

Food Security

Historical Perspectives to Community-Driven Solutions

Carissa Dillon
Sarah Auten
Health and Wellness
August 23, 2023



Agenda

- Background
 - Current Food Insecurity Data
 - Historical Legacy through Maps
 - Community-Driven Next Steps
 - Q & A
-

Food is a Basic Need

Food insecurity is a condition of limited access to healthy, culturally-connected and medically appropriate food to support an active and healthy lifestyle.



The Impact of Food Insecurity

People experiencing food insecurity are forced to make choices that impact their health, such as:

Postponing or avoiding preventative or needed medical care

Purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy food.

Not following special diets to prevent or control chronic health conditions.

Not filling, skipping or reducing doses of prescriptions.

Choosing between food and other basic needs.



Other impacts of food insecurity on economic well-being include:

Absenteeism and decreased ability to perform effectively in the workforce.

Decreased learning ability in children.

Aligned Approach to Address Food Insecurity

- Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

“Ramsey County will strengthen families by expanding access to quality consistent early childhood care, education, and access to nutritious foods, resources and opportunities.”

- Responding to Climate Change & Increasing Community Resilience

“Reduced access to healthy foods and basic needs”

- Urban Institute’s Upward Mobility

“Promote food security and access to nutritious foods.”

- 2040 Comprehensive Plan

“Work with community partners to eliminate food insecurity by 2040.”

- COVID response.. first Food Security Coordinator

Assessment Approach

What is Ramsey County's role in supporting greater food security?

- Quantitative Data
 - Analyzed proxy measures specific to Ramsey County
 - Developed Open Data Portal for Food Security Data Story
- Qualitative Data
 - Over 75 informational interviews with service providers
 - Community engagement, partnered with Imagine Deliver
 - Heard from over 300 community members at 6 events
 - Open ended questions analyzed into priority areas
 - Surveys of organizational representatives
- Analysis of Historical Maps to understand context and legacy

Assessment: Food Insecurity Data Story



Hunger is a challenge for many Ramsey County residents. We have higher rates of food insecurity than the Minnesota state average and this gap widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 12% of Ramsey County residents were food insecure, while the state average was 10%. This trend continued in 2021 and the gap widened further during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children, older adults, and racially and ethnically diverse communities are the most impacted by food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed inequities among our most vulnerable community members.

Ramsey County is taking steps with our partners to continue to address food insecurity.

<https://data.ramseycounty.us/stories/s/Food-Security/9cfd-sn87/>

Food Security Assessment

Food Security Needs Assessment 2022

Executive Summary

Food insecurity is defined as a "household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food."¹ Food insecurity rates increased in Ramsey County during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among those who struggle to overcome its resulting economic challenges. Ramsey County commissioned a Needs Assessment to examine food insecurity, rooted in community engagement and broad stakeholder inputs across the system, to answer the question: **"What is Ramsey County's role in supporting greater food security?"**

This assessment started with a review of Ramsey County-specific quantitative data, followed by in-depth interviews, an online survey for service providers and food support recipients, and in-person surveys with community members. This document summarizes the results of this analysis.

Measuring Food Insecurity Ramsey County

Food insecurity rates in Ramsey County are above the state average: in 2021, 11% of the county's adults and 17% of the county's children were food insecure, compared to 9% and 13% statewide, respectively.

Usage rates for SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, reveal wide disparities in the extent to which various racial and ethnic groups access food benefits. In 2021, nearly **half of the total Black/African American population** in the county were on SNAP, about a **third of the total Asian population**, and **20% of all Native residents** used SNAP that year. Conversely, lower proportions of White, Hispanic/Latinx, and Multiple Race residents accessed SNAP benefits: about **10% of all Hispanic/Latinx and Multiple Race residents** and about 5%, or **one out of every 20 White residents**, used SNAP in 2021.

Mapping food insecurity rates across the county (Figure 1) shows that the **highest** concentrations in the University Avenue, Midway, Frogtown, and Capitol Heights areas of Saint Paul, shown with red borders. The **lowest** rates are found in the northern suburbs and the southeast corner of the county, shown with green borders.

Food Shelf usage rates show demand for food shelves has increased since the start of COVID and, in 2022, is on track to be nearly 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels. Usage rates have grown the most among seniors, increasing 160% since 2020.

Meals on Wheels served 1,375 total recipients in 2021. Usage rates were highest in Roseville (55113), East Side (55106), North End (55117), and University-Midway (55104). White residents make up about two-thirds of the recipients, but Black/African American and Mixed-Race recipients rose by 10% between 2019 and 2021.

School Feeding Rates were higher in Ramsey County (56%) than the state average (37.5%) in 2018. During the pandemic, universal free school lunch was provided to all students; this benefit ended in 2022 but students whose family income is less than 185% of FPG are still eligible. SNAP and MFIP recipients are automatically enrolled; those on WIC must submit a formal application.

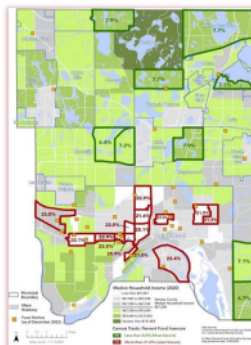


Fig.1. Food insecurity rates by census tract

Community Vision for a Better Food System

Ramsey County's Food Security Coordinator engaged more than 400 individuals representing service providers and recipients of food assistance, through one-on-one interviews, an online survey, and in-person qualitative surveys at six pop-up events hosted at food distribution sites conducted in June 2022. **Four Key Themes emerged from these discussions**; each of these themes and the planned activities to address them, are discussed below.

Theme 1: Expanding the Food Safety Net System

This theme will support enhanced capacity of food shelves and other safety net providers through improved transportation options to support food distribution; more culturally appropriate, fresh, and healthy options offered; increased distribution services to meet immediate community needs; and easier processes for residents to access food assistance from food shelves.

"Everyone has a garden in their backyard ... expanding farmers markets, rooftop farming, fruit trees, fruits grown locally ... taking people out to go fishing for their own food."

Black Transgender, age 45-64 zip code 55102

Theme 2: Expanding Urban Agriculture

This theme will support expanded availability and productivity of community gardens and other urban growing spaces to promote food sovereignty. This will be achieved through enhanced planning processes to ensure accessible community-based urban agriculture that accommodates multi-year growing seasons and long-term investments in agricultural development focusing especially on low-income urban communities with diverse racial and ethnic residents.

Theme 3: Increasing Access to Public Benefits

This theme will promote greater access to food-security benefits like SNAP and WIC through increased number of locations and access points at which to apply for benefits; improved co-enrollment processes; increased use and redemption of benefits, especially among demographic groups with low usage rates; and increased health care screening and referral programs to access county benefits holistically.

"We barely survive paying for daily essentials and rent ... The cost of food should be realistic and not just a high cost for all. If that can't be, then the income limits for SNAP should be higher."

Multiracial female, age 25-34 zip code 55112

Theme 4: Expanding Food Availability and Affordability

This theme will promote more affordable food options available in the community through expanded subsidy programs; increased redemption of Farmers Market Bucks; maintaining stable and consistent food access points for all residents; and strengthening the local economy through system upgrades.

Food Security Strategic Leadership

Going forward, the Food Security Coordinator will manage implementation of the activities under these Key Themes with guidance from the Internal Steering Committee and External Governance Team, described below.

Internal Steering Committee is comprised of Ramsey County food security and health service team members, including staff from WIC and FAS, Policy and Planning, Research and Evaluation, and Race and Health Equity teams, who will provide internal guidance and implementation support for the key thematic areas.

External Governance Team includes representatives of food security and health services providers within Ramsey County, who will provide support and strategic guidance for the county's efforts.

- Ramsey County Food Assessment 2022
- Executive Summary of Food Security Assessment

Who experiences food insecurity the most?

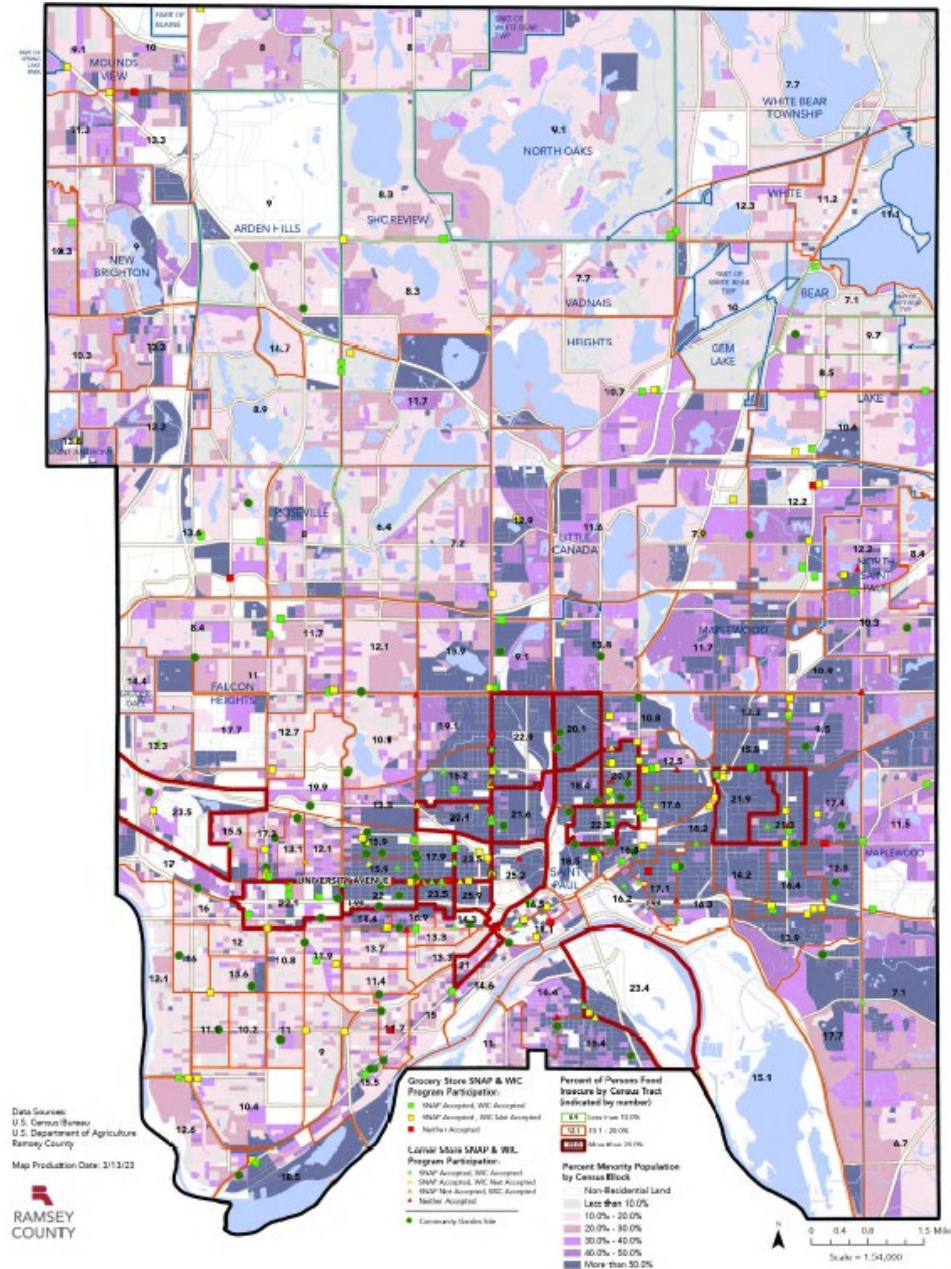
Food insecurity rates in Ramsey County are **above the state average**: in 2021, 11% of the county's adults and 17% of the county's children were food insecure, compared to 9% and 13% statewide, respectively.

SNAP Usage rates show wide disparities in who accesses food benefits. In 2021:

- **43% of the total Black/African American population** in Ramsey County received SNAP.
- **30% of all Asian residents.**
- **20% of all Native residents.**
- **10% of all Hispanic/Latinx and Multiple Race residents.**
- **5% of all White residents.**

Food Shelf usage rates show demand for food shelves has increased:

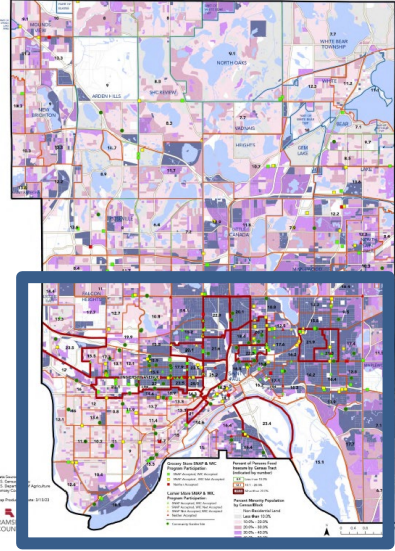
- **2022 had nearly 50% higher food shelf rates** than pre-pandemic levels.
 - Usage rates have grown the most among **seniors, increasing 160%** since 2020.
-



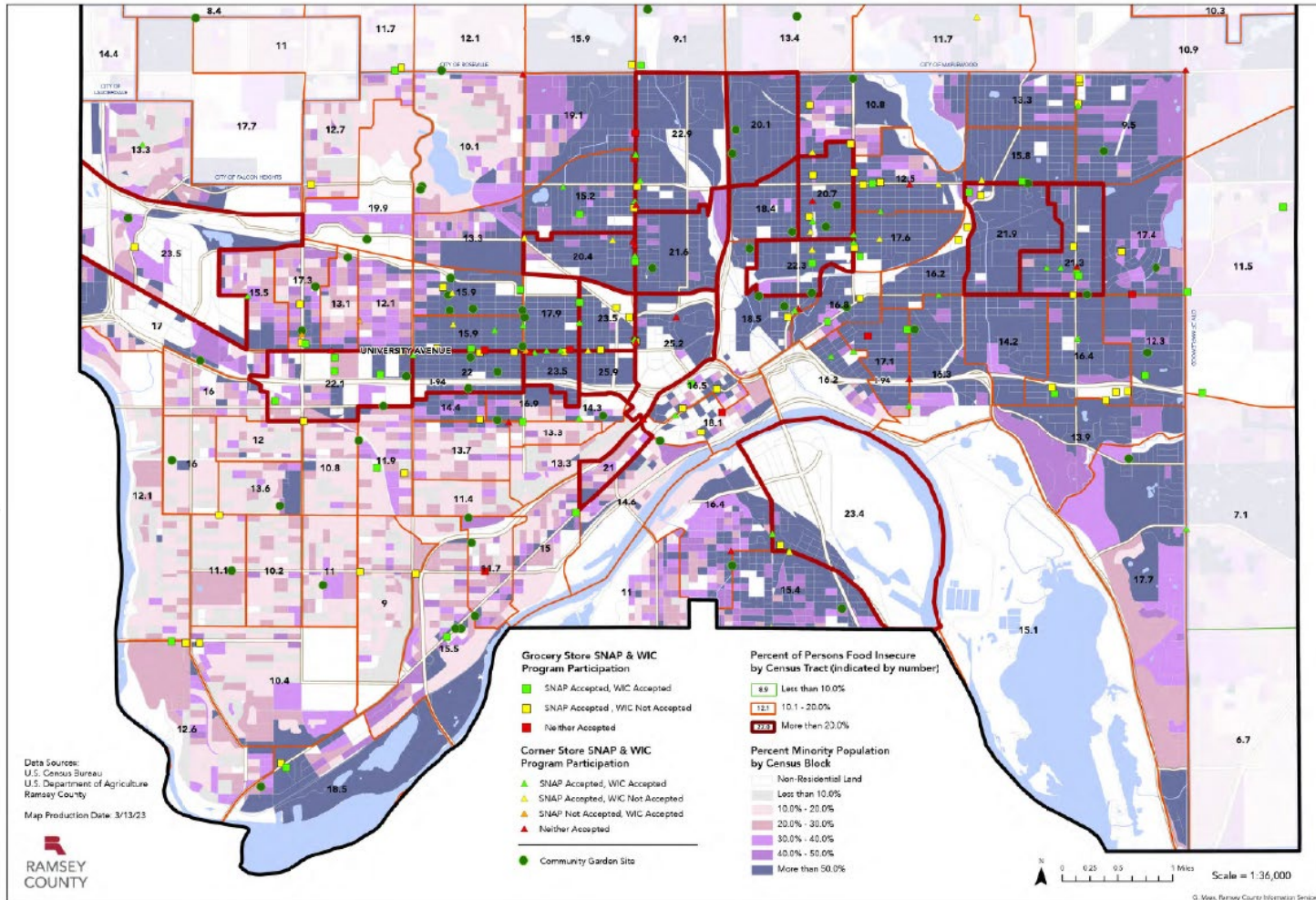
Ramsey County: Percent Minority Population by Census block U.S. Census Bureau 2020

Highest percent minority populations are found primarily within the City of Saint Paul with other concentrations throughout the County.

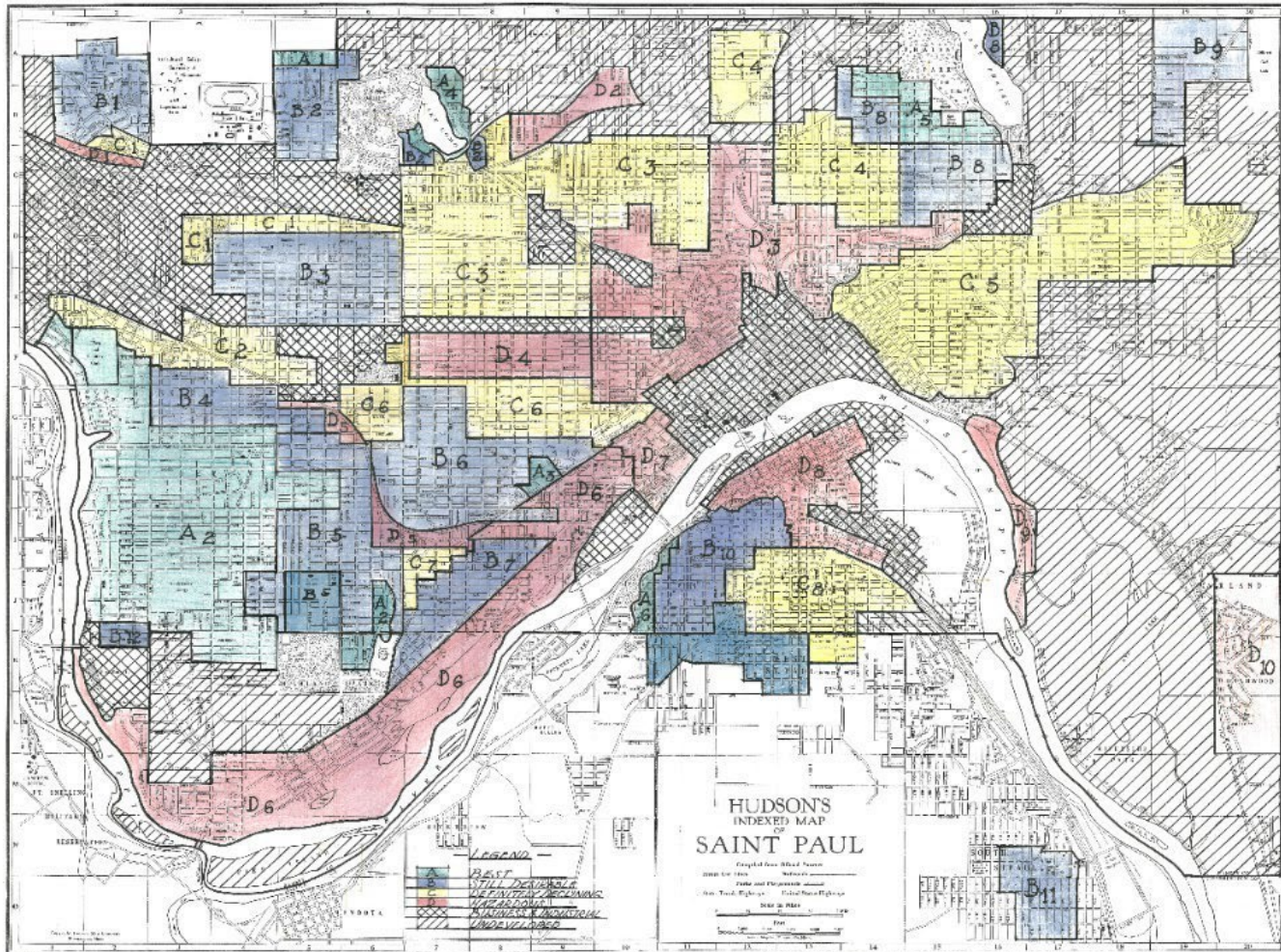
Ramsey County: Food Insecurity Analysis
Percent Minority (by Census Block)



City of Saint Paul: Food Insecurity Analysis - Percent Minority by Census Block

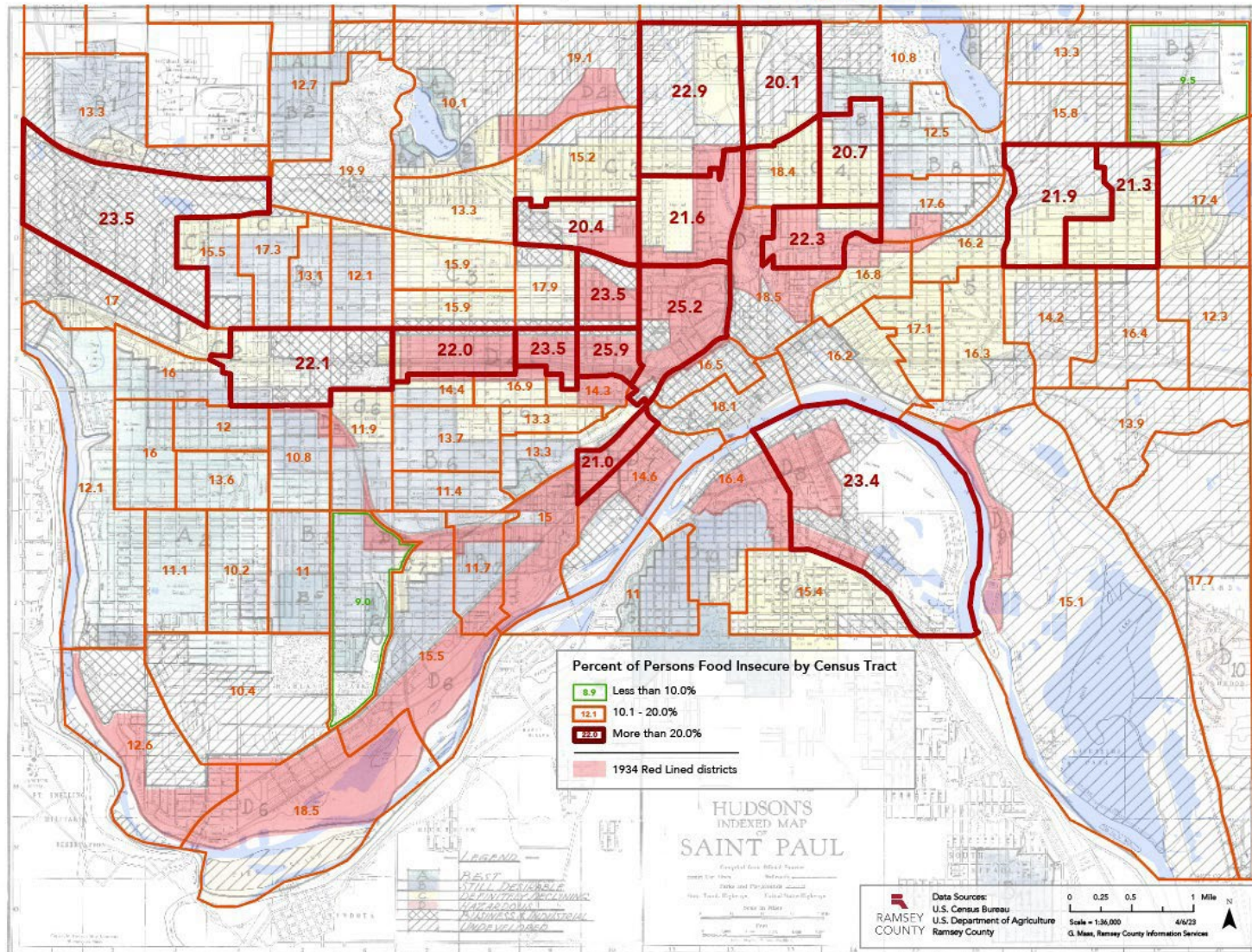


Home Owners Loan Corporation Red Lining (1934)

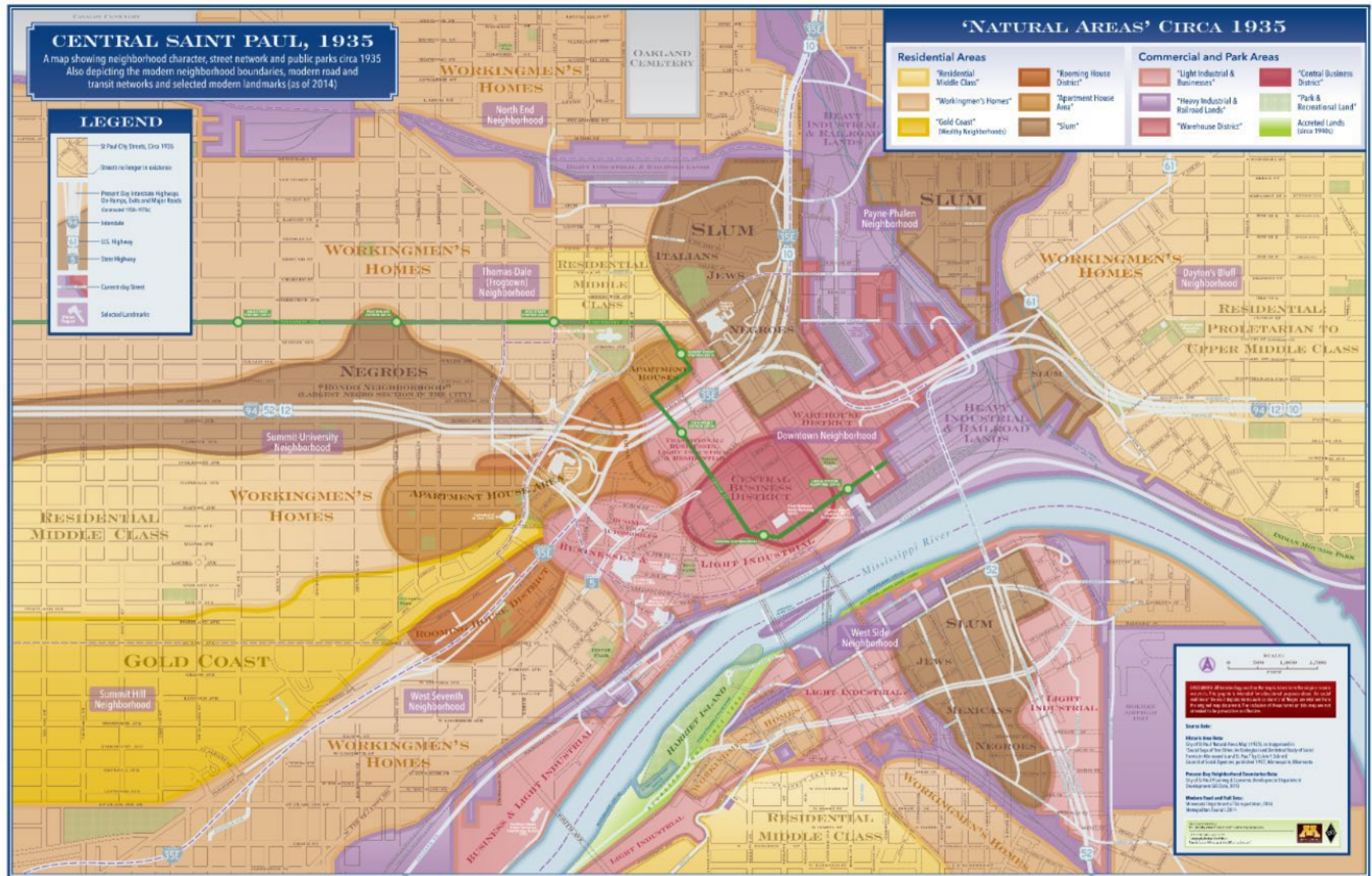


Redlining: A discriminatory practice that consists of the systematic denial of services such as mortgages, insurance loans, and other financial services to residents of certain areas, based on their race or ethnicity. Redlining disregards individual's qualifications and creditworthiness to refuse such services, solely based on the residency of those individuals in minority neighborhoods; which were also quite often deemed "hazardous" or "dangerous."

**City of Saint Paul: Percent Population Food Insecure by Census Tract (2019)
compared with Home Owners Loan Corporation **Red Lining** (1934)**



In the United States, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was passed to fight the practice of redlining.





Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture

The Legacy to Now

Advancing Racial & Health Equity & Shared Community Power Strategic Priority

“Honoring racially and ethnically diverse knowledge and wisdom from our community of residents, businesses and employees before budgetary investments, program decisions or new projects are launched helps build trust and is critical to helping actively involve our most impacted communities in creating a better future, where all are valued and thrive.”

Goal for how to address food insecurity:

To build a more resilient food system for all residents, especially those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity, such as our racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Community-Driven Food Security Solutions

Immediate Actions

Expanding
Food Safety
Net System

Increasing
Access to
Public
Benefits

Medium-term Actions

Urban
Agriculture

Expanding
Food
Affordability

Foundational Actions

Resources &
Communications

Advocacy

Key actions to build a sustainable and resilient food system

■ Expanding the food safety net system

- Improved transportation options
- More culturally and medically-appropriate, fresh, and healthy options
- Increased distribution services to meet immediate community needs
- Reduce food waste to redistribute
- Low barrier food safety-net access

■ Increasing access to public benefits

- Increased number of access points at which to apply for benefits
- Improved co-enrollment processes; SNAP and WIC
- Increased use and redemption of benefits
- Better communication and outreach
- Advocating for federal and state changes

Key actions to build a sustainable and resilient food system

■ Expanding urban agriculture

- Expanded land availability of community gardens
- Easier process to accessing land
- Comprehensive resources for supporting food sovereignty
 - From soil –growing---harvest---gleaning
- Linking urban agriculture to wealth creation

■ Expanding food availability and affordability

- Promote more affordable and expanded subsidy programs
 - Fare for All, Farmers Market Bucks, Mobile Market
- Mapping food availability sources to stop food store closures

Key actions to build a sustainable and resilient food system

■ Aligning communications and resources

- Promote existing food programs
- Focus on youth, elders, and those most food insecure (racial and ethnically diverse communities)
- Communication and outreach alignment
- Updating the food resource guides and maps

■ Promoting advocacy and policy change for better food security

- Advocate for hunger and food-related legislation
- Partner with other food-related organizations to build alliances
- Educating elected officials, state agencies and community

Strategic Priority: Responding to Climate Change & Increasing Community Resilience

- Concerns around worsening food insecurity, need to reduce food waste.
- Food insecurity as second highest concern

State Climate Action Framework

- Urban pollinator garden, support local food markets, urban agriculture, and emerging farmers, community-based agriculture
 - Reduce waste and promote beneficial use of materials
 - Composting, incentivize and reduce barriers for local and regional food donation and food rescue organizations
 - Support parks, community gardens, and green spaces in communities at greater risk from climate impacts.
 - Support healthy communities and workplaces
 - Work with local organizations and government to promote actions that reduce food insecurity and increase access to culturally appropriate foods in the face of climate change.
-

Successes

- \$800,000 invested in food safety-net organizations
 - Ramsey-Washington County Recycling and Energy grants
 - Community Block and Development Grant (CBDG)
 - Food Security Grants in 2022/2023
 - 645,000 pounds of food distributed to more than 87,000 people
 - Six Culturally appropriate, low barrier food shelves
 - Advocacy work with legislative priorities, food access policies
 - Universal Free School Meals & Emergency Food Shelf Funding
 - Washington DC - Anti-Hunger Policy Conference
 - Minnesota Hunger Day on the Hill
 - Work with State Agencies and other community organizations
-

Successes

- Food Resources postcard for those denied SNAP
 - One-stop Referral – Medical Assistance to WIC
 - 30+ presentations on the Food Security Assessment
 - Community, MN State, intrastate and interagency councils, Minnesota Public Health Association conference
 - Alignment internally with other county teams
 - Climate Action Framework
 - Emergency Management
 - Recycling and Energy
 - Economic Growth and Community Investment
 - Service Center Navigators
 - Public Health (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership)
-

Next Steps

- Urban Agriculture
 - “All-in” partners’ meeting
 - Policy work for land access from the County Managers Office
 - Aligning with local jurisdictions and across the river
 - Deeper dive in missing data gaps
 - Young adult and Latino/e assessments
 - Food waste reduction in partnership with R&E
 - American Public Health Association conference
 - Ongoing data monitoring to track food security trends
-

Resources and Documents

- [Food Security webpage](#)
- [Food Insecurity Open Data Story](#)
- [Ramsey County Food Assessment 2022](#)
- [Executive Summary of Food Security Assessment](#)

- <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/assistance/food-resources>
- <https://ramseygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=afe8d7067726472da336deaecb957c9d>

Thank you