



Food Access in Worcester: *An Asset Map*

Margaret Xu, Class of 2020
University of Massachusetts Medical School



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The 2016 Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) listed Access to Healthy Food as one of its nine priority areas, alongside other crucial areas such as Access to Care, Physical Activity, and Safety.

Access to Healthy Food is especially important for Worcester based on CHIP's findings for the region:

- 18,000 households receive SNAP benefits
- Both adults and youth report eating fewer fruits and vegetables daily compared to Massachusetts residents as a whole
- 15% of adults reported eating the recommended number of fruits and vegetables daily
- Increased access can increase healthy eating habits in low-income households

An asset map of Worcester's food access resources allows for an overarching analysis of the distribution of the city's assets, helping to reveal the needs, both addressed and unaddressed, of Worcester's neighborhoods and residents.

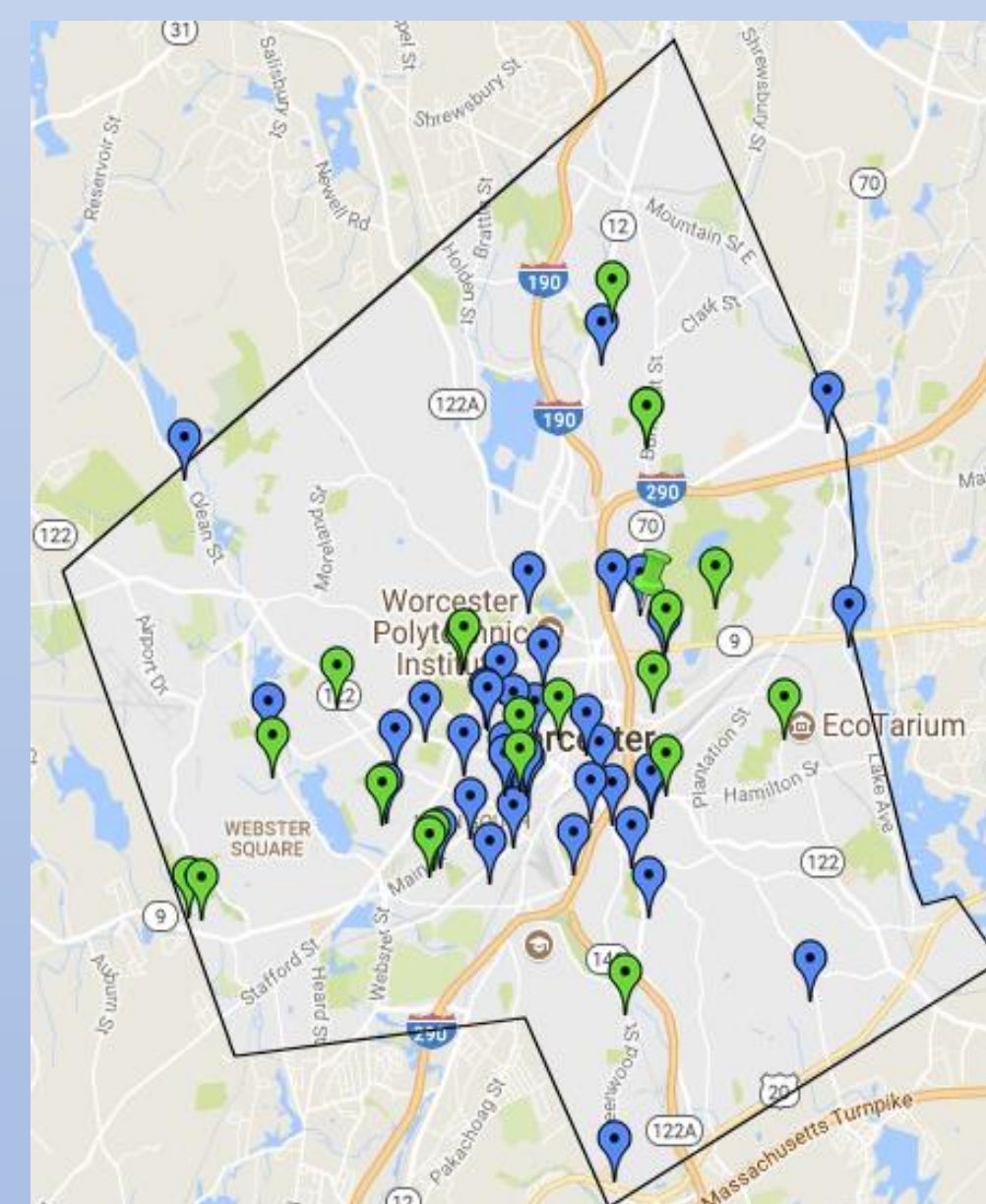
RESOURCES FOR IDENTIFYING ASSETS

- Foodpantries.org
- Local Food Guide (farmfresh.org)
- Regional Environmental Council
- Worcester Community Indicators (Clark Uni.)
- Worcester County Food Bank
- Worcester Food Policy Council

METHOD: BUILDING AN ASSET MAP

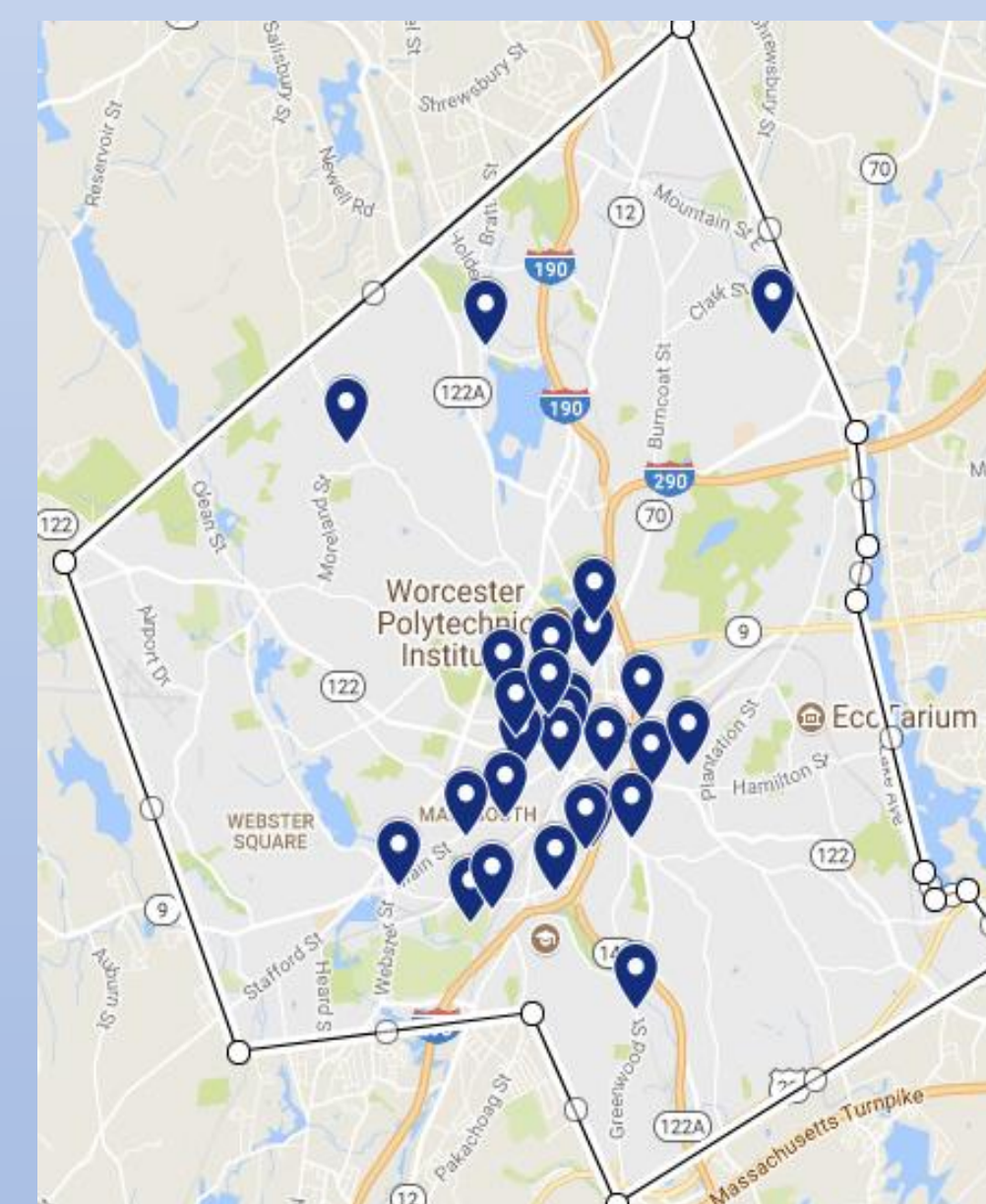
- Define the area: Worcester city
- Specify the assets
 - Supply: food pantries, farmers' markets, community/school gardens, community meals
 - Organizations: governmental, policy/advocacy, nonprofits
 - Academic institutions relevant to food access work
 - Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHCs) and hospitals
- Identify the assets
 - Resource directories from state and nonprofit organizations
 - Interviews with community stakeholders and organizations

FOOD SUPPLY ASSET MAPS

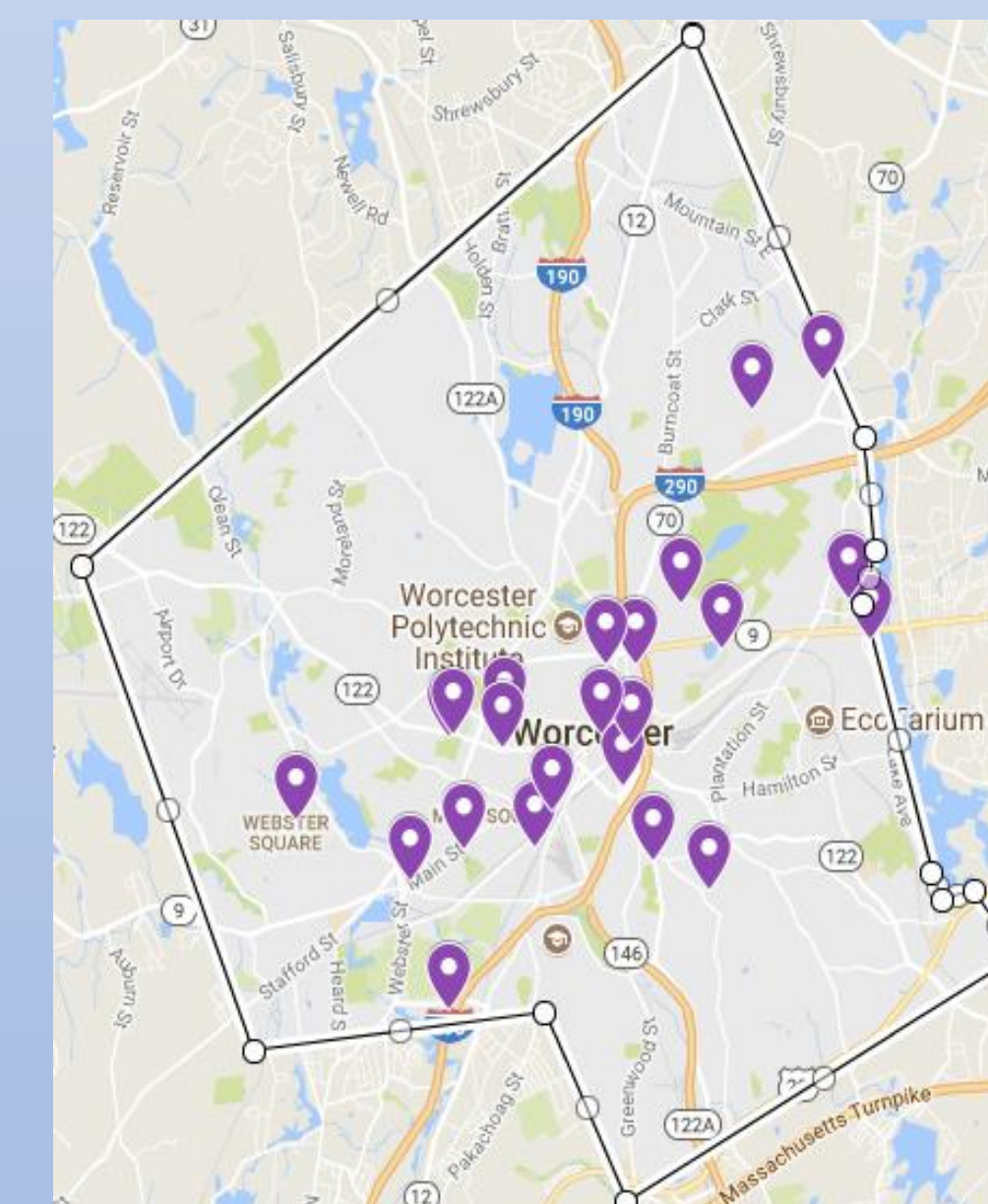


Regional Environmental Council (REC) Gardens

- Community gardens
- School gardens

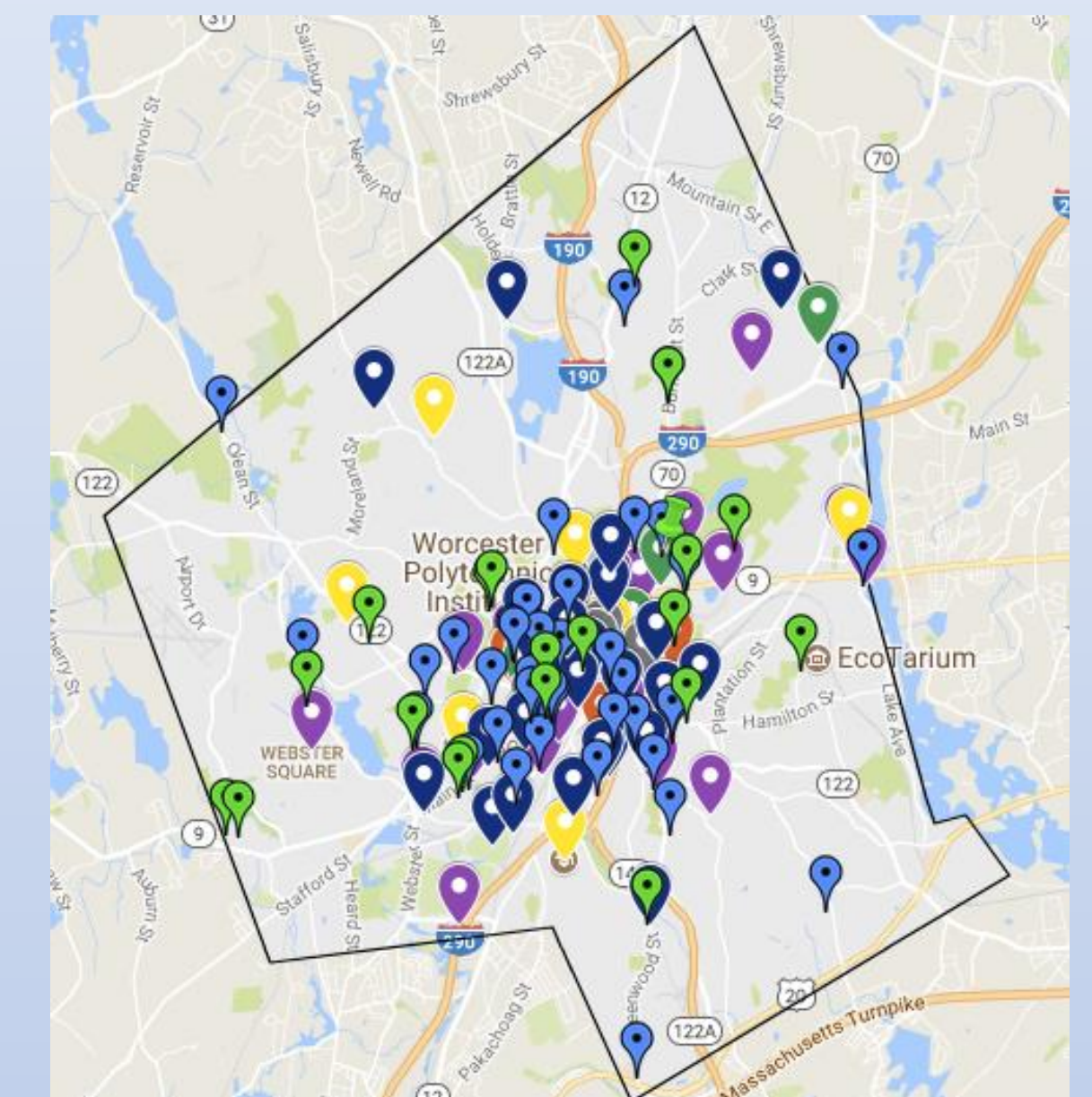


Food Pantries and
Community Meal Sites



Farmers' Markets, including
REC Mobile Markets

MAP OF ALL ASSETS



- Policy/Advocacy Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations in Food Access
- Academic Institutions
- State Government Agencies
- FQHCs and Hospitals

MOVING FORWARD

The highest concentration of assets lies in the Downtown and Central City areas of Worcester, which correspond to the zip codes with the lowest median household incomes (01608 and 01610). Thus, community assets mostly reflect poverty level, but outer areas like East and South-west Worcester also have low income levels with fewer resources.

Further study is needed to identify if the outer communities' needs are being met, and the capacity for local resources to expand to those neighborhoods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Heather-Lyn Haley of UMMS and its Summer Assistantship Program, Dr. Amber Sarkar and Dr. Melanie Gnazzo of Family Health Center Worcester, Liz Sheehan-Castro of Worcester County Food Bank, and Martha Assefa of Worcester Food Policy Council.