

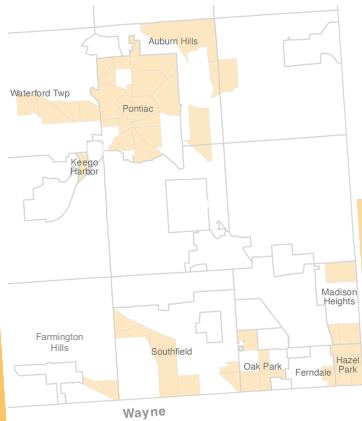
Food Access in Oakland County

How easy is it to access nutritious food in Oakland County? Oakland County Health and Human Services engaged Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to explore food security in Oakland County, including residents' abilities to access food. PSC collected and analyzed publicly available data, findings from a community survey and one-on-one interviews, and feedback from the Oakland County Food Landscape Community Coalition and community discussion groups to paint a picture of what food access looks like in Oakland County.

What Is a Food Desert?

Food deserts are places where getting fresh, affordable food is a challenge. In cities, this means the nearest grocery store is over a mile away; in rural areas, it's more than ten miles. Mapping these areas helps visualize food access.

Several areas in Oakland County qualify as food deserts, including:



The majority of:

- Oak Park
- Pontiac
- Hazel Park

Areas of:

- Auburn Hills
- Farmington Hills
- Ferndale

- Southfield
- Madison Heights
- Southfield
- Waterford Township

Several of these food deserts have also been identified as Health Equity Zones (communities facing several factors which contribute to inequitable health outcomes) during Oakland County's recent community needs assessment.

44% of survey respondents said they experienced some difficulty accessing food that meets their cultural, religious, or dietary needs.

Food Affordability

The cost of food was the top reason survey respondents cited when asked what barriers they face in accessing nutritious food.

29% of survey respondents said their household could not afford healthy and nutritious foods.



Since 2018, the average meal cost has jumped from \$3.20 to \$4.28, adding \$1,565 in annual expense per person.



The minimum yearly food cost for an Oakland County family is about 23% of total household costs (which is 10% higher than the national average).

Accessing Local Food

Local food access points are associated with providing fresh, local, nutritious foods, but **only 21% of survey respondents said they often or always choose to eat locally produced foods when they have the option.**

Cost, access, and the ability to use public benefits (like SNAP, EBT, and WIC) limit residents' ability to buy local food and boost the economy.



“Getting food even if it's ‘free’ requires time and money. I don't have a car, so I got a ride with a friend who was going to the pantry, but many people do not have vehicles.”

– Community member



Building a Stronger Food System Together

The Oakland Food Landscape Study Community Coalition and the Oakland County Health and Human Services Division are taking action to tackle food insecurity with a community-driven plan focused on three key areas:



Expanding access to nutritious food – Removing barriers, supporting culturally relevant food programs, increasing food literacy, and reducing stigma around assistance.



Reducing food waste and strengthening local food businesses – Cutting waste so more nutritious food is available and affordable, while building a stronger, more sustainable food system that benefits everyone.



Fostering collaboration – Bringing together food system partners and community members to align efforts and create lasting solutions.

These efforts aim to make it easier for Oakland County residents to find food that meets their needs when they need it most. Oakland County Health and Human Services is committed to turning this plan into action, prioritizing proven strategies, innovation, and community input every step of the way.



Learn more about the Oakland Health and Human Services | www.oakgov.com/community/health