

April 2017

# Montgomery County Food Security Plan

Building a Montgomery County in which all people have access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food, with dignity



The Montgomery County Food Security Plan outlines extensive recommended strategies for addressing food insecurity and sets a target of a 22% reduction in the number of food insecure individuals in three years.

The Plan offers comprehensive background data on food security, demographics, poverty, income, employment, transportation, public health, food assistance program participation, and the wide range of existing resources on the Federal, State and County level. The Plan also offers extensive recommendations to guide future research, analysis, and policy actions to work toward enhancing food security in the County.

Community engagement efforts in developing the plan included:

- ◆ **Public discussion forums** were held every three weeks at various locations throughout the County, with total attendance of over 100 people.
- ◆ **Facilitated listening sessions** with residents receiving food assistance services to capture the lived experience of those facing food insecurity. Eleven listening sessions were held engaging over 100 people, with Spanish and French translation provided when needed.
- ◆ Conducted **in-person interviews and roundtable discussion groups**, and gathered feedback from our Working Groups throughout Fall 2016.

## Collaborators in Developing the Plan



## The Path to Eliminating Hunger in the County

**Spring 2016**  
County Council Vice-President Roger Berliner introduced Bill 19-16.

**Summer 2016**  
Bill 19-16 is passed unanimously following a public hearing at which 16 community nonprofits testified in support of the legislation.

**Fall 2016**  
The Chief Innovation Officer of the Montgomery County Office of the County Executive led a four-month initiative to create the five-year Strategic Plan.

**Goal**  
Reduce food insecurity by 22% by 2020.

# Findings

Though the research to create the plan found that many people with a household income under the County's Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS), \$91,252, are potentially at risk for food insecurity, the Plan found that there are 20 specific populations of people with household incomes under the SSS that are at greatest risk of becoming food insecure, including:

- ◆ Residents lacking access to personal vehicles and adequate transit options; eligible but not enrolled in benefits programs; working multiple jobs and/or experiencing homelessness
- ◆ Children in school, on weekends, and/or in single parent households
- ◆ Seniors aging in place and/or with medical dietary restrictions
- ◆ Foreign born residents with limited English proficiency in mixed immigration status families, with lack of knowledge of or access to culturally appropriate services
- ◆ People with disabilities with limited mobility and/or waiting for case management

## Current State of Food Insecurity in Montgomery County

**70,150**

people are estimated to be food insecure

**35%**

of these people are income ineligible for Federal benefit programs

**73,213**

people are living below the Federal poverty level

**25,009**

households received SNAP benefits in 2015 compared to 8,990 in 2005

**14,680**

of these households had children under 18

**31,204**

mothers, infants, and young children enrolled in WIC in June 2016

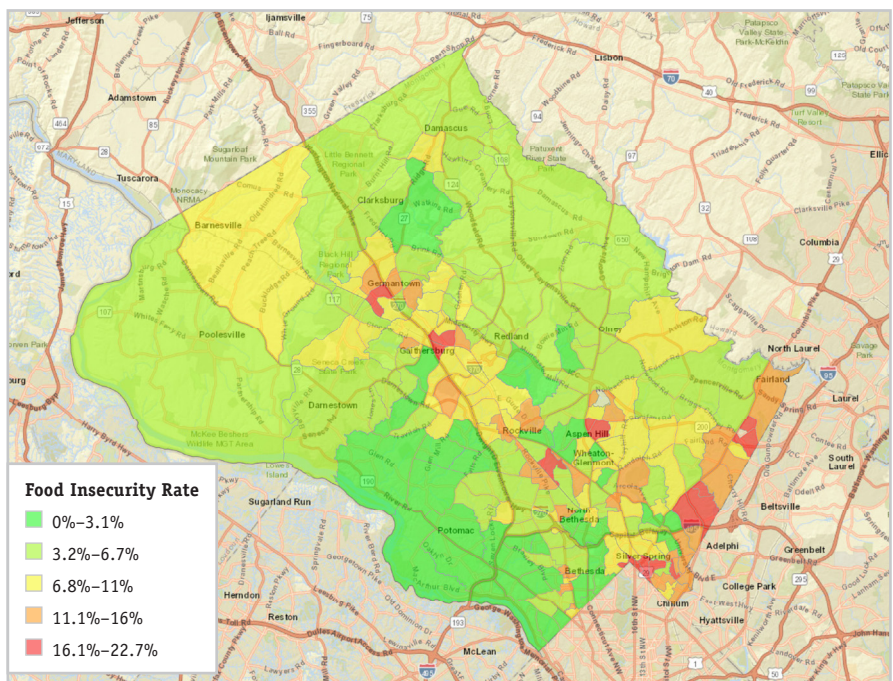
**59,480**

students receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs)

**83%**

of those enrolled receive Free rather than Reduced Price Meals

## Estimated Food Insecurity Rate



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community.

# Recommendations

This first iteration of the Plan is primarily focused on identifying populations in the County at risk for food insecurity and the food access barriers they face. Recommendations were included, however, to both enhance food security in the County and conduct further research and analysis to prepare for future improvements to the Plan.

## Year One Recommendations

- ◆ **FoodStat:** Create a cross-functional set of metrics to be updated annually by CountyStat to track metrics associated with the implementation of recommendations and progress toward reducing food insecurity.
- ◆ **Transportation Analysis:** Analyze the County’s RideOn bus system to identify areas in which access via transit to food retailers and other resources could be improved.
- ◆ **Increase Outreach and Collaboration:** Enhance service of residents in need through increased collaboration—especially information sharing—both among food resource providers and across private and public sector entities.
- ◆ **Improve Accessibility of Resources:** Improve availability of and outreach on culturally appropriate food resources—especially among newer immigrant populations—and nutritionally appropriate resources for all populations.
- ◆ **Target Children and Seniors:** Focus additional resources on serving both the growing senior and low-income children populations in the County.

## Years Two-Three Recommendations

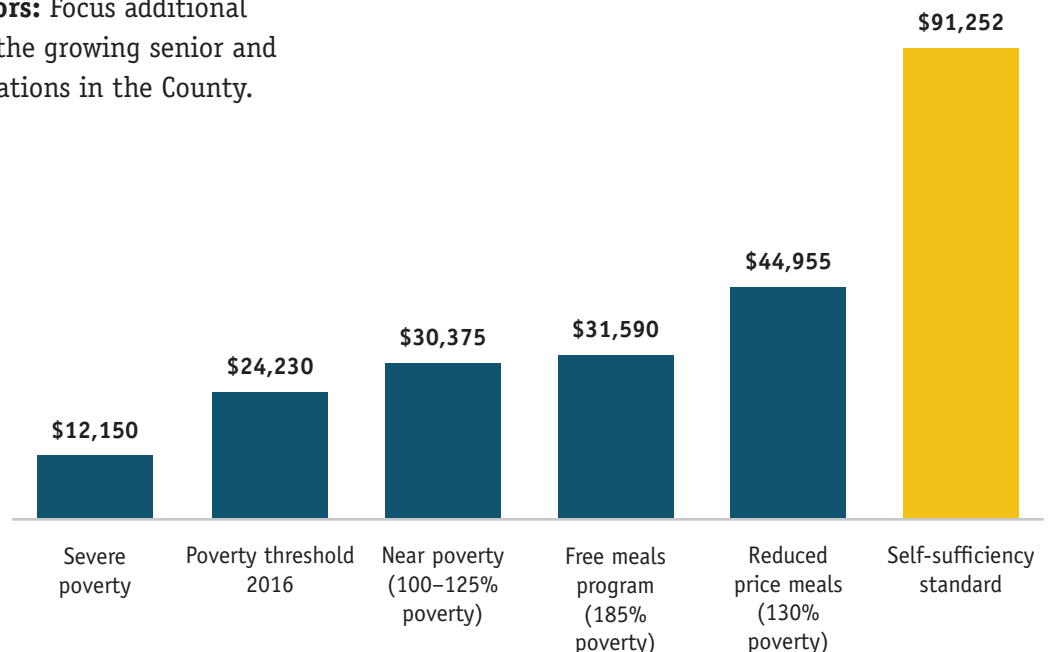
- ◆ Build capacity of smaller food assistance organizations in high-need “zones” through strategic investments in infrastructure.
- ◆ Deploy new programs via partnerships with retailers and the healthcare system.
- ◆ Reduce transportation related barriers to food access.

## Years Four-Five Recommendations

- ◆ Transition the system from one that simply feeds people to one that empowers them through food literacy, workforce and economic development programs and develop plans for a food system that is resilient.

### Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard versus Poverty Income Levels, 2016

Annual Income



Source: Adapted from The Children’s Agenda.  
<http://www.collaborationcouncil.org/2015childrensagendadatabookfinal.pdf>



## What We Can Do Now

- ◆ **Donate your Skills:** Do you have expertise in communications, accounting, data management, program evaluation or technology? Identify specialized skills you or your employees have that could provide much-needed support to a community nonprofit.
- ◆ **Volunteer your Time:** Coordinate a food drive, deliver food for Community Food Rescue or Meals on Wheels, or organize a team of volunteers for a shift at a local food assistance organization.
- ◆ **Contribute Financially:** Donate funds to a local food security organization or partner with a local philanthropy that coordinates support of anti-hunger programs.
- ◆ **Share your Resources:** Offer extra storage space, refrigeration capacity, trucks, drivers, or even land for a garden that would be useful to food assistance providers on an occasional or consistent basis.
- ◆ **Support Food Recovery:** Use caterers who reduce food waste and fight hunger by donating leftover food to Community Food Rescue. Encourage your local restaurants, grocery stores, and other food businesses to participate in this free program.
- ◆ **Advocate for your Community:** Food insecurity affects every community in Montgomery County. Learn more about what barriers to food access exist. Sign up for policy alerts and contact your elected officials to voice your support.
- ◆ **Create a Culture of Action:** Establish fighting food insecurity as a priority for your business, neighborhood, school or faith community. Increase awareness of this pervasive issue in our County and lead initiatives to create change.

Those who  
struggle  
with hunger  
often live in  
plain sight.

– Isiah Leggett,  
County Executive



Contact the Food Council for  
more information or to explore  
how to get involved:

[info@mocofoodcouncil.org](mailto:info@mocofoodcouncil.org)  
806-395-5593  
[www.mocofoodcouncil.org](http://www.mocofoodcouncil.org)