News

HOW HARTFORD IS GRAPPLING WITH FOOD ACCESS ISSUES

by Samira Chambers
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR
SHE/HER/HERS
samira.chambers@uconn.edu



Kamora Herrington smiles in the Sterling Street Sanctuary. The Sterling Street Sanctuary is a community greenspace and black history cultural site.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMIRA CHAMBERS

As a resident of downtown Hartford, Alycia Jenkins knows what's missing: a grocery store.

"Food access in downtown Hartford is difficult to come by because we don't have a grocery store," Jenkins said. "I actually either have to get food delivered or I have to go take a bus to get groceries."

Jenkins, an advocate for environmental justice and a local campaign manager for the Sierra Club, added that though she is in a "privileged" position to take a bus to get her groceries or get them delivered, it isn't fair that she has to. Jenkins thinks that Hartford's access to food needs to be more walkable and affordable.

Only 34% of adults in North Hartford — which includes the Northeast, Upper Albany and Clay Arsenal neighborhoods — believe there is access to affordable, fresh produce in the area, according to a DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey. The survey found that 45% of Hartford residents citywide and 71% of Connecticut residents believe they have access to fresh produce.

The problem weighs heavily on the state's Black and Latino populations, who are the main demographics in the North and South End, according to the North Hartford Health Report. The survey also showed a higher level of income inequality in that area. showed a higher level of income inequality in that area.

There is only one full-service grocery store in Hartford, a Stop & Shop located on New Park Avenue. Smaller grocery stores are available, but they do not offer the same services, scale or pricing as traditional full-service supermarkets.

Today, Hartford is classified as a food desert — an area that has limited access to affordable nutritious food — by the U.S. Census.

The administration of President Ronald Reagan stopped enforcing the Robinson-Patman Act, which gave competitive advantages to large grocery store chains, The Atlantic reported. Many independent stores were driven out of business while large chains moved out of most low-income areas, turning them into food deserts, it reported.

Hartford has struggled to get a grocery store for decades. There have been financial incentives and an attempt at a community-owned store, according to the Hartford Courant. Former councilwoman, Tiana Hercules said these stores failed because they were not profitable in the North End.

Tax incentives have been used to incentivize grocery store development in food-desert relief plans. The 2023 state budget, included a provision that allowed municipalities to lower property taxes for grocery stores that operated in food deserts during 2023 and 2024. No stores opened in the North End at that time.

Kamora Herrington, founder of Kamora's Cultural Corner and the Sterling Street Sanctuary in Hartford, said the solution to food deserts doesn't have to be a large-chain grocery store. Instead, she said that there is a more accurate term for the problem at hand.

"This is not a food desert," Herrington said. "This is a food apartheid."

Food apartheid, first coined by food justice advocate Karen Washington, is defined as systemic, racialized and economic segregation of food access, where marginalized communities are intentionally denied access to nutritious, affordable food while being flooded with unhealthy options.

Herrington said calling Hartford a food desert gives the impression that there is no food in the city, but that is not the case.

"There is plenty of food here," she said, pointing out how every few steps there is a bodega or corner store with junk food.

"All of those places are small businesses that, with more support, could offer us better food," Herrington said. "But, for some reason, in Hartford, the powers that [have] convinced all of us that the way to take care of our food problem is to make Stop & Shop understand that they need to be here."

Hartford and its residents have launched multiple initiatives to address food access, such as food pantries, farmers' markets and urban farming.

Saraya Wise, a resident in the North End, said she uses a source list from 211, a service that connects people to local health and human services, to find nearby fresh fruits and vegetables. The 211 list includes dates, times, location and contact information for places providing food.

"They send me everything," she said. "Believe it or not, it's like maybe eight different places right here on the avenue that'd be giving out food."

Some have also turned to urban farming, which helps expand food access by cultivating, processing and distributing food within the city. Examples include Levo International's hydroponic farm on Homestead Avenue, Trinfo Community Garden at Trinity College and Urban Roots Grow Center at the Chrysler Center.

Knox, located on Laurel Street, is one of the larger Hartford-based non-profits that promotes agriculture growth in the city. The organization hosts farmers' markets, managing 21 gardens, planting trees and offering workforce development training, according to its website.

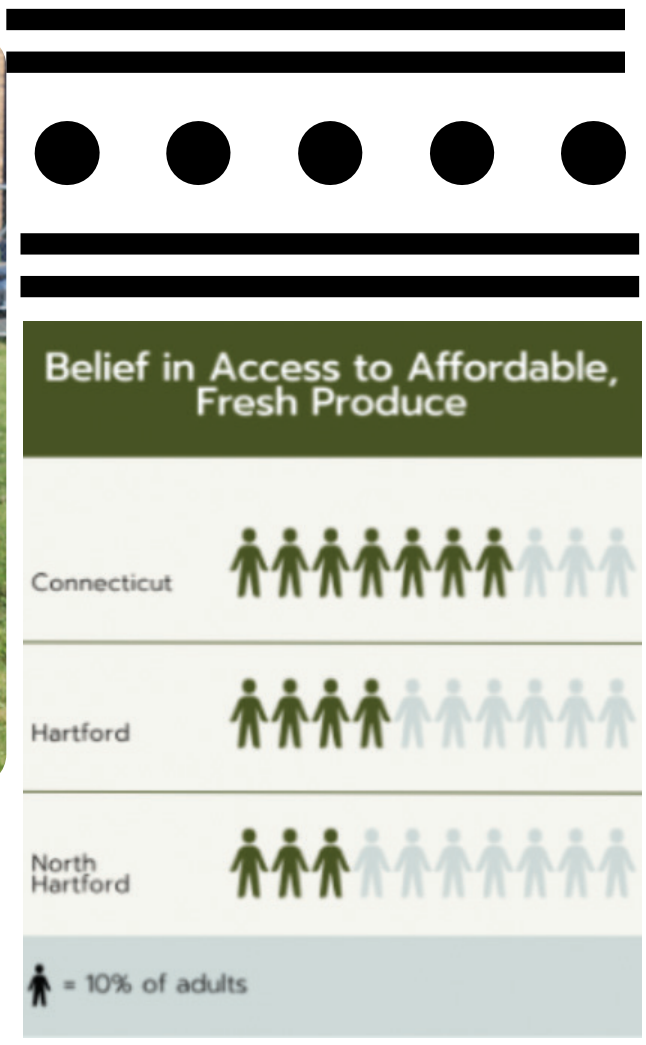
The organization works with farmers to grow food for sale at several places, including its own farmers' market called FoodShare. Most farmers' markets in the state accept the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, which Doyle said makes fresh food more accessible.

About 250 to 300 people access the community gardens Knox manages to grow fresh food either for themselves or to share with others, Doyle said.

Hartford's low tree canopy creates a heat island effect that affects the growing season, but other than that, it's about the same climate in surrounding cities, he said.

"But the weather has become much more variable and that can be hard for people," he said. "So, one of the things we talk about with our farmers and gardeners is kind of like grow variety, grow extra."

During the off-season, operations have to scale down quite a bit, Doyle said.



Data by DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey
PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMIRA CHAMBERS



Patrick Doyle, executive director of Knox. He is standing in front of the labyrinth during "Love Your Block Day" at the Sterling Street Sanctuary.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMIRA CHAMBERS

The Daily Campus

Printing since 1896, The Daily Campus is the oldest and largest independent student publication at the University of Connecticut. The Daily Campus circulates 1,500 newspapers daily and strives to serve the student body by delivering accurate, relevant and timely news and content, both in print and online at Daily Campus.com. Our staff is comprised entirely of students, with roughly 200 undergraduates gaining professional development while contributing to the daily production of the paper, with positions including writers, photographers, copy editors, page layout designers, graphic designers, advertisement representatives, receptionists, delivery drivers and digital producers.
Thanks for reading.

Want to advertise in print or online?
businessmanager@dailycampus.com

Corrections and Clarifications:
Send Corrections to EIC@dailycampus.com

Monday, September 21, 2026
Copy Editors: Grace Ballou, Molly Diagle
News Designer: Raphaela Pierre-Noel
Life Designer: Grace Larson
Sports Designer: Deena Ignacio
Opinion Designer: Lillli-Ann Hanlon
Photo Producer: Sophia Viera

Samantha Brody, Editor-in-Chief
Isabella Kulawik, Managing Editor
Pierce Colfer, Business Manager
Connor Lafferty, Digital Editor
Camille Kiang, Associate Managing Editor
Lilli-Ann Hanlon, Associate Managing Editor
Joshua Cummings, Associate Digital Editor

Mikayla Bunnell
News Editor
Kevin Guinan
Associate News Editor
Avery Becker
Sports Editor
Jake McCreven
Associate Sports Editor
Emma Meidinger
Photo Editor
Madison Hendricks
Associate Photo Editor
Maleena Muzio
Life Editor
Ayyan Tamjeed
Associate Life Editor
Patrick Minnerly
Opinion Editor
Gianna Cassino
Associate Opinion Editor
Lillian LaFemina
Artist Editor
Colbi Loranger
Associate Artist Editor
Uzoma Chukwurah
Outreach/Social Media Coordinator
Sofiyah Shiwnarine
Associate SMOC
Aleia Bischof
Circulation Manager
Valley Publishing Company
Derby, Conn.

For more information about getting involved as an editorial, business or digital employee:
Editorial · managingeditor@dailycampus.com
Business · businessmanager@dailycampus.com
Digital · digital@dailycampus.com

Prefer to read our content online?
Check out our newly redesigned website at dailycampus.com and follow us on social media.
Instagram · The_DailyCampus
Facebook · The Daily Campus
Twitter · The_DailyCampus

Want to write, photograph or draw for The Daily Campus?

The Daily Campus welcomes writers, photographers and artists of all backgrounds, interests, majors and levels of experience. To get involved, it's as easy as attending section meetings on Sunday nights, all at the Daily Campus building, (1266 Storrs Road) or reaching out to an email below:

Opinion (Meetings at 5 p.m.)
opinion@dailycampus.com
News (Meetings at 5 p.m.)
news@dailycampus.com
Life (Meetings at 6 p.m.)
life@dailycampus.com
Sports (Meetings at 7 p.m.)
sports@dailycampus.com
Photo (Meetings at 9 p.m.)
photo@dailycampus.com
Artists (Meetings at 9 p.m.)
artists@dailycampus.com