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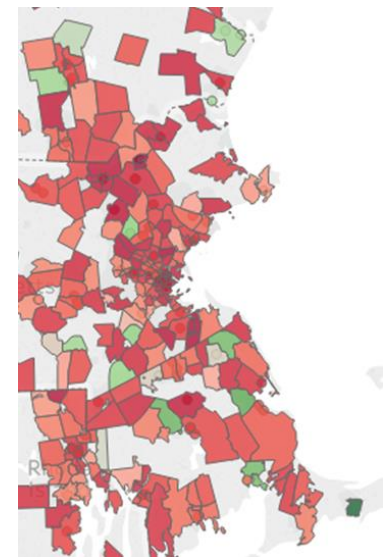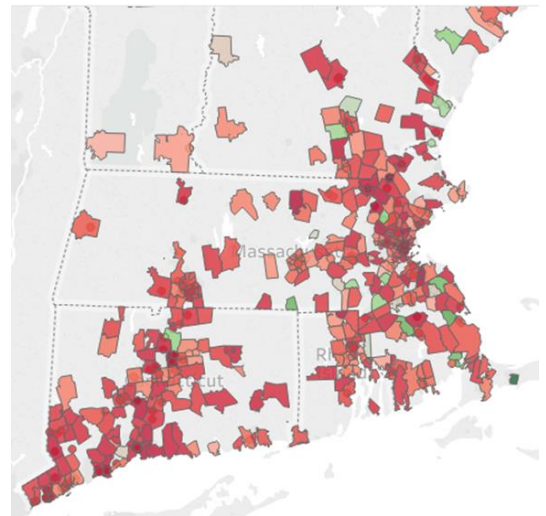
Where's the Food Aisle?

By Zach Blatt, Founder, RightBid (December 2017)

Grocery stores in New England tend to clustered around small cities

Have you ever wondered which town in New England is the grocery store capital of New England? I have! Being a native of Bedford, New Hampshire, I was naturally curious to think about this question. When I was growing up there were only two supermarkets in the town. The last several years have seen five new supermarkets open up their aisles: Target, The Fresh Market, Market Basket, a Whole Foods, and even a second Hannaford's. A Trader Joe's is under construction and will open in 2018 in an adjacent lot to the Whole Foods, The Fresh Market, and a Hannaford's. But does Bedford have the most grocery stores per capita in all of New England? To answer this, I used RightBid's software to search for *grocery store* on Yellowpages.com across the six New England states to produce a list of 1,287 stores.[1]

Two maps of the results are shown to the right. The top result shows most of New England whereas the bottom result shows towns around greater Boston. Only those towns with a population over 10,000 are shown. The towns with the highest numbers of grocery stores per capita are shaded green. Two tables on the next page show the towns with the highest and lowest per capita results. The places with the most grocery chains per capita tend to be large towns or small cities that serve as shopping centers for the adjoining region. For instance, Hyannis, MA serves as a center point for shopping for much of Cape Cod. Burlington, MA is known across the MetroWest region for its mall and shopping centers. The places with the fewest grocery chains per capita tend to be small cities with their big box shopping districts in

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[1] Only those chains with three or more locations were included, so Mom and Pop stores were excluded from the final total. Target was included although Walmart was excluded (the majority of Walmart locations in New England lack a supermarket). Additionally, we removed locations where there were duplicate results for a single zip codes (so Bedford which has only a single zip code was left with one Hannaford's and not two).

neighboring towns such as Malden or East Haven). There are likely a number of reasons Boston makes this list. For instance, lower car ownership by residence means more grocery sales come through convenience store chain which weren't included. Notably missing from the top ten highest grocery chains per capita table was my home town of Bedford, NH. Bedford (the bright green town at the top of the second map) just missed the cutoff and has 23.6 grocery stores per 100,000 people placing it 16th out of 323 towns studied (ahead of 95% of all towns). It has the most grocery stores per capita of all large towns/cities in New Hampshire, although it's only narrowly ahead of nearby Hooksett (22.43) and Portsmouth in the Seacoast region (23.22). When Trader Joes opens in Bedford in 2018, tourists may want to forego their vacation to Cape Cod and head on up to Bedford and instead see all eight supermarkets!

Zach Blatt is the founder of RightBid, a software company that produces custom technology enabled research. For more information, email zblatt@rightbidresearch.com or visit www.rightbidresearch.com.

Towns with the Most Grocery Chains Per Capita

CITY	STATE	COUNT	POP	PER_CAPITA
Hyannis	MA	6	14,089	42.59
Kingston	MA	4	12,629	31.67
Ellsworth	ME	4	12,974	30.83
Webster	MA	5	16,767	29.82
Raynham	MA	4	13,566	29.49
Wareham	MA	3	10,481	28.62
Norwell	MA	3	10,506	28.56
Saint Albans	VT	4	14,449	27.68
Sanford	ME	4	16,189	24.71
Burlington	MA	6	24,487	24.50

Towns with the Fewest Grocery Chains Per Capita

CITY	STATE	COUNT	POP	PER_CAPITA
Malden	MA	1	59,503	1.68
Lawrence	MA	1	47,225	2.12
Woonsocket	RI	1	41,186	2.43
Fitchburg	MA	1	40,337	2.48
Boston	MA	18	655,884	2.74
Randolph	MA	1	32,158	3.11
Billerica	MA	1	30,310	3.30
East Haven	CT	1	29,861	3.35
Dracut	MA	1	29,422	3.40
Cheshire	CT	1	29,161	3.43