

RIVERDALE PARK



From February through April 2018, the Town Administration of the Town of Riverdale Park (TRP), Maryland entrusted students under the direction of Caroline Boules, Ph.D from the University of Maryland Campus Community Connection to determine whether food insecurity is a prevalent issue in the municipality. Their findings indicated that food insecurity is prevalent in certain areas of Riverdale Park. There are several initiatives and meal delivery programs in place to assist in boosting food security in the area, however these programs may not be reaching all segments of the Riverdale Park population.

The data from their final report confirmed the presence of a food desert in the lower-income area of Riverdale Park, which is likely where the root of the issue lies. For future Capstone projects, the students highly recommend finding ways to get involved with this part of the community, since they are most at-risk for food insecurity affecting their daily lives. As for Riverdale Park, they recommended improving the efficiency of food distribution centers, as well as trying urban agriculture programs within the community to promote healthy eating and sustainable living. The students wrote that even though urban agriculture can come with an expensive up-front cost, this approach could be well worth the initial capital. The report concludes with their hope for future Capstone projects and future state/local government endeavors to eradicate food insecurity in all communities and provide each and every family the nutrition they need to live a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle.

Food security became a priority issue for the TRP since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of TRP's earliest legislative actions in 2020 were aimed at providing food assistance to TRP's most at risk residents. At TRP's March 25, 2020 Special Legislative session, the Town Council adopted the following policies that were created by our incredible staff. This list does not include projects for the Food Forest, the Community Garden and the Bountiful Buckets program which are included in additional writes-ups as part of this Sustainable Maryland report. Additionally, the Town Council addressed logistical issues in meeting the needs of student residents of Riverdale Park who receive daily meals from the Prince Georges' County Public Schools (PGCPS).

Farmer's Market SNAP Dollars Program

The town council voted to move \$3000 dollars to assist TRP residents capable of accessing SNAP funds. This doubled TRP's contribution to the program for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

Farmers Market Dollars Program

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The [Farmers Market Dollars Program](#) created weekly grants of \$25 dollars to residents unable to access SNAP funds for use only at the Riverdale Park Farmers Market. To those residents accessing SNAP funds, a \$15 dollar weekly grant on top of the current SNAP funds is available for use only at the Riverdale Park Farmers Market. In order to get the word out about the new program as quickly as possible, town officials advertised the program at Riverdale's community schools, set up a booth at the weekly Riverdale Park Farmers Market in March, April, and part of May to inform and assist residents in filling out applications for this program, and created a [webpage](#) in English and Spanish and [posted applications](#) on the town website for electronic submission.



The screenshot shows the website for the Farmers Market Dollars Program. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with the heading 'APPLY FOR' and links for 'Town Permits', 'Town Licenses', and 'Employment'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'HOME > HOW DO I > APPLY FOR > FARMER'S MARKET DOLLARS'. Below this is the title 'FARMER'S MARKET DOLLARS' and the Town of Riverdale Park seal. The section is titled 'FARMERS MARKET DOLLAR PROGRAM'. The text states: 'Riverdale Park residents in need of assistance are eligible to receive weekly Farmers Market Dollar disbursements.' Below this is a banner image of various fruits. A link says 'Applications are available for download here.' Further down, it provides submission details: 'Applications can be submitted via email at development@riverdaleparkmd.gov, by phone at 301-927-6381 or mailed to 5008 Queensbury Road Riverdale Park.' It also mentions that dollars are sent by mail for the entire month, the market is at 4650 Queensbury Road, and proof of residency is required. At the bottom, there is a Spanish version of the text.

Above is a picture of TRP's website advertising the new Farmer's Market Dollars Program in both English and Spanish to help TRP's most vulnerable populations during the Covid-19 pandemic. http://www.riverdaleparkmd.gov/how_do_i/apply_for/farmers_market_dollars_.php

Direct Benefit Grocery Programs

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RTP utilized the remainder of its Social Concerns Fund (\$2700) to assist families with children in Riverdale Elementary in desperate need. TRP was able to provide vouchers to over 54 families between March 25, 2020 and June 19, 2020 through this program.

Resident - Restaurant - Town Partnership

Summary: [Resolution 2020-R-2012](#) makes available to Town residents, Town funded discount coupons for participating Town restaurants that are not corporate chains or franchises that exceed 25 locations.

Food Distribution Centers

Due to the economic and safety issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, PGCPS established [food distribution centers](#) to address critical needs of families. Children attending PGCPS were no longer able to attend school in person and lost access to an important and regular source of meals at school. The closest food distribution sites to TRP's student residents were over a mile away and required crossing the dangerous and large streets of East-West Highway and Kenilworth Avenue. In response, through individual and TRP communications with School Board Member Joshua M. Thomas and PGCPS CEO Dr. Goldson, TRP moved one of the distribution centers to Riverdale Elementary which provides significantly safer access to these critical, free meals.