

The Health Issue: Health Disparities

Solution: Prioritizing Lower-Income and Higher Density Neighborhoods for Access to Produce and Parks

Quick Facts

Fact: There are 51 residential areas in the City of San Jose that do not have access to a park, school, or open space within 1/3 mile.

Fact: In one Los Angeles neighborhood, about 20 fast-food restaurants are packed into a quarter-mile stretch of road. Grocery store chains have historically been less likely to locate in lower-income communities and communities of color. East Palo Alto, a community of 30,000 and predominantly Hispanic and African American, recently approved its first full service grocery store (as of October 2009).

Fact: In Los Angeles, white neighborhoods (where whites make up 75% or more of the residents) boast 31.8 acres of park space for every 1,000 people, compared with 1.7 acres in African American neighborhoods and 0.6 acres in Latino neighborhoods.

Fact: A Health Report from the City of Berkeley points to evidence that some California communities display a life expectancy that is 20 years greater in the wealthiest census tracts than in the most impoverished.

Key Messages

Message: "It is vital that all residents of a community enjoy equal access to nature, and urban parks provide that visual and mental respite from the busyness of city life."

Message: "Lower-income neighborhoods that are shown to have little to no access to parks, must be prioritized to receive these first as the City expands parkland. Having a green place to play, walk, and relax benefits people of all ages."

Policy Suggestions

- Apply resources to meet parks, recreation, and open space needs in underserved areas of the city, prioritizing lower income and higher density areas, which may have a greater need for these amenities.
- Provide access to an existing or future park, open space lands, and/or a major city trail within a 1/3 mile radius walking distance of all residents by either acquiring lands within 1/3 mile or providing safe connections to existing recreation facilities outside of the 1/3 mile radius walking distance.
- Implement zoning designed to limit fast-food restaurants in overburdened communities.
- Identify sites for community gardens and promote the expansion of farmers' markets and urban agriculture.
- Measure the accessibility of healthy foods by neighborhood to identify nutrition-deficient neighborhoods in a city.

Resources & References

Looking for an interactive map to identify park deficient neighborhoods? Check out www.parkscore.org

