Title: An Ecological Analysis of Food Outlet Density and Prevalence of Type II Diabetes in South Carolina Counties

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewer

Dr. Thomas J Songer,

Thank you very much for the thoughtful reviews and giving us this opportunity to revise and improve our manuscript. Below we present the reviewer’s comments verbatim in italic and then provide our response. We show excerpts for our manuscript in quotations in font Arial. The changes in the manuscript are shown in the color red.

*Minor weaknesses exist, notably the written perception that the authors are trying explain away the null results in the discussion (lines 275-285) and conclusion.*

We have added more content in lines 276-280 in the updated manuscript to expand on the results. We provide more sufficient explanation of the results by building upon these interesting findings to help the reader expand their understanding of the research problem. We have also paid close attention to avoid making strong inferences that are not indicative of the results. Specifically, we deleted the following statement:

“...suggesting the built environment still contributes to DM prevalence; in particular, fast food restaurants and convenience stores have a negative association.”

We have also deleted previous lines 281-286. “Further, in contrast to the hypothesis, the density of fast food restaurants and density of convenience stores were found to be negatively associated with DM among South Carolina’s counties in the adjusted OLS regression analyses. However, neither of these associations reached statistical significance. Again, no significant associations were found between super store densities and grocery store densities and DM prevalence.”

We feel that these lines simply reiterate the results as opposed to interpreting and expanding on the results, which is the purpose of the discussion section. Thank you for picking up on these lines.

*The authors may consider revision in the discussion and conclusion to eliminate potential confusion about the null findings.*

The revisions to this comment have been addressed above as we have added more sufficient explanation to our results without making broad generalizations to the world. We have also added more content in the discussion section (lines 293-297) to further explain possible reasons for differences in results within the literature. We also expanded on our limitations (lines 321-323) and revised our conclusion (lines 328-330). We appreciate this comment and hope that our revisions help respond to this concern. While we value this input, we also feel that it is important to elaborate on our null findings and explain possible reasons for them because the results generally contradict the literature, and the purpose of the discussion section is to expand on the results.