

How Urban Food Stewardship Enhances Community Aid and Access to Culturally Relevant Foods

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Background

- Throughout history, colonial power structures have separated individuals and communities from each other and their connections with land and food, resulting in a loss of necessary cultural knowledge and practices.
- Today, food apartheid and exorbitant costs of food often pose barriers for many urban communities to access fresh, local, and culturally relevant food options. These impacts still primarily effect people of color and indigenous communities
- Urban Farming has many promising opportunities to provide space for communities to exercise food sovereignty and interconnectedness with each other and their food.
- Attention to methods for connecting communities and food production is necessary in order to rectify the harm done by food injustice.

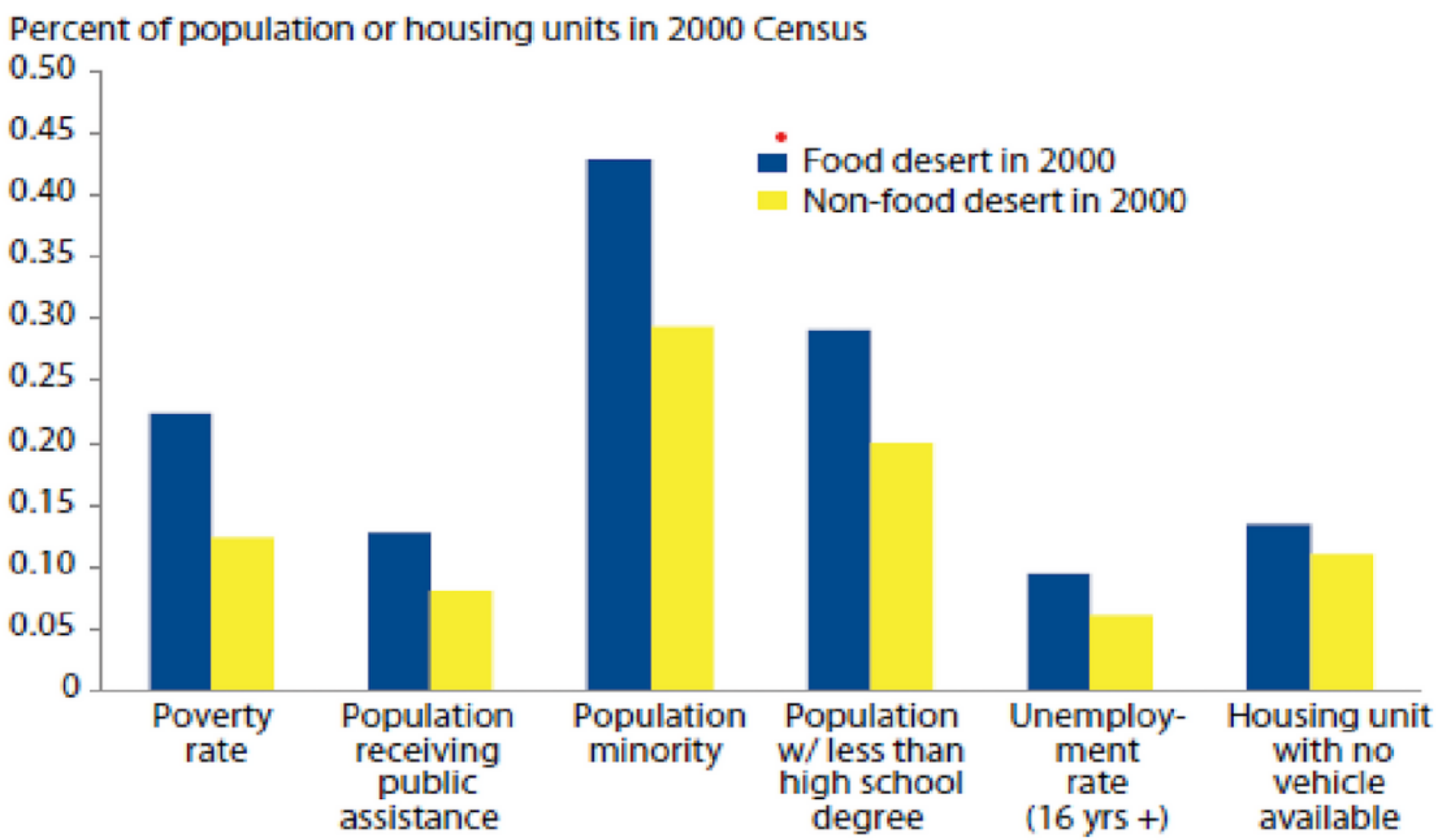


Figure 1. Graph showing the levels of access in food deserts and non-food deserts. Sourced from USDA, Economic Research Service calculations based on data from U.S. Census 2000.

Research Question

- How can/does urban agriculture enhance food justice in Seattle?
- How can culturally relevant food options be more accessible through urban agriculture?

Methodology

- I interned with local non-profit, City Fruit, as a community engagement/ outreach intern.
- Alongside this internship, I conducted numerous interviews with various individuals working within urban food production in Seattle, varying from P-Patches, urban farms, and community organizations
- My questions varied depending on the individual's expertise and work, but all pertained to the accessibility of culturally relevant foods in Seattle, and how Seattle works towards achieving food security.



Image 1: Photo of volunteers at one of Seattle's many P-Patch gardens , photo by John Olson from "Planting A Legacy: Seattle's P-Patch Gardens" by Rebekah Denn

Results

- Shared passion and need for urban agriculture brings members together
- Open requests or feedback from residents for crops to be grown
- Cultural responsiveness - research the demographics of neighborhoods in order to meet their specific needs
- Climate mimicking - use of green houses to recreate climates for hotter crops

Significance

- Many urban farms/ organizations in Seattle provide free or low-cost opportunities to get involved in food production
 - Increased awareness would help bolster this
- Increasing the ability for individuals to manage their own plots of land is key in order to prioritize food sovereignty for communities who have faced food insecurity the most
 - Urban Ag. must be seen as a "public good" to receive more funding (Siegnier)
- More investment in agricultural technology so that growers can have more flexibility in what crops they are able to grow.



Image 2. Myself and Piper's Orchard steward, Paul Brookshire, discussing winter pruning while mapping out our cuts on an apple tree on site.

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Interview Questions

- How would you define food justice?
- How does food justice relate to the work that you do, if applicable?
- How do you maintain culturally relevant options for different community members?
- What kind of crops/ food can be grown in Seattle or the PNW? How?
- How does urban agriculture cultivate mutual aid?
- Have you experienced any particular requests of certain fruits or vegetables to be grown on the farm? If so, how do you meet those needs?
- What has been the most challenging obstacle that you have experienced in your efforts to make food free/ the most accessible to people in your community?
- What do you think needs to be done on a systemic level to achieve food security for all people?
- How do you view Seattle's efforts in the fight against food insecurity?

Bibliography/ Further Resources

- <https://www.cityfruit.org/food-systems-resources/>
- The \$16 Dollar Taco - Pascale Joassart-Marcelli
- "Culture and Food Security" - Elena Briones Alonso
- "Growing 'Good Food': Urban Gardens, Culturally Acceptable Produce and Food Security" - Lucy O. Diekmann
- "The Intersection of Planning, Urban Agriculture, and Food Justice: A Review of the Literature" - Megan Horst
- "Youth Perceptions of Food Environment in the High Point Neighborhood in Seattle, WA" - Erin Thayer
- "Ethics and Politics of the Built Environment: Gardens of the Anthropocene" - Marcello Di Paola
- "The Elusive inclusive: Black Food Geographies and Racialized Food Spaces" - Margaret Marietta Ramírez

Get Involved

- Nurturing Roots
<https://www.nurturingrootsfarm.org/>
- City Fruit
<https://www.cityfruit.org/>
- Shark Garden
<https://sharkgarden.org/our-story>
- Danny Woo Community Garden
<https://interimcda.org/danny-woo/>
- Beacon Hill Food Forest
<https://beaconfoodforest.org/>
- P-Patch Program
<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening/how-to-sign-up>