

## CATAPULT Analysis by April Galarza

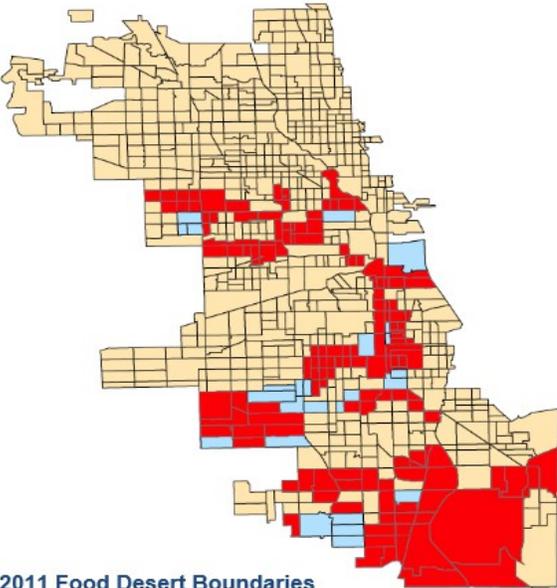
### Food Deserts in Chicago

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEWriN6kh3c>

[http://marigallagher.com/site\\_media/dynamic/project\\_files/Final\\_2011\\_ChgFD\\_drilldown.pdf](http://marigallagher.com/site_media/dynamic/project_files/Final_2011_ChgFD_drilldown.pdf)

#### 1) CONTEXT

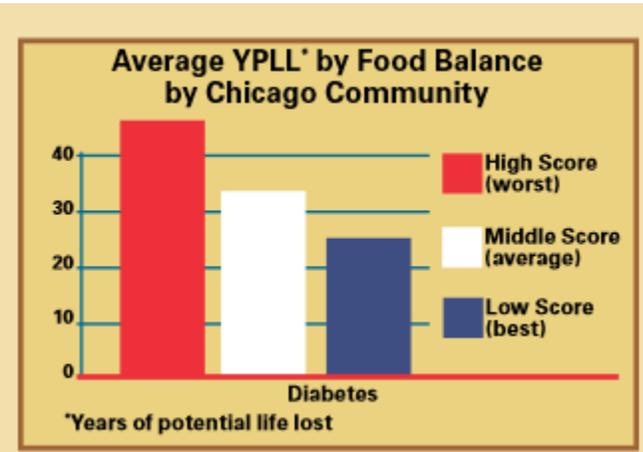
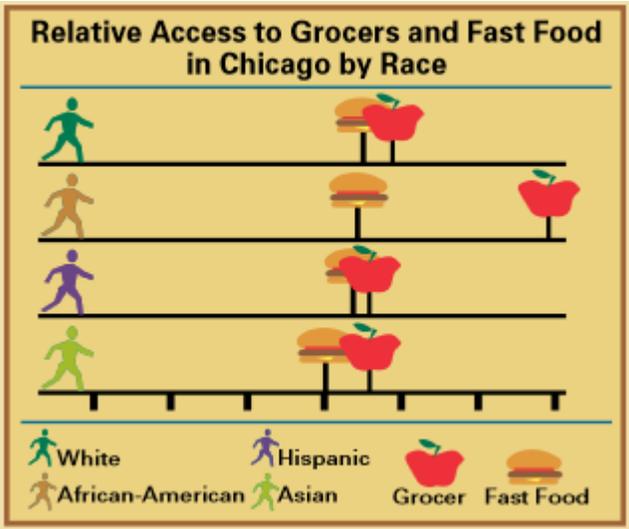
- a. A food desert, as defined by Mari Gallagher, is a large geographic area where residents must travel long distances to find a grocery store. Gallagher also measured cases where people can travel shorter distances to find fast food or other unhealthy food alternatives. This is called food balance
- b. The USDA defines a food desert as an area with a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher where at least a third of the population resides more than a mile from a supermarket.
- c. 383,954 Chicagoans live in a food desert.
- d. “2,484 busloads of children are still stranded in the Chicago Food Desert. The number of children is roughly equivalent to the total population of Naperville, Illinois. If all of these buses lined up bumper-to-bumper, they could stretch from President Obama’s house in Hyde Park, to City Hall, and then on to Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s house – a total distance of about 17 miles” –Mari Gallagher
- e. The majority of people who live in Chicago’s food deserts are Black or another minority.
- f. The rates of premature death due to cancer and cardiovascular disease increase where there is greater imbalance of food choices.
- g. Larger context: Food Stamps/SNAP program is supposed to provide healthy food to struggling families branding itself as the “last line of defense against malnutrition” but investigations by Gallagher and [others](#) are showing that corner stores and liquor stores and other questionable stores are being given the designation of grocery store

h. |  Chicago:

#### 2011 Food Desert Boundaries

##### Census 2010 Tracts

-  Became Food Oasis in 2011
-  Remained in Food Desert in 2011



Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease by Chicago Community Areas by Food Balance Scores					
Food Balance Groupings	Cancer		Cardiovascular Disease		Food Balance Score
	YPLL	Death Rate	YPLL	Death Rate	
Worst	314	9.73	345	11.07	2.04
Middle	247	7.42	242	7.41	1.25
Best	204	6.68	185	5.72	0.87

## 2) ACTORS

- a. People living in Chicago's food deserts (enough to fill Wrigley Field during a crowded Cubs game).
- b. Mari Gallagher for calculating the numbers behind the issue and bringing them to attention of the public and policy-makers.
- c. People who are acting to mitigate the problem
  - c.i. Policymakers like [Mayor Emanuel](#) who
    - c.i.1. Changed zoning to allow urban agriculture
    - c.i.2. Encouraged grocery chain stores to invest in food desert communities
  - c.ii. Community food heroes like
    - c.ii.1. [Sheelah Muhammad](#) co-founder of Fresh Moves a mobile farmer's market in a decommissioned city bus
    - c.ii.2. [Growing Home](#) the first organization to take advantage of the new urban agricultural zoning.
  - c.iii. [For-profit and nonprofit grocery stores](#)

## 3) THEMES

- a. At its surface the food desert problem is a simple one, there simply aren't enough grocery stores serving produce and other healthy foods to people in sections of the city but when you start to look at the numbers you realize that this problem runs much deeper. The people affected the most by this problem are African American and Latinos. They are as the USDA indicated in its definition of a food desert largely poor. And although you could be quick to blame the city and the mayor for allowing these neighborhoods to remain underserved, the issues go even deeper. Some major themes:
  - a.i. Public Health – there is a direct correlation between access to nutritional food and health of the people.

- a.ii. Class – you can't help but question why are these neighborhoods so underserved?
- a.iii. Government laxity – why are liquor stores and convenience store being given SNAP designation?
- a.iv. Politics – before the new ordinance did people have trouble growing food in the city? Before Gallagher stepped in, how was it decided which communities were benefited by new grocery stores?

#### 4) ACTION

- a. Mari Gallagher's 2006 report *Good Food: Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago*. She brought the results to the attention of City Hall.
- b. [Mayor Emanuel's Food Desert Summit](#) in which he met with all of the CEOs of major grocery store chains to induce to them build in food deserts.
- c. Small-scale "be the change" actions like Fresh Moves' mobile farmer's markets and burgeoning urban agriculture in food deserts.
- d. Gallagher's follow-up report in 2011 and promise for continuing reports until the food deserts are eradicated.
- e. The [Urban Agriculture Ordinance](#)
- f. Investigations into SNAP store designations.

#### 5) POWER

- a. Mari Gallagher has power because her statistical analysis of the Chicago's food deserts when brought to the attention of former Mayor Daley and current Mayor Emanuel led the reduction of food deserts by 40,000 people. She suggested that instead of allowing the traditional windy city political machine decide where new grocery stores be located, why not use statistical data instead.
- b. Mayor Emanuel has power because he is able to
  - b.i. Attract chain stores to areas of need
  - b.ii. Encourage community change through urban agriculture zoning changes
- c. Sheelah Muhammad has power because her strategy is working: The USDA granted Fresh Moves \$54,000 allowing it to start a second bus and increase the people served from 8,500 people to 17,000.

#### 6) UNDERLYING CAUSE

- a. Systematic divestment from communities now suffering as food deserts. Maybe starting in the 60s?
- b. Race: According to the Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Chicago is extremely segregated: "the Chicago Sun Times found that in order for blacks

to be as evenly distributed as whites in the city, 81 percent of Chicago's African Americans would have to move" Although Latino neighborhoods often have culturally specific grocery stores, this is not the case in African American neighborhoods.

- c. These communities are also underserved by Chicago Transit Authority. There are less buses and trains and because the majority of households (over 65,000 according to Gallagher) don't have cars, it causes people to be dependent on what food is nearby.
- d. ["The lack of fresh food creates a vicious cycle; children grow up never seeing it or acquiring a taste for it. It is one reason that the poor are likelier to be obese than the rich."](#)
- e. Market problems of supply and demand –it is assumed residents of these neighborhoods couldn't afford to shop at grocery stores so none are built.
- f. Walkable neighborhoods – If you had to pass over a freeway, or try to cross a busy street with no crosswalk, or go over poorly paved sidewalks or through gang territories with your arms full of bags or dragging your granny cart full of groceries, would you do it?

## 7) LONG TERM EFFACY

- a. There needs to be a sea-change that will accomplish not only the minor goal of providing produce but also overcoming the larger goal of revitalizing largely neglected communities. The author of *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* said one of the main differences between thriving communities and those of the disadvantaged was civic pride and activity. One could hope that the depression and helplessness of living in a deprived community could be remedied by food security. Personally I think, it is going to have to be a much deeper solution than bringing mere consumer goods to the people through grocery stores, I think what is necessary is allowing the people of these communities to take ownership over their food in the form of urban agriculture and community partnerships with farms. Michael Pollen writes about how farmer's markets are becoming the new town squares, and that people are far more likely to engage in conversation with one another at farmer's market than a grocery store. Consider the example of Logan Square, once poverty stricken and ravished by gangs, it is now slowly rising up as one of the most popular neighborhoods. I think this is largely due to three things. 1) Logan Square hosts a year-round farmer's market that—at least during the summer months—feels like a weekly festival. It is one of the largest markets in the city and is filled with fresh produce, music and laughter. 2) Logan Square has taken a strong community stance supporting independent stores and services and against chain stores such as a Walmart. Logan Square residents have deep pride in their neighborhood. 3) Logan Square fought for the right to have community gardens in their neighborhood. Communities within Chicago's food deserts could do well to follow their example.

## 8) THRESHOLDS

- a. The 2006 report by Gallagher was a major threshold. It called attention to the fact that (at the time) there were half a million Chicagoans living in food deserts. This information

was taken to heart by Mayor Emanuel, and even garnered the attention of first lady Michelle Obama.

b. The Urban Agriculture Ordinance is a major threshold leading to excellent initiatives such as

- b.i. The [Farmers for Chicago](#) which will turn 5 acres of vacant lots into urban farms under the city's guidance.
- b.ii. [The Nation's largest vertical farm](#)
- b.iii. [Over 600 community gardens and counting!](#)