

# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Critical Hearing on Efforts to Transform South LA's Food Desert**

*Zoning & Design Issues Could Stall First New Supermarket for Community in 20 Years  
City Council will also hear testimony on fast-food regulations*

**City Council Hearing • Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 10am**

*City Hall Room #340 • 200 N. Spring Street • Los Angeles 90012*

**Los Angeles, CA** — For thousands of South LA residents, tomorrow could represent a significant milestone in making South LA a healthier place to live. The LA City Council will decide if a new neighborhood market touting fresh food and a new format for inner-city grocery stores should be allowed to go forward at 54<sup>th</sup> and Crenshaw while also considering zoning standards to prevent the further over-concentration of fast-food restaurants. But the proposed *Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market* is in danger of losing approval due to concerns about zoning and design requirements.

Studies have shown that South LA has fewer full-service grocery stores and more fast-food restaurants than their healthier food alternatives. Home to over 1.3 million people, South LA's full-service grocery stores average 22,156 residents. In West LA, stores average only 11,150 residents. More than 70 percent of the restaurants in South LA are fast-food outlets that traditionally offer foods high in calories and fat, low in nutritional value and "super-sized" portions. Health experts suggest the proliferation of fast-food restaurants combined with the lack of quality full-service grocery stores carrying fresh, quality healthy food has fueled the high rates of death and disability due to diet-related disease, including heart disease.

Many residents in South LA must travel outside the community to find fresh and nutritious foods while being bombarded by fast-food restaurants promoting cheap, quick, nutritionally poor meals on each of the area's major corridors. "In neighborhoods like the Crenshaw district, while there are a number of full-service stores, one or two stores dominate the market and the quality of the food and store is generally substandard," says Lark Galloway-Gilliam, executive director of CHC. "Research has shown for each additional supermarket, the likelihood of residents meeting nutritional guidelines increases by one third. One of the biggest challenges to bringing new grocery stores into regions like South LA is the large, big box format and large parking lots most stores require. Fresh and Easy opens the door to a new, small neighborhood market format. While we are not expecting the entry of a new grocery store to eliminate health disparities, it will provide greater choice and hopefully help improve quality through greater competition."

The specific plan represented a long-fought effort on the part of area residents to set limits on the height of new construction, the types of businesses allowed and inclusion of pedestrian-friendly design standards. The 14,000

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square foot store will replace a long-defunct auto dealership and provide access to the first new grocery store in the area in decades. Although the City's Planning Department was successful in getting the grocer to revise their design plans to conform with all but four modifications to the signage and parking provisions in the Specific Plan, a community resident has filed an appeal challenging any deviation from standards. "We believe the Planning Department struck a balance between urban design standards that limit parking and the functional needs of the retailer and shoppers as South LA struggles to fill the void of quality grocery stores and faces a major health crisis," says Gwendolyn Flynn, CHC Policy Director. "We are confident the design will conform with the pedestrian-oriented commercial development, provide safe access to the store and expanded green space along Crenshaw Boulevard." However, there is now a good chance the development will be stalled and go down as yet another example of failed efforts for reinvestment in South LA.

City Council will also hear testimony on the community plan amendment to regulate the development of new standalone fast-food restaurants in South LA. The proposed plan not only addresses the growing concern for over concentration but improves the aesthetics of proposed projects as seen in other communities. The amendment restricts the development of new standalone restaurants to within a ½ mile radius of another fast-food restaurants, but continues to allow for new restaurants integrated into a mixed-use building, commercial center or other joint tenant buildings. The amendment also includes seven design standards for exempt restaurants to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area, eliminate setback along the street frontage, landscaping, and requires screening and parking in the rear or at the side.

Community Health Councils, its Food Policy Roundtable and Food Resource Development Coalition have been advocating for more healthy food retail investment in South Los Angeles as one strategy to close the food resource gap. South LA experiences higher rates of obesity and diet-related chronic disease compared with LA County overall. The death rate from diabetes is three times higher in South LA than in West LA (37.9 per 100,000 population compared to 12.8), while nearly twice as many residents in South LA die from heart disease compared with West LA (217.6 per 100,000 vs 132.6). "Establishing new opportunities for healthy food retail in South Los Angeles is good public policy, responsible planning and good for the public's health," continues Galloway-Gilliam. Community residents are expected to pack the hearing to voice their support for the proposed store and approval of the fast-food zoning standard.

*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.*