

# Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

# 2015 Reader



October 2015



STEPHANIE  
RAWLINGS-BLAKE  
MAYOR



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# Baltimore Food Policy Initiative: A Catalyst to Address Health, Economic and Environmental Disparities



Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake  
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October 4, 2015

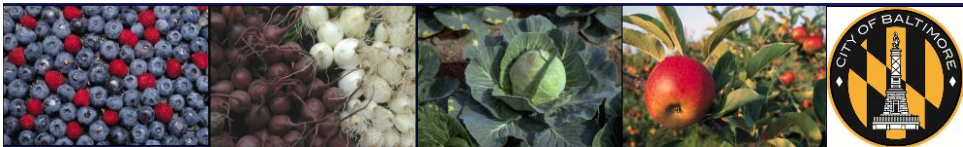
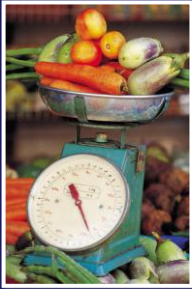
# Baltimore Food Policy Overview





# Timeline

- 2009: Food Policy Taskforce Recommendations
- 2010: Hired Food Policy Director & established Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC)
- 2012: Released first Food Environment Map
- 2013: Developed Food Desert Retail Strategy
- 2014: Hired Food Access Planner and Food Retail Economic Development Officer
- 2015: Released 2015 Food Environment Map Report, Introduced Personal Property Tax Credit for supermarkets in Food Desert Incentive Areas



# Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI)

## Inter-governmental collaboration:

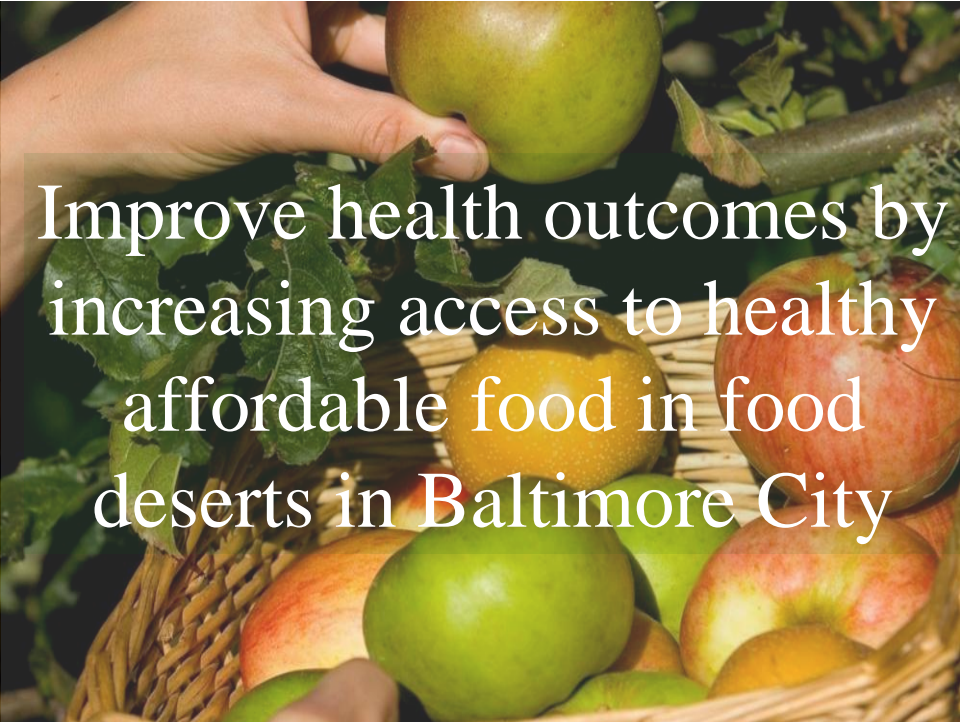
- Baltimore Office of Sustainability, Department of Planning, Health Department & Baltimore Development Corporation



## Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC):

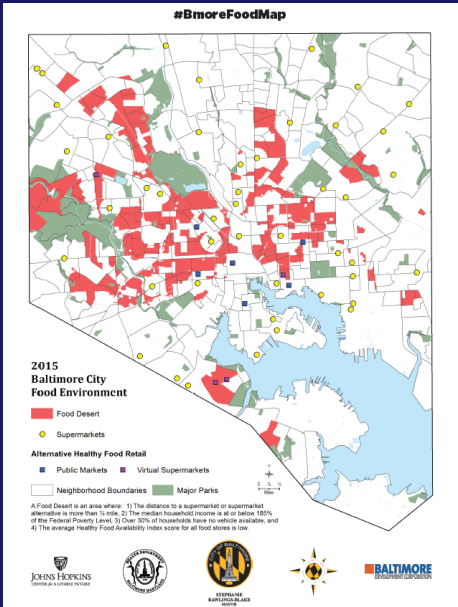
- Provide Advisory Capacity to implement Food Policy Taskforce recommendations
- 60 Diverse stakeholders (such as Anti-hunger community, extension, city government, community nonprofits, schools)





Improve health outcomes by increasing access to healthy affordable food in food deserts in Baltimore City

# Food Desert Map



## Food Desert Definition:

- 1/4 mile from supermarket
- Low vehicle availability
- At or below 185% federal poverty level
- Low Healthy Food Availability Score

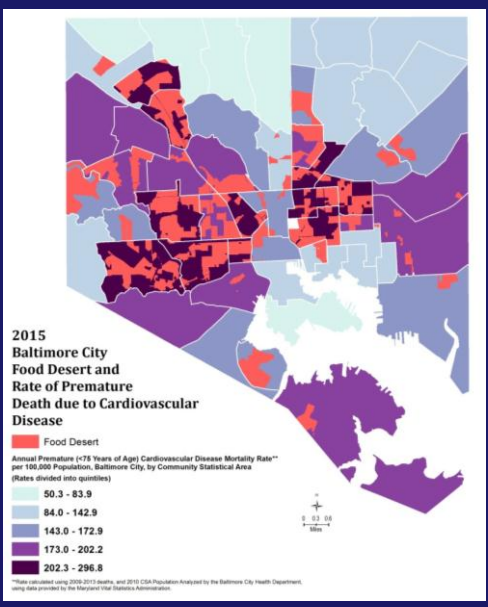
## Impact:

- 25% City residents (158,000 people)
- 30% School aged children
- 25% Seniors
- Black residents 4x more likely to live in a food desert than White residents

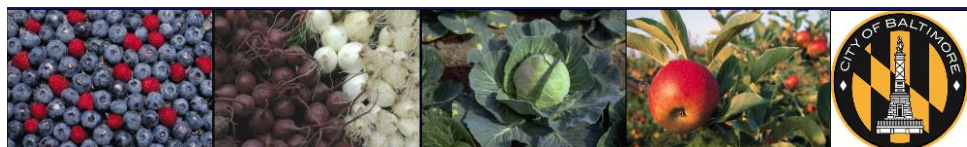
## Council District Maps:

- Created food environment maps for each council member

# Health Disparities



- Where you live impacts your health
- There is as a 17 year difference in life expectancy between Baltimore neighborhoods
- Greater access in terms of proximity to supermarkets and less access to convenience stores is correlated with healthier diets and lower obesity rates



# Food Desert Retail Strategy

1. Expand and Retain Supermarkets
2. Improve the Food Environment of Non-Traditional Grocery Retail
  - Small grocery stores, corner stores, and Virtual Supermarket
3. Improve Healthy Food Availability in the Public Market Setting
4. Expand Homegrown Baltimore to serve food desert neighborhoods
5. Develop a Food Access Transportation Strategy



# Food Initiatives



## Food Access Initiatives

### Virtual Supermarket:

- The Health Department coordinates online grocery ordering at 5 senior, disabled and public housing. Deliver to central site and SNAP is accepted.
- Run by Neighborhood Food Advocates



### Healthy Stores Program:

- 4 healthy Corner Stores (with plans to add 14 more over the next 2 years)
- 20 middle school students trained as Youth Neighborhood Food Advocates



### Healthy Carryouts:

- Developed a Healthy Carryout Strategy with 36 vendors in Lexington and Northeast Public Markets





# Homegrown Baltimore:

Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local

## Employee Wellness Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):

- Changed Labor Union MOU to allow for CSA's to be an approved use for the Wellness Reimbursement



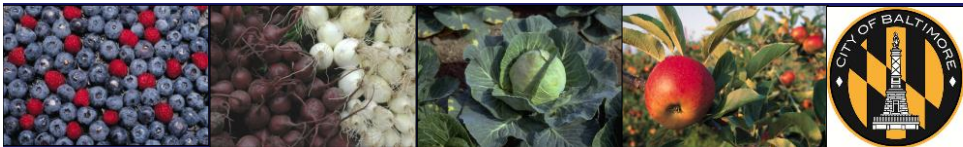
## Farmers Markets:

- Piloted SNAP and Double Incentives through smartphone technology



## Urban Agriculture:

- Developed an Urban Agriculture Plan
- 2 urban farms have leases to farm on 3 acres of city-owned land



# Childhood Hunger Initiatives

## School Food:

- Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
- Salad in all schools
- Renovating and building new kitchens and cafeterias through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Initiative



## Great Kids Farm:

- 33 acre working farm owned by BCPSS
- Provides education and supplies salad bars



## Summer Meals:

- 2015 USDA Demonstration Project to target older youth and teens
- Served over 5,000 additional meals through project





# Food Policy



## Addressing Food Policy Barriers: Baltimore City

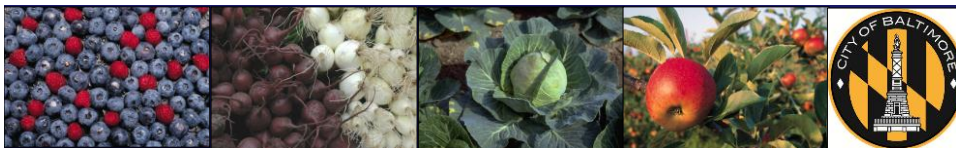
### Food Retail:

- Personal Property Tax Abatement for Supermarkets in/near Food Deserts

### Urban Agriculture:

- New Zoning Code will allow more agricultural uses
- Property tax credit for urban farms
- Streamlined Farmers Market Permit
- Building Code for hoop house and animal husbandry regulations





## Addressing Food Policy Barriers

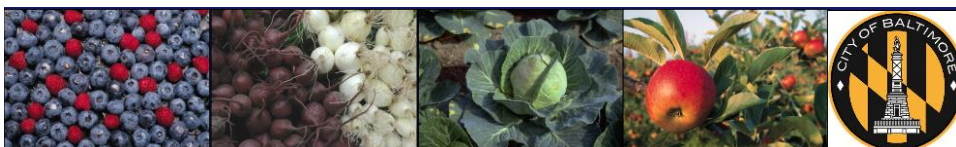
### State:

- Lengthening SNAP Disbursement Period
- Supermarket Tax Credit for food desert incentive areas (state enabling legislation)



### Federal:

- Federal implementation of the Farm Bill
- Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act



## USCM Food Policy Taskforce

### Mayors' Taskforce

- Formed in 2012
- Meets 2-3 times a year
- Creates USCM resolutions related to food access and sustainable food
- Advocacy on federal legislation (e.g. Farm Bill, CNR)



### Food Policy Director Network

- Formalized in 2013, funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Purpose to share resources and food access strategies
- Support new cities in creating equivalent positions



# Thank You

**For More Information Please Contact:**

Holly Freishtat

Baltimore City Food Policy Director

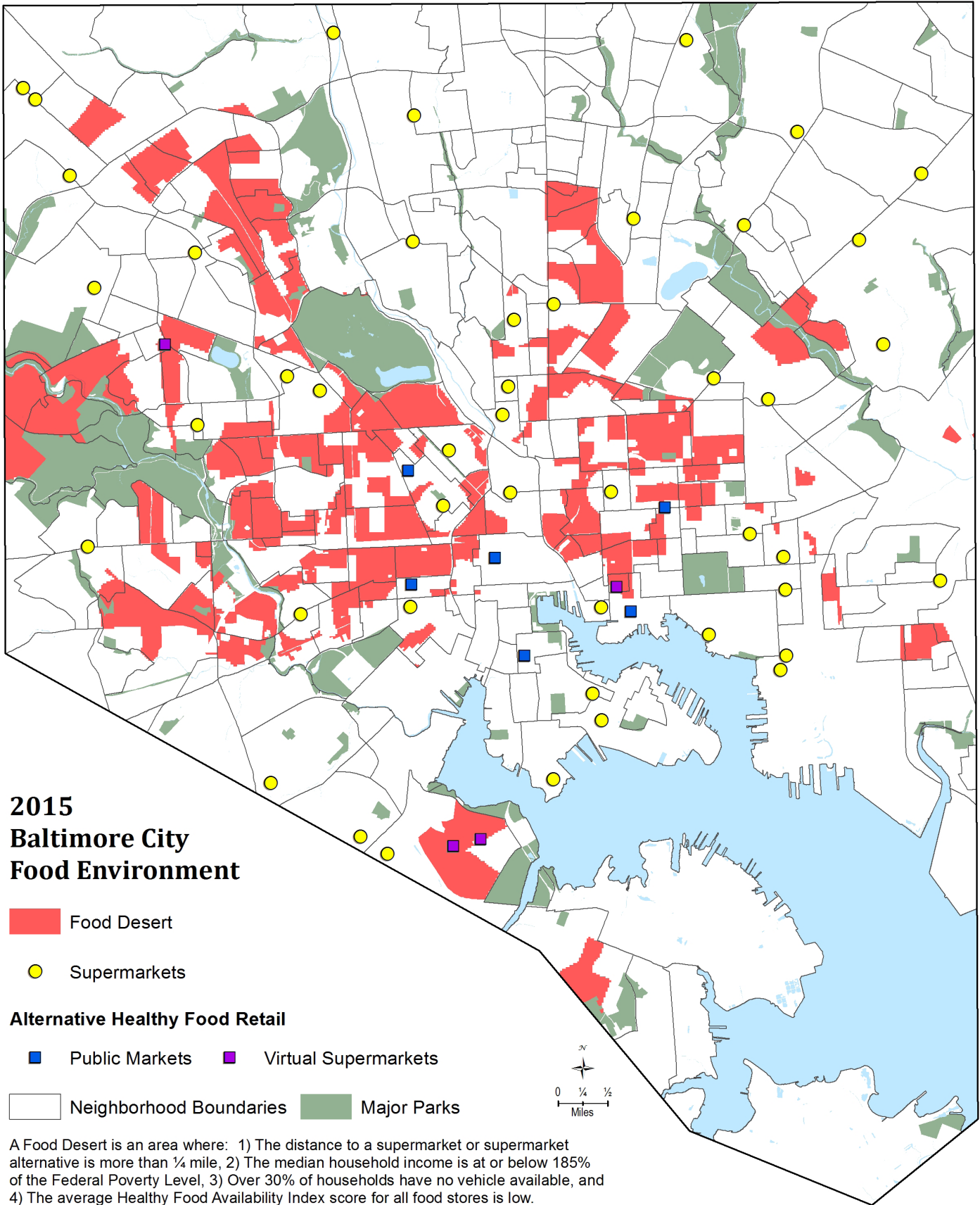
[Baltimore Food Policy Initiative](#)

[Holly.freishtat@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Holly.freishtat@baltimorecity.gov)

443-928-3477

**BFPI is currently supported by:**





# 2015 BALTIMORE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

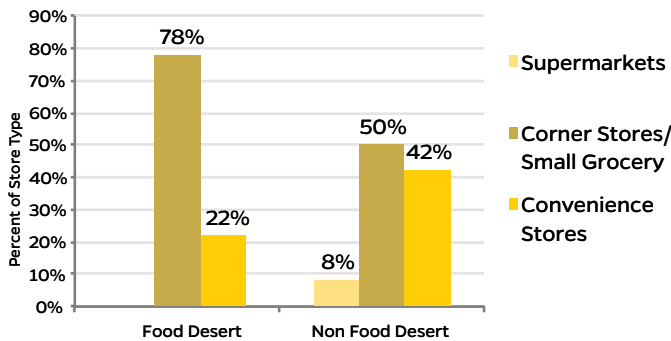
## WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

A food desert is an indicator for low access to healthy food. It is an area where residents lack both access and sufficient economic resources to obtain healthy food.

### Food Desert Definition:

An area where the distance to a supermarket or supermarket alternative is more than 1/4 mile, the median household income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, over 30% of households have no vehicle available, and the average Healthy Food Availability Index (HFAI) score for all food stores is low.

## PERCENT OF FOOD STORES IN FOOD DESERTS AND NON FOOD DESERTS



## FOOD DESERT RETAIL STRATEGY

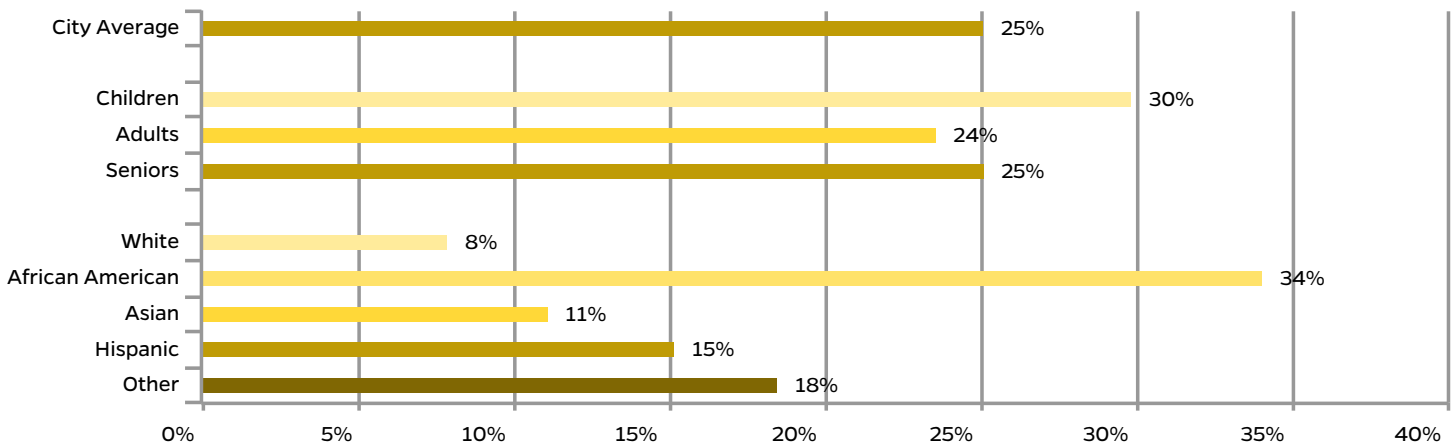
B'More Fresh: Baltimore's Food Desert Retail Strategy is one part of the city's comprehensive agenda to reduce the number of people living in food deserts and grow the economy, using five key approaches:

1. Expand and Retain Supermarkets
2. Improve Non-Traditional Grocery Retail Options (i.e. small grocery stores, corner stores, pharmacies, Virtual Supermarket)
3. Improve Healthy Food Availability in the Public Market Setting
4. Expand Homegrown Baltimore to Serve Food Desert Neighborhoods
5. Transportation Strategy

## FOOD RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

TYPE	NUMBER
SUPERMARKETS	45
SMALL GROCERY AND CORNER STORES	435
CONVENIENCE STORES	300
FARMERS MARKETS	17
PUBLIC MARKETS	6
VIRTUAL SUPERMARKETS	4

## PERCENTAGE OF EACH POPULATION GROUP LIVING IN FOOD DESERTS



For more information, see <http://mdfoodsystemmap.org/2015-baltimore-city-food-access-map/> and <http://archive.baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Planning/BaltimoreFoodPolicyInitiative/FoodDeserts.aspx>.

Contact: Holly Freishtat, 443-928-3477, [Holly.Freishtat@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Holly.Freishtat@baltimorecity.gov)

Amanda Behrens Buczynski, 443-287-4760, [abehren4@jhu.edu](mailto:abehren4@jhu.edu)

# Programs





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## The Homegrown Baltimore Employee Wellness CSA: A Model for Citywide Community Supported Agriculture Programs

### INNOVATION:

Baltimore City was the first city in the country to financially incentivize participation in a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. In 2014, Baltimore's Managerial and Professional Society (MAPS) amended its Health and Welfare Reimbursement policy to allow CSAs as a reimbursable activity. As more unions offer wellness incentives, this will become a viable option for cities across the nation to link local food to wellness.

### RATIONALE:

#### • Employee Wellness:

- Workplaces and municipalities around the country are emphasizing wellness. One recent trend in workplace wellness is weekly produce box deliveries, generally known as CSA shares, to promote fruit and vegetable consumption among employees.
- CSA shares make a healthy diet **easier and more convenient**: a 2003 study of a 221-member California CSA program found that 79% of participants increased their vegetable consumption over the course of the season.<sup>1</sup>
- CSA shares can make a healthy diet **more affordable**: 60% of participating MAPS employees in Baltimore said that the reimbursement for the CSA program was the primary factor in their participation.



#### • Local Farms:

- In Baltimore, the CSA supports the City's Homegrown Baltimore urban agriculture strategy by **increasing demand** for products from urban farms.
- Even in areas where urban farming is less prevalent, CSAs help **local and regional farms** to build a loyal customer base.



### POLICY:

- It is important to note that labor unions may already have wellness incentives that allocate funds for everything from eyeglasses to gym memberships. Baltimore was able to take advantage of the existing incentive to include CSA shares as an allowable expense without creating an entirely new mechanism.
- For unions that offer incentives, encourage leadership to include CSA as an acceptable reimbursable "wellness activity." In Baltimore's first year of the CSA program, MAPS added an MOU to its Health Reimbursement policy, a relatively simple process. By the second year, it was became fully approved use.
- MAPS employees can now be reimbursed up to \$250, meaning that they pay only \$50 for approximately 24 weeks of produce delivered directly to City offices. This provides maximum convenience at minimal cost.

<sup>1</sup> Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, *Community Supported Agriculture on the Central Coast: The CSA Member Experience*. UC Santa Cruz, 2003. Available: [http://cgirs.ucsc.edu/research/environment/afsrp/publications/Perezetal\\_2003.pdf](http://cgirs.ucsc.edu/research/environment/afsrp/publications/Perezetal_2003.pdf)

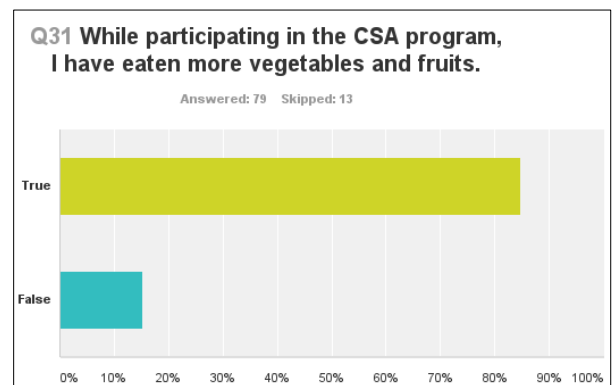
## OPERATIONS:

In Baltimore, the intention was to create an effective, sustainable model that requires few inputs and operates in a decentralized manner using the following program elements:

- **Volunteer site coordinators:** While there is one paid employee of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative who serves as the citywide CSA coordinator on a part-time basis, the program is dependent on volunteer site coordinators to recruit members, manage each site, and communicate regularly with the citywide coordinator. One program element that is critical to this volunteer structure is that farms provide free CSA shares to each volunteer site coordinator.
- **Sign-up:** In Baltimore, members sign up directly through each farm (currently, two farms participate) and receive a pre-determined share of vegetables and fruit each week. Each site is required to have a minimum of ten full shares to have a dedicated delivery. Many participants split shares with a colleague.
- **Payment:** Members pay through the farm in advance of the season, and MAPS employees submit their payment receipt for the \$250 Health Reimbursement individually. Any employee may participate, but only MAPS employees have a reimbursement option.
- **Delivery:** Farms deliver on the same day weekly at fixed locations.
- **Seasonal timeline:** The program runs for approximately 24 weeks from June through November, although participants may sign up after the start of a season at a pro-rated price.
- **Inter-agency partnerships:** Partners include the Office of the Labor Commissioner of Baltimore City, Baltimore City Department of Human Resources, and the Baltimore Office of Sustainability.

## OUTCOMES:

- **Wellness Impact:**
  - 85% of survey respondents said that they ate more vegetables and fruits while participating in the CSA program in 2014.
  - 96% of survey respondents said that as a result of the CSA program, they tried vegetables or fruits that they had never eaten before.
  - 60% said that during the CSA program, most of the produce they ate was grown locally, up from 30% in the pre-survey.
- **Participation:**
  - An average of 120 city employees participated in Baltimore CSA's program in 2014 and 2015.
  - In 2015, 7 drop-off sites are in operation at workplaces across the city with two site coordinators managing each site.
  - 80% of 2014 participants were first-time CSA members.
  - 60% of MAPS employees used the wellness reimbursement.
- **Convenience:**
  - Produce is delivered weekly directly to the workplace, making fresh food easily accessible for all employees in the program.



## OTHER MODELS:

- **Madison, WI:** The nonprofit FairShare coordinates CSA rebates provided by several small regional HMOs for local employees. Some employers cover the difference of the cost of an HMO provider rebate, making the CSA share free.
- **Austin, TX:** The Texas Department of State Health Services created the Farm to Work program in response to a state workplace wellness law. A local nonprofit helps to match farmers to workplaces at nearly 30 sites statewide.







## Baltimarket Virtual Supermarket

The Virtual Supermarket Program is an innovative approach to food desert elimination that uses online grocery ordering and delivery to bring food to neighborhoods with low vehicle ownership and inadequate access to healthy foods. It enables residents to order groceries at their local library, senior/disabled housing, public housing, or from any computer and pick up their order at their community site for no delivery cost.

As the flagship program of the Baltimore City Health Department's *Baltimarket* food access initiatives, the Virtual Supermarket Program increases access to high quality affordable groceries in low-income neighborhoods, saving money and time. Payments can also be made with cash, credit or debit. It is the first community-based program nationally that uses online food ordering and accepts SNAP.



Key program components include:

- Free grocery delivery for customers to sites in food desert neighborhoods
- Acceptance of SNAP, debit, credit, and cash upon delivery
- Community-based planning, implementation, and evaluation
- Healthy food incentive coupons and nutrition programming



## Program Impact

As of July 2015, the Virtual Supermarket Program has served over 530 unique customers, who placed over 4,000 orders totaling over \$150,000.

The program has 4 sites: two in senior/disabled housing, one in public housing and one in a public library.

## Press and Other Recognition

The Virtual Supermarket is a nationally recognized, award-winning program that is key in Baltimore City Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake's healthy food access initiatives.



The program has been covered extensively from a local, national, and professional level.

- Honorable Mention, 2013 Archstone Foundation and the Aging and Public Health Section of the American Public Health Association Award for Excellence in Program Innovation ([http://www.archstone.org/usr\\_doc/AF\\_APHABrochure\\_Final\\_SinglePages\\_100813.pdf](http://www.archstone.org/usr_doc/AF_APHABrochure_Final_SinglePages_100813.pdf))
- *Bloomberg Business Week*: Fresh Relief for Baltimore's Food Deserts. By Meg Tirrell. (<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-08-23/fresh-relief-for-baltimores-food-deserts>)
- *New York Times Blog*, Mark Bittman: Cities, Soda Taxes, Obesity and More (<http://bittman.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/cities-soda-taxes-obesity-and-more/>)
- *USA Today*: Programs cropping up across USA to address 'food deserts' ([http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-07-13-food-deserts-farmers-market-agriculture\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-07-13-food-deserts-farmers-market-agriculture_n.htm))
- *Baltimore Sun*: City Relaunches Virtual Supermarket Program in Cherry Hill. By Yvonne Wegner. (<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-virtual-supermarket-20140729,0,1876268.story>)
- *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*: Report, "F as in Fat": Where you live – How much you weigh. (<http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH2011FasInFat10.pdf>)

For more information, please contact the Baltimore Market and Food Access Director Laura Flamm at 410-545-7544 or by email at [laura.flamm@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:laura.flamm@baltimorecity.gov).

[www.baltimarket.org](http://www.baltimarket.org) | <http://health.baltimorecity.gov/programs/baltimarket>

Thanks to our partners:



Leonard & Helen R. Stulman  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION





## Growing Great Kids!



Great Kids Farm is a 33acre outdoor learning laboratory that provides Baltimore City Public Schools' students with hands-on, real world experiences. The Farm engages students from pre-kindergarten through graduation in programs that begin with experiential learning visits and culminate in career pathways.

### Harvesting Success

- **Cultivating Knowledge** – More than three thousand City Schools' students visit Great Kids Farm annually to connect classroom curriculum to the world around them through experiential learning. Visits to the farm engage students in hands-on, exploratory activities that strengthen their understanding of soil science, plants, insects, and much more.
- **Enhancing Career and Technology Education** –Great Kids Farm serves as an outdoor learning laboratory for students in the agriculture, environmental science, and culinary arts Career and Technology Education pathways. From propagation and cultivation of to fresh fruits and vegetables to harvesting and preparing a gourmet meal for hundreds of people, Great Kids Farm provides students with real world experience, connections with industry professions, and the knowledge and skills needed for their future careers.
- **Learning to Work** - Each year Great Kids Farm provides rich work experiences for dozens of high school students through City Schools' Work Based Learning program. These young professionals develop critical thinking, problem solving, and leadership skills through engaging in the farm's daily activities, peer-mentoring, and marketing their harvest to local restaurants and the City Schools' lunch program.
- **Healthy Eating, Healthy Living!** – Through collaborations with business, non-profit, and governmental partners, Great Kids Farm plays an integral role in growing awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and living among City Schools' students and their families. From growing produce and living materials for students to eat and study at school to hosting events that showcase student leadership in creating a culture of health, Great Kids Farm creates district-wide opportunities to celebrate healthy eating and living.





Real Food Farm is a six-acre urban farm providing fresh, nutritious produce to Northeast Baltimore's communities. Real Food Farm works toward a just and sustainable food system by improving neighborhood access to healthy food, providing experience-based education, and developing an economically viable, environmentally responsible local agriculture sector.

### *Education Programs*

We welcome school groups from across the Baltimore region for hands-on learning during our field trips, internships, and service learning opportunities. We also host workshops and educational programs related to farming to support those of all ages interested in urban farming and the food system.

#### *Education Programs for Clifton-Area Schools*

Real Food Farm offers a variety of educational programming to schools located adjacent to the farm.

##### *Farm Club*

Farm Club is an after-school program for middle school students. Farm Club meets once a week during the fall and spring, and students have the opportunity to cultivate their own garden plots and participate in activities related to farming, food, and nutrition.

##### *Farm Lab*

Farm Lab is an opportunity for teachers to use Real Food Farm as an outdoor classroom. Projects take place during class time over the course of multiple days or weeks. Real Food Farm's Education Coordinator collaborates with educators to develop lessons that meet the standards and goals of the class.

##### *Afterschool Internships*

We offer a paid, semester-long high school internship for students in the Lake Clifton-area. Interns work at the farm multiple times per week and are involved in the growing, harvesting, and selling of produce. Interns assist with volunteer days and learn about topics related to agriculture, food systems, and food justice.

#### *Field Trips*

We offer one- to two-hour outdoor educational programs to pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students that includes a discovery activity, food sampling, and an age-appropriate work project. The Education Coordinator will tailor the visit according to each group's goals, interests, and time frame. Possible focus topics include:

- Exploring soil and compost
- Learning about bees, bugs, and worms
- Understanding food deserts
- Investigating ecosystems

#### *Daytime Internships*

Daytime interns earn academic credit working one day a week. They contribute to the operation of the farm and learn about the food system and nutrition.

#### *Service Learning*

Real Food Farm welcomes groups of up to 25 for service learning projects at the farm. Service learning projects are three hours long and include an orientation and tour of the farm.

#### *Workshops*

Real Food Farm hosts multiple educational workshops on a variety of topics including the business of urban farmer, farming techniques, and more. Updates on our upcoming workshops can be found on our website.

#### *Summer Jobs*

Real Food Farm partners with Baltimore City's YouthWorks program to employ students in internships about farming, cooking, nutrition, and environmental sustainability.

# Civic Works



## REAL FOOD FARM

### *Food Access*

Food access is generally understood as the **availability and accessibility of fresh food** to maintain a healthy and nutritious lifestyle. At Real Food Farm we attempt to increase food access using an assortment of methods. We set up Mobile Farmers Market stops in local areas to provide our neighbors in the surrounding communities with fresh fruits and veggies from our farm. We know that simply providing physical access to healthy food does not solve the issue, so we share information about nutrition, agriculture, and food systems as well. Increased familiarity with healthy foods and their sources helps people to include more fruits and vegetables in their diet.

### *Payment Options*

We accept cash, check, credit, debit, EBT, WIC Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC) and Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks at all of our Mobile Farmers Market stops.

Through our Double Dollars initiative, we can match up to \$10 of any purchase made with EBT, WIC FVC, and(S)FMNP.

# Real Food Farm's Mobile Farmers Market

A top priority at Real Food Farm is making our fresh, health produce available and affordable within the Northeast Baltimore neighborhoods surrounding Clifton Park. With our Mobile Farmers' Market, **we travel throughout these neighborhoods** hosting market stops and making home deliveries.

We strive to keep the produce we sell on the Mobile Market **affordable** without diminishing its value. This means we do our best to keep our prices below that of organic produce you'll find at farmers' markets, but above that of conventionally grown produce at supermarkets.

### *Neighborhood Markets*

The Mobile Farmers Market hosts several 'neighborhood market' stops per each week. These 2-hour markets provide at least one central location per market day where our customers can easily find us. We choose locations that are accessible and have potential to attract other vendors and grow into full farmers' markets. Let us know if you have an idea for a neighborhood market stop in your community.

### *Market Stops*

Each week our Mobile Farmers Market hosts market stops in addition to our neighborhood markets. Locations are chosen in conversation with partners with an aim to strengthen our surrounding community. Stops include local schools, offices, religious institutions, senior centers, and even busy intersections. Contact us if you'd like to set up a market stop near you!

### *Home Deliveries*

Our Mobile Farmers Market makes home deliveries Tuesday through Friday depending on our schedule and your availability. We strictly limit home deliveries to neighborhoods in Northeast Baltimore area, and set a \$10 minimum purchase limit (no delivery charge, though!) Some customers place a joint order with their neighbor in order to reach the \$10 minimum. If you are interested in our home delivery service, please contact us.

### *Questions? Contact us!*

Email: [rffcommunity@civicworks.com](mailto:rffcommunity@civicworks.com)

Phone: (443) 531-8346

Web: [www.realfoodfarm.org](http://www.realfoodfarm.org)



[www.facebook.com/rffpage](http://www.facebook.com/rffpage)



[@realfoodfarm](https://www.instagram.com/realfoodfarm)

For more information about other Civic Works' projects, visit [www.civicworks.com](http://www.civicworks.com)

# Policy



**INTRODUCTORY\***

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL \_\_\_\_\_**

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Introduced by: The Council President

At the request of: The Administration (Baltimore Development Corporation)

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**A BILL ENTITLED**

AN ORDINANCE concerning

**Personal Property Tax Credits – Food Desert Incentive Areas**

FOR the purpose of establishing a tax credit against the personal property tax imposed on qualified supermarkets in Food Desert Incentive Areas; imposing certain limitations, conditions, and qualifications for credit eligibility; providing for the amount, duration, and administration of the credit; defining certain terms; providing for a special effective date; and generally relating to a personal property tax credit for certain supermarkets.

BY adding

Article 28 - Taxes  
Section(s) 10-30  
Baltimore City Code  
(Edition 2000)

**SECTION 1. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the Laws of Baltimore City read as follows:

**Baltimore City Code**

**Article 28. Taxes**

**Subtitle 10. Credits**

**§ 10-30. FOOD DESERT INCENTIVE AREAS (PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX CREDIT)**

(A) *DEFINITIONS.*

(1) *IN GENERAL.*

IN THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING TERMS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) *FINANCE DIRECTOR.*

“FINANCE DIRECTOR” MEANS THE DIRECTOR OF THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

**EXPLANATION:** CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

**\* WARNING:** THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL, INTRODUCTORY COPY OF THE BILL.  
THE OFFICIAL COPY CONSIDERED BY THE CITY COUNCIL IS THE FIRST READER COPY.

OR THAT DIRECTOR'S DESIGNEE.

(3) *FOOD DESERT.*

"FOOD DESERT" MEANS AN AREA IN WHICH:

- (I) THE DISTANCE TO A SUPERMARKET IS MORE THAN ¼ MILE;
- (II) THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS AT OR BELOW 185% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL, AS MEASURED BY THE MOST RECENT 5-YEAR ESTIMATE OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU'S AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY;
- (III) OVER 30% OF HOUSEHOLDS HAVE NO VEHICLE AVAILABLE, AS MEASURED BY THE MOST RECENT 5-YEAR ESTIMATE OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU'S AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY; AND
- (IV) THE HEALTHY FOOD AVAILABILITY INDEX AVERAGE SCORE OF ALL FOOD STORES IS LOW, AS MEASURED BY THE JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER FOR A LIVEABLE FUTURE.

(4) *FOOD DESERT RETAIL INCENTIVE AREA.*

"FOOD DESERT INCENTIVE AREA" MEANS ANY AREA THAT IS:

- (I) A FOOD DESERT; OR
- (II) WITHIN ¼ MILE OF A FOOD DESERT.

(5) *INCLUDES; INCLUDING.*

"INCLUDES" OR "INCLUDING" MEANS BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION AND NOT BY WAY OF LIMITATION.

(6) *PERSONAL PROPERTY.*

"PERSONAL PROPERTY" MEANS ANY PERSONAL PROPERTY THAT IS SUBJECT TO THE CITY'S TAX ON PERSONAL PROPERTY.

(7) *QUALIFIED SUPERMARKET.*

"QUALIFIED SUPERMARKET" MEANS A SUPERMARKET THAT HAS BEEN NEWLY CONSTRUCTED OR NEWLY RENOVATED TO MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS IMPOSED BY THIS SUBTITLE.

(8) *SUPERMARKET.*

"SUPERMARKET" MEANS A GROCERY STORE THAT HAS:

- (I) ALL MAJOR FOOD DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING PRODUCE, MEAT, SEAFOOD, DAIRY, AND CANNED AND PACKAGED GOODS;
- (II) MORE THAN 50% OF TOTAL SALES DERIVED FROM FOOD SALES; AND
- (III) MORE THAN 50% OF TOTAL FLOOR SPACE DEDICATED TO FOOD SALES.



(B) *CREDIT GRANTED.*

IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE TAX-PROPERTY ARTICLE § 9-304, A TAX CREDIT IS GRANTED AGAINST THE CITY PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX IMPOSED ON QUALIFIED SUPERMARKETS.

(C) *QUALIFICATIONS FOR CREDIT.*

TO QUALIFY FOR THE CREDIT GRANTED BY THIS SECTION, A SUPERMARKET MUST:

- (1) BE LOCATED EITHER:
  - (I) IN A FOOD DESERT RETAIL INCENTIVE AREA; OR
  - (II) IN AN AREA THAT WOULD BE A FOOD DESERT RETAIL INCENTIVE AREA BUT FOR THAT SUPERMARKET'S PRESENCE;
- (2) HAVE EXPENDED ON NEW PERSONAL PROPERTY AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO THE GREATER OF:
  - (I) \$150,000; OR
  - (II) \$25 PER SQUARE FOOT OF TOTAL FLOOR SPACE;
- (3) HAVE AT LEAST 500 SQUARE FEET OF TOTAL FLOOR SPACE DEDICATED TO THE SALE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES; AND
- (4) HAVE AT LEAST 500 SQUARE FEET OF TOTAL FLOOR SPACE DEDICATED TO THE SALE OF OTHER PERISHABLE GOODS, INCLUDING MEAT, SEAFOOD, AND DAIRY PRODUCTS; AND

(D) *AMOUNT OF CREDIT.*

THE AMOUNT OF THE CREDIT GRANTED UNDER THIS SECTION IS EQUAL TO:

- (1) THE AMOUNT OF PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE DUE IN THE CURRENT TAX YEAR ON THE SUPERMARKET'S PERSONAL PROPERTY, LESS
- (2) THE AMOUNT OF ANY OTHER CREDIT APPLICABLE IN THE CURRENT TAX YEAR TO THE PERSONAL PROPERTY, MULTIPLIED BY
- (3) 80%.

(E) *APPLICATION.*

THE OWNER OF THE PERSONAL PROPERTY FOR WHICH A CREDIT UNDER THIS SECTION IS BEING SOUGHT MUST FILE AN APPLICATION WITH THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AT LEAST 90 DAYS BEFORE THE 1<sup>ST</sup> TAX YEAR FOR WHICH THE CREDIT IS SOUGHT.

(F) *TERM OF CREDIT.*

THE TERM OF THE CREDIT IS 10 TAX YEARS.

(G) *CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY.*

THE OWNER OF THE PERSONAL PROPERTY FOR WHICH A CREDIT HAS BEEN GRANTED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL ENSURE THAT, THROUGHOUT THE CREDIT PERIOD, THE SUPERMARKET:

- (1) CONTINUES TO OPERATE AS A SUPERMARKET; AND
- (2) IS MAINTAINED IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH:
  - (I) THE CITY HEALTH ARTICLE; AND
  - (II) THE CITY BUILDING, FIRE, AND RELATED CODES ARTICLE.

(H) *ADMINISTRATION.*

THE FINANCE DIRECTOR, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE BALTIMORE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:

- (1) SHALL ADOPT RULES AND REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THIS SECTION, INCLUDING PROCEDURES, FORMS, AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR THE CREDIT AUTHORIZED BY THIS SECTION AND TO PERIODICALLY EVIDENCE CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CREDIT;
- (2) IN THOSE RULES AND REGULATIONS, MAY DEFINE OR FURTHER DEFINE ANY TERMS USED IN CONNECTION WITH THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR OR COMPUTATION OF THE CREDIT AUTHORIZED BY THIS SECTION;
- (3) MAY SETTLE DISPUTED CLAIMS ARISING IN CONNECTION WITH THE CREDIT AUTHORIZED BY THIS SECTION; AND
- (4) MAY DELEGATE TO ANY OTHER CITY AGENCY OR TO THE BALTIMORE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION ANY OF HER OR HIS MINISTERIAL POWERS, DUTIES, OR FUNCTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CREDIT AUTHORIZED BY THIS SECTION.

**SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That the catchlines contained in this Ordinance are not law and may not be considered to have been enacted as a part of this or any prior Ordinance.

**SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That this Ordinance takes effect on the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the date it is enacted and is applicable to all tax years beginning after December 31, 2015.

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**  
**ORDINANCE \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Council Bill 14-0420**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Welch, Henry, Scott, Kraft, Stokes, Branch, Clarke  
Introduced and read first time: July 17, 2014  
Assigned to: Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments  
Council action: Adopted  
Read second time: April 27, 2015

---

**AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING**

**Property Tax Credits – Urban Agriculture**

FOR the purpose of establishing a property tax credit for urban agricultural property; providing for the amount, duration, and possible early termination of the credit; imposing certain limitations, conditions, and qualifications; providing for the administration of the credit; requiring providing that the credit be repaid and a surcharge imposed under certain circumstances; defining certain terms; and generally relating to the a property tax credit for urban agricultural property.

BY adding  
Article 28 - Taxes  
Section(s) 10-18  
Baltimore City Code  
(Edition 2000)

**SECTION 1. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the Laws of Baltimore City read as follows:

**Baltimore City Code**

**Article 28. Taxes**

**Subtitle 10. Credits**

**§ 10-18. URBAN AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY.**

(A) *DEFINITIONS.*

(1) *IN GENERAL.*

IN THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

**EXPLANATION:** CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.  
Underlining indicates matter added to the bill by amendment.  
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from existing law by amendment.

**Council Bill 14-0420**

1 (2) *INCLUDES; INCLUDING.*

2 “INCLUDES” OR “INCLUDING” MEANS BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION AND NOT BY WAY OF  
3 LIMITATION.

4 (3) *SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE.*

5 “SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE” MEANS THE BALTIMORE CITY OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY,  
6 ESTABLISHED BY CITY CODE ARTICLE 1, SUBTITLE 34.

7 (4) *URBAN AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY.*

8 “URBAN AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN STATE  
9 TAX-PROPERTY ARTICLE, § 9-253.

10 (5) *URBAN AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES.*

11 “URBAN AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN STATE  
12 TAX-PROPERTY ARTICLE, § 9-253.

13 (6) *VALUE.*

14 “VALUE” MEANS THE AMOUNT EQUAL TO:

15 (I) THE GROSS INCOME THAT IS ACTUALLY RECEIVED FROM SALES OF  
16 ~~AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS~~ PLANTS, PLANT PRODUCTS, ANIMALS, OR ANIMAL  
17 PRODUCTS PRODUCED ON SITE; OR

18 (II) FOR ~~PRODUCTS~~ PLANTS, PLANT PRODUCTS, ANIMALS, OR ANIMAL PRODUCTS  
19 THAT ARE DISTRIBUTED FREE OR AT LESS THAN APPLICABLE MARKET PRICES,  
20 THE GROSS INCOME THAT COULD REASONABLY BE ASSUMED TO BE RECEIVED  
21 FROM ~~SALE OF THOSE PRODUCTS~~ THEIR SALE AT MARKET PRICES.

22 (B) *CREDIT GRANTED.*

23 IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE TAX-PROPERTY ARTICLE § 9-253, A TAX CREDIT IS  
24 GRANTED AGAINST THE CITY PROPERTY TAX IMPOSED ON QUALIFIED URBAN  
25 AGRICULTURAL PROPERTIES.

26 (C) *QUALIFICATIONS FOR CREDIT.*

27 (1) *IN GENERAL.*

28 (I) TO QUALIFY FOR THE CREDIT GRANTED BY THIS SECTION, A PARCEL OF LAND:

29 (A) MUST BE AN URBAN AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY THAT IS BEING USED FOR  
30 URBAN AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES;

31 (B) MAY NOT BE USED FOR ANY OTHER ~~FOR-PROFIT~~ PURPOSE THAT WOULD  
32 SUBJECT THE PARCEL TO PROPERTY TAX LIABILITY; ~~AND.~~

**Council Bill 14-0420**

1                    (C) MUST BE MAINTAINED IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE BUILDING, FIRE,  
2                    AND RELATED CODES ARTICLE OF BALTIMORE CITY; AND

3                    (D) ~~(C)~~ UNLESS A WAIVER IS GRANTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS  
4                    SUBSECTION, MUST PRODUCE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS VALUED AT AND  
5                    EITHER SELL OR OTHERWISE DISTRIBUTE EACH TAX YEAR PLANTS, PLANT  
6                    PRODUCTS, ANIMALS, OR ANIMAL PRODUCTS WITH AN AGGREGATE VALUE  
7                    OF \$5,000 OR MORE PER TAX YEAR.

8                    (2) *DOCUMENTATION OF PRODUCT VALUE.*

9                    THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE MAY REQUIRE AN OWNER TO VERIFY ~~PRODUCT VALUE~~  
10                    VALUES BY PROVIDING COPIES OF SALES RECEIPTS OR INVOICES AND, IF RELEVANT,  
11                    EVIDENCE OF CURRENT MARKET RATES.

12                    (3) *WAIVER OF VALUE REQUIREMENT.*

13                    (I) THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE MAY GRANT A WAIVER TO THE ~~PRODUCT VALUE~~  
14                    VALUE REQUIREMENT IF, IN THE TAX YEAR FOR WHICH THE CREDIT IS BEING  
15                    SOUGHT, THE AGRICULTURAL USE OF THE PROPERTY:

16                    (A) IS NEWLY ESTABLISHED; OR

17                    (B) HAS SUFFERED AN UNEXPECTED DISASTER, SUCH AS DROUGHT,  
18                    VANDALISM, OR INFESTATION

19                    (II) A WAIVER MAY NOT BE GRANTED UNDER THIS PARAGRAPH FOR MORE THAN 2  
20                    CONSECUTIVE TAX YEARS.

21                    (D) *AMOUNT OF CREDIT.*

22                    THE AMOUNT OF THE CREDIT GRANTED UNDER THIS SECTION IS EQUAL TO:

23                    (1) THE AMOUNT OF PROPERTY TAX THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE ~~IMPOSED~~ DUE ON THE  
24                    PROPERTY, LESS

25                    (2) THE AMOUNT OF ANY OTHER CREDIT APPLICABLE TO THE PROPERTY IN THAT TAX  
26                    YEAR, MULTIPLIED BY

27                    (3) 90%.

28                    (E) *APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION.*

29                    (1) A PROPERTY OWNER SEEKING TO OBTAIN AND ANNUALLY MAINTAIN A CREDIT UNDER  
30                    THIS SECTION MUST:

31                    (I) AT 90 DAYS BEFORE THE 1<sup>ST</sup> TAX YEAR FOR WHICH THE CREDIT IS SOUGHT, FILE  
32                    AN APPLICATION FOR THE CREDIT WITH THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE; AND

**Council Bill 14-0420**

1 (II) AT LEAST 90 DAYS BEFORE EACH SUBSEQUENT TAX YEAR DURING THE TERM OF  
2 THE CREDIT, FILE WITH THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE A CERTIFICATION THAT  
3 THE PROPERTY CONTINUES TO BE USED FOR URBAN AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES  
4 AND TO MEET ALL OTHER QUALIFICATION FOR THE CREDIT.

5 (2) THE APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION MUST BE IN THE FORM AND CONTAIN THE  
6 INFORMATION THAT THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE REQUIRES.

7 (F) *TERM OF CREDIT.*

8 (1) THE TERM OF THE CREDIT IS 5 TAX YEARS, UNLESS RENEWED.

9 (2) ON APPLICATION MADE NO LATER THAN 90 DAYS BEFORE EXPIRATION OF THE 5-YEAR  
10 TERM, A PROPERTY OWNER MAY APPLY TO RENEW THE CREDIT FOR ANOTHER 5 TAX  
11 YEARS.

12 (G) *CONTINUOUS AGRICULTURAL USE REQUIRED.*

13 (1) IN GENERAL.

14 IF, AT ANY TIME DURING THE INITIAL 5-YEAR TERM OF THE CREDIT OR DURING A 5-  
15 YEAR RENEWAL TERM, THE PROPERTY CEASES TO BE USED FOR URBAN AGRICULTURAL  
16 PURPOSES:

17 (I) ~~(1)~~ THE CREDIT GRANTED TO THE PROPERTY IS TERMINATED; AND

18 (II) ~~(2)~~ THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY IS LIABLE FOR:

19 (A) ALL PROPERTY TAXES THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN ~~IMPOSED~~ DUE DURING  
20 THAT 5-YEAR TERM HAD IF THE CREDIT HAD NOT BEEN GRANTED, PLUS

21 (B) A SURCHARGE AT THE RATE OF 1% FOR EACH MONTH OR FRACTION OF  
22 A MONTH ACCOUNTING FROM THE DATES THAT THOSE TAXES WOULD  
23 HAVE BECOME DUE HAD THE CREDIT NEVER BEEN GRANTED THROUGH  
24 THE DATE ON WHICH THE TAXES FIRST BECAME DUE BY APPLICATION OF  
25 THIS SUBSECTION.

26 (2) GOOD-CAUSE WAIVER OF INTEREST AND PENALTIES.

27 (I) A PROPERTY OWNER MAY APPLY TO THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE FOR A WAIVER OF  
28 ALL OR PART OF THE SURCHARGE IMPOSED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS  
29 SUBSECTION.

30 (II) THE PROPERTY OWNER HAS THE BURDEN TO DEMONSTRATE THAT:

31 (A) THE CESSATION OF THE PROPERTY'S USE FOR URBAN AGRICULTURAL  
32 PURPOSES WAS THE RESULT OF CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE OWNER'S  
33 CONTROL; AND

**Council Bill 14-0420**

1 (B) THE OWNER OTHERWISE MEETS THE REQUISITE CRITERIA FOR A WAIVER, AS  
2 ESTABLISHED IN THE RULES AND REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER  
3 SUBSECTION (H)(1)(I) OF THIS SECTION.

4 (III) THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE SHALL CONSULT WITH THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE  
5 BEFORE DENYING OR GRANTING THE APPLICATION FOR A WAIVER, IN WHOLE OR IN  
6 PART.

7 (H) *ADMINISTRATION.*

8 THE ~~SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE~~ DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE  
9 ~~DIRECTOR OF FINANCE~~, MAY SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE:

10 (1) SHALL ADOPT RULES AND REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THIS SECTION, INCLUDING:

11 (I) THE PROCEDURES, FORMS, AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR  
12 THE CREDIT AND TO PERIODICALLY EVIDENCE CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY FOR  
13 THE CREDIT; AND

14 (II) THE PROCEDURES AND GOVERNING CRITERIA FOR OBTAINING A SURCHARGE  
15 WAIVER UNDER SUBSECTION (G)(2) OF THIS SECTION;

16 (2) MAY SETTLE DISPUTED CLAIMS THAT MIGHT ARISE IN CONNECTION WITH THE  
17 CREDIT; AND

18 (3) (2) MAY DELEGATE TO ANY OTHER CITY AGENCY OR EMPLOYEE THE POWERS,  
19 DUTIES, OR FUNCTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE  
20 CREDIT.

21 (I) *ANALYSES AND REPORT ON COSTS AND BENEFITS.*

22 ~~(4) THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE~~ DIRECTOR OF  
23 FINANCE, MUST ANALYZE THE PUBLIC COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE CREDITS GRANTED  
24 UNDER THIS SECTION AND ANNUALLY REPORT HIS OR HER ITS FINDINGS TO THE BOARD  
25 OF ESTIMATES AND THE CITY COUNCIL

26 ~~(2) THE METHOD OF ANALYSIS USED BY THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE MUST BE APPROVED~~  
27 ~~BY THE BOARD OF ESTIMATES.~~

28 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That the catchlines contained in this Ordinance  
29 are not law and may not be considered to have been enacted as a part of this or any prior  
30 Ordinance.

31 **SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> tax year for which a tax credit  
32 is authorized under this Ordinance, the Mayor and City Council must evaluate the effectiveness  
33 of the credit in promoting the use of property for urban agricultural purposes

34 **SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That this Ordinance takes effect on the 30<sup>th</sup> day  
35 after the date it is enacted.

**Council Bill 14-0420**

Certified as duly passed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Baltimore City Council

Certified as duly delivered to Her Honor, the Mayor,  
this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Clerk

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor, Baltimore City





## 2015 Adopted Resolution

The U.S. Conference of Mayors  
83rd Annual Meeting  
June 19-22, 2015  
San Francisco

### Urging the Passage of a Child Nutrition Reauthorization That Supports Healthy Meal Opportunities For Infants, Children, and Teens

WHEREAS, Mayors assert that infants, children, and teens should have access to healthy food, no matter where they live, yet 16.2 million children in this country live in food insecure households and rates of food insecurity were substantially higher for households with children headed by single women or single men, and Black- and Hispanic-headed households; and

WHEREAS, federally funded child nutrition programs exist to serve these age groups, but barriers to increasing participation often exist due to piecemeal authorizing legislation and inflexible regulations; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization offers an opportunity to update the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and the Special Milk Program; and

WHEREAS, the improvements to nutrition and quality of School Lunch Program meals included in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 resulted in clear increases in fruit and vegetable intake without increased food waste and without decreased revenue or participation in the vast majority of the nation's schools; and

WHEREAS, only about half of the students in this country that receive free- or reduced-price lunch also receive School Breakfast, and there are innovative models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom, that have shown increases in participation; and

WHEREAS, only one in seven kids who may need summer meals receives them, and the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization offers an opportunity to update the Summer Food Service Program which includes provisions that would reduce red tape, increase eligibility, and allow sites to serve three meals per day, giving children the same access to meals that they have during the school year; and

WHEREAS, the Child and Adult Care Food Program served 551 million meals in 2013 and provides funding for meals for some of the most vulnerable populations such as at-risk and homeless children; and

WHEREAS, WIC has improved at-risk children's health, growth and development, and prevented nutrition-related and other health problems for 40 years, and promotes breastfeeding, reduces childhood obesity and improves cognitive performance of young children, and reduces the risk for preterm birth and low birth-weight babies by 25% and 44%, respectively, and for every dollar spent on a pregnant woman in WIC, up to \$4.21 is saved in Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, 1.7 million WIC participants received Farmers Market Nutrition benefits in 2012 to increase their ability to purchase and eat fresh, healthy, local produce; and

WHEREAS, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides produce snacks to children in low-income schools, increasing their fruit and vegetable intake and familiarizing them with eating produce; and NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the ability of cities to provide access to healthy and affordable meals before, during and after school for all children, all year long; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the continued funding and expansion of child nutrition programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors opposes any rollbacks to the nutrition standards included in the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of

2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the expansion of School Breakfast and innovative delivery models such as Breakfast in the Classroom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges Congress to allow for more flexibility around where children are able to eat Summer Meals, by allowing them to pick up meals from sites and eat them at home, or allowing states the option to provide low-income families with additional funds for groceries during the summer, and that children be allowed to eat three meals a day through the program by removing any restrictions to the number and type of meals that may be served; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors endorses the full continuous funding for the WIC program to reach all nutritionally at-risk, eligible women and children with nutrition services and supplemental foods and to encourage and support breastfeeding, healthy eating, physical activity, and overweight prevention for children and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports programs that increase access to fresh, affordable produce for children such as the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and WIC FMNP; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges Congress to continue to pass federal legislation that reflects the innovation and flexibility that cities have demonstrated in implementing pilots and other federal programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports passage of a Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, which incorporates the above stated goals and principles, before its current expiration of September 30, 2015. --

Projected Cost: Unknown

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THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

# 83<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

June 19-22, 2015 in San Francisco, CA

#uscm2015



Title Sponsor

## 2015 Adopted Resolution

The U.S. Conference of Mayors  
83rd Annual Meeting  
June 19-22, 2015  
San Francisco

### Opposing The Efforts of the United States Congress to Cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Other Provisions within the 2014 Farm Bill

WHEREAS, Mayors recognize the many important benefits to cities from federal nutrition assistance programs that provide access to healthy foods for under-resourced communities; and

WHEREAS, there are major concerns in urban America regarding hunger and food insecurity, lack of access to healthy food, and chronic diseases related to poor diet such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases; and

WHEREAS, for the first time in the 83-year history of The United States Conference of Mayors, Mayors adopted a position on the Farm Bill in 2012 that supported strong local and regional food systems and opposed steep cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would exacerbate poverty in cities; and

WHEREAS, the areas of cities which have the highest rates of enrollment in federal nutrition assistance programs also have the least access to healthy food and the highest rates of obesity and diet-related diseases, which ultimately lead to significant health related costs at the federal and local levels; and

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors opposed cuts to SNAP and restrictions of "Heat and Eat" policies in the last budget appropriations; and

WHEREAS, The House of Representatives approved a budget on March 25, 2015 containing \$1 billion worth of farm bill spending cuts over 10 years and a massive reorganization of SNAP that would shift control from the USDA to individual states, eliminate or reduce benefits to every SNAP household, and jeopardize the national economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, the 2014 Farm Bill authorized much needed investments in incentive and promotion programs that deliver healthy, affordable, and local food to our cities, including \$31.5 million through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program that will fund local, state, and national organizations to support programs that help SNAP participants purchase more fruits and vegetables; and NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors opposes the efforts of Congress to make cuts to SNAP through the adoption of a Federal Budget that will make it more difficult for residents to put an adequate, healthy meal on the table, increase poverty, and further strain the emergency food systems in our cities, including food pantries and homeless shelters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the promotion of food security and the health and well-being of our residents by maintaining funding levels for SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors opposes any efforts to turn SNAP into a block grant program administered by the states that would create additional confusion and reduce efficiencies in the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors opposes the efforts of Congress to levy cuts in the 2014 Farm Bill after years of effort and compromise to produce an adequate Bill. --

Projected Cost: Unknown



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

# 83<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

June 19-22, 2015 in San Francisco, CA

#uscm2015



Title Sponsor

## 2015 Adopted Resolution

The U.S. Conference of Mayors  
83rd Annual Meeting  
June 19-22, 2015  
San Francisco

### Urging the Integration of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's Recommendations in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors recognizes the value of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) in designing and implementing nutrition and food assistance programs, developing health and nutrition education messages, and informing the decision-making of health professionals and policymakers; and

WHEREAS, there are major concerns about diet-related diseases, low average intakes of healthful foods, and high average consumption of unhealthful foods among Americans currently; and

WHEREAS, there are major concerns about the degree of environmental sustainability associated with the American diet, the food production methods supporting that diet, and the impact on natural resources and long-term food security; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) appoint a Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) consisting of nationally recognized experts in the fields of nutrition and health to conduct thorough systematic reviews of the relevant scientific literature in order to provide insightful evidence-based recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the DGAC has recommended in their Scientific Report various dietary patterns that have been found to be the most health-promoting, sustainable, and likely to ensure food security now and in the future for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the DGAC does not include any discussion of environmental sustainability beyond its relationship to nutrition, health, and food security, and finds that the most health-promoting dietary patterns are also the most sustainable; and

WHEREAS, incorporating the DGAC's recommendations in the final dietary guidelines could contribute to population-wide improvements in nutrition and health outcomes as well as improved food security.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the incorporation of sustainability in the final dietary guidelines as they relate to ensuring a safe and nutritious diet for all Americans now and in the future; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports the creation of dietary guidelines that encourage Americans to adopt dietary patterns that are higher in plant-based foods and lower in animal-based foods than current average American diets, as such patterns have been found in systematic reviews to be the most health-promoting and sustainable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the Secretaries of USDA and HHS and their respective staffs to incorporate the DGAC's evidence-based recommendations regarding healthy dietary patterns and sustainability in the formulation of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. --

Projected Cost: Unknown

# Research



## Collaboration meets opportunity: The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

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Rachel Yong,<sup>b</sup> Acumen, LLC

Anne Palmer,<sup>c\*</sup> Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Livable Future

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### Abstract

As cities across the nation seek to improve healthy food access, this participant observer case study highlights how one midsized city successfully developed a collaborative infrastructure to understand and address inequity in healthy food access. We trace the genesis and evolution of Baltimore's Food Policy Task Force, the hiring of a food policy director, and the establishment of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, which is an

intergovernmental partnership to increase access to healthy, affordable foods in urban food deserts. While some cities have approached food access issues through community coalitions pressuring city government or government edicts, Baltimore successfully identified its need, used available research to drive and inform action, established priorities, and acted expeditiously with a focus on sustainability. This case study is relevant and applicable for those seeking to influence change in local food policy in midsized urban settings.

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### Keywords

food policy, collaboration, food access, local government, food system mapping, community food security

### Introduction

Since the 1980s, food system stakeholders across North America have formed entities to consolidate their efforts to increase the accessibility, consump-

tion, and affordability of healthy and sustainable food (Clancy, Hammer, & Lippoldt, 2007; Scherb, Palmer, Frattaroli, & Pollack, 2012). They are motivated by a variety of issues — frustration with supermarket chains relocating to the suburbs, increasing rates of diet-related diseases, loss of farmland, and the poor quality of school meals — all of which reflect broader trends in the food system (Scherb et al., 2012). As a result, the nation has seen an increase in food policy groups, councils, or coalitions that are attempting to change food policy at the city, state, regional, and tribal level (Neuner, Kelly, & Raja, 2011; Scherb et al., 2012). These policy actions have the opportunity to create organization and institutional changes, potentially modeling effective solutions for the federal, state, and local level, and can also help nonprofits seeking to improve access to nutritious foods and address food insecurity in urban settings.

How and where food policy councils (FPCs) originate has a lasting influence on their evolution and potential impact. Some of the earliest iterations of FPCs were started in the 1980s by city governments to cope with hunger, nutrition, and food supply issues (Clancy et al., 2007). A recent report analyzing 13 U.S. municipal food policy directors (sought out through the Urban Sustainability Directors Network) found that over half of the cities' efforts originated from within local government through a centralized, top-down approach directed by the mayor, a city council member, or another civil servant (Hatfield, 2012). While that government model remains commonly used by various jurisdictions, nonprofits have also housed and supported FPC efforts, particularly when potential FPC members may not have a favorable attitude toward government (Schiff, 2008) or, as in the case of the Los Angeles FPC, the founders sought to establish a larger, more inclusive, and public-driven coalition of working groups (Hatfield, 2012). Oakland's FPC took a hybrid approach (Schiff, 2008) by having city government initiate a food system study, passing a city council recommendation to create an FPC, and then selecting a nonprofit to house the council (Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, & Lambrick, 2009).

The experience of the City of Baltimore and its

creation of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) illustrate this hybrid model. BFPI was prompted by the coordination of work between several community stakeholders and city officials, but its formation, particularly its unique rendition of the role of the food policy director, was more centrally directed and ultimately centrally funded. The series of events that led to the BFPI's current status arose in an opportunistic manner that contributed to its noteworthy and prompt progress in consolidating various efforts to improve food access and food security.

The City of Baltimore has been described as “one of the most progressive cities in addressing food insecurity” (Messner, 2012). While each community is unique and there is no straightforward formula for addressing public food policy, the Baltimore experience is illustrative of what can happen when utilizing a strategic approach in a progressive environment. In this case study, we examine the issue of food access and insecurity in Baltimore; the founding of the Food Policy Task Force; the hiring of one of the country's first food policy directors; the subsequent development of the BFPI, currently the country's largest food policy program in terms of full-time salaried positions; and the structure, functioning, and jurisdiction of this interdisciplinary, comprehensive body. Finally, we will discuss what others working on local food policy can learn from Baltimore's model and experience.

It should be noted that the authors of this paper have been and are currently involved with various aspects of Baltimore's food policy efforts. Anne Palmer has been involved in Baltimore food policy since 2007. Rachel Yong was the Healthy Food Coordinator for the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative from 2011 to 2013. Raychel Santo was a public health studies and global environmental change and sustainability double-major senior at Johns Hopkins University. We have striven to provide an accurate account; however, we fully acknowledge that while our engagement in the development of the BFPI as participant-observers gives us a unique perspective, there is also the potential for a bias. To maximize the accuracy of our account, the draft manuscript was shared and revised with key stakeholders' input.

## Methods

The information presented in this case study was gathered primarily through document analysis, interviews, a literature review of other local food policy initiatives, and, as mentioned above, direct experience with the events. Document analysis included reviewing reports and website information provided by the Baltimore City Planning and Health departments; archives of the *Baltimore Sun* and other local newspapers; and meeting agendas, transcripts, and reports from the original Baltimore Food Policy Task Force. During October 2012, Raychel Santo conducted taped interviews with Holly Freishtat, the Baltimore Food Policy director, and co-author Anne Palmer to collect details about the development of the BFPI. The authors later conducted a literature review to contextualize Baltimore's progress with similar efforts in other cities. To ensure accurate representation of the events, final drafts of the paper were shared with key participants Holly Freishtat, Seema Iyer, and Joyce Smith, and edited based on feedback.

## Overview

Baltimore City is a midsized city of approximately 620,000 residents who identify themselves with 55 unique neighborhoods (Baltimore City Health Department, 2012; United States Census Bureau, 2013). Food insecurity affects nearly 14 percent of Baltimore households (Food Research and Action Center, 2013). These families report not having “enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle” (Food Research and Action Center, 2013). The median family income in Baltimore is US\$40,100 and its population is predominantly African American (63.6 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Racial disparity plays a role in food insecurity. The Baltimore City Health Department's Office of Epidemiology and Planning (2010) gave the city a “D” in the disparity between blacks and whites on food insecurity, with almost 2.5 times more blacks than whites reporting concerns about not having enough healthy food. Access to nutritious food is recognized by the city as an important social determinant of health (Baltimore City Health Department, Office of Epidemiology and Planning, 2010).

In Baltimore, areas where inhabitants have

limited access to supermarkets and healthy foods correspond to higher rates of diet-related disease (Center for a Livable Future, 2012). Obesity and poor diet are associated with the first and third leading causes of death in Baltimore, cardiovascular disease at 26.7 percent and stroke at 5.3 percent, respectively (Baltimore City Health Department, n.d.). In Baltimore, 67.7 percent of adults and 38.4 percent of high school students surveyed, respectively, randomly through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, in 2007 were overweight or obese, and obesity prevalence is about 30 percent higher in Baltimore than in Maryland as a whole or nationally (Baltimore City Health Department, 2008).

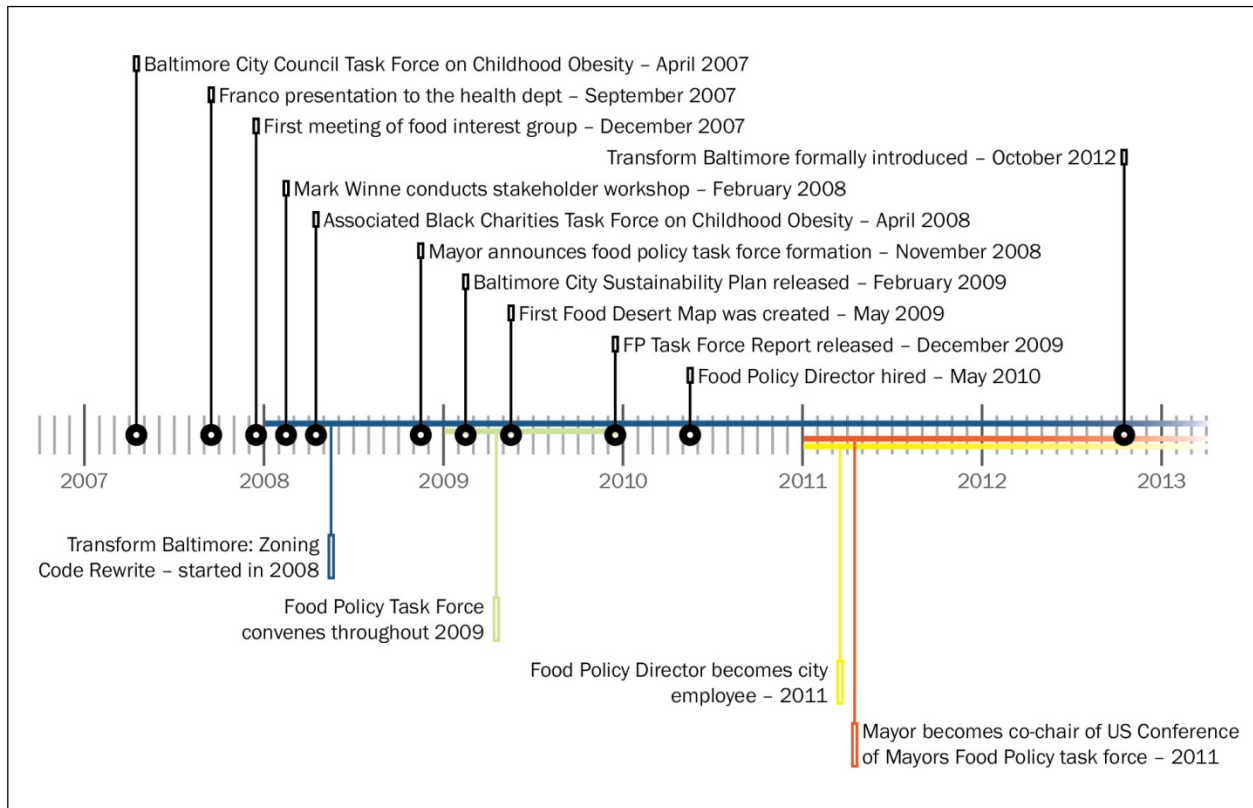
In its efforts to address these public health issues, Baltimore City followed the national trend in the formation of a city-level food policy group, but through a unique, circumstantial, and notably successful way. This case study details, in chronological order, how Baltimore developed an infrastructure for food policy work during this time (see Figure 1).

## Existing Local Policies (2000–2008)

In response to supermarket chains increasing their presence in the surrounding suburbs, then-Mayor Martin O'Malley launched a grocery store initiative in 2000 that attracted 17 grocery stores to the city in 2.5 years (Baltimore City Planning Department, 2003). Following this development, the Planning Department adopted a comprehensive plan in 2006 that included a goal to “Ensure all residents are within 1.5 miles [2.4 km] of quality groceries and neighborhood services.” The comprehensive plan acknowledged the role of the Health Department in achieving this goal; as a result, senior staff from both departments met in 2007 to discuss the plan. In addition, the Baltimore City Council later convened the Task Force on Childhood Obesity in 2007 (Baltimore City Council, 2007). In 2008, they released final recommendations related to the food environment to “improve access to and affordability of healthy foods for low-income populations in Baltimore City” and to “develop policies that will support healthy eating among Baltimore City residents” (Baltimore City Health Department,



**Figure 1. Baltimore's Food Policy Timeline, 2007–2012**



2008). With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Associated Black Charities (ABC) also launched its own task force on childhood obesity in 2007. ABC highlighted the food policy council model as a promising institution and committed to providing support to community partners to improve the local food environment (Associated Black Charities, 2011). In March 2008, the City Council, and subsequently then-Mayor Sheila Dixon, approved a ban on the sale of all restaurant foods with trans fats,<sup>1</sup> which went into effect in September 2009 (Dash, 2008).

<sup>1</sup> Trans fats (found in partially hydrogenated oils) are industrially created fats made by the transformation of liquid vegetable oils into solid fats. According to the American Heart Association, trans fats raise levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol and lower HDL (good) cholesterol levels, thereby increasing one's risk for heart disease, stroke, and type II diabetes. As a result of these poor health consequences, many cities have been banning the use of trans fats in restaurants in order to reduce public consumption of trans fats.

### Individual Organization Efforts (2000–2009)

Food insecurity and health disparities were becoming increasingly apparent to policymakers, funders, nonprofits, community advocates, leaders, and academics in Baltimore in the early 2000s. It is important to note that Baltimore in particular had a relative absence of large-scale, coordinated efforts on healthy food access from the nonprofit sector. While many organizations and institutions were already addressing some food system issues, they were working in relative isolation from each other up to that time.

In early 2009, the Health Department created the Charm City Health Award for Nutritional Information, to be awarded to food facilities that display point-of-purchase nutrition information about menu items including calories, saturated fat, carbohydrates, and sodium (Baltimore City Health Department, Bureau of Food Control, 2009). Meanwhile, the Planning Department began its first zoning code rewrite in decades, a process that

was completed in March 2013 (Baltimore City Planning Department, n.d.a). The new code includes provisions to support the development of urban agriculture and other public health and environmental sustainability considerations.

Anthony Geraci assumed the position of the Baltimore City public school director of food and nutrition in July 2008. Under his leadership, Great Kids Farm, a 33-acre (13-hectare) farm in a Baltimore suburb owned and operated by the city public school system, was founded to provide hands-on educational opportunities for students (Simmons, 2009). Geraci also began sourcing produce from local farms and significantly increased participation in the school breakfast program.

Little was happening in the commercial sector during the early 2000s. The city had seven farmers' markets, two limited grocery delivery services, and a community supported agriculture program through One Straw Farm that had established several drop-off sites.

In the nonprofit sector, Maryland Food Bank operated a popular free Produce Giveaway Program, distributing produce to a statewide network of soup kitchens, food pantries, and emergency shelters, including some in Baltimore City. Produce Giveaways typically delivered 7,000 pounds (3,175 kg) of fresh produce one to three times a week in Baltimore City (Maryland Food Bank, n.d.). The Food for Life food and nutrition education program was also in operation at two Baltimore City public schools (Riddims, 2007).

The local food environment was an active topic of interest for researchers in Baltimore's academic institutions. Joel Gittelsohn of the Center for Human Nutrition at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has led a team since 2002 in conducting research on food store-based environmental nutrition interventions. In 2006, the team partnered with the Baltimore City Health Department and other community organizations to begin an intervention study called the Baltimore Healthy Stores Project (BHSP). BHSP was aimed at improving the availability and purchasing of healthy food in low-income Baltimore corner stores and supermarkets (Song, Gittelsohn, Kim, Suratkar, Sharma, & Anliker, 2009). Gittelsohn worked in collaboration with the Korean American

Grocers & Licensed Beverage Association of Maryland (KAGRO) to assist storeowners in stocking healthy foods in local corner stores. He then assessed their opinions and perceived barriers to offering healthy foods. As an extension of the BHSP, Gittelsohn also initiated the Baltimore Healthy Eating Zones Project to improve the availability of healthy foods in corner stores near 12 Baltimore City recreation centers, training peer mentors and recreation center staff in nutrition and healthy eating promotion for kids.

### **Needs Assessment (2007–2009)**

In 2007 Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF), an interdisciplinary academic center based at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, partnered with Operation ReachOut Southwest (OROSW), a coalition of community associations led by Joyce Smith that organizes community associations in Southwest Baltimore. As part of work by OROSW's health committee to reduce health disparities, it conducted a community food assessment (Palmer, Smith, Haering, & McKenzie, 2009). This study identified community members' key food and nutrition concerns and measured the availability of healthy foods in Southwest Baltimore City. Out of a complete sample of the 41 food stores OROSW residents shopped in (35 within OROSW boundaries — including two supermarkets — and six nearby stores), the assessment found that 75 percent of the stores did not offer any fruits, and 68 percent did not offer any vegetables. In addition, residents reported that 46 percent of their food-related shopping visits were made to corner stores.

Meanwhile, Manuel Franco, a PhD student and Innovation Grant recipient from the CLF, was in the process of mapping healthy food availability and health outcomes across 159 contiguous Baltimore neighborhoods and in the 226 food stores within them. He noticed a significant association between the availability and price of healthy food and risk for cardiovascular disease (Franco, Diez-Roux, Glass, Caballero, & Brancati, 2008). Franco et al. found that racial and economic disparities were notably present, with 43 percent of predominantly black neighborhoods and 46 percent of low-income neighborhoods having the lowest healthy

food availability rating, compared to only 4 percent and 13 percent in predominantly white and wealthy neighborhoods. A strong correlation between healthy food availability and dietary patterns was also noted, as individuals living in neighborhoods with lower availability of healthy food had higher intakes of fats and processed meats and lower intakes of whole grains and fruits (Franco, Diez-Roux, Nettleton, Lazo, Brancati, Caballero, Glass, & Moore, 2009). Moreover, the availability of healthy foods was inversely related to body mass index (BMI), a recognized cardiovascular and metabolic disease risk factor (Franco et al., 2009).

At the invitation of Baltimore's Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Franco gave a presentation of his research findings to the Baltimore City Health Department in 2007. Recognizing the need to consolidate efforts currently underway, such as the implementation of the city's comprehensive plan, Sharfstein requested that the CLF meet with the Planning and Health departments to discuss what could be done.

The first meeting included senior staff from the Planning and Health departments, Dr. Gittelsohn, and Joyce Smith, the community partner from the OROSW southwest Baltimore food assessment. The group members talked about their respective work and where there were opportunities for collaboration. Surprisingly, the city departments had not previously interacted because the Health Department was organized by disease and the Planning Department was organized by geography. Everyone's interest was piqued. Several months earlier, Palmer had sought out Mark Winne, a noted expert on local and state food policy, at the Community Food Security Coalition's annual conference and asked his opinion on what Baltimore should be doing. Winne recommended that Baltimore convene those already working on food issues to talk about joint opportunities through a type of food policy council. Palmer mentioned this option to the group and it was well received.

## **Collaboration: The Baltimore Food Policy Task Force (2008–2009)**

### *Overview*

As mentioned earlier, a variety of stakeholders, including public health researchers, policymakers from the city's Planning and Health departments, hunger advocates, and other nonprofit organization representatives, were working on various food system-related problems, but were not working together to solve them. In 2009 these stakeholders were brought together when Mayor Sheila Dixon appointed the Baltimore Food Policy Task Force, convened by the health commissioner and the Planning Department's director of research and strategic planning, to assess local food system features and offer recommendations for how to improve the overall system.

After one year, the Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force (2009a) issued a report with 10 goals addressing many different issues related to healthy and sustainable food — a “roadmap” for action. This report led to the funding of the Baltimore food policy director in 2010, who would establish a new intergovernmental collaboration, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI), to carry out these recommendations. Within the BFPI, a Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC) — Baltimore's version of a food policy council, comprising 60 stakeholder organizations in the Baltimore community — was brought together to collaborate and drive the coordinated implementation of the task force recommendations.

In the past three years (and in a timeframe coinciding with the nation's economic recession) BFPI has achieved many significant goals that have earned it widespread media attention, both locally and nationally (Baltimore City Planning Department, n.d.b). This has included changing zoning code to allow for urban agriculture, addressing policy barriers related to accepting SNAP benefits at farmers' markets, improving food options at public markets, and supporting online grocery shopping for SNAP customers. At the end of 2011, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake assumed national leadership on the issue as vice chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) Food Policy Task Force, bringing together mayors throughout

the country to share ideas and facilitate conversations regarding food policy change.

### *Development of the Baltimore Food Policy Task Force (2008–2009)*

In February 2008 the CLF invited and supported Winne in coming to Baltimore and holding a workshop with 25 participants representing various stakeholders in the local food system. He introduced participants to the food policy council concept and discussed the various efforts underway across the country to improve community food systems. The group agreed that collective action was key to moving forward and recommended that Mayor Dixon get involved. Staff from the Health Department suggested they talk to Dr. Sharfstein, Baltimore's health commissioner, to encourage his support.

A few months later, Dr. Sharfstein contacted Palmer and recommended that he and the head of the Planning Department<sup>2</sup> convene a task force that would meet for one year to decide how to move forward. This development boded well because getting city government's buy-in was crucial to any progress. Several months passed and it appeared the task force idea and interest had waned. However, in November 2008 Mayor Dixon announced that the Baltimore Food Policy Task Force would be appointed to facilitate the necessary collaboration among food system stakeholders. Using the precedent from the Swan Park Task Force, commissioned by Mayor Dixon in 2007 to address an arsenic contamination issue in South Baltimore (Goldman, Moore, Nilson, Sharfstein, & Simms, 2007), this new body agreed to convene three times between February and November 2009 in order "to identify means to create demand for healthy food through awareness and education and to ensure opportunities for all Baltimoreans to access affordable healthy food options in order to achieve and sustain better health outcomes and a higher quality of life" (Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force, 2009a). In

essence, the group was tasked with creating specific, actionable solutions that would address these recognized needs for improved healthy food access, demand, and affordability.

The task force was composed of 18 stakeholders representing the Baltimore City Planning Department, the Health Department and its Division of Environmental Health, the Development Corporation, and the Department of Recreation and Parks; grocery chains including Giant, Santoni's, Safeway, and KAGRO; the Maryland Food Bank; Baltimore City Public Schools; the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; the University of Maryland School of Medicine; Operation ReachOut Southwest; and Park Heights Community Health Alliance.

The task force members' inexperience in food policy proved to be an advantage because it allowed the group to learn and evolve collectively in their efforts. Members did not attempt to change laws; they did not even know what food laws existed. In the beginning, many members attended without a clear idea of why they were invited. Over the course of the year, however, they came to realize that at the city level, zoning, regulations, procurement contracts, and ordinances all constitute local food policy.

### *Task Force Recommendations (2009)*

On February 9, 2009, the first meeting was held. The key objectives included understanding the food policy council model; reviewing what was happening in Baltimore; and working in small groups to produce a list of opportunities. The groups developed 23 actionable programs, projects, or policy ideas to create a food system that would better ensure equal access to healthy food for all residents. The Planning Department also vetted the list with other food system stakeholders. During the second meeting, members used that list to concentrate on the feasibility of each strategy and to develop action plans for those opportunities selected for the short list. A brief amount of time was allocated to reviewing the draft mission statement and goals. At the final meeting in December 2009, the members prioritized the actions and voted for the following 10 key recommendations (not ranked hierarchically). The CLF drafted the

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<sup>2</sup> By the first meeting, the planning director had left the department, so the director of research and strategic planning, Dr. Seema Iyer, took his place. Dr. Iyer had been involved in early meetings, so this change was fortuitous.

Food Policy Task Force Report, which was issued in December 2009 (Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force, 2009a).

Baltimore Food Policy Task Force recommendations:

1. Promote and expand farmers' markets.
2. Promote and expand community supported agriculture.
3. Support continued research on food deserts and collaboration with policymakers.
4. Support a central kitchen model for the Baltimore City Public School System.
5. Support community gardens and urban agriculture.
6. Expand supermarket home delivery program.
7. Improve the food environment around schools and recreation centers.
8. Support street vending of healthy foods.
9. Create healthy food zoning requirements or incentives.
10. Develop a targeted marketing campaign to encourage healthy eating among all Baltimoreans.

As the task force was assembling in the fall of 2008, the Planning Department simultaneously was drafting Baltimore City's first Sustainability Plan. Palmer was asked to participate in the green infrastructure working group, where the topic of food was located. When the group learned how the task force recommendations were shaping up, it was clear that they should be cross-referenced and incorporated into the City Sustainability Plan for consistency and dual accountability. As a result, the plan's Greening Goal 2 was to "establish Baltimore as a leader in sustainable local food systems" through the following strategies (Baltimore Commission on Sustainability and Baltimore City Planning Commission, 2009):

- Increase the percentage of land under cultivation for agricultural purposes;
- Improve the quantity and quality of food available at food outlets;
- Increase demand for locally produced,

healthy foods among schools, institutions, supermarkets, and citizens;

- Develop an urban agriculture plan;
- Implement Baltimore Food Policy Task Force recommendations related to sustainability and food; and
- Compile local and regional data on various components of the food system.

Thus before the task force made much progress, it was designated as a "means of implementing the City's adopted Sustainability Plan," and "its recommendations should help to inform the TransForm Baltimore zoning code rewrite project to ensure that the city's built environment does not impede access to healthy foods" (Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force, 2009b).

### **Baltimore's Food Desert Map**

Partly due to the third task force recommendation, Baltimore City officials and the CLF continued their research on food deserts. Baltimore City operationally defined a food desert as "an area where the distance to a supermarket is more than ¼ mile [0.4 km], the median household income is at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, over 40 percent of households have no vehicle available, and the average Healthy Food Availability Index score for supermarkets, convenience and corner stores is low (measured using the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey [as reported in Franco et al, 2008])" (Baltimore City Planning Department, 2012, p. 2).

The research showed that many areas in Baltimore and other urban inner-city settings are food deserts. According to data compiled by the Baltimore Department of Planning using 2010 Census data, 20 percent of Baltimore's population (around 125,000 people) lives in food deserts, which are found in one in three neighborhoods (Center for a Livable Future, 2012). Racial disparities are particularly prevalent, as 26 percent of the African American population lives in food deserts, compared to only 7 percent of the white population. In the absence of supermarkets, which typically offer a better variety of healthy foods than other food stores, residents in food deserts are

surrounded by cheap, mostly high-fat and high-calorie foods and meals from the high proportion of corner stores and carryout restaurants. These features have led some experts to use the term “food swamp” over “food desert” to more adequately describe the phenomenon (Maryland Department of Planning, 2012).

### **Organizational Structure: Food Policy Director, Initiative, and Advisory Committee (2009–Present)**

#### *Food Policy Director*

Once the task force recommendations were established, the next challenge faced was how to implement them. The Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers had member funders who were interested in supporting more work related to food systems, so they offered a forum to educate their members about what was happening in Baltimore with regards to the food system. Seema Iyer, co-chair of the task force from the Planning Department, Palmer, and others discussed the food system mapping project that CLF was undertaking, the task force recommendations, and urban agriculture initiatives. The task force considered the idea of funding a food policy position to carry out and oversee implementation of its recommendations. A mentor of Palmer’s, Kate Clancy, recommended that several foundations jointly contribute to the position. She argued that while funders need to narrow their focuses based on their missions, any foundation working on public health, food security, urban development, etc., would benefit from having a dedicated position for food policy. This share-the-burden strategy was also popular because the foundations were anticipating a financial hit from the 2008 recession. Several foundations invited the city to submit letters of interest. As a result, four external donors, the Abell Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF), and Kaiser Permanente, provided a total of US\$70,000 to initially fund the position as a contractor to city government, with the BCF serving as the fiscal agent. The role and responsibilities of the food policy director would be to work with members of city government to review and develop specific food-related policy and

assist with facilitating those policy changes; partner with community, political, academic, private, and nonprofit stakeholders to facilitate food system changes; expand current projects and initiate new ones to expand access and availability of healthy food choices in targeted Baltimore communities; and more.

On May 1, 2010, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the former City Council president and new mayor of Baltimore, announced the city’s Food Policy Task Force recommendations and Baltimore’s food policy director. Demonstrating the city’s timely developments, the White House released its report on childhood obesity around the same time, which served as a frame for First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign. The major points and recommendations of the White House report mirrored many of the Baltimore Food Policy Task Force recommendations and accomplishments that Baltimore had already made, such as starting a food policy council.

Native Baltimorean Holly Freishtat accepted the job as Baltimore City’s first food policy director as a part-time, 15 hours-per-week position with the intention that, once additional funds were secured, it would become full-time (Marsh, 2011). A 2007–2008 Kellogg Food and Society Fellow through the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and graduate of Tufts University with a master’s degree in food policy and applied nutrition, Freishtat had previous experience in the food system realm as the founder of a farm-to-school program and a farm-to-healthcare project in Washington state (Cohn, 2010).

Having the task force assembled and recommendations established before Freishtat arrived was invaluable to the progress of the BFPI. Moreover, the roadmap of recommendations was general enough to provide Freishtat with the flexibility to carry it out with appropriate timing based on the present priorities of the Mayor’s Office and community needs, a crucial aspect of the job. Having a broad food policy framework provides the opportunity to develop the detailed food policy agenda over time.

One unique aspect of Baltimore’s arrangement is the relationship between Baltimore City and the Sustainability Food Fund at BCF, which was

established to support the city's food policy work. The intention of the Food Policy Task Force recommendations was to have a permanent city employee solely focused on food policy and food access issues, yet its designers anticipated that the position would require some years of outside grant funding. BCF agreed to act as a fiscal agent for the consultant position, a role they had played for other city initiatives. Within a short time, Freishtat was hired as the food policy director through a consultancy with BCF, yet she had an office in the Office of Sustainability and "looked and felt like a City employee" (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012). "Having the option to start as a consultant allowed the Planning Department to hire someone without asking the City for funding," Palmer noted. Within one year, Freishtat became a city employee and no longer relied on grant funding for her salary. The relationship between the city and the Sustainability Food Fund is still very important, and Freishtat uses the fund to write proposals for additional staffing as well as program and policy implementation through the city.

#### *Baltimore Food Policy Initiative*

In 2010, Freishtat proceeded to create the Baltimore City Food Policy Initiative (BFPI), an intra-governmental collaboration among the Baltimore Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, Baltimore Development Corporation, and the Health Department aimed "to increase access to healthy and affordable foods in Baltimore City food deserts...through a holistic and comprehensive food system approach" (Baltimore City Planning Department, n.d.c). BFPI is a planning and policy shop that works to identify barriers across city agencies to improve food access, increase food production, and address these and many other food system issues through local, state, and national policy changes.

#### *Baltimore Food Policy Advisory Committee*

Within the BFPI, Freishtat assembled the Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC), composed of over 100 stakeholders representing more than 60 organizations currently working on local food system projects in nutrition, hunger and food

access, schools, gardening, sustainability, and urban agriculture. The purpose of Food PAC is to break down silos between organizations working on all types of food issues. By the very nature of their work, these groups are already implementing the task force recommendations, and Food PAC provides an opportunity for the organizations to coordinate and collaborate on their efforts. Food PAC groups are "on the ground" and have the pulse of neighborhoods and the community at large. In addition to ongoing communication, the group meets six times per year to provide updates and raise policy issues and barriers to the food policy director so that BFPI and city government are abreast of all issues and can help drive solutions (Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, n.d.). While Food PAC is essentially Baltimore's equivalent to a food policy council, its distinction as a purely advisory group, and not a council, is important. It is not a formal, decision-making body (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012).

Having the task force assembled and recommendations established before Freishtat and the Food PAC arrived were important contributions to the process. The task force report established the case for how the city could engage in food policy issues that would contribute to better health outcomes. Without the report, there would have been little evidence that hiring anyone to focus on food policy would make a difference. The process also allowed Freishtat to step into the position and immediately use her skills and knowledge to act on the recommendations. Moreover, the roadmap of recommendations was general enough to provide her with the flexibility to carry it out with appropriate timing, a crucial aspect of this job. "So much of what I do is successful because of timing," Freishtat noted, and a very detailed roadmap would have proven a hindrance to her efforts (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012).

#### **Implementation: The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (2010–Present)**

##### *Attention to Food Access*

Within the first month on the job, Freishtat already had 50 media calls. By the end of the first year it was apparent that BFPI was filling a needed role in

the city through its successful initiatives: an educational campaign called Get Fresh Baltimore, an effort to get EBT cards accepted at farmers' markets, incorporation of urban agriculture into rezoning laws, and more. Other city initiatives, such as the Health Department's virtual supermarket program for pickup in inner-city libraries, garnered more media attention because Freishtat was able to highlight them.

#### *Financial Sustainability*

BFPI has grown from solely Freishtat as a consultant to two city-funded positions, and one to two grant-funded employees. The growth of the BFPI and the support, both internal and external, harnessed in such a short time frame and in a relatively difficult economic climate was no small accomplishment. In the last four years, BFPI has secured approximately US\$1 million in grants to address food access (as of 2013) (H. Freishtat, personal communication, August 4, 2013).

#### *Governance*

The BFPI's role within city government, technically located under the Office of Sustainability but in reality under a multi-agency governmental collaboration, directly influences its functioning and power. Working with the Health Department, the Baltimore Development Corporation, Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, Food PAC, and others, Freishtat can connect these groups' efforts to address other recognized challenges in the food system. Her role is to identify policy opportunities, so she focuses on collaborating and explaining policies in ways that encourage these groups to act on issues that affect food policy on multiple levels. She is able to officially interact with these other agencies because she has been appointed to various cabinets and committees throughout the city and is able to organize meetings with their directors and administrators when needed.

#### **Policy Changes: Need-Driven (2009–Present)**

##### *Assessment and Evaluation*

The Baltimore Food Desert Map is one tool that

helped Freishtat and the BFPI provide the sense of urgency needed to successfully frame the highest priority policy needs and interventions. Initially created by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future as part of its Maryland Food System Map Project, the first food desert map of the city was released in May 2009. Using geographic information system (GIS) technology, this map overlaid household income with proximity to supermarkets to show the areas of the city that were in greatest need of access to healthy foods (Baltimore City Planning Department, 2012). It was updated in 2012 with additional information on vehicle availability and the quantity and availability of healthy food within all food stores, from corner stores to supermarkets. Jointly published with the city in 2012, this map proved to be an invaluable resource. According to Freishtat, "Having the city-approved food desert map was one of our greatest successes. It's not an external report or from somewhere nationally, it's from us. It was how we were able to get the buy-in of establishing need very clearly; as such, it's really driving our policies, our urgency" (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012).

##### *Focus on Policy*

Freishtat cites her background in policy as another key force behind the BFPI's initiatives. While other food policy directors across the country have come to the position as former chefs, lawyers, public health officials, or other food system stakeholders, she came in with extensive experience in grant writing, food policy, and food system media training. This background has allowed her to see where her efforts can be most efficiently implemented. Compared to other food policy councils that often struggle to balance their focus between programs and policy, she spends virtually all of her time on policy. More specifically, she focuses on details of policy implementation, such as permitting, requirements, and procedures, and has found that making changes in the small policy details has led to substantial positive impact on the city's food environment (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012). Through her education and past experience, she is able to recognize these gaps and address them to the best of her ability.



### *City-centric Priorities*

Around the country there are places where food policy directors are commonly located within city government: the mayor's office, office of sustainability, the department of planning, health, economic development, etc. A unique aspect of Baltimore is that the food policy director position is located in the Office of Sustainability (a division of the Department of Planning), yet has a very close relationship with the Mayor's Office without being located within the mayor's office. Freishtat has found that it is important to maintain a close relationship with the mayor but to remain in separate offices (H. Freishtat, personal communication, October 18, 2012). Food policy directors in other cities have learned this the hard way, as their positions located within the mayor's office became threatened when the incumbent mayor left. Freishtat maintains her relationship with Mayor Rawlings-Blake by providing briefing memos, in which she describes the background issue at hand and various needs related to it, before each major media event. By having frequent events, she maintains direct communication with the mayor while simultaneously increasing the mayor's media coverage on the issues.

Freishtat had a fortuitous opportunity to accompany Mayor Rawlings-Blake to a round-table summit on improving healthy food access that was hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama in Chicago. Observing the need and urgency described by the mayors and the first lady at this summit provided the impetus for the mayor to be chosen for national leadership in food access. Following the event, Mayor Rawlings-Blake helped form the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) Food Policy Task Force, a national committee of which she is vice chair that brings together mayors throughout the country to share ideas and consolidate efforts (United States Conference of Mayors, n.d.). The mayor's national leadership is having far-reaching effects at home as well, helping drive the momentum and change that Baltimore is now seeing.

### **Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

When the Baltimore food policy director started there were only a handful of similar positions embedded in city governments across the country,

and none with the same mandate as Baltimore's. As of 2013, 16 food policy director equivalents have been established throughout the country. Similarly, in the few years of BFPI's existence the number of food policy councils has more than doubled. In 2010, there were 92 food policy councils (Scherb et al., 2012). In 2013, the Center for a Livable Future's Food Policy Network program conducted a census that recorded over 270 active councils in the U.S. and Canada (Center for a Livable Future, 2013). As the movement addressing policy at the food system level continues to expand, the formation, structure, and functioning of BFPI may help guide future efforts with similar missions.

Ultimately, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative is one example of how much progress can be made in only a few years' time. Before BFPI, there were many disparate efforts with the same goal of improving healthy food access and demand in Baltimore, but nothing to coordinate them to make greater impact. Circumstances placed the city in a proactive role to provide and shape how food policy would look in its midsize urban setting. The case study of BFPI provides an example for other midsize urban cities to consider.

(1) **Identify need and priorities first:** Baltimore convened a task force specifically focused on identifying how the city would address food access and food policy. The task force created short-, medium-, and long-term goals for tangible outcomes and developed a timeline based on available financial resources. Setting priorities before a food policy director was hired was effective because attention could be focused strictly on implementation.

The food policy director's mandate to implement a predetermined set of recommendations led to her unique relationship with the Food PAC as an advisory committee instead of a food policy council with decision-making abilities (Hatfield, 2012). The flexibility imparted by this structure has given her the influence needed to implement stakeholder recommendations without as many bureaucratic limitations as typical councils, which often need members to vote in order to implement action items.

- (2) **Balance evidence and action:** The task force understood the need to improve food access but was willing to make decisions based on available data instead of waiting for complete and perfect evidence. The task force was highly effective in bringing academic, governmental, and community partners together in order to use available evidence and members' expertise in research to drive decisions. Yet more importantly, it looked for opportunities for what could be done immediately to improve food access. It spent less time waiting for complete data or determining exact strategies and instead focused on how to gain momentum in fixing the city's broken food system.

Notably, the process of selecting which activities to include in the task force report did not involve reviewing all the scientific literature to determine which activities were more likely to be successful. At that time few peer-reviewed journal articles had been published that evaluated food system interventions. Instead, the task force contacted similar initiatives around the country and sought out potential opportunities despite the economic hardships that came as a result of the 2008 economic recession.

- (3) **Ensure financial sustainability:** In the midst of an economic downturn, Baltimore successfully found a way to work on food policy within the city. In creating the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, key partners and funders invested in — and continue to invest in — the vision set by the task force. Through briefings and participation in activities, each funder recognized that working on a systems problem meant that all sectors could be engaged in solving the problem. BFPI built its credibility in the city through work funded by nonprofit grants. As the city took note of its work, BFPI leveraged the funds to become partially funded by the local government, creating a sustainable way to work on Baltimore's food system.


BFPI now has three full-time positions dedicated exclusively to food policy work, one of the largest offices in the country. The funding for these positions, which came through its

demonstrated need and notable achievements, has allowed BFPI to achieve even more progress simply by having more devoted staff time to facilitate effective policy changes.

- (4) **Maintain agility:** One of the notable goals absent from the task force report was the opening of supermarkets in food deserts, which all the retail task force members agreed was untenable in the current economic climate. Now is it central to Baltimore's focus. Baltimore has been successful because of its ability to stay agile and use the task force report as a blueprint to start its work.

Further, the media spotlight on Baltimore's food policy initiatives, first used by Freishtat as a tool of garnering attention and further highlighted by the mayor's efforts nationwide, have contributed to the continued interest in and support of the BFPI's efforts. Baltimore is working to continue to evaluate and show the impact of its efforts. Its current metrics are mainly centered on the food desert map and include the number of residents living in food deserts and the percentage of the city designated as a food desert. Future evaluation efforts may include reporting on a range of measures relevant to the city's effort to improve access in different sectors, such as urban agriculture or healthy food availability in existing food stores. This would include combining evaluation metrics used in existing programs and by Food PAC partners.

Within three years, Baltimore became a national leader in food policy (Hodgson, 2012). Future challenges BFPI may face include incentivizing new or improved supermarkets in underserved neighborhoods; supporting the sustainability of all healthy food sources; increasing demand for and affordability of healthy foods; addressing health disparities and diet-related disease; ensuring fresh, healthy foods in school meals; and addressing barriers that arise as unintended consequences of federal and state policies. Baltimore's unique ability to address food policy through BFPI attests to the promising ability of its approach, both structurally and functionally, to tackle the issues of healthy and sustainable food access.



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