



As the pandemic has increased the rate of food insecurity in the country, it has highlighted the many existing flaws in our food system.

## How Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Planning Can Help Combat Food Inequalities

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## What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable nutritious food (Oxford Languages).

### What Are the Contributing Factors?:

Employment, Income, Race, Food Availability (Feeding America)

These factors are very discriminatory especially towards people living in low-income neighborhoods. There needs to be systemic changes being made in order to grant food sovereignty for all.

### Low-income neighborhoods are at risk:

Low-income neighborhoods suffer from disinvestment as the residents are displaced from the results of gentrification, red-lining, and exploitation that have created invisible segregation barriers. As a result from this, this leads to food inequalities as the residents in these disinvested neighborhoods are excluded from inclusive urban planning that fail to support basic needs.

### What Have We Created?:

We have created an urban planning model that is inclusive for low-income neighborhoods, specifically to be applied to low-income neighborhoods in Greater Boston.

### The Call-For-Action:

We created this model for urban planning after all the research we have done this summer, with the hopes to educate the public about the severity of food insecurity as well as urge people to support this plan and help advocate for these systemic changes to be made.

### The Model:

- 1) Advocate for more community land-trusts in low-income neighborhoods
- 2) Urge housing policymakers to expand more stable and affordable housing programs in low-income neighborhoods
- 3) Advocate for the expansion of more non-profit grocery stores to be introduced in low-income neighborhoods
- 4) Advocate for the expansion of healthy initiative programs in existing corner stores



# 1. Advocate for more community land trusts

What is a land trust?

A land trust is when a private organization, such as non-profit organization, takes legal and private ownership over property for the benefit of another group of people.

How can it benefit low-income and food insecure neighborhoods?

In our research, we found a land trust in the Dudley neighborhood that is protected by Dudley Neighbors Incorporated (DNI). In this land trust, DNI was able to secure vacant land in the neighborhood and protect it from exploitation and displacement of its residents. With the use of the land trust, the residents were able to turn vacant land into a community urban farm, resulting in the residents to be self-sufficient and grow their own nutritional food. The community farm is located on 42 Langdon St., and residents have been growing there since 1995. A land trust in this example has allowed more food access in this neighborhood.





## 2. Advocate for housing policymakers to expand more stable and affordable housing programs in low-income neighborhoods

### Why is it important?

Allowing for stable and affordable housing programs to be expanded and included in urban plan models for low-income neighborhoods, will help with the affordability of food and combat this factor of food insecurity. Allowing for rent and housing to be more affordable in these neighborhoods will help remove the battle between being able to pay month's rent vs. groceries for the month that is a result from discriminatory urban planning.

### Who can help?

In Boston, the Boston Housing Authority's (BHA) mission is "to provide stable, quality affordable housing for low and moderate income persons". With this they offer Tenant-Based Section 8 vouchers that allow for residents to pay 30-40% of their income towards rent while BHA pays the rest. It is assistance like this that needs to be expanded into neighborhoods that currently don't have this form of aid. There are resources like this that need to be included in the conversation of how to create inclusive and sustainable urban planning, in order to let the stakeholders' voices be heard.

### 3. Advocate for more non-profit grocery stores to be introduced into low-income neighborhoods

Why the advocacy for it matters:

Non-profit grocery stores support local economies, supply chains in the neighborhood, businesses, and deal more efficiently with social and community needs. Non-profit grocery stores are bridge to affordable access of quality food that nourish the residents physically and culturally. Corporate supermarkets are driven by profit so, the lack of money and investment in low-income neighborhoods means they do not get the resources that other wealthier communities get. Advocating for the expansion more non-profit grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods can help alleviate the problems of food insecurity and food access in these neighborhoods.

#### An interview with Elizabeth Wang:

Elizabeth Wang serves on the board of directors for The Dorchester Food Co-op, which is a GrassRoots organization whose goal is to “create a full service grocery store that is started, run, and organized by the community and its workers”. The Dorchester Food Co-op aims to disrupt the traditional food system and create a public space committed to racial, economic, worker, and environmental justice. When asking Elizabeth why more non-profit grocery stores should be implemented in urban planning models for low-income neighborhoods, she responded, “Non-profit grocery stores reflect what the community wants and is willing to fight for. Non-profit grocery stores are able to meet the community where they are at and address local issues quicker and better”.



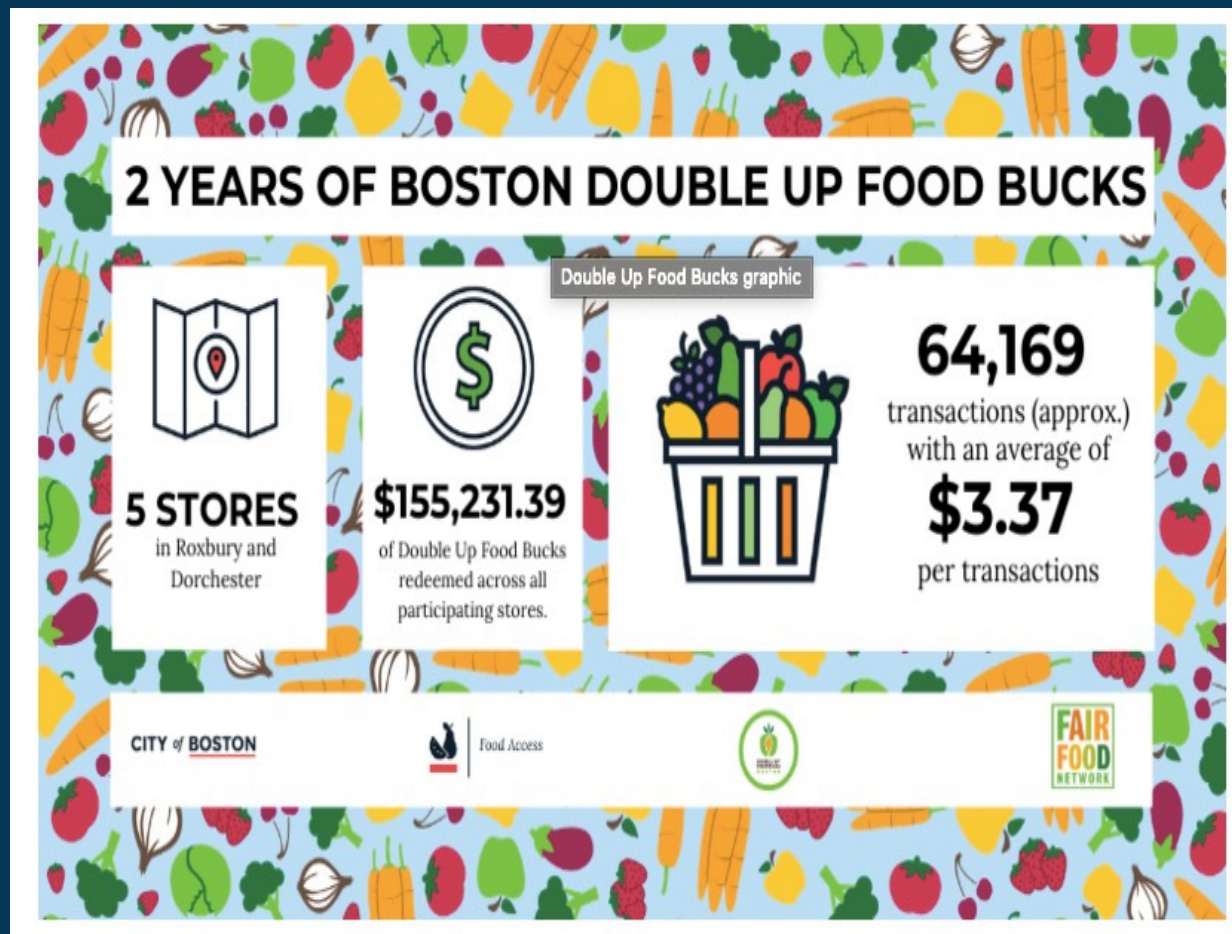
Fresh Kale being grown on an urban farm in the Dudley neighborhood that will be sold to the residents.



## 4. Advocate for the expansion of healthy initiative programs in corner stores

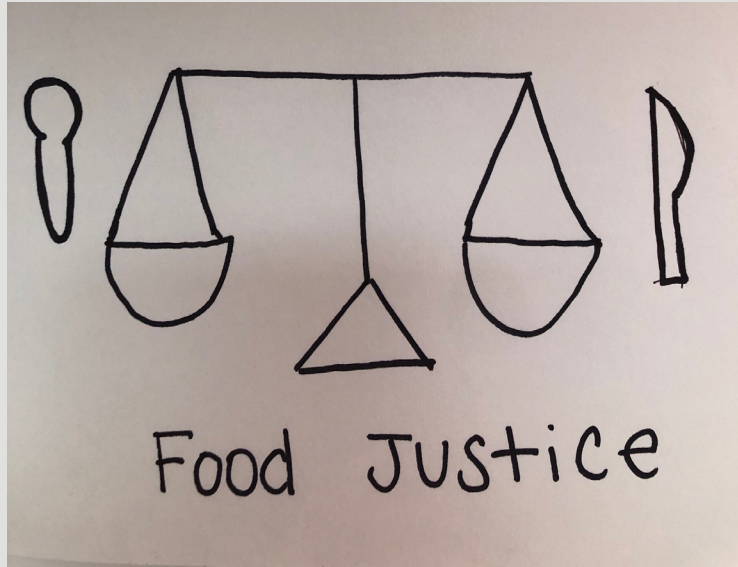
How can it combat food inequalities in low-income neighborhoods? Most often, in low-income neighborhoods, the residents rely on the corner stores that they rely on for the accessibility and affordability. Although corner stores in these neighborhoods are affordable, they often don't allow access to nutritional food for the residents. This presents an issue that needs to be fixed and addressed in order for food access to be inclusive in these neighborhoods that suffer from their needs not being catered to.

An estimated 54.4 million people, of 17.7% of the U.S live in a low-income area that is more than 1/2 mile or 10 miles from the nearest supermarket (USDA).



Access to nutritional food can often times be discriminatory as many people in low-income neighborhoods don't get the resources they need to be able to find an affordable food outlet within a short distance. Because of this, the Department of Food Access in Boston is trying to implement a initiative program to corner stores that is available to EBT eligible residents. The program is called, Double Up, and this allows EBT eligible customers to get 50% off fruits and vegetables, up to a total purchase of \$10. This program is currently in 5 participating corner stores in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester. Although this program is successful, 5 stores is not enough to help eliminate the food inequalities that other low-income neighborhoods face. This program needs more exposure to the public in order for others to know where it can be expanded to, next.

# How can you help?



The model that we created for inclusive urban planning was made to show how it can help combat the issues of food insecurity in neighborhoods that are often overlooked and disinvested. It is unclear how long this pandemic will last, that has impacted the most marginalized communities, but, what is clear is that it has highlighted flaws in urban planning that needs public awareness, whether you are directly affected by it or a bystander to it.

## Where should you start?

Ways to get involved in the conversation:

Contact the Office of Food Access: [FOOD@BOSTON.GOV](mailto:FOOD@BOSTON.GOV)

Get involved with The Dorchester Food Co-op: [info@dorchesterfoodcoop.com](mailto:info@dorchesterfoodcoop.com)

Donate and volunteer at local hunger relief organization in Boston

Contact the mayor's office: [MAYOR@BOSTON.GOV](mailto:MAYOR@BOSTON.GOV)