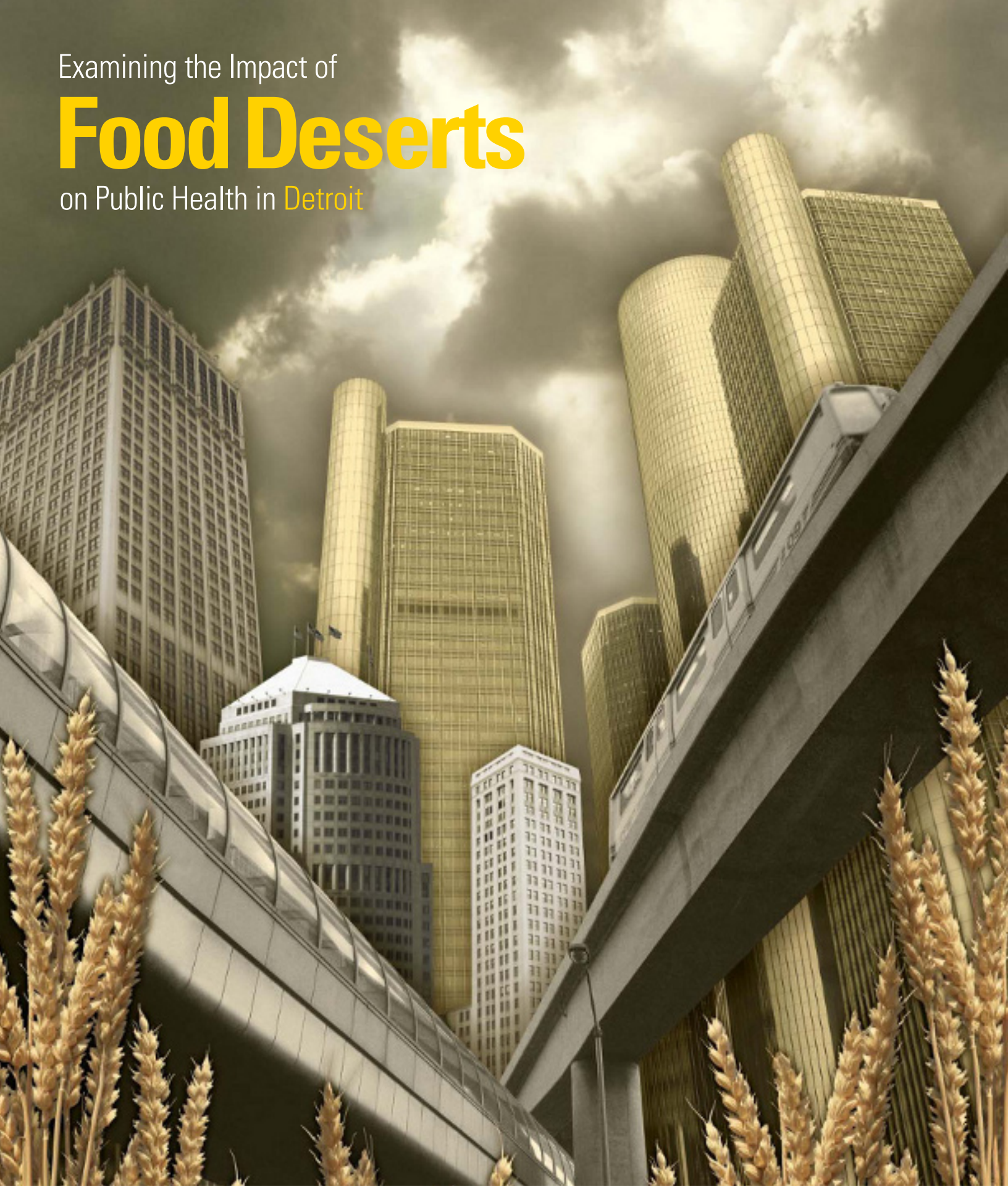


Examining the Impact of

Food Deserts

on Public Health in **Detroit**

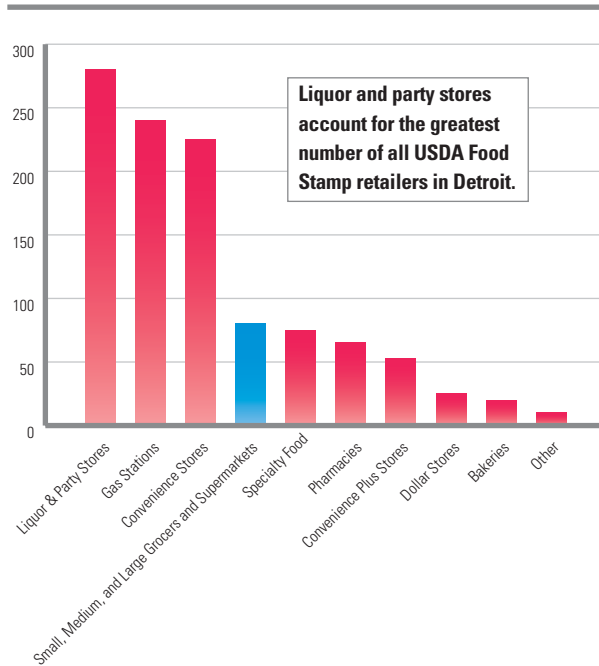


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Chart 4: Recoded Food Stamp Retail Categories and Distribution for Detroit

ments for participation, but we suspect that many do not. For example, an inspection of a Food Stamp dollar store revealed very little food available for purchase: paprika, cans and packages of soup, candy, and ice cream. Two buy-and-fry establishments were observed. They are coded by the USDA as “specialty stores” but function more like fast food restaurants: raw fish can be purchased with a “Food Stamp” card, after which the fish is fried for immediate consumption for free or for a small cash surcharge. It was not our goal to inspect all stores; additional scrutiny would likely lead to more recoding. For example, we suspect that the number of Food Stamp liquor stores is actually higher than what our current recoding reveals.

Our toughest recoding decision concerned the original category of “small and medium” grocers, which we recoded into “convenience ‘plus’ stores.” Overall, they did not quite meet our definition of mainstream establishments yet they offered more than regular convenience and specialty stores. No data set is perfect. We suspect that a small number of retailers that are in our fringe category might be mainstream food venues, and that a small number of our mainstream retailers might be fringe venues. However, we believe that our overall characterization and splitting of stores into mainstream and fringe categories accurately reflects the range and distribution of the types of food stores and food options available today in Detroit.

Majority Latino Census tracts, although comparatively few in number in Detroit, are the shortest average distance to small, medium, and large grocers or supermarkets (.41 miles) and majority White tracts are the farthest distance (.75 miles).

Majority African American tracts (.56 miles) and majority diverse tracts (.61 miles) score in the middle. By contrast, fringe food options are nearby and plentiful throughout Detroit. For example, in Detroit, more than half of all USDA Food Stamp

56% of USDA Food Stamp ‘convenience stores’ were recoded into party stores, liquor stores, dollar stores, bakeries, and other venues.

retailers are a liquor store, party store, gas station, dollar store, or bakery. On average, the closest fringe venue of any type is 0.2 miles away; mainstream grocers, by contrast, are two or three times that distance. We did not review Food Stamp data with the same record-by-record scrutiny for non-Detroit locations as we did for Detroit. Additional analysis is needed to understand if recoding of “small or medium grocers” and other official categories would be warranted. However, it appears that mainstream food access is a greater percentage of total Food Stamp retailers in every other non-Detroit location that we examined.

We demonstrate in this study that primarily poor food purchasing options are available through USDA Food Stamp retailers in Detroit and that it is highly likely that their widespread concentration negatively impacts not only poor families, but also thousands of middle and upper income residents who also have difficulty reaching mainstream grocers on a regular basis or who have grown accustomed to the pervasive fringe food environment. Fast food is also a contributor to food imbalance, but residents on average live closer to Food Stamp convenience, liquor, and party stores; the distance to the closest mainstream grocer can be two or three times farther. Whether you are a diabetic, an elderly person, a young professional, or a mother trying to raise a healthy child, following a doctor’s dietary recommendation is likely difficult if you live in one of these far-out-of-balance areas. Food imbalance is a serious public health concern and will likely have compounded effects on Detroit and the region unless access to healthy food greatly improves. Identifying market as well as needs-based solutions that promote access to nutritious and healthy food choices will require input and support from the food desert residents themselves as well as from grocers, banks, brokers, developers, planners, health advocates, educators, government, and foundations if we plan to achieve even a modest level of success.

We hope this study provides one small step in the direction of understanding the complex relationship between food balance and community health in Detroit.

We invite your comments and participation moving forward.



Supermarkets

GROCCERS

Nutritional

Strong Bones

Farmers Fresh Produce

vitamins healthy

Healthy, Energetic Communities.

local farmer

farm fresh produce

Vitamins & Minerals

Supermarkets

Nutritional Value

Vegeta

In search of Food Balance. In our study, we found that the vast majority of places to purchase groceries in Detroit are fringe locations, such as convenience stores, liquor stores, and gas stations. Unless access to healthy food greatly improves, Detroit residents will continue to have greater rates of premature illness and death from diet-related diseases, after controlling for other key factors.

Map 1: Detroit Out-of-Balance Census Tracts *Food Balance Scores of 2 or More by Range*

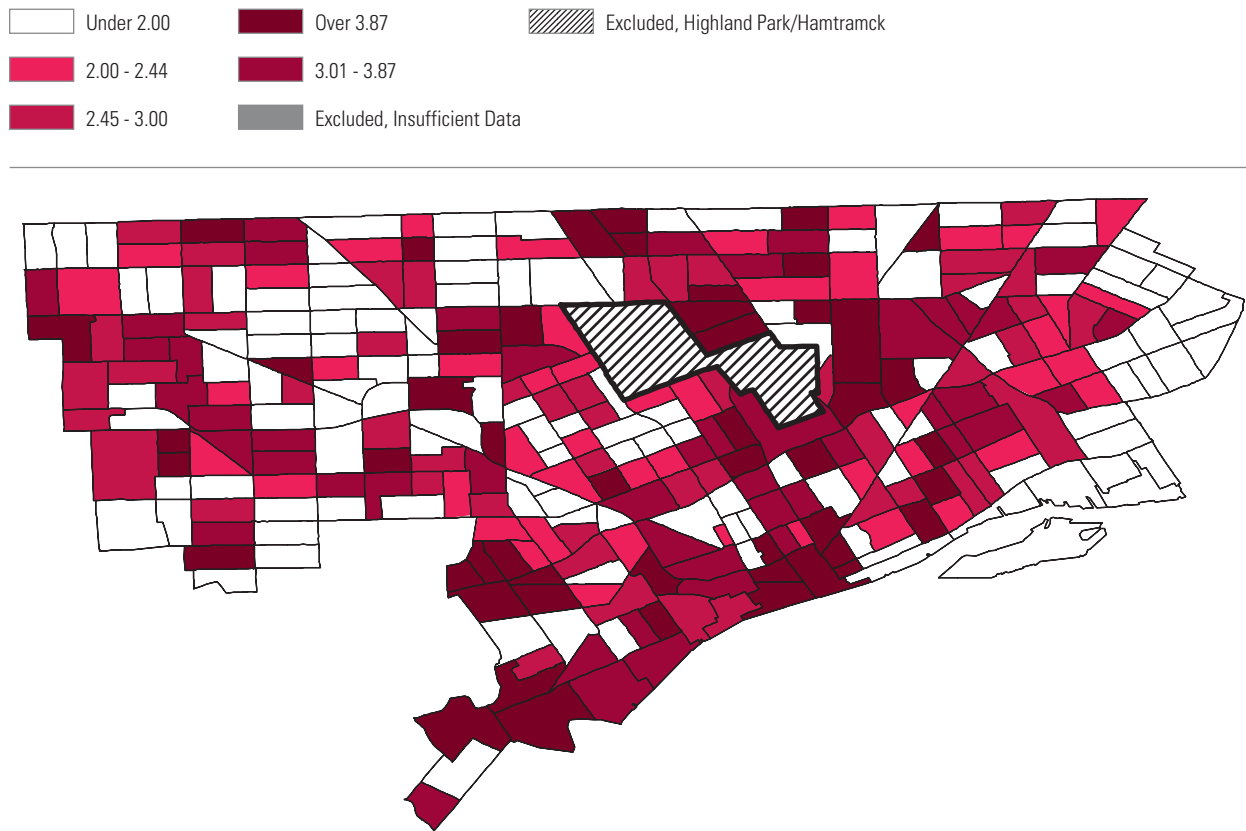





Table 1: Average Distance by Tract in Miles to Food Venues in Detroit

Any Food Stamp Venue	.21
Recorded Food Stamp Convenience Stores	.25
Recorded Food Stamp Liquor and Party Stores	.37
Fast Food	.38
Food Stamp Gas Stations	.40
Recorded Food Stamp Small, Medium, or Large Grocers or Supermarkets	.57
Recorded Food Stamp Pharmacies	.74
Food Stamp Specialty Food	.81
Recorded Food Stamp "Convenience Plus" Stores	1.04

*While our focus is Detroit, our findings are more meaningful when placed in the context of the Detroit region as well as other Michigan locations. **Detroit is distinct from other urban areas**, yet its ability to offer healthy food options is tied to these broader market and government systems.*

Average Relative Distance by Census Tract to Food Venues in Detroit

	Food Stamp Convenience Stores	Food Stamp Liquor and Party Stores	Fast Food	Food Stamp Gas Stations	Food Stamp Small, Medium, or Large Grocers or Supermarkets	Food Stamp Pharmacies	Food Stamp Specialty Food	Food Stamp "Convenience Plus" Stores
All	.25	.37	.38	.40	.57	.74	.81	1.04
African American	.25	.37	.38	.40	.56	.75	.84	1.10
 Latino	.17	.30	.25	.33	.41	.46	.45	.35
 White	.25	.42	.42	.37	.75	.80	.64	.65
 Diverse	.25	.37	.39	.35	.61	.61	.56	.89