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Urban Food Deserts: Working Across Disciplines to Address Food Insecurity in Richmond, Virginia
Authors: Crystal Tyler-Mackey, Ph.D., Brittany Council MS, Twandra Lomax-Brown MA Ed.

Food security and access are central metrics of Richmond City’s health status, environment, and economy. Efforts in the city to reduce hunger and increase access to healthy foods have been independent, geographically specific initiatives, but food-related issues remain.

• One in three children in Richmond City lives below the federal poverty level.
• 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.
• Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.

Policy and Program Recommendations

Policy Implementation and Integration
Innovations in Land Use and Urban Agriculture
Access to Fresh, Healthy Food
Healthy Living Media and Marketing
Fresh, Local and Healthy School Food

Richmond City allocates $25k to VCE office to address food desert issues

Statewide Task Force & Documentary Followed

Over 100 participants met and shared resources, ideas, and promising strategies, from prescription produce to indoor farms. The First Lady of Virginia kicks off symposium

Food Deserts & Food Access

Food desert – term used to describe low-income neighborhoods with limited or no access to fresh healthy foods, specifically a supermarket or large grocery store. Though there are various methodologies used to identify food deserts, the most commonly accepted is used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2009, USDA created the Food Desert Locator, a website used to display a national map of areas with low access to food as part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” initiative. The food desert locator primarily uses income and locations of grocery stores to determine food access, and is displayed by census tract.

Citywide Assessment

Mayor Dwight C. Jones established the Food Policy Task Force to provide the administration with recommendations that will improve access to quality, affordable, healthy fresh foods throughout the city.

VCE Richmond City Response

VCE- Richmond Hosts First Urban Food Desert Symposium in VA

31st Street Baptist Church partners and becomes 1st urban church to have USDA certified farm

Documentary available on YouTube – search “Food Deserts in Virginia”

Innovations in Land Use and Urban Agriculture

Healthy Living Media and Marketing

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First Lady of Virginia kicks off symposium

Changing palates and eating habits