

## Advocate group blames lack of fresh food for high inner city disease rates

From wire service reports

Posted: 07/21/2010 07:10:24 AM PDT

A lack of full-service grocery stores in South Los Angeles and other low-income communities contributes to high rates of heart disease and diabetes, according to a report released today.

The report was issued by Community Health Councils, a nonprofit policy group advocating for disadvantaged communities.

"Quality grocery stores providing nutritious, health food options are scarce in South L.A.," said Lark Galloway-Gilliam, executive director of the organization. "(That) has fueled the high rates of death and disability due to diet-related diseases like heart disease and diabetes."

South Los Angeles' 1.3 million residents have about 60 full-service grocery stores, or one per about every 22,000 residents. That compares to one per about 11,000 residents in more affluent West Los Angeles, according to the report.

The lack of resources forces shoppers to travel outside the community to find fresh produce and meat, according to CHC. Others may resort to fast food or convenience store shopping to meet their needs.

"Research has shown for each additional supermarket, the likelihood of residents meeting nutritional guidelines increases by one-third," Galloway-Gilliam said. "It's time for policymakers and grocers alike to break down stigma, misperceptions and bureaucratic obstacles and bring quality stores back into our community."

The report, "Food Desert to Food Oasis," recommends changes that Los Angeles city and county officials can adopt to attract retail food stores to underserved neighborhoods.

The federal government's \$400 million Healthy Food Financing Initiative, designed to bring healthy food to economically challenged urban and rural communities, was cited as one example of momentum that could help fuel the CHC's goals and encourage retailers to develop new stores.

The findings, the result of a year-long study, can be viewed in full at [www.chc-inc.org/policy-briefs](http://www.chc-inc.org/policy-briefs).

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