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The Chicago Food Desert Progress Report

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Special Update

This update marks the five-year anniversary of our original 2006 study:
Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago.

Watch our website for an upcoming briefing on our vision and methods for the next five years.

Methodology:

We updated our database of mainstream grocers in Chicago and surrounding buffer zone, which includes bordering suburbs and portions of Indiana. We added mainstream grocers that opened for business and removed those that closed. Retail data is current as of May 2011. We used the new 2010 U.S. Census tract and block boundaries and data for Chicago, and weighted blocks by population share of each tract. Blocks with no or very low population were excluded. We do not exclude community areas based on income level. We define Food Deserts as large areas that cluster that have no or distant mainstream grocery stores. A mainstream grocer is a small, medium, or large store that sells the types of food that would support a healthy diet on a regular basis. It does not have to be a chain store. In fact, it can be a small “corner store” as long as it meets our nutritional requirements. Our Food Desert methodology involves millions of block-level calculations. More information is available at marigallagher.com.

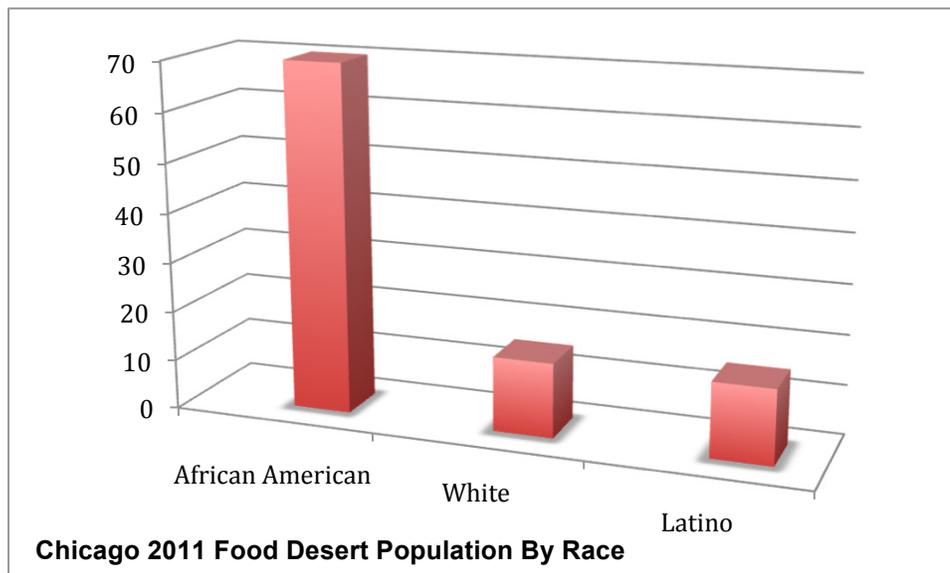
Findings:

- As shown on the map on the last page, progress has been made in shrinking Chicago’s Food Desert. Areas shown in blue were formerly part of the 2010 Food Desert¹ but, in the last year, became a Food Oasis. Areas in red consist of the remaining 2011 Food Desert.
- From 2010 to 2011, the Chicago Food Desert contracted from about 64 to 55 square miles. During that time, the Food Desert population decreased from 550,382 to 383,954. This reduction accounts for 166,428 total people or about 30% over the last year. Over the last five years, the Food Desert population saw a 39% reduction.
- Moving 166,428 people from a Food Desert to a Food Oasis in the last year alone is not a small accomplishment. To put the number into perspective, consider that this is roughly equivalent in population size to the city of Rockford, which is the fourth largest metropolitan area and third largest city in Illinois. It is also equivalent to filling to capacity U.S. Cellular Field, home of the Chicago White Sox, four times over.
- However, the Food Desert problem remains significant, as 383,954 Chicagoans still live in one, compounding the impact on health outcomes and quality of life over time for those residents. The current Food Desert population total is well over two times the size of Rockford and nearly equivalent to filling U.S. Cellular Field to capacity ten times. Said another way, the next time the Sox play to a sold-out crowd, consider that ten times that number of people on the west and

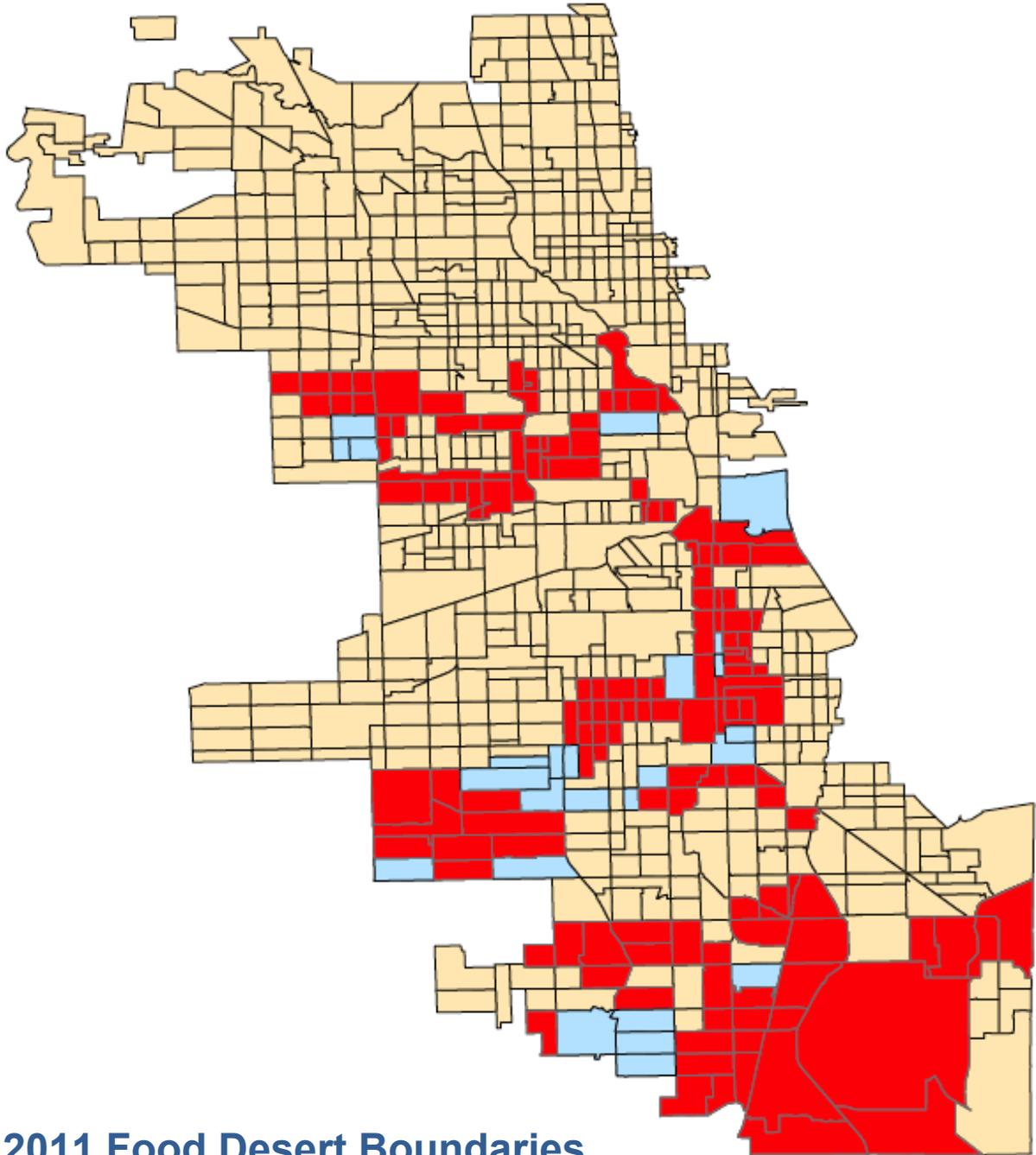
¹ Our original 2006 study, which included a statistical analysis linking the Food Desert to more diet-related death, was updated in 2008 (released in 2009), 2010, and now in 2011 (this document). The updates provide the new Food Desert boundaries and related demographic data.

south sides of the city live without adequate access to healthy foods and that they are more likely to die prematurely from diabetes at statistically significant rates controlling for other factors as documented in our original 2006 report.

- Of the total Food Desert population, well over 100,000 residents are children. This figure is roughly equal to filling Whitney Young High School's total student body to capacity fifty times over. Children who grow up at a nutritional disadvantage are more likely to have trouble paying attention in school, graduating, developing their full mental and physical potential, and maturing into happy, healthy, and productive adults. Access to healthy food is certainly not the only factor, but it indeed a contributing factor.
- About 70% of the total Food Desert population is African American. The remaining 30% is roughly an equal split of Whites and Latinos.



- The Food Desert has many low-income residents, but not everyone is poor. Middle and upper middle class residents also live there. For example, in 2010, we identified over 12,000 Food Desert households that earn over \$100,000 per year.
- Unless conditions improve, we predict continued premature death and suffering of Chicago Food Desert residents from diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and certain kinds of cancer. We also predict continued high rates of obesity among adults and children. Based on the chart above, those who suffer most will be African American adults and children.



2011 Food Desert Boundaries

Census 2010 Tracts

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

