The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Treasury, and Department of Health and Human Services define a **food desert** as a census tract where at least 500 people live in low-income areas and have limited access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable food retail outlet (USDA website).

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies a tract as "urban" if the tract has a population of at least 2,500, with less than 1,500 residing in an institutional group home, and one-third of the land within the tract is developed.