



KEY TAKEAWAYS • FOOD ACCESS •

WHY PLANNING FOR FOOD ACCESS MATTERS

Resident choices about food spending and diet are often influenced by the accessibility and affordability of nearby food retailers. Considerations such as travel time and mode to shopping, availability of healthy food offerings, and costs contribute to one’s food access and security. Some residents, especially those with low income, may face greater barriers in accessing healthy and affordable food retailers, which can negatively affect food security, diet and health and overall quality of life.



FOOD INSECURITY & FOOD DESERTS

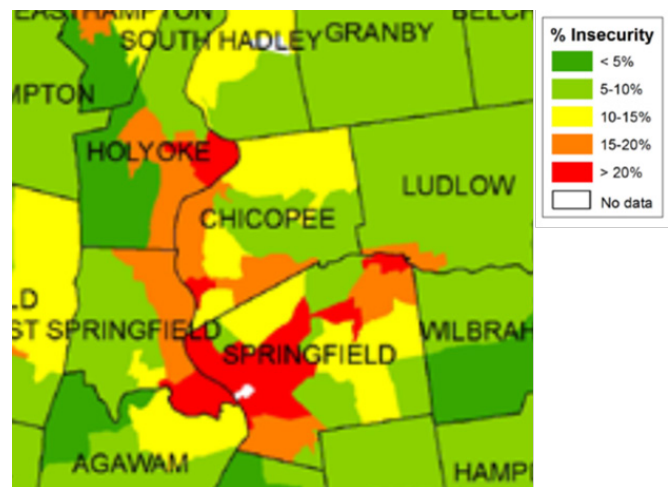
Food insecurity is when people have inadequate or uncertain access to food, particularly healthy food like fresh produce. Food insecurity is highest in Chicopee Center, Chicopee Falls, and Willimansett, where 15% to over 20% of the population is food insecure.

Drive, and it can be difficult and time consuming to take transit depending on where you live. There is also limited pedestrian infrastructure and reaching these stores on foot or by bicycle is difficult and dangerous.

Food deserts occur in lower-income areas where grocery stores and other places to purchase healthy foods are difficult to access for people without a personal vehicle or where public transportation is limited. On top of Chicopee Center, Chicopee Falls, and Willimansett, much of the eastern portion of the City is considered a food desert.

Chicopee is home to nine grocery stores or other large stores that sell groceries (such as Walmart), all of which are accessible by public transit. There are also at least two convenience stores that sell fresh produce. However, most of these stores are located on Memorial

Food Insecurity Rates



Source: Community Health Needs Assessment 2019, Baystate Medical Center

ALTERNATIVE FRESH FOOD OPTIONS

Chicopee Farmers Market - located in Willimansett under the Interstate 391 overpass the Chicopee Farmers Market is managed by the Valley Opportunity Council. The Market gives local farmers and small vendors the opportunity to sell their fresh and locally grown products. The farmers market is only open from July through mid-September from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on Wednesdays, making it difficult for working adults to access. The City would be interested in exploring ways to have a permanent, year-round market with more accessible open hours.

Chicopee Community Garden - is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department at Lincoln Grove Park. The garden is very popular, and a new one is in the planning stages for Rivers Park.

McKinstry's Market Garden - sells fresh, local produce including corn, tomatoes, strawberries, and a variety of other fruits and vegetables, as well as flowers, starter plants, and more.



FOOD ASSISTANCE

Chicopee Summer Lunch Program- operated through the Valley Opportunity Council, provides free lunches to Chicopee youth when school is not in session. In 2019, 26,258 lunches were distributed over the course of the summer, demonstrating a very significant need.

Chicopee WIC- is a nutrition program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to healthcare and other services free of charge to qualified families. Most notably, participants receive a card to redeem at participating grocery stores and pharmacies for nutritious foods and infant formula/baby foods.

ChicopeeFRESH- is a Chicopee Public School program providing every student in the school system access to locally sourced, nutritious meals. Locally sourced food now accounts for about 15% of the school system's food budget. Every school in the system participates, with school system-wide menus featuring "farm fresh" meals at least once a week.