

# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## ***Food Desert to Food Oasis***

*A Symposium to Break Down Barriers to Grocery Store & Business Development in South LA*

**Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> 9am-4pm & Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> 9-Noon**

*Center for Healthy Communities at The California Endowment*

*1000 North Alameda Street • Los Angeles 90012*

**Los Angeles, CA**—More than 150 concerned citizens, community-based organizations and representatives of local government agencies, private investment, food retail and developers are sitting down together at the *Food Desert to Food Oasis* symposium to discuss what can be done to stimulate grocery store and business development in South LA. The 1½-day event sponsored by Community Health Councils, a non-profit health advocacy organization will feature guest speakers from across the country to present their success stories and lessons learned in changing the food resource environment in urban areas.

“Nutritious, healthy food options are scarce in South LA,” says Lark Galloway-Gilliam, executive director of CHC. “The lack of full service grocery stores carrying fresh, quality healthy food has fueled the high rates of death due to heart disease and diabetes in communities such as South Los Angeles. Research has shown that for each additional supermarket, the likelihood of residents meeting nutritional guidelines increase by one third.<sup>1</sup> It’s time to breakdown the stigma, misperceptions and excuses and bring quality stores back into our community.”

The two-day working session is designed to stimulate public and private reinvestment by: providing policy makers with strategies to attract developers of retail grocery stores into low-income, urban neighborhoods; reframing the economic profile of South Los Angeles for retailers; and equipping local communities with the knowledge and tools to be active participants in retail development. “We

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<sup>1</sup> K. Morland; The Contextual Effect of the Local Food Environment on Resident’s Diet”. American Journal of Public Health. 2002:92(11) 1761-1768.

*Community Health Councils is a non-profit, community-based health promotion, advocacy and policy organization. Established in 1992, CHC’s mission is to improve health and increase access to quality healthcare for uninsured, economically-disadvantaged, and underserved populations.*

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have so few tools to understand the market opportunities for retail investment in underserved communities, according to John Talmage, president/CEO of Social Compact, “we typically blame those communities for not having the market rather than the investment community for not understanding the market. Los Angeles is a prime example where we have found 80 thousand more people than the census captured, and 24% higher average household income than previously understood”.

The data presented and stories shared of progress made in communities across the nation, demonstrates the feasibility of changing the food retail landscape in South Los Angeles. Day 2 of the symposium moves the discussion from economic and health data to a concrete roadmap for change. Participants will examine two potential sites for retail development in South Los Angeles. Representatives from the City of Los Angeles Planning Department, Community Redevelopment Agency along with the California Grocers Association and a local community economic development corporation will work together to develop a blueprint for policy makers on what they can do to facilitate the establishment of new food retailers in South Los Angeles. Where other efforts have stalled – the symposium is designed to jump start and engage all sectors and interest in turning South LA from a food desert to a food oasis.