

News Release



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Zoning In on Healthy Fast Food

South LA's fast-food moratorium expires in September. Where do we go from here?

Town Hall • Thursday, August 12th, 6-8pm

Second African Methodist Episcopal Church • 5500 South Hoover Street • Los Angeles 90037

Los Angeles, CA— The City of Los Angeles' fast-food moratorium for South LA expires September 14, 2010. A 2008 ordinance placed a moratorium on the development of new standalone fast-food restaurants in portions of South Los Angeles. Without regulations in place, South LA could face an influx of unhealthy fast-food restaurants when the moratorium runs out. Already, 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.

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). "With a growing number of studies demonstrating the link between the availability of fast-food restaurants and obesity, restrictions on developing new fast-food restaurants are necessary to create a better balance between unhealthy and healthy restaurants in our community," says Gwendolyn Flynn, policy director at Community Health Councils.

The Town Hall will draw the link between health disparities in South LA and the lack of healthy restaurant options as one contributing factor and review current efforts to develop permanent regulations to curb unhealthy fast-food restaurants. Councilmember Bernard Parks will provide opening remarks and a summary of the current fast-food moratorium, while Councilmember Jan Perry's Office will review the moratorium's status. LA City Planning will outline the City's options for continuing the protections, and the Department of Public Health will describe common health issues in South LA and the problems inherent with concentrating fast-food restaurants in a community. The Legal Aid Foundation will discuss what the community can do to support efforts for a healthier food environment.

Community members will have the opportunity to weigh in on options to create a better balance in the development of future fast-food restaurants. Many communities have passed zoning restrictions on fast-food restaurants. Several communities in California (Berkeley and Arcata, for example) restrict the total number of fast-food restaurants. Westwood Village regulates the density of fast-food restaurants to one every 200 feet. Zoning laws can also require a specified distance between a new fast-food restaurant and schools, churches, parks and residential areas. A 2009 report in the *American Journal of Public Health* has linked overweight and obesity to students who go to school within a half-mile of a fast-food restaurant.

"The fast-food moratorium cannot be allowed to expire without another policy to replace it," concludes Lark Galloway-Gilliam, executive director at Community Health Councils. "Even a gap between when the moratorium expires and the completion of the Community Plan updates in 2011 is too great a gamble given the degree of obesity and diet-related chronic disease in South LA."

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.