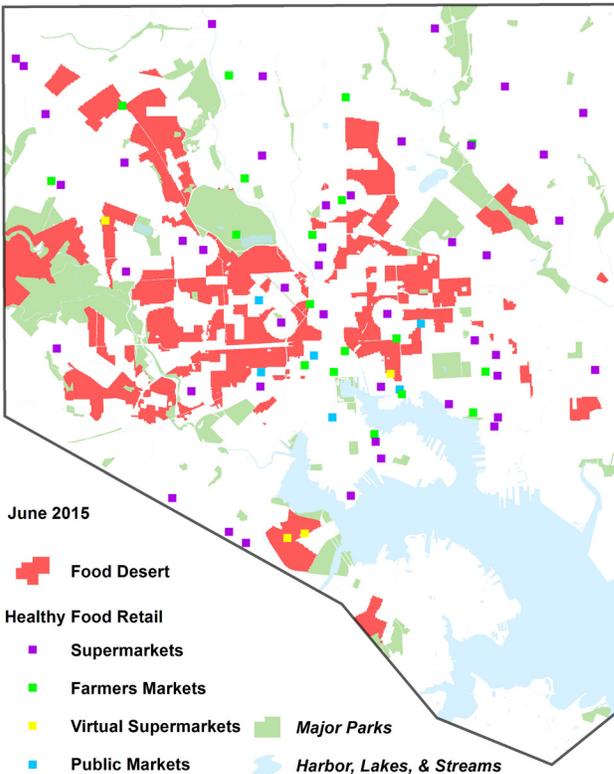


# BALTIMORE FOOD POLICY INITIATIVE (BFPI): FOOD SYSTEM PRIORITIES AND POLICIES

## INCREASING FOOD ACCESS FOR BALTIMORE CITY

Baltimore City is the largest city in Maryland, USA, with a population of 622,000. A quarter of residents live in food deserts, including 30% of the city's children. To increase access to healthy, affordable food, Baltimore takes a strong policy perspective and creates and implements food policies at the city, state, and federal levels. Understanding that food does not fit into solely one government agency, the City of Baltimore takes an intergovernmental approach to collaboration on food issues. Baltimore serves as a leader in US food access solutions and this document highlights many of the key innovations, policies, and programs.

With each agency lending its expertise, the City creates comprehensive strategies that tackle food access from many perspectives, and implements programs and policies with multi-sector support. The Department of Planning has led the effort to refine the City's food agenda and priorities through sustainability and food access lenses. The Baltimore City Health Department is committed to making Baltimore a city where all residents can realize their full health potential, through cross-cutting collaborations and community-based programming. The Baltimore Development Corporation, recognizing that food is a catalyst for economic development, offers retailers, small businesses and entrepreneurs access to information, resources and incentives.



A food desert is an area where 1) the distance to a supermarket or supermarket alternative is more than 1/4 mile, 2) the median household income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, 3) over 30% of households have no vehicle available, and 4) the average Healthy Food Availability Index score for all food stores is low.

## BUILDING A FOOD POLICY FRAMEWORK

**Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI):** An intergovernmental collaboration between Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, Health Department, and Baltimore Development Corporation to increase access to healthy, affordable food in Baltimore City food deserts.

**Governance:** Full-time Food Policy Director and dedicated staff from three agencies focusing on food access, resilience, equity, and entrepreneurship, plus the support of a coalition of 60+ stakeholders representing organizations with missions and visions related to food access and local food systems.

**Food Environment Map and Report:** In 2015, BFPI released a comprehensive report and map on the food environment to identify areas of greatest need and to drive policy and strategies. Part of an ongoing collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

**Food Desert Retail Strategy:** Based on the findings of the Food Environment Report, this five-point strategy aims to increase access to healthy, affordable food through various types of retail—understanding that solutions must be adaptable to each neighborhood's needs and assets.

**Food Desert Retail Incentive Areas:** Based on the Baltimore-specific definition of a "food desert", these incentive areas are meant to specifically target supermarket development and renovation to the areas of highest need. The first incentive is a personal property tax credit.

**Food Policy:** BFPI has supported and leveraged 13 local, state, and federal food policies to improve the food environment. Policies have included subjects like urban agriculture, tax credits for supermarkets, and the Farm Bill.

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**Vacant Land Leasing:** Low-cost, mid-term leases of city-owned vacant land for urban farms, with up to 20 acres available for leases over the next few years.

**Urban Agriculture Tax Credit:** Passed a 90% credit on real property tax for urban farmers.

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Wellness:** First city in the US to incentivize CSAs as part of employee wellness plans, offering Managerial and Professional Society (MAPS) employees up to \$250 for CSAs.

**Hoop Houses:** Amended the Building Code to allow for hoop houses on urban farms, increasing from three to over thirty in five years.

**Animal Husbandry Regulations:** Passed policy to allow bees, chickens, rabbits, and pygmy goats, and to support urban farmers.

**Food Procurement:** Formed strategic partnership with Procurement to promote health and economic development through purchasing.

**Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFFP):** Won the 2016 MUFFP monetary award. Developing the US Conference of Mayors (USCM) food policy advisor network to share best practices. Provides technical assistance to Mayors.

**5-STAR Community:** One of three US cities to have a five-star rating through the Sustainability Tools for Assessing & Rating Community Rating System. Food production policies and practices were highlighted in its top rating.

**Food Resilience:** A short-term Emergency Food Working Group created a protocol to address food access during incidents and disasters, as part of the Emergency Operations Plan. A Food Resilience Plan will understand and strategize around resilience in the food system at-large.

**Food Equity:** A 14 member board of resident food advocates will convene for six months to advise BFPI on promoting equity through food policy. BFPI previously hosted a "Food and Race" training.

## FOOD ACCESS

**Overview:** With a high proportion of Baltimore residents receiving federal nutrition assistance, BFPI advocates for federal policy that will best support both recipients and retailers.

**Personal Property Tax Credit for Supermarkets:** A 10-year, 80 percent credit against the personal property tax for supermarkets locating in or making significant improvements in Food Desert Incentive Areas.

**USDA Summer Meals Demonstration Project:** Supported two-year demonstration project resulting in an additional 60,000 meals served at supper and targeted towards teens.

**SNAP (Food Stamp) Retail Support:** Conduct comprehensive analyses, develop strategies, and provide technical assistance to retailers to maximize SNAP utilization. Changed benefit distribution period to support retailers retention and attraction near food deserts.

**Smartphone Technology for Double Incentives:** Baltimore's largest farmers market employs smartphone technology for vendors to accept and double federal nutrition assistance at their individual stalls.

