



Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

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Putting Supermarkets Within Reach

New Online Tools Helps Communities, Businesses Identify Viable Market Opportunities in Underserved Areas

Washington, DC—A new analysis by the Brookings Institution, in collaboration with The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), finds that nearly 2 million residents of low- and moderate-income communities in 10 large U.S. metropolitan areas lack access to something most of us take for granted—a local supermarket.

This is a problem we can overcome, and a new video and interactive map can help local officials, policy planners, and retailers better understand this challenge and identify and address supermarket access in these metro areas. The video, “Getting to Market,” and a link to the interactive map can be found at http://www.brookings.edu/multimedia/video/2010/1019_supermarket_access_berube.

“Getting to Market” describes the important role that local supermarkets play in reducing food costs, expanding healthy food options, and promoting economic development for lower-income households and communities. It discusses how market obstacles limit supermarket access in some locations, however, and highlights the extent of these access gaps in 10 metro areas—affecting populations ranging from 27,000 in the Little Rock, AR area to more than 500,000 in greater Los Angeles. The analysis estimates the lost retail opportunity in these low-access communities at a combined \$2.6 billion annually.

The Brookings analysis of these ten metro areas is available in the interactive map. The tool, powered by TRF’s PolicyMap, provides extensive, user-friendly geographic, demographic, and economic detail on areas that are underserved and those which have the greatest potential for new or expanded supermarket development.

This detailed analysis of 10 metro areas leverages TRF’s PolicyMap platform and complements TRF’s broader work on food access. This broader work includes the estimation of low access food areas across the nation and can be found at www.trfund.com.

These data and maps on PolicyMap can inform growing federal, state, and local efforts that are leveraging private capital to reduce barriers to supermarket development in neighborhoods where viable market opportunities exist.

“We’ve known for some time that not all neighborhoods are created equal when it comes to supermarket and healthy food access,” said Alan Berube, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and author of “Getting to Market.” “This analysis—and more importantly, TRF’s new tools on PolicyMap—give public- and private-sector leaders detailed, actionable information on those gaps and the potential market opportunities they represent.”

“TRF has conducted food access analyses and created the PolicyMap platform to get good data in the hands of decision makers,” said Jeremy Nowak, President and CEO of The Reinvestment Fund. “This analysis is a diagnostic tool, not a prescription. We provide information to understand these markets and to estimate where there may be opportunities for improving local food access.”

“The data are clear: poor families and people of color don’t have enough access to the fresh fruits and vegetables they need to live a healthy life,” said Judith Bell, President of PolicyLink, a leading advocate for the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative. “It’s no wonder that these same communities are hit hardest by obesity and diabetes. We must help supermarkets, farmers markets, and other fresh food stores open in under-served areas – bringing jobs, economic stability, and healthy food to communities in need of all three. ”

The new analysis is part of Brookings’ High Cost of Being Poor project, supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Brookings’ Metropolitan Policy Program partnered with The Reinvestment Fund to analyze the data and publish the results through TRF’s PolicyMap service. It examines supermarket access in low- and moderate-income communities in 10 U.S. metropolitan areas: Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Cleveland, OH; Jackson, MS; Las Vegas, NV; Little Rock, AR; Los Angeles, CA; Louisville, KY; Phoenix, AZ; and San Francisco-Oakland, CA. This work complements prior TRF analyses supported by the Tides Foundation. Together this work forms a base of data now available to the public at www.policymap.com and directly on TRF’s website at www.trfund.com.

The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings provides decision-makers with cutting-edge research and policy ideas for improving the health and prosperity of metropolitan areas, including their component cities, suburbs, and rural areas. To learn more, please visit: www.brookings.edu/metro.

The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) is a leading national innovator in capitalizing distressed communities and stimulating economic growth for low- and moderate-income families. TRF's data analysis focuses both on helping TRF identify opportunities to invest its own resources and providing services to public sector and private clients seeking assistance with their own strategies to preserve and rebuild vulnerable communities. TRF's analytical strength is also reflected in its national online data analysis and mapping tool that is available for all internet users at www.policymap.com. The tool offers thousands of data indicators to help users understand a place, compare places or track their own investments in a place. To learn more about TRF, visit www.trfund.com.

PolicyLink is a national research and advocacy institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works. PolicyLink helps create sustainable communities of opportunity that offer access to quality jobs, affordable housing, good schools, affordable transportation, and healthy food. The organization is based in Oakland, CA, with offices in New York City, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC. To learn more, visit: www.policylink.org

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