

Food Desert Community Designation Listening Session

January 2022



About the NJ Economic Recovery Act

Governor Phil Murphy signed the **New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 (ERA)** into law on January 7, 2021.

The ERA creates a package of **tax incentive, financing, and grant programs** that will build a stronger, fairer New Jersey economy.

The ERA is both a broad-based **recovery bill and reform bill** that will better position New Jersey to recover from economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, while remaining true to the NJEDA's commitments to transparency and accountability.

Visit the NJEDA's website at www.njeda.com/economicrecoveryact to learn more about each of the programs within the ERA, or to provide general ERA feedback.

Opportunities for Engagement

The NJEDA is committed to transparency, equity, and faithful stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and welcomes constructive input from all New Jerseyans as we work through the process of implementing the programs under the ERA.

The NJEDA will be providing multiple opportunities for public input. Today's session is one way that the NJEDA is collecting informal program-specific feedback.

GENERAL ERA PROGRAM FEEDBACK

Provide general suggestions on one or more ERA programs prior to NJEDA releasing program-specific information.

You can use this website to provide thoughts on the ERA legislation and how NJEDA should implement the ERA programs.

INFORMAL PROGRAM-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Provide specific feedback on draft program regulations, before they are approved by NJEDA's Board.

NJEDA will post additional draft ERA program regulations on this website for public input as they are developed.

FORMAL REGULATORY FEEDBACK

Provide formal public feedback on the proposed regulations approved by our Board.

All ERA programs will have a formal APA 60-day public comment period once proposed rules are published.

Executive Order No. 63

Pursuant to Governor Murphy's Executive Order No. 63, the NJEDA is providing opportunities for groups and stakeholders to engage with the NJEDA in designating Food Desert Communities, pursuant to the Food Desert Relief Act.

We welcome constructive input on how to ensure new programs created through the ERA are structured and administered in a manner that drives opportunities for all residents and communities.

The NJEDA will begin the session with a presentation to summarize the draft rules – opportunity for public feedback will be available following the NJEDA's presentation. It is expected that 75-90 mins will be reserved strictly for public input.

Recording of Public Feedback Sessions

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All Food Desert Community Designation public feedback sessions will be recorded and posted on www.njeda.com/program-specific-feedback so that members of the public unable to participate in a virtual session have the opportunity to review

Public Feedback Policy

- ▶ **Feedback may be submitted verbally by using the “raise hand” function in Zoom, or in writing through the Q&A feature.** Input will not be accepted verbally until the NJEDA has concluded its presentation.
- ▶ **Each member of the public who wishes to speak during the public feedback period should use the “raise hand” function in Zoom.** The host will acknowledge each speaker in the order in which they raised their hand and will open the speaker’s microphone to make their statement.
- ▶ To ensure everyone that chooses to has an opportunity to speak, **each speaker will have a maximum of three (3) minutes to speak and should limit input to matters pertaining to the Economic Recovery Act of 2020, the Food Desert Relief Act, or the proposed Food Desert Community designations.**
- ▶ **Each member of the public will have one opportunity to provide remarks.** If time remains at the end of the session, we will reopen the opportunity for additional remarks.
- ▶ **Speakers should not expect to engage in a dialogue. NJEDA staff may respond to basic questions or clarify a speaker’s input.** However, NJEDA staff are not obligated to answer impromptu questions or address remarks from members of the public.
- ▶ **Speakers and members of the public should at all times maintain proper decorum and shall provide their remarks in a civil manner.**

Please Note

NJEDA staff will summarize the proposed Food Desert Community designations and provide context.

To access the full proposed methodology, including Food Desert Community data and map, please visit www.njeda.com/program-specific-feedback.

What is the Food Desert Relief Act?

Goals of Food Desert Relief Act (FDRA):



Facilitate **development and sustainable operations of supermarkets and grocery stores** in Food Desert Communities



Strengthen existing community assets in Food Desert Communities by equipping them with the necessary **equipment and infrastructure to provide healthier food options**



Help food retailers **respond to the shift to e-commerce**, including for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)



Identify and foster **innovative solutions to alleviate food insecurity**

Scope of Food Insecurity in New Jersey:

- New Jersey faces a crisis of food insecurity that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts on families across the state.
- According to the Community Food Bank of NJ, nearly 800,000 New Jerseyans face hunger every day, approximately 200,000 of them children.
- The latest data from the US Census Bureau's Household Pulse survey indicated more than 350,000 households did not have enough to eat in the past week
- Even prior to COVID-19, significant numbers of New Jersey residents had limited access to a supermarket or grocery store; according to a 2018 analysis by the Reinvestment Fund, nearly 880,000 New Jerseyans had limited supermarket access.

Food Desert Designation in the FDRA

- ▶ The FDRA directs EDA to work with the Departments of Community Affairs and Agriculture to designate **up to 50 areas as Food Desert Communities (FDCs)**
- ▶ FDCs must be **distinct geographic areas with a single defined border**, but the size of that area is not defined in the law
- ▶ The law directs EDA and its partners to use certain evaluative criteria (e.g., USDA ERS data, US CDC healthy food retail data) and suggests others (e.g., SNAP enrollment, vehicle access) but EDA and its partners **may consider additional criteria** beyond those specified in the law
- ▶ EDA may designate **additional FDCs once every 3 years**

FDRA Section 38b.:

“The authority, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Community Affairs, **shall initially designate not more than 50 separate geographic areas that have limited access to nutritious foods as food desert communities in this State. The authority, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Community Affairs, shall develop criteria for the designation of food desert communities, but each separate food desert community shall consist of a distinct geographic area with a single defined border.** The criteria shall, at a minimum, incorporate analysis of municipal or census tract poverty statistics, food desert information from the Economic Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, healthier food retail tract information from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and residents’ access to nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, through supermarkets and grocery stores. The authority, in consultation with the departments, may also consider in making food desert community designations pursuant to this subsection, data related to municipal or census tract population size and population, the number of residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits within a municipality, the extent to which a municipality’s residents have access to a personal vehicle, and a municipality’s Municipal Revitalization Index distress score, obesity rate, and unemployment rate. The authority, in consultation with the departments, shall continuously evaluate areas previously designated as food desert communities and assess whether they still meet the criteria for designation as a food desert community and **may designate additional food desert communities once every three years** following the effective date of sections 35 through 42 of 14 P.L.2020, c.156.”

Determining Food Desert Community Criteria

In addition to statutory guidance, EDA, and its partners sought feedback from the public and conducted a literature review to identify potential criteria for Food Desert Community designations.

From statutory guidance:

- Poverty
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Modified Retail Food Environment Index
- US Department of Agriculture Low Access Score
- Supermarket access
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment
- Vehicle access
- 2020 NJ DCA Municipal Revitalization Index Score
- Unemployment rate
- Obesity rate

Additional feedback from EDA Request for Information:

- Access to unhealthy food retailers
- Income relative to cost of living
- Municipal Violent Crime Rate
- Households with internet access

Additional from DCA literature review:

- Access to public transportation
- Education levels
- Health indicators
- Income and employment
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) enrollment
- Public assistance enrollment
- Housing quality
- Race and ethnicity
- Single mother headed of households
- Urbanicity and geography
- Walkability
- Students with free or reduced-price lunch
- Residents under age 18

Proposed Food Desert Community Designation Criteria

NJDCA performed a **factor analysis** to identify the variables that together best signal the presence of a Food Desert Community.

|  Food Retail Environment |  Demographics |  Economic Factors |  Health Factors |  Community Factors |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021 Limited Supermarket Area (NJDCa analysis)• 2021 Low Access Score (NJDCa analysis)• Food Swamp – unhealthy food access area (NJDCa analysis)• CDC Modified Retail Food Environment Index | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single mother head % of households• % non-Hispanic white• % African-American• % Hispanic• % of adults with a HS diploma | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployment rate (block group)• Poverty rate• Per capita income• % of households receiving public assistance• % of households receiving SNAP benefits• WIC participation rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• % of pop. that is obese (Health Dept. area)• % of adults rating health as poor or fair | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• % of households with internet access• % of housing non-seasonally vacant• % of households that are housing cost burdened• % of households with no vehicle• DCA Walkability Score• Municipal violent crime rate, 2016-18 |

Proposed Size and Geography

- ▶ FDCs may have a **minimum of 1,000 residents and maximum of 50,000 residents**
- ▶ **A single municipality may have more than one FDC** if FDC areas are not geographically contiguous or a geographically contiguous FDC within the municipality has more than 50,000 residents
- ▶ FDCs **may cross municipal borders** to include residents of a neighboring municipality's FDC up to 50,000 residents across all municipalities included within a single FDC
- ▶ To ensure geographic diversity, the **highest scoring FDC for each county will be included** on the final FDC designation list

Food Desert Factor Scores

DCA has synthesized the variables based on weights determined by the Factor Analysis detailed on previous slides to create a **'Food Desert Factor Score' (0-100)** for each Census block group (BG) in the state (smaller than a Census tract, a block group is generally home to 600 to 3,000 people)

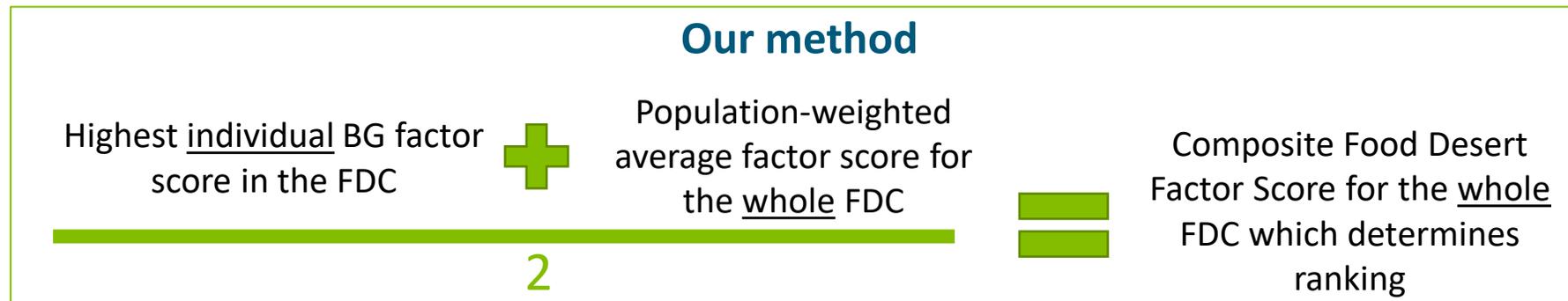
Depending on size, a proposed FDC may include a small number of block groups (e.g., Salem City has 3) or dozens of block groups (e.g., Newark North/Central has over 50)

Each block group receives an individual Food Desert Factor Score, ranging from 0 to 100. Higher scores indicate more qualities consistent with being an FDC.

- For example, Salem City's proposed FDC covers 3 block groups and their respective Food Desert Factor Scores are 75.0, 62.7 and 54.1
- The population weighted average of the three block groups is a Food Desert Factor Score of 64.2

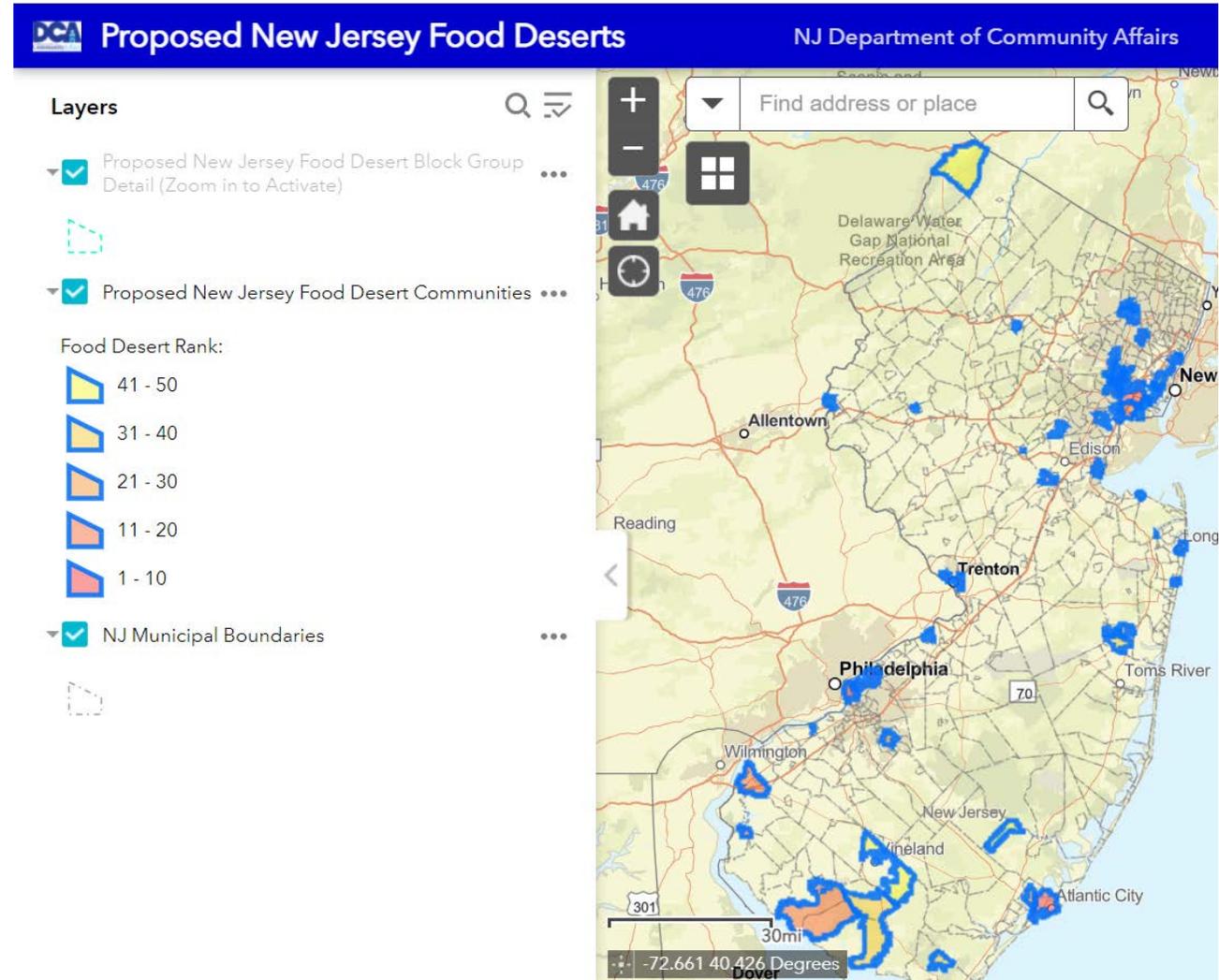
To target analysis and prioritize the areas with greatest acuity of need, we calculate the average of the highest scoring block group and the population weighted average to create a 'composite' score for each FDC

- For Salem City: calculate the average of 75.0 (highest Food Desert Factor Score) and 64.2 (population weighted average of the Food Desert Factor Scores for all block groups), to determine a composite Food Desert Factor Score of 69.6



Proposed Food Desert Communities Summary

- ▶ All 21 NJ counties have at least one FDC
- ▶ FDC designations include 57 municipalities
 - In most cases, just *portions* of a municipality are included in FDC designation, not the whole municipality
- ▶ 6 municipalities are sub-divided due to the size of the population residing in an FDC and the proposed FDC maximum of 50,000 residents
 - Camden (2 FDCs), Elizabeth (2), Jersey City (3), Lakewood (2), Newark (4), Paterson (2)
- ▶ The 50 proposed FDCs cover 1,321,484 total residents
- ▶ Population size of each FDC ranges from 1,135 to 49,831, averaging 26,430



Map of Proposed Food Desert Communities found at www.njeda.com/program-specific-feedback

Blue indicates a subdivided municipality

Higher
Food
Desert
Factor
Score



Lower
Food
Desert
Factor
Score

| | Food Desert Community | County | Composite Food Desert Factor Score (0-100) | Food Desert Population |
|----|--|------------|--|------------------------|
| 1 | North, Central and South Camden /Woodlyrne* | Camden | 85.4 | 34,228 |
| 2 | Atlantic City/Ventnor | Atlantic | 79.1 | 37,877 |
| 3 | Newark South | Essex | 75.2 | 42,713 |
| 4 | Newark West | Essex | 72.7 | 49,065 |
| 5 | Paterson South | Passaic | 71.6 | 35,825 |
| 6 | Camden East /Pennsauken | Camden | 71.4 | 44,006 |
| 7 | Newark East | Essex | 71.3 | 40,427 |
| 8 | Newark North and Central | Essex | 70.7 | 49,741 |
| 9 | Passaic city | Passaic | 70.4 | 45,117 |
| 10 | Salem city* | Salem | 69.6 | 5,296 |
| 11 | Paterson North | Passaic | 65.7 | 46,602 |
| 12 | Bridgeton/Fairfield Twp/Lawrence Twp* | Cumberland | 65.3 | 29,167 |
| 13 | New Brunswick city | Middlesex | 64.1 | 49,408 |
| 14 | Trenton city | Mercer | 63.9 | 43,209 |
| 15 | Elizabeth East | Union | 61.6 | 33,378 |
| 16 | Asbury Park city | Monmouth | 60.8 | 14,547 |
| 17 | Jersey City South | Hudson | 60.5 | 46,956 |
| 18 | Penns Grove*/Carneys Point* | Salem | 59.9 | 13,474 |
| 19 | Perth Amboy city | Middlesex | 59.6 | 30,997 |
| 20 | Irvington township | Essex | 59.3 | 28,367 |
| 21 | Elizabeth West | Union | 59.2 | 23,445 |
| 22 | Union City | Hudson | 57.1 | 23,926 |
| 23 | Lindenwold/Clementon* | Camden | 56.8 | 19,469 |
| 24 | Lakewood North | Ocean | 56.5 | 49,364 |
| 25 | Pleasantville/Absecon | Atlantic | 56.0 | 9,874 |

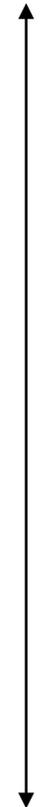
* Whole municipality included in FDC

Proposed Food Desert Community Designations

(slide 1 of 2, this is #1-25)

Blue indicates a subdivided municipality

Higher
Food
Desert
Factor
Score



Lower
Food
Desert
Factor
Score

| | Food Desert Community | County | Composite Food Desert Factor Score (0-100) | Food Desert Population |
|----|---------------------------------------|------------|--|------------------------|
| 26 | Red Bank borough | Monmouth | 55.6 | 1,508 |
| 27 | East Orange city | Essex | 54.5 | 45,808 |
| 28 | Orange/West Orange/Montclair | Essex | 54.2 | 35,976 |
| 29 | North Bergen/West New York/Guttenberg | Hudson | 53.3 | 48,711 |
| 30 | Long Branch city | Monmouth | 52.6 | 17,885 |
| 31 | Jersey City North | Hudson | 52.5 | 48,783 |
| 32 | Jersey City Central | Hudson | 52.4 | 38,433 |
| 33 | Woodbine borough* | Cape May | 51.2 | 2,128 |
| 34 | Millville/Commercial Twp* | Cumberland | 49.9 | 25,634 |
| 35 | Keansburg borough* | Monmouth | 49.1 | 9,755 |
| 36 | Prospect Park/Haledon/Hawthorne | Passaic | 49.0 | 10,478 |
| 37 | Paulsboro borough | Gloucester | 48.8 | 2,282 |
| 38 | Lakewood South | Ocean | 48.5 | 49,831 |
| 39 | Fairview borough | Bergen | 48.3 | 1,135 |
| 40 | Linden/Roselle | Union | 47.3 | 31,671 |
| 41 | Egg Harbor City* | Atlantic | 47.1 | 4,396 |
| 42 | Burlington city | Burlington | 46.1 | 6,101 |
| 43 | Vineland city | Cumberland | 45.2 | 13,273 |
| 44 | Plainfield city | Union | 44.9 | 21,363 |
| 45 | Phillipsburg town | Warren | 44.4 | 13,823 |
| 46 | Bayonne city | Hudson | 43.5 | 28,718 |
| 47 | Dover town | Morris | 42.5 | 10,478 |
| 48 | Bound Brook borough | Somerset | 42.4 | 1,823 |
| 49 | High Bridge borough | Hunterdon | 26.5 | 1,221 |
| 50 | Montague township* | Sussex | 25.1 | 3,792 |

* Whole municipality included in FDC

Proposed Food Desert Community Designations

(slide 2 of 2, this is #26-50)

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