

## **Project:** Food Policy: Urban Zoning

Student: Maryam Abdul-Kareem & Dave Thornton

Team: Health

### **Project name**

Using Zoning to Create Healthy Food Environments in Baltimore City

### **Clients & collaborators**

The client is the Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force.

A combination of economic factors has limited the access of many Baltimore residents to healthy foods. This unavailability of healthy foods has contributed to the underdevelopment and poor health of children, and is fueling Baltimore's current obesity epidemic. Baltimore's obesity epidemic is associated with two of the city's leading killers— cardiovascular disease and stroke.

The “built environment” – the surrounding area where people live – is a major influence on public health, including food-related health issues. A growing body of evidence indicates that the physical availability of healthy foods in neighborhoods influences dietary patterns and overall health. The report produced for the Baltimore City Food Policy Task Force analyzes the use of zoning to facilitate changes to the built environment in order to increase access to healthy foods.

### **Goals & objectives**

Goal:

The City of Baltimore wishes to redesign its zoning code in a way that promotes access to healthy foods by: (1) encouraging urban agriculture; (2) expanding the number of farmers' markets; (3) improving the food environment around schools and recreation centers; and (4) establishing “healthy food zoning requirements.”

Objectives:

- Review Baltimore's authority to zone for public health purposes, relevant limits on that authority, and legal limits related to zoning.
- Explore the use of zoning to support healthy food access in cities that are demographically similar to Baltimore.
- Review cities include Cleveland, the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Detroit, New York City, and Los Angeles.
- Present zoning-related options available to Baltimore including:
  - Creating new “community garden” districts within the zoning code

- Encouraging farmers' markets by making market activities explicitly-permitted uses within commercial districts
- Requiring fast food restaurants to maintain a certain distance from schools
- Incentivizing the development of full service grocery stores in underserved areas and/or encouraging healthy mobile food vending

### **Stages of work**

- Analytic work products:
  - Mapping of food nutrition policy options
  - Compilation of policy options in cities that are both demographically and legally similar to Baltimore
  - Written report of findings
  - PowerPoint presentation of findings
- Outreach to policy networks:
  - Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Sustainability
  - Cleveland City Planning Commission
  - City of Milwaukee Planning Department