

What Next?

The next steps toward improving Birmingham's food landscape include: new food-related businesses owned and operated by local residents, a public market system to serve local neighborhoods, and mobile markets and transportation solutions for seniors and disabled residents. Other Health Action partners are working to create community gardens, walkable communities, educational programs and other collaborative programs that serve the public health and economic needs of the communities.

Main Street Birmingham will continue working with its many partners on this issue. Now that the study is complete, we are focused on solutions. We need your help and invite your participation.



Download the full report at www.theurbanfoodproject.org.

Join the Health Action Partnership - visit www.jcdh.org for more information.

Examining The Impact of Food Deserts & Food Imbalance on Public Health in Birmingham, Alabama



This study sponsored by Main Street Birmingham and conducted by Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group

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What we eat and thus our health depends on where we live and the types of food we have access to in the marketplace. The City of Birmingham is increasingly concerned with the overall health and economic viability of the community. In an effort to combat food inequities, Main Street Birmingham commissioned Mari Gallagher to address this question. Analyzing Birmingham at the block level, we've identified areas of opportunity for increased access to fresh food, and in turn an improved quality of life.

Here is what we found:

- In Birmingham, over 88,000 people live in areas called Food Deserts where mainstream grocers are distant, or in areas where there is Food Imbalance - that is, mainstream grocers are distant and unhealthy food is readily available. In these areas, it is generally difficult to buy a first-rate apple, tomato, or green bean. Many venues instead specialize in candy, soda, chips, and fried food.
- In total, these problem Food Desert and Food Imbalance conditions in Birmingham comprise over 43 square miles. Of those affected, over 23,000 are children.
- This lack of access to fresh, healthy foods is related to preventable diseases and shortened lives. Quality of life is impacted.

A Food Desert is defined as a large, contiguous area with poor access to mainstream grocers.

Food Imbalance generally means that it is a Food Desert area and that there is fringe (unhealthy food nearby). By contrast, in a community with **Food Balance**, the nearest mainstream grocer is roughly the same distance as the nearest fringe food venue. We consider such an area to be in balance in terms of food access; it is just as easy or difficult to reach one or the other food establishment.

How to read this map:

The darker the red, the farther one must travel to reach healthy food. The blue areas indicate that the distance to healthy food is closer than to unhealthy food. White areas indicate equal distance to healthy or unhealthy food.

