



CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, JULY 20, 2020 | 7:00 PM

City Council will meet at 7:00 p.m. in Mauldin City Hall Council Chambers, 5 East Butler Road, Mauldin

Please note that members of the public may attend this meeting in-person but are encouraged to participate remotely through Webex. Please visit the City's website at <https://cityofmauldin.org/your-government/meeting-minutes-agendas/> to access the meeting via audio and videoconferencing.

AGENDA

1. Call to order

Mayor Terry Merritt

- a. Invocation
- b. Pledge of Allegiance
- c. Welcome

2. Proclamations and Presentations

3. Reading and approval of minutes

- a. City Council Meeting –June 15, 2020 (Pages 4-12)
- Special Called Council Meeting- June 18, 2020 (Pages 13-17)
- Special Called Council Meeting- June 26, 2020 (Pages 18-19)
- Special Called Council Meeting- July 6, 2020 (Pages 20-29)

Mayor Terry Merritt

4. Public Comment

5. Report from City Administrator

6. Reports from Standing Committees

- a. Finance and Policy (Chairman Reynolds)
- b. Public Safety (Chairwoman King)
- c. Public Works (Mayor Merritt)
- d. Economic Planning and Development (Chairman Matney)
- e. Building Codes (Chairwoman Kuzniar)
- f. Recreation (Chairman Black)

7. Unfinished Business

Ordinances - Second Reading

- a. Consideration and action on an Ordinance to Extend a Moratorium to Temporarily Suspend the Acceptance and Issuance of Permits and Business Licenses For Small Box Discount Stores Pending the Consideration of Amendments to the City Zoning Ordinance (Pages 30-32)

Mayor Terry Merritt,
Committee of the Whole

8. New Business

Ordinances – First Reading

- a. Consideration and Action on an Ordinance to Amend Article 10 of the City of Mauldin Zoning Ordinance by Establishing Special Standards and Definitions for Small Box Variety Stores and Like Businesses and to Establish the Zoning Districts for Which They Can Locate (Pages 33-86)

Diane Kuzniar,
Chair of the Building
Codes Committee

- b. Consideration and Possible Action on an Ordinance to Require Face Coverings Under Certain Conditions (Pages 87-91)

Taft Matney,
Chair of the EPD Committee

Standing Committee Items

- c. C- Fund Collaboration Request (Pages 92-95)

Taft Matney,
Chair of the EPD Committee

9. Public Comment

Mayor Terry Merritt

10. Council requests

11. Adjournment

Minutes
City Council Meeting
June 15, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members present were Mayor Terry Merritt, Council members Taft Matney, Carol King, Dale Black, Michael Reynolds and Diane Kuzniar. City Attorney John Duggan was present remotely. City Administrator Brandon Madden was also present.

1. Call to order

Mayor Terry Merritt

- a. Invocation- Councilwoman Kuzniar
- b. Pledge of Allegiance- Councilwoman Kuzniar
- c. Welcome – Mayor Merritt

2. Proclamations and Presentations- None

3. Reading and approval of minutes

- a. City Council Meeting –May 18, 2020
The minutes were approved by consent.

Mayor Terry Merritt

4. Public Comment- None

5. Report from City Administrator

Mr. Madden had no report, but asked Pat Pomeroy from the Mauldin Chamber to give a report on activities. Ms. Pomeroy reported on a ribbon cutting for a new law firm that will be upcoming. The Chamber Golf Tournament will be held on August 10, 2020 at Holly Tree Country Club. This is the largest fundraiser of the year for the Chamber.

Ms. Pomeroy also reported that she had been in contact with CU-ICAR about this year's Memberfest. CU-ICAR may be unable to host the event, but they are talking with the Chamber on this item.

6. Reports from Standing Committees

- g. Finance and Policy (Chairman Reynolds)
- h. Public Safety (Chairwoman King)
- i. Public Works (Mayor Merritt)
- j. Economic Planning and Development (Chairman Matney)
- k. Building Codes (Chairwoman Kuzniar)
- l. Recreation (Chairman Black)

7. Unfinished Business

Ordinances - Second Reading

Councilman Reynolds made a motion to suspend the rules to move item 8c to the front of the agenda. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

8c. Consideration and action on Event Coordinator.

This item needs to be voted on before the FY 2021 budget ordinance is considered. There was a special called meeting last Friday to discuss this item. Chairman Reynolds made a motion to appropriate \$39,313 from the H&A Tax fund balance to fund a full-time event coordinator position for the Community Development Department. Councilman Matney seconded the motion.

Councilwoman King said she was originally against a full-time position, and does not like to make changes to the budget once the workshops and discussion have been completed, but there was some additional information given to Council at the special called meeting on Friday that made it clear to her that a full-time position is needed. It is impossible for the current staff to be able to cover events at the cultural center during the evening.

Councilman Black said the taxpayers bought the facility and there should be someone present from staff any time someone is using the cultural center. He then asked if there was a job description for an Event Coordinator. Mr. Madden said the City does have a job description, but if this position is approved, the description will be presented to the Finance Committee for vetting.

Councilman Matney thanked Council for considering this item. The funding for the additional hours would come from hospitality and accommodations this year. He said it is appropriate to fund this position out of H&A because the Cultural Center is a destination that brings people to Mauldin and helps economic development. Councilman Black said the funding would come out of the general fund next budget year.

Mayor Merritt said funding a full-time position out of H&A has never been done before. A full-time position has 35% more overhead costs than part-time. Mayor Merritt said during the Council goals workshop, there was no mention about any department needing additional staff. During the budget workshops that were held, there was only mention of part-time hours for this position. The City has been blessed by our hospitality and accommodation funding. This year, the amount dipped a little. He wants to be fiscally conservative and see how things continue before deciding to fund a full-time Event Coordinator.

Councilwoman King said she regretted the Mayor was not present on Friday during the special called meeting in which this was discussed. City Administrator Madden brought forth several points on the need for a full-time position. The City is growing, and the Economic Development and Community Development

Departments are staffed with only 3 people. Having a full-time Event Coordinator would allow Mr. Van Broad to be able to focus on Economic Development, which is why he was hired. She has struggled with this decision but does see the need for a full-time position.

The vote was 4-2 to fund the full-time Event Coordinator position with Mayor Merritt and Councilman Black dissenting.

- b. Consideration and action on an Ordinance to Amend Section 18-95 Of The Noise Ordinance In The Mauldin Municipal Code Chapter 18, Environment, Article II, Nuisances, Division 3, Noise

This ordinance proposes to restrict construction noise from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The previous ordinance restricted construction noise from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Councilman Black reiterated that emergency situations such as repairs do not fall under this ordinance. Councilman Matney said there has been several discussions with people in industry and with the Home Builders Association and they agree with the 9:00 p.m. restriction. Chairwoman Kuzniar made a motion to pass this ordinance on final reading. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- b. Consideration and action on an Ordinance to Authorize A License Agreement Between the City Of Mauldin And New Cingular Wireless Pcs, LLC D/B/A AT&T Mobility For the Placement Of A Small Cell Wireless Facility At 137-P W. Butler Road, Mauldin, South Carolina

AT&T has expressed an urgent need to erect a small wireless facility at the corner of Cary Street and W. Butler Road. This location is adjacent to Chick-fil-a. AT&T is proposing to install a 32- to 34-foot metal stealth pole. The 5G antenna will be concealed in a canister located at the top of the pole. The associated cables and wires will similarly be concealed inside the pole. Chairwoman Kuzniar made a motion to pass this ordinance on final reading. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- c. Consideration and action on an Ordinance To Provide Amended Appropriations For The Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2019 And Ending June 30, 2020 For Ordinary And Other City Purposes; To Provide For A Levy Of Taxes On All Taxable Property In The City Of Mauldin For All City Purposes, Including Sufficient Tax For Any Principal And Interest On Outstanding Indebtedness Maturing In The Fiscal Year; To Provide For The Expenditure Of Said Taxes And Other Revenues Coming To The City During The Fiscal Year

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to pass the amended budget ordinance on final reading. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- d. Consideration and action on an Ordinance To Provide For The Issuance And Sale Of Not Exceeding Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000) City Of Mauldin, South Carolina, General Obligation Bonds, Series 2020; To Prescribe The Purposes For Which The

Proceeds Shall Be Expended; To Provide For The Payment Thereof; And Other Matters Relating Thereto.

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to pass the FY 2021 budget ordinance with the addition of the full- time Event Coordinator position. Councilman Matney seconded the motion. Councilwoman King mentioned that this budget also includes up to a 3% merit raise for employees as well as provisions for salary increases in the fire department to keep Mauldin competitive with surrounding cities. The vote on the budget ordinance was unanimous (6-0).

City Administrator Brandon Madden brought it to Council's attention that the FY 2021 budget ordinance was not listed on the agenda. John Duggan, City Attorney, was asked for his opinion. Mr. Duggan said because the ordinance was not specifically listed on the agenda, it could not be considered for action tonight under FOIA law. Councilman Matney made a motion to rescind the motion and call the vote null and void. Councilwoman King seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (6-0). A special called Council meeting will be called before June 30th to take second reading on the FY 2021 budget.

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to approve the Ordinance regarding issuance and sale of GO bonds on final reading. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- e. Consideration and action on an Ordinance Providing For The Issuance And Sale Of Not Exceeding \$2,900,000 City Of Mauldin, South Carolina Accommodations Tax And Hospitality Tax Revenue Bonds, In One Or More Series; And Other Matters Relating Thereto

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to pass the ordinance on final reading providing for issuance and sale of accommodations and hospitality tax revenue bonds. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- f. Consideration and action on an Ordinance Authorizing The Execution And Delivery Of Documents Relating To The Provision Of Municipal Facilities; Consenting To And Approving The Issuance Of A Not Exceeding \$2,750,000 Mauldin Public Facilities ; Corporation Installment Purchase Revenue Bond, Series 2020, By The Mauldin Public Facilities Corporation (The "Corporation") To Provide Funding To Finance The Costs Of Acquiring, Constructing, Renovating, Equipping, And Installing Public Facilities; Consenting To And Approving The Execution Of A Base Lease And Conveyance Agreement By And Between The City Of Mauldin, South Carolina (The "City") And The Corporation; Consenting To And Approving The Execution Of A Municipal Facilities Purchase And Occupancy Agreement Relating Thereto By And Between The City And The Corporation; Consenting To The Form Of An Indenture To Be Entered Into By The Corporation And The Purchaser Of The Bond; And Making Provision For All Other Matters Relating To The Foregoing.

This is the IPRP bond. Chairman Reynolds made a motion to accept this revenue bond issuance ordinance on final reading. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- m. Consideration and action on an Ordinance Establishing A Sewer Pump Station Fee For The Indigo Point Development; Creating A Lien For Unpaid Sewer Pump Station Fees; And Other Matters Related Thereto.

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to pass this ordinance on final reading. Councilwoman Kuzniar seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

8. New Business

Ordinances – First Reading

- a. Consideration and action on an Ordinance to Extend A Moratorium to Temporarily Suspend The Acceptance And Issuance Of Permits And Business Licenses For Small Box Discount Stores Pending The Consideration Of Amendments To The City Zoning Ordinances

Councilman Matney made a motion to consider this item informally. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0). Councilman Matney made a motion to accept this ordinance on first reading with Councilwoman Kuzniar seconding. The vote was unanimous (6-0).

Standing Committee Items

- b. Consideration and action on Selection of Auditor

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to select Greene Finney to continue as our auditor. He pointed out that not only did they have the lowest cost of the submittals, but they are an in-City business. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

- d. Consideration and action on a Resolution For the Purpose Of Establishing The Mauldin Public Facilities Corporation, Stating Its Purposes And Appointing The Members To The Board Of Directors Of The Corporation

This resolution will establish the Mauldin Public Facilities Corporation and appoint members to the Board of Directors for the Corporation. These board members act on behalf of the City and would only be required to meet periodically and would serve a three-year term. Chairman Reynolds asked that more time be given for consideration of this item. There were concerns that Council was given the list of proposed members of the board on short notice. Chairman Reynolds made a motion to hold this item and bring it back to a special called council meeting to be held later this month. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

e. Boards and Commissions Appointments

The terms of the Planning Commission members serving in seats #1, 4, and 7 will expire at the end of June. The volunteers currently serving in those seats have each applied for re-appointment. This includes Michael Forman (seat #1), Jonathan Paulsen (seat #4), and Dean Oang (seat #7). Each of these volunteers has provided a breadth of planning and development knowledge to the Planning Commission and has been outstanding in their service to the City. Staff fully supports their re-appointment to their respective seats. In addition, Mr. Ted Allison (seat #5) has indicated that his schedule no longer allows him to continue to serve on the Planning Commission. Therefore, he has stepped down from his seat on the Planning Commission. The City has a need to fill the remainder of his appointment which expires at the end of June 2022. The City has received an application from Mr. Michael King to be appointed to the Planning Commission.

The terms of three Zoning Board members will expire at the end of June. In addition, there is presently an open seat on the Zoning Board. Therefore, the City needs to appoint four volunteers to serve on the Zoning Board. The City has received an application from Mr. Paul Calabrese and Mr. Michael Burns for re-appointment to the Zoning Board. Staff supports and recommends the re-appointment of Paul Calabrese and Michael Burns. The remaining open positions can continue to be advertised.

Chairwoman Kuzniar made a motion to re-appoint Michael Forman, Jonathan Paulsen, and Dean Oang to the Planning Commission as well as appoint Michael King to the Planning Commission and to re-appoint Paul Calabrese and Michael Burns to the Zoning Board. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

The other two positions on the zoning board will continue to be advertised and come back to council at a later date.

f. Consideration and action on Permit and License Software

Chairwoman Kuzniar made a motion to select Citizenserve to provide permit and license software for the City and that City Council authorize staff to contract with Citizenserve for the provision of permit and license software services. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

g. Consideration and action on Traffic Calming – Edgewood Drive

In October 2019, a resident of Edgewood Drive relayed a concern to the Public Safety Committee about excessive speeds and residential safety. At the request of the Public Safety Committee, a speed measurement study was completed on Edgewood Drive. The first traffic study started on October 11th and continued until the end of the month. Data collected showed the road met volume requirements to be eligible for traffic calming, and also met the minimum threshold of 32mph at the 85th percentile. The speed limit for Edgewood Drive is posted at 25mph. At the conclusion of the first traffic study, a digital sign board was positioned on Edgewood Drive to alert drivers of their speed and the speed limit. This display was left active for two weeks. This posting of the signboard on the street was part of Level 1 Traffic Calming methods. Following the education efforts, MPD officers were assigned to work directed traffic enforcement (RADAR/LIDAR) along the roadway. This assignment began on December 6, 2019 and continued until after the Christmas Holiday. During this time, no warnings or citations were issued. This extra enforcement was also completed as part of the Level 1 traffic calming methods. On Tuesday, December 31, 2019 the Digital Sign Board was repositioned on Edgewood Drive to capture data post education and enforcement efforts. This study concluded on January 9, 2020. The following data was provided from the 10-day collection period. Speed at the 85th percentile has decreased to 24.3mph and the average daily volume on the roadway was 172.8, with a total volume of 1555 vehicles. At this point speeding at the 85th percentile is not considered to be a major factor as it falls under the threshold of 32 mph. In addition, roadway traffic is not considered to be "cut through" in nature.

On March 23, 2020, a petition was returned for traffic calming measures and the process began on verifying signatures. On April 27, 2020, a final portion of the petition was provided, and the petition was verified. A total of eighteen property owners have signed the petition requesting traffic calming measures. Although a total of 30 homes comprise the study area, this petition meets the 60% as outlined in the traffic calming policy.

Chairwoman King said even though most of the violators are residents, this is a serious problem. There are children in the neighborhood who need to be protected from speeders. She believes the petition is a good representation that the residents want traffic calming measures on Edgewood Drive. The financial impact is less than \$1,000.00. Councilman Black asked if the speed humps would have signage warning that they are upcoming so cars can slow down to go over them. Chairwoman King said there would be appropriate signage. Councilwoman Kuzniar asked if you can go over a speed hump at 25 mph. Chief Turner said you could, but it was best to slow down. The purpose of the humps is to slow traffic down before it goes over the hump and continue the slower speed down the road. Councilman Black asked if these humps would allow emergency vehicles to travel over them. Interim Fire Chief McHone said there are humps in other neighborhoods and the fire trucks and other vehicles can get through.

Chairwoman King made a motion to install traffic calming measures. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

h. Consideration and action on Police Mutual Aid Agreement

In recent years, the Mauldin Police Department has aided various SC Law Enforcement Agencies. In late April 2020, a request was initiated by the City of Mount Pleasant to have our officers assist the department. In reviewing our existing mutual aid agreements, it was observed there is not a current mutual aid agreement on file between our agencies. SC Code requires the governing body to provide approval to all mutual aid documents. The documents provided by the City of Mount Pleasant have been reviewed by the City Attorney. Chairwoman King said we already have mutual aid agreements with 10 other agencies, including Horry County and Goose Creek. She considers this a compliment that a large department such as Mt. Pleasant would have need for our assistance.

Mayor Merritt said he was concerned that Mauldin would not receive a fair trade, but since this does not pose a financial burden to the City, he has no objections. Chairwoman King made a motion to approve the mutual aid agreement with Mount Pleasant. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

i. Consideration and action on the Walking Trail located at City Park

Through its Park and Recreation Development Fund (PARF), the SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism manages the PARF grant program which is a state-funded noncompetitive reimbursable grant program for eligible local government or special purposes district entities within each county which provide recreational opportunities. The PARF grants are available to eligible local governmental entities within each county area for development of new public recreation facilities or enhancement/renovations to existing facilities. The grants require an 80-20 match. The City is eligible for \$22,288.51 for 2019 which must be spent and reimbursed by May 31, 2021. Staff recommends using the 2019 PARF grant funds to resurface other portions of the trail that are in disrepair with cracks and damaged asphalt. \$22,288.51 in PARF grants funds are available, which require a 20% match or \$4,457.70. The needed matching funds are available in the current Council approved budget. If approved by Council, the matching funds will be encumbered for use in FY2021 as the project completion deadline is May 31, 2021. Chairman Black made a motion to fund \$4457.70, which is 20% of the \$22,851 PARF grant to resurface other portions of the City Park walking trail that are in disrepair with cracks and damaged asphalt. Councilman Reynolds seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

j. An emergency ordinance to temporarily waive penalties for the late payment of fees for business license permits and local hospitality tax and local accommodations fee payments; and matters related thereto

Councilwoman King made a motion to consider this item informally with Councilman Reynolds seconding. The vote was unanimous (6-0). During its March 23, 2020 Special Called Emergency Council Meeting, Council approved an Emergency Ordinance which amongst other provisions, waived late fees associated with City hospitality tax

and local accommodations fee payment through May 23, 2020. Given the impact of COVID-19, the waiver of late fees associated with City hospitality tax and local accommodations fee payment through June 30, 2020 may assist businesses as they mitigate the fiscal impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilwoman King added that the tax returns are still due at the regular time, but the payment must be made by June 30th. Councilman Reynolds made a motion to pass this emergency ordinance on its first and only reading. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

9. Public Comment

Mr. Tafta- Stormwater and flooding- Audio recording sometimes unintelligible

I have some photos. I will be brief. My wife Jordan and I... The house would flood once or twice a quarter with water in the basement. We have encapsulated the crawl space, replaced sheetrock. We welcomed our first child and have two perfectly healthy babies. It is frustrating to see the outcome of eight months of labor. Antifreeze, bacteria from pet waste, oil. I cannot sell this home to anyone in good conscience. I am coming to you for help. Mauldin Public Works has been helpful and courteous in helping to clean up the water out of the front yard. The photo of my back yard has a white drain. You will also find a document from Greenville County. My understanding is that the City has no provision for stormwater management. Since this is our first meeting, I want each of you to know, I am not angry with you. I know you are doing your best and that times are desperate. I would love to raise my children in a healthy home in Mauldin.

10. Council requests- Councilman Black said he had received a department commendation for the Fire Department on a call for help for a resident.

11. Adjournment- Mayor Merritt adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Cindy Miller
Municipal Clerk

Minutes
Special Called Council Meeting
Thursday, June 18, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Members present were Mayor Terry Merritt, Council Members Taft Matney, Carol King, Michael Reynolds and Diane Kuzniar. Councilman Dale Back was out of town. City Administrator Brandon Madden was also present.

1. Call to order

Mayor Terry Merritt

- a. Invocation- Councilman Matney
- b. Pledge of Allegiance- Councilman Matney
- c. Welcome- Mayor Merritt

2. Unfinished Business

Ordinances - Second Reading

- a. Consideration and action on an Ordinance to Provide Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2020 and Ending June 30, 2021 for Ordinary and Other City Purposes; to Provide for a Levy of Taxes on all Taxable Property in the City of Mauldin for all City Purposes, Including Sufficient Tax for any Principal and Interest on Outstanding Indebtedness Maturing in the Fiscal Year; to Provide for the Expenditure of Said Taxes And Other Revenues Coming to the City During the Fiscal Year.

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to accept the FY 2021 budget ordinance on second reading. Councilwoman King seconded the motion. Chairman Reynolds said there were several budget workshops, and this provides for the future for investment in infrastructure and investments in our employees. He thanked Mr. Madden and Mrs. Abercrombie for their hard work on the budget. Mayor Merritt said this is the eighth or ninth year in which there has been no tax increase. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

Standing Committee Items

- b. Consideration and action on a Resolution for the Purpose of Establishing the Mauldin Public Facilities Corporation, Stating its Purposes and Appointing the Members to the Board of Directors of the Corporation

This is a resolution to establish a Public Facilities Corporation and appoint a Board of Directors of this corporation. This board is formed because of the IPRB revenue bond and the board will make bond payments on the City's behalf. This is not a board with influence or administrative responsibilities, it is strictly a part of this bond

for the pedestrian bridge. City Administrator Madden passed out some ballots for voting. There are several names to be considered. The names of the candidates are John Center, Allen Chavis, Jessie Winchester, Cristina Ortiz, Rodney Neely, Diana Gracely.

Each Council Member will choose three members for the board. Diana Gracely was appointed outright and there was a three-way tie with Allen Chavis, Rodney Neely, and Cristina Ortiz. Another vote was cast for two out of those three.

Rodney Neely and Cristina Ortiz were appointed to the board as well as Diana Gracely.

Chairman Reynolds made a motion to accept the resolution as presented. Councilman Matney seconded the motion and the vote was 4-1 with Mayor Merritt dissenting.

3. Public Comment

Derrick Quarles: Good evening. My name is Derrick Quarles. I reside at 182 Bonnie Woods Drive in Greenville. When Mr. Matney prayed tonight, he said that all of us were made in God's image. I hope and pray that is what people believe because we are all made in God's image. One of the members of Council has made some very derogatory comments on his Facebook page that have now gone viral. I am here tonight to speak on that and expressly on the posts he made recently. I would like to share these posts with you in case you have not seen them. I would like to read what I have.

One of the posts said I wondered why this issue of racial inequality was not fixed when we had a black President in office for eight years. He then says, if this symbol represents racism, which is the Confederate flag, then so do these, which is NAACP, which does not, BET, which it is not, Black History Month, which is not, UNCF, Hispanic Heritage Month, and so on and so forth, and the Democratic Party. He then posts how does a statue that has stood in the same place for 100 years suddenly become offensive and men who walk around in public with their ass showing is not offensive? Are people really this ignorant? There is a picture of a statue and a picture of a black man with his pants down.

There are several others and I will not read them, but they were very hurtful to myself and the entire black community I believe, especially with all the racial tension that is happening right now in our nation. I think that all of us have a duty, especially public officials have a duty, to be honorable and respectful to our constituents, regardless of our personal beliefs. What is most concerning to me is that Councilman Black serves on the Public Safety Committee. I believe that committee considers issues relative to law enforcement and crime prevention. It scares me especially knowing he is on that committee to know what advice he gives to law

enforcement especially as it relates to black people. I have absolutely no confidence in Mr. Black's ability to be impartial to his constituents or to any members of the Mauldin community. I realize as public officials there is not much you can do in terms of asking him to resign, but I hope you would encourage him to resign from his office as we will be pushing for at this time. Mauldin has a population of nearly a quarter of blacks here, and I believe I speak for all of them in saying that Mr. Black is incompetent to lead.

Bruce Wilson: Good evening, Council. My name is Bruce Wilson and I am the founder of Fighting Injustice Together based out of Greenville, South Carolina. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. Just as Mr. Quarles had brought up earlier, I am here to discuss Mr. Black, who is a Council Member. Of course, I understand that as an elected position, this body really has no control over who is elected. What this body does have, and I believe the Mayor would have, is the ability to place individuals on certain committees. I understand Mr. Black is on Public Safety, and if I am correct, I think that would have something to do with law enforcement. And we know today what is going on in this country, in this nation, and across the world, and even here in Greenville or Mauldin.

It is sad when we can see a man get murdered on television with a knee on his neck for almost nine minutes. And then to have a Councilman, an elected official who should be speaking for us, standing up for us, not just certain groups of the population, but for the whole population, to have those comments, to put the NAACP, who has done tremendous work for over one hundred years for this nation, in the same category as someone with the KKK. I think we can all say that is not right, and I would hope that racism does not have a place in politics. Those need to be separated.

I could care less what your politics are, but I do care if you are a racist because I am a black man and I have black children in this country. Tomorrow we celebrate Freedom Day, Juneteenth, but yet I am standing here in 2020 in front of this body asking you to censor one of your own because of racial comments. Because of bigotry and racism that was posted. I am hoping this is a wake-up call to this body. I have never had to come before this body, but I assure you that Mauldin will be in the forefront of any activities I pursue. I hope you understand this is serious. Anytime we see racism rear its nasty head, we plan to get rid of it, to cut it off. It is a cancer and we cannot continue in today's age to allow it to grow. I thank you for the opportunity to speak and I hope this body takes this matter seriously, because we are taking it seriously. Thank you, Council.

Patrick Tate: Thank you. My name is Patrick Tate. I am a Pastor, and I live in Greenville, South Carolina. Mr. Madden. My reason for coming today, first and foremost, as the gentlemen just spoke about earlier, is having a heart of love. I graduated from Mauldin High School in 1982, and I still carry Mauldin in my heart. I was here when Chief Sherbert was here. I coached his son. I taught at the high school and I served my country in the Navy for 13 years. I served under a flag that

had no color. I was in a war and when we went on the ship, all we knew was one body, one mind and one heart.

It was very offensive for anyone, no matter what color you are either, for the climate that is going on at this particular time. What I was taught is, how I trained in the military was to be a leader and to serve as a leader. This Council Member has been elected to serve as a leader and he has failed at that. To toe the line, as we would call it, to stand up before your constituents, to which he is not today, to say I am sorry, I apologize, and I was wrong. I missed the mark, something.

You have a community who is looking upon you, because I have followed this community since 1986 when I graduated. A beautiful community. I still give to my high school. I am still a Maverick. I coached two of these young men in here and they held me accountable. Today I am still held accountable to them because of who I am. I have five children, the youngest being 22, and what they know from their father is, do the right thing at the right time. Do not just do the right thing, do it when it is right. He has not done it.

The reason you see the people here today, and I applaud them, is they are freedom fighters. What they are saying is enough is not just enough, it is time out for the comments. If you have that in your heart, you should not be serving people who you say come together commonly for one cause under your roof to say the Mayor doesn't stand for it, the Council doesn't stand for it, and your City Manager doesn't stand for it because he looks like me. At the end of the day, every time something like this comes up, it does not matter if it is Tyler, Texas, this is what the response will be. And it will be out of respect. I bring love as a Pastor to say I cannot hate, that is not my calling, however, I can tell you he needs to stand forth and toe the line and account for his words, what he says, and what he believes. Thank you Mayor and Council.

Mr. Chandler: Good evening Council. I grew up on Old Mill Road in Mauldin. I want to tell you a little story. This is the best way to put it to you why I am here tonight. When I was ten years old, I do not know if you remember, but Toys R Us put out a kind of pogo ball. You put your feet on both sides of it and bounced up and down. My dad would not let us go to the road, but I happened to bounce down really close to the road and my sister followed me. A big white pickup truck pulled up with a Confederate flag on it. A white gentleman yelled at me and said that was not made for you n words.

I went and played at Mauldin High School. I remember when the Chambers kids went and spray painted the n words all over the walls and Kevin Garnett and the guys older than me got in a fight with them and you know the history behind that. So, to see how this representative from where I grew up, post or re-post anything on that matter, is very hurting to me. And then the fact that he works out in the gym where I work out at and my mom and dad, is very, very disturbing to me.

My worry is that birds of a feather flock together. That is my worry. I have a daughter and I have to drive through this town. Everyone knows this town is famous for if you speed through this town you are going to get a ticket. So, what I am asking of you is, it takes a lot of gumption to tell on a friend and put them in jail. It takes a lot of cohunes as someone would say to use another word. Tell him he needs to resign. For every day that I am living, till I pass away, I am going to work to get him off of this board. Even if I have to run for Councilman here. Because I will be damned if I have to worry about my daughter. Do I want her to have that experience that lasted me the rest of my life? I am forty years old now and that is what I remember.

I remember jogging on the track at Mauldin High School and the Chambers kid again rode around and yelled the n word again and drove off. And now we are here again with this same mess. I did not choose to be black. I was born that way. But I choose to love everybody and have respect for everybody. If you feel that way, that is fine. I am not in the business of changing your heart. But you should not be an elected official having to serve a diverse community as Mauldin is growing to be. We have more black hair salons, black businesses and black restaurants, Asian businesses, Indian businesses, all this stuff coming to Mauldin and then we have this foolishness going on by an ignorant person.

I challenge him and you all to have the gumption to do something with him. I challenge him to sit down and have a conversation about the Confederate flag, how the Confederacy lost the war and the flag was put away. The flag did not come back out until the Civil Rights movement started because they wanted to let it be known that we are the knee on your neck, that you do not have equal rights. Tell them to come talk to me. I will leave my number. I left my number on his answering machine. I challenge you. I am going to hold you all accountable. If you all do not do it, I am going to run against each and every last one of you to get you out from up there. Thank you for your time.

4. Council Requests- None

5. Adjournment- Mayor Merritt adjourned the meeting at 6:31p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Miller
Municipal Clerk

Minutes
Special Called Council Meeting
Friday, June 26, 2020
5:00 p.m.

Members present were Mayor Terry Merritt, Councilmembers Taft Matney, Dale Black, Michael Reynolds, and Diane Kuzniar. Councilmember Carol King attended remotely. City Attorney Daniel Hughes and City Administrator Brandon Madden were also present.

1. Call to order-Mayor Terry Merritt
2. New Business

Executive Session

- a. Motion to enter into Executive Session as allowed by State Statute Section 30-4-70 (a)(1) and (a)(2)

Councilman Matney made a motion to go into executive session with Councilman Reynolds seconding. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

Mayor Merritt reconvened the meeting. Councilman Matney reported no decisions were made and no action was taken.

3. Council Requests-

Councilman Matney: I have a rather long statement and a request. It has been a rough couple of weeks. I do not think that any of us in this room can say it has not. There has been hurt and frustration. I have tried to look at this through a number of lenses. One lens has been my faith. If anyone was here during the budget meeting last week, and I had the invocation, one of the things I said in the invocation, I was taught at a young age that all of us are made in God's image, all of us. I have looked at it as a father who has heard his 16-year-old son ask Dad, why can't the world be more like our football locker room where no one sees these issues? I have looked at it as an elected official of this City who is here to serve all 25,000 people who reside here in the City of Mauldin. Not just the people served, but our employees who have been hurt by what has been said, done and posted. I look at it as Chair of Economic Planning and Development because I don't want the City to have a reputation that we are not welcoming or diverse and I don't want to see us turning away businesses that want to locate here.

I have tried to look at this through all of those lenses and it is very difficult. I do not support what Mr. Black has posted. We have had very serious and hard discussions upstairs. I believe racism is wrong. We cannot turn a blind eye and say that is being against racism. We have to be actively against it. That is what I need to say right now.

Not only do I not support what was posted, I have to condemn it. Otherwise, by my silence, I am supporting it. I do not have confidence in Mr. Black's ability to serve in a leadership role for the City. My request would be that he resign as a member of Council and as Mayor Pro Tempore.

I also have another request, and this goes to the general public. Mr. Black's family has taken a lot of unfair criticism, threats, the people that are elected to serve are up here. Our families are off-limits. Leave Mr. Black's family alone. Thank you, Mayor.

4. Adjournment- Mayor Merritt adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Miller
Municipal Clerk

Minutes
Special Called Council Meeting
Monday, July 6, 2020
5:00 p.m.

Members present were Mayor Terry Merritt, Council Members Taft Matney, Carol King, Michael Reynolds, Dale Black, and Diane Kuzniar. City Attorney John Duggan and City Administrator Brandon Madden were also present.

1. Call to order- Mayor Terry Merritt

Prayer- Dr. Neely

2. New Business

Executive Session

a. Motion to enter into Executive Session as allowed by State Statute Section 30-4-70 (a)(1) and (a)(2)

Councilman Matney made a motion to go into executive session.
Councilwoman King seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (6-0).

Mayor Merritt reconvened the council meeting after the executive session. Councilman Matney reported no action or votes were taken in executive session.

Mayor Merritt read Councilman Black's resignation letter from his position as Mayor Pro Tempore.

b. Possible action on items discussed in executive session

Councilwoman King made a motion to add an item to Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution to admonish and censure Councilman Dale Black. Councilman Reynolds seconded the motion to consider this item as Committee of the Whole.

Councilman Black recused himself from this discussion since it was regarding him and left Council chambers.

The vote to consider this item as Committee of the Whole was unanimous (5-0).

Councilwoman King made a motion to adopt the resolution to admonish and censure Councilman Dale Black. Councilman Reynolds seconded the motion.

Councilman Reynolds requested Mayor Merritt read the resolution being considered.

The vote to adopt the resolution was unanimous (5-0).

Councilman Black returned to the meeting following his recusal on the above item.

Councilman Matney made a motion to consider an item informally through Committee of the Whole. Councilwoman King seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous (6-0).

Councilman Matney made a motion to adopt a resolution to develop guidelines for education and training opportunities for diversity training and the use of social media for all elected officials, city employees and persons serving on city boards, commissions, and other capacities for the city and also providing for public forums for citizens and local business to engage in discussions of diversity issues and provide recommendations for city officials. Councilwoman King seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous (6-0).

c. Public Comment- Comments will be limited to three minutes per person.

- a. Gene Gore: 230 Tar Boulevard. I am a taxpayer and a homeowner in the City of Mauldin. I have about three things I would like to speak on tonight. I do not know what you mean about admonishing someone. Can you tell me what that means? Does anyone understand what it means? OK.

I am here tonight to support Dale Black's right to express himself under the 1st Amendment of the Constitution. What he said was wrong, he has admitted it and apologized for it, but obviously that was not enough. I also acknowledge the protesters have the same right and the right to ask him for his resignation. The problem is not going to go away. The people want Dale Black to resign. I think the only way to do that... I looked at Google and got two separate answers. Number 1 is Council members can call a special meeting and vote whether Dale Black is to resign or not. If the vote is that he resign, a special election would be held. On the other hand, if you

vote and there is not a majority, then Mr. Black would continue and serve out the remainder of his term.

I was told by the Administrator that the only person who can remove him is the Governor. If that is true, let us get off our duffs and contact the Governor. Nothing has ever come of name calling. That is not the way this is done. You need to act instead of hiding and thinking it will go away. You are hiding from the protesters. You need to act.

- b. Randy Eskridge: I will be very brief. Thank you, Council, for allowing time to speak. The Constitution allows for free speech.

Mayor: Please state your address.

Randy Eskridge: My address is 211 Springdale Drive here in Mauldin. I believe the Constitution allows for free speech. What that means to me is if you agree with what I say or not, that is ok and whether I agree with what you say or not, that is ok. I do not think it is right to bully an elected official into resigning his position just because he stated his opinion. Whether you agree with me or not, that is ok. Dale and I have known each other for a long time, and we have not always agreed with each other, but one thing I can tell you is he is not a racist. I would like that to be known. Thank you for your time.

- c. Teresa Mattison: I am a resident of Mauldin at 5 Winery Court and I am a business owner at 400 South Main Street. I have lived here for 21 years. Originally I was not going to get up and speak, but as this gentleman before said, there is a right to free speech, and I agree with that, but free speech does not mean he has the right to put someone down or be disrespectful. With that being said, I am going to read what I wrote to Dale Black.

Being a Mauldin resident for 21 years, and a business owner for 16 years, I am ashamed and embarrassed, but as a black human being, I was offended. We teach our children to show respect, be kind, and if you do not have anything nice to say, keep your mouth closed. Whether we have freedom of speech or not, that is what we teach our children. Our expectations of those we elect to lead are higher and they need to raise the bar and lead by example.

Dale Black is an elected official who has a responsibility to represent all of the residents of Mauldin. Your being elected is a privilege. When you choose to insert your personal prejudices and opinions, you are doing your community a disservice and you need to step aside. I respect that you have. If you were laughed in the face by an employee of a business, you would not expect the employer to keep that person on staff. An apology is not a free pass and does not mean that what you said should be forgotten. Words have a lasting effect, and an apology is not just supposed to be accepted.

I remember my great-grandfather used to say your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your character, and your character becomes your destiny. I am ashamed we are even having to do this. As the gentleman stated about the protesters- we did not start this. What you elected to do is what he called your freedom of speech.

- d. Curtis Johnson: Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and Councilman Black. I am sure that having served on Council, that you have your own personal relationships with Councilman Black. I am sure it is probably difficult for Ms. King, Ms. Kuzniar, and Mr. Reynolds to make public statements about this and I respect the difficult choices you have made. I only met Councilman Black two weeks ago and he came across as a genuinely friendly and personable gentleman. While he made statements that we disagreed with, we have expressed publicly and privately that we are going to treat Councilman Black and his family with dignity and respect. As we have stated privately and publicly, our posture against Councilman Black is not personal, nor is it a desire to harm his name or his posture in the community. However, as an elected official, and Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Mauldin, the many publicly shared posts that exploit our racial differences and demean our cultural heritage are incendiary and deeply offensive to a growing number of the Mauldin constituency who make up all ethnicities. We all acknowledge the fact that everyone is entitled to their opinion, and appreciate the freedom of speech, but even that freedom comes with consequences.

As an elected official, his words carry weight and the words and images can be considered as reflective as those of the City of Mauldin, the Council, and in height of such racial tensions through the country and the world, we all must reject words and images that project hate and divisiveness. We are not seeking to damage

him personally, but we are seeking as Mayor and Council you hold him accountable publicly as a means of making a public statement that we are a better Mauldin. The mindset that produced the racially divisive posts, you are making a public statement that we are a community that celebrates diversity and not one that denigrates the population of its people. You made a public statement that Mauldin is sensitive to its people and strives to overcome the offenses that have crippled other cities. This is the Mauldin we all want.

I only have one request, to get more information regarding our other requests made for a citizen commission as well as an advisory board for a relationship with the police department. We understand this is a decision Council has to make. We continue to ask for his resignation, and we thank you for your consideration to our requests. Thank you for your time.

- e. Eric Steele: 814 Worchester Drive. I am a former resident of the City of Mauldin. I think that Facebook is exasperating to have. People act and react to things in the heat of the moment. I am not here to defend Dale Black's actions, but his character. I am not aware of any previous racial bias on Dale's part. I believe Dale is a good man who made a mistake. We have a method to replace public officials. If Council decides this is warranted, I believe there can be sanctions. This continual tit for tat, he said, she said is not the answer. Thank you for your time.
- f. Jim Neighbors: 1 Cade Court. Thank you for those on Council who responded. What was posted on Facebook was deeply offensive to me and everyone I know in Mauldin. I teach at Wofford College and have taught a lot of students. If I were to have said or posted anything remotely offensive or like you did, I would resign immediately. I have a responsibility to those people and for the damage caused. I would have conveyed to people the idea that I think of them as lesser human beings and that there is some kind of racial hierarchy. That is profoundly damaging, and people should not have to listen to this and get it from an elected official. That is a disgrace. I appreciate the fact that you resigned as Mayor Pro Tempore, but you need to resign from Council. With that, the healing can begin. That cannot begin without the acknowledging and taking responsibility for what was said.

- g. Rachael Putman: I reside at 104 Brookbend Court here in Mauldin. I have been a resident of Mauldin for 20 years. I have enjoyed the intimacy of Mauldin and especially as a suburb of Greenville County. I have been an active member of Mauldin Recreation. My family has enjoyed football, basketball, and baseball. My husband has been a coach, I have been a Team Mom, and our sons are All-Star players. I served on Mauldin High School Booster Club for almost 20 years.

For twenty years, I have been a neighbor of City Councilman Dale Black. Almost every day, Dale would wave to us and say hello as we went in and out of the neighborhood. His comments have been very offensive and hurtful to me. I have a responsibility to my community to expect a better community for my sons. I want them to return to a Mauldin that is safe and welcoming. I served my community and my employer and work with diversity, and I certainly appreciate Mauldin City Council for accepting and understanding the importance of this. I do expect as a paying citizen and taxpayer that the community expects City Council to align our actions with our thoughts. I promised my family that I would give back to my community and be a responsible citizen, and I want to express my concerns. For my family, it concerns me that we are not at the point that we recognize the comments are too soon. I don't discredit that Mr. Black does not have bad intentions and is not a bad person, but I did expect more in our community. I will forever watch his property, and be a good person, and I will always treat you with the dignity that you expect, and I expect in return.

Freedom of speech is a right that all Americans should have the expectation for, but as an elected official, we expect a level of respect. I appreciate your service, but I expect better and more of our City Council. I appreciate your time and your support, and I trust that as elected officials you will act appropriately. Thank you.

- h. Bruce Wilson: Once again, Council, I appreciate your letting me speak. I am Bruce Wilson with Black Lives Matter. I am not a Mauldin resident, but I am a resident of Greenville County. I have heard a lot about freedom of speech. I want to take you from just this weekend of this freedom of speech I received from a gentleman in Spartanburg. I cannot really use the language and terminology, but you will get the idea. He expressed his willingness to see me hung by a noose. He informed another individual that

my house would be blown up. He said I was a walking dead man. He wanted to see me dead. He said he planned to kill me and kill the individual that lives up the street from him. This is what we are talking about when we say freedom of speech. It has consequences and meaning. You cannot believe that it is ok to engage in racist terminology and not understand that there are consequences. There are people who can die behind so-called freedom of speech if it is not used wisely.

Today I have been engaged with the FBI and US Attorney because of this freedom of speech. When we have an elected official for the community there should be a higher standard. You have to be able to overcome any prejudices you may have inherently. You have to be able to understand right now what black America is dealing with. What this nation is dealing with. It is hurtful. I have been marching and protesting here in Mauldin and the reason I have been doing it, Mr. Black, is so my children would not have to do it. It was not an embarrassment, because we were doing it peacefully. We were asking, demanding, that you step down. If you truly love this community like I read in one of your statements, I am here to tell you the community is hurt.

I know there are some that will pat you on the back and tell you to keep pushing forward, that you have freedom of speech, but I think they are forgetting that you are an elected official. There is a higher standard. I hope that we can end today with the Council understanding that this is serious, and that freedom of speech can hurt. It is true that some individuals lost their life for that freedom of speech, but we cannot use it to hurt the community. Just like I cannot go to a movie theater and scream out "fire", Mr. Black cannot use social media to bring out racism. Thank you.

- i. Clarence Thornton: I live in Greenville, South Carolina. I have a hard time today because you are choosing who to serve. A man cannot serve two masters. Love one and hate the other. You cannot say I choose to come to America and choose the Confederacy at the same time. The bible said I will spew you out of my mouth. The Confederacy is a symbol of hate. Show me anytime where the Confederacy ever did anything out of love. You do not have to go too far, when people are trying to go to their church, and someone took out a gun and murdered them. The Bible says repent, but has South Carolina truly repented? South Carolina is one of the few states in the nation, three, that will not

promote a hate crime bill. I have seen Bruce Wilson work hard to get South Carolina to do it. The Bible tells me no one can say I love my brother but have hate in my heart. We are supposed to be the light of the world. The Bible tells me so many things. Hate cannot cancel out hate, only the Lord can do that. I cannot make you love me, only God can do that. We can pass laws that stop you from hating. That is the hate crime bill. The community has zero confidence in your abilities. The Confederacy never ever stopped hating. Never stopped hating. You talk about George Floyd, but the Confederacy is what I hate.

- j. Michael Reynolds: I did not give a formal statement, but I held many conversations over the past few weeks regarding this issue. I disagree with the posts from Mr. Black. I have had members of the community reach out to me both for Mr. Black and in opposition. Mr. Black is a good man, a good father, church member, and has been a good representative for and of the City of Mauldin. He is kind to strangers and friends. Unfortunately, sharing these posts brought Mr. Black's ability to represent Mauldin into question. Race relations can be an uncomfortable topic to discuss. It is out of this pain that growth can occur. I told my 12-year-old son there were ways to grow. We still have so much we can learn, and I am proud of all of you. I am proud of the Mauldin residents who are here. This community is diverse and thriving. I believe this can highlight problems, but things can change from on- way conversations, to conversations in the driveway, on the golf course, and conversations with our neighborhood. These driveway conversations that I have had with you have helped shape my view. I have thought about public service as a Christian and council member. I am reminded of the oath I took. "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I am duly qualified, according to the constitution of this state, to exercise the duties of the office to which I have been elected and that I will, to the best of my ability, discharge the duties thereof and preserve, protect and defend the constitution of the state and of the United States.

"As councilmember of the City of Mauldin, I will equally, fairly and impartially, to the best of my ability and skill, exercise the trust reposed in me and will use my best endeavor to preserve the peace and carry into effect, according to law, the purpose for which I have been elected. So help me God." This moment has caused me to step back and reflect. Each council member represents with individual personalities and we have a different

approach to serving. We can come together and learn from each other to make Mauldin progress. I may get laughed at for this, but I read this poem the other day and I want to read it to you.

The Cold Within by James Patrick Kinney

Six humans trapped by happenstance
In bleak and bitter cold.
Each one possessed a stick of wood
Or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs
The first man held his back
For of the faces round the fire
He noticed one was black.

The next man looking 'cross the way
Saw one not of his church
And could not bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes.
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from his sight.
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

The last man of this forlorn group
Did nought except for gain.
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

Their logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They did not die from the cold without
They died from the cold within.

Mayor Merritt read the resolution regarding diversity.

12. Adjournment- Mayor Merritt adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Miller
Municipal Clerk

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

MEETING DATE: July 20, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: 7a

TO: City Council

FROM: Business & Development Services Director, David C. Dyrhaug

SUBJECT: Extension of Moratorium for Small Box Discount Stores
*** 2nd Reading ***

BACKGROUND

In January, staff shared with the Planning Commission remarks from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance about the rapid growth of chain dollar stores, particularly the two dominant chains—Dollar General and Dollar Tree, which also owns Family Dollar. Because these dollar stores typically only offer a limited selection of processed foods and no fresh vegetables, fruits, or meats, the Mauldin City Council has expressed concern that they are opening stores at a density that might crowd out full-service grocery stores and thereby exacerbate the issue of food deserts. In response, the Mauldin City Council adopted a moratorium on new dollar store development on February 17, 2020.

At its January 28, 2020, meeting, the Planning Commission directed staff to further study this issue and to consider appropriate regulations. Since that time, the Planning Commission and staff have been working on drafting an ordinance with appropriate regulations for these types of stores. The Planning Commission and staff have recently completed a draft ordinance and will be holding a public hearing for this ordinance on June 23, 2020.

In the meantime, there has been concern about the possibility that the current moratorium could expire before the draft ordinance is adopted. The current moratorium expires on August 17, 2020. Right now the draft ordinance is on pace to be adopted by City Council at second reading on August 17, 2020. In case the draft ordinance needs to undergo any revisions, the City Attorney, Daniel Hughes, has suggested it may be practical to extend the current moratorium.

The attached ordinance has been prepared by Mr. Hughes and in effect extends the current moratorium for small box discount stores by 3 months.

ATTACHMENTS

Ordinance to Extend Moratorium by 3 months

ORDINANCE _____-2020

AN ORDINANCE TO EXTEND A MORATORIUM TO TEMPORARILY SUSPEND THE ACCEPTANCE AND ISSUANCE OF PERMITS AND BUSINESS LICENSES FOR SMALL BOX DISCOUNT STORES PENDING THE CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY ZONING ORDINANCE.

WHEREAS, on February 17, 2020, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 933-2020 which imposed a six month (6) moratorium that temporarily suspended the acceptance and/or issuance of any permits, business licenses, land development applications for new development of small box discount stores; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Mauldin Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 23, 2020 regarding a proposed ordinance to amend the City's zoning ordinance to establish standards and definitions for small box discount stores; and,

WHEREAS, to provide for an extension of time for study, analysis, public review and finalization of ordinances adopted in accordance herewith, the City desires to extend its temporary moratorium and suspension upon new development of small box discount stores; and,

WHEREAS, the City finds that an additional period of three (3) months from the date of expiration of the previously approved temporary moratorium is appropriate; and,

WHEREAS, the City deems it in the best interests of the citizens and residents of Mauldin to extend the moratorium for new development of small box discount stores; and,

WHEREAS, the moratorium shall now be in effect for a period of three (3) months from August 17, 2020, or until Council has taken final action on proposed text amendments and other ordinances associated with the regulation of discount stores, whichever first occurs.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ordained by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Mauldin that:

SECTION 1. The City Council hereby extends the moratorium adopted pursuant to Ordinance No. 933-2020 for three (3) months following the expiration of the original moratorium according to the same terms contained therein.

SECTION 2. The Council, by subsequent ordinance, may extend the temporary moratorium for a further time period upon appropriate findings.

This Ordinance shall be effective from the date of second and final reading.

Passed on First Reading: _____

Passed on Second Reading _____

CITY OF MAULDIN, SOUTH CAROLINA

BY: _____
Terry W. Merritt, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cindy Miller, Municipal Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

MEETING DATE: July 20, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: 8a

TO: City Council

FROM: Business & Development Services Director, David C. Dyrhaug

SUBJECT: Regulation of Small Box Variety Stores

BACKGROUND

Since January, the Planning Commission has been studying issues pertaining to the proliferation of small box variety stores including dollar stores. These stores typically only offer a limited selection of processed foods and no fresh vegetables, fruits, or meats. This practice has led to concern that these types of stores are growing at a rate that might crowd out full-service grocery stores and thereby exacerbate the issue of food deserts. On February 17, 2020, the Mauldin City Council adopted a moratorium on new discount stores.

ABOUT THE DRAFT ORDINANCE

The attached draft ordinance considers the input provided by the Planning Commission. This ordinance includes a preamble section containing several “whereas” statements to provide context and findings that are the basis for the ordinance. Please note that the preamble section has been slightly reworded by the City Attorney since the public hearing.

The ordinance defines a “small box variety store” similarly to other communities including Kansas City and New Orleans. The ordinance uses the term “small box variety store” over terms such as discount store or dollar store because it is more consistent with the definition provided. Although a typical square foot threshold of 15,000 is included in the definition, there is also a qualifying statement included which indicates that stores exceeding that threshold are not necessarily excluded from the definition. This ordinance further exempts small box stores that (1) contain a prescription pharmacy; (2) sell gasoline or diesel fuel; (3) primarily sell specialty food items (e.g., meat, seafood, cheese, or oils and vinegars); (4) dedicate at least 15% of shelf space to fresh or fresh frozen foods; or (5) dedicate less than 5% of shelf space to food sales.

The ordinance lists “small box variety stores” as a conditional use in the City’s commercial districts including CRD, C-1, and C-2. The main conditional standard that applies is a dispersal requirement that no small box variety store shall be located within one mile of any other small box variety store inside or outside the City limits of Mauldin.

PUBLIC HEARING

At its meeting on June 23, 2020, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing for this ordinance. At the public hearing, the following individuals provided comments.

- Mr. William Swent, of the Fox Rothschild Law Firm, representing its client Dollar General, spoke in **opposition** to the ordinance. Mr. Swent explained Dollar General's business model and highlighted how Dollar General is a positive resource for the community. He expressed concerns about the basis of the ordinance and asserted that the ordinance does not provide equal protection to his client.
- Mr. Scott Westberg, District Manager of Family Video, spoke in **opposition** to the ordinance. Mr. Westberg commented that Family Video will not be able to continue to operate and that they are fortunate that Dollar General is considering leasing their space and retaining their employees. Mr. Westberg also commented that Dollar General will make the property look great.
- Mr. Jason Kraeling, 234 Devin Drive, spoke in **favor** of the ordinance. Mr. Kraeling remarked that it is time for the City of Mauldin to examine what type of community it wants to be. Mr. Kraeling also commented that citizen access to dollar stores does not appear to be deficient in Mauldin.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission reviewed the attached ordinance at its meeting on June 23, 2020. By a unanimous vote, 6-0, the Planning Commission has forwarded this ordinance to the City Council with a recommendation of approval.

REQUEST

Consider first reading of the attached ordinance.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Ordinance
Map of 1-mile dispersal standard

ORDINANCE # _____

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY OF MAULDIN ZONING ORDINANCE BY ESTABLISHING SPECIAL STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS FOR SMALL BOX VARIETY STORES AND LIKE BUSINESSES AND TO ESTABLISH THE ZONING DISTRICTS FOR WHICH THEY CAN LOCATE.

WHEREAS, there has been a considerable increase in the number of small box variety stores nationwide in the last several years; and,

WHEREAS, small box variety stores typically open in food deserts, which in urban areas, a “far” distance from a grocery store or supermarket is one (1) mile; and,

WHEREAS, small box variety stores typically offer mostly inexpensive, energy-dense, low-nutritive foods and beverages rather than fresh, nutritious food found at grocery stores; and,

WHEREAS, as the number of small box variety stores increase so do the number of people who use a small box variety store for their grocery shopping thereby reducing people’s access to healthy food options; and,

WHEREAS, recent studies¹ show that small box variety stores can discourage grocery stores from opening, eliminate locally owned grocery stores, reduce access to fresh and affordable produce, and harm job growth; and,

WHEREAS, many small box variety stores do not include Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program essential items and therefore are not certified to accept WIC coupons; and,

WHEREAS, a number of small box variety stores are already in operation in and around the City of Mauldin; and,

¹ See the following attached hereto as Exhibit “A”:

www.ilsr.org/dollar-stores;

https://www.academia.edu/7660189/Disparities_and_access_to_healthy_food_in_the_United_States_A_review_of_food_deserts_literature;

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/aug/13/dollar-general-walmart-buhler-haven-kansas>

<https://ilsr.org/dollar-stores-target-cities-towns-one-fights-back/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/28/dollar-store-ripping-people-off-poverty-inequality>

<https://progressive.org/magazine/dollar-stores-prey-on-the-poor-sainato-191001/>

<https://civileats.com/2018/12/17/dollar-stores-are-taking-over-the-grocery-business-and-its-bad-news-for-public-health-and-local-economies/>

WHEREAS, some of the small box variety stores are currently in close proximity to one another; and,

WHEREAS, the regulation of small box variety stores will promote the efficient use of land and resources in the City of Mauldin and is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the City of Mauldin; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to properly published public notice, the Mauldin Planning Commission considered this matter at a public hearing on June 23, 2020.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Mauldin, South Carolina, in council assembled and by the authority thereof that the Mauldin Municipal Code be amended as follows:

Section 1 Amendment. Amend Section 3:3, Definitions, of Article 3, as follows (*language that is ~~struck through~~ is language proposed to be deleted, underlined language is language proposed to be added, language is not ~~struck through~~ or underlined is not to be changed, and *** represents sections of the Zoning Ordinance that have been skipped and remain unchanged*):

ARTICLE 3. – ZONING DISTRICTS, GENERAL STANDARDS, DEFINITIONS

Sec. 3:3 – Definitions

Fresh or Fresh Frozen Foods. Food for human consumption that is unprocessed, or otherwise in its raw state; food that was quickly frozen while still fresh. This includes unprocessed meat and seafood.

Small Box Variety Store. A retail store typically 15,000 square feet or less that sells at retail an assortment of physical goods, products, or merchandise directly to the consumer, including food or beverages for off-premise consumption, household products, personal grooming and health products, and other consumer goods. A store that exceeds 15,000 square feet is not necessarily excluded from this definition if it still coincides with the remaining characteristics described herein and the intent of associated regulations. Small box variety stores do not include small box stores that:

- (1) Contain a prescription pharmacy;
- (2) Sell gasoline or diesel fuel;
- (3) Primarily sell specialty food items (e.g. meat, seafood, cheese, or oils and vinegars);
- (4) Dedicate at least 15% of shelf space to fresh or fresh frozen foods; or

(5) Dedicate less than 5% of shelf space to food sales.

Section 2 Amendment. Amend Article 5, Zoning District Regulations, as follows (*language that is ~~struck through~~ is language proposed to be deleted, underlined language is language proposed to be added, language is not ~~struck through~~ or underlined is not to be changed, and *** represents sections of the Zoning Ordinance that have been skipped and remain unchanged*):

ARTICLE 5. – ZONING DISTRICT REGULATIONS

Sec. 5:6 – CRD, Central Redevelopment District

5:6.1 Uses Permitted

Retail sales, except small box variety stores

5:6.3 Conditional Uses

Small box variety store

Sec. 5:7 – C-1, Commercial District

5:7.1 Uses Permitted

Convenience store (without a carwash and with a maximum size of two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet, a minimum size of one thousand (1,000) square feet, and limited to one (1) fuel service area that can serve no more than four (4) vehicles at one time), except small box variety stores

5:7.3 Conditional Uses

Adult Care Center
Child Care Center
Multi-family dwellings (in accordance with provisions of Section 8:1 and
Section 10:13)
Small box variety store

Sec. 5:8 – C-2, Highway Commercial District

5:8.1 Uses Permitted

Convenience store (with or without a car wash and no size restriction),
except small box variety stores

5:8.3 Conditional Uses

Adult Care Center
Child Care Center
Multi-family dwellings (in accordance with provisions of Section 8:1 and
Section 10:13)
Small box variety store

Section 3 Amendment. Amend Article 10, Conditional Uses, by adding a new section 10:15, Small Box Variety Store, as follows (*language that is ~~struck through~~ is language proposed to be deleted, underlined language is language proposed to be added, language is not ~~struck through~~ or underlined is not to be changed, and *** represents sections of the Zoning Ordinance that have been skipped and remain unchanged*):

ARTICLE 10. – CONDITIONAL USES

Sec. 10:15 – Small Box Variety Store

10:15.1 Applicability and Purpose

A small box variety store may be allowed as a conditional use within the CRD, C-1, and C-2 districts and is subject to the standards contained herein.

The purpose of these standards is to limit over-concentration of small box variety stores and to allow for more diverse retail options and convenient access to fresh meats, fruits and vegetables.

10:15.2 Separation Requirements

No small box variety store shall be located within one (1) mile or 5,280 feet of any other small box variety store inside or outside the City limits of Mauldin. The required separation distance shall be measured in a straight line from the nearest point on the lot line of the property occupied by a small box variety store to the nearest point on the lot line of the subject property.

Section 4. This ordinance shall become effective upon and after its final passage.

Passed on First Reading: _____

Passed on Second Reading _____

CITY OF MAULDIN, SOUTH CAROLINA

BY: _____
Terry Merritt, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cindy Miller, Municipal Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney

EXHIBIT A

Dollar Store Impacts

Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar have big expansion plans. But are these chains good for communities? **Get the facts and learn what you can do.**

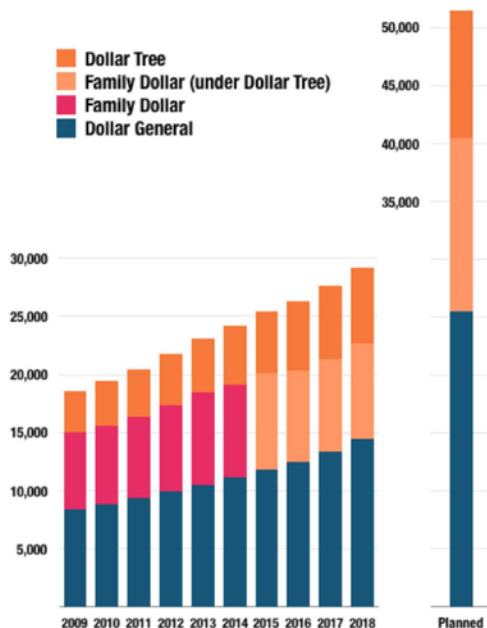
Dollar stores are multiplying rapidly. Since 2011, two dominant chains – Dollar General and Dollar Tree, which acquired Family Dollar in 2015 – have grown from about 20,000 locations to nearly 30,000 total. Both plan to expand even further. In recent annual reports, the two chains indicate they have identified locations for a combined total of 20,000 additional outlets.

While dollar stores sometimes fill a need in cash-strapped communities, growing evidence suggests these stores are not merely a byproduct of economic distress. They're a cause of it. In small towns and urban neighborhoods alike, dollar stores are triggering the closure of grocery stores, eliminating jobs, and further eroding the prospects of the vulnerable communities they target.

The dollar chains have thrived in part by taking advantage of lax land use policies. New dollar stores, which are generally smaller than 10,000 square feet, are often subject to little or no planning review or other permitting hurdles. But communities do have the authority to check their spread – and some are starting to use it.

Rapid Expansion of Dollar Stores

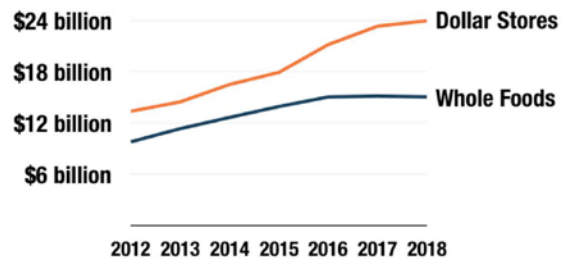
"Planned" stores are based on "identified locations" as reported by the major dollar store chains.



Source: Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar Annual Reports

For more information, see ILSR's research on dollar stores on our website, at www.ilsr.org/dollar-stores

Although most dollar stores sell no fresh food and only a limited selection of packaged foods, the two major dollar chains are now feeding more Americans than Whole Foods is.



Source: Chain Store Guide | Note: "Dollar Stores" combines data from Dollar General and Dollar Tree, which owns Family Dollar

Eliminating Grocery Stores

Dollar stores are taking a toll on grocery stores and, in many cases, reducing people's access to fresh food. In small towns, which are often served by a single locally owned supermarket, a dollar store's arrival typically cuts sales at the supermarket by about 30 percent.¹ In most cases, that's enough to put a local grocer out of business, leaving the community's commercial district without an anchor and negatively impacting other businesses.

In cities, dollar stores concentrate in areas that already have few or no grocery stores.² Our research suggests that they often target African American neighborhoods.³ Their strategy of saturating these neighborhoods with multiple outlets can make it nearly impossible for new grocers and other businesses to take root and grow.

Dollar stores are a poor substitute for grocery stores. A typical dollar store carries no fresh produce, only a limited selection of processed foods. And they aren't necessarily less expensive. Packaged in single-serving quantities, their food offerings have lower price points, but are often more expensive per ounce.⁴

"What the dollar stores are betting on in a large way is that we are going to have a permanent underclass in America."⁵

– Garrick Brown, retail analyst, Cushman & Wakefield

Fewer Jobs and Lower Wages

Dollar stores employ fewer people than the grocery stores they eliminate. Dollar General outlets have a nine-person staff on average, while small independent grocery stores employ an average of 14 people.⁶

Dollar store jobs are not only fewer in number but also low-wage and low quality. Employees are monitored intensely and subject to a “web of contradictory work policies.”⁷ Store managers earn a salary of about \$40,000 but must work long hours without overtime. Court records reveal that dollar chains frequently face class-action lawsuits for violating fair labor laws, typically paying millions to settle such suits out of court.⁸ These companies also lean heavily on taxpayers to subsidize their employees’ healthcare.⁹

Left-Behind Places

Dollar stores worsen inequality by extracting wealth from vulnerable communities, leaving them to fall further behind.¹⁰ As dollar stores multiply, they’re contributing to a growing disparity between communities that have access to fresh food and healthy local economies, and those who do not.

“The jobs, tax dollars, and even any profits generated from a local grocery store go back to community,” David Procter, Director of the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University, explains. “Profits from Dollar General are going back to their corporate office, not to the community.”¹¹

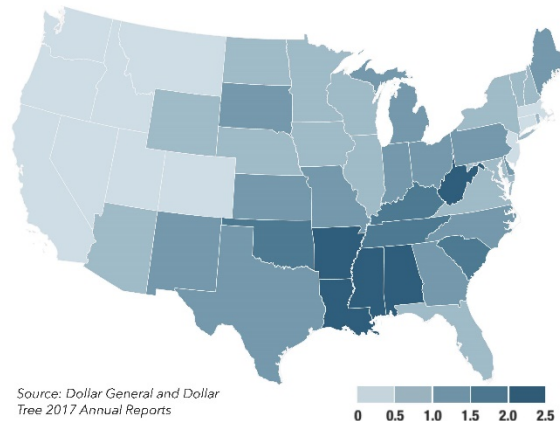
“When dollar stores are able to proliferate – in poor, black, and brown communities – it makes it more difficult for grocers to come and survive.”¹²

– Vanessa Hall-Harper, City Councilor, Tulsa, Okla.



Dollar Stores by State

Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar locations, per 10,000 Residents



What Your Community Can Do About Dollar Stores

- **Set Limits on Chains** – Cities and towns have authority to adopt “formula business” ordinances that place limits on the ability of chains to open new locations.¹³ These ordinances apply to dollar store chains and they’ve been enacted in dozens of cities and towns.
- **Adopt a Dispersal Policy for Dollar Stores** – Cities can adopt dollar store dispersal restrictions to reduce the growing concentration of these stores.¹⁴ Leaders in Tulsa, Okla., amended the city’s zoning code to require new dollar stores be no less than one mile from existing stores in North Tulsa, one of the city’s hardest-hit food deserts.
- **Strengthen Planning Review Polices** – Cities and towns can elect to designate particular retail uses, including “small box discount stores,” as conditional uses. This means that these stores must undergo a review and meet certain conditions before they are permitted to open. These conditions can include economic impact criteria.¹⁵
- **Expand Financing for Locally Owned Grocery Stores** – One of the biggest barriers entrepreneurs face in starting new grocery stores is securing a business loan.¹⁶ Programs such as the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, which supported more than 80 grocery store projects, can incubate new stores in underserved areas.¹⁷ Funding for new financing programs could come from eliminating tax incentives for chain stores, dollar stores included.¹⁸
- **Make Your Voice Heard** – Everyday people are organizing campaigns to raise awareness about the threats dollar stores pose to their communities. As Tulsa developed its ordinance, hundreds of residents attended meetings and submitted formal comments; some organized protests of new dollar store development. Their actions led not only to local policy wins but also focused national attention on dollar store impacts and inspired other communities to act.

ENDNOTES 1. Sales drops of roughly 30% have been reported in numerous accounts of small-town grocery stores after a Dollar General opens. See, e.g., “Where even Walmart won’t go: how Dollar General took over rural America,” C. McGreal, *The Guardian*, Aug. 13, 2018 2. “Dollar Days: How Dollar Stores Are Growing in a Weak Economy,” A.T. Natunewicz, *Colliers International*; “Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature,” R.E. Walker, C.R. Keane, & J.G. Burke, *Health & Place*, 2011, 16(5): 876-884 3. “Dollar Stores Are Targeting Struggling Urban Neighborhoods and Small Towns. One Community is Showing How to Fight Back,” M. Donahue & S. Mitchell, *ILSR*, Dec. 2018 4. “Dollar stores are thriving – but are they ripping off poor people?” J. Eskenazi, *The Guardian*, June 28, 2018 5. “Dollar General Hits a Gold Mine in Rural America,” M. Frazier, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Oct. 11, 2017 6. Dollar General. 2018 Annual Report; U.S. Economic Census. 7. “Employees or Suspects? Surveillance and Scrutiny of Low-Wage Service Workers in U.S. Dollar Stores,” T.L. Vargas, *J. of Labor & Society*, 2017 8. “Join The Booming Dollar Store Economy! Low Pay, Long Hours, May Work While Injured,” D. Jamieson, *The Huffington Post*, Aug. 29, 2013 9. “New Data Show How Big Chains Free Ride on Taxpayers at the Expense of Responsible Small Businesses,” S. Mitchell, *ILSR*, 2013 10. “What Dollar Store Locations Reveal About America,” R. Florida, *Citylab*, Feb. 2012; “The Growing Inequality Between America’s Superstar Cities, and the Rest,” R. Florida, *Citylab*, Nov. 2018 11. See supra note 3. 12. *Ibid.* 13. See “Formula Business Restrictions,” *ILSR* 14. See “Dollar Store Dispersal Restrictions,” *ILSR* 15. See “Economic Impact Review,” *ILSR* 16. See “Access to Capital for Local Businesses,” *ILSR* 17. “Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative,” S. Mitchell, *ILSR*, 2010 18. See “Banning Public Subsidies for Big Retailers,” *ILSR* | PHOTO CREDIT Councilor V. Hall-Harper (top right) – Vice News, April 7, 2018.

For more information, see ILSR’s research on dollar stores on our website, at www.ilsr.org/dollar-stores

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Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, studies are focusing on the role the local food environment plays in residents' ability to purchase affordable, healthy and nutritious foods. In a food desert, an area devoid of a supermarket, access to healthy food is limited. We conducted a systematic review of studies that focused on food access and food desert research in the United States. The 31 studies identified utilized 9 measures to assess food access. Results from these studies can be summarized primarily into four major statements. Findings from other countries offer insight into ways, in which future research, policy development and program implementation in the U.S. may continue to be explored.

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1. Background

Environmental conditions have been extensively explored as contributing factors in promoting health disparities (Lee, 2002; Sexton, 2000). It is widely accepted that racial/ethnic minority neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by increased rates of morbidity, mortality and adverse health outcomes (Cubbin et al., 2001; Deaton and Lubotsky, 2003). These disparities are believed to be associated with factors, including residential segregation, poverty and neighborhood deprivation (Gee and Payne-Sturges, 2004), which can lead to adverse health outcomes. Previous studies focused on the ill-effects of neighborhood deprivation have reported the tendency of poor and minority neighborhoods to have an increased exposure to unhealthy advertisements for tobacco and alcohol (Morello-Frosch et al., 2002), fewer pharmacies with fewer medications (Morrison et al., 2000), and fewer supermarkets which offer a larger variety of affordable and healthy foods compared to smaller convenience stores (Morland et al., 2002b). The latter is of importance due to the emergence of “food deserts” in many low-income and minority neighborhoods that result from the absence of a supermarket.

The phrase “food desert” was first used in the early 1990s in Scotland by a resident of a public housing sector scheme (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002). Since that time, the phrase has been used

differently by different researchers. For example, in a study by Hendrickson et al. (2006) food deserts were defined as “urban areas with 10 or fewer stores and no stores with more than 20 employees” (2006: 372). Cummins and Macintyre (2002) define food deserts as “poor urban areas, where residents cannot buy affordable, healthy food” (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002). The latter definition focuses on the type and quality of foods rather than the number, type and size of food stores available to residents. Beyond these descriptions, there is a lack of consensus on the definition of food deserts (Hendrickson et al., 2006), and what measures are required for identifying food deserts, thereby contributing to the debate about their actual existence (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002; Cummins, 2003; Reisig and Hobbiss, 2000; Shaw, 2006).

In the U.S., several theories to how food deserts formed have been postulated. One theory has been associated with both the development and closure of stores (Curtis and McClellan, 1995; Guy et al., 2004). It is believed that the growth of large chain supermarkets on the outskirts of inner-cities in more affluent areas offer consumers a better quality, variety and price for food options. Additionally, these venues tend to have longer business hours and better parking options that are attractive to consumers (Alwitt and Donley, 1997; Guy et al., 2004). The expansion of these supermarkets have forced the smaller, independent, neighborhood grocery stores to close, thereby creating areas where affordable, varied food is accessible to those who have access to a car, or those able to pay public transportation costs (Guy et al., 2004). This theory has led one independent retailer to define a food desert as ‘an area where high competition from the multiples [large chain supermarkets] has created a void’ (Furey et al., 2001).

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Another theory of how food deserts formed in the inner-cities pertain to changes in demographics in larger U.S. cities between 1970 and 1988. It is speculated that during this period, economic segregation became more prominent with more affluent households emigrating from inner-cities to suburban areas (Bianchi et al., 1982; Nyden et al., 1998; Wienk et al., 1979). This shift caused the median income in the inner-cities to decrease and forced nearly one-half of the supermarkets in the three largest U.S. cities to close (Alwitt and Donley, 1997; Diesenhouse, 1993; Miller, 1994).

Other factors that make the establishment of businesses in inner-cities less desirable are inaccurate perceptions of these areas, declining demand for low-skilled workers, low-wage competition from international markets and zoning laws (Gittel and Thompson, 1999). For instance, in urban areas, it is difficult for large supermarkets to find land that is appropriate for the size of the supermarket, due to fragmentation of property that results from the ease of selling smaller pieces of land (Alwitt and Donley, 1997). It is plausible that urban food deserts would have a competitive advantage as sites for a supermarket, due to its prime location near the city center, ability to address an unmet demand and access to a large labor force. However, financial gain is often an underlying factor that tends to override these characteristics and deter retailers from establishing in the urban areas (Gittel and Thompson, 1999).

A consequence of poor supermarket access is that residents have increased exposure to energy-dense food (“empty calorie” food) readily available at convenience stores and fast-food restaurants (Drewnowski and Specter, 2004). It is documented that a diet filled with processed foods, frequently containing high contents of fat, sugar and sodium, often leading to poorer health outcomes compared to a diet high in complex carbohydrates and fiber (Block et al., 2004; Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2006; Lewis et al., 2005; Swinburn et al., 2004). For those who are low-income, maintaining a healthy diet can be difficult to achieve due to various factors (Chung and Myers, 1999; Freedman, 1991; Hendrickson et al., 2006). First, the lack of financial resources present a barrier to healthy eating, due to the increased cost associated with healthy eating. Second, many urban areas lack a supermarket, thereby, limiting access to healthy foods for residents. For residents without access to a personal vehicle for transport to food stores outside the immediate neighborhood, residing in a food desert can be even more deleterious (Kirkup et al., 2004; Lake and Townshend, 2006).

People tend to make food choices based on the food outlets that are available in their immediate neighborhood (Furey et al., 2001). This can pose problems since many low-income, urban areas have a higher density of fast-food restaurants and corner stores that offer prepared foods compared to higher income areas (Hendrickson et al., 2006). Increasingly, environmental factors including where people live have been considered when studying food access (Rose and Richards, 2004). The impact of focusing on the neighborhood food environment is two-fold. First, increased attention is brought to the local food environment given the important role these environments play in providing food for residents within their immediate vicinities. Second, the uneven distribution of food stores can be observed and disadvantaged neighborhoods that lack supermarket access, or food deserts, can be noted.

The goal of this paper is to explore the current state of research on food deserts in the United States and to identify areas in need of future research. To date, there is a relatively limited amount of research on food deserts conducted in the U.S. One explanation for this finding is that food security, a household measure of hunger, is assessed in the U.S. annually, and forms the basis of numerous research studies. However, research on food deserts and food-related policy in the United States has become an increasing

priority for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, implemented by the USDA, provides legislation for Federal agriculture programs (The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, The United States Department of Agriculture, June 18, 2008). Enacted into law in June 2008, this bill will remain in effect until 2013. In addition to international provisions outlined in the bill, the importance of addressing domestic food distribution and nutrition is highlighted. Section 7527 of the bill (2008: 389) outlines the responsibilities of the Secretary as they pertain to addressing food deserts in the U.S. These activities include researching the prevalence and causes of food deserts; effects of food deserts on populations; recommendations for reducing and eliminating food deserts; community development initiatives; incentives for food stores to establish in food deserts; and partnerships to address food deserts (The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, The United States Department of Agriculture, June 18, 2008).

Restricting this review to studies conducted in the U.S. will parallel the USDA's efforts in researching food deserts in the U.S., and will bring attention to research looking at neighborhood-level access to food in a specific geographic region that is poorly studied and poorly understood. This paper will identify measures that have traditionally been used to assess food access in the U.S. and summarize the articles into major statements, or major research findings. Gaps in the literature will be identified. Lastly, the breadth of knowledge that exists within other countries will be discussed to offer insight into work that has been done pertaining to food deserts and food access within an international context.

2. Methods

The articles included in this review were identified from January 2008 to January 2010 by two mechanisms: keyword searches in the PubMed, Agricola, Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Geography, Public Affairs, and Sociology databases, and by reviewing the references of the articles identified from these databases. Combinations of the keywords “food desert” and “food access” were used to identify relevant articles. Only articles written in English were included in the review. No constraints were made for the year of article publication. The rationale for not limiting the year of article publication is due to the relatively recent nature of the topic. Abstracts were then reviewed to ensure that articles that did not meet certain criteria were excluded from the review. Abstracts excluded were: (1) editorials, (2) non-empirical papers, including review articles and book reviews, (3) articles with outcomes that did not focus on food deserts, and (4) letters to the editor. Fifty-two abstracts were identified in the initial review. After reading the articles, it was determined that only 31 would be included in the review after 5 were excluded based on the first exclusion criterion, 10 for the second criterion, 5 for the third criterion and 1 excluded for the fourth criterion. The articles were read with particular attention to the measures used in the studies. These measures were noted and designated as categories.

3. Results

The 31 selected articles represent a variety of work that has been done in the U.S. related to food access. Nine measures have been used to assess food access. For example, articles that used business directories/lists include yellow pages, business addresses on food stores, food store data including consumer spending, geographic location and store openings and closings. The food use

inventory included in the review was used to assess food used within the home (regardless if eaten at home or somewhere else). Food store assessments were objective assessments of the food environment. Studies that used GIS technology used geocoding to map resources or density maps to make comparisons between different locations. Interviews used in the studies were either in-depth or one-on-one. Food frequency assessments were grouped with questionnaires. These measures are presented in Table 1. The most frequently used measures to assess food access are GIS technology (9 articles), food store assessments (8 articles) and surveys (7 articles). The findings from the 31 included articles can be divided into 11 categories representing the variables that have been explored in food desert research (Table 2). For example, articles that focused on the racial/ethnic differences in the neighborhood food environment were grouped under the category “Race/Ethnicity”. Similarly, articles that compared food stores between urban areas versus rural and/or suburban were grouped under the category “Location”.

4. Major findings in the literature

Results of the review of the literature produced 31 empirical studies that focus on food deserts in the U.S. It is worthwhile to

Table 1
Measures used to explore food access by author(s).

Measures used to assess food access Author	
Business lists/directories and census data	Alwitt and Donley, 1997 Chung and Myers, 1999 Cotterill and Franklin, 1995 Moore and Diez-Roux, 2006 Powell et al., 2007
Focus groups	Hendrickson et al., 2006 Smith and Morton, 2009
Food store assessments	Chung and Myers, 1999 Freedman, 2009 Freedman and Bell, 2009 Glanz et al., 2007 Hendrickson et al., 2006 Lewis et al., 2005 Morland and Filomena, 2007 Morris et al., 1990 Morris et al., 1992 Zenk et al., 2006
Food use inventory	Rose and Richards, 2004
GIS technology and census data	Block et al., 2004 Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2006 Giang et al., 2008 Kaufman, 1999 Morland et al., 2002a Morland et al., 2002b Morland and Filomena, 2007 Raja et al., 2008 Schafft et al., 2009 Zenk et al., 2005
Interviews	Freedman, 2009 Rose and Richards, 2004 Richards and Smith, 2007
Inventory for measuring perceptions of food access	Freedman and Bell, 2009
Questionnaires	Garasky et al., 2004 Morland et al., 2002a
Surveys	Block and Kouba, 2006 Chung and Myers, 1999 Hendrickson et al., 2006 Inagami et al., 2006 Kaufman et al., 1997 Lopez, 2007 Rose and Richards, 2004

note that most of the research in this area has focused on exploring racial/ethnic and income disparities within food deserts. This can partly be attributed to increased attention focusing on reducing and eliminating health disparities, including racial/ethnic and income disparities. Four major statements emerged from summarizing the research findings of the included articles. These statements are: (1) access to supermarkets (10 articles); (2) racial/ethnic disparities in food deserts (11 articles); (3) income/socioeconomic status in food deserts (11 articles); and (4) differences in chain versus non-chain stores (14 articles). The fourth statement encompasses factors associated with cost (6 articles), availability of food items (4 articles) and store type (4 articles).

4.1. Access to supermarkets

Increasingly, studies are focusing on the availability of healthy and nutritious foods within communities across the country, and suggest that factors within the built environment play a critical role in a person's diet (Morland et al., 2002b; Rose and Richards, 2004). A widely cited example of the lack of access to supermarkets is in Philadelphia, PA (Giang et al., 2008). Results from the University of Connecticut's Food Marketing Policy Center study showed that Philadelphia had the second lowest number of supermarkets per capita among major cities in the U.S. during the 1990s (Cotterill and Franklin, 1995).

To illustrate this further, consider the number of supermarkets on the national level. It is believed that the lowest income neighborhoods had nearly 30% less supermarkets than the highest income neighborhoods (Weinberg, 1995). Compare this to the food environment in Philadelphia, where the highest income neighborhoods had 156% more supermarkets than the lowest income neighborhoods (Weinberg, 1995). Access-related concerns are even more compounded by the lack of transportation. Low-income residents may have difficulty affording transportation costs to the supermarket located outside of their immediate vicinity, thereby limiting access to food options (Rose and Richards, 2004; Weinberg, 1995). Transportation is not the only barrier to accessing healthy foods. Rose and Richards (2004) suggest that access to food goes beyond the food environment and incorporates the built environment and individual characteristics. For example, unsafe neighborhoods for walking, and the lack of time due to work schedules, being a single parent, or the lack of time required to prepare meals, can result in difficulty accessing supermarkets (Rose and Richards, 2004).

A related finding in the aforementioned University of Connecticut study was that residents in many of the neighborhoods that lack access to supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods of Philadelphia had greater prevalence of health challenges with diet as a risk factor. These challenges include diabetes, heart disease and cancer (Cotterill and Franklin, 1995). Studies suggest that disparities in supermarket access exist with racial/ethnic minority communities and low-income communities being disproportionately affected (Chung and Myers, 1999; Hendrickson et al., 2006; Powell et al., 2007; Zenk et al., 2005). While many of these studies address access-related concerns, they focus on the racial/ethnic and income disparities that exist within food deserts. Findings from these studies will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.2. Racial/ethnic disparities in food deserts

Previous studies found that predominantly Black neighborhoods have fewer supermarkets compared to predominantly White neighborhoods (Metro Chicago Information Center, 2008; Morland et al., 2002b). In an examination of the associations

Table 2
Summary of publications included in the review by food desert category.

Categories	Article results
Access to stores	<p>Alwitt and Donley, 1997—poor residents travel a greater distance to access the same resources as non-poor residents.</p> <p>Chung and Myers, 1999—poor residents have less access to chain stores.</p> <p>Cotterill and Franklin, 1995—more low-income residents lack transportation which limits access to food outlets.</p> <p>Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2006—African Americans have the lowest access to grocery stores and greatest access to fast-food outlets. A decrease in grocery store access is associated with an increase in obesity.</p> <p>Giang et al., 2008—access to food is unevenly distributed in Philadelphia. In areas where access is limited the most, residents suffer greater health challenges with diet as a risk factor.</p> <p>Inagami et al., 2006—residents who shopped in more disadvantaged neighborhoods had higher BMIs than those who did not shop in a more disadvantaged neighborhood, suggesting that neighborhood SES of the grocery store is a proxy for quality of the grocery store.</p> <p>Kaufman, 1999—more than 70% of the total low-income population in the catchment area had accessibility challenges.</p> <p>Morland et al., 2002a—fewer supermarkets were observed for neighborhoods, where both black study participants and white study participants resided. However, there were five times as many supermarkets in the areas, where white participants resided compared to blacks.</p> <p>Raja et al., 2008—there are no food deserts in Erie County, New York</p> <p>Rose and Richards, 2004—easy access to supermarkets was associated with increased household fruit intake.</p>
Income/SES	<p>Alwitt and Donley, 1997—poor areas have fewer and smaller food outlets than non-poor areas.</p> <p>Chung and Myers, 1999—residents of poor neighborhoods pay more for shopping locally</p> <p>Cotterill and Franklin, 1995—low-income areas have 30% fewer supermarkets compared to higher income areas.</p> <p>Giang et al., 2008—low-income residents have limited access to supermarkets.</p> <p>Glanz et al., 2007—non-poor neighborhoods were more likely to have healthier food options than poor neighborhoods</p> <p>Kaufman et al., 1997—there is little evidence that food prices are higher in poor areas compared to non-poor areas.</p> <p>Lewis et al., 2005—poorer neighborhoods have fewer healthy food options compared to non-poor neighborhoods</p> <p>Moore and Diez-Roux, 2006—low-income neighborhoods had four times as many grocery stores (non-chain stores) and half as many supermarkets (chain stores) compared to more affluent neighborhoods.</p> <p>Morland et al., 2002b—there were three times as many supermarkets in non-poor neighborhoods compared to poor neighborhoods. Non-poor neighborhoods were less likely to have smaller grocery stores (non-chain), convenience stores (without a gas station), and specialty stores compared to poor neighborhoods.</p> <p>Powell et al., 2007—poor neighborhoods have fewer supermarkets, only 75%, of that in middle-income neighborhoods</p> <p>Zenk et al., 2005—supermarket access was similar among the least impoverished neighborhoods regardless of race/ethnicity.</p>
Race/ethnicity	<p>Block et al., 2004—predominantly black neighborhoods have six times more fast-food restaurants than predominantly white neighborhoods.</p> <p>Block and Kouba, 2006—the predominantly black neighborhood had fewer supermarkets and more grocery stores. Store prices were comparable to supermarket prices, but of poorer quality.</p> <p>Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group, 2006—African Americans travel the greatest distance to any type of grocery store.</p> <p>Lewis et al., 2005—predominantly African American neighborhoods have fewer healthy food options compared to areas with a lower percentage of African American residents.</p> <p>Moore and Diez-Roux, 2006—predominantly minority and racially mixed neighborhoods had more than twice as many grocery stores (non-chain stores) and half the number of supermarkets (chain stores) than predominantly white neighborhoods.</p> <p>Morland et al., 2002a—the presence of one supermarket was associated with a 32% increase in fruit and vegetable consumption among blacks and 11% increase in fruit and vegetable consumption among whites.</p> <p>Morland et al., 2002b—supermarkets were four times more likely to be found in predominantly white neighborhoods compared to predominantly black neighborhoods.</p> <p>Morland and Filomena, 2007—predominantly white areas had greater supermarket access compared to racially mixed areas. Predominantly black areas did not have a supermarket. A lower proportion of stores in predominantly black areas carried fresh produce compared to predominantly white and racially mixed areas.</p> <p>Powell et al., 2007—predominantly African American neighborhoods have 52% of the supermarkets that are available in predominantly white neighborhoods. Hispanic neighborhoods have only 32% of the supermarkets that are available in non-Hispanic neighborhoods.</p> <p>Raja et al., 2008—there is a lack of supermarkets in neighborhoods of color compared to white neighborhoods</p> <p>Zenk et al., 2005—compared to the most impoverished white neighborhoods, African American neighborhoods were 1.1 mile farther from the nearest supermarket.</p>
Food store density	<p>Block et al., 2004—neighborhoods with 80% black residents have 2.4 fast-food restaurants/mile² compared to 1.5 fast-food restaurants/mile² in neighborhoods with only 20% black residents.</p> <p>Lewis et al., 2005—the comparison group for the study (more affluent, smaller percentage of African American residents) contained 50% more full-service restaurants than the target area.</p> <p>Morland et al., 2002b—with the exception of bars and taverns, all food outlets were more common in racially mixed and predominantly white neighborhoods than predominantly black neighborhoods. Full-service restaurants were two times more common in white neighborhoods. Carryout food outlets serving specialty food items are 9–11 times more common in racially mixed and predominantly white areas.</p>
Cost	<p>Chung and Myers, 1999—prices at chain stores are lower than smaller convenience stores.</p> <p>Glanz et al., 2007—the prices for most healthy options (low fat, low calorie) were not significantly different from the comparable regular item. The greatest cost difference found in the cost of lean ground beef, low-fat hot dogs, baked chips and 100% fruit juice compared to the regular items ($p < 0.01$).</p> <p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—food prices were higher in both rural and urban food deserts compared to non-food deserts</p> <p>Kaufman et al., 1997—food items in supermarkets offer greater variety and quality at a lower cost.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1990—the average cost of one week's worth of thrifty food plan groceries was 36% higher than the maximum weekly food stamp allotment of \$75 for a family of four.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1992—the average thrifty food plan cost for small/medium stores was \$102 compared to \$81 in supermarkets.</p>
Location	<p>Chung and Myers, 1999—more chain stores are located outside inner-cities, where there is low poverty.</p> <p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—food prices in the urban food desert were more expensive than the market basket price.</p> <p>Kaufman, 1997—supermarkets in inner-cities have somewhat higher prices than those in suburban areas.</p> <p>Kaufman, 1999—poor residents of rural areas depend on smaller convenience stores than residents in metropolitan cities.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1990—rural poor depend on limited, more expensive food outlets.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1992—in 1988, the number of supermarkets per county in rural America versus urban America was 3.8 and 2.9, respectively.</p> <p>Powell et al., 2007—food outlets are more common in urban areas compared to suburban, rural and farm areas.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Categories	Article results
Store type	<p>Chung and Myers, 1999—for specific food items, chain stores offer prices that are 10–40% less than non-chain stores.</p> <p>Glanz et al., 2007—convenience stores were found to have lower food price compared to grocery stores.</p> <p>Moore and Diez-Roux, 2006—poorer areas were less likely to have fruit and vegetable markets, bakeries, specialty stores and natural food stores compared to affluent areas. These areas were more likely than affluent areas to have liquor stores.</p> <p>Raja et al., 2008—smaller grocery stores (non-chain) are more prevalent in neighborhoods of color compared to white neighborhoods.</p>
Availability	<p>Glanz et al., 2007—grocery stores were found to have greater availability of healthier food options compared to convenience stores.</p> <p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—foods within rural and urban food deserts are more limited in type and in number compared to non-food deserts.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1990—many rural food outlets contained poorly stocked shelves and lacked healthy and nutritious foods.</p> <p>Morris et al., 1992—small/medium stores carried a small amount of fresh foods.</p>
Perception	<p>Garasky et al., 2004—rural clients were more likely than urban or suburban to perceive their food environment as having an inadequate number of supermarkets (50% compared to 22% and 13%, respectively). Suburban clients' perceived local food as being more affordable compared to urban and rural clients. Transportation concerns were the greatest among suburban and rural clients.</p> <p>Freedman, 2009—participants did not perceive convenience stores and non-chain stores as “real” food stores.</p> <p>Freedman and Bell, 2009—participants' perceptions of access to healthy food was supported by objective food store assessments.</p> <p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—residents identified lack of affordable healthy food options within their communities and food insecurity as concerns.</p> <p>Richards and Smith, 2007—participants perceived environmental (rules and regulations established at the homeless shelter), parental, and personal factors as influencing food access and food choice.</p> <p>Smith and Morton, 2009—perceptions of factors influencing food choice and food access among rural residents include household, social and cultural and environmental factors.</p>
Quality of available foods	<p>Glanz et al., 2007—grocery stores were found to have greater quality of healthier food options compared to convenience stores.</p> <p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—foods within the urban and rural food desert were of fair or poorer quality compared to a non-food desert.</p> <p>Zenk et al., 2006—the quality of fresh produce was significantly lower in predominantly African American, low socioeconomic position communities compared to racially mixed, middle socioeconomic position communities.</p>
Impact	<p>Hendrickson et al., 2006—the lack of affordable, quality foods diminishes the ability to access healthy foods needed to maintain a healthy diet.</p> <p>Lewis et al., 2005—the neighborhood food environment in the low-income neighborhoods in the study provides challenges to healthy eating for residents. Restaurants in the less affluent target area promoted unhealthy food options to residents.</p> <p>Lopez, 2007—zip code level variables, including median household income and the presence of a supermarket were associated with obesity risk.</p> <p>Schafft et al., 2009—there is a positive association between increased rates of child overweight and percentage of children in the school district residing in a food desert.</p>

between the availability of food stores in the US and race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, [Powell et al. \(2007\)](#) found that the availability of chain supermarkets in Black neighborhoods was only 52% that of their White counterpart ([Powell et al., 2007](#)). These differences still existed after controlling for relevant covariates, including neighborhood income.

In a similar study using geographic information system (GIS) to measure spatial accessibility of chain supermarkets with respect to neighborhood racial composition and poverty in Detroit, Michigan, [Zenk et al., 2005](#) found that the most impoverished neighborhoods in which African Americans resided were 1.1 mile farther from the closest supermarket compared to the most impoverished White neighborhoods ([Zenk et al., 2005](#)). Additional findings show that 28% of the residents in the most impoverished Black neighborhoods did not own a car in 2000, that these neighborhoods had 2.7 fewer supermarkets within a three-mile radius compared to the most impoverished White neighborhoods, and that among the most impoverished neighborhoods in Detroit, 76% of these areas had a high proportion of African Americans ([Zenk et al., 2005](#)). Understanding the social and racial history has helped frame the present-day issue of racial segregation and consumer purchasing power. Looking at the history in Detroit, Michigan, [Zenk et al., 2005](#) surprisingly found that among the least impoverished neighborhoods studied, all but one of the predominantly Black neighborhoods that had access to a supermarket equivalent to their White counterparts, was located in the inner city. The interpretation of this finding is two-fold. First, this suggests that supermarkets will stay invested in a neighborhood as long as the residents have the purchasing power to make their commitment to the area profitable. Second, supermarkets that remain in these urban areas are remnants from when these areas

were predominantly White, again implying that it is profitable for these retailers to remain in the area ([Zenk et al., 2005](#)).

4.3. Socioeconomic status in food deserts

The majority of smaller stores located in urban areas are in low-income areas ([Alwitt and Donley, 1997](#); [Hendrickson et al., 2006](#)). The consequence is that the issue of poverty plays out in economic barriers in accessing food in low-income areas. [Hendrickson et al. \(2006\)](#) found that food prices are higher and food quality is poorer, often inedible, in areas where poverty is the highest, compared to more affluent areas. Furthermore, results from the same study show that there is a smaller quantity and variety offered at stores in impoverished areas. These findings are consistent with other studies that show that residents living in areas that do not have a supermarket pay more for their food ([Chung and Myers, 1999](#); [Freedman, 1991](#); [Hendrickson et al., 2006](#); [Kaufman et al., 1997](#); U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Hunger, 1990). In a similar report by the New York's Consumer Affairs Department in 1991, results from price surveys in 60 stores and 140 interviews with consumers and retailers showed that the poor residing in urban areas paid more for groceries, and received poorer quality foods ([Chung and Myers, 1999](#); [Freedman, 1991](#)).

One explanation for the higher costs of food in urban areas has to do with increased crime in these areas. Theft within stores in urban areas, where the cost is already high tends to drive up the cost of food items even more. The unfortunate result is that a vicious cycle may form, where the high cost of food makes stealing an attractive option, thereby forcing store owners to

increase the price of food for consumers that already have a difficult time paying for food (Hendrickson et al., 2006).

Additionally, the issue of lack of transportation is echoed throughout the literature citing that many low-income households do not have access to a car and cannot afford the costs associated with getting to a supermarket outside of their immediate neighborhood. (Alwitt and Donley, 1997; Guy et al., 2004; Hendrickson et al., 2006; Kaufman, 1999; “U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Hunger”, 1990). As a result of the lack of transportation, low-income households are less likely to travel the distance to a supermarket outside of their neighborhood and will purchase food items from the stores that are nearby, thereby sacrificing cost and quality for convenience.

4.4. Differences in chain versus non-chain stores

A report by the Economic Research Services (ERS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that urban supermarket prices are higher than the suburban ones (Kaufman et al., 1997; Powell et al., 2007). The fewer supermarkets and the prevalence of smaller grocery stores that are located in urban areas may account for the higher food prices. The ERS report also explained that smaller grocery stores tend to stock leading brand items and smaller package sizes, which can drive the cost of food prices up. Larger supermarkets are able to stock both leading brand and generic items, both offered in larger and smaller packages. The variety, in brands and package size, that larger supermarkets are able to offer helps offset the higher priced items, thereby keeping the cost lower (Chung and Myers, 1999; Kaufman, 1999).

In an examination of food items in approximately 55 stores within the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan areas, Chung and Myers (1999) found that only 22% ($n=256$) of chain supermarkets were located in urban areas. However, nearly one-half of the non-chain stores were located there. Results also showed that non-chain stores were more likely to be located in poor areas, whereas chain supermarkets were more likely to be located in more affluent areas (Chung and Myers, 1999). To identify differences between two markets, chain versus non-chain, Chung and Myers (1999) compared market basket prices. These prices reflect the cost of a fixed list of items and provide information regarding inflation within the larger economy as well as within a specific market.

The biggest disparity in price between chain and non-chain venues was in the price of dry goods, including flour and oatmeal. Consumers who shop at chain supermarkets paid between 10% and 40% less for these items (Chung and Myers, 1999). In terms of market basket prices, there was a \$16.62 price gap between non-chains and chains, \$1.18 price gap between urban and suburban retailers, and a \$5.15 price gap between poor and non-poor areas (Chung and Myers, 1999). This means that consumers who shopped at non-chain stores, in urban and poorer areas paid more per unit of measurement than chain, suburban and non-poor areas.

5. Discussion

This review focused on food desert literature in the US. The specific focus on food deserts opposed to including articles pertaining to areas that have supermarkets, or food oases, was to highlight the issues surrounding poor access to healthy and nutritious foods characteristic of food deserts. Furthermore, the focus allowed for better understanding of the challenges in obtaining healthy and affordable foods faced by residents of these areas. This review highlights measures traditionally used in food desert research in the U.S. and identified areas, where additional work is needed. To gain insight and knowledge into potential

ways, in which gaps in the literature can be addressed in the U.S., the existing literature related to food access was sought from other countries. While studies conducted in other countries may not be translatable entirely to the U.S. context, pertinent findings can be gleaned and expounded upon.

5.1. Increased access to food

One of these areas, where additional research is needed, is exploring the impact of residing in a food desert. Specifically, there is debate about whether living in a food desert is associated with unhealthy eating and food buying practices. It is unknown to what extent additional factors, including personal preferences are better indicators for healthy eating than the actual presence or absence of a supermarket. However, one noteworthy before/after study, the Seacroft intervention study offers insight into how increased access to a supermarket influences factors, including food consumption and perception (Wrigley et al., 2003, 2004). Using food diaries and household questionnaires, Wrigley et al. (2003) explored a host of factors including attitudes towards healthy eating, food store choice and travel options to stores pre-intervention (before the opening of a new store). Surveys and focus group discussions assessed changes in usage of primary food store and changes in travel behavior post intervention (nearly two years after the new store opened). Results showed that nearly half of the respondents switched their main food store location to the new store. Additionally, distance travelled to the primary food store decreased from 2.25 km (approximately 1.4 mile) before the switch to the new store to 0.98 km (approximately 0.60 mile) after the switch to the new store (Wrigley et al., 2003). Access-related reasons including convenience and proximity were expressed by the majority of respondents as being instrumental in the switch to the new store (Wrigley et al., 2004). Modest improvements in diet and nutrition were noted. Only a small percentage of respondents utilized savings associated with increased access to purchase fresh food.

What can be gleaned from this study are unintentional consequences. For instance, with the opening of a larger store, residents had a larger variety of foods, including prepared foods to choose from and reported feeling “tempted” to overspend small food budgets by purchasing large quantities of needed items or purchasing “luxury” items (Wrigley et al., 2004). This finding has major public health implications for improving diet, nutrition and for obesity prevention. Some respondents in this intervention study did not switch to the new store. Reasons for not switching included cheaper prices and familiarity with the current store. These reasons are underscore the importance for considering issues of poverty and financial constraints when food shopping. In other words, increasing access to healthy and nutritious foods does not necessarily increase consumption, especially for low-income households. Furthermore, a sense of loyalty to owners of neighborhood convenience stores is a real concern for residents. One of the theories to how food deserts formed in many urban cities have to do with the opening of a supermarket that introduced competition to small business owners and forced many to close their doors. The presence of a supermarket can have detrimental effects on these smaller stores and their ties to and roles within the community.

5.2. Policy implications

Another area for future research is exploring the impact of policy on food access. The few studies that mention policy-related concerns in the U.S. discuss reducing the racial/ethnic and related income disparities that exist in accessing food, and working to

attract supermarkets to economically disadvantaged neighborhoods (Chung and Myers, 1999; Lang and Caraher, 1998; Zenk et al., 2005). This underscores the need for policymakers and stakeholders to begin determining food-related policies and practices. These policies can have a major impact in addressing the limited access to affordable healthy and nutritious foods for low-income residents of urban areas that lack access to these foods.

An example of how cities are addressing the lack of access to supermarkets are found in Pittsburgh, Boston and New York, where many communities have relied on local leadership and policy development to alleviate these disparities (Pothukuchi, 2000). These cities have developed public/private partnerships, agreements between government and private sector organizations, to build and maintain infrastructure and necessary community facilities (Nayga and Weinberg, 1999; Widdus et al., 2001). Specifically, partnerships between local government and supermarket leaders have been developed to bring supermarkets into underserved areas. Ultimately, these partnerships seek to increase supermarket access within neighborhoods that have been overlooked by food retailers.

Findings from Western Australia identified similar partnerships between government and non-government sectors that were established with the goal of developing strategies aimed at increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. In an iterative process that involved discussing priority areas for policy and program interventions and the required infrastructure support, activities were identified. These policies included developing and supporting nutrition policies to increase fruit and vegetable consumption within the schools, restricting food advertising targeted to children, support of a fruit and vegetable mass media campaign and support the efforts of local organizations to develop and implement policies geared towards increasing fruit and vegetable access and improving overall nutrition (Pollard et al., 2008).

Recommendations from this working group included developing policies and strategies that support and complement each other. For example, a social marketing campaign was established to support a school canteen program introduced to recognize and reward schools operating healthy canteens. This initiative was a partnership between the Western Australia School Canteen Association, the Heart Foundation of Australia and the Department of Health. As of 2009, 21.4% of the schools in Western Australia that operated school canteens committed to the program. Recent findings show that schools have increased promotion and sales of healthy food and drinks as identified under the Government Healthy Food and Drink Policy, which mirrors the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents (Western Australia School Canteen Association, Inc., 2010). The intersectoral collaborations established in Western Australia to improve diet and nutrition quality among children in schools and child care have been successful, in part, due to the collaborations established, willingness and readiness for organizational change, resources available and incentives for improving food service standards (Pollard et al., 2001).

5.3. An Ecological approach

While many studies focus on the presence or absence of supermarkets, few examine the dynamic interaction between other food venues (restaurants, corner stores, gas stations, etc.) as places, where residents purchase food. This is another area where additional research is needed in the U.S. This is important because these venues, in addition to local grocery stores, comprise the food environment and offer food items for residents, despite

the nutritional value of these foods. The importance of identifying these types of food stores within a neighborhood is two-fold. First, identifying these stores offers a complete picture of the entire food environment within a neighborhood. Second, researchers will have a better understanding of the food options that are available to residents. While it is important to identify places that offer healthy foods within a neighborhood, it is equally important to identify the places within a neighborhood that can offset these locations. Research is needed to better understand additional factors involved in food buying practices among the residents of food deserts. These factors are important for developing and implementing individual and community-level interventions that increase access to healthy foods, influence food buying practices, and facilitate healthy eating.

In the U.K., Reisig and Hobbiss (2000) identified key stakeholders involved in food poverty initiatives. Semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to identify causes of food poverty and ways to combat food poverty in Leeds (Reisig and Hobbiss, 2000). Causes included personal factors such as lack of education, poor eating habits, poverty, income inequalities, lack of transportation and limited availability of foods offered at the local convenience store (Reisig and Hobbiss, 2000). Program initiatives aimed at improving food access on the individual-level included a health education and health promotion component for residents to encourage them to eat healthier foods. A secondary goal was then to empower residents to demand store owners stock healthier food options that are not available in the store. A community-level initiative included providing better transportation options for residents to get to supermarkets as part of the retailers responsibility, or within the context of a larger transportation program sponsored by the city (Reisig and Hobbiss, 2000). The lack of transportation is a real concern in accessing food, especially among low-income residents who do not own a car or cannot afford costs associated with taking public transportation. Strategies taken in other countries to address transportation-related issues in food access will be helpful when thinking about ways to bridge the gap between food access and healthy eating.

5.4. Future areas of research in the U.S.

This review identified aspects of food desert research that have been thoroughly studied in the U.S. Further research on this topic is warranted. Research studies utilizing a mixed-methods approach to assess both objective and subjective measures would be beneficial. We recommend an innovative method such as concept mapping, a participatory research method that allows hypotheses to be generated and integrates the results in a way that multivariate analyses can be used to make comparisons between groups. Comparisons can be made between participants with differential supermarket access such as those who reside in a food desert compared to a food oasis. Additional comparisons can be made between participants from food secure versus food secure households, and even those who own a personal car or have access to transportation compared to those who lack transportation options. These analyses will provide data for understanding factors involved with food buying practices and healthy eating. While the studies included in this review improve our understanding of the measures and major findings of food access research in the practices. These data will provide an understanding of the complexity of food access and the food environment, while providing a basis for program planning and policy development aimed at addressing access to healthy and affordable foods.

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Where even Walmart won't go: how Dollar General took over rural America

As the chain opens stores at the rate of three a day across the US, often in the heart of 'food deserts', some see Dollar General as an admission that a town is failing

Chris McGreal in *Haven, Kansas*

Mon 13 Aug 2018 06.00 EDT

When Dollar General came to Haven, Kansas, it arrived making demands. The fastest-growing retailer in America wanted the taxpayers of the small, struggling Kansas town to pick up part of the tab for building one of its squat, barebones stores that more often resemble a warehouse than a neighbourhood shop.

Dollar General thought Haven's council should give the company a \$72,000 break on its utility bills, equivalent to the cost of running the town's library and swimming pool for a year, on the promise of jobs and tax revenues. The council blanched but ended up offering half of that amount to bring the low-price outlet to a town that already had a grocery store.

“Dollar General are a force. It’s hard to stop a train,” said Mike Alferts, Haven’s then mayor who backed the move. “Obviously there’s been collateral damage. We didn’t expect it. I’m torn but, net-net, I still think it was a good move to bring them in.”

The Dollar General opened in Haven at the end of February 2015. Three years later, the company applied to build a similar store in the neighbouring town of Buhler, a 20-minute drive along a ramrod straight road north through sprawling Kansas farmland.

Buhler’s mayor, Daniel Friesen, watched events unfold in Haven and came to see Dollar General not so much as an opportunity as a diagnosis.

Friesen understood why dying towns with no shops beyond the convenience store at the gas station welcomed Dollar General out of desperation for anything at all, like Burton, just up the road, where the last food shop closed 20 years ago. But Buhler had a high street with grocery and hardware stores, a busy cafe and a clothes shop. It had life.

As Friesen saw it, Dollar General was not only a threat to all that but amounted to admission his town was failing. “It was about retaining the soul of the community. It was about, what kind of town do we want?” he said.



Buhler, Kansas. Photograph: Kacy Meinecke/The Guardian

Dollar General is opening stores at the rate of three a day across the US. It moves into places not even Walmart will go, targeting rural towns and damaged inner-city neighbourhoods with basic goods at basic prices – a strategy described by a former chief executive of the chain as “we went where they ain’t”.

The chain now has more outlets across the country than McDonald’s has restaurants, and its profits have surged past some of the grand old names of American retail. The company estimates that three-quarters of the population lives within five miles of one of its stores, which stock everything from groceries and household cleaners to clothes and tools.

Not everything is to be had for a dollar, but rarely is anything priced above \$10. But there is a cost. Dollar General’s aggressive pricing drives locally owned grocery stores out of business, replacing shelves stocked with fresh fruit, vegetables and meat with the kinds of processed foods underpinning the country’s obesity and diabetes crisis.

Dollar Generals are frequently found at the heart of “food deserts”, defined by the department of agriculture as a rural community where one-third of residents live more than 10 miles from a grocery store selling fresh produce.

That was not what bothered Friesen. He saw construction of a Dollar General more as a statement about the health of his town as a whole than any one of its 1,400 residents.

If Dollar General were to be believed, there was a sound economic benefit for Buhler from one of its stores. This time the company didn’t ask the council for money. Instead it sold the promise of prosperity, claiming it would boost the town’s coffers with increased sales tax revenues by encouraging residents to shop locally instead of traveling to distant supermarkets for what they cannot find at the grocery store.

Buhler’s council called two public meetings in March to gauge the mood of residents and invited Doug Nech, owner of neighbouring Haven’s only grocery store, the Foodliner, to speak. Dollar General had driven his shop out of business days earlier.

“We lasted three years and three days after Dollar General opened,” he said. “Sales dropped and just kept dropping. We averaged 225 customers a day before and immediately dropped to about 175. A year ago we were down to 125 a day. Basically we lost 35 to 40% of our sales. I lost a thousand dollars a day in sales in three years.”

The arrival of Dollar General cost the Foodliner hundreds of thousands of dollars over that time. The foremost challenge was price. The chain has the power of scale in negotiating with foodmakers. Nech discovered the store had done a deal with Campbell’s Soup to make a 14.5oz can of chicken noodle soup for \$1.50, the price he was paying wholesale for an 11oz can of the same soup.

“Dollar General have buying power. There’s not a lot of competition at the wholesale level so it’s rather difficult and the smaller you are, you pay a higher price for goods whether it’s in delivery costs or volume buying or any number of things,” he said.

Nech calls Dollar General “a cancer” but reserves his anger for Haven’s council for subsidising a hugely profitable corporation to compete against him. He asked the council to cut his shop’s utility bill to \$100 a month until the Foodliner received a matching benefit. It refused, saying that Dollar General had taken advantage of a programme to bring in new business while Nech’s was long established.

“It’s the principle that they gave them money to come to town. I’m kind of conservative. I don’t believe in asking government for anything and I damn sure don’t believe in asking the government for anything now,” he said.



Daniel Friesen in Buhler. Photograph: Kacy Meinecke/The Guardian

Friesen said Nech's account "scared a lot of people" in Buhler who feared they could lose their own grocery store. The council also took on board what happened in a town an hour north-east of Buhler when a small Walmart moved in, put two grocery stores out of business and then shut down, leaving the town with nothing. "Dollar General, Walmart, any large corporation, doesn't have the best interests of our community at heart here at all," said the mayor.

Buhler's council was not reassured by Dollar General's attempts to say that it should not even discuss the store and its potential impact at the planning meetings. The company submitted its application through the developer assigned to build the outlet. The developer sought a change of use for the land from agricultural to retail without specifying what kind of shop it planned to construct. Friesen said Dollar General did not want its name brought up during the council's deliberations.

"Dollar General were saying this wasn't an application for a Dollar General, it was an application for a retail store. It could be anything. It could be a clothing store. They didn't want us to consider some significant issues such as local economic impact," he said.

The council asked an expert on the impact of cut-price stores from Kansas State University to address the public meeting. David Procter laid out the ways independently owned family businesses generally benefit small communities. "On the average there are about 15 employees in these small grocery stores and Dollar General stores might have five employees. Profits from small-town grocery stores are generally going to stay in that town whereas profits made by Dollar General, a significant percentage of them anyway, are going to the corporate office in Tennessee," he said.

Procter said many local grocery stores also serve as community gathering places, some of them with delis and seating areas where people have lunch, and offer services such as home delivery for the elderly or infirm. Dollar General, which tends to build spartan shops on the edge of towns to catch passing traffic on main roads, does none of these.

"Grocery stores give more back to the community. They are much more likely to support local sporting teams, local faith-based organisations. Dollar General corporate policy sets a pretty strict limit on how much community giving they provide," said Procter.

Some at the public meeting spoke up in favour of the chain. They liked its long opening hours - most of Buhler's shops are closed on a Sunday - and cheaper prices. But the sentiment was

overwhelmingly against the store and an informal online poll of the town's residents came out two to one in opposition. Some people didn't want an ugly building as the gateway to the town.

A retirement community next to the planned site objected. In the end, people in Buhler decided that although the grocery and hardware stores might cost a little more they were prepared to pay a premium to preserve their community. Buhler has a large brown and yellow sign on the main road into town. It features a cross with an open book suggestive of a Bible. On one page is written "traditional values" and on the other "progressive ideas".

"There were some who said this is not very progressive to deny a new retail development in the community," said Friesen. "But there was agreement in the city council that the more progressive thing is to not do what every small community in Kansas seems like it's doing, just begging for a national retail chain to come in."



Burton, Kansas, where the last food shop closed 20 years ago.
Photograph: Kacy Meinecke/The Guardian

Days after Nech was driven out of business in Haven, Buhler's council voted unanimously to reject Dollar General. The company's developer was not pleased. "I wasn't terribly impressed. They stormed out. They were pretty hot about it," said Friesen.

In Haven, the former mayor Mike Alfes conceded that the promised financial advantage of Dollar General has largely been lost with the closure of the Foodliner. It is now a fitness centre, with the old grocery store sign still hanging outside. Sales tax revenue for the town rose by more than \$60,000 between the years before and after the Dollar General opened. But the Foodliner alone was collecting around \$75,000 a year in sales tax which is now gone.

On top of that, Nech paid an annual electricity bill of \$37,000, which the city made money on, plus there was the break the council gave Dollar General on its utility bills. It remains to be seen how much business will transfer from the defunct grocery store to the Dollar General but the end result is the Haven's main street is finding it even more of a struggle to survive with the diminished flow of people to pick up groceries.

For all that, while Alfes feels sympathy for Nech, he said the Dollar General is the future. "The Model-T put horses out of business. It's hard to protect existing businesses," he said. "I would still vote for Dollar General. If one state didn't accept the Model-T it wouldn't have changed the outcome. I think Buhler voted their sentiment. The question is, in five years will they have a Dollar General or something similar?"

The owner of Buhler's grocery store, JC Keith, is acutely aware that seeing off Dollar General is not the only challenge. With decent paying jobs increasingly scarce in rural Kansas, a good part of the population of Buhler and Haven work in large towns with ready access to a range of rivals from Walmart to farmers markets. It's easier for residents of what have become bedroom communities to stop at a major store on the way home from work and only use the local grocery shop for last-minute supplies such as milk.

"A majority of people in Buhler that work, work somewhere else," said Keith, who is also a long-distance truck driver. "Chances are they drive right by some chain store on their way home."

The threat from Dollar General prompted Keith to evaluate his way of doing business. He was already in the process of building a larger shop just down the road from the existing one, but now it will incorporate hot foods such as chicken and a salad bar. It will also open later.

For all his support for building the Dollar General in Haven, Alferts rarely shops there and regrets the loss of the Foodliner. "It makes a lot of difference to me. I shopped a lot at Foodliner," he said. "Now I have a hard time shopping at Dollar General. I like to cook. I like food items and spices you can't get at Dollar General. I'm less loyal to any one store these days."

Haven's residents now have to travel out of town to find fresh food, although many do that for work in any case. The more immediate impact has been on those who are less mobile, like the elderly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calculates that about a quarter of the population is unable to buy healthy food nearby. Dollar Generals are frequently to be found in those areas and some studies have made a direct link between the rise of dollar stores and unhealthy eating. But it is not that straightforward. Megan Rinehart worked at Nech's Foodliner for six years.

"This isn't a rich town. A lot of our customers bought not healthy stuff. They leaned towards what was fast and cheap. We had a pretty good selection of fresh produce. It was a matter of if they could afford it," she said.

An agriculture department study found that many of those on low income and reliant on food stamps were more likely to decide where to shop based on price than where the nearest store is. They drive past a grocery store to a Dollar General.

Alferts thinks Buhler will struggle to stave off the cut-price chain store because it is the future. Doug Nech is not so sure. He owned the Foodliner alongside a job travelling a dozen states as a church pew cushion salesman. Nech has seen the impact across the midwest of the store that put his own out of business. He views Dollar General as a juggernaut but that does not mean he thinks it's invincible.

"Dollar General is building just as fast as it can. Nebraska. The Dakotas. You see it," he said. "But somewhere down the line, as these small towns dry up, business for Dollar General is going to dry up just like it does for a grocery store. If there's nobody new coming to town and your older population is dying off and they're not getting replaced very quickly, who are they going to sell to?"

America faces an epic choice ...

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Report: Dollar Stores Are Targeting Struggling Urban Neighborhoods and Small Towns. One Community Is Showing How to Fight Back.

BY MARIE DONAHUE AND STACY MITCHELL | DATE: 6 DEC 2018 | [f](#) [t](#) [r](#) [e](#)

It's not easy to buy groceries if you live on the north side of Tulsa, Okla. This predominantly African American part of the city sprawls for miles and yet does not have a single, full-service grocery store.

For many of North Tulsa's residents this means their best option for buying groceries close to home (and really, their only option) is a dollar store. There are dozens of those. Dollar General, together with Family Dollar and Dollar Tree, which are owned by the same company, have more than 50 locations in Tulsa. Many are on the city's north side. Alongside aisles lined with clothing and household goods, these small stores offer a narrow selection of processed foods, such as canned peaches and cereal, cookies and frozen waffles.

There are no fresh vegetables, fruits, or meats in most dollar stores. And yet, as limited as their offerings are, dollar stores are now feeding more Americans than Whole Foods is, and they're multiplying rapidly. Since 2011, the number of dollar stores nationwide has climbed from about 20,000 to nearly 30,000. There are now more dollar stores than Walmart and McDonalds locations combined.

Although dollar stores sometimes fill a need in places that lack basic retail services, there's growing evidence that these stores are not merely a byproduct of economic distress. They're a cause of it. In small towns and urban neighborhoods alike, dollar stores are leading full-service grocery stores to close. And their strategy of saturating communities with multiple outlets is making it impossible for new grocers and

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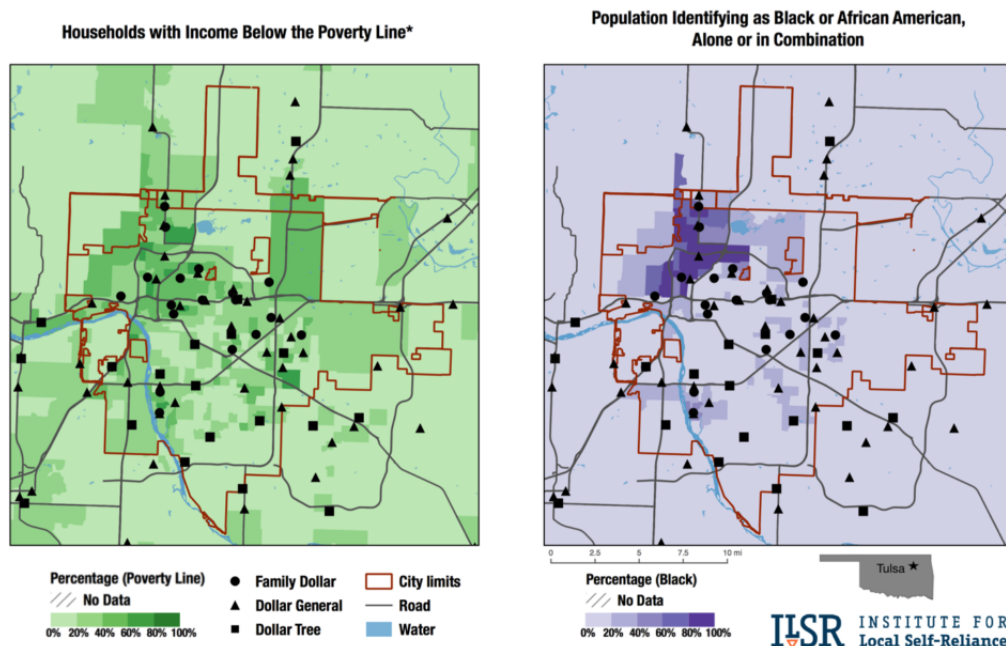
“I don’t think it’s an accident they proliferate in low socio-economic and African American communities,” says Vanessa Hall-Harper, who grew up in North Tulsa and in 2016 won a seat on the City Council to represent the district that encompasses the area. She campaigned on a platform of public health and food security. “That proliferation makes it more difficult for the full-service, healthy stores to set up shop, and operate successfully.”

As our maps of Tulsa show, dollar stores have largely side-stepped the city’s more affluent, white neighborhoods, instead concentrating in Census tracts with both a greater percentage of households living in poverty and more African American residents. Indeed, the presence of dollar stores appears to correlate with both income and race.

RETAIL

The Impact of Dollar Stores and How Communities Ca...

Dollar Stores and Demographics — Tulsa, Oklahoma



*2018 Poverty Threshold to \$25,100 for a family of four. Data: US Census, 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Block Group Estimates; Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar store locators. Institute for Local Self-Reliance (2019)

One reason for this link might be that dollar stores see an easier revenue stream in places that lack competing grocery stores. In the case of Family Dollar, for example, “Food deserts’ are its sweet spot,” notes Ann Natunewicz, an analyst at Colliers International. The absence of grocery stores is, in turn, a direct result of a history of racial discrimination by banks that have been less likely to lend to African American entrepreneurs and by supermarket chains that have tended to bypass black neighborhoods.

For residents of North Tulsa, the consequences of this economic marginalization have been severe. “There has been a documented 14-year life expectancy gap between North Tulsa and South Tulsa,” points out Hall-Harper. This startling disparity, she says, speaks to “the situation and environment, and how these systemic issues work.”



“I don’t think it’s an accident they proliferate in low socio-economic and African American communities,” says Tulsa City Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper. “That proliferation makes it more difficult for the full-service, healthy stores to set up shop, and operate successfully.”

A deep desire to change these systems and improve the health of people in her district drove Hall-Harper’s decision to run for Council.

Last April, after more than a year of rallying community members, marshaling legal research, and steadily chipping away at the opposition, Hall-Harper finally convinced the City Council **to enact a measure** that limits dollar stores on Tulsa’s north side and encourages the development of full-service grocery stores.

This is one of the first ordinances in the country to specifically target dollar stores, and its passage is being felt both locally and nationally. It’s marked a new era of political inclusion and grassroots power for the city’s African American residents. It’s also focused national attention on the growth of dollar stores and inspired other cities and towns to take steps to check their spread.

The timing for such local action could not be more urgent. In their latest annual reports, Dollar General and Dollar Tree say they have identified thousands of new locations for dollar stores. The two chains are planning to expand their combined empires to more 50,000 outlets.

An Invasive Species in America’s Left-Behind Places

“Essentially what the dollar stores are betting on in a large way is that we are going to have a permanent underclass in America,” Garrick Brown, a researcher with the commercial real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield, **told Bloomberg** last year.

Alongside urban black neighborhoods, another place the dollar chains think they will find enduring poverty is rural America. Small towns have been **battered by corporate consolidation**. Mergers have triggered plant closures. Agribusiness giants have slashed farmers’ incomes. As a result, rural communities have experienced little in the way of new business and job growth during the current economic recovery, **new data show**.

This follows two decades in which Walmart’s super-charged growth left small-town retail in shambles. By building massive, oversized supercenters in larger towns, Walmart found it could attract customers from a wide radius. Smaller towns in the vicinity often suffered the brunt of its impact as their Main Street retailers weakened and, in many cases, closed.

Today the dollar chains are capitalizing on these conditions, much like an invasive species advancing on a compromised ecosystem.



Local grocers that survived Walmart are now falling to Dollar General. “This has become the number one challenge of grocery stores,” says David Procter, an expert on community development and director of the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University.

Until this year, the small town of Moville, Iowa, had managed to defy the odds. The nearest Walmart is nearly 20 miles away and residents are passionate about supporting their community. When the owners of the town’s only grocery store, Country Foods, decided not to rebuild after a devastating fire in 2008, residents quickly organized. They raised funds for a new building and enticed Chet Davis, who owns a grocery store in Kingsley, about 12 miles up the road, to open another location. For a time, Chet’s Foods did a good business from its crisp new building along the state highway that runs through town.

Then, in 2016, Dollar General opened. Sales at Chet’s Foods fell by 30 percent. Davis, a veteran grocer, tried to adjust. He cut staff hours, changed his product mix, and negotiated a rent reduction from the community development group that owns the building. But it wasn’t enough. Even though residents were still buying most of their groceries from Chet’s, the drop in sales was enough to push the store into the red. Chet’s closed this year.

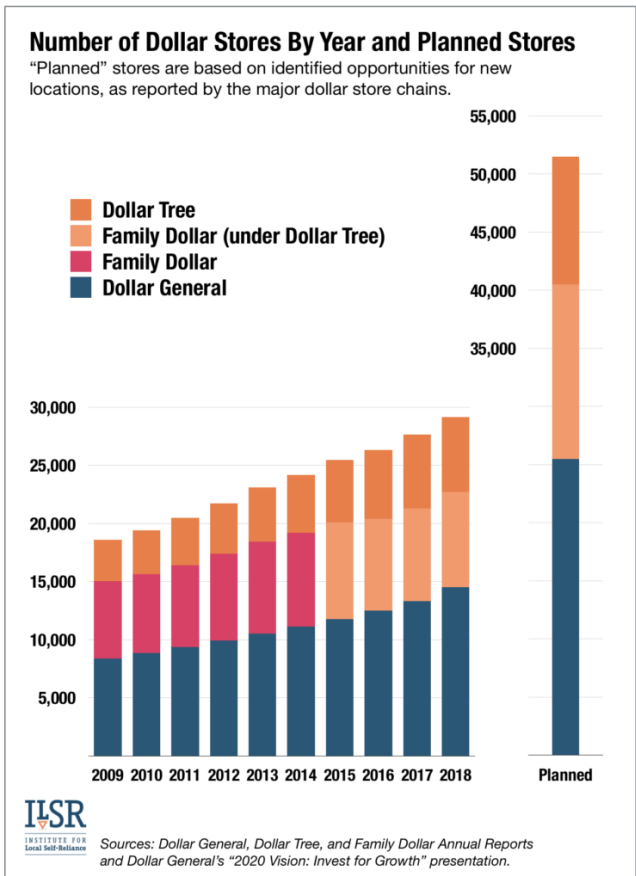
Six hours south, in the town of Haven, Kan., the family-owned Haven Foodliner also shuttered this year. “We lasted three years and three days after Dollar General opened,” owner Doug Nech told *The Guardian*. “Sales dropped and just kept dropping.”

The stories of Chet’s Foods and the Haven Foodliner are not anomalies. Reports from local grocers in numerous communities suggest that it’s typical for sales to drop by about 30 percent after a Dollar General opens. Thin margins in the grocery business mean that such a disruption is generally enough to force a local grocery store to close, although it may take months or even years before the owner finally gives in.

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As a consequence, local grocery stores, which have anchored small town economies for generations, are fast becoming as rare in rural areas as they are in North Tulsa.

When a town loses its grocery store, the rest of the local economy suffers. “The problem is that if the grocery store closes, this impacts the town in a big way,” Procter explains. “Our research shows grocers



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The Impact of Dollar Stores and How Communities Ca...

One immediate effect is a decline in employment. Dollar chains rely on a lean labor model. Dollar General and Dollar Tree stores have a staff of eight or nine people on average, according to their annual reports. Small independent grocery stores employ an average of 14 people, according to federal data.

Local shoppers lose nearby access to fresh food and they may also end up paying more for groceries. Dollar stores package many of their products in smaller quantities than items sold at traditional grocery stores. This cuts sticker prices, but often results in a higher costs per ounce.

There are broader economic impacts too.

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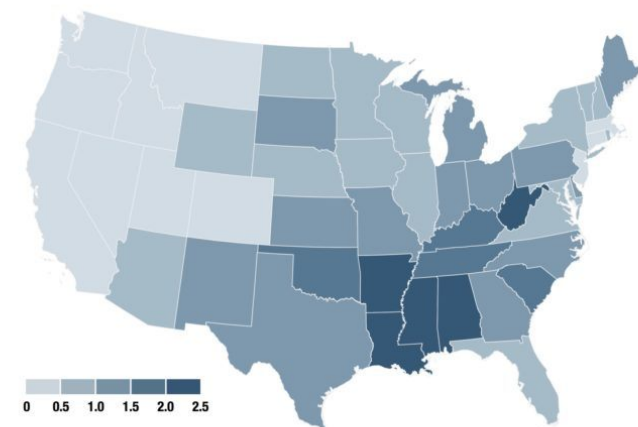
**"The economy is continuing to create more of our core customer,"
Dollar General chief executive Todd Vasos told investors last year.**

"Rural grocers provide all kinds of value: economic value, nutritional value, social value, and more," he adds. In many cases, this includes delivering groceries, a critical service in rural areas, where the population tends to be older and not served by public transit.

This cascade of losses is a bitter outcome for communities that, in many cases, welcomed the arrival of a dollar store. "For many communities, it's the first new commercial investment in many years," says Chris Merritt of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs.

Number of Dollar Stores per 10,000 Residents by State

Number of stores include Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar locations



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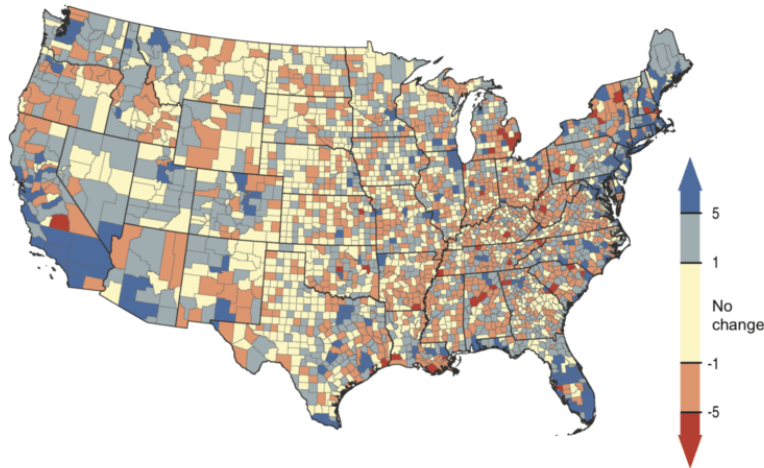
Source: Dollar General and Dollar Tree 2017 Annual Reports
© Institute for Local Self-Reliance | Marie Donahue (2018)

The parallel between these rural towns and urban neighborhoods like North Tulsa suggests that America's real divide is not so much rural versus urban. Rather, it's between the few large and mostly coastal cities that are prospering in an economy increasingly dominated by a few corporate giants and the many other cities and regions that are being left behind.

"The economy is continuing to create more of our core customer," Dollar General chief executive Todd Vasos told investors last year.



Changes in number of total grocery stores across the United States, by county, 2005-15



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from Nielsen TDLinX.

The number of grocery stores has declined in 969 counties, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (This map is from the USDA's 2017 study, "Independent Grocery Stores in the Changing Landscape of the U.S. Food Retail Industry.")

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As corporate consolidation erodes the economic foundation of many towns and neighborhoods, these communities are increasingly vulnerable to the dollar chains. The sector itself is highly concentrated. Dollar Tree is the product of a long **history of mergers**, including, most recently, its acquisition of Family Dollar in 2015. Even though that deal left just two companies in control of most of the small-store discount market, the Federal Trade Commission approved it. (The FTC **stipulated** only that Dollar Tree divest about 330 stores, but that requirement ultimately failed to produce a new competitor: Dollar Tree sold the stores to a private equity firm, which within two years, **sold them to Dollar General**.)

Fortunately, some have started connecting all of these dots and are beginning to see dollar stores as both a symptom of larger economic trends and a cause of additional economic despair. With this knowledge, these communities are identifying strategies to control the growth of dollar stores and restore a more balanced local economy.

Tulsa's Dollar Store Ordinance

One way to understand the high density of dollar stores in her district, Hall-Harper says, is to **remember what happened in North Tulsa a century ago**. The neighborhood once boasted one of the nation's most successful African American business districts, nicknamed "Black Wall Street." But over the course of a few days in 1921, a white mob tore through the commercial district, destroying more than 1,000 buildings and leaving 300 people dead.

The long-term effects of this are still being felt today. The neighborhood has relatively few local businesses and has struggled with a lack of political power to control dollar stores and other predatory companies.

Today, though, these dynamics are starting to shift, as residents organize and show how policy change that rebuilds a healthy food system and local business community can underpin the broader goals of social and economic justice.

After taking office, Hall-Harper opened two fronts in her campaign to address the lack of healthy food and proliferation of dollar stores in North Tulsa. First, she started researching policy tools, such as **"formula" business restrictions**, that could block new dollar stores and open opportunities for full-service grocery



stores instead. In the spring of 2017, she called for a short-term moratorium on new building permits for dollar stores. Pressing the pause button, she explained, would give the city time to craft a permanent policy.

But the city's legal department, Hall-Harper says, was slow in doing the research and preparing language for the moratorium. In the meantime, a developer filed plans for yet another Dollar General in the neighborhood, this one just down the block from an existing Family Dollar. "I felt [the city was] procrastinating, so the developer could get a building permit," she says.

That led Hall-Harper to open a second front in her campaign: she rallied residents to **protest** the new Dollar General and pressure the mayor and City Council to act. "To my knowledge, this was probably one of the first times a city councilor from Tulsa was out actively organizing and coordinating protests of an incoming business," says Hall-Harper. This inside-outside strategy paid off.



Hall-Harper joins Dollar General protest. Photo Credit: *Vice News*, 2018.

In late August, just a few days before Labor Day, the City Council finally took up Hall-Harper's proposed dollar store moratorium. Residents of North Tulsa filled the chambers and one by one spoke in favor of the measure — a show of support that Hall-Harper says made all the difference. The moratorium passed by a 5-to-4 vote. It suspended the permitting of new "small-box discount stores" for a period of six months in Hall-Harper's district.

Three months later, Hall-Harper proposed a permanent change to the city's zoning code. She introduced a **"dispersal" ordinance** that would restrict the development of dollar stores in North Tulsa. Intended to foster "greater diversity in retail options and convenient access to fresh meats, fruits and vegetables," the measure prohibits a dollar store from opening within one mile of an existing dollar store in a designated "overlay" district. It also prioritizes full-service grocery stores by cutting in half the number of parking spaces they are required to have.

While other cities have adopted **more aggressive limits** on chain retailers, Hall-Harper's measure was one of the first to specifically target dollar stores. And in Tulsa, it was a reach. The city has long favored a permissive approach to development, even going so far as to use its powers of eminent domain to seize land for developers over the objections of residents.

"I was told, 'That is illegal, we can't do that.' But fortunately, I had done my research," says Hall-Harper. "Communities have the authority, and in my opinion the responsibility, to put these policies in place."

The Tulsa Metro Area Planning Commission opposed the ordinance, voting 7-3 to recommend that the City Council reject it. The city's daily newspaper, the *Tulsa World*, likewise **editorialized against it**, writing that the measure would "put government-enforced restrictions on where north Tulsans can do business and get jobs." The paper added: "We prefer incentives to encourage development to restraints to prevent it."

"We kept pushing," says Hall-Harper of the neighborhood's campaign. That pushing paid off. In April 2018, Tulsa's Healthy Neighborhood Overlay ordinance passed the City Council on a 5-2 vote and was signed by the mayor.

Now Hall-Harper and the community's organizing is paying off in another way. "We'll [soon] have a groundbreaking of a new grocery store," she explains.

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That new store is being developed through a project led by the **Tulsa Economic Development Corporation (TEDC)** in partnership with the City of Tulsa. Aiming to “eliminate food deserts in Tulsa’s most distressed communities,” TEDC has raised \$3 million from federal block grants and other sources to build a 15,000-square-foot grocery store in North Tulsa.

TEDC is in the process of identifying an operator that will own and operate the new store and lease the TEDC-owned building being constructed for the project. “Our number one [criteria] is that they have a passion for what we’re doing,” explained Kim Prince, TEDC’s Operations Associate. TEDC is a nonprofit community development financial institution that seeks to create “economic vitality in communities by encouraging small business growth.”

Once a store operator is selected in early 2019, construction of the store will begin, with the aim of opening by the end of the year. A local architecture firm is already drawing up designs for the building, based on input from residents. “The community wants an aesthetically pleasing store, something they can take ownership of,” explains Hall-Harper.

For Hall-Harper, though, this single victory is just the first step. “One grocery store isn’t enough,” she points out. There is no shortage of ideas, from helping local entrepreneurs open food stores to supporting new models like **mobile grocery trucks**. “Reaching every citizen is how I’ll know we were successful,” she says.

That long-term vision, though, hinges on the ability of new food stores to carve out enough market share to survive, and that’s far from guaranteed. “The proliferation of dollar stores certainly has made that a challenge to overcome,” says Hall-Harper.

How Communities Can Check the Growth of Dollar Stores

The dollar chains have been able to multiply virtually unimpeded because most communities have relatively lax planning and zoning policies. Even in Vermont, where big-box retailers must navigate a thicket of environmental and land use policies, dollar stores, by virtue of being relatively small in size, rarely face permitting hurdles or scrutiny by planning boards under current policies.

As the story of Tulsa illustrates, some communities are beginning to correct this. In addition to limiting the density of dollar stores, as Tulsa did, another option for cities is to adopt a **policy that restricts “formula” businesses** — those that follow a cookie-cutter format. Used in dozens of small towns and cities, including San Francisco and Jersey City, N.J., formula businesses policies offer a way to limit chain stores or require that they meet certain conditions to open. These measures typically cover all types of retailers, including dollar stores.

Motivated in part by increased development pressure from dollar stores, **Mendocino County, Calif.**, passed a formula business policy in 2016. The measure, which covers unincorporated areas of the county that are outside municipal boundaries, requires chain stores to seek a special permit in order to open. The permit application involves a public hearing, and county staff then review the application based on whether the proposed formula business would fit the community’s character. The idea is not to stop all development, but to establish a process for weighing the merits of particular projects.

“Be ready to have to do your own research,” Vanessa Hall-Harper advises local leaders and residents who want to take on dollar stores. “Having examples [of policies passed by other cities] keeps you as an elected official encouraged that this work is possible, even when you’re up against opposition from the powers that be.”

Another key to winning, Hall-Harper says, is community engagement. “I honestly believe we wouldn’t have been successful if the community didn’t come out,” she notes.

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Residents protest dollar store development in North Tulsa, Okla. Photo Credit: *Black Wall Street Times*, 2017.

Already some cities are moving to replicate Tulsa's success. In Mesquite, Texas, which saw 15 new dollar stores built over the course of a decade, the city consulted with Hall-Harper and ultimately passed a **similar dollar store "dispersal" ordinance**.

In New Orleans, several city council members have recognized dollar stores as a problem. Similar to Tulsa, they've seen these stores concentrate in particular neighborhoods. In 2018, New Orleans City Council **passed a motion** directing the city's planning commission to conduct a study to help "classify, define and regulate" dollar stores. Along with this "**Small Box Retail Diversity Study**," finalized in December, the commission has scheduled public hearings and invited public comments.

Cities and states can also take steps to actively support the development of local grocery stores, just as Tulsa is doing with TEDC's new grocery store. One of the biggest barriers entrepreneurs face in starting new grocery stores is securing a business loan. The **Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative** has shown how to solve this problem. Through loans made over the course of about a decade, it has facilitated the opening and expansion of more than 80 local food stores in underserved cities and towns across the state.

As these policy examples illustrate, communities are not at the mercy of the dollar chains and their plans to blanket both rural and urban America with thousands of new stores. By blocking the spread of dollar stores and fostering the growth of local grocers, cities and towns can begin to close the gap in access to fresh food while also building local power and opportunity.

*If you liked this post, be sure to sign up for the monthly **Hometown Advantage newsletter** for our latest reporting and research.*

Correction: The map in the story has been updated to correct errors in the original that misrepresented the distribution of African Americans in Tulsa. Additionally, this story has been updated to reflect new information about the grocery store being developed in North Tulsa and add details about Dollar Tree's acquisition of Family Dollar.

Related Resources

- **More Cities Pass Laws to Block Dollar Store Chains**
- **Dollar Store Impacts Fact Sheet [PDF]**
- **New Maps Show Alarming Pattern of Dollar Stores' Spread in U.S. Cities**





Dollar stores are thriving - but are they ripping off poor people?

Plenty of items actually work out pricier than buying from supermarkets - but many don't have that luxury

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Joe Eskenazi in San Francisco

Thu 28 Jun 2018 06.00 EDT

While online retailers have transformed the landscape of American commerce, the largest three dollar-store chains are prospering offline, opening more than 1,800 stores last year.

The cost of a trip can be so negligible - the average customer drops \$29 a month - and dollar stores have grown so ubiquitous, that it's hard to countenance what economists confirm: visitors to dollar stores are often paying more than well-off consumers who shop elsewhere.

"If you're budget-constrained, then you make choices that are not optimal," said Professor John Strong, a dollar-store expert at the College of William & Mary.

The bags of flour at a Dollar Store just south of San Francisco cost only \$1, but they also only weigh two pounds. Most bags in the supermarket are five pounds, and can be scored for less than \$2.50 at cavernous retailers like Walmart or Costco - though these require time and, often, a car to access.

Dollar store raisins are only 4.5 ounces. At a big box store, however, 72 ounces of raisins cost \$10.50 - meaning dollar store customers are paying 52% more.

Cartons of milk at a dollar store are only 16 ounces - which prorates to \$8 per gallon, more than what you would pay for even top-of-the line milk at Whole Foods.

Deep-discount retailers have flourished in recent decades, popping up like mushrooms in the depressed locales big-box stores economically eviscerated in the decades before.

The Family Dollar chain opened up some 1,500 new stores between 2010 and 2013 alone - well more than one a day. Dollar Tree picked up Family Dollar several years ago, and its most recent annual report notes it has 14,334 locations across the United States and Canada. It is now a \$20.7bn-a-year behemoth.



A Dollar General store in Westminster, Colorado. Photograph: Rick Wilking/Reuters

“We saw an opportunity,” Dollar Tree’s co-founder Macon Brock wrote in his 2017 book *One Buck at a Time*. “When a customer walked into our store, she could shut off her brain. She didn’t have to think, didn’t have to calculate how much she was spending. All she had to do was count - ‘One, two, three, four, five, six. I have six items and I have six dollars. I can buy this.’”

Some items are indeed more economical at dollar stores: toys, greeting cards, hangers.

And their allure is clear at the store near San Francisco, where Bruce Barringer is 57, retired, living on a pension and in an aisle stocked with medical products.

He doesn’t want to go into too many details, but it’s clear Barringer’s life has taken a turn of late. He recently relocated from Sacramento to the Bay Area and says he is going through a “transition”. He has “downsized”. He doesn’t need a lot of things. “But I’m on a fixed income,” he says, “so I really do need to shop at Dollar Tree.”

Seen one way, dollar stores, like a layaway plan or payday loan, are yet another manifestation of people of limited means getting around an unaffordable cost-of-entry by paying more to get less.

Strong, however, points out that dollar stores are often well-received in the neighborhoods they move into, which were economically strangled by the big-box stores on the city's periphery. Yes, someone with the cash on hand to buy in bulk would do better to do so, but Strong adds that dollar stores are still cheaper for locals than the liquor shops and convenience stores they compete with. They are the least bad option. And, with vegetables, milk, eggs and meat, they're often what passes for an oasis in the food desert.

"We have so many people who are pretty close to the line in trying to get by," says the economist. "Until incomes are raised for the bottom third of the population, dollar stores will be part of the landscape."

This article was amended on 28 June 2018 to remove an incorrect estimate of the price of flour at dollar stores.

America faces an epic choice ...

... in the coming year, and the results will define the country for a generation. These are perilous times. Over the last three years, much of what the Guardian holds dear has been threatened - democracy, civility, truth.

Science and reason are in a battle with conjecture and instinct to determine public policy in this time of a pandemic. Partisanship and economic interests are playing their part, too. Meanwhile, misinformation and falsehoods are routine. At a time like this, an independent news organisation that fights for data over dogma, and fact over fake, is not just optional. It is essential.

The Guardian has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Like many other news organisations, we are facing an unprecedented collapse in advertising revenues. We rely to an ever greater extent on our readers, both for the moral force to continue doing journalism at a time like this and for the financial strength to facilitate that reporting.

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How Dollar Stores Prey on the Poor

“Their whole strategy is to go to a neighborhood that has a lot of poor people who don’t have access to transportation and can only walk to and from the dollar store.”

by Michael Sainato
October 1, 2019

Blaine Griffin knows that messing with the dollar store industry is a risky proposition.

“I understand people have concerns and criticisms because they feel this is a free market and a capitalist society,” Griffin, a member of the Cleveland City Council, tells *The Progressive*. “But we feel that there is a price of doing business in the city of Cleveland.” While the city doesn’t want to be “overbearing,” he says, it does want to hold bad operators accountable.

By some measures, Cleveland, Ohio, is the [second-poorest city](#) in America, behind only Detroit, Michigan. Nearly [54 percent](#) of children there live in poverty. A [report](#) conducted by the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity at the University of Minnesota Law School in

April 2019 found that Cleveland’s neighborhoods are experiencing economic decline and the city’s low-income population is growing despite losing [10 percent](#) of its overall population since 2000.

These conditions have opened up Cleveland’s neighborhoods to the proliferation of dollar stores—[more than thirty-five in all](#). On the surface, this may seem like an innocuous development. Dollar stores offer what are billed as low prices—many items really do cost a buck—on common goods, from snacks to school supplies.

But critics say dollar stores [contribute](#) to declines in economic and public health as they displace full-service grocery stores, eliminate jobs, and undercut competition from other retailers and small businesses.

Across the United States, economically distressed communities are pushing back against high concentrations of dollar stores and their negative impacts.

“It’s kind of like a corporate bodega on steroids,” says Charles Bromley, co-director of [Shaker Square Alliance](#), a community group that has [opposed](#) the development of new dollar stores in Cleveland.

“Their whole strategy is to go to a neighborhood that has a lot of poor people who don’t have access to transportation and can only walk to and from the dollar store,” Bromley says. “The big stores, the chains, are pulling out of these neighborhoods.”

Bromley’s group began to protest dollar stores in response to complaints about overflowing trash at a dollar store in Cleveland’s Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood. Community groups like Shaker Square Alliance [were successful](#) in their effort to open a full-service grocery store, Simon’s Supermarket, in the neighborhood in October 2018. But Bromley says the store is struggling—despite receiving [\\$1 million](#) in subsidies to open—due to competition from the high volume of local dollar stores.

The Cleveland City Council is [currently weighing](#) an ordinance proposed by Griffin to impose a temporary moratorium on dollar stores. The measure will likely come to a vote sometime over the next few months.

“We want to try to provide a more equitable model to provide healthy options for the citizens of Cleveland,” Griffin says. “We feel there are certain brands of dollar stores that don’t bring added value to our community.” He cites recent zoning law changes in Birmingham, Alabama, as an example of what he wants the Cleveland City Council to achieve.

In July 2019, the city of Birmingham [passed](#) a law to limit the number of dollar stores. Its goal was to increase fresh food availability in a city where [69 percent](#) of the population lives in a “food desert.”

A food desert, as [defined](#) by the United States Department of Agriculture, is an area in which at least a third of the population lives more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store, or ten miles for rural communities.

The rapid expansion of dollar stores across the United States has contributed to the problem of food deserts. [Research](#) conducted by Ashanté Reese, an assistant professor of anthropology at Spelman College, has demonstrated that food access reflects historical patterns of racial segregation, as supermarket availability is much lower in predominantly black and low-income neighborhoods.

“The dollar chains are targeting both small towns and low-income urban neighborhoods, especially black neighborhoods.”

“The dollar stores make the argument they’re expanding food access, but what they’re really expanding is access to unhealthy foods like candy, chips, and soda,” says Julia McCarthy, a senior policy associate at

the [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#). “The healthy food options at dollar stores are really limited. Fewer than 3 percent of Dollar General stores [offer](#) these.”

Birmingham’s law [limits](#) concentration of dollar stores to a one-mile radius, and provides incentives for grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and community gardens.

“Our ordinance has mobilized a lot of people,” says Yuval Yossefy, data management specialist with the city’s department of innovation and economic opportunity. “We’ve received some really interesting ideas, everything from grocery co-ops, expanding urban agriculture and community gardening, all sorts of interesting projects that the residents themselves are pushing. This has given us a way to communicate to residents that this is a priority.”

In urban neighborhoods, high saturations of dollar stores [deter](#) grocery stores and other businesses from entering the market. Dollar stores tend to [employ](#) fewer employees than independent grocery stores and typically offer no fresh produce, and just a small selection of processed foods.

And, in fact, products in dollar stores have also been [shown](#) to actually be more expensive than in grocery and other retail stores, as the products are packaged in smaller quantities in order to be sold for a dollar and appear cheaper. For instance, *The Guardian* [reported](#) that a two-pound bag of flour can be found in dollar stores for \$1, but five-pound bags are often sold for less than \$2.50 in larger supermarkets.

Despite all of these drawbacks, in the race to control the proliferation of dollar stores, the dollar stores are winning.

Dollar General [plans](#) to open 975 retail locations in the United States in 2019, making it by far the top retail company for domestic expansion. Dollar Tree has 350 [planned](#) openings in 2019.

From 2011 to the end of 2018, Dollar General and Dollar Tree locations [increased](#) from around 20,000 retail locations to nearly 30,000. There are [more](#) dollar store retail locations than the combined total of Walmart and McDonald's locations, and more Americans [rely](#) on dollar stores for food than Whole Foods supermarkets.

Dollar General has [achieved](#) consistent sales growth for the past twenty-nine years and is currently the largest retail chain in the United States by store count. Around [57 percent](#) of Dollar General's business comes from households with less than \$49,900 in annual income. Chief Executive Officer Todd Vasos [told](#) *The Wall Street Journal* in December 2017 that his company's primary customer base consists of low-income Americans and that the economic decline in communities across the United States is facilitating Dollar General's expansion.

"The economy is continuing to create more of our core customer," Vasos [said](#) in that interview. "We are putting stores today [in areas] that perhaps five years ago were just on the cusp of probably not being our demographic and it has now turned to being our demographic."

Stacy Mitchell, co-director of the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#), says half of all U.S. retail store openings in the past six months have been dollar stores.

"They are far from done," she adds. "Dollar General and Family Dollar [report](#) that they have identified locations for another 20,000 outlets combined."

Mitchell says her group consistently receives inquiries from communities around the United States struggling with dollar stores and their negative economic impacts.

"The dollar chains are targeting both small towns and low-income urban neighborhoods, especially black neighborhoods," Mitchell says.

In urban areas, Mitchell says, “the dollar chains’ strategy of saturating communities with multiple outlets is making it impossible for new grocers and other local businesses to take root and grow. Basically, they’re locking in poverty.”

And in small rural towns, local grocery supermarkets have [reported](#) a 30 percent decline in sales after the introduction of a dollar store to an area.

David Procter, director of the [Center for Engagement and Community Development](#) at Kansas State University, helps run a rural grocery initiative [started](#) in 2006 to provide resources to sustain independent rural grocery stores.

He explains that, initially, big box retail chains like Walmart were among the most prolific competitors to independent rural grocery stores, but that shifted to dollar stores around five years ago. That’s in part because of how savvy dollar stores have been at, well, making dollars.

“What grocers have told us is the middle-of-the-store items generate the highest percentage of profit, the shelf stable items” of the sort dollar stores sell, Procter says. “Small town grocery stores operate at a small profit margin to begin with. It is an area that dollar stores are strongest [in] and it strikes at the best profit area of grocery stores.”

Procter thinks independent grocers still have some advantages over their dollar store competitors, including greater variety of products, higher quality customer service, civic spaces within stores, and better relationships with local communities. But population [decline](#) in the rural Midwest combined with the [increasing concentration](#) of food manufacturing and distribution is making it more difficult for independent rural grocery stores to survive.

“It’s getting more and more difficult to find a single entrepreneur who

It's getting more and more difficult to find a single entrepreneur who will come into a town and agree to establish a grocery store," Procter says. "So what we find is more and more communities are banding together to build and run grocery stores."

Dollar General did not respond to multiple requests for comment on this story. In a recent [comment](#) to CNN, Dollar General spokesperson Crystal Ghassemi said, "We are disappointed that a small number of policymakers have chosen to limit our ability to serve their communities. We believe the addition of each new Dollar General store represents positive economic growth for the communities we serve."

Sidebar #1: Wanted: Fewer Stores, More Dollars

Across the country, municipalities have imposed and enacted restrictions on dollar stores.



Wyandotte County, Kansas, which includes Kansas City, in 2016 passed an ordinance limiting the number of dollar stores in the region, with a separation requirement of 10,000 feet for any new dollar store retail locations.

In **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, the city council in April 2018 passed restrictions on dollar stores, requiring new ones to be at least one mile apart from existing retail locations. The changes came after a six-month moratorium on all new dollar stores passed in September 2017. Oklahoma City passed a similar moratorium in May 2019.

In August 2018, **Mesquite, Texas**, a Dallas suburb with around 140,000 residents, passed new regulations limiting the number of dollar stores. Officials cite the high influx of permit applications and the congestion of dollar stores in certain neighborhoods.

"They were not only going into areas where we thought they might push out competition for a grocery store that serves fresh food, but they were also concentrating themselves," says Mesquite City Manager Cliff Keheley. "We had concerns this type of concentration and the number would deter us from being able to attract a grocery store in some neighborhoods that have lower income and it would be marginal for a grocery store to consider going there."

The regulations limit new dollar store locations to a one-mile distance from existing locations and mandated new dollar stores must devote at least 10 percent of their floorspace to fresh food.

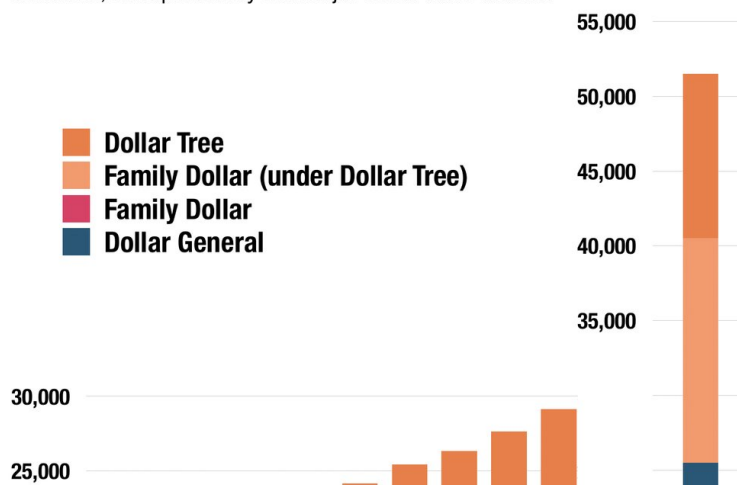
Other communities are looking to follow suit. In **Broadview Heights, Ohio**, a city near Cleveland, city officials are seeking a temporary moratorium on dollar stores in response to issues of oversaturation similar to those experienced by neighborhoods in Cleveland.

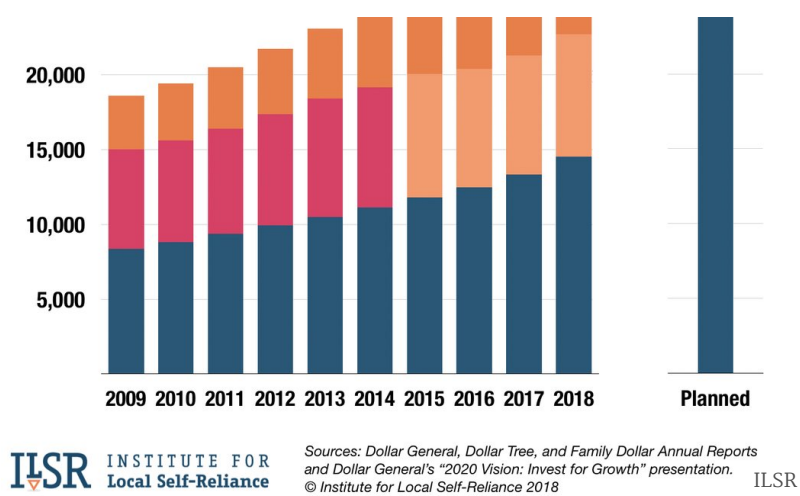
Several small towns in rural Michigan are debating whether to take action in response to a recent influx of dollar stores in the region. And New Orleans, Louisiana, and Fort Worth, are currently considering imposing restrictions to these stores' growth.

Sidebar #2: By the Numbers

Number of Dollar Stores By Year and Planned Stores

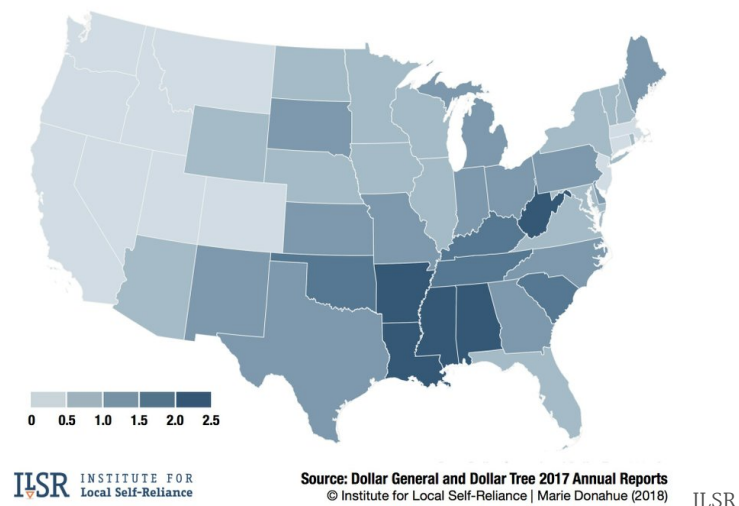
"Planned" stores are based on identified opportunities for new locations, as reported by the major dollar store chains.





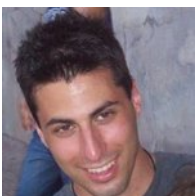
Number of Dollar Stores per 10,000 Residents by State

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Tags

OCTOBERNOVEMBER 2019 / CORPORATIONS / MAGAZINE / ECONOMIC DISPARITY / FOOD AND AGRICULTURE / LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



MICHAEL SAINATO

Michael Sainato is a journalist based in Gainesville, Florida. His work has appeared in the Intercept, The Guardian, The Nation, Vice.com, and Huffington Post.

[Read more by Michael Sainato...](#)

October 1, 2019

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Paying for Jobs: Is Taxpayer Fury Making a Difference?

Are we witnessing a fundamental change in how the public views corporate incentive packages, and the craven submissiveness of elected officials who



Dollar Stores Are Taking Over the Grocery Business, and It's Bad News for Public Health and Local Economies

A new report shows growth of dollar stores in low-income and rural communities furthers inequity and pushes out local businesses.

BY **CLAIRE KELLOWAY**

Posted on: December 17, 2018 [31 Comments](#)

Today, there are more dollar stores in the United States than all Walmarts and Starbucks combined. These low-priced “small-box” retailers, like Dollar General, offer little to no fresh food—yet they feed more Americans than either Trader Joe’s or Whole Foods, and are gaining on the country’s largest food retailers.

Detailing the explosion of dollar stores in rural and low-income areas, the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#) (ILSR) recently [released a report](#) that shows how these retailers exacerbate economic and public health disparities. The report makes the case that dollar stores undercut small rural grocers and hurt struggling urban neighborhoods by staving off full-service markets.

ILSR also argues that the proliferation of dollar stores is the latest outgrowth of an increasingly concentrated grocery sector, where the [top four chains](#)—Walmart, Kroger, Ahold-Delhaize, and Albertsons—sell [44 percent](#) of all groceries, and Walmart alone commands [a quarter](#) of the market. These dominant chain stores have decimated independent retailers and divested from [rural and low-income areas](#), as well as [communities of color](#).



A Dollar General in Morgantown, West Virginia. (Photo credit: [Taber Andrew Bain](#))

“Earlier trends in big box store [growth] are making this opening for dollar stores to enter,” says Marie Donahue, one of the report’s authors. “We’re seeing a widening gap of inequality that’s a result of wealth being extracted from communities and into corporate headquarters... Dollar stores are really concentrating in communities hit hardest by the consequences of economic concentration.”

“Before this report, I had no idea that dollar stores were proliferating in this way,” says Dr. Kristine Madsen, Faculty Director of the [Berkeley Food Institute](#). But, she adds, “it doesn’t surprise me that these incredibly cheap stores may be the only choice for people [who] may be choosing between medicine and rent and food.”

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Dollar General did not respond to a request to comment for this article.

Profiting Off Customers in “Food Deserts”

Two companies, Dollar Tree (which acquired Family Dollar in 2015) and Dollar General, have expanded their footprint from just under 20,000 stores in 2010 to nearly 30,000 stores in 2018, with plans to open yet another 20,000 stores in the near future. Dollar General alone opens roughly **three stores a day**.

Most of these new stores are in urban and rural neighborhoods where residents don't often have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In 2015, in fact, Dollar Tree and Dollar General represented **two-thirds** of all new stores in "**food deserts**," defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as low-income areas where a third or more of residents live far from a full-service grocery store. Dollar General predominantly targets rural areas, though it's beginning to compete with Family Dollar, which is ubiquitous in urban food deserts.

Profiting off these left-behind places is baked into dollar stores' business plan. In 2016, low-income shoppers **represented** 21 percent of Dollar General's customers but 43 percent of their sales. Dollar General executives publicly described households making under \$35,000 and reliant on government assistance as their "**Best Friends Forever**." When discussing growing rural-urban inequality, Dollar General's CEO **said** "the economy is continuing to create more of our core customer," i.e., more struggling rural families.

Undercutting Independent Grocery Stores

Some, including **dollar-store executives themselves**, argue that a low-cost retailer seeking to go where no one else will benefits underserved communities. But ILSR argues that dollar stores are not a true solution to hunger or food insecurity. Furthermore, the group says, they do nothing to promote food sovereignty, or people's right to control the production and distribution of their own food.



Inside a Dollar General store in Eldred, Pennsylvania. (Photo credit: [Random Retail](#))

“To the extent that dollar stores are filling, in some ways, a need in communities, I think that is true in the short term,” says Donahue. “But really our research is demonstrating ... those foods aren’t as good quality as full-service grocers or independent local stores, which may be able to connect to local farmers and the larger food system.”

Dollar stores sell predominantly shelf-stable and packaged foods. Four-hundred-and-fifty Dollar General locations are [experimenting with an expanded refrigerator section](#) to respond to a demand for more fresh fruits and vegetables. But, to date, the fresh and frozen offerings that do exist in these stores [consist of](#) processed meats, dairy products, and frozen meals. In other words, customers don’t have the same wide selection as they do in a traditional full-service grocery store.

“Grocery stores have more variety and a higher quantity of healthy foods than do dollar stores,” says Dr. David Procter, director of the [Rural Grocery Initiative](#), a program of Kansas State University’s Center for Engagement and Community Development.

Despite their reputation, dollar stores don't provide the best deals either. They often sell products in smaller quantities to keep a low price tag and draw in cash-strapped buyers. But when comparing per-ounce prices to a traditional grocery store, dollar store customers tend to pay more. Reporting by *The Guardian* found that the prorated cost of dollar store milk cartons comes to **\$8 per gallon**, for example.

Dollar store customers do, however, find genuine value in things like greeting cards, pasta, coat hangers, and other everyday home goods. But this very cost-cutting is what makes dollar stores uniquely brutal competitors for smaller independent grocers.

"There's very little money made on all kinds of segments of the [independent] grocery store, but where [grocers] do make their most money ... is in paper goods and dry goods," explains Procter. "That is really the heart of Dollar General ... and it's cutting into the largest profit area of the grocery store, that's the real challenge."

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By sucking away this source of revenue, dollar stores tend to drive out the few independent grocers that remain, especially in rural areas. ILSR's report found that "it's typical for sales [at local grocery stores] to drop by about 30 percent after a Dollar General opens."

Additionally, a **survey** by the Rural Grocery Initiative found that competition from large chain stores is the single largest challenge facing independent rural grocers. In the '90s, **Walmart** was their main challenger; now Dollar General is moving in where even Walmart wouldn't go, pushing out more local businesses.

The Benefit of—and Fight for—Small, Local Stores

Residents lose more than fresh foods when their **local grocery store disappears**. They lose jobs, local investment, and a voice in their food choices.

According to federal data, small independent grocers employ **nearly twice** as many people per store when compared to dollar stores. “When you have a hometown grocer owned by people who are committed to that community, not only are all the decisions made locally, but all of the profits stay in that town,” says Procter. “Some of the money that’s being generated in Dollar General stores is going to their headquarters in Tennessee, and the decisions about whether or not that [store] stays open or what they offer is being made by out-of-state corporate decision makers.”



A Dollar Tree store in Cheshire, Conn. (Photo credit: **Mike Mozart**)

In addition to undercutting existing stores, the proliferation of dollar stores can shut out new entrants. This is a particular concern in low-income urban areas and communities of color. ILSR’s report features the case of Tulsa, Oklahoma, where there’s a 14-year life expectancy gap between residents in the predominantly Black north Tulsa neighborhood and residents in the predominantly white south Tulsa neighborhood. ILSR found that dollar stores have “concentrated in [Tulsa] census tracts with more African American residents,” and community members are not happy about it.

“I don’t think it’s an accident they proliferate in low socio-economic and African American communities,” Tulsa City Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper told **ILSR**. “That

proliferation makes it more difficult for the full-service, healthy stores to set up shop and operate successfully.”

However, Tulsa’s story also provides a glimpse of hope into what some communities can do to halt the invasion of dollar stores. Hall-Harper worked to pass **zoning ordinances** that would limit dollar store development and encourage full-service grocers to set up shop. She rallied residents to protest the opening of a new Dollar General and join city council meetings to show support for a temporary dollar store moratorium. City council passed the moratorium and the zoning changes seven months later. North Tulsa will soon have a new grocery store, operated by **Honor Capital**, a veteran-owned company that has a food-access mission. **Rural communities in Kansas** have similarly organized and leveraged city council to halt a proposed Dollar General.

“It’s great to see a community really fight for this ordinance and show up to public meetings and hearings and challenge those traditional systems that would have just approved development for more dollar stores in the area,” says Donahue.

*Top photo: Outside a Dollar General in Fort Hancock, Texas. (Photo credit: **Thomas Hawk**)*

LEAVE A COMMENT

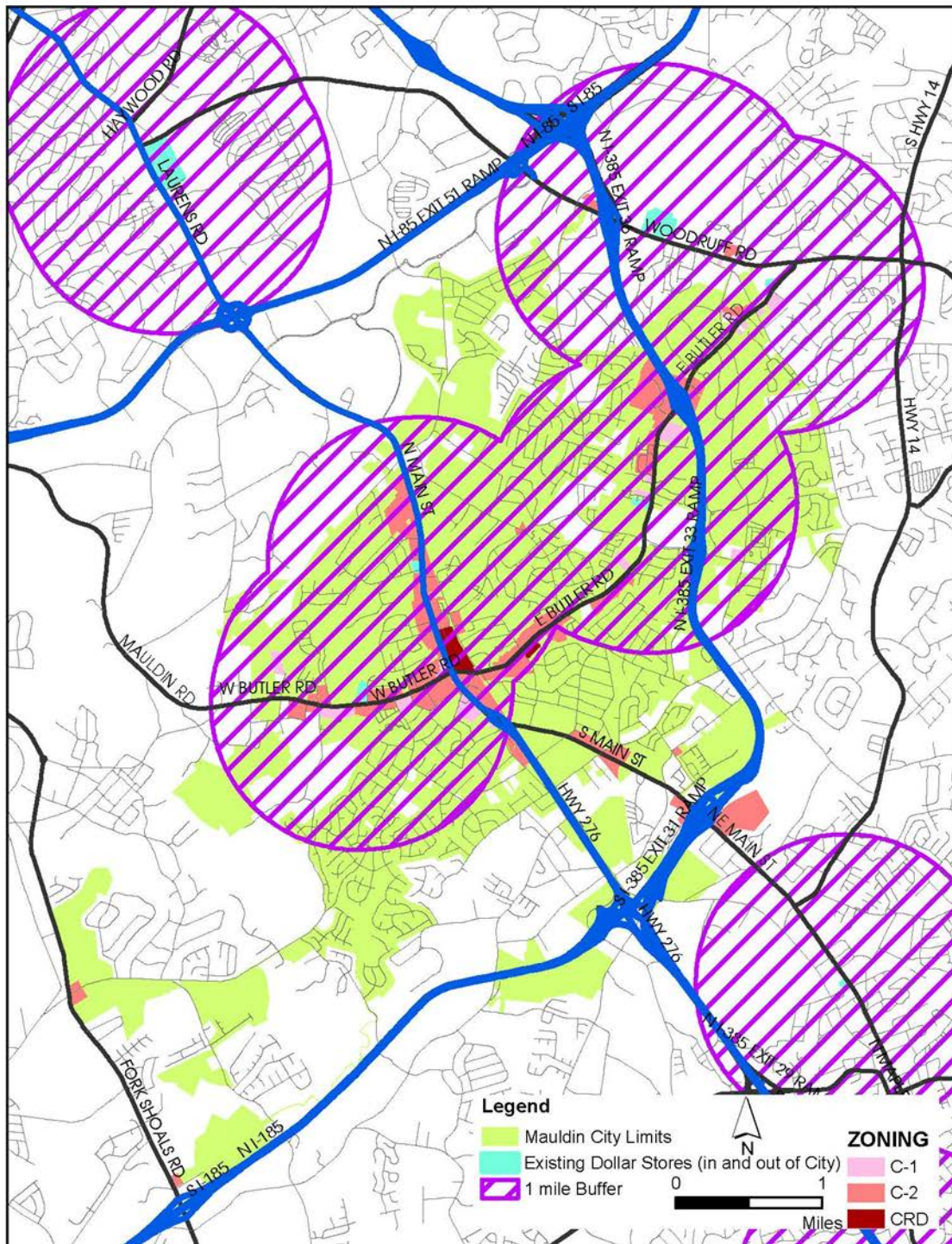
Name *

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One-Mile Buffer from ALL Dollar Stores



City Council

AGENDA ITEM

MEETING DATE: July 20, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: An Emergency Ordinance Requiring Individuals to Wear Face Coverings in Certain Circumstances and Matters Related Thereto

TO: City Council

FROM: EPD Committee Chair Taft Matney

ITEM NUMBER: 8b

SUBJECT: An Emergency Ordinance Requiring Individuals to Wear Face Coverings in Certain Circumstances and Matters Related Thereto

REQUEST

Consideration of an emergency ordinance requiring individuals to wear face coverings in certain circumstances and matters related thereto.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND

This item is being presented following a request from Councilor Taft Matney.

FISCAL IMPACT

No.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is a Council-initiated request. Staff will proceed accordingly.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Emergency Ordinance

ORDINANCE _____-2020

AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE REQUIRING INDIVIDUALS TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES AND MATTERS RELATED THERETO

WHEREAS, it is well recognized that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease COVID-19, presents a public health concern that requires extraordinary protective measures and vigilance; and,

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a world-wide pandemic; and,

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States has declared a National Emergency for the United States and its territories in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus; and,

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Governor of the State of South Carolina declared a state of emergency for the State of South Carolina; and,

WHEREAS, on March _____, 2020, the City Council declared a state of emergency for the City of Mauldin, (“City”); and,

WHEREAS, S.C. Code Ann. §5-7-250 empowers Council to enact emergency ordinances affecting life, health, safety, or property; and,

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has spread across the state with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (“SCDHEC”) confirming the localized person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in South Carolina, which indicates a significantly risk of exposure and infection and creating an extreme public health risk; and,

WHEREAS, as of July 1, 2020, the total number of confirmed cases in South Carolina is approximately 36,399 and the number of confirmed deaths is 739; the number of reported cases in Greenville County is 5,009; and, the total number of estimated cases in Greenville County is 31,384; and,

WHEREAS, the number of cases is growing rapidly and if COVID-19 continues to spread in the City, the number of persons relying on medical, pharmaceutical, and general cleaning supplies will increase, the private and public sector work force will be negatively impacted by absenteeism, and the demand for medical facilities may exceed locally available resources; and,

WHEREAS, it is vitally important that we all work together to decrease the widespread proliferation of COVID-19 among us all now rather than suffer the unfortunate and devastating consequences later; and,

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and SCDHEC advise the use of cloth face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, taking measures to control outbreaks minimizes the risk to the public, maintains the health and safety of the City’s residents, and limits the spread of infection in our communities and within the healthcare delivery system; and,

WHEREAS, in order to protect, preserve, and promote the general health, safety and welfare and the peace and order of the community, the City is taking steps to try to protect the citizens and employees of the City from increased risk of exposure; and,

WHEREAS, in light of the foregoing, City Council deems it proper and necessary to adopt this Emergency Ordinance to require (a) patrons of grocery stores and pharmacies to wear face coverings while inside the store in light of the fact these establishments sell essential goods such that individuals do not have meaningful choice to decide not to shop there; and, (b) all employees of restaurants, bars, retail establishments, salons, beauty shops, barber shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies to wear face coverings at any time there is face to face interaction with the public.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MAULDIN, SOUTH CAROLINA:

1. All persons entering a grocery store or pharmacy in the City must wear a face covering while inside the establishment. For purposes of this Ordinance, the term grocery store shall mean a retail establishment that primarily sells food, but may also sell other convenience and household goods; the term does not include a convenience store. The business shall not have responsibility for enforcing this requirement, but shall post conspicuous signage at all entrances informing its patrons of the requirements of this section.
2. All restaurants, retail stores, salons, beauty shops, barber shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies in the City must require their employees to wear a face covering at all times while having face to face interaction with the public.
3. Any person who is unable to safely wear a face covering due to age, an underlying health condition, or is unable to remove the face covering without the assistance of others is exempt from this Ordinance.
4. A person who fails to comply with Section 1 of this Ordinance shall be guilty of a civil infraction, punishable by a fine or not more than \$25.00.
5. A person who fails to comply with Section 2 of this Ordinance shall be guilty of a civil infraction, punishable by a fine of not more than \$100.00. Each day of a continuing violation of this Ordinance shall be considered a separate and distinct offense. In addition to the fines established by this section, repeated violations of this Ordinance by a person who owns, manages, operates or

otherwise controls a business subject to this Ordinance may, subject to all procedural protections set forth in the City Code, result in the suspension or revocation of any occupancy permit or business license issued to business where the repeated violations occurred. Repeated violations of this Ordinance is additionally hereby declared to be a public nuisance, which may be abated by the City by restraining order, preliminary and permanent injunction, or other means provided for by the laws of this State. The foregoing notwithstanding, every effort shall be made to bring the business into voluntary compliance with the terms of this Ordinance prior to the issuance of any citation. For the purposes of Section 2 of this Ordinance, “person” shall be defined as any individual associated with the business who has the control or authority and ability to enforce a social distancing requirement of six feet within the business, such as an owner, manager or supervisor. “Person” may also include an employee or other designee that is present at the business but does not have the title of manager, supervisor, etc. but has the authority and ability to ensure that the requirements of this Ordinance are met while the business is open to the public.

6. Furthermore, Council recommends, but does not require, all persons entering all other public buildings or private buildings into which the public is invited, that are not included in Paragraph one (1) hereof, to wear a face covering while inside the establishment. Proprietors of such buildings are encouraged to adopt and enforce a policy requiring face coverings for all employees and visitors to their respective buildings while having face to face interaction with the public and to post conspicuous signage at all entrances.
7. Should any provision, section, paragraph, sentence or word of this Ordinance be rendered or declared invalid by any final court action in a court of competent jurisdiction or by reason of any preemptive legislation, the remaining provisions, sections, paragraphs, sentences, or words of this Ordinance as hereby adopted shall remain in full force and effect.
8. This Emergency Ordinance shall be effective at _____ a.m./p.m. on July _____, 2020 and shall be terminated by the issuance of another ordinance or shall automatically expire on the 61st day after enactment of this Ordinance, whichever date is earlier.

DONE, RATIFIED, AND PASSED THIS THE ____ DAY OF _____, 2020.

Terry Merritt, Mayor

ATTEST:

Cindy Miller, Municipal Clerk

Introduced by: _____

First Reading: _____

Approved as to form: _____
City Attorney

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

MEETING DATE: July 20, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: 8c

TO: City Council
FROM: Community Development Director Van Broad
SUBJECT: C-Fund collaboration Request / via Greenville County

REQUEST

Council is requested to a request from Mark III Properties to assist in funding the redesign of Standing Springs Road and Ashmore Bridge Road interchange in cooperation with the County of Greenville SC.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND

The City of Mauldin worked to attain access and annexation of the former Bonnie Brae Golf Course along Ashmore Bridge Road. The site was annexed into the City with plans to develop a 700-800 lot housing subdivision. During the annexation process, concerns from the public were presented regarding increased traffic, and the alignment of Standing Springs Road onto Ashmore Bridge.

Mark III Properties the developer for the subdivision. Via their attached correspondence, Mark III Properties is partnered with Greenville County and the SCDOT in a multi-jurisdictional project to improve the intersection of Ashmore Bridge Road and Standing Springs Road.

ANALYSIS / STAFF FINDINGS

While the Ashmore Bridge Rd. and Standing Springs Rd. intersection is not a Mauldin intersection, it will be used by City residents. The proposed interchange has historically received a failing grade. Multiple new development projects will increase stress and pressure on the interchange. As proposed by Mark III Properties, this approach will repair the intersection in a manner to serve the existing traffic and projected future growth.

Also, it is worth noting the SCDOT plans to install a traffic signal at the newly aligned intersection outside of the scope of the realignment project.

TIMELINE/FINANCIAL

1. The project will commence upon approval of funding by the C-Funds Committee
2. The total amount being requested of the City is \$50,000
3. Should Council proceed, an appropriate funding source would be fund balance.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of staff that council approve funding of \$50,000 toward the Standing Springs/Ashmore Bridge Re-alignment Project.

ATTACHMENTS

Letter from Mark III Properties

Project Cost Estimate as prepared by CoTransCo

City of Mauldin
Mr. David Dyrhaug
5 E. Butler Road
Mauldin, SC 29662

June 8, 2020

Mr. Dyrhaug,

Mark III Properties is teaming with Greenville County and the SCDOT in a multi-jurisdictional project to improve the intersection of Ashmore Bridge Road and Standing Springs Road. I have attached the proposed layout. This intersection has historically received a failing grade and is being made worse with the increased traffic in this area. It is time to fix the intersection in a manner to serve the existing traffic and projected future growth.

The intersection is not a City of Mauldin road, however many Mauldin residents will use it every day. With the recent annexation of the Bonnie Brae golf course property (approx. 800 homes), Camden Cottages (68 homes) and Meadow Springs (151 homes), I estimate an increase in Mauldin's tax base of over \$230 million from these developments over the next few years. All of these new homes will benefit from an improved intersection at this location.

Hesha Gamble with Greenville County is planning to present this project to the CTC as soon as possible. She feels the best chance of having it approved is to have participation from as many stakeholders as possible. I am writing to request the City of Mauldin commit to invest \$50,000 towards this intersection improvement project. For your reference, Mark III Properties has purchased right of way (\$25,000), is donating additional right-of-way (\$20,000) and is planning to contribute an additional \$100,000 for this intersection. We will also be doing extensive upgrades to Ashmore Bridge Road and Fork Shoals Road at the Bonnie Brae property.

I understand Greenville County is working on a new / revised cost estimate, however the latest information I have shows the cost of this project to be about \$1.2 million plus the right-of-way acquisition (which Mark III is contributing to the project). I've included the cost estimate. Also, note the SCDOT plans to install a traffic signal at the newly aligned intersection outside of the scope of the realignment project.

Feel free to contact me or Joe Waldron with Mark III Properties with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jay Beeson

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