

Feeding the Future: Reducing Food Insecurity in Southeast DC

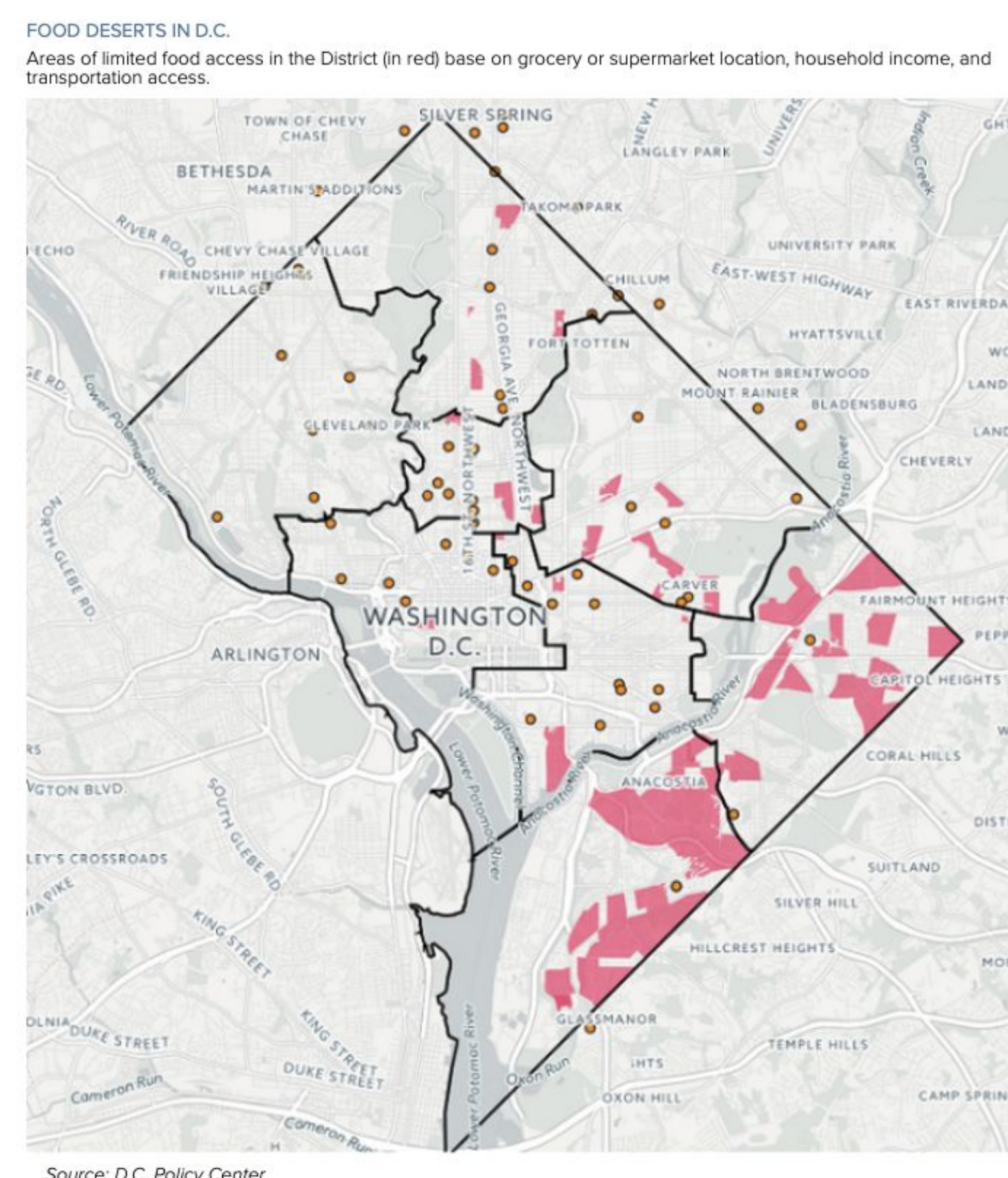
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BACKGROUND

A food desert is a region where people have limited access to healthful or affordable food usually due to low income and low vehicle access.¹ Food insecurity also has to do with food deserts as food insecurity is a lack of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development to live a healthy life.² Food deserts are relevant because without access to healthy foods people living in food deserts might be at a higher risk of diet related conditions like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.¹ Research from the American Board of Physician Specialities suggests that eating local can help someone avoid or reverse a variety of illnesses that can both shorten your lifespan and diminish your quality of living, such as diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, hypertension, and even many different types of cancers.³ Our method to address food insecurity in Southeast DC is to implement farmers' markets in places with higher needs. We feel like this will help because people will finally start getting the healthy food they need to live a long and healthy life.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Washington D.C. is a city with an extended history of racial and economic divisions and disparities, which has resulted in the development of food deserts. According to Capital Area Food Bank, 33% of people in DC didn't always know where their next meal would come from or be. Over time the prevalence increased which, 55% identified as Hispanic; 50% identified as Black; and 13% identified as white. Many families lost financial stability due to the pandemic leading to negative impacts on the community's health. By area, the majority of all food deserts are located in Ward 8 with a percentage of 51, while Ward 7 contains the second largest portion of food deserts with 31 percent.^{4, 5}



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Since Wards 7 & 8 are the district's two lowest income wards they have less access to fresh, nutritious, healthier foods than Wards like 3 & 4. Which means by association that the communities within Wards 7 & 8 are consuming foods, fruits, and drinks that aren't manufactured naturally or with their best interest at heart which can and will lead to life threatening health issues in their later lives. To combat this we at the Lifesavers would like to propose the idea of hosting a farmer's market, an event where farmers and anyone else who would like to sell their food, vegetables, and even pastries can come together and distribute their products. These farmers' markets would happen every week on Friday and Saturday from 12-4pm at specific sites. We choose religious churches as these are centrally located in the community and would likely be willing community partners. Our sites include:

- Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church (Ward 7)
- St Benedict the Moor Catholic Church (Ward 7)
- Catch of the Day DC (Ward 8)
- Delaware Ave Baptist Church (Ward 8)

These events will allow people of all ages from all different types of backgrounds in the community to shop and fill their homes with food, fruits, and legumes that will improve their physical health, performance in daily living, and even sleep.



THEORETICAL FOUNDING

Exposure to Farmers' Markets significantly improves the communities they are stationed at. Farmer's markets not only have healthy and delicious produce, but also improve the lives of many people. Farmers' Markets gives a wide variety of different produce which has been studied and shown proof of improvements to people's diets.⁶ Farmers' Markets produce also has better quality than produce from grocery stores. Produce available at grocery stores lose up to 45% of its vitamin nutritional value from the travel from farm to store.⁷ The fresh produce that is packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients has been shown to protect against chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer.⁸ Studies have shown that Farmer's Markets in low-income communities lower the rates of diseases such as obesity and diabetes.⁹

PROGRAM EVALUATION

We will track the attendance of the farmers market by implementing a punch card incentive reward system. Customers will be given a card during their first visit, with four sections that will be stamped every visit, and on the fourth visit they will be awarded a new punch card and a \$20 credit to use at any of the stands, in order to expose the areas to nutritional foods and to encourage future visits to the market.¹⁰ Surveys will be given each time a punch card is given to incentivize filling a survey out. Data will be confidentially stored and analyzed with R programming. These surveys will track nutritional intake and track over several months.

CONCLUSIONS

Feeding the Future is aimed to address food insecurity in Southeast DC. We found these areas have higher rates of food insecurity and a greater risk of nutrition related disease, and are at greater need for assistance. Our plan is to work with local community partners like churches to establish farmers' markets in Wards 7 and 8. Implementing farmers markets has shown to improve community health. We will track the effectiveness of these markets using surveys. Ultimately we hope that these markets will reduce food insecurity in Southeast DC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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