

A Food System Map of the Greater Baltimore Area

A resource for understanding our local food system

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) is developing a food system map of the Baltimore area that includes Baltimore City and its neighboring counties (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard and Harford). The key objective of this project is to gather information that will help people better understand the local food system and how it works. CLF is developing the map as a resource tool that can help guide the design of research and program activities of local non-governmental organizations and government agencies that are working to improve the local food system.

The food system map will be multi-dimensional, utilize GIS technology that enables layered displays of graphically linked data, integrates a variety of database resources, and includes useful analytical summaries in narrative form regarding:

- What food is being produced in the area;
- Who is producing food in the area and their locations;
- Where the locally produced food travels once it has been harvested
- How and where locally produced and non-locally produced food available in the area is transported and distributed;
- Where the food stores are located;
- What the availability is of healthy and nutritious foods in area stores.

Who is this map for?

CLF hopes the map will be used by groups that are seeking to increasing access to fresh produce, addressing health disparities and inequities, improving community food security, preserving farmland and supporting local farmers. CLF has met with the Maryland Food Bank, the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network, the Chesapeake Sustainable Business Alliance (CSBA) and the Maryland Department of Agriculture to discuss the map's potential applications. For example, the MD Food Bank could use the map to determine if their current food drop off sites are reaching the all the economically deprived areas. CSBA would like to use the map to identify farms that are interested in marketing their products locally. CLF will work with these agencies and organizations to:

- Identify specific information needs that the mapping project can address;
- Identify the most appropriate / useful ways the food map information can be accessed and presented;
- Provide technical assistance in accessing information and / or interpreting data.
- Update the map on a regular basis.

What will the map include?

Each map layer will reflect a stratum of the food system. It is envisioned that the exercise of creating the map will take place over several months and involve input from many stakeholders. It is anticipated that the map will be a dynamic resource requiring periodic revisions, refinement and maintenance. As a starting point, CLF will review food maps that have been produced in other geographic areas and have had a similar scope. As an initial step in the process of developing the food system map, CLF has identified the following strata:

1. Farms (especially specialty crops farmers), CSA farms, community gardens
2. Wineries
3. Wholesale networks of food suppliers, including distribution centers
4. Food retail stores (supermarkets, grocery stores and corner stores)
5. Farmer's markets, community supported agriculture drop off sites.
6. Soup kitchens, emergency food bank sites
7. Established community gardens and city farms
8. Restaurants, fast-food franchises, and carry out shops, mobile food carts
9. Relevant public transportation routes (bus, subway)

Map layers may include:

- Point locations for 1-8 above
- Transit lines (#9 above)
- Indicators of the size of 1-8 in comparison to each other (1s to 1s, 4s to 4s, etc.)
- Socio-economic “ranking” of areas on the map

- Map should be able to be viewed at the following levels:
 - All counties together
 - Each county separately
 - Smaller geographic areas within each county
 - All of Baltimore City
 - Baltimore City neighborhoods
 - Seasonality
- Produce warehouses, from where they receive their produce, and their distribution points
- Farm to distribution-point connections
 - If possible, the number of people served by each distribution point
 - The socio-economic status of those served
- Farming methods used by local producers
- Percent of food from emergency sources that is fresh produce
- Percent of food from emergency sources that is local
- CVD/Diabetes/Obesity prevalence for the region
- Frequency of availability
- Land use

Info to include in mouse-over:

- Distance from farm to distribution point
- list countries/states of origin for the produce at each site
- list of what is grown/available at that site