

Source: J. Shannon, “From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining: Making sense of food access in Atlanta,”
Atlanta Studies, Aug. 14, 2018.

Supermarket redlining in Atlanta

Lesson 2 Supplemental

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Slideshow created: Aug. 26, 2021

Last revised: Aug. 26, 2021

Food deserts

From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining: Making Sense of Food Access in Atlanta

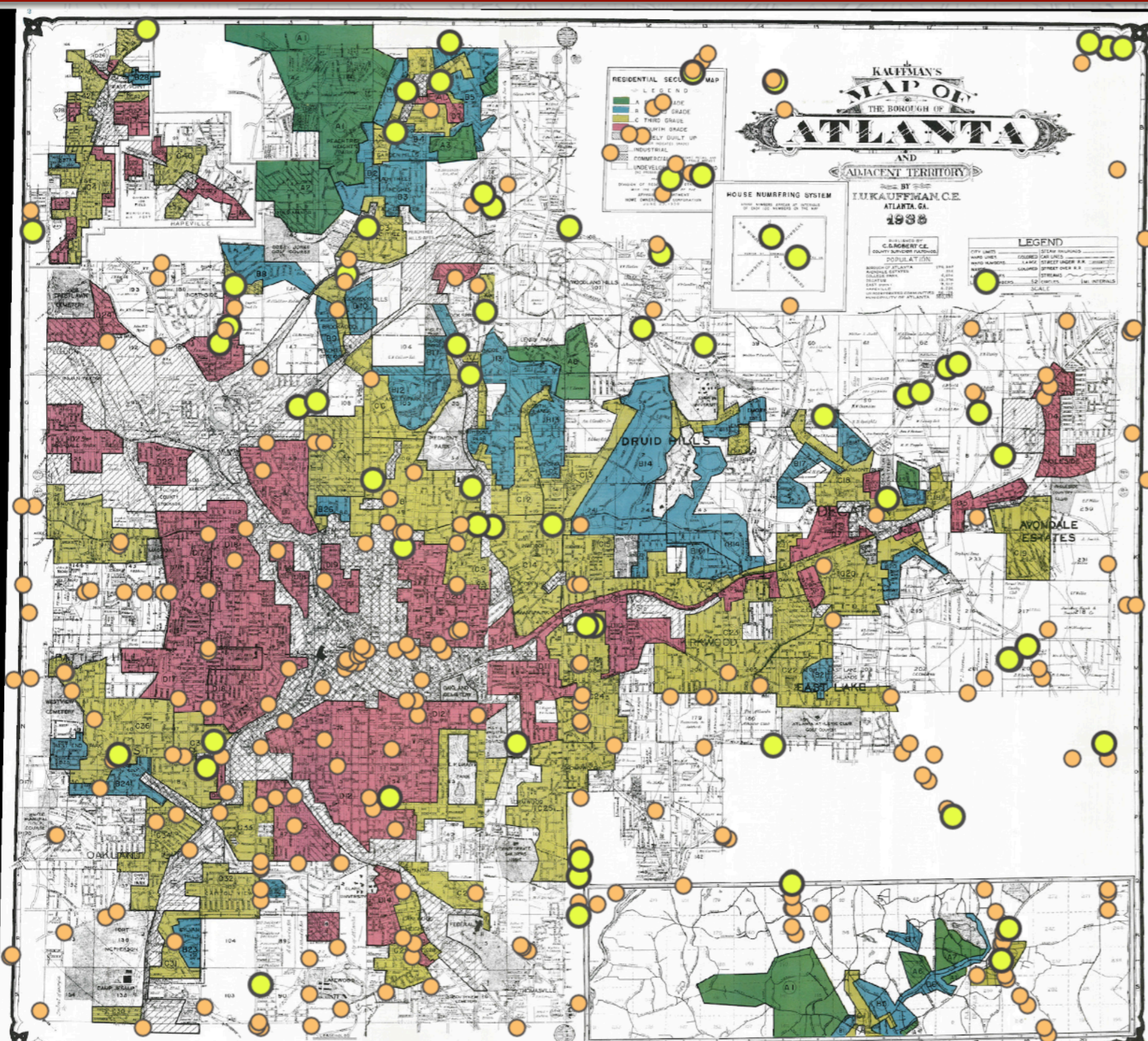
JERRY SHANNON, UGA

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Food Access Research Atlas](#), over one in every four Atlantans live in neighborhoods defined as *food deserts*, or areas with limited geographic access to fresh meats and produce. In urban areas such as Atlanta, food deserts are defined as census tracts where a significant part of the population is a mile or more from the nearest supermarket, as these are assumed to provide the best and most affordable access to healthy foods. A number of policy

A food desert is a neighborhood with limited geographic access to fresh meats and produce.

Source for all images and screen-shotted excerpts: J. Shannon, "From Food Deserts to Supermarket Redlining: Making sense of food access in Atlanta," *Atlanta Studies*, Aug. 14, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.18737/atls20180814>

Supermarkets and superstores (yellow dots)



- SNAP Retailers
- Convenience Store
- Super Store/Supermarket
- Redlined areas
- HOLC map
- OpenStreetMap

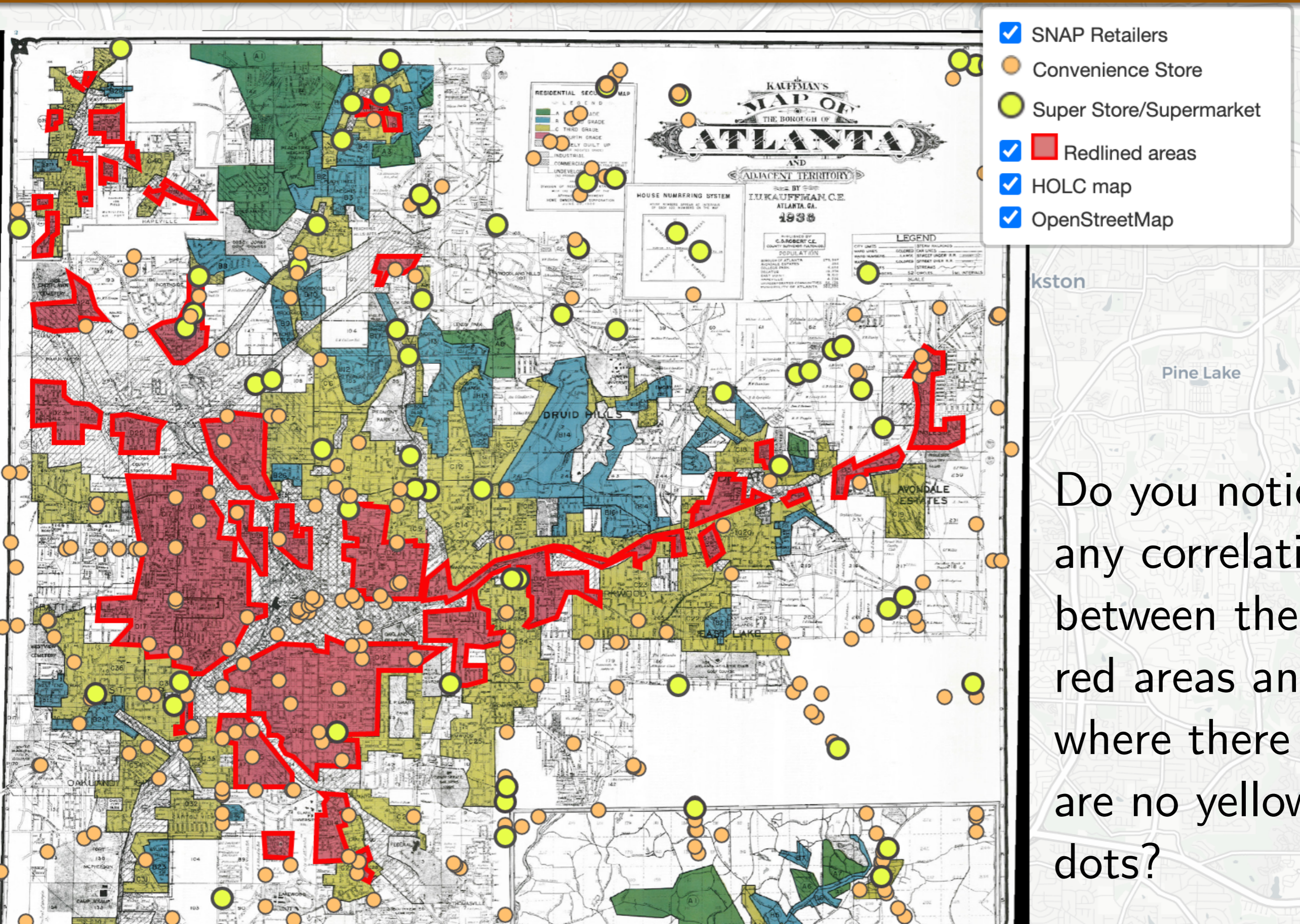
The 1938 housing industry redlining map shown can be viewed without the dots plotted on it at <https://twitter.com/thexylom/status/1286296957732950017/photo/1>

Redlining in housing

“Redlining” refers to discriminatory practices in the housing industry dating to the 1930s.

Rather than using the ecological metaphor of food deserts, some scholars have used the term *supermarket redlining*.⁴ Redlining refers to discriminatory practices in the housing industry dating to the 1930s. During this time, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) created maps of many major urban centers that showed the lending risk in specific neighborhoods. Areas with an “A” grade were excellent candidates for home loans. At the other end of the scale, areas with a “D” grade – usually marked in red – were considered poor risks. “Redlined” areas were often determined based on a high rate of African American residents. In a previous post in *Atlanta Studies*, Jason Rhodes provided a fuller explanation of how HOLC maps impacted Atlanta specifically,⁵ and the University of Richmond also has an excellent resource for viewing HOLC maps in most major urban areas.⁶ These maps, and the

Historically redlined areas



Do you notice any correlation between the red areas and where there are no yellow dots?

Supermarket-redlining

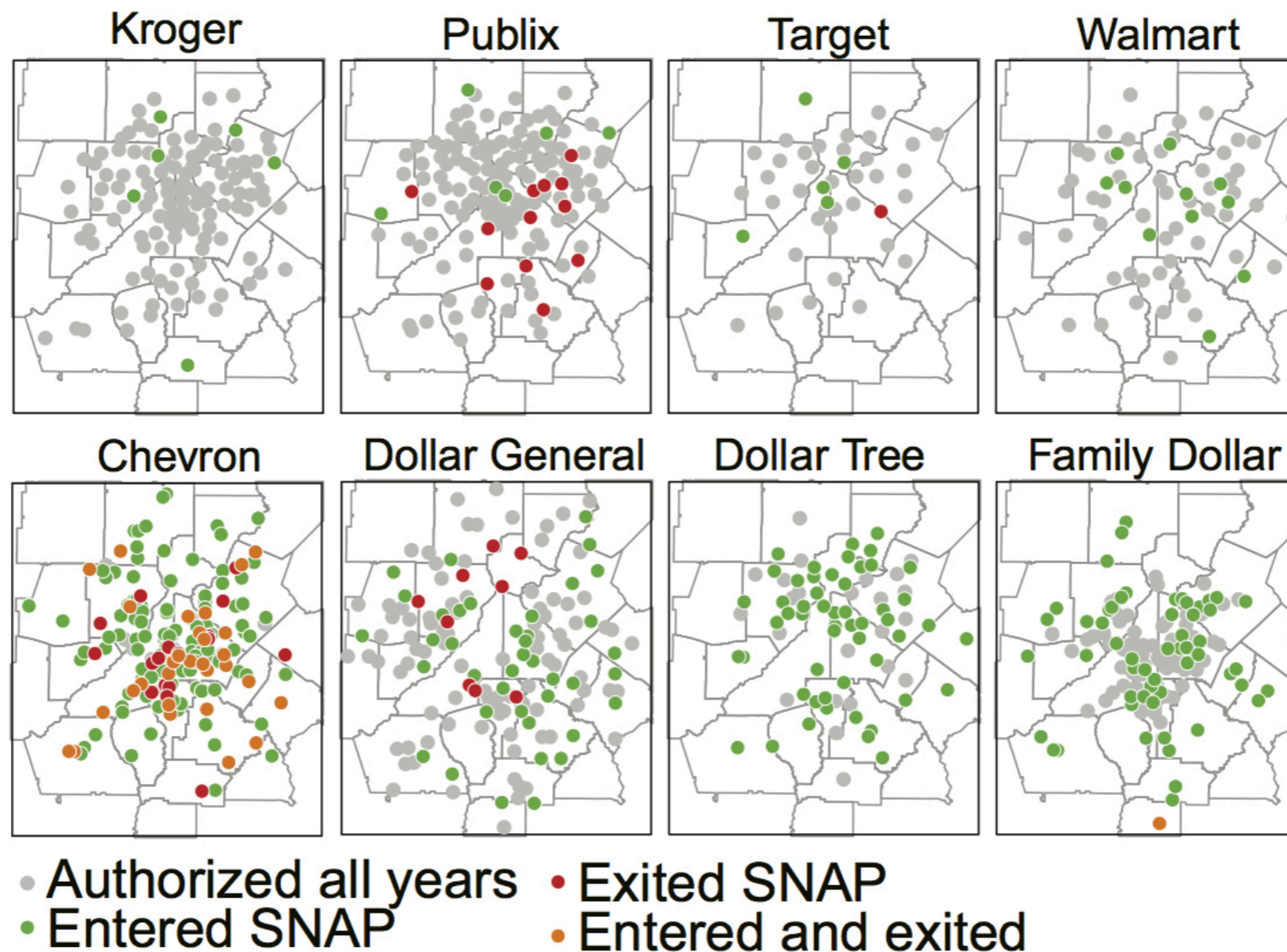
We will say an area is “**supermarket-redlined**” if major food retailers withdraw their financial investment from that neighborhood.

Rather than using the ecological metaphor of food deserts, some scholars have used the term *supermarket redlining*.⁴ Redlining refers to discriminatory practices in the housing industry dating to the 1930s. During this time, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) created maps of many major urban centers that showed the lending risk in specific neighborhoods. Areas with an “A” grade were excellent candidates for home loans. At the other end of the scale, areas with a “D” grade – usually marked in red – were considered poor risks. “Redlined” areas were often determined based on a high rate of African American residents. In a previous post in *Atlanta*

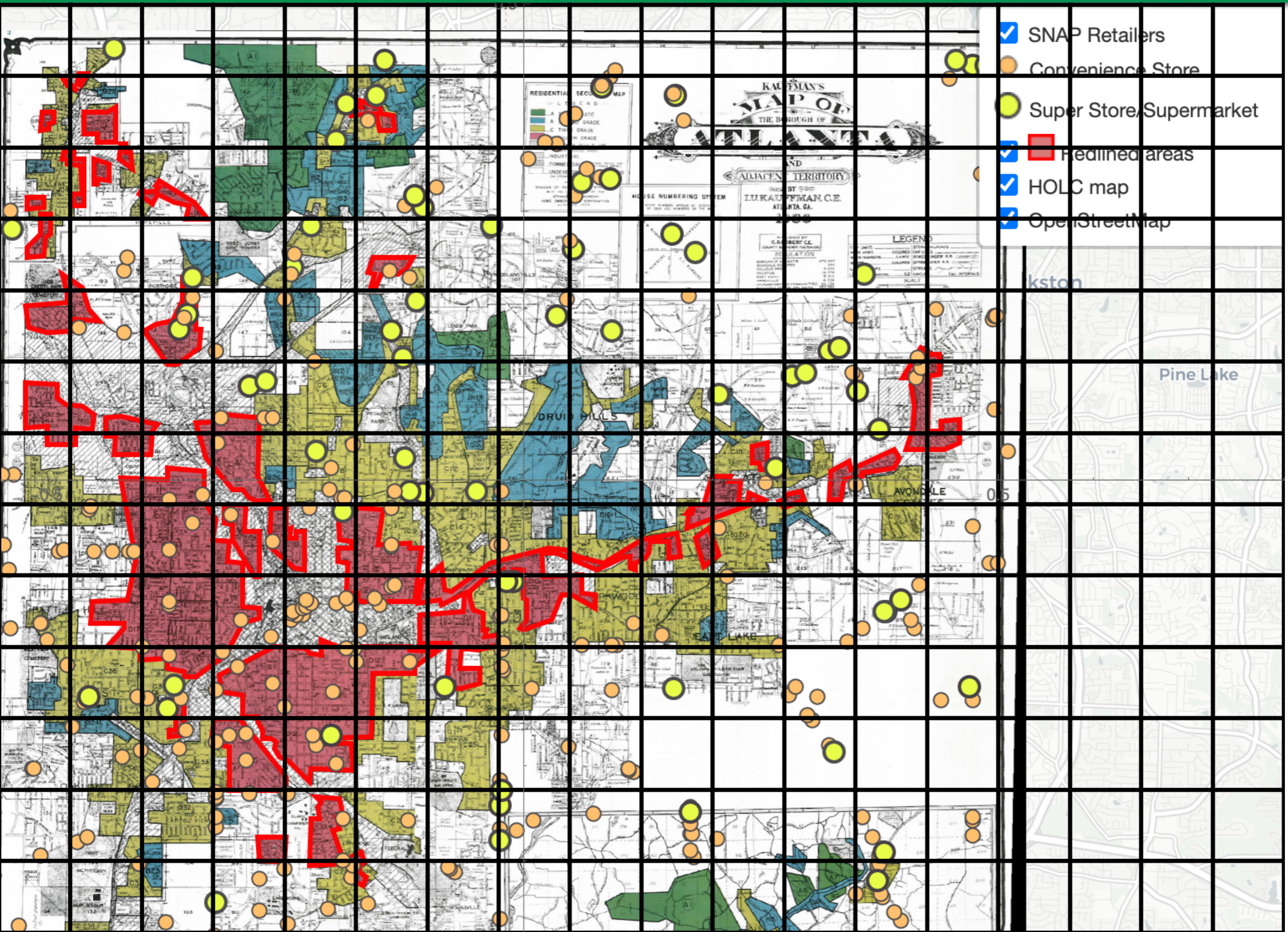
Supermarket redlining as a term, then, resists framing disparities in access to healthy foods as just a side effect of an otherwise functional market or some “natural” urban ecology, as a bug in the system so to speak. Rather it highlights how the locational decisions of food retailers are evidence of intentional disinvestment in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. This parallel is not simply metaphorical. Historically, supermarkets grew up along with the suburbs, relying on the sprawling, car dependent landscape of these low density communities.⁸ Supermarkets were created with suburban residents in mind, and so the forces that created

“Withdrawing their investment”

(By “withdrawing their investment,” we specifically mean exiting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a USDA program that provides nutrition benefits.)



How much of Atlanta was redlined?



How much of Atlanta was redlined?

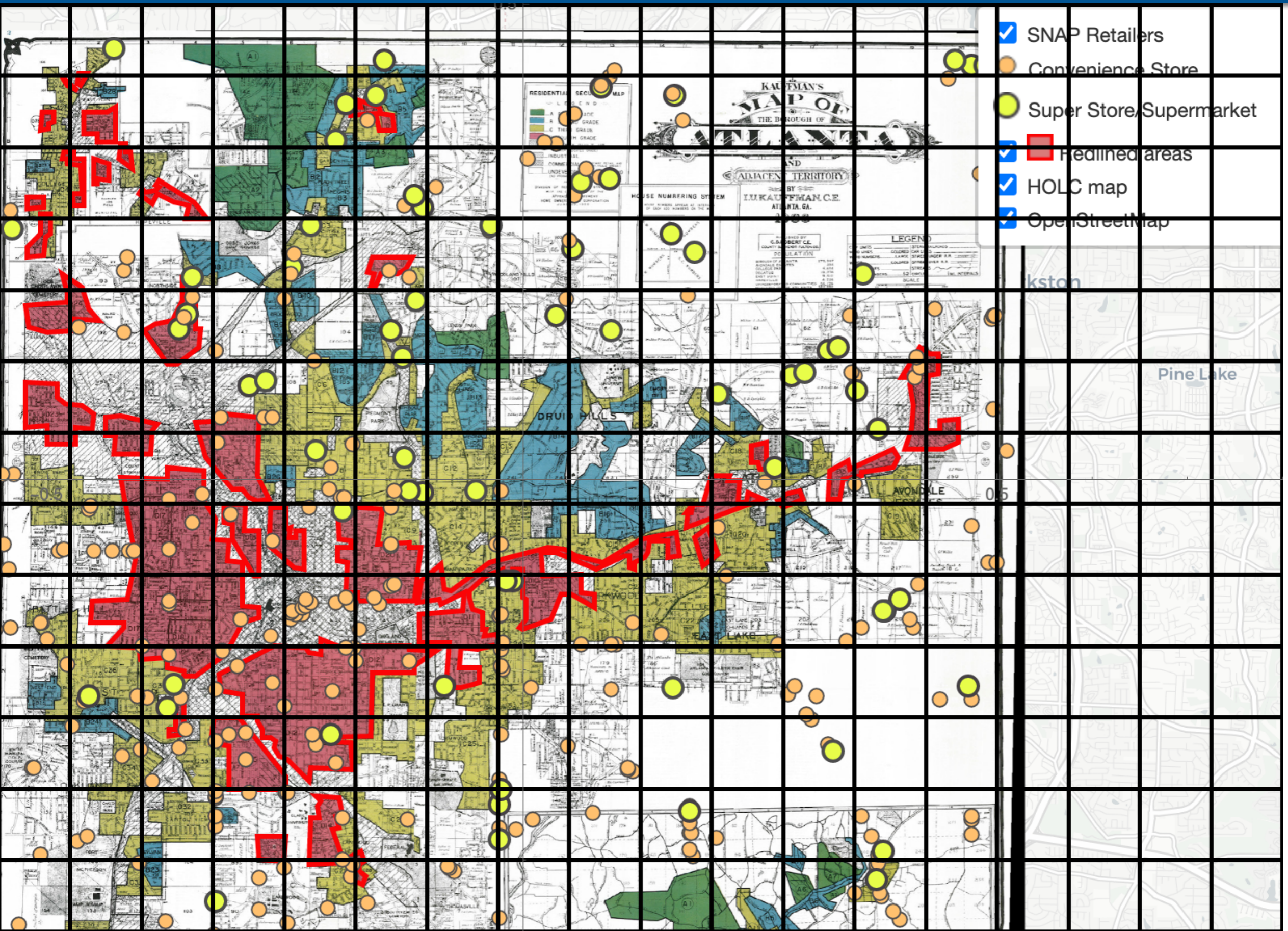
Ex.

Each grid square in the previous slide measures about 3500 ft. on each side.

Be sure to give your units in parts (1) and (2).

- (1) Estimate the area (first in *grid squares*, then in *square feet*) of the redlined area.
- (2) Estimate how much of the redlined area has limited geographic access to fresh meats and produce. (*Hint: How many redlined or mostly redlined grid squares contain no yellow dots?*)
- (3) Estimate what percent of the redlined area has limited geographic access to fresh meats and produce.

How much of the redlined area has limited food access?



How much of the redlined area has limited food access?

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(do all parts as group work)

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