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Where does our fresh produce come from? Who decides?

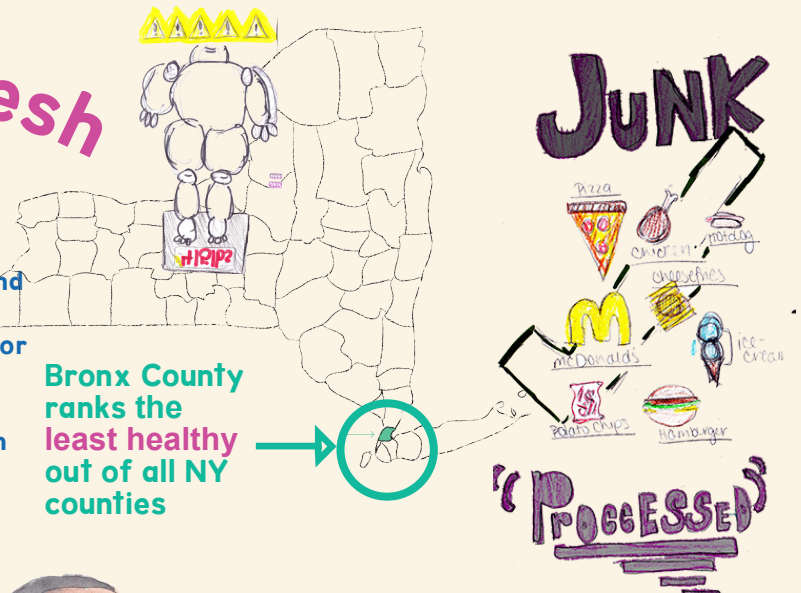
Did you know that although the Hunts Point Produce Market in the Bronx offers one of largest selections of fresh fruits & vegetables in the world, some Bronx residents feel there aren't enough places to get fresh produce in their neighborhoods? So where does our fresh produce come from? Where does it go? Who decides?

CUP and Teaching Artist Kathryn Sclavi worked with a group of public high school students from KAPPA International High School in the Bronx to investigate these questions. The students got out of the classroom and into the garden to dig deeper, visiting sites like a community garden and an urban farm. We talked to a City Council Member, a food distributor, and community food advocates. We have created this booklet to teach others about where our fresh produce comes from and who makes these decisions.

How does eating fresh produce impact our neighborhoods?

According to the New York City Departments of Health and City Planning, low-income neighborhoods that don't have enough access to fresh fruits and vegetables are at risk for a lot of health problems.

For the past few years, the Bronx has ranked the lowest in health outcomes of all of New York State's 62 counties.



Brx County ranks the least healthy out of all NY counties



"If you can afford it and go to another neighborhood, or if your neighborhood is middle income or affluent, you can have greater access to this fresh, healthy food. Whereas if you're low income... then you typically have less access, which is basically sentencing people

to diabetes and hypertension and things that are food-related and completely preventable."
- Nadia Johnson, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Just Food

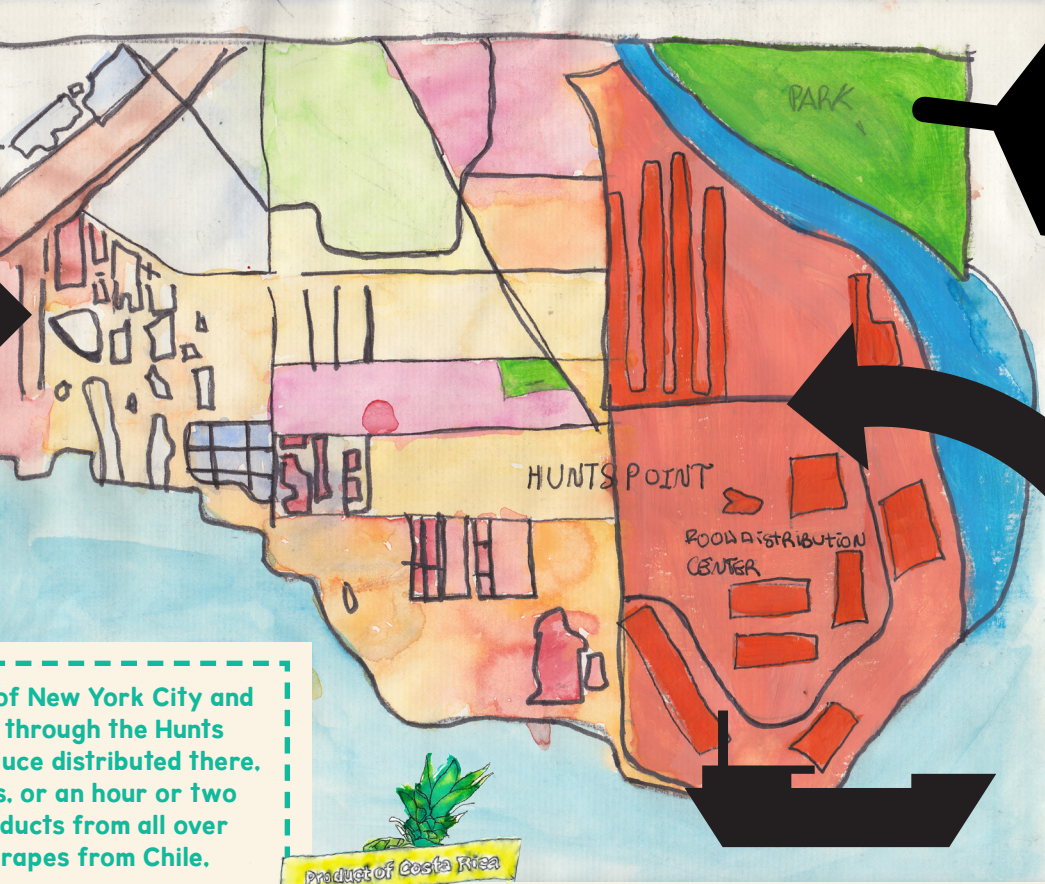


"When people are eating unhealthily it increases the rate of chronic illness, the rate of obesity, the rate of diabetes — all of which not only create a public health crisis but a healthcare crisis."
- Ritchie Torres, New York City Council Member, District 15 (Central Bronx)

Where does our fresh produce come from?

HUNTS POINT PRODUCE MARKET

Many people consider the Bronx to be the center of NYC's food system. Located in the South Bronx, the Hunts Point Produce Market is the largest wholesale produce market in the world, supplying over 60% of NYC's fresh produce.



HOW DOES IT GET THERE?

The produce at Hunts Point is delivered every day by planes, trains, boats, and trucks from 49 states and 55 countries.

WHERE DOES IT GO AFTER IT LEAVES?

Every day, trucks carry produce from Hunts Point to grocery stores and restaurants all over the city.



"Much of the fresh produce for all of New York City and the whole metropolitan area comes through the Hunts Point Market, and so you have produce distributed there, some of which is picked within miles, or an hour or two drive away... then you will have products from all over the world: the apples from China, grapes from Chile, depending on the season..."
 - Joel Berg, CEO, Hunger Free America



"[The Hunts Point Produce Market] has railroad access, so if I'm ordering potatoes from Idaho, it gets loaded up on a freight car in Idaho, and it's supposed to come to me in five to seven business days."
 - Joe Fierman, Sales, Fierman Produce Exchange



Fresh produce: local versus global

Although Hunts Point gets a lot of its produce from all over the world, not everyone agrees on whether that's a good thing or not.

Some people think we should get our produce from local farmers.



"What happens when we import our food from far away is that the food system is totally out of whack because we get our fruits and vegetables by increasing our carbon footprint: travelling so many miles to get to your local community. Where as we could be getting fruits and vegetables from our local farms."

- Karen Washington, Urban Farmer, Founder Black Urban Growers (BUGs)

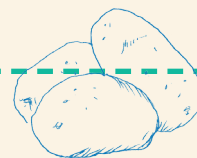


Other folks think that there are too many barriers to just getting produce from local farms.



"Idaho potatoes are grown in certain soil, so they fry a certain way... McDonald's is not going to go support some local guy in upstate New York, because his potatoes are not going to fry like the french fries that you get from McDonald's. McDonald's uses Idahoes. That's why everybody likes their french fries."

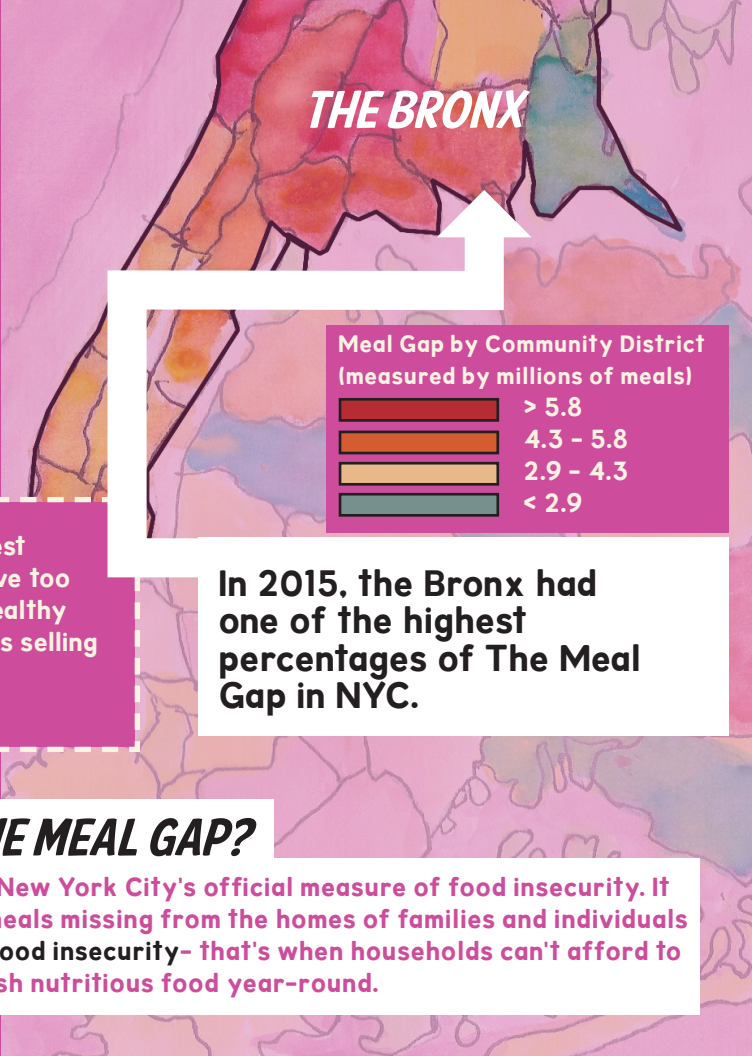
- Joe Fierman



Do Bronx residents have enough access to fresh produce?



Although the Bronx hosts a lot of NYC's food infrastructure, do Bronx residents have access to the fresh produce that travels through the borough?



In 2015, the Bronx had one of the highest percentages of The Meal Gap in NYC.

Bodega La Bodega

"...it's never a question of enough food existing; it's being able to afford the food. Much of the food that comes through Hunts Point, the "good stuff" goes to fancier, richer neighborhoods... People in the Bronx have less money to buy the more expensive stuff."

- Joel Berg

"I have found that the poorest parts of the city tend to have too few supermarkets selling healthy foods and too many bodegas selling processed foods."

- Ritchie Torres

WHAT IS THE MEAL GAP?

The Meal Gap is New York City's official measure of food insecurity. It represents the meals missing from the homes of families and individuals struggling with food insecurity- that's when households can't afford to have enough fresh nutritious food year-round.

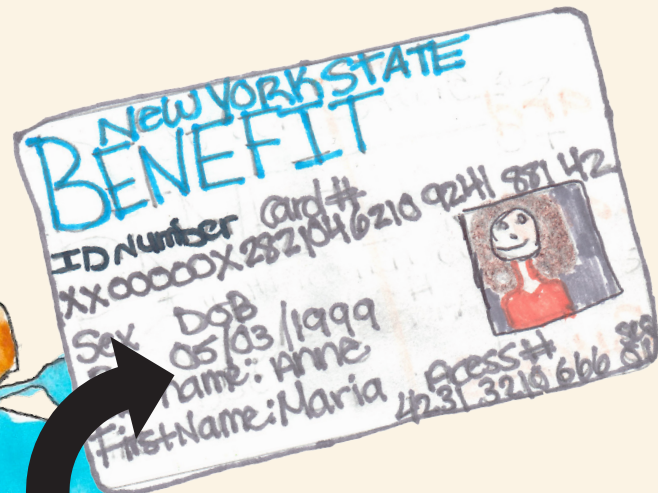
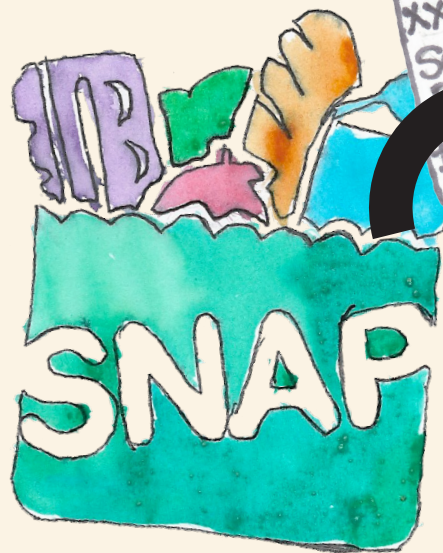
Candy
Cereal

What is the city's role in increasing access to fresh produce?

Some people feel the government should continue nutritional assistance programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to help people in low-income communities have more access to fresh produce.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

"Low-income people can get food through the SNAP/food stamps program. They get a card and they can use it at most supermarkets, many farmers markets, ... most bodegas, and basically go in and buy the food they need."
- Joel Berg



SNAP benefits, formerly received in the form of food stamps, are received on an Electronic Bank Transfer (EBT) Card.

Some people feel that city programs are making progress towards increasing food access in low-income communities.

"We have a program known as "health bucks," which is a \$2 dollar coupon that you can bring to a Green Market and purchase local produce. So even though we have few supermarkets in the neighborhood, we've been able to arrange for Green Markets to come to the neighborhood and then give residents coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables."

- Ritchie Torres



Others think the city could do more.

"I don't want to hear another person say [they] signed up and voted for [a city official] because they put more money into SNAP, and more money into childhood nutrition program, which I know is overly [funded]."

"Can somebody come in here and say, "I have a company and I want to train people, Black and Brown people, how to be executives and how to own a business." - Karen Washington

Who makes decisions about fresh produce?

There are lots of opinions about who makes decisions about where fresh produce comes from and where it goes. Here are some of the key players:

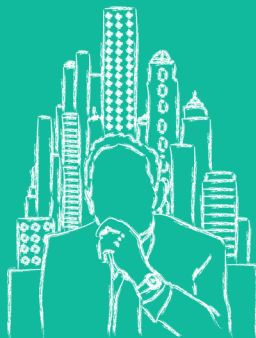
THE GOVERNMENT



"I mean the government should have a role [in where our food comes from]. The government has to ensure that it is coming from a safe place. I think that is a core function of government — to regulate."

— Ritchie Torres

BIG CORPORATIONS



"If you look at the system as a whole, the hospital health system [and] the food system, money is being made on people who are poor and sick. If we didn't have poor people, then big corporations that provide processed food, junk food, would be out of work."

— Karen Washington



THE STORE OWNER

"It's not the bodega's fault — don't get me wrong — they want to be able to have fresh fruits and vegetables but until there is a demand for it, they can't make money."

— Nadia Johnson



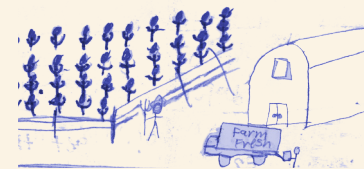
THE CONSUMER

"You all do — consumers — because you got power. You all are the ones that control the food system."

— Karen Washington

How can the community get involved?

There are a lot of ways that nonprofits are working with communities to bring more fresh produce to their neighborhoods. Here are a few:



CSA

Some community residents can start or join programs called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). A CSA is where you subscribe to weekly deliveries of produce a farm is producing for that week.

FARMERS MARKETS

There are over 150 farmers markets in NYC, some of which were started by local community residents. The Greenmarket program is a network of NYC farmers markets.



"What is wonderful about the Greenmarket program is that you have the farmers themselves coming and selling it to you directly. You're not purchasing from a butcher or a supermarket. You're receiving fresh fruits and vegetables directly from the farmer."

— Ritchie Torres



COMMUNITY GARDENS

NYC residents can start or join one of the many community gardens around the city.

"In a community garden [as opposed to a farm], it's more the community that surround the neighborhood that get to be a part of that garden."

— Karen Washington

Just Food offers job trainings to residents interested in starting a farmers market in their community. You can learn more at:

www.justfood.org/about-us

You can learn more about how to bring a community garden to your neighborhood at:

www.grownyc.org/gardens

What solutions are on the table?

How can we start to increase access to fresh produce for all people in the Bronx? What are some ways that we can create new or modify existing policies to make this happen?



TRAIN COMMUNITIES

"I tell people that there's three things that keep us back: opportunity, capital, and ownership. We need people coming into our neighborhoods and saying, "Look, we want to do a job training to teach your parents how to own a business." [Because] once you own something, you have power. Once you own a business, you own land, you own a store, own a house, and you own a job that can pay so that you can buy good food."

-Karen Washington

MAKE FOOD AFFORDABLE

"Our end goal isn't just having more soup kitchens or food pantries and food drives and charity. Our goal is justice. For people to be able to earn enough by a good day's work... If you make food affordable and make sure people have money in their pocket or SNAP benefits to buy it. If you make it convenient, and you make sure it's physically present in a neighborhood, people will eat healthier food."

- Joel Berg



PROTECT NY FARMLAND

"I think in New York State every week there's two farms lost to development. Are they going to be paved over? Are they going to be apartment buildings or plazas or Walmarts? So we need our farm land to be protected and I think the city can do a lot to invest in protecting that farm land and connecting those farmers to different communities." - Nadia Johnson



EDUCATE YOUNG PEOPLE

"We have to educate people and encourage people to change their behavior. I am a strong supporter of nutritional education in schools — teaching young people how to eat healthy. Have them develop their habits when they're young so it will carry with them for the rest of their lives."

- Ritchie Torres

How can I have a say?

JOIN A COMMUNITY BOARD

The community board is the most local level of government in NYC. It's seen as the eyes and ears on the ground. People as young as 16 can be appointed to a community board. The community board helps decide where money goes and what is built in a neighborhood.

Find out more about how to join a community board at:
www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml

ASK QUESTIONS

"When you start asking those questions, that's when change happens. And if people start asking more questions about where their food comes from and challenging the fact that it should be a local economy, that's when change happens."
- Karen Washington

"The best way to make a difference in your community is to get involved, ask questions, take action, stand out. Join and support your local community gardens and participate in healthy food access programs where you ask questions to educate others about where our products come from."
- Rafia Chowdhury, KAPPA student

"Does the government make bad decisions about how fresh produce is distributed?"
- Angel Gil, KAPPA student

"Why do we get our NYC produce from other states and countries?"
- Rosa Gil, KAPPA student

"Why is healthy food more common in wealthy areas?"
- Kory Bueno, KAPPA student

GET INFORMED

"Personally I've learned a lot from hearing the different views on food inequality. This has forced me to develop a new perspective concerning health."
- Sahira Abreu, KAPPA student

"Healthy food is important since it brings nutrients to our body, maintaining it healthy and strong."
- Kaliz Baez, KAPPA student

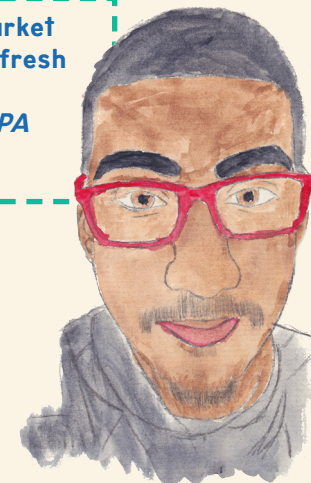
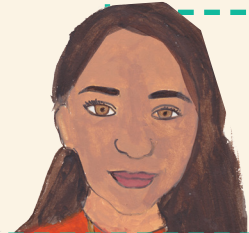
TALK TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

"Lobby your elected officials. Put pressure on elected officials to invest more in fresh produce in neighborhoods. There should be more health bucks, more [farmers markets], there should be more incentives for supermarkets in lower income neighborhoods."
- Ritchie Torres

SPREAD THE NEWS

"Contact the Greenmarket to learn where to get fresh produce."
- Kevin Bhuggoo, KAPPA student

"The fast food epidemic must be eradicated in order for our society to be as equal as we claim it."
- Sharon Nwankpa, KAPPA student



The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement.

This project is one of CUP's Urban Investigations—project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and teaching artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice.

welcometocup.org

Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (KAPPA) International High School is a small public high school in the Bronx dedicated to preparing its students for success in college. KAPPA offers the International Baccalaureate Program for all interested and on-track Juniors and Seniors.

www.kappainternational.org

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CUP

Teaching Artist: Kathryn Sclavi

Project Lead: Christy Herbes

Project Support: Jenn Anne Williams, Christine Gaspar, Deja Holden

Graphic Design: Joelle Riffle

KAPPA International High School

Principal: Panorea Panagiousoulis

Students: Sahira Abreu, Kaliz Baez, Kevin Bhuggoo, Kory Bueno, Angel Gil, Rosa Gil, Sharon Nwankpa, Rafia Chowdhury

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