



D.C. POLICY

CENTER

FOOD ACCESS IN DC

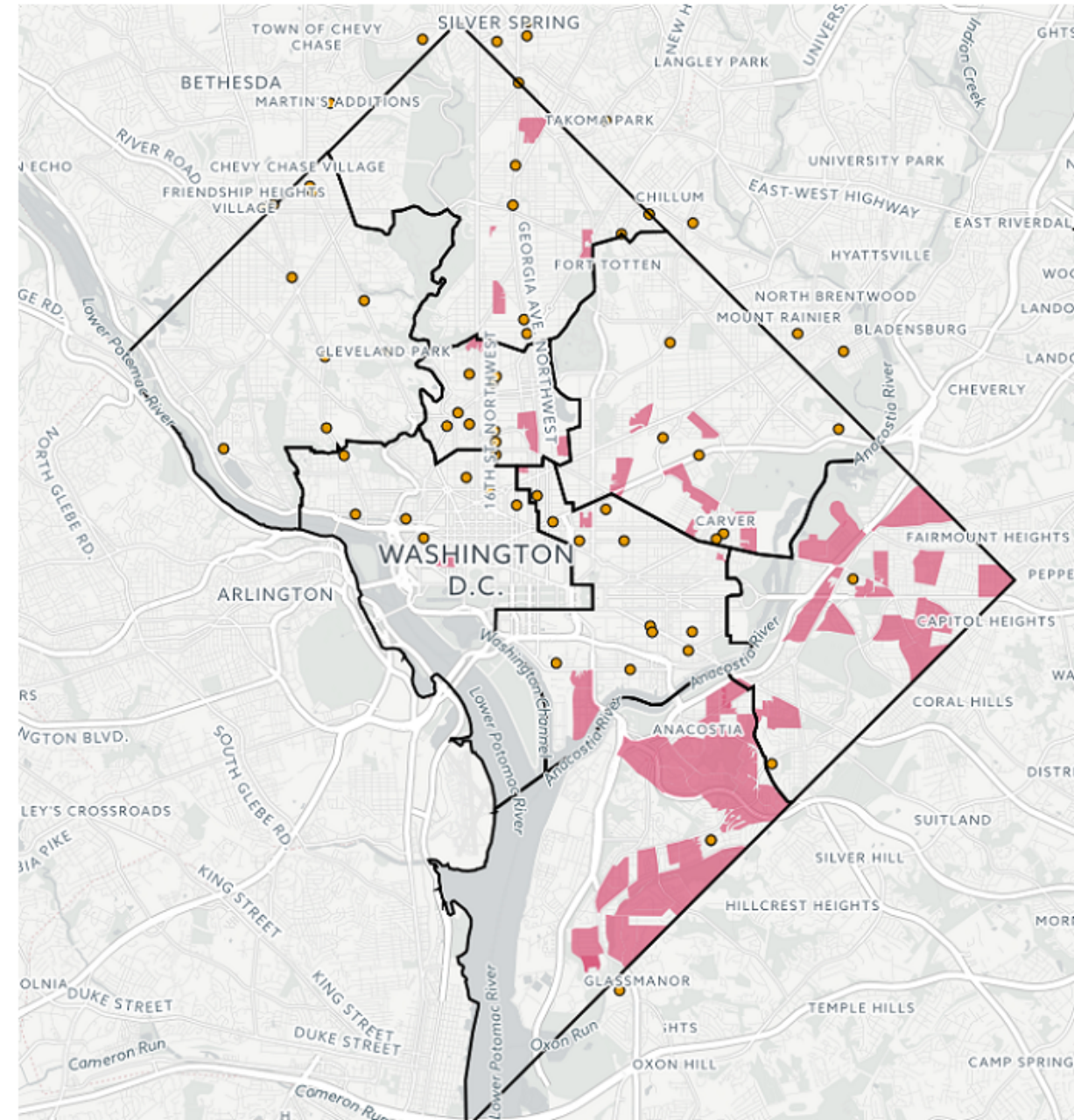
A Focus on Retail Grocery Access

FOOD DESERTS IN DC

Areas that

- are located more than half a mile from a grocery store or supermarket,
- have low rates of car access, and
- have a high poverty rate.

household income, and transportation access.



Source: D.C. Policy Center

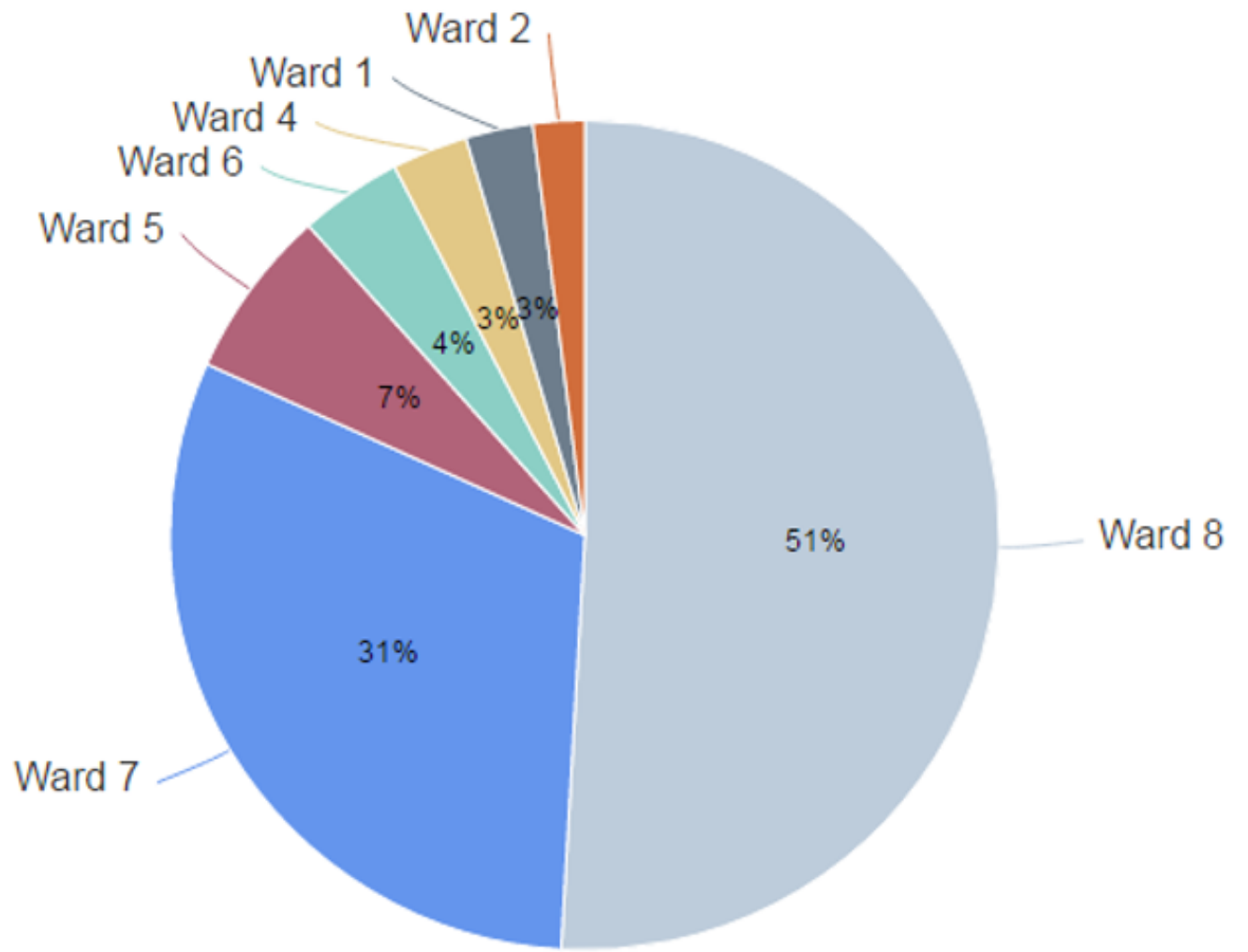
Half of D.C. food deserts are in Ward 8

Areas with limited food access in the District (based on grocery or supermarket proximity, household income, and car access), by ward

MORE THAN HALF
IN WARD 8

Food deserts

- Make up about 11 percent of D.C.'s total area (6.5 square miles), and
- Are concentrated in the neighborhoods of Anacostia, Barry Farms, Mayfair, and Ivy City.
- Ward 3 has no areas considered a food desert. Ward 2 does contain a food desert, but it is quite small—only 0.13 square miles.

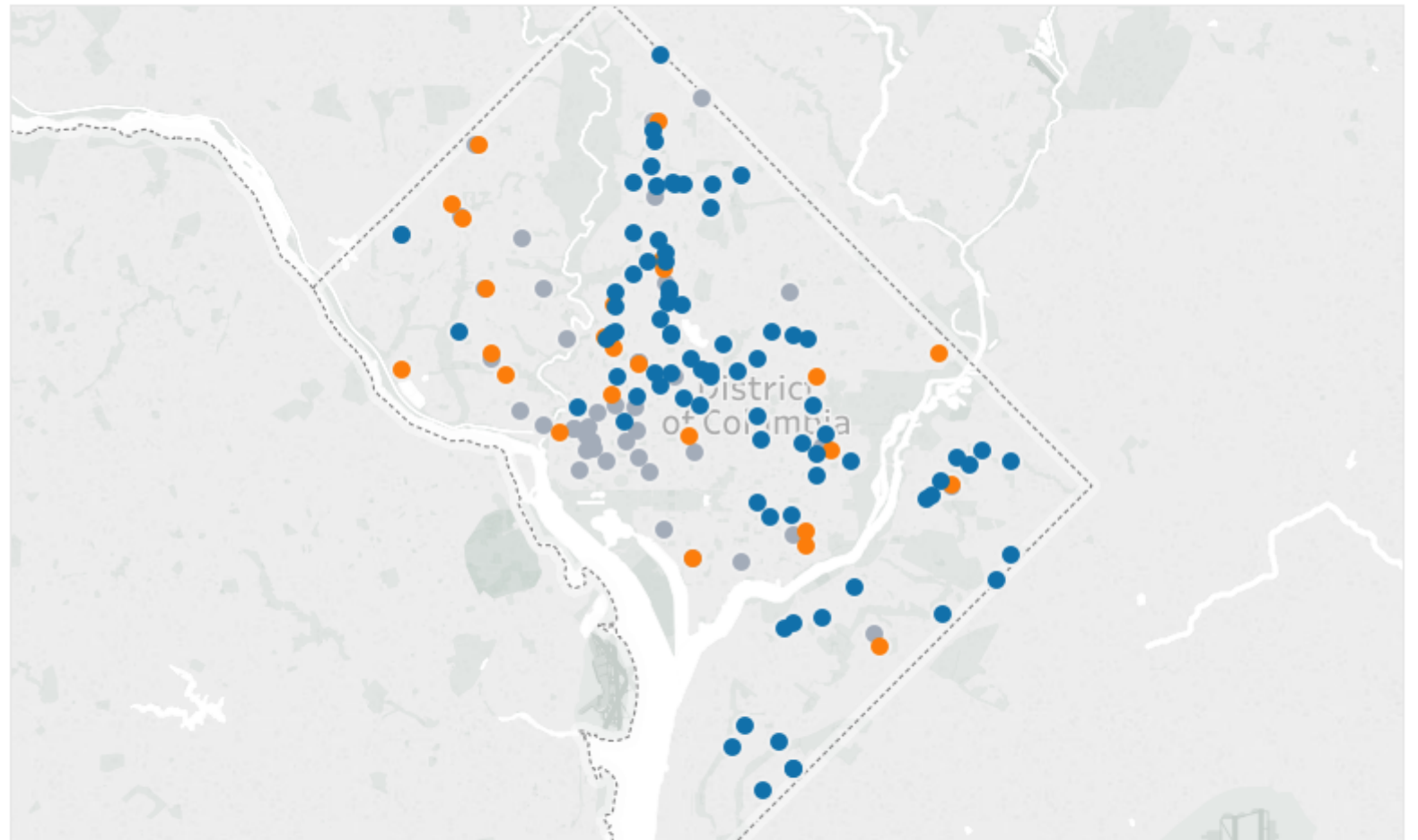


Source: D.C. Policy Center
Updated March 16, 2017

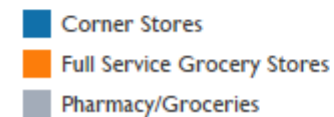
DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD RETAIL

- **West of Park:** lots of full service supermarkets
- **East of the River:** lots of corner stores

Grocery Stores, Corner Stores, Pharmacy/grocery



Source: BBL data for 2015 and 2016



SUPPLY SIDE

- The Food Policy Council and the DC Office of Planning are working with ICF International on a report on the supply-side landscape of D.C.'s food economy.
- Legislative and budget initiatives to help increase supply
- When policy conversations focus exclusively on grocery store gaps, we implicitly ask grocery stores to accomplish many things: improve nutrition, solve hunger, prevent obesity and chronic diseases, and improve the overall health of thousands of residents.

DEMAND SIDE

- **High income households stronger preference for healthy options.** Households with income below \$25,000 are willing to pay an average of \$0.62 per day to consume the U.S. recommended daily intake of healthy nutrients instead of the maximum daily intake of unhealthy nutrients, whereas households with income above \$70,000 are willing to pay almost twice that amount.
- **Even households in zip codes with no supermarkets still buy almost 90 percent of their groceries from supermarkets.**

Hunt Allcott, Rebecca Diamond, Jean-Pierre Dubé, The Geography of Poverty and Nutrition: Food Deserts and Food Choices Across the United States, NBER, 2018

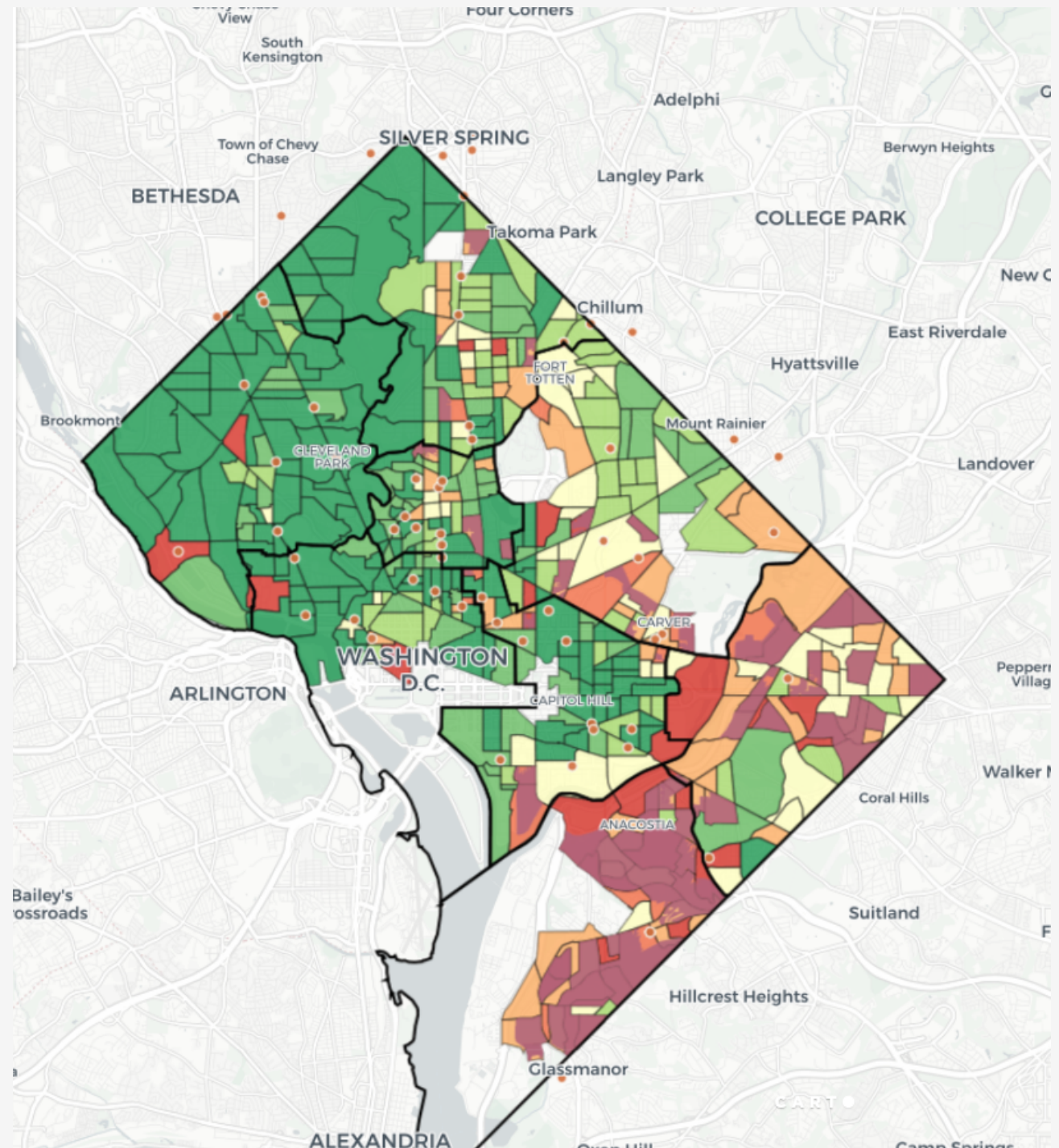
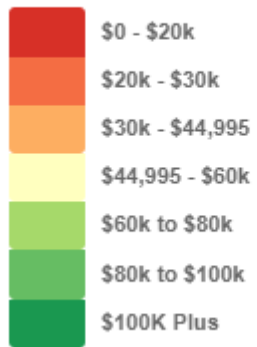
DEMAND SIDE

- Differential local access to supermarkets explain no more than about five percent of the nutrition-income relationship.
- When households move from one place to one with more healthy eating options, the move doesn't have much of an effect on nutritional habits in the medium term (~3 years).

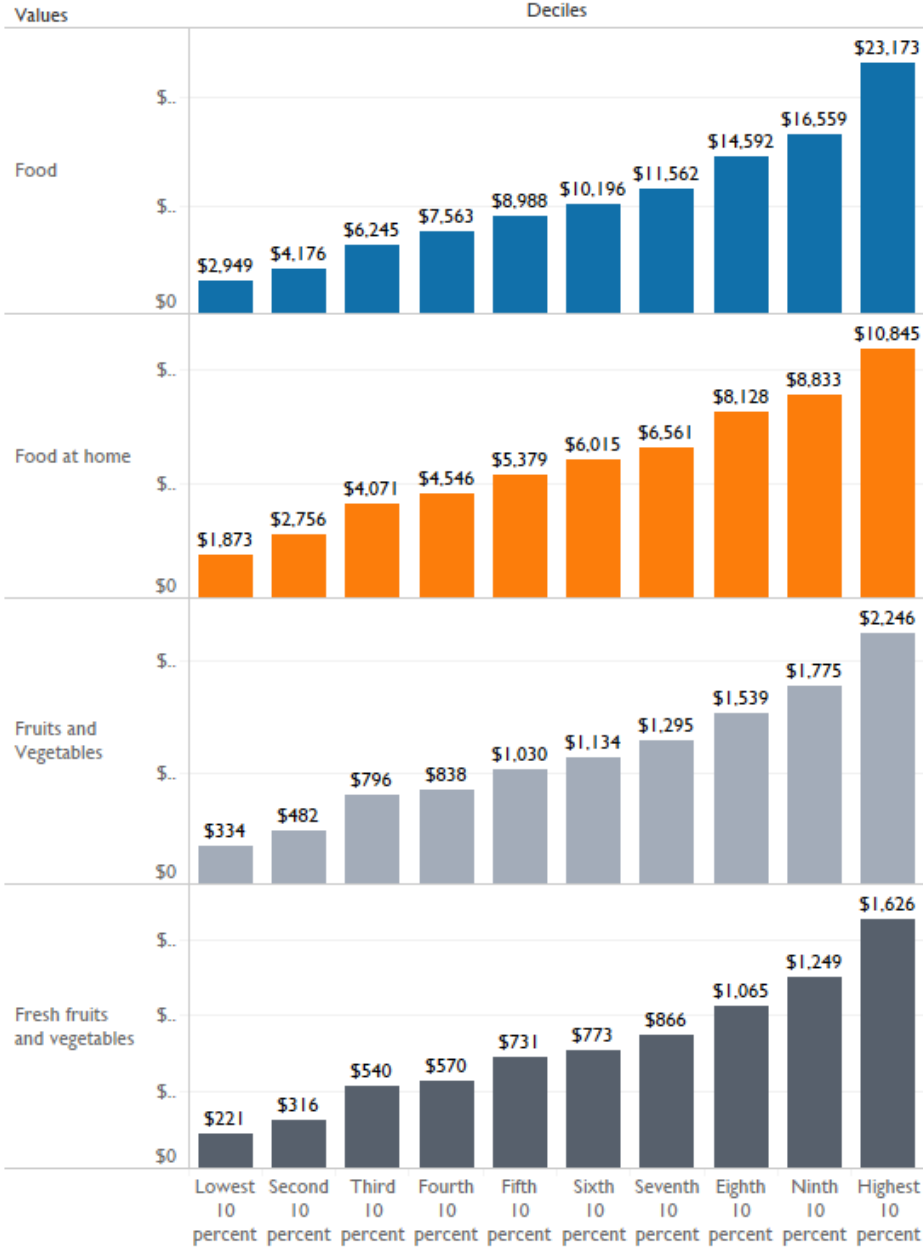
Hunt Allcott, Rebecca Diamond, Jean-Pierre Dubé, [The Geography of Poverty and Nutrition: Food Deserts and Food Choices Across the United States, NBER, 2018](#)

INCOMES TOO LOW TO SUPPORT?

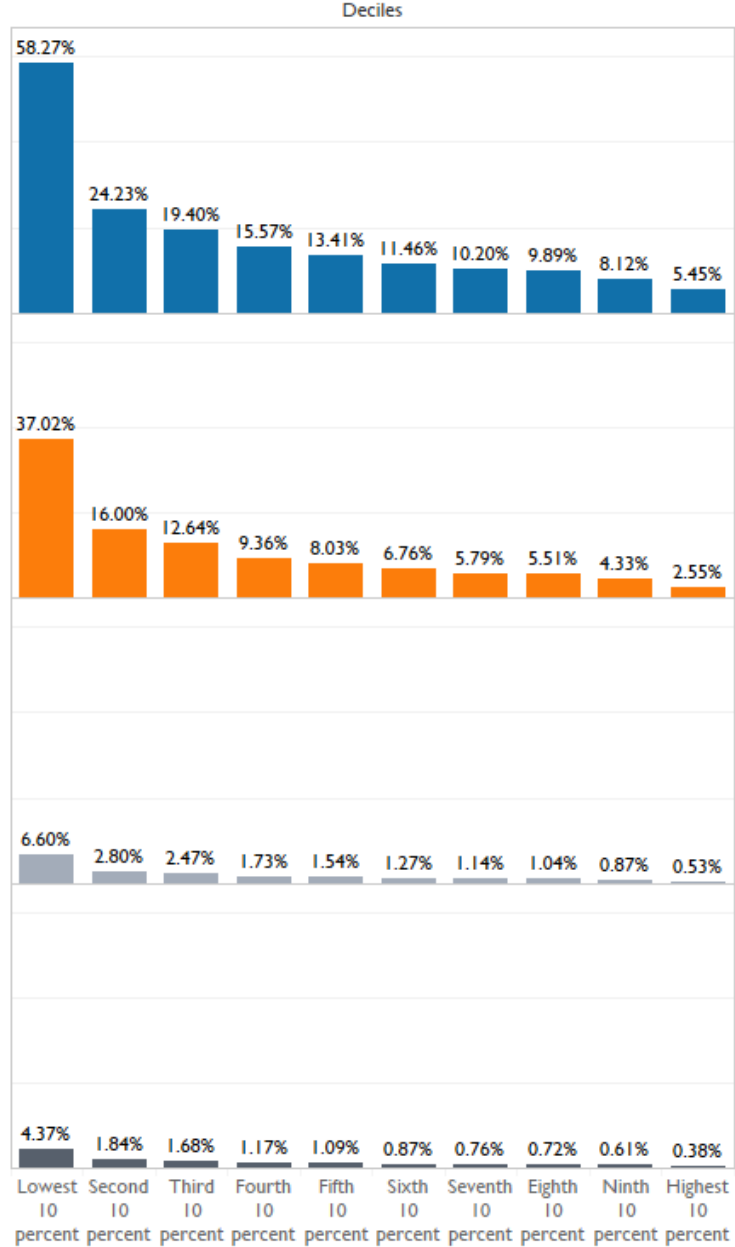
Median Household Income



Spending by decile



Spending as a share of income, decile



Economic Wellbeing indicators

Location	Metric				
	Families on TANF	Families receiving SNAP	Number of people below the poverty rate	Number of people unemployed	Number of renter occupied homes and no vehicle access
Ward 1	829	6,076	10,454	3,721	13,197
Ward 2	812	9,074	8,849	1,987	15,508
Ward 3	20	499	7,403	1,848	7,128
Ward 4	1,427	8,355	9,814	4,670	4,989
Ward 5	1,989	10,943	14,820	6,198	7,728
Ward 6	2,282	9,928	10,303	3,502	10,784
Ward 7	3,674	15,947	19,006	6,382	9,687
Ward 8	4,917	17,658	29,716	7,503	13,189

Source: ACS

DEMAND SIDE

- Educational differences explain about twenty percent of the relationship between income and healthy grocery demand, while about seven percent is explained by ... nutrition knowledge scores. ...
- While these findings are only correlational, they may suggest an opportunity for policies focusing on demand-side factors, such as education and health knowledge, to reduce nutritional inequality

DEMAND SIDE INTERVENTIONS

- **Expand WIC and SNAP and reduce restrictions on grocery stores that can accept WIC:** Only half of DC's full-service grocery stores accept WIC, according to FRAC, and DC has stricter retailer requirements than federal requirements for which stores are eligible to accept WIC.
- **Increased access to free and affordable healthy options in convenient locations** (schools, neighborhoods, workplaces; corner store efforts), which DC is already doing; work with non-profit partners to invest in a grocery co-op

DEMAND SIDE INTERVENTIONS

- **Incorporate more nutritional information and even lessons into home visiting;** more accessible nutritional information provided by medical providers (when appropriate)
- **Targeted community education around nutrition, cooking, and fitness**

QUESTIONS?



D.C. POLICY

CENTER

Advancing policies for a strong
and vibrant economy in the
District of Columbia