

11.7.2 Access to Healthy Foods

A healthy community promotes healthy food options, including grocery stores and food markets, through the design of its built environment.

Community Health Impacts

The presence of a grocery store or food market in a neighborhood correlates with higher fruit and vegetable consumption, reduces the prevalence of overweight and obesity and reduces the incidence of hunger.⁴⁰ A grocery store is defined as a retail outlet where a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and meats could be purchased. A food market is a store that carries some fruits and vegetables.

Farmers markets provide another source of fresh, locally produced fruits, vegetables and other food products. This in turn may help residents meet the recommended daily servings of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. Healthy food is generally low in fat and saturated fat, contains limited amounts of cholesterol and sodium, and provides natural vitamins. Markets may be particularly important in areas poorly served by full-service supermarkets.⁴¹

Community gardens can also provide a source of fresh fruits and vegetables for users, increase physical activity and provide opportunities for social interaction and cohesion. Locally produced food helps attain other benefits, such as sustaining the local economy and reducing long-distance shipping, thereby decreasing vehicle emissions, which are associated with chronic diseases and global warming.

Neighborhood studies demonstrate that where there are high numbers of fast food restaurants compared to grocery stores, there are also higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.⁴² Increasing the number of full-service grocery stores relative to fast food restaurants in neighborhoods can help to combat these conditions.

Current Conditions

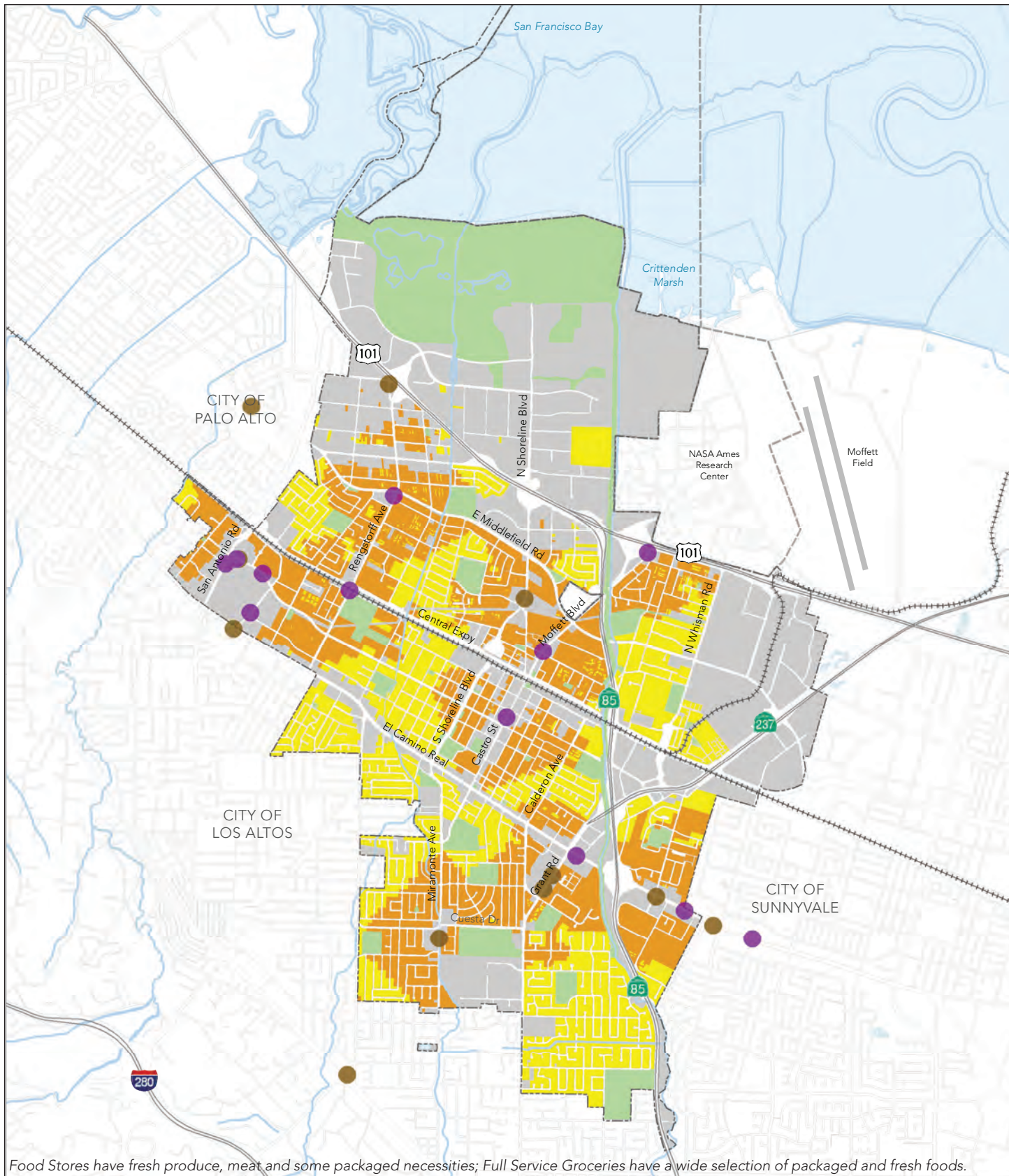
More than half of the residential parcels in the city enjoy good access to nutritious food options. [See Figure 11-7]

While farmers markets and community gardens are important sources of fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables, this analysis focuses only on access to grocery stores and food markets. Farmers markets and community gardens do not always provide a ready, regular supply of food. For the purpose of this analysis, the service areas of food pantries, farmers markets and community gardens were not taken into account due either to their infrequent nature or lack of general market items.

⁴⁰ Inagami S, Cohen DA, Finch BK, Asch SM. You are where you shop: grocery store locations, weight and neighborhoods. Am J Prev Med, 2006.

⁴¹ Morland K, Diez Roux AV, Wing S. Supermarkets, other food stores and obesity: the atherosclerosis risk in communities study. Am J Prev Med, 2006.

⁴² Inagami S, Cohen DA, Finch BK, Asch SM. You are where you shop: grocery store locations, weight and neighborhoods. Am J Prev Med, 2006.



LEGEND

- City of Mountain View
- Water Bodies
- Food Store
- Full Service Grocery Store
- Sphere of Influence
- Creeks
- Parks & Open Space
- Non-Residential Area
- Residential, within 1/4 Mile of Healthy Food
- Residential, beyond 1/2 Mile of Healthy Food

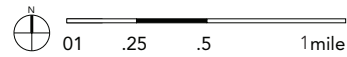


Figure 11-7: Access to Healthy Foods

January 2010

Five of the city's ten public elementary schools and about half of all residential parcels in Mountain View are located within one half mile of one or more fast food restaurants. [See Figure 11-8]

Five of Mountain View public elementary schools are located within half a mile of a fast food restaurant. About three in five elementary school children can walk to a fast food restaurant from school within ten minutes (one half mile).⁴³ Some of these elementary schools, however, are also located within one half mile of a grocery store or food market, such Huff and Bubb Elementary Schools (compare figures 11-7 and 11-8).

About 48 percent of residences are located within one half mile of at least one fast food restaurant. The majority of these residential parcels are located near the following arterials: El Camino Real, North Shoreline Boulevard, North Whisman Road and Calderon Avenue (north of El Camino). Some of these residential areas, however, are also located within one half mile of a grocery store or food market, such as areas along El Camino Real (compare figures 11-7 and 11-8).

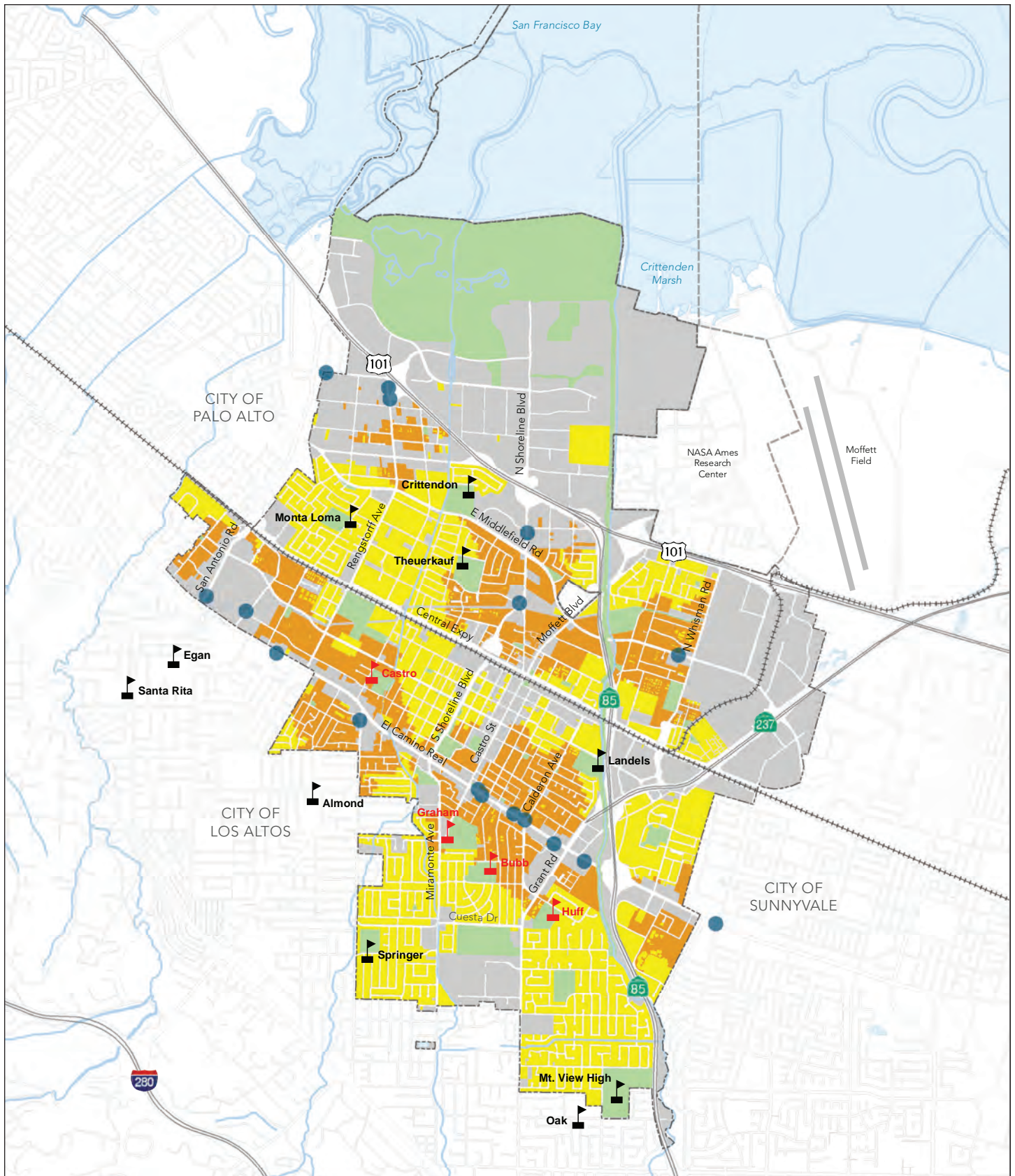
Opportunities

Access to fast food and areas with limited access to grocery stores and food markets provide clear opportunities for targeted policy to improve access to healthy foods. Both residential areas and elementary school children would benefit from such efforts.

Mountain View could promote access to health foods by:

- Building community gardens on vacant public parcels in neighborhoods, in school yards and potentially as part of large private development projects;
- Exploring the potential for additional farmers' markets in the city;
- Restricting the availability of unhealthy foods in schools and public facilities;
- Preventing the concentration of fast food restaurants close to schools;
- Restricting the amount of trans fat in restaurants in Mountain View;
- Enforce menu labeling in restaurants, as per state law;
- Encouraging local organizations and schools to provide education program on nutrition and healthy eating habits; and
- Allowing healthy food options in 'village nodes'.

⁴³ California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit. (2009). Accessed November 3, 2009 from California Department of Education database. <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.



LEGEND

- City of Mountain View
- Sphere of Influence
- Parks & Open Space
- Water Bodies
- Creeks
- Non-Residential Area
- Fast Food Restaurant
- Residential, within 1/4 Mile of Fast Food
- Residential, Beyond 1/2 Mile of Fast Food
- ▲ Elementary Schools in Close Proximity to Fast Food Restaurants
- ▲ Elementary Schools

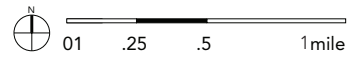


Figure 11-8: Access to Fast Food

January 2010