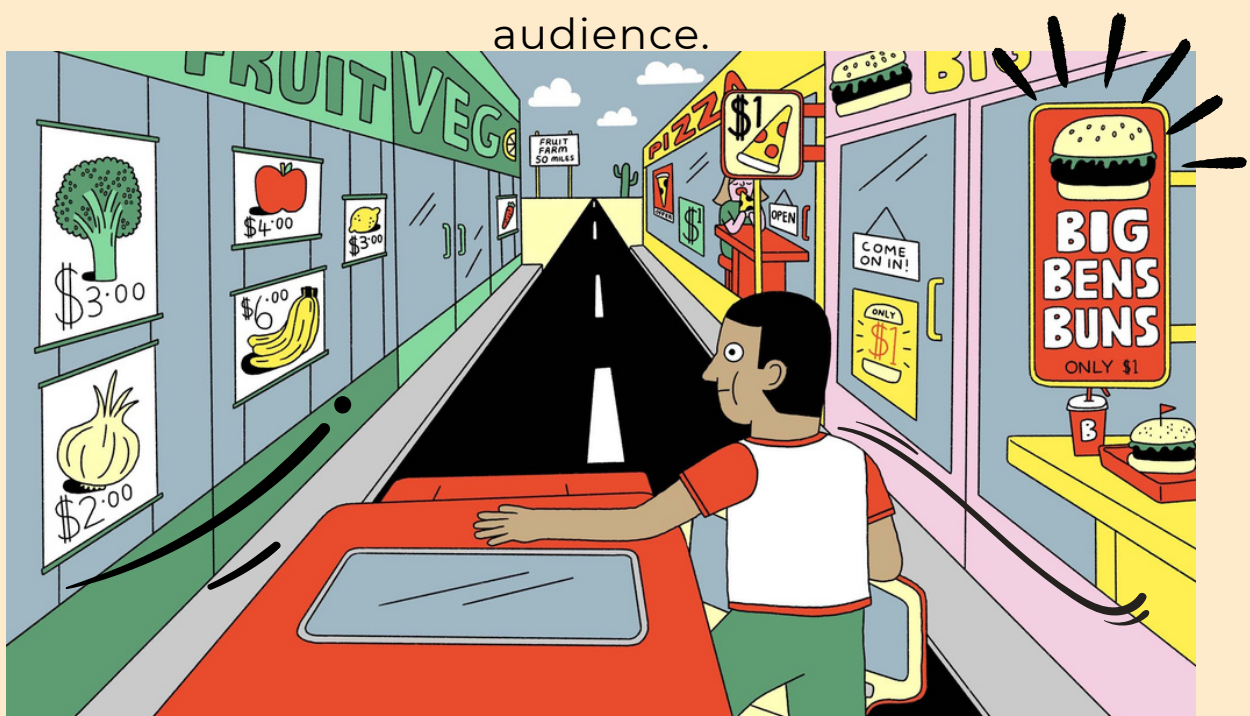
(Percent of adults)

The lack of affordable and healthy food options, combined with the abundance of unhealthy fast food and junk food in Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, and East New York, may have contributed to the higher rates of chronic illnesses such as obesity and diabetes among residents. The accessibility of cheap, high-calorie processed foods compared to more expensive healthy options, which often require transportation to obtain, has led some residents to adopt unhealthy eating patterns. In addition, studies have found a correlation between food insecurity and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

In areas like Central Brooklyn, food deserts and lack of access to healthy and nutritious food options are major public health concerns. Residents of these areas often rely on convenience stores and fast food restaurants for their meals, which can lead to the routine consumption of unhealthy foods and contribute to diet-related health issues. Predatory marketing and price promotions for unhealthy foods can exacerbate these issues and perpetuate health disparities in the community.

Predatory marketing is a marketing strategy that targets vulnerable or disadvantaged groups with the intention of exploiting their vulnerabilities for profit. In Central Brooklyn, low-income communities are often targeted with predatory marketing tactics for unhealthy foods. This marketing can take various forms, most visibly by advertising unhealthy products to children and marketing addictive substances, such as tobacco or alcohol, to people with addiction problems.

The goal of this marketing is to increase sales and profits without regard for the well-being of the target audience.



Source: Humphrey, Lauren. "Tackling Food Deserts." Courier, 11 Aug. 2021, mailchimp.com/courier/article/tackling-food-deserts/

These marketing tactics can be particularly harmful in areas with limited access to healthy food options, as residents may be more likely to rely on convenience stores and fast food restaurants for their meals. These establishments often offer low-cost and unhealthy food options, which can be appealing to individuals with limited financial resources. These price promotions make unhealthy products more affordable and accessible than healthier alternatives, which can be especially problematic in low-income communities where residents may have limited resources to purchase healthier options. The combination of price promotions and lack of access to healthy food options can create a situation where unhealthy foods are the most viable and affordable option for residents.



On March 1, 2023, nutrition advocates across New York State were pushing for the passage of the Predatory Marketing Prevention Act, S.213 / A.4424, which seeks to address the issue of unhealthy food advertising that targets young people.

Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie (D-Central Brooklyn)



Source: "Myrie, Advocates Rally against Predatory Junk Food Marketing 2023 nysenate.gov

ARE BODEGAS THE PROBLEM?

On the other side of the argument, researchers have challenged the idea that bodegas and delis are completely to blame for the state of food accessibility in Brooklyn. While the proximity hypothesis is compelling and has some truths to it, adding a fresh food supermarket does not immediately, or may not even at all, change the way people buy and consume food. Bodegas and delis are ubiquitous in New York City, and they play an essential role in the city's culture and economy. They are more than just places to purchase goods. They also serve as community hubs where people can gather, socialize, and connect with others in their neighborhood.

Many bodegas and delis are small, family-owned businesses that have been operating in the same location for years. Because of this, they have become fixtures in their neighborhoods and are often places where people go to catch up with each other, exchange information, and form social connections; which is especially important in a city as large and diverse as New York.

For example, it's not uncommon for regular customers to strike up conversations with bodega owners or employees while making their purchases. These interactions can create a sense of community and belonging that may be hard to find in other places.

Additionally, bodegas and delis often provide additional services beyond just selling products. For instance, some offer ATM machines, lottery tickets, and money transfer services, which can be convenient for people who don't have access to traditional banking services.



What's up Johnny! Hey, how's your sister??

... the usual please.



"Do the Right Thing" (1989) - This Spike Lee movie is set in the Bed-Stuy, and features a bodega prominently.

Bodegas and delis are also an integral part of New York City's cultural heritage. They have become symbols of the city's unique character and have been portrayed in movies, TV shows, and literature.

One reason for their cultural significance is that they are often associated with the immigrant experience in New York. Many bodegas in the city are owned and operated by immigrants who have come to the United States seeking a better life. These businesses often serve as a way for immigrants to establish themselves in the city and provide for their families.

In addition, corner stores have become icons of NYC's street culture. They are known for their distinctive awnings, colorful signage, and storefront displays. These elements have been incorporated into the city's visual identity and have become emblematic of the NYC's unique style.

Bodegas have also become part of the city's food culture. They offer a wide variety of foods and snacks that are unique to the city, such as breakfast sandwiches, bagels, and hot dogs. These foods have become staples of the New York diet and are often associated with the city's fast-paced lifestyle.



Eric Adams is NYC's first vegan mayor. He is pictured here eating a burrito at Marinello's Gourmet Deli in Buskwick; advocating for more vegan bodegas.

Photograph by Lev Radin, *The New Yorker* 2021

As shown by the statistics on the intersectionalities of hunger and poverty, as well as the cost of living in NYC, the best and most effective policy change would be lessening the cost of food. Although decreasing the distance between people and food retail stores, it may not directly change people's eating habits. The real change comes from addressing the root issue of food insecurity, and not limiting it to just the spatial disparities between food shoppers and supermarkets. This would help alleviate some of the constraints that low-income people face, and not be forced to decide between nutrition and cost.



"Oftentimes, people use the words "food desert" to describe low-income communities who have limited access to food. In fact, we do have access to food-cheap, subsidized, processed food. The word "desert" also makes us think of an empty, absolutely desolate place. But there is so much life, vibrancy, and potential in these communities. I coined the term "food apartheid" to ask us to look at the root causes of inequity in our food system on the basis of race, class, and geography. Let's face it: healthy, fresh food is accessible in wealthy neighborhoods while unhealthy food abounds in poor neighborhoods. "Food apart-heid" underscores that this is the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions. It begs the question: What are the social inequities that you see, and what are you doing to address them?"

*Karen Washington- Political Activist,
Guernica Magazine*



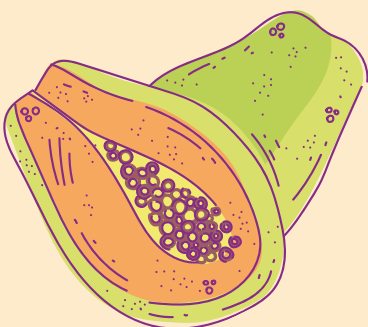


GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND KEY INITIATIVES

In recent years, the city and federal government have implemented a number of policies to address issues of food insecurity and poor food accessibility.

As mentioned, food insecurity is a complex issue that can result from a variety of factors, including poverty, lack of access to healthy food options, and systemic inequalities. In Brooklyn, low-income and marginalized communities are particularly affected by food insecurity, which can contribute to higher rates of diet-related health issues, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

To tackle these issues, the government has initiated several programs and policies aimed at food insecurity and increasing access to healthy food options in low-income neighborhoods.





SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal assistance program administered by the USDA that provides financial assistance to low-income families and individuals to help them purchase food. SNAP is known as one of the most important and effective anti-hunger programs in the U.S. The program was formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, but its name was changed in 2008 to reflect its focus on providing help through an electronic benefits card, rather than paper food stamps.

With SNAP, participants can purchase food for their household to prepare and eat, such as breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, dairy products, and also seeds and plants so they can produce food themselves. SNAP does not cover costs for alcohol, cigarettes, tobacco, household supplies, vitamins, medicine, soap or paper products, food that will be eaten in the store, hot foods, or pet food.



Maximum SNAP Benefits Allowance

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Maximum Allotment</i>
1	\$281
2	\$516
3	\$740
4	\$939
5	\$1,116
6	\$1,339
7	\$1,480
8	\$1,691
Each Additional Person	+\$211

Source: ny.gov

*figures based on SNAP Standards effective Oct 1, 2022

How much could I receive in SNAP Benefits each month?



If your gross income, based on family size, is at or below the amounts in the following charts, you may be eligible for SNAP benefits. But, the only way to determine if your household is eligible for SNAP benefits is to apply.



Income Guidelines for Households w/o Earned Income (no disabled or elderly members)

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Monthly Gross Income</i>	<i>Annual Gross Income</i>
1	\$1,473	\$17,676
2	\$1,984	\$23,940
3	\$2,495	\$29,940
4	\$3,007	\$36,084
5	\$3,518	\$42,216
6	\$4,029	\$48,348
7	\$4,541	\$54,492
8	\$5,052	\$60,624
Each Additional Person	+\$512	+\$6,144

Source: ny.gov

*figures based on SNAP Standards effective Oct 1, 2022

Income Guidelines for Households with Earned Income (no disabled or elderly members)

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Monthly Gross Income</i>	<i>Annual Gross Income</i>
1	\$1,699	\$20,388
2	\$2,289	\$27,468
3	\$2,879	\$34,548
4	\$3,469	\$41,628
5	\$4,059	\$48,708
6	\$4,649	\$55,788
7	\$5,239	\$62,868
8	\$5,829	\$69,948
Each Additional Person	+\$590	+\$7,080

Source: ny.gov

*figures based on SNAP Standards effective Oct 1, 2022



Income Guidelines for Households with an Elderly or Disabled Member and Households with Dependent Care Expenses

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>Monthly Gross Income</i>	<i>Annual Gross Income</i>
1	\$2,265	\$27,180
2	\$3,052	\$36,624
3	\$3,839	\$46,068
4	\$4,625	\$55,500
5	\$5,412	\$64,944
6	\$6,199	\$74,388
7	\$6,985	\$83,820
8	\$7,772	\$93,264
Each Additional Person	+\$787	+\$9,444

Source: ny.gov

*figures based on SNAP Standards effective Oct 1, 2022



Measure and Distribution of SNAP Recipients

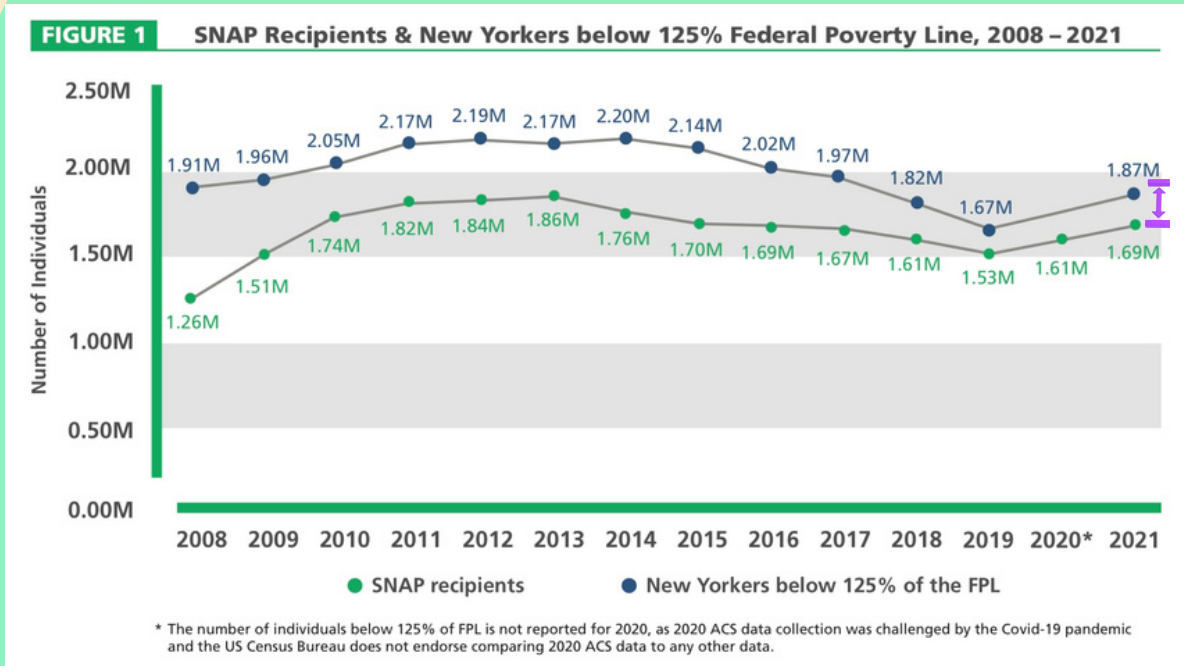
Bronx	480,103
Brooklyn	589,934
Manhattan	237,195
Queens	320,715
Staten Island	67,410
NYC	1,695,356

SNAP Recipients Fiscal Year, 2022 Monthly Average
Source: NYC Human Resource Administration

SNAP serves over 1.6 million people citywide each month, and about 589,934 (34.7%) of those are Brooklyn residents.



According to Hunger Solutions New York, SNAP has assisted about 556,000 people above the poverty line in NYS, including about 218,000 children per year between 2014 and 2018. SNAP was able to reach populations in NYS in need, with 89% of eligible individuals participating across NYS.



Although SNAP reaches those in need, it is important that we identify the communities that are under-enrolled in SNAP. An important policy question is the degree to which New Yorkers are not receiving SNAP benefits and whether these individuals who are eligible but are not enrolled are disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods with specific demographic characteristics. NYC’s 10-year food policy plan includes increasing enrollment in federal food benefit programs is a key strategy.

Office of Evaluation and Research, OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND POLICY INNOVATION, NYC Department of Social Services
January 2023



I wish we had enough dough for groceries!!



Did someone say dough?!



*Apply for SNAP at
www.ny.gov/services/apply-snap,
and you'll have more dough for
food!*



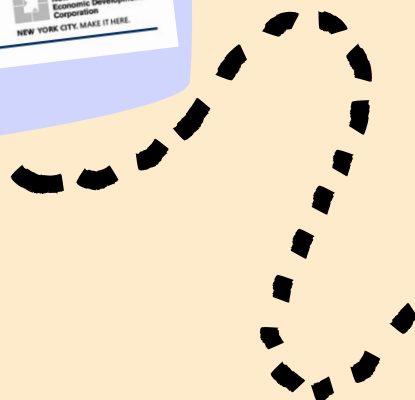
*SNAP!! No more Ramen
Noodles for breakfast
lunch AND dinner!*



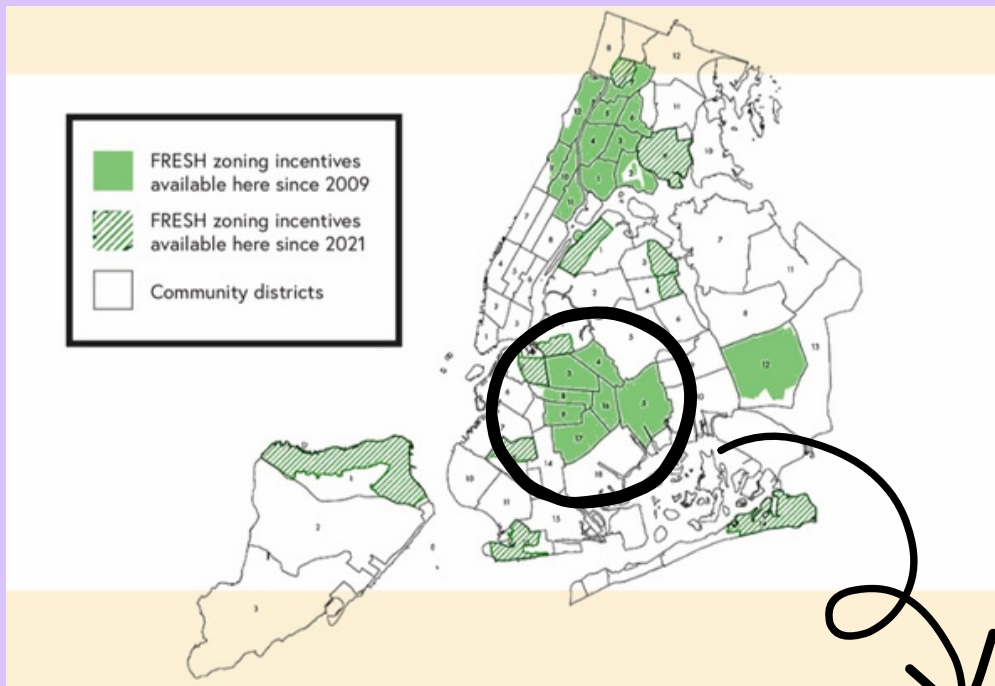
FRESH PROGRAM

The Food Retail Expansion Program to Support Health (FRESH) is a program initiated by the NYC Council, NYC Dept of Planning, NYC Economic Development Corporation and the five Borough Presidents in 2008, after the results of the “Going to Market” study that illustrated the widespread shortage of grocery stores in several NYC neighborhoods. In 2008, 15 of the 18 Brooklyn Community Districts fell short of the overall NYC average ratio of supermarkets to population.

The FRESH program constructs or renovates eligible retail space that will be leased by a full service grocery store operator. Through this program, it will give property owners the right to construct slightly larger buildings with reduced parking requirements in mixed residential and commercial districts if they include a FRESH supermarket. Financial benefits, administered by the NYC Industrial Development Agency, exempt or reduce certain taxes for qualifying FRESH food stores.



The goal of FRESH is to encourage stores to provide a full range of grocery products including fresh meat, fruit and vegetables. The idea is to “directly support the development and retention of accessible food stores” (NYC Planning Feb. 2023). NYC Planning released a report finding that the FRESH program now brings fresh food within walking distance of 1.2 million New Yorkers, with its 30 stores serving an additional 300,000 in the pipeline. Most of the FRESH stores were established in Brooklyn; NYC’s most populous borough. According to the NYC Planning report, about 450,000 Brooklyn residents live within a one-half mile of a FRESH store.

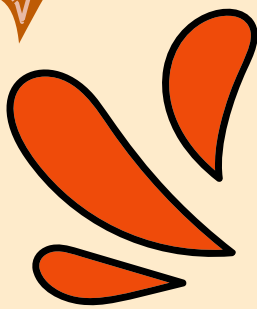


Source: NYC Department of City Planning in partnership with the NYC Economic Development Corporation Feb 2023

Note: The FRESH zoning incentives are available in mostly central and east Brooklyn Community Districts: BCD 3, 4, 5, & 16

The "Going to Market" report also includes a section on the "Supermarket Need Index" (SNI), which is a tool used to measure the need for supermarkets in different neighborhoods in New York City. It also illustrates where the highest levels of diet-related diseases are and where the largest populations with limited opportunities to purchase fresh foods are

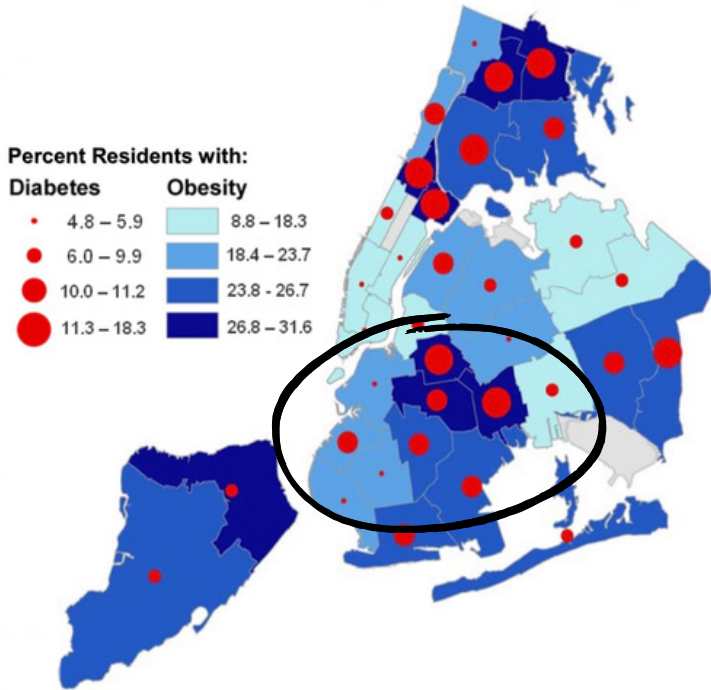
The SNI was helpful in assessing the need for new grocery stores because it measured factors such as:



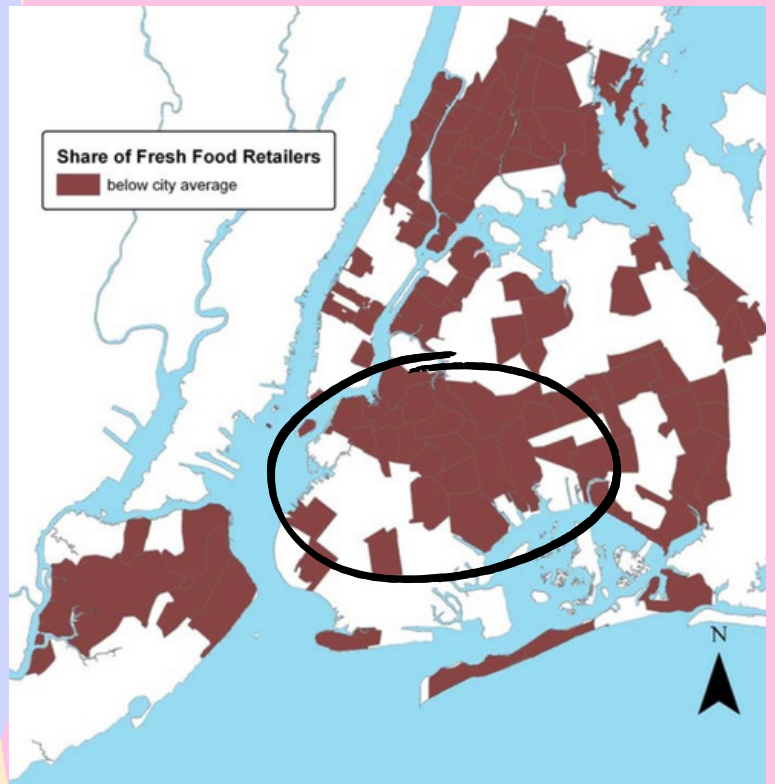
- *high population density*
- *low access to a car at the household level*
- *low household incomes*
- *high rates of diabetes*
- *high rates of obesity*
- *low consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables*
- *low share of fresh food retail*
- *capacity for new stores*



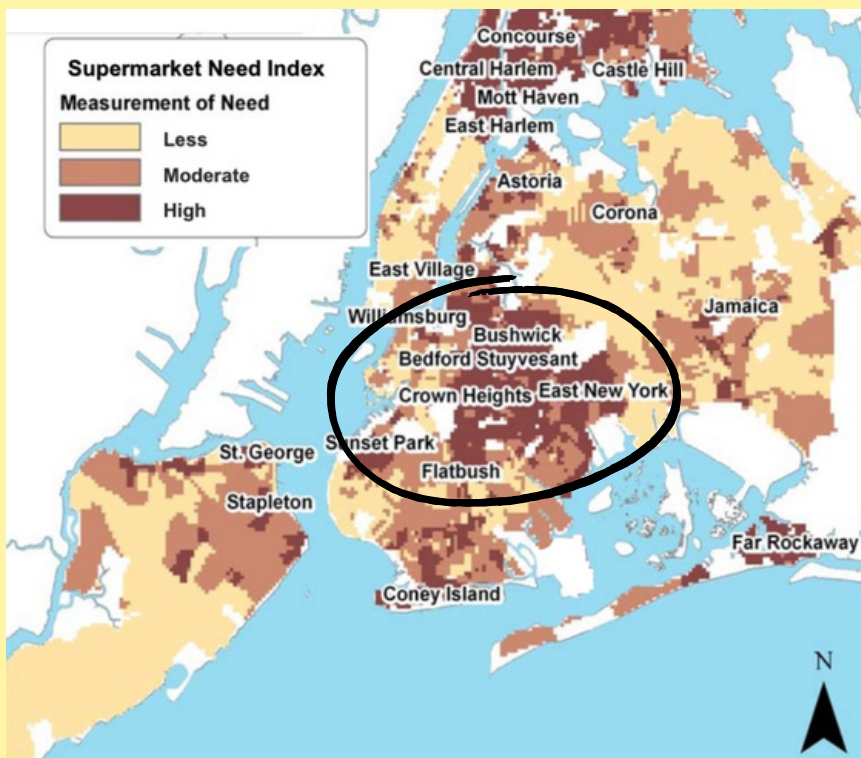
Prevalence of Diabetes and Obesity reported in neighborhoods defined by the United Hospital Fund (UHF)



Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



Source: NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets, 2007; Dept. of Labor ES202 by Zip Code, 2002



Source: Going to Market Report Apr 2008 and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

The higher the SNI score, the greater the need for supermarkets in that area.



The “Going to Market” report found that the Brooklyn neighborhoods in high need of supermarkets were Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, East New York, and Sunset Park. The FRESH program targets these high-need areas in order to increase access to fresh and healthy food for residents. Since 2009, 30 FRESH supermarkets have opened, and approximately 884,215 square feet of space is taken over by grocery stores, and about 1,738 people are full time employees.

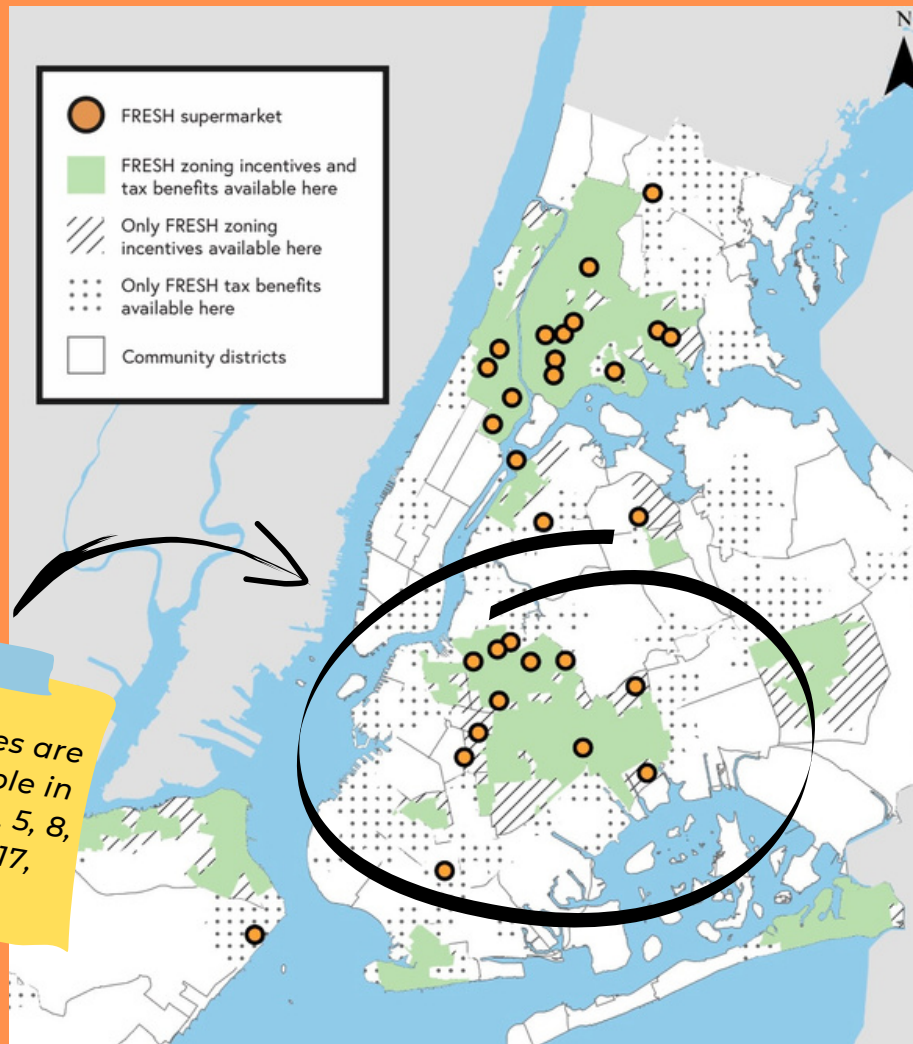
“We have 31 (FRESH stores) that have already opened and are operational, 20 more are in our pipeline today. So this is a program that has delivered for communities around the city that really need it”

*Dan Garodnick, Dir. of NYC
Department of Planning for PIX 11
News*



Brooklyn stores are operating at these locations:

- Bogopa BTM, 221-251 Mckibbin St.
- Moisha's Kosher Discount Supermarket, 305-325 Avenue M
- Food Bazaar, 17-59 Ridgewood Place Food Bazaar, 417 Junius St.
- Food Bazaar, 21 Manhattan Ave.
- ShopRite Associates, 590 Gateway Drive
- Union Market, 1535 Bedford Ave.



FRESH stores are now available in BCD 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17,



SHOP HEALTHY NYC!



Shop Healthy NYC! is an initiative launched by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) in 2012, aimed at promoting healthy eating and active living among residents of New York City. The program is designed to encourage individuals to make nutritious food choices and engage in regular physical activity to improve their overall health and well-being. This program is unique in the sense that they work directly with food retailers such as corner stores and supermarkets, to increase the inventory of healthy food, as well as developing marketing strategies that raise awareness of healthy food options to customers. Essentially, the amount of healthy food would be increased and placed in a noticeable place in the store for consumers.

ShopHealthyNYC provides resources, information, and support to help individuals and families make healthier choices when it comes to food and physical activity. This includes promoting access to affordable and fresh fruits and vegetables, encouraging the consumption of whole foods, and providing guidance on how to read food labels and make informed decisions while shopping. The overarching goal of this program is to focus on increasing the inventory of healthy products and to encourage its consumption through intentional placement and promotion that is more appealing than high-calorie foods and drinks.



Source: CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute

This program has many different moving parts, and they use help from retailers, suppliers and distributors, and the community to address supply and demand. Shop Healthy NYC focuses on specific zip codes, usually two to three neighboring areas, for about a year. In Brooklyn, the participating stores are in Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, and East New York. Their goal is to make a long-lasting impact on food access, and they adapt different strategies to influence both the supply and demand of healthy foods.

First, they reach out to food retailers and encourage them to stock and promote more healthy food options. They work closely with these stores, setting goals and giving them lots of support to help them meet those goals. They also team up with distributors and suppliers to make it easier for retailers to buy and promote healthy foods in bulk. By working with the whole distribution chain, they want to make healthy options more widely available and visible in the targeted areas.

Shop Healthy NYC: Supply and Demand

Retailers



Suppliers and Distributors



Community



*Increased Neighborhood
Access to Healthier
Foods*





With these strategies combined, Shop Healthy NYC aims to create lasting changes in food access by incorporating both the supply side (retailers and distributors) and the demand side (the local community).



Source: NYC Department of health and Mental Hygiene and the Center for Economic Opportunity

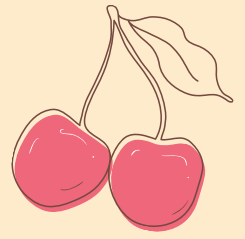
For this program to be at its most effective, it will need community (consumer) support. The pushback about this initiative is that some communities may feel threats of gentrification or outsiders “deciding what is good for them”. It will take collective efficacy for people to partner and show support for these changes.

Shop Healthy NYC reaches out to the entire neighborhood, including residents, schools, elected officials, community organizations and businesses to create a trustworthy community wide effort. However, similar to the FRESH program, while this increases the accessibility and awareness of healthy food options, for it to be more than just a function of economics, people will need to be able to afford the goods sold there and *want* to shop there.



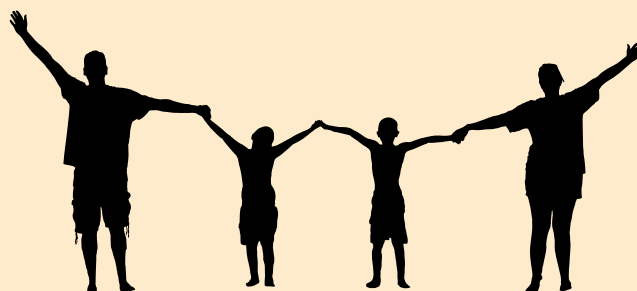
“Bed-Stuy is gentrified, which means more places to get a salad, but also higher rent and community displacement.”
Alzo Slade, VICE News. March 2021





COMMUNITY POWER FOR FOOD SECURITY

As the struggle to access sufficient, nutritious, and affordable food continues to affect many low-income and marginalized populations, community-driven efforts have emerged as a powerful force in combating this pervasive problem. These organizations, fueled by the collective strength and resilience of local communities, have become pivotal in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity and joining the fight for equitable access to healthy sustenance. This section explores the significance of community-driven efforts in combating food insecurity, examining their impact, challenges, and potential for transformative change. By highlighting the inspiring stories and innovative approaches pioneered by these community organizations, the hope is to shine a light on the vital role they play in creating a more just and sustainable food system.



BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY CULINARY CENTER

Brownsville Community Culinary Center (BCCC) is a sit-down full-service restaurant in the neighborhood of Brownsville- the first one in over 50 years. BCCC has partnered with numerous community organizations to provide healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food to residents. This non-profit organization opened up in 2017 as a restaurant, but has now expanded to offering several programs such as a diabetes wellness program and a 40-week paid culinary training program to the local residents. It was established with the vision of addressing food insecurity, unemployment, and limited access to healthy food options in the area.





The Diabetes Wellness Program (DWP) emerged as a response to COVID-19 challenges. The pandemic has largely devastated low-income, marginalized communities; and Brownsville was no exception. This program offers a comprehensive approach by assessing participants' social, clinical, and nutritional needs through nutritional screening assessments. The DWP provides crucial referrals to outside services and collaborates with healthcare providers to ensure access to routine diabetes care and other health services. Participants also benefit from workshops led by Registered Dietician Nutritionists, addressing nutritional deficiencies. This program is provided to participants free of charge as long as they remain actively engaged.



Source: @brownsvilleccc on Instagram

They also have established a 6-week course focused on diabetes self-management skills, in collaboration with another local community-based organization. This program integrates various elements such as group classes, peer learning, and ongoing support to assist participants in effectively managing their diabetes. Through sessions led by a peer educator, both group and individualized guidance are provided. They cover many essential health-related aspects including diet, physical activity, medication adherence, and blood glucose monitoring. Additionally, the program offers weekly fitness sessions in partnership with the NYC Parks Department's Shape Up program, featuring aerobic and kinesthetic exercises. These invaluable services are provided to participants at no cost, as long as they are actively engaged with the program.



As part of their commitment to promoting healthy eating and nutrition, the DWP offers a farm bag program to eligible participants. This program ensures access to fresh, locally and regionally sourced produce, providing 7-10 items per bag for a duration of 26 weeks. The DWP also leads bi-weekly cooking demonstrations, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge to prepare healthy meals using the farm-fresh ingredients. Additionally, the program distributes over 700 ready-to-eat meals to the community, ensuring that individuals will have access to convenient and nutritious options. Recognizing the undeniable connection between food and health, the DWP has plans to launch the 'Food is Medicine' program in 2023. This upcoming initiative will provide medically tailored meals specific to certain medical diagnoses, accompanied by nutritional counseling services. Eligible participants will have access to this program for a period of three months, further emphasizing BCCC's dedication to utilizing food as a means of promoting wellness and supporting individuals in their journey towards improved health outcomes.



Source: @brownvilleccc on Instagram

BCCC offers culinary training programs and job placement services to individuals in the community, as well as those from underserved backgrounds. This organization mostly serves the population of formerly incarcerated individuals and young people who have had limited opportunities growing up. Through this program, participants are trained in valuable culinary skills (food science, knife skills, etc), professionalism, and gain work experience in the food service industry during the process.

In addition to its training programs, the BCCC operates a commercial kitchen and a cafe that serves as a social enterprise. The cafe not only provides a platform for the trainees to showcase their culinary talents but also serves as a community gathering space where residents can enjoy delicious and affordable meals. The revenue generated from the cafe helps sustain the programs and services offered by the BCCC.

“BCCC acts as a way to create social change within the community and leverage social mobility.” Tamer Badr, DWP Program Manager



Source: @brownsvilleccc on Instagram

Beyond its immediate impact on individuals, the BCCC plays a crucial role in addressing the poor access to affordable and beneficial food in the Brownsville neighborhood. By offering job training and creating employment opportunities in the culinary industry, the center helps break the cycle of poverty and provides residents with access to nutritious food. It also fosters community engagement and revitalization by serving as a hub for culinary education, entrepreneurship, and social interaction.

In addition to serving as a restaurant or training program, it is a community hub for Brownsville residents. People are able to connect with one another, while getting the services they need. Currently, there are about 200 participants program-wide, and has reached 900+ community members.



Executive Chef Alexis Aquino --> check him out! @cheflexu on Instagram!



EAST BROOKLYN MUTUAL AID

East Brooklyn Mutual Aid (EBMA) is a community organization that operates in the eastern neighborhoods of Brooklyn, New York. This grassroots initiative emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, and focused on providing support, resources, and assistance to community members in need.

EBMA has made notable accomplishments since its establishment, providing essential support and resources to community members in need. Their achievements encompass various areas of assistance, including emergency relief efforts during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. Through their initiatives, the organization has effectively distributed food packages, hygiene supplies, and other essential items to individuals and families facing hardship. They have also addressed emergent food insecurity by organizing food drives, establishing community gardens, and forming partnerships with local businesses and farms to ensure access to nutritious food options.



Source: eastbrooklynmutualaid.org

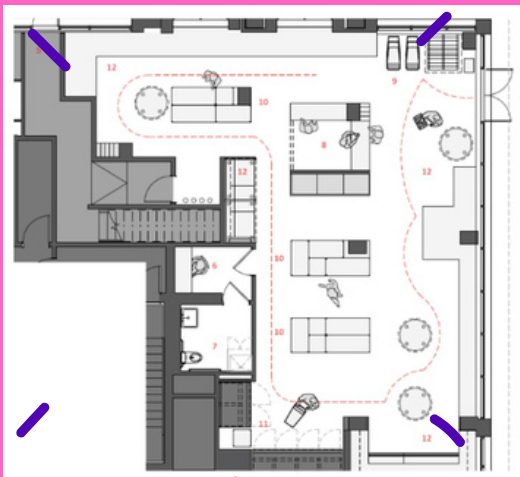
Initially, this organization started out as a hyper-localized group called “Ocean-Hill Brownsville Mutual Aid”, and has since expanded to reach neighborhoods across the east Brooklyn area. They have partnered with volunteers, the local precinct, and other mutual aid groups to deliver food to about 30 families a week during the height of COVID-19. The Christian Cultural Center (CCC) served as an inventory hub for EBMA to buy wholesale food items, and people would go fill out a form requesting the type of food they want and either have it delivered to them or available for pick up. EBMA now are based out of the CCC; they buy and provide the groceries and CCC shares storage and refrigeration with them. Some of the volunteers also served with another organization called the Brooklyn Packers (in addition to EBMA), who had some extra money left over from a contract. By July 2020, 25 volunteers from EBMA were hired full-time, packing and distributing food in the surrounding communities for \$20/hr. Since their start, EBMA has been able to deliver over one million pounds of food to over 100,000 people in the east Brooklyn area, prioritizing vulnerable populations.



EBMA's longest running program is called Black Radish, in which they collaborate with Black distributors and farmers to source affordable groceries and deliver them directly to

New Yorkers in need. Currently, this organization is working towards creating a Black Radish Grocery store in the Chestnut Commons multi-family building in Cypress Hills. This grocery store is intentionally placed to support the 250 households and "evoke the warmth and sense of community the organization is built around" (EBMA.org).

The store design focuses on creating a contemporary shopping environment that welcomes its customers. The shelves will consistently be stocked with fresh food, forming a stable base for the store. Also, they have plans to create a wooden lattice ceiling to make the space more inviting and enhance acoustic comfort. The lattice design takes inspiration from the organic shape of a growing tree and draws influence from the work of American sculptor, Martin Puryear.



Source: eastbrooklynmutualaid.org

Source: eastbrooklynmutualaid.org



"I really love how there are things in place for us to come out, serve each other, and help in a sustainable way. It's nice to connect with likeminded people and work with the kindness of our hearts, and share the experience with others."

Jeff Desir, participant of the Food Pantry and Christian Cultural Center



EBMA has established a significant relationship with Black Yard Farm, a local urban farming initiative. Through this partnership, EBMA and Black Yard Farm are able to support one another's efforts in cultivating fresh produce and promoting food sovereignty within the local and regional area. In order to maximize their impact, they collaborate on projects such as community gardening, educational workshops, and the distribution of locally grown food to residents in need.

On April 22, 2023, EBMA supported Black Yard Farm by hosting their 2nd annual farm trip in Argyle, NY. About 60 volunteers came together to give their time and service in farm labor. The volunteers were split up into three groups; fencing, seed starting, and a chicken run. By collaborating with Black Yard Farm, East Brooklyn Mutual Aid strengthens their efforts in addressing food insecurity and supporting local agriculture, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship that serves both organizations and the community.



Through community education efforts, they have also facilitated workshops and informational sessions on various topics, empowering community members with knowledge and resources to navigate complex systems. In the future, they hope to run a Food Justice curriculum with CUNY, to educate others on equitable food systems.

East Brooklyn Mutual Aid embodies the principles of unity and collective action, highlighting the resilience and strength of local communities in supporting one another during difficult times. By mobilizing resources and fostering connections, the organization aims to create a stronger and more interconnected East Brooklyn where community members can rely on each other for support and well-being.



"The way mutual aid works for us is: resources for all. Take what you need, leave what you can. We don't believe that folks need to qualify for food. Food is a human right, everyone should be eligible and able to have access to food when they need it."
Kelvin Taitt, Co-Founder of EBMA



"EBMA is a collection of neighbors who came together to help our neighbors"
Ari Hooks, Data & Technology Chair EBMA

RECOMMENDATIONS



1. High food security: Households in this category have no problems or anxiety related to food access. They have sufficient access to food and can afford to eat nutritious meals. Policy interventions for this level of food insecurity could include promoting healthy food choices and nutrition education programs.



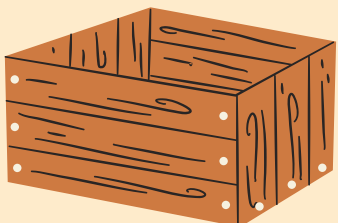
2. Marginal food security: Households in this category may experience some anxiety or uncertainty about their ability to access sufficient food due to concerns about running out of food or the quality of food they can afford. Policy interventions for this level of food insecurity could include expanding access to food assistance programs.



3. Low food security: Households in this category have reduced quality, variety, or desirability of their diets, but no reduction in quantity of food intake. They may be forced to rely on low-cost, energy-dense, and nutrient-poor foods. Policy interventions for this level of food insecurity could include improving access to healthy and affordable food options in low-income neighborhoods through programs like community gardens, farmers' markets, and healthy corner stores.

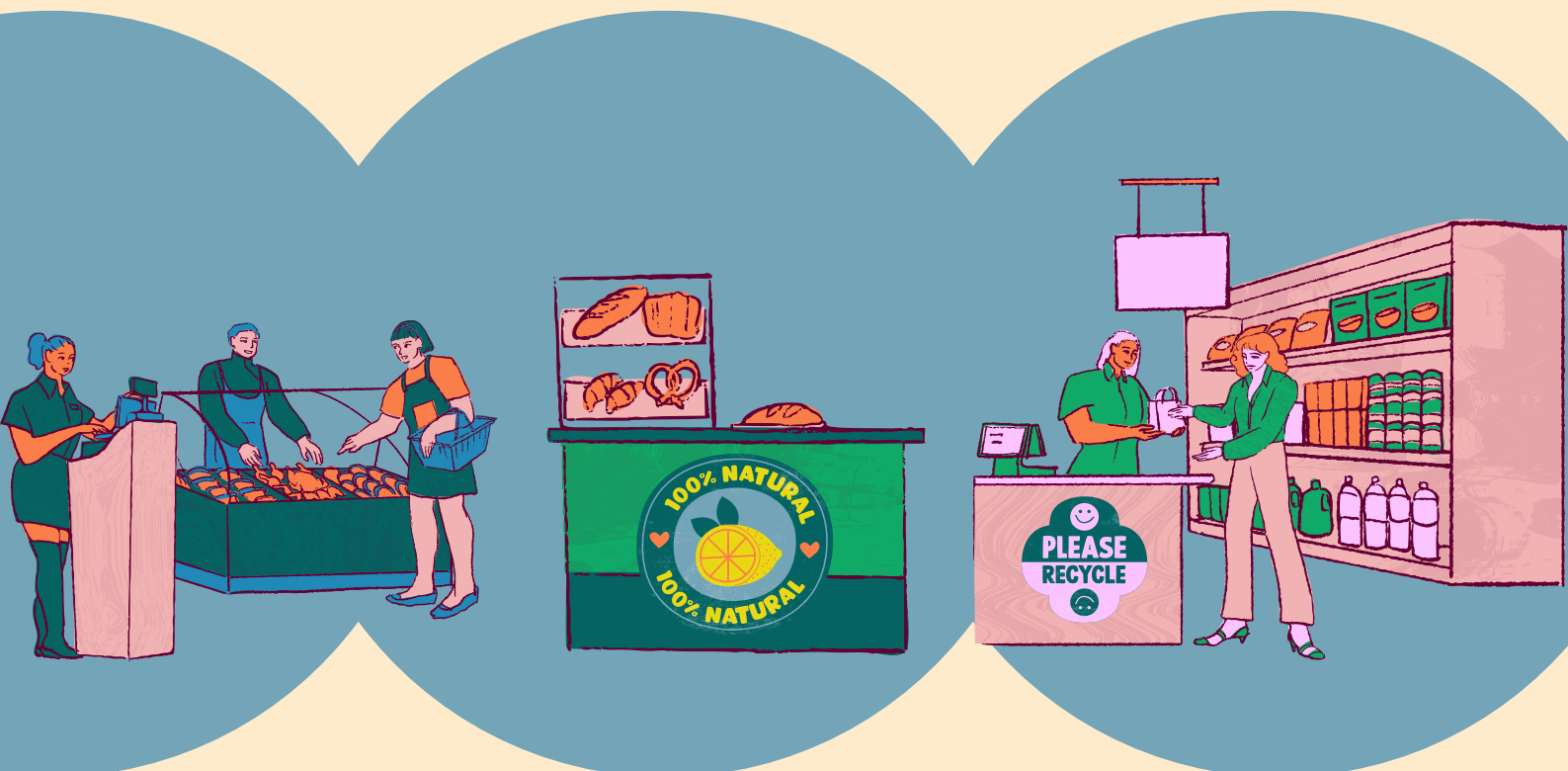


4. Very low food security: Households in this category have experienced multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. They may skip meals, eat less, or go hungry because they cannot afford enough food or because they lack access to food due to transportation or other factors. Policy interventions for this level of food insecurity could include expanding access to emergency food assistance programs, such as food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries.



Some additional policy recommendations may include utilizing more ground floor or street-level spaces in mixed-use buildings for grocery stores and community kitchen education spaces. This approach improves access to fresh food and provides opportunities for culinary education and community engagement. Similar to the approach EBMA has adopted with Black Radish Grocery, these existing systems should receive support.

Another important step is to create dedicated spaces where housing developers and community leaders involved in urban agriculture can convene. These spaces facilitate discussions and collaborations, aiming to allocate more land for urban agricultural use and involve building tenants and local residents in stewarding these areas. This promotes a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for sustainable and inclusive urban agriculture practices.





CONCLUSION

It has been an honor to prepare this informative zine about the food scapes in Central and East Brooklyn. The hope for this zine is to educate others on the legacy of disinvestment in this community, how that has contributed to the current status of food insecurity, and how both government and community initiatives have tackled these issues. Equally important, the hope is for this to serve as a tool for starting conversations about the deeper institutional systems that prevent people from being food secure. The recommendations also call relevant stakeholders to action and collaboration to create positive strides in food security and access in this area and beyond.

Special thanks to Nevin Cohen, Tamer Badr, Kelvin Taitt, EBMA staff, the Hunter College Food Policy Center, and Professor Wolf-Powers for their excellent addition and support of this research.





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