



Searching for Healthy Food

The Food Landscape in California Cities and Counties

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There is increasing evidence that what we eat and the likelihood of being obese are influenced by the foods available in neighborhoods—the food landscape or food environment. Given the uneven distribution of food outlets in California communities, the California Center for Public Health Advocacy calls on federal, state and local policy makers to enact policies to accomplish the following:

1. **Increase the number of grocery stores and other produce vendors in neighborhoods that have limited access to fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods.** State and local governments should implement policies that stimulate and support retail projects that provide access to healthy foods through strategies such as grants, loans, and zoning regulations.
2. **Support other innovative retail strategies to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods in California neighborhoods.** State and local governments should support nontraditional approaches to expanding access to healthy food—such as mobile vendors, direct farm-to-consumer sales, healthier options at fast-food restaurants, and training and technical assistance for retailers.
3. **Set reasonable limits on the number of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores in California neighborhoods.** The health implications of these establishments should be considered in the community design and permitting process. State and local governments should seek a balance of retailers that support both the economic and health needs of communities.
4. **Utilize federal nutrition assistance programs, such as Food Stamps and WIC, to make fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods more affordable to low-income families.** Even with food assistance programs, many families find it difficult to afford healthy food. Increasing families' financial ability to purchase healthy foods will increase the demand for healthy food retailers. State and local governments should enhance assistance programs so that families are better able to purchase healthy foods. For example, the state should fund the fruit and vegetable incentive program established through AB 2384 (Leno, 2006).
5. **Require food retailers such as fast-food restaurants to provide consumers with nutritional information for all items on menus and menu boards.** Given the proliferation of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, consumers need immediate access to the nutrient content of items sold by these retailers so that they can make healthier choices. State and local governments should require retailers to post nutrition information on menus and menu boards.