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Food Deserts in Poor, Urban Areas

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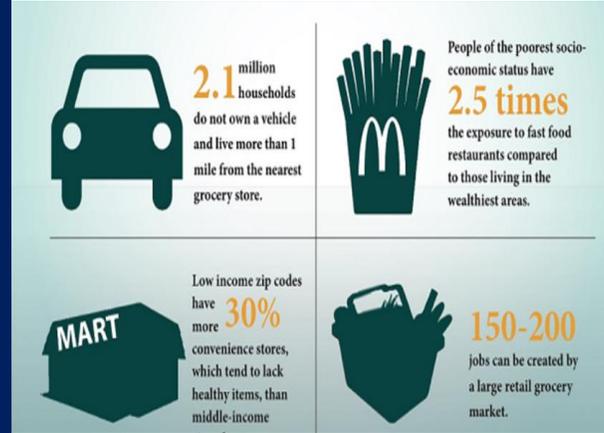
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Food Deserts in Poor, Urban Areas

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Food Empowerment Project

- Shows that it is possible to overlook communities that are located in food deserts when relying on data collected by the US government.
- Problem: According to the North America Industry Classification System code, small corner grocery stores are statistically lumped together with supermarkets, such as Safeway, Whole Foods Market, etc.
- A community with no supermarket and two corner grocery stores that offer liquor and food would be counted as having two retail food outlets even though the food offered may be extremely limited and consist mainly of junk food.



Let's Talk Solutions

On the national level, First Lady Michelle Obama organized the "Let's Move" campaign to combat childhood obesity, which includes a goal of eradicating food deserts by 2017 with a \$400 million investment from the government. It focused on providing tax breaks to supermarkets that open in food deserts.

- In New York City, they started the Green Carts program, which has been bringing affordable fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved areas while providing jobs for vendors since 2008. Number of Green Carts are rapidly increasing as prospective vendors obtain training, licenses, and permits from the city.
- Having fewer fast food restaurants created greater demand for better food choices, so Council members passed another measure, offering grocery stores and sit-down restaurants healthier meals and financial incentives to open up in underserved communities. These policies were successful in South L.A. by creating their first Supermarket in 10 years.

WHAT IS A "FOOD SWAMP"?

IN ADDITION TO FEW HEALTHY OPTIONS, THERE IS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF FAST-FOOD JOINTS & CONVENIENCE STORES THAT OFFER MOSTLY PROCESSED & UNHEALTHY FOOD.



Where are food deserts located?

- Food deserts are typically found in geographic areas where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options are very limited or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distances.
- According to a report prepared for Congress by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, about 2.3 million people live more than one mile away from a supermarket and do not own a car.
- Economic forces have driven grocery stores out of many cities in recent years, making them so few and far between, that an individual's food shopping trip may require taking several buses or trains.

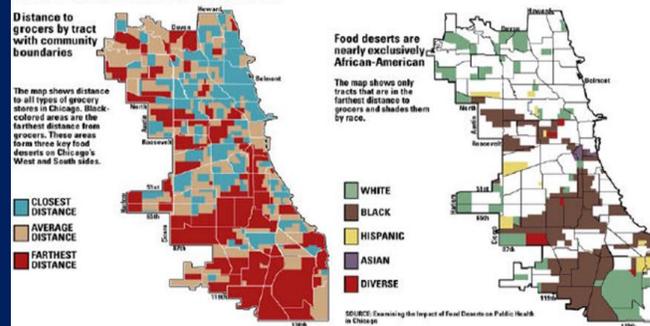
Higher rate of obesity in urban areas

- While unhealthy eating may be economically cheaper short term, the consequences of long-term constrained access to healthy foods is one of the main reasons that ethnic minority and low-income populations suffer from statistically higher rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other diet-related conditions than the general population.
- One study of Chicago neighborhoods found the death rate from diabetes in food deserts to be twice that of areas offering access to grocery stores.
- Researchers explain this disparity by emphasizing that the high-calorie foods most readily available in food deserts put residents living in these areas at greater risk for diabetes in the first place, and that having restricted access to healthy foods also makes it harder for them to manage diabetes once they are diagnosed..

Let's get into numbers!

- Chicago – More than 500,000 residents (mostly African-American) live in food deserts, and an additional 400,000 live in neighborhoods with a preponderance of fast food restaurants and no grocery stores nearby.
- Los Angeles – In 2008, the Los Angeles City Council voted to enact a moratorium on new fast food outlets in a 32-square-mile zone encompassing some of South L.A.'s most arid food deserts, an area where about 97 percent of the population is either Latino, African-American, or of mixed race.
- New York City – An estimated 750,000 New York City residents live in food deserts, while about three million people live in places where stores that sell fresh produce are few or far away.

FOOD DESERTS IN CHICAGO



Effects of Food Deserts

- People in food deserts are substituting less nutritious fast food for fresh food.
- When you combine the data seen in Patchwork Nation communities who are the local economic developers and want change in the federal system, with these food deserts and public health numbers, there are signs of a growing socio-economic and cultural problems.
- Two key factors that go into making a county prone for these food desert:
 - lower levels of population density and lower levels of wealth.
- The people living in those places are living in poorer places that are less healthy. They are actually getting less wealthy over time as well, which, in turn, may make it harder to turn the tide on the health trends.
- A testament to the challenge of the food deserts – they are both a symptom and a cause of broader problems in these communities.

