

Municipal Grocery Stores: Public Ownership in Practice and Policy

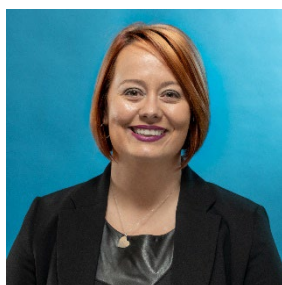
About the Guest Panelists, Respondents, and Moderator

Guest Panelists:



Ruby J. Ferguson is a food justice strategist, trust-builder, and registered dietitian committed to celebrating food by transforming food systems. She serves as the Senior Director of Community Engagement at the Greater Chicago Food Depository and was appointed as the city's first Food Equity Policy Lead in

the Mayor's Office. In this role, she stewards the Food Equity Council, uniting city leaders and grassroots organizations to advance the Food Equity Agenda. With a background as a registered dietitian, Ruby previously directed nutrition services at a Federally Qualified Health Center, where she oversaw WIC clinics, clinical dietetics, and community cooking programs. Her work is grounded in building trust across systems and uplifting the leadership of those who also dream of a more equitable and vibrant food system. Ruby holds degrees from Spelman College (BA/BS), Auburn University (MEd), and the University of Illinois at Chicago (MS).



Laurie Prickett: As Senior Vice President of Economic Development at Invest Atlanta, Laurie Prickett leads with a strategic and people-centered vision for shaping Atlanta's economic future. She oversees transformative initiatives that expand food access, preserve

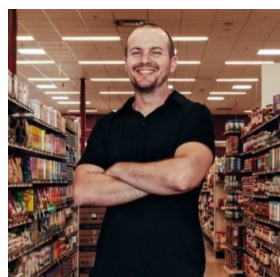
legacy businesses, strengthen small business resilience, and position Atlanta to fully capitalize on the economic opportunities surrounding the 2026 World Cup and other major events. Her work also elevates Atlanta's global competitiveness, reinforcing the city as a premier destination for international investment and innovation. Laurie brings more than a decade of experience in international trade, economic diplomacy, and public service. Prior to joining Invest Atlanta, she served as the Trade & Investment Manager for the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) at the British Consulate-General in Atlanta, representing the United Kingdom across the Southeastern United States.

Her portfolio spanned consumer goods, creative industries, and sports economy growth, where she led trade missions, high-impact business engagements, and cross-border policy initiatives. Earlier in her career, Laurie served as a Consular Officer at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., managing complex citizen services and crisis response. As a member of the UK's Rapid Deployment Team, she provided emergency support during humanitarian crises in Haiti (2010) and Japan (2011). Laurie holds a B.A. in Political Science from Georgia State University and an M.A. in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Bath and Charles University in Prague. She remains deeply committed to giving back to the city that shaped her path.



Bill Moore, a retired Department of Defense Senior Executive (3-Star General Equivalent), is currently the President & CEO of Moore Insight, LLC, a Defense consulting firm. In this role, he consults with Defense Industry clients on many topics from his experience as a Defense Senior

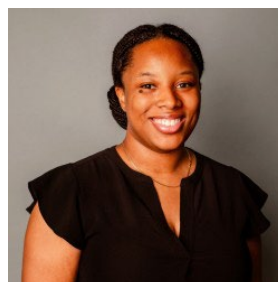
Executive, to include IT, Defense retail, supply chain management, and Executive coaching. Prior to his Federal Service retirement in March 2023, he served as the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Director & CEO. As DeCA's Director/CEO, Mr. Moore led the operations and transformation of a global agency, with annual sales over \$4.7 billion and employing more than 14,000 people at nearly 240 commissaries across 45 states and 13 countries. During his tenure, he reversed a ten-year annual decline in revenue, achieving 12% annual growth, while saving military families 25% on their grocery bills. Prior to his DeCA role, he served as the Army's senior Civilian logistician, working in the U.S. Army Headquarters at the Pentagon. In all, Mr. Moore's experience spans more than 40 years serving our military and their families



Errol Schweizer was born in The Bronx and is a product of New York Public Schools. He has over 30 years of experience in the food industry, starting out as a stock clerk and grill cook. Errol was V.P. of Grocery/Executive Global Coordinator for Whole Foods

from 2009-2016. His team grew sales to over U.S. \$5 Billion on top of a 350 BP margin improvement by supporting the launch and commercialization of thousands of new products. He has developed plant-based, organic, Non-GMO and regenerative supply chains and product standards for decades. He was awarded a NOSH Top 50 grocery industry award in 2023 and was recognized with a Retail Game-changer from Supermarket News in 2015 and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Hemp Industries Association in 2019. He has been a board member, advisor and co-founder to over a dozen "better for you" CPG companies and now works closely with independent and cooperative grocers. He has ten years of experience in municipal food policy, is the Host of The Checkout Podcast and writes for Forbes, Jacobin and Salon. He is now the publisher of The Checkout Grocery Update, a 100% unfiltered insider analysis on the \$1 trillion U.S. grocery industry.

Guest Respondents:



Lauren Drumgold: As a Policy Advisor with the NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy, Lauren leads efforts at the intersection of food access and health, including contributing to the city's chronic disease prevention strategy, focusing on local and federal safety net initiatives, and

tracking federal policy developments. During her time with MOFP, Lauren developed a research agenda outlining food affordability and access priorities and works to enhance data transparency of the city's key food metrics.

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Bianca Bockman is a lifelong social justice activist working to support communities in their pursuit of self-determination. Bianca has been active in a broad range of movements - from the Global Justice movement to the struggle for Tibetan independence to Occupy Wall Street and, for almost 15 years now, in Brooklyn's food sovereignty movement.

Bianca graduated from the New School in 2002 with a BA in Creativity and Social Change. While she always had a strong passion for food in her personal life, it was in graduate school in 2011 at the University for Peace in Costa Rica where she finally made the connection between food and politics. She has been working in the food movement, primarily in Brooklyn, ever since. In 2016, Bianca was in the inaugural class of the New York City Food Policy Center's 40 under 40 Rising Stars and in 2019-21 was an inaugural fellow with the Community Food Funders' Seeding Power Fellowship. Currently, at RiseBoro Community Partnership, she directs Our Food, where her team invites Brooklyn community members to take control of the food system through urban farming, community marketplaces and the development of food-related worker-owned co-ops. Bianca also serves on the Leadership Council of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, which launched in January 2025.



Corinna Lee is the Director of GrowNYC's Wholesale Food Hub program, where she oversees strategy and operations for procurement, logistics, sales, partnerships, and long-term planning. Since 2018, she has led the program's transition into the New York State Regional Food

Hub. This new Hunt's Point facility opened in April 2025, expanding cold storage, logistics capacity, and procurement channels to strengthen New York's regional supply chain. Under her leadership, the Food Hub program has distributed more than 26 million pounds of regionally sourced products and advanced market access for over 50 farms. She brings more than a decade of experience in the food sector, with prior roles spanning restaurant consulting, event production, and food entrepreneurship.

Moderator:



Nevin Cohen is Associate Professor at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Public Health, Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management, and Director of the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. For the past 10 years, his scholarly work has involved

community-based research on urban food policy and food systems disparities, and he is an expert on the food policies and policymaking processes of New York City, where for 7 years he also held staff positions in city government. He is the author of *Beyond the Kale: Urban Agriculture and Social Justice Activism in NYC* (The University of Georgia Press).

About the forum:

Zohran Mamdani was elected Mayor of New York City based on a platform to make New York City affordable. His campaign included a proposal to create five city-run grocery stores, one in each borough, that would sell food at affordable prices by operating as non-profit public retailers. The idea of creating city-run grocery stores has ignited spirited debate about how New York City can make healthy food more affordable and accessible to all residents. The conversation has expanded to explore what role municipal governments should play in food retail, how publicly owned food retail could operate sustainably, and what public food retail might mean for equity, health, and competition with the private sector. The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute invites you to a timely and thought-provoking forum that will bring together business and policy experts to examine the opportunities and challenges of city-owned food retail, drawing lessons from past and current public-sector food access efforts. Join us to discuss how cities like New York can reshape their food systems to promote justice and affordability.

Additional Resources

- Bradley, A. R.** (2025). [Can city-run stores fill food access gaps?](#) *The Washington Post*.
- CNN:** [Mamdani's plan to open public supermarkets.](#) (2025). *CNN Business*.
- Community Food Advocates.** [CFA Supermarket Access Economic Modeling Recommendations.](#)
- Food Systems for the Future Institute.** (2024). [Grocery retail for all: Affordable, nutritious food in every neighborhood.](#)
- Good Food Purchasing Program.** [Why we need a public food sector.](#)
- Invest Atlanta** <https://www.investatlanta.com/dashboard>
- Kailath, R.** (2025). [Zohran Mamdani is calling for city-owned grocery stores. NYC already has them.](#) *Gothamist*.
- NYC Food Policy.** [Food affordability and access research agenda.](#)
- Parton, M.** (2025). [A look at the history and future of public grocery stores.](#) *Modern Retail*.
- Parton, M.** (2025). [The public-grocery store debate.](#) *The Atlantic*.
- Patel, R., & Schweizer, E.** (2025). Op-ed: [Public grocery stores already exist and work well — we need more.](#) *Civil Eats*.
- Public Grocery Store Concept Presentation.**
- Schweizer, E.** (2024). Grocery Update #17: [How Grocery Cartels Created & Profited From Price Inflation.](#) *Grocery Nerd* (Substack).
- Schweizer, E.** (2024). [Why a price-gouging ban isn't so crazy after all.](#) *Forbes*.
- Schweizer, E.** (2024). [Why your groceries are still so expensive.](#) *Forbes*.
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [Grocery Update 116: Why High Food Prices Persist.](#) *Grocery Nerd* (Substack).
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [Grocery Update 117: Making Food Affordable.](#) *Grocery Nerd*
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [Grocery Update Special Feature: Why It's Time for Public Sector Grocery Stores in New York.](#) *Grocery Nerd* (Substack).
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [How public groceries can make food affordable again.](#) *Jacobin*.
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [How to operate a public grocery sector.](#) *Grocery Nerd* (Substack).
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [Why New Yorkers voted for public grocery stores: Explained.](#) *Forbes*.
- Schweizer, E.** (2025). [How Public and Cooperative Grocers Could Transform New York City.](#) *Forbes*
- The Week.** (2025). [What Mamdani's plan really means.](#) *The Week*.
- Vital City.** (2025). [Guess what? Government is already in the grocery business.](#)
- Watson, C.** (2025). [Critics weigh in on city-run groceries.](#) *NBC New York*