Title
Grocery Stores: Neighborhood Retail or Urban Panacea? Exploring the Intersections of Federal Policy, Community Health, and Revitalization in Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland, California

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1d45296j

Author
Elias, Renee Roy

Publication Date
2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
Grocery Stores: Neighborhood Retail or Urban Panacea? 
Exploring the Intersections of Federal Policy, Community Health, and Revitalization in Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland, California

By
Renee Roy Elias

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Jason Corburn, Chair
Professor Karen Chapple
Professor Malo Hutson
Professor Margaret Weir

Fall 2013
Abstract

Grocery Stores: Neighborhood Retail or Urban Panacea?
Exploring the Intersections of Federal Policy, Community Health, and Revitalization in Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland, California

By

Renee Roy Elias

Doctor of Philosophy in City and Regional Planning

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Jason Corburn, Chair

Throughout the nation, grocery retailers are reentering underserved communities amidst growing public awareness of food deserts and the rise of federal, state, and local programs incentivizing urban grocery stores. And yet, even with expanding research on food deserts and their public health impacts, there is still a lack of consensus on whether grocery stores truly offer the best solution. Furthermore, scholars and policymakers alike have limited understandings of the broader neighborhood implications of grocery stores newly introduced into underserved urban communities.

This dissertation analyzes how local organizations and agencies pursue grocery development in order to understand the conditions for success implementation. To do this, I examine the historical drivers, planning processes, and outcomes of two extreme cases of urban grocery development: a Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market (a chain value store) in San Francisco’s Bayview Hunters Point and the Mandela Foods Cooperative (a worker-owned cooperative) in Oakland’s West Oakland districts.

Through a comparative institutional analysis, I find that both Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect distinctive neighborhood revitalization legacies, critical moments of institutional capacity building, localized versions of national policy narratives, and the role of charismatic leaders in grocery store implementation. While national narratives shape the rhetoric of urban grocery development, ultimately local context dictates how food access issues are defined, who addresses them, and how. These findings suggest that federal grocery incentive programs should: 1) maintain a broad framework that enables local communities to define food access problems and their solutions on a case-by-case basis, 2) encourage diverse solutions not limited to grocery stores and supermarkets, and 3) emphasize community reinvestment goals.
# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. i  
Tables and Figures .................................................................................................................. iv  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... v  
Prologue ................................................................................................................................. 1  

## Chapter 1: Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Definition of terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Grocery Stores</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Food Deserts</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Neighborhood Revitalization</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Why study urban grocery stores?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Overview of urban grocery literature and debates</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Contributions of this study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Case background / selection</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Federal food access programs and the Bay Area [See Figure 1]</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Fresh and Easy, Bayview Hunters Point</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Mandela Foods Cooperative, West Oakland</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Research approach</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Methodology</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Analytical Framework</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Organization of chapters</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 2: Grocery Stores on an Urban Agenda: A Historical Review and Policy Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Grocery stores and the ideal neighborhood</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 19th and early 20th century utopian planning and the neighborhood ideal</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Neo-traditional planning, mixed-use development, and the neighborhood ideal</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Grocery stores and neighborhood revitalization</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The War on Poverty, CDCs, and neighborhood retail</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Urban decline and the urban grocery gap on the federal agenda</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Grocery stores and the push for “inner city revitalization”</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Community food security and the federal food access agenda</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. From community food security and food access on a policy agenda</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Health disparities and food deserts</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Neighborhood and municipal responses to food deserts</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Converging grocery store agendas: public health and neighborhood revitalization</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. From food deserts to a federal policy agenda</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Reactions to federal actions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 3: The Institutional Contexts of Neighborhood Revitalization in Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Wartime economic development and the military-industrial complex (1940s) .................. 41
   A. Bayview Hunters Point: Shipbuilding and early trajectories of community and economic life ......................................................................................................................... 41
   B. West Oakland: Industrial growth, redevelopment, and community resistance ........ 43
II. Redevelopment as a response to deindustrialization (1950s) ...................................... 45
   A. Bayview Hunters Point: Neighborhood change and redevelopment ..................... 45
   B. West Oakland: The “Industrial Garden” and Urban Renewal ............................... 46
III. Federal urban policy and the local response (1960s-1970s) ..................................... 47
   A. Bayview Hunters Point: Experiments in community action .................................. 47
   B. West Oakland: Resident mobilizations around place ......................................... 48
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 50

Chapter 4: The Convergence of Public Health and Retail Revitalization Agendas: The Case of Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market, Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco .............. 52

Introduction ................................................................................................................. 52
I. Neighborhood revitalization and the rise of grocery stores as a local concern (1993-2004) 53
   A. Planning practice, revitalization, and the focus on Third Street ......................... 53
   B. Public health practice, food access, and the reframing of environmental health .... 56
II. Housing revitalization, transit-oriented development, and mayoral grocery agendas (2004-2007) ........................................................................................................... 60
   A. 5800 Third and the opportunity for grocery development .................................. 61
   B. Neighborhood revitalization and the role of Mayor Gavin Newsom .................. 62
   C. MOEWD and the beginnings of grocery planning in Bayview .............................. 64
III. Starts, stops, and the path to the Fresh and Easy development (2007-2013) ............. 67
   A. Delays, downturns, and eventual progresses .................................................... 67
   B. Community protests and momentous grand opening ......................................... 68
   C. Outcomes ........................................................................................................... 70
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 74

Chapter 5: Integrating Community-Based Goals with Neighborhood Revitalization Agendas: The Case of the Mandela Foods Cooperative, West Oakland ......................... 76

Introduction ................................................................................................................. 76
   A. Acorn Supermarket, retail development, and the rise of community-based planning ... 77
   B. Loma Prieta earthquake recovery efforts and the community response ................ 79
   C. Mobilization of place-based movements around redevelopment ....................... 82
II. Housing revitalization, Seventh Street, and alternative visions of transit oriented development (1998-2003) ................................................................. 84
   A. Housing rehabilitation and a city’s vision of Transit Oriented Development ........ 85
   B. Alternative transit-oriented development plans ................................................. 87
   C. Grocery stores back on the agenda: exploring the bounds of community-based planning .......................................................... 89
III. The maturation of community-based planning and the Mandela Foods Cooperative (2001-Present) ......................................................................................... 91
   A. Coalition building around food systems in West Oakland .................................. 92
   B. Mandela Gateway and community-based plans for ground floor retail ............... 94
   C. Gains, losses, and eventually a lease agreement ............................................... 97
D. Outcomes ............................................................................................................................................. 99
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................ 101

Chapter 6: A Comparative Institutional Analysis of Grocery Development in Bayview and
West Oakland ............................................................................................................................................. 103
Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 103
I. Historical Analysis ................................................................................................................................ 104
   A. Neighborhood revitalization legacies shape grocery store development ........................................ 104
   B. Critical junctures established the institutional context for grocery development ....................... 105
II. Sociological Analysis ............................................................................................................................. 109
   A. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect both national policy narratives and locally-
      specific framings of neighborhood revitalization .............................................................................. 109
   B. It matters who participates in grocery development and how .................................................... 111
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................ 113

Chapter 7: Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 114
Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 114
I. The problem of problem definition ........................................................................................................ 115
II. Methods matter ...................................................................................................................................... 116
III. Grocery stores are not enough ............................................................................................................ 117
V. Considerations for future research and policy ..................................................................................... 119
References ................................................................................................................................................ 121
Appendix A: Grocery store definitions ........................................................................................................ 140
Tables and Figures

Tables
Table 1: Selected Grocery Definitions from Food Marketing Institute (Food Marketing Institute 2013) ................................................................. 5
Table 2: Bayview and West Oakland Demographics ........................................ 16
Table 3: Proposed Analytical Framework: Historical-Sociological Institutionalism .... 19
Table 4: Neighborhood revitalization and the grocery agenda in Bayview (1993-2004). 60
Table 5: Neighborhood revitalization efforts in Bayview (2004-2007) ..................... 67
Table 6: Bayview Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline ................................... 75
Table 7: Neighborhood Revitalization in West Oakland (1985-1997) ....................... 84
Table 8: Neighborhood revitalization and community planning In West Oakland (1998-2003) .................................................................................. 91
Table 9: West Oakland Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline ........................... 102
Table 10: Institutional Framework ......................................................................... 103
Table 11: Bayview Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline ................................. 108
Table 12: West Oakland Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline ............................ 109
Table 13: NAICS Classifications for Grocery Stores (NAICS Code 4451) (U.S. Census Bureau 2013) .................................................................................. 140
Table 14: Food Marketing Institute Supermarket Classifications (Food Marketing Institute 2013) .................................................................................. 141
Table 15: Food Marketing Institute Non-Traditional Grocery Classification .......... 142

Figures
Figure 1: Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland ............................................. 11
Figure 2: Bayview Hunters Point (Open Street Map) ............................................ 12
Figure 3: West Oakland (Open Street Map) ....................................................... 14
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous support of numerous individuals. First, I would like to thank all of the government officials, community leaders, grocery experts, and residents who dedicated their time to this project. I would especially like to thank Wells Lawson, for his thoughtful insights and research tips during the past year.

I am extremely grateful to the Department of City and Regional Planning for their financial and administrative support throughout my time at UC Berkeley. The Dean’s Normative Time Fellowship and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Choice Neighborhoods Demonstration Grant made this work possible. A special thanks goes to Yeri Caesar-Kaptoech, Clayton Hall, Pat Ramirez, and Malla Hadley for always being on hand for general advice.

My deepest gratitude goes to my committee members, who made my time at UC Berkeley more enjoyable and enriching than I ever could have imagined. Thank you to my dissertation chair, Jason Corburn, for believing in me and keeping me on track. Your mentorship and guidance has meant so much to me. Thank you to Karen Chapple, for your close readings of my work and your thoughtful advice. I cannot thank you enough for involving me in the Choice Neighborhoods project, which supported my studies for the past year. Thank you to Malo Hutson, for your encouragement and for always getting me to think about the big picture. Thank you to Margaret Weir, for challenging me to think critically, but always in the sincerest way possible.

Many thanks to my brilliant colleagues at Berkeley, without whom I would not have survived the PhD program. First and foremost, I would like to thank my friends and writing group partners, Ian Carlton, Ariel Bierbaum, and Miriam Zuk. This dissertation would not have been possible without your regular constructive feedback. Thank you my PhD colleagues for your friendship and expert advice over the past four years: Asavari Devadiga, Hyungkyoo Kim, Jake Wegmann, Lisa Feldstein, Fernando Burga, Manish Shirgaokar, Alice Sverdlik, Miriam Solis, and Ellen Kersten. I constantly draw inspiration from you all.

Last but certainly not least, I offer my deepest gratitude to my family for their love and unyielding support during many challenging years of study. To my mother: thank you for always championing my personal and professional ambitions with no hesitations. This dissertation is yours as much as it is mine. To my brother, Ronnie: thank you for your warmth, kindness, and constant encouragement throughout the years. To my closest confidant/partner-in-crime/husband: thank you for supporting me every step of the way and for relieving stressful times with your love, compassion, and humor. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Gautam Kumar Roy. This journey would not have been possible without your tremendous sacrifices and your profound dedication to me and my future successes.
Prologue

On February 19, 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack took a rather unusual pit stop on the way to a press conference: a Fresh Grocer supermarket. The eight-store, Philadelphia-based grocery chain was the poster child of the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, then a six-year state-wide grant program aiming to expand grocery stores and food retail in underserved areas. During this momentous visit, the First Lady announced the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative “to replicate [Pennsylvania’s] success…all across America” (Office of the First Lady 2010). An extension of the First Lady’s Let’s Move childhood obesity prevention initiative, the $400 million Healthy Food Financing Initiative was created “to eliminate food deserts across the country within seven years” by expanding grocery stores and other food retailers into underserved areas (Treasury Public Affairs 2010). Developed under the guidance of Oakland-based PolicyLink and Philadelphia-based The Reinvestment Fund, the program galvanized ongoing efforts across the nation:

Oakland
On June 6, 2009, West Oakland celebrated the grand opening its first community-owned and operated grocery store in decades: the Mandela Foods Cooperative. Despite its diminutive appearance, the 2300 square foot worker-owned cooperative commanded a broad national audience as a model of community-based retail and “successful” community-government partnerships. Mandela Foods would form the basis of national advocacy efforts around the Healthy Food Financing (PolicyLink 2007; Treuhaft, Hamm, and Litjens 2009; Flournoy 2011; PolicyLink 2011).

Chicago
In June 2011, Chicago Mayor Emanuel convened the CEOs of Walmart, Walgreens, and other major retailers and secured commitments for the new construction or expansion of nearly 100 stores in the Chicago area. Subsequently in October 2011, Emanuel enlisted the help of First Lady Michelle Obama to host the first Mayor’s Summit on Food Deserts—all efforts to mobilize political support for a national food desert fight.

San Francisco
On August 24, 2011, new outlets buzzed with the grand opening of Fresh and Easy, the first new grocery store in San Francisco’s distressed Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood. A subsidiary of British supermarket retailer Tesco, Fresh and Easy steadily expanded into the Bay Area since 2007, specializing in urban store formats under the mantra of “wholesome food, not whole paycheck.” Coincidentally, the grand opening was just one month following the First Lady’s

---

1 This includes the Yale University Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, the City of Cincinnati, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, ChangeLabs Solutions, PolicyLink, The Reinvestment Fund, and The Food Trust (Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity 2008; Cincinnati Food Access Task Force 2009; Trust for America’s Health 2011; Michael and Susan Dell Foundation 2012; Healthy Food Access Portal 2013).
announcement of the California’s FreshWorks program, a statewide public-private loan fund designed to expand food retail into underserved areas.²

Detroit, Michigan
In June 2013—just a month before the city’s declaration of bankruptcy—leading upscale grocer, Whole Foods Market celebrated its grand opening in downtown Detroit. Following five years of planning and $5.8 million state and local tax credits, the Detroit store was the first of three lower cost pilot stores³ tailored for underserved urban areas (Voight 2013). As of September 2013, Whole Foods Market reported solid profits and new collaborations with local food distributors and community-based organizations.

Los Angeles
In September 2013, the first new grocery store in decades opened in Los Angeles’ Chinatown neighborhood: a Walmart Neighborhood Market. The Walmart Neighborhood Market⁴ brand was created in 1998 to offer grocery items in locations smaller than their warehouse-style supercenters. Despite vehement protests by residents, business owners, and labor activists in Los Angeles, the global mega-retailer’s scaled-down version of its suburban supercenter has been welcomed into cities spanning San Jose, Omaha, Chicago, and Greensboro. As of 2013, nearly 100 more stores are in the pipeline across the nation (Walmart 2013).

Grocery stores are now central in efforts to revitalize underserved urban communities. And yet, these cases illustrate that urban grocery stores can take distinct forms with wide-ranging implications. Indeed, a community-based food cooperative entails something very different compared to a Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market, Whole Foods Market, or Walmart Neighborhood Market. Can these and other grocery stores become more than a place for everyday food and household shopping? Can grocery stores catalyze community reinvestment and ultimately address urban poverty, childhood obesity, and health disparities? The federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative dares to say “yes” to these questions. Local practice will reveal whether these claims ring true.

² Administered by The California Endowment, a statewide private health foundation, the $200 million public-private partnership loan fund aimed to finance grocery stores in ‘food deserts.’
³ As of the writing of this dissertation, Whole Foods is planning additional stores in self-described food deserts in Chicago’s Southside and New Orleans.
⁴ There are 290 Walmart Neighborhood Market stores in the U.S., including 24 stores within California (Walmart 2013; Guzman 2013).
Chapter 1: Introduction

During the past decade, grocery stores have expanded into underserved urban communities with growing awareness of ‘food deserts’ and their associations with urban health disparities and economic disinvestment. Even though scholars contest whether physical access to grocery stores truly improves food accessibility and health (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011; An and Sturm 2012; Lee 2012; Kolata 2012), policy advocates continue to promote grocery stores as the ultimate solution to urban food deserts. Federal, state, and local governments have followed suit with the creation of incentives and tax breaks for food retailers that locate in underserved urban communities. What does this evolving policy environment mean for local communities?

Despite numerous studies on food deserts and their potential impacts, there are few explorations of the prescribed “solution” of grocery stores. Moreover, recent studies on the impacts of new and recently closed urban grocery stores tend to focus on resident behavioral changes (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011; Russell and Heidkamp 2011; An and Sturm 2012; Lee 2012). Thus, scholars and policymakers alike have limited understandings of the broader neighborhood implications of grocery stores newly introduced into underserved urban communities. This dissertation addresses this gap by analyzing how local organizations and agencies pursue grocery development in response to neighborhood issues. By exploring local processes, I aim to understand whether governments should continue to incentivize urban grocery stores and if so, under what conditions. As such, the ultimate goal of this dissertation is to understand the conditions for successful grocery development across contexts.

Using a comparative case study approach, I analyze the historical drivers, planning processes, and outcomes of recently completed ground-floor grocery stores in two distressed San Francisco Bay Area communities: a Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market in San Francisco’s Bayview Hunters Point and the Mandela Foods Cooperative in Oakland’s West Oakland. Despite their marked differences, both stores were cited in national advocacy efforts around the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative (See Chapter 1, Section III.C.).

In 2005, British supermarket magnate, Tesco created the Fresh and Easy chain primarily for untapped urban markets and health and cost-conscious consumers in California, Arizona, and Nevada. In 2006, amidst massive grocery closings citywide, former San Francisco Mayor Gavin

---

5 The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a ‘food desert’ as “a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store…To qualify as a ‘low-access community,’ at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract's population must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (for rural census tracts, the distance is more than 10 miles) (USDA Economic Research Service 2011).”

6 Current studies tend to focus on measuring the scale of the problem of lacking grocery stores and their associations with public health disparities and urban disinvestment (USDA Economic Research Service 2009; Segal 2010; Gordon et al. 2011; Alviola, Nayga, and Thomsen 2013; Alviola et al. 2013).

7 PolicyLink’s studies include evaluations of the scale and impacts of food deserts and best practices in grocery retail (PolicyLink 2005; PolicyLink 2007; Treuhaft, Hamm, and Litjens 2009; Treuhaft and Karpyn 2010; PolicyLink 2011). The Reinvestment Fund’s work has primarily involved toolkits for financing urban grocery stores (Goldstein et al. 2008; The Reinvestment Fund 2011a; The Reinvestment Fund 2011b; The Reinvestment Fund 2011c).

8 As opposed to stand-alone building structures, both stores were built as ground floor retail within multi-unit housing developments. See Chapter 1, Section III.B.
Newsom, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and the Department of Public Health coordinated Fresh and Easy’s entry into San Francisco’s distressed Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood. As the first new grocery store in the neighborhood in decades, Fresh and Easy represented a convergence of previously disparate efforts around public health, economic and workforce development. As such, the City’s vision of grocery development was consistent with the rhetoric of federal food access programs. Yet ultimately, national and global capitalist forces led to the store’s demise. In September 2013, Tesco sold the Fresh and Easy chain to a private equity firm, following two years of massive profit losses. The Bayview Hunters Point location was one of numerous stores that were closed as a result.

Despite similar underlying socio-economic conditions, West Oakland’s first coordinated grocery store efforts took a markedly different form. Beginning in the late 1990s, West Oakland residents and activists created farmers markets, mobile grocery stores, and community gardens—all with the goal of establishing a full service cooperative grocery store. For the next decade, environmental justice activist Dana Harvey led efforts to realize this vision. Following financial hurdles and disputes with developers over retail space, Harvey and her team of consultants negotiated a 2300 square foot ground floor retail space. In June 2009, the worker-owned Mandela Foods Cooperative and café opened for business. As of 2013, Harvey is exploring possibilities for expansion with funding support from the California FreshWorks program.

Through an institutional analysis of the planning processes, I find that both Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect distinctive neighborhood revitalization legacies, critical moments of institutional capacity building, localized versions of national policy narratives, and the role of charismatic leaders in grocery store implementation. While national narratives shape the rhetoric of urban grocery development, ultimately local context dictates how food access issues are defined, who addresses them, and how.

In Bayview, a city-led grocery agenda entailed top-down planning processes that aligned with the corporate model of the Fresh and Easy store. Ultimately, collaborations across government agencies and a systematic role of the Department of Public Health failed to sustain the community’s first new grocery store. In West Oakland, an activist-defined grocery agenda produced grassroots planning processes consistent with the community-based model of the Mandela Foods Cooperative. Conflict and community protests eventually won out—albeit for a scaled-down version of West Oakland activists’ original vision.

These findings suggest that federal grocery incentive programs should: 1) maintain a broad framework that enables local communities to define food access problems and their solutions on a case-by-case basis, 2) encourage diverse solutions not limited to grocery stores and supermarkets, and 3) emphasize community reinvestment goals.

I. Definition of terms
This dissertation refers to policy terms and concepts that are either vaguely defined or described differently across fields and sectors. For the purposes of this study, I clarify my own definitions of “grocery stores,” “food deserts,” and “neighborhood revitalization.”
A. Grocery Stores
This dissertation is about the processes surrounding the development of urban grocery stores, a broad range of food retailers specializing in the sales of dry goods, whole foods, household goods, and sundries. And yet in common language and among food retail trade associations, the term “grocery store” is often used interchangeably with “supermarket.” Furthermore, industry definitions of grocery stores are quite malleable. For example, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) distinguish grocery retail types primarily by its selection of products:

“Establishments generally known as supermarkets and grocery stores primarily engaged in retailing a general line of food, such as canned and frozen foods; fresh fruits and vegetables; and fresh and prepared meats, fish, and poultry. Included in this industry are delicatessen-type establishments primarily engaged in retailing a general line of food (NAICS Code 44511/445110, U.S. Census Bureau 2013).”

Meanwhile, the Food Marketing Institute and Progressive Grocer (the grocery industry’s primary trade and marketing organizations), classify grocery types by product selection in addition to overall size and sales volume. [See Table 1, Appendix A]

Table 1: Selected Grocery Definitions from Food Marketing Institute (Food Marketing Institute 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Stores offering a full line of groceries, meat, and produce with at least $2 million in annual sales and up to 15% of their sales in GM/HBC. These stores typically carry anywhere from 15,000 to 60,000 SKUs (depending on the size of the store), and may offer a service deli, a service bakery, and/or a pharmacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Format⁹</td>
<td>Different from traditional supermarkets and traditional natural food stores, fresh stores emphasize perishables and offer center-store assortments that differ from those of traditional retailers—especially in the areas of ethnic, natural, and organic, e.g., Whole Foods, Publix GreenWise, The Fresh Market, and some independents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited-Assortment</td>
<td>A low-priced grocery store that offers a limited assortment of center-store and perishable items (fewer than 2,000), e.g., Aldi, Trader Joe’s, and Save-A-Lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>The small corner grocery store that carries a limited selection of staples and other convenience goods. These stores generate approximately $1 million in business annually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although not included in these definitions, industry associations categorize these grocery stores as either “independent” or “chain”¹⁰. Some store formats are largely associated with a certain business model—for example larger supermarkets and warehouse stores tend to be associated with national chain stores. However, traditional supermarkets, fresh format stores, limited assortment stores, and “others” generally fall into either category.

---

⁹ In part due to the rapid expansion of natural and gourmet food retailers, as of 2013, the Food Marketing Institute and Progressive Grocer introduced the new category of “Fresh Format Stores” and revised the definition of “limited assortment stores” to largely encompass “low priced” goods (Food Marketing Institute 2013).

¹⁰ Progressive Grocer, the primary trade association for the food retail industry, defines a grocery store chain as a company owning and operating 11 or more supermarkets.
Relevant to this dissertation, there are multiple types of food retail within the broad category of “independent”, which are not recognized by industry or trade classifications. This includes direct sale retail outlets such as farmers markets, produce stands, and Community-Supported Agriculture\textsuperscript{11}. This also includes alternative food distribution models such as food buying clubs and consumer cooperatives—both voluntary, member-owned and operated food retail establishments that may or may not have a storefront retail space. These food businesses are frequently found in urban areas either as an alternative to corporate food retailers or as a community-driven response to food deserts (Allen 2008; Guthman 2008).

In this dissertation, I use the term grocery store to encompass independent and chain retailers of whole foods, dry goods, household goods and/or sundries, with an emphasis on store formats commonly found in urban areas. This includes traditional supermarkets, fresh format stores, and limited-assortment stores.

B. Food Deserts
Policies and research on urban grocery stores tend to revolve around the phenomenon of ‘food deserts.’ While food deserts refers more generally to areas lacking grocery stores and food retailers, researchers, community leaders, and policy makers tend to vary in how they define the term. As of the writing of this dissertation, the most frequently cited definition of food deserts is the USDA’s definition as provided in their 2009 report, “Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food—Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences: Report to Congress.” As such, food deserts are defined as:

“a low-income census tract where a substantial number or share of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store...To qualify as a ‘low-access community,’ at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract’s population must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (for rural census tracts, the distance is more than 10 miles) (USDA Economic Research Service 2011).”

While the term has been subject to critique,\textsuperscript{12} this dissertation refers to the USDA definition given its ubiquity in current policy and planning initiatives.

C. Neighborhood Revitalization
For the purposes of this dissertation, I understand neighborhood revitalization to encompass a broad range of practices that aim to systemically address social and economic problems affecting cities and their residents. As summarized by Zielenbach (2000), neighborhood revitalization refers to “the improvement of economic conditions for existing residents and the re-integration of the neighborhood into the market system” (34). As such the practice of neighborhood revitalization can take many forms, spanning physical rehabilitation of housing and the creation of business improvement districts to social programs focused on youth engagement and workforce development. As such, scholars generally categorize neighborhood revitalization

\textsuperscript{11} Community Supported Agriculture refers to a type of farm in which consumers purchase farm “shares” in return for a weekly or bi-weekly box of the farm’s harvest.

\textsuperscript{12} See Chapter 2 for a discussion on further details on the concept of food deserts and its recent critiques.
activities into place-based (physical rehabilitation) and people-based (individual, program-based) initiatives.\textsuperscript{13}

Commonly, all of these strategies assume the “neighborhood” as a primary unit of intervention. In this dissertation, I assume the multi-faceted nature of neighborhood revitalization, noting where and if strategies fall into a particular category of intervention.

II. Why study urban grocery stores?

A. Overview of urban grocery literature and debates

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, urban grocery stores are now on federal, state, and local policy agendas. Much of this current momentum is the result of an expansive body of research on ‘food deserts,’ which has pointed to urban grocery stores as a comprehensive solution to food access, health disparities, and economic disinvestment.

As early as the 1970s, government agencies and researchers profiled the phenomenon of “supermarket flight” due to deindustrialization and the consolidation of the grocery industry (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1972). The combined impacts of these trends contributed to the continued “suburbanization” of grocery stores with that of housing and employment centers. Already since the 1960s, Community Development Corporations (CDCs) helped reintroduce grocery stores and other urban retail into underserved areas with expanding federal programs for neighborhood revitalization (Williams 1985; Halpern 1995; Abell 1998; Stoutland 1999).

Urban grocery stores entered more squarely into federal policy agendas with the push for “inner city revitalization” beginning in the 1990s and new evidence of the “urban grocery gap” (U.S. House of Representatives 1992; Cotterill and Franklin 1995; Alwitt and Donley 1997; Nayga Jr and Weinberg 1999). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, researchers conducted the first detailed accounts of the socio-economic and health impacts of lacking urban grocery stores in the UK. This research had a resounding impact on domestic research, recasting the “urban grocery gap” as the phenomenon of food deserts (Cummins and Macintyre 1999; Reisig and Hobbiss 2000; Whelan et. al. 2002; Wrigley 2002).

In the U.S., the visceral metaphor of the ‘food desert’ effectively shifted discourses on the function of urban grocery stores from economic reinvestment to health promotion\textsuperscript{14}. The greater extent of food desert research that followed suggested a positive correlation between the lack of grocery stores and poor health outcomes in poor urban communities (Wrigley et. al 2003; Guy et. al 2004; Hendrickson et. al 2006; Gallagher 2007; Babey and Diamant 2008). A separate but related body of literature linked food environments more generally to growing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S. (Neff et al. 2009; Segal 2010; Alviola et al. 2013). These studies directly informed the first comprehensive federal efforts focused dually on health promotion and retail

\textsuperscript{13} Decades of federal urban policies and local practices have emphasized either physical (“place-based”) or programmatic (“people-based”) neighborhood revitalization strategies despite some attempts at their integration (Halpern 1995). Scholars and practitioners generally agree that neighborhood revitalization, should better integrate people and place-based neighborhood strategies to impart the greatest impacts (Spencer 2004), and reframe place-based strategies to better service people-based strategies (Crane and Manville 2008).

\textsuperscript{14} See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion about these shifting policy narratives.
revitalization, namely First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move childhood obesity initiative and the Healthy Food Financing Initiative discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Already since the 1990s, community-based organizations nationwide addressed urban food access issues through “community food security” initiatives—alternative modes of food production and consumption ranging from farmers markets, produce stands, mobile grocery stores, and community gardens.

Overall, policy and practice were built on similar assumptions about the contributions of new food retail outlets on the health and livelihoods of disenfranchised urban residents. However, researchers, policymakers, and journalists—with varied technical backgrounds and political leanings—continued to contest the claims of research and policies that purported the promise of urban grocery stores. For example, some researchers found that areas defined as food deserts are not devoid of food stores as the term would suggest. Others found that areas otherwise defined as food deserts can in fact be replete with corner markets and ethnic food stores that meet culturally preferred food needs (Short et al. 2007; Raja et al. 2008).

Even in spite of this evidence, scholars have agreed that poor communities tend to lack stores that provide greater fresh food options (i.e., supermarkets). Furthermore, disinvested communities become targets for fast food establishments, convenience stores, and liquor stores, which may contribute to poor diets and health disparities (Guthman 2011). As such, some prefer to characterize underserved communities as ‘food swamps’ as opposed to food deserts to emphasize the ubiquity of “low quality” food options (Klimas 2012).

These debates came to a head in late 2011 and early 2012, when The Economist and The New York Times highlighted several longitudinal studies claiming that the introduction of grocery stores into poor communities had no effect on health outcomes and that cost was more of a barrier to healthy food access than physical access (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011; An and Sturm 2012; Lee 2012). While these (and most evaluations of food deserts) suffer from methodological shortcomings, even proponents of urban grocery stores urged policymakers to fully consider non-physical means of improving urban food access. This includes greater attention to nutrition education, food affordability and the role of food assistance programs, and efforts to expand healthy food offerings at corner markets and liquor stores in underserved areas (Karpyn, Young, and Weiss 2012; Andrews, Bhatta, and Ploeg 2013; Larson et al. 2013).

This raises the question—should grocery stores be developed in poor communities at all? Even the critics say yes. It is an undisputed fact that poor communities tend to lack grocery stores, by their very nature of being under-resourced, disinvested areas. The issue is the definition of the problem (food deserts) and how it points to a rather simple solution (grocery stores) that is ultimately inconsequential to the broader issues faced by poor communities. For example, community activists and researchers argue that perhaps the root of the problem is the use and operationalization of the term ‘food desert,’ a term that may not fully capture food access issues as experienced by disenfranchised residents. Accordingly, some community activists suggest that the term has even contributed to co-optation of food access “solutions” by corporate actors:

“The use of the phrase ‘food desert’ creates a set of problems. The first problem is the term suggests that economic development is at the expense of community development. [It’s] really nothing more than a marketing term. Food desert identifies for corporate America how to sell cheap, off brand food to our
community—when we know that cheap, highly processed food is at the crux of the rise in chronic diet related diseases. In the end, the term masks the real harm of the U.S. corporate controlled food system by suppressing the ability of community entrepreneurs to develop and finance scalable community solutions. The danger of accepting the food desert philosophy is that it masks the real problem of the corporate controlled food system: poverty and hunger (Fields 2013).”

Along these lines, researchers argue that a purely spatial definition of food deserts fails to capture the broader political-economic factors that contribute to inequitable access to resources in poor communities. For example, Donald (2013) argues that singularly “built environment solutions” to food access issues fail to consider the problem of food cost—healthier food items cost more due to agricultural subsidies that favor the production and distribution of low-cost, highly processed, “unhealthy” food. (Shannon 2013) argues that the mere designation of food deserts constitutes ‘neoliberal paternalism’—the assumption that the plight of urban communities are ultimately only solved through top-down market solutions (i.e., a federally subsidized grocery store).

B. Contributions of this study
Scholars cast urban grocery stores as either a normative solution or a faulty “build-it-and-they-will-come” approach that requires redefinition and reassessment. Still, the practical reality is that grocery incentive programs continue to expand at local and state levels. Leading corporate retailers such as Walmart, Target, Kroger, and SuperValu continue to reenter urban markets by creating “urban format” versions of their largely suburban supermarket chains. Community-based organizations are pursuing their own alternatives to chain supermarkets through corner store conversions, food cooperatives, mobile grocery stores, and farmers markets. In sum, urban grocery stores will continue to be developed in underserved urban areas if not for current policies but due to industry and urban trends. What does this mean for future research?

Shannon (2013) argues for research that “questions the naturalizing language of market relations that positions low-income communities as just another emerging market” (13). On a practical level, Donald (2013) calls for studies that explore: 1) before/after assessments of communities where new grocery stores are introduced, 2) how the changing grocery retail environment shapes local implementation, and 3) the institutional context and “localized geographies” of food access issues.

In line with planning scholars and critical geographers, this dissertation reinforces the idea that future research must account for the complexity of food access problems and its solutions. First, this dissertation provides a detailed account of grocery planning processes to complement spatial and quantitative studies of food deserts. The greater extent of literature on urban grocery stores has involved assessments of the phenomenon of food deserts—namely evaluations of the “problem” of lacking food deserts and its possible impacts. In light of recent critiques, scholars have made strides in redefining food deserts and how food accessibility more generally might be measured15 (Eckert and Shetty 2011; Leete et al. 2011; Jiao et al. 2012). While there is ample evidence to suggest the “problem” of lacking grocery stores exists, there are few detailed

---

15 Jiao et al. (2012) explored new criteria for determining areas with low food access, such as transportation access and food costs. Others used GIS to determine areas of relative food inaccessibility dispersed across cities rather than concentrated in single areas defined as food deserts.
accounts of how local communities and municipalities themselves define the problem and choose to address it through grocery development.

Second, this dissertation explores grocery store development as a set of processes instead of as a finite solution. Accounts of urban grocery development tend to comprise gray literature spanning “best practices” case studies (PolicyLink 2005, 2007, 2011; Treuhaft and Karpyn 2010) and grocery financing toolkits (Goldstein et al. 2008; The Reinvestment Fund 2011a; The Reinvestment Fund 2011b; ChangeLabs Solutions 2012). Even this gray literature is premised in the idea that the development of grocery stores in poor communities is entirely possible by leveraging tax incentive programs and policies that encourage retail reinvestment in poor communities. And yet the question remains, why was grocery development pursued in a certain way and what were the outcomes? This dissertation addresses this gap by tracing how the development of grocery stores emerged as a solution, in line with Donald's (2013) proposal for more before/after assessments of urban grocery development.

Finally, this dissertation analyzes the current trend of grocery development in relationship to larger processes and institutions of neighborhood revitalization. Despite acknowledgement of the connections between urban disinvestment and the lack of grocery stores, current literature on food deserts tends to cast the problem as a somewhat isolated issue. Grocery incentive programs attest to this fact— the “problem” is defined as the lack of grocery stores not urban disinvestment more broadly. That said, the lack of grocery stores in poor communities was defined more as a problem of urban disinvestment in the 1990s body of literature on “inner city revitalization.” For example, the early work of Community Development Corporations involved grocery store development within the broader context of housing and retail revitalization (Halpern 1995; Ferguson and Dickens 1999). As such, a wide body of 1990s “inner city revitalization” scholars considered grocery store development as a component of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization efforts including housing rehabilitation, infrastructure development, workforce development, and social service provision (Porter 1995; Boston and Ross 1997). This dissertation seeks to conceptually disengage urban grocery stores from their association with food deserts in order to reveal its inner complexities.

III. Case background / selection

A. Federal food access programs and the Bay Area [See Figure 1]
What do Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods have to do with federal food access programs? While neither of these stores were recipients of grocery incentive programs, they both contributed advocacy efforts around the Healthy Food Financing Initiative. As described in detail in Chapter 2, Oakland-based think tank, PolicyLink and Philadelphia-based non-profit, The Reinvestment Fund were the main architects of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, drawing upon nearly a decade of best practice case studies and grocery store development toolkits. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are among the grocery stores profiled in PolicyLink’s “toolkits”

Russell and Heidkamp's (2011) study is among few which evaluated the social and economic impacts of supermarket closings in a poor area of Newark.
specifically—that is, prior to Fresh and Easy’s exit from the U.S. market (PolicyLink 2011). Accordingly, both stores have been recognized as exemplary models of community-government partnerships (Oakland Redevelopment Agency 2010; PolicyLink 2011; ChangeLabs Solutions 2012).

As such, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods were significant early models of urban grocery development that shaped both local and national policy discourses around food deserts, grocery stores, and neighborhood revitalization more generally. The fact that two uniquely different “best practice” models draw from the same region raises its own set of questions regarding the variability of local responses to similar issues. Furthermore, as completed projects predating federally subsidized urban grocery stores, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods provide important lessons for current and future efforts.

Figure 1: Bayview Hunters Point and West Oakland
Established in 2011, the Fresh and Easy is a 21,000 square feet limited assortment grocery store located in San Francisco’s Bayview Hunters Point district [See Figure 2]. The store is located on the ground floor of 5800 Third, a 137-unit condominium along the Third Street light rail corridor. British supermarket retailer, Tesco created the Fresh and Easy chain in 2006 with an eye towards untapped urban markets and consumer demands for healthy, convenient, affordable grocery items. In contrast to conventional chain supermarkets and limited assortment stores, Fresh and Easy utilizes self-service checkouts and primarily offers private label dry goods, packaged whole foods, and preservative-free prepared meals. As of 2012, there were nearly 200 Fresh and Easy stores in California, Nevada, and Arizona; the Bayview store is one of three stores in the City of San Francisco. Amidst continued profit losses, private equity firm, Yucaipa Companies acquired the Fresh and Easy chain. On September 20, 2013, the Bayview Fresh and Easy was one of fifty stores closed as a result of the acquisition. As of the writing of this dissertation, deliberations about the future of the site continue.

The development of the Bayview Fresh and Easy is part of a long history to revitalize Bayview Hunters Point is an ethnically diverse community of approximately 34,000 residents located in San Francisco’s southeastern quadrant. About a third of the land area of the community includes the Hunters Point Shipyard (a former shipbuilding site), expansive municipal facilities, and Candlestick Park, the arena for the San Francisco 49ers football team. As of 2009, the community comprised the highest percentage of ethnic minorities in all of San Francisco: over
85% of its population comprises of non-whites, split nearly equally between African Americans, Asians, and Latinos (American Community Survey 2009).

Prior to the construction of the Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market in 2011, grocery store options were limited to a Foods Co (a discount food store) in the central part of the neighborhood, Super Save, a recently expanded neighborhood produce and meat market, and over thirty liquor stores. And yet in a strange twist of fate, Bayview is also the home to the region’s primary food distribution warehouse. For over 130 years, the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market has purveyed fruits and vegetables from regional producers to local restaurants, grocers, and small businesses throughout the Bay Area region.

The dearth of grocery stores reflects broader patterns of disinvestment that have plagued the community and its residents for decades. Compared to surrounding neighborhoods and San Francisco city averages, Bayview residents have a higher percentage of families living below the poverty level, higher unemployment rates, lower median household, and lower rates of educational attainment. The neighborhood also has highest percentage of youth residents under the age of 17 and the highest rates of homeownership (51% versus 38%). Gang and drug-related crime is considered by some residents and businesses to be one of the greatest obstacles to revitalization and neighborhood improvement (Sideroff and Walker 2011). Termed “San Francisco’s invisible majority,” the leading cause of premature death among Bayview residents is homicide, with half of the City’s thirty one homicides in 2006 (Lelchuk 2006). [See Table 1]

Disinvestment combined with Bayview’s industrial location near highways, superfund sites and municipal waste facilities has contributed to health disparities in BVHP. Controlling for race and income, residents have a life expectancy 14 years less than surrounding neighborhoods and three times the state averages of emphysema, heart failure, hypertension and diabetes among residents (Pacific Institute 2002). Furthermore, a 2005 assessment found that Bayview had the both highest concentration of food stamp recipients and highest percentage of eligible residents who are not receiving food stamps (San Francisco Food Systems 2005, 36).

Today, Bayview is currently at a critical juncture. Large-scale redevelopment has been planned for the 638-acre former Hunters Point shipyard along with extensive housing revitalization projects at two of the neighborhoods largest public housing sites, Alice Griffith and Hunters View. Over the next decade, this will entail over 20,000 new housing units, 300 acres of park development, 700,000 square feet of new retail, and 2.5 million square feet of office development centered on green technology (Office of Workforce and Economic Development 2012; POWER 2012). Even with the prospects of large scale neighborhood revitalization, residents and city authorities alike have expressed concerns over gentrification and the extent to which new development will address longstanding social and economic issues in the community (Lelchuk 2006; Sheppard 2010; Waldholz 2011; POWER 2012).

---

17 Also known as “extreme-value” retailers, discount food stores specialize in value-priced grocery items. These stores are generally smaller in size and selection compared to larger supermarket chains. Well known discount grocery stores include Foods Co (operated by Kroger) and Save-A-Lot (operated by SuperValu).

18 The same report noted that the state of California ranked last in a nationwide survey of food stamp participation among eligible populations.
C. Mandela Foods Cooperative, West Oakland

Established in 2009, the Mandela Foods Cooperative is a 2,300 square feet store owned and operated by six residents of Oakland’s West Oakland district [See Figure 3]. The store is located on the ground floor of a HOPE VI affordable housing development project and grew out of nearly a decade of community-based experiments in food retail. Currently, the store operates as a subsidiary of Mandela MarketPlace, a West Oakland non-profit organization that administers community-based programs focused on local food distribution, nutrition education, youth leadership activities, and corner store conversion\(^{19}\). In contrast to conventional chain supermarkets and limited assortment stores, Mandela Foods operates as a food market and café-restaurant specializing in bulk dry goods and organic produce and perishable items. As of 2012, Dana Harvey, Executive Director of Mandela MarketPlace, has been exploring options for expansion in other parts of West Oakland.

Similar to Bayview, Mandela Foods is the product of decades of efforts to revitalize West Oakland. Considered Oakland’s oldest neighborhood, today West Oakland is a community of approximately 26,000 residents. The neighborhood is located west of Downtown Oakland and north of the Port of Oakland, the fifth busiest container port in the U.S. Almost half of West Oakland’s land area either active or inactive industrial sites, including the former Oakland Army Base, one of the most toxic Superfund sites in the nation, and food processing and manufacturing facilities (most of them inactive). Like Bayview, West Oakland has been a predominately ethnic minority community. Today, over half of West Oakland residents are African American.

\(^{19}\) Corner store conversions refer to programs aimed at expanding whole foods and “healthy” food items in corner stores and liquor stores. The administrators of such programs (usually non-profits or government agencies) either supply produce and grocery items and/or assist with store retrofits to accommodate new shelving and refrigerator units for additional food offerings.
For decades, West Oakland’s only grocery store was located in Jack London Gateway, a suburban style retail shopping area located along the community’s easternmost border with Downtown Oakland. Eugene International Market, the latest iteration of the store, closed in 2007 due to poor profits. Residents have alleged that the Eugene International Market as well as previous tenants did not meet resident grocery needs fully, providing limited selections of foods and higher prices relative to stores elsewhere in Oakland (Nakao 1995; Burt 2004; Burt 2007; Burt 2008). Citywide efforts to attract a new tenant for Jack London Gateway are underway.20 Currently, there are three food markets in the neighborhood: 99 Cent, a discount food store, Produce Pro, an independently owned produce market, and Mandela Foods Cooperative. Like Bayview, West Oakland has had no continuously operating full-service grocery store21 in decades. Similar to Bayview, despite being considered a ‘food desert’ in today’s terms, West Oakland was once home to processing plants for numerous food companies including Carnation, Del Monte Foods, and Safeway.

West Oakland’s symptoms of disinvestment are comparable to Bayview, but in many ways more dire. Among the statistics: nearly half of West Oakland residents live under the poverty line. Median household income is nearly half of the City of Oakland and unemployment rates are twice that of City of Oakland (U.S. Census 2010). Historically, crime has been a significant issue throughout the City of Oakland, but has tended to concentrate in Oakland’s “flatlands”—West and East Oakland (Osborn 2012). Recent studies have found that West Oakland’s concentration of liquor stores has been a significant contributor to crime: while Oakland itself has had an overconcentration of liquor stores for decades, the Oakland City Attorney has found that West Oakland fares the worst. West Oakland exceeds the state instituted liquor license limit by 28 licenses (Russo 2004); this among the most licenses per 1000 residents in the City of Oakland (Alameda County Public Health Department 2008, 101). [See Table 2]

Like Bayview, disinvestment and industrial location has also contributed to health disparities in West Oakland. Life expectancy is ten years less among West Oakland residents compared to residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Children are seven times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma. The Alameda County Public Health Department found that West Oakland adults are five times more likely to be hospitalized for diabetes, three times more likely to die of stroke, and two times more likely to be hospitalized for and to die of heart disease and cancer (Alameda County Public Health Department 2008, vii).

Also similar to Bayview, West Oakland has been the focus of numerous revitalization efforts during the past decade. Plans are underway for the redevelopment of the Oakland Army Base, commercial revitalization along West Oakland’s historic main street, Seventh Street, and the development of artists lofts, condominiums, and affordable housing. Over the next decade, local planners and developers expect that West Oakland will be home to 6,000 new housing units, 200,000 square feet of neighborhood retail, 400,000 square feet of destination retail, and improved transit if plans progress as expected (Conley Consulting Group 2011; Cornu 2012).

20 Personal interview, Staff at Office of Neighborhood Investment, City of Oakland, August 6, 2012
21 A full service grocery store (also known as a “conventional grocery”) is grocery store that offers fresh produce items, meats, dairy, baked goods, dry and packaged goods and household and sundry items. Full service grocery stores include chain stores and independent retailers.
Like Bayview, recent revitalization efforts have been received equally with enthusiasm and caution. Some argue that new housing has been prohibitively priced, perpetuating gentrification in the neighborhood (Letz 2007; Stuhldreher 2007; Cott 2010; Smith-Dahl 2011).

Table 2: Bayview and West Oakland Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bayview Hunters Point</th>
<th>West Oakland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>33,996 (Census 2010)</td>
<td>26,023 (Census 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>- Bounded by Highway 101 - Location of Superfund site, PG&amp;E power plant, 100+ brownfield sites and 25 petroleum storage tanks - Holds 1/3 of city's waste generators</td>
<td>- Bounded by Port of Oakland, Oakland Army Base, three freeways - Location of AMCO Superfund site (one of most hazardous sites in the nation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic composition</td>
<td>33.7% African American 12.1% White 30.7% Asian 24.9% Hispanic 15.1% Other (2010)</td>
<td>53.17% African American 15.6% White 11.19% Asian 21.99% Hispanic (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Families Below Poverty Line</td>
<td>18% vs 11.9% (City of San Francisco) (2010)</td>
<td>37.5% vs 18.7% (City of Oakland) (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>14% vs 7% (City of San Francisco) (2010)</td>
<td>27% versus 17% (City of Oakland) vs 12% (state of CA) (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment for 25+</td>
<td>36.6% no high school diploma vs 18.8% citywide 11.6% advanced degree vs 45% City of San Francisco (Mayor’s Office of Housing 2010)</td>
<td>30% no high school diploma vs 23% City of Oakland (Conley Consulting Group 2011, 10–11) 6% advanced degree vs 15% City of Oakland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Research approach

A. Methodology

This dissertation uses an in depth, comparative case study approach to explore grocery store planning processes. In line with Yin's (2008) criteria for case studies, this dissertation is focused on understanding processes over time and contemporary events where individual and organization behaviors cannot be manipulated (9-11). In some ways, this study could be...

---

22 Yin (2008) further notes that the goals of case studies area to (author’s emphasis):
1) “explain the presumed causal links in real life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental stages” (19).  
2) “describe an intervention and the real life context in which it occurred” (20)  
3) “illustrate certain topics within an evaluation...in a descriptive mode”
understood as a comparison of two extreme cases—one top down, government-led process (i.e., Fresh and Easy) and a bottom-up activist driven process (i.e., Mandela Foods). Although one of these cases could be explored as a revelatory or critical case, this comparison of two extreme cases allows for a richer analysis of the factors that might explain their variation (Flyvbjerg 2006). While I am exploring Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods as illustrative rather than representative cases, my analysis aims to draw out important lessons that might be generalizable to other contexts.

As further discussed in the next section, an important aspect of this comparative case study was “tracing and delineating a coherent story but keeping multiple voices (González and Healey 2005, 2061).” Because my case studies involve past planning processes, I triangulated across multiple primary and secondary data sources. First, I relied heavily on a number of archival sources to tell the stories of both stores from multiple vantage points. This includes: 1) neighborhood and general plans, 2) neighborhood studies, 3) city council and government agency meeting minutes, 4) videos of public meetings and hearings relevant to both cases, 5) local and national newspaper articles, 6) press releases, and 7) websites and internet sources. Content from these sources was systematically organized around specific historical periods and events.

I supplemented these data with fifteen key informant interviews with urban grocery experts as well as government staff, community leaders, and residents associated with Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. Urban grocery retail experts were asked about national advocacy efforts around the Healthy Food Financing Initiative and the roles of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. Government staff and community leaders were asked about their involvement with the Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods projects and various facts about the planning processes, financing plans, and interactions between key actors. Residents were asked about their impressions of both stores.

B. Analytical Framework
The multi-scalar, multi-faceted nature of grocery development demands a contextual, historical, and organizational-level analysis. Drawing upon planning applications of ‘new institutionalism’, this dissertation uses an integrated historical-sociological institutionalist approach to account for how different types of grocery development emerge as a response to local conditions.

Broadly, institutionalism draws upon a long history of scholarship within economics, political science, and sociology focused on the study of “policy evolution or politics in time” and what drives economic and/or political decisions (Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005, 391). As such, institutionalism is premised in the idea that political and economic behaviors are not simply revealed through social choice but are mediated through social contexts and institutional structures (Steinmo 2001; Alexander 2005; Teitz 2007).

On a conceptual basis, institutional analysis is premised in the concept of institutions described by Healey (1999) as,

---

4) “enlighten those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.” (20)
“not understood as an organization as such, but as an established way of addressing certain social issues, for example, in the relationships through which what we understand as family are produced and reproduced, or, on a more micro-scale, the ways in which people go about community organizing activities (113).”

As such, institutions can encompass overarching formal structures such as “government” and “markets” as well as the categories of practices they encompass (e.g., planning practice, urban policymaking, etc.). At the same time, institutions include informal norms that become routinized into social actions, such as the practice of community organizing and place-based social movements (Healey 1999). That said, institutions are not necessarily understood as a causal determinant of particular urban and political phenomena; rather institutionalists understand institutions as a key influence in understanding policy paths and political outcomes (Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005, 391).

On a methodological level, institutionalism involves a systematic analysis of the connections between political-economic contexts and agency-level decision-making processes. Within political science, this type of analysis has entailed different schools of thought namely, rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism. Within the planning field, applications of institutionalism span historical and sociological institutionalism approaches, with an emphasis on how new approaches to planning problems emerge and why. As further expounded by González and Healey (2005):

“Planning analysts in this intellectual strand consider who gets involved in governance processes, through what modes or styles of governance...[and] the ways concepts and discourses become embedded in practices” (2057).

For example, Low, Gleeson, and Rush (2005) use a historical institutionalist approach to analyze why Australian transportation planning systems have been resistant to the adoption of sustainability. The authors found that innovations in Australian transportation planning were in fact, constricted by longstanding transportation policies emphasizing short-term operational and economic goals. The path dependence of ideas about transportation planning and how it should be done, explained why “sustainable” approaches were slow to be adopted.

In contrast to this contextual, historical approach to understanding planning processes, González and Healey (2005) analyzed how a citizen council gained “governance capacity” by exploring key governance episodes (actors, arenas, and interactive processes), governance processes (discourses, practices, and laws), and governance cultures (norms and values). Like Low, Gleeson, and Rush (2005), González and Healey's (2005) approach has a historical component—they analyze their case over a 15-year period within the changing political context of the City of Newcastle. However, their analysis is largely contingent upon endogenous, organizational-level factors that explain the rise of the citizen council (as opposed to exogenous, historical factors).

Ganapati's (2007) institutional analysis of housing cooperatives combines both of these approaches. In order to understand why housing cooperatives increased dramatically during India’s post-Independence period, he argues that it is necessary to consider both the role of historical political and economic conditions (i.e., exogenous, institutional-level) as well as agency-specific factors (i.e., endogenous, organizational-level).
Following the course of scholars arguing for an integration of the three “institutionalisms,” (Nichols 1998; Schneiberg 2005; Hall 2009), I propose a historical-sociological institutionalist framework to better account for the full range of historical and organizational attributes of the Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods cases. [See Table 3]

Table 3: Proposed Analytical Framework: Historical-Sociological Institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Analysis</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>HISTORICAL</th>
<th>SOCIOLOGICAL</th>
<th>EXPANDED HISTORICAL</th>
<th>HISTORICAL-SOCIOLOGICAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions, events [Historical]</td>
<td>Path dependencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical junctures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors, frames, interactions [Sociological]</td>
<td>Actors and governance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framing processes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Organization of chapters

This dissertation is organized as follows:

In Chapter 2, I set up the context for my analysis of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods by exploring how grocery stores entered into urban agendas. First, I provide a brief background on the role of grocery stores in utopian planning from “Garden City” to recent New Urbanist theories/practice. Next, I trace the evolution of federal urban policies relevant to urban grocery stores from the War on Poverty to Clinton-era federal neighborhood revitalization policies. Third, I discuss how grocery stores were both community-based practice and federal policy with the rise of the community food security movement and a growing body of ‘food desert’ research. Finally, I discuss the current context of federal food access policies and neighborhood revitalization, which represents a convergence of previously disparate neighborhood revitalization and public health agendas around grocery stores.

In Chapter 3, I situate Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods within the history of neighborhood revitalization efforts in Bayview and West Oakland. Throughout this chapter, I highlight the relationship between federal urban policy, planning/ redevelopment, and community based practice during three key historical moments: 1) wartime economic development and the military-industrial complex (1940s); 2) redevelopment as a response to postwar decline (1950s); and 3) federal urban policy and the local response (1960s-1970s).
In Chapter 4, I relate national policy narratives and local institutional contexts to planning processes respective to Fresh and Easy. This chapter explores: 1) how grocery stores generally entered into local practice agendas, and 2) how and why Fresh and Easy would become the chosen model for grocery development in Bayview. I argue that the Fresh and Easy store was the result of a convergence of government agendas around public health and neighborhood revitalization in Bayview. Ultimately, a city-defined grocery agenda entailed a largely top-down planning process that aligned with the corporate model of the Fresh and Easy store.

In Chapter 5, I relate national policy narratives and local institutional contexts to planning processes respective to Mandela Foods. This chapter explores: 1) how grocery stores generally entered into local practice agendas, and 2) how and why Mandela Foods would become the chosen model for grocery development in West Oakland. I argue that Mandela Foods was the result of the integration of community-based revitalization agendas into local practice. Ultimately, an activist-defined grocery agenda entailed a community-based planning process that aligned with the community-based, cooperative model of the Mandela Foods Cooperative.

In Chapter 6, I use an integrated historical-sociological institutional framework to analyze the contextual factors that explain the variations across Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. Key findings of this analysis are as follows: 1) neighborhood revitalization legacies shape grocery development, 2) critical junctures are important for institutional capacity building, 3) grocery development reflects national policy narratives and local framings of neighborhood revitalization, and 4) it matters who participates in grocery development and how. Overall I show how in Bayview and West Oakland alike, government agencies, community-based organizations, and residents are conditioned to respond to neighborhood issues in different ways.

In Chapter 7, I raise critical questions to be addressed by future research and policies. I also provide recommendations for how planners, policymakers, and community-based practitioners might re-approach and reframe food deserts and their solutions.
Think about all the neighborhoods that could be transformed, because people want to live in communities where they have resources. And a grocery store—a good-quality grocery store—is the first step. – First Lady Michelle Obama, Mayor’s Food Desert Summit, Chicago, Illinois, October 2011 (Office of the First Lady 2011)

Introduction

In many ways, the First Lady’s statement is not unique. As vital centers for everyday food and household shopping, grocery stores are cornerstones of neighborhood commercial districts. Easily accessible grocery stores exemplify the conveniences of neighborhood life. Their lack thereof demonstrates resource deficiencies on an almost visceral level. Therefore, it is perhaps no surprise that the phenomenon of food deserts has seized the attention of policymakers, politicians, and planners in recent years.

In this chapter, I situate Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods in a national policy context by tracing the rise of grocery stores as an urban policy and planning concern. Through a historical review and policy analysis, I find that the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative reflects normative ideals about urban grocery stores as well as a long history of government interventions and private investment in urban poverty alleviation. At the same time, grocery stores are now part of this shifting federal policy context, where childhood obesity and health disparities are driving local decisions about community reinvestment. As I will discuss further in Chapters 4 and 5, this has implications for grocery development and tools, techniques, and governance patterns of urban revitalization more broadly.

First, I show how the current rhetoric around urban grocery stores reflects longstanding normative ideals about the role of food markets in cities. Whether the Greek agora, the “Garden City,” or the neo-traditional neighborhood, food markets became the lifeblood of cities, neighborhoods, and their residents.

Second, I show how current federal food access programs trace back to a long history of federal urban poverty programs beginning with the War on Poverty to the Clinton-era federal neighborhood revitalization policies. Community Development Corporations would play a vital role in early experiments in urban grocery development in line with the logic of Michael Porter’s classic campaign for “inner city revitalization.” Growing evidence of the “urban retail gap” would cast grocery stores as a priority retail development in underserved urban neighborhoods—albeit with mixed outcomes.

Third, I discuss how despite the shortcomings of these efforts, public health concerns placed grocery stores back on an urban policy and planning agenda. The community food security
movement and growing body of ‘food desert research’ redefined the goals of grocery store development in line with the current Healthy Food Financing Initiative.

Finally, I discuss the current context of federal food access policies and neighborhood revitalization, which represents a convergence of previously disparate neighborhood revitalization and public health agendas around grocery stores. The catalyst would become Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move childhood obesity campaign, which shifted national policy discourses around place-based determinants of health. This further elevated the status of grocery stores as a centerpiece of national public health and neighborhood revitalization goals.

I. Grocery stores and the ideal neighborhood

Today, grocery stores are being framed as a normative solution to health disparities, urban disinvestment, and unemployment. Although these framings may seem relatively recent, marketplaces for the sales of goods comprised broader visions of the city and the ideal neighborhood.

A. 19th and early 20th century utopian planning and the neighborhood ideal
Cities were fundamentally founded as centers of commerce and the transaction of physical goods. Be it the agora of Ancient Greece and or the forum of Ancient Rome, the marketplace was the center of social, economic and political life (Lawson 2005). With the industrialization of cities, central public markets became hubs for the sales of goods. Utopian visions of the city emphasized the role of the marketplace as an organizing element of cities and neighborhoods.

For example, for 19th century British town planner, Ebenezer Howard, the “garden city” comprised variety of residential areas connected by rail and accessible to recreational green space, places of work, and basic retail services. Garden cities would be organized along swaths of central green space and the “Crystal Palace” where, “manufactured goods are exposed for sale, and here most of that class of shopping which requires the job of deliberation and selection is done (Howard 1902, 143).”

Early 20th century urban planner/sociologist Clarence Perry saw a similar role for the marketplace in his vision of the “Neighborhood Unit.” As such, neighborhoods would consist of communities of 5000 to 6000 residents centered around schools and bound by basic commercial facilities on the periphery (Perry 1998 [1929]). Recalling pre-World War I urban neighborhoods, Perry’s concept emphasized physical accessibility and walkability to institutions that supported the social fabric of neighborhoods, namely schools, churches, and marketplaces. While both the Garden City and Neighborhood Unit concepts would be criticized for prioritizing urban design over the social and economic organization of cities, they articulated particular ideals of neighborhood that maintained in 20th century planning practice.

For example, despite being a staunch critic of top-down urban planning and the Garden City concept, Jane Jacobs captured elements of utopian planning ideals in her observations of the livable, mixed-use communities in New York, Boston, and Pittsburgh. Neighborhood
commercial areas comprising of grocery stores and basic necessities provided a certain structure, visual character, and pace to urban life—one that urban planners, she argued, should aspire to:

“The street has a visual character which is consistent and basically orderly as well as various…A restaurant or snack place, a grocery, a cabinet-maker, a printer’s shop, for instance can fit well into such a street. But exactly the same kind of use—say a big cafeteria, a supermarket, a large woodworking factory or printing plant can wreak havoc (and sometimes auditory havoc) because it is on a different scale” (Jacobs 1992 [1961], 235).

B. Neo-traditional planning, mixed-use development, and the neighborhood ideal

Neo-traditional planning of the 1980s and 1990s, captured elements of Jane Jacobs’ vision of the ideal urban neighborhood as a solution to suburban sprawl, wherein cities were designed to be pedestrian-friendly and well serviced with amenities. For New Urbanist planners, accessible grocery stores contribute to a “balanced mixed of activities-dwelling, shopping, working, and schooling” (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1994, xviii).23 For Peter Calthorpe and a related cohort of Transit-Oriented-Development (TOD) planners, transit stops serve as hubs of dense mixed-use development. Regionally, TODs were to be distributed one-mile apart, a designation determined based on the “market area specifically to support a grocery store within a neighborhood retail center” (Calthorpe 1995, 67).24

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, New Urbanism, TOD, and related neo-traditional planning principles have been applied to the design of entirely new communities (e.g., Seaside and Celebration, Florida) and for the enhancement of existing areas (e.g., Fruitvale Transit Village). Initially, New Urbanism was envisioned as a strategy to combat auto-centric, suburban greenfield development. And yet by the early 1990s, neo-traditional planning principles would explicitly inform the Clinton-era HOPE VI housing revitalization program and municipal form-based codes, further elevating the role of urban design in land use planning (Bohl 2000; Congress of New Urbanism and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2000).

Overall, normative planning paradigms—be it the Garden City, Neighborhood Unit, New Urbanism and/or TOD—all considered grocery stores among neighborhood amenities essential to the creation of livable, walkable community. As such, grocery stores completed a certain vision of the ideal neighborhood, where the necessities of daily life could be readily accessible.

---

23 This refers to a series of related concepts beginning with Traditional Neighborhood Development, Smart Growth, and Transit-Oriented-Development—all anti-suburban development models premised broadly in the idea of New Urbanism.

24 Grocery stores were central to further iterations of Calthorpe’s TOD model. In his idea of the Urban Network, “Retail within the village and town centers need adequate access, visibility, and an appropriate market area. For example, it takes a minimum of 10,000 population or just under two square miles of mixed-density housing to support a full-service grocery store. In the Urban Network, a Village Center, anchored by such a grocery store, is located at major Avenue intersections without being cut off from the surrounding development. Connector streets provide direct access for pedestrians, bikers, and cars from the adjacent neighborhoods while the couplet allows comfortable pedestrian movement through the center. Surrounding the village are four ‘neighborhoods’ each defined by a quarter-mile walking radius and a mix of uses enhanced by access to the Village Center” (Calthorpe 2002, 4).
II. Grocery stores and neighborhood revitalization

While neo-traditional planning emphasized the role of neighborhood retail to the extent that it fulfilled urban design goals, community development practitioners and policies couched grocery stores within broader efforts to address the symptoms of poverty in underserved urban areas.

A. The War on Poverty, CDCs, and neighborhood retail

Grocery stores entered more explicitly into urban agendas with the rise of federal urban policies and local institutional practices that developed in response to postwar urban decline. In the 1960s, controversial Urban Renewal plans, rampant social movements around civil rights and economic justice swept cities across the nation. Then President Lyndon Johnson instated a series of programs focused on workforce development or as put by Halpern (1994), “enhancing opportunity and preparing poor children, youth, and to a lesser extent adults to take advantage of opportunities (107).” Through the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity funded “Community Action Agencies” primarily for the provision of social services spanning workforce development, early childhood education, and youth services—all considered “people-based” social services. In 1966, then Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Jacob Javits introduced an amendment to the Act, the Special Impact Program, to expand the scope of the War on Poverty to encompass economic development activities that addressed the focused on “place-based” neighborhood concerns.

Prior to the instatement of this amendment, non-profit organizations and Settlement Houses dating back to the turn of the century pursued “place-based” revitalization activities spanning housing rehabilitation, infrastructure development, and small business incubation. Chicago’s Woodlawn Organization was among these early CDCs, which primarily focused on business and workforce development and significantly, the development of neighborhood grocery stores among other resident-led businesses (Halpern 1995, 131; Stoutland 1999, 196). The Special Impact Program further expanded these activities, now reorienting federal monies specifically towards the creation of CDCs. The first of 39 CDCs included Brooklyn-based Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC) and Cleveland-based Hough Development Corporation. Both organizations pursued housing assistance, rehabilitation, the provision of business loans for new enterprises, and the development of larger scale projects such as supermarket-anchored shopping center (Madway 1972; Williams 1985b).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the dismantling of OEO by the Nixon administration, as well as the mixed successes of commercial pursuits reoriented the focus of federally-funded CDCs from economic development to housing and social services primarily (Stoutland 1999, 198). Early evaluations found that despite growing numbers of CDCs nationally, they had limited successes with economic and business incubation strategies (Schill 1996). This contributed to the dwindling of CDC funding, but instead, the creation of intermediary organizations who would serve as fiscal agents of federal CDC funds—namely Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) such as the national network of Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC). During the mid 1970s to early 1980s, more established CDCs such as BSRC continued to pursue supermarket-anchored shopping centers even as the large majority of CDCs shifted their focus to housing rehabilitation and social services.
B. Urban decline and the urban grocery gap on the federal agenda
In the late 1970s and 1980s, cities across the U.S. experienced deindustrialization and as a result, unprecedented levels of unemployment, urban population decline, and mounting economic segregation. CDCs persisted during this time, even experiencing a net growth by the mid to late 1980s. On the heels of Bill Clinton’s election into office in 1992, grocery stores entered more squarely into neighborhood revitalization practice as a new administration sought new solutions to the old problem of urban poverty.

The impacts of urban decline were well known but it was only in the early 1990s, that phenomenon of “supermarket redlining” and the resulting “grocery gap” commanded a national audience. In February 1992, amidst growing concerns about the economic conditions of urban areas across the nation, the U.S. Conference of Mayors issued a report examining urban retail gaps. Through a national survey of supermarket trends, the report revealed that the number of supermarkets in eight major cities experienced a net decrease in a phenomenon they described as “supermarket redlining” (Turque 1992).

That said, the mass exodus of supermarkets from urban areas well established in previous research. Previous research had found that “supermarket flight” in fact traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, when retail suburbanized with housing and the grocery industry began a gradual process of consolidation to remain competitive (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1972; Greer 1986; Cotterill 1991). By the 1980s, Reagan-era deregulation relaxed previous corporate antitrust policies. This would encourage the trend towards larger, fewer supermarkets, each of which gained larger shares of grocery sales over time—an benefit to stockholders but not necessarily consumers (Cotterill 1991, 4-5). Between 1979 and 1989, 16 of the nation’s top 20 grocery retailers experienced mergers and leveraged buyouts, resulting in a complete reorganization of the grocery industry (Cotterill 1991, 16). Furthermore, between 1970 and 1990, half of the supermarkets in the three largest U.S. cities closed (Alwitt and Donley 1997, 141).

The U.S. Mayor’s Conference report reinforced this findings emphasizing the implications for these industry wide changes on local communities and vouching for the creation of new policies to ‘end the redlining of urban America by the supermarket industry’ (Bennett 1992). As a result, the report drew a strong response from the national media, trade associations, grocery retailers, and the federal government. The news media featured the findings of the report as well as the beginnings of coordinated local responses by local entrepreneurs. Despite disputing the rhetoric of the report, the Food Marketing Institute (the grocery industry’s main trade association) created an Urban Initiatives Task Force designed to revitalize communities through the development of grocery stores and job creation (Bennett 1992). Regional retailers Lucky’s, Von’s, and Pathmark Supermarket made new commitments to open stores in underserved areas mostly in the Pacific West and Northeast respectively (Bennett 1992).

25 The goals of the Urban Initiatives Task force were as follows: “To foster the revitalization of communities through private-public partnerships; To identify and promote model community-support programs in education, job training, mentoring and store development; To highlight proactive programs for youth-at-risk to enhance their education and employment opportunities; To motivate members of the food industry to organize, participate in and support such programs and activities (Bennett 1992).”
Most significantly, in September 1992, Tony Hall, Ohio State Representative and Chairman of the House Select Committee on Hunger of the hosted a special hearing to discuss the state of the “urban grocery gap” and the ways local communities were beginning to address them. As summarized by Representative James Moran of Virginia:

“The grocery stores that offer a wide variety of food at reasonable rates are no more available in many areas of our inner cities. You have to often times travel several miles by taxi or bus or rail sometimes and obviously it is very inconvenient, and it is expensive to do that. We can understand why it is done. The people who are removed from that urban area and the top levels of management of our grocery chains decide that the suburbanites can buy more and can pay more for their groceries. But the fact is that this is a very basic necessity for communities, particularly urban communities, and we see the results of this inexorable erosion in the health of our children in our urban school system and in fact, that families even when the parent is determined, to provide a well balanced diet is not able to because of the fact that so many grocery stores have left the area, left local communities, and what they are left with is corner stores that offer small variety and much higher prices. So this is the type of thing that would not read about on the front page of the newspaper, but it takes leadership like yours, Mr. Chairman, to bring it to the public’s attention and I know that is what this hearing is about today, and I thank you for conducting the hearing today” (U.S. House of Representatives 1992, 4).

The hearing featured statements from urban grocery experts, Ronald Cotterill and Mark Winne, residents of grocery-deficient communities, and notably, the work of the Monsignor William Lindor, executive director/founder of Newark’s New Community Corporation (NCC). A faith-based CDC operating in Newark’s poor urban areas since 1968, NCC garnered widespread acclaim for its comprehensive scope of work including retail, housing, health centers, and social service programs initiatives for poor urban residents. Amongst its most notable achievements was its joint venture partnership with Pathmark supermarket, among the first of larger supermarket chains to reenter urban areas by way of CDC partnerships.

Together, these speakers highlighted several key trends among urban grocery stores that were beginning to be explored but had not yet been widely publicized. This included new evidence showing that poorer urban residents pay between 8 to 30% more for food each year than more affluent residents and spend an extra $400-$1000 per year to commute to supermarkets outside of their own communities due to limited vehicle ownership (U.S. House of Representatives 1992, 1-2). Several ways forward were identified including: 1) more stringent corporate anti-trust policies that promote more competition within the grocery industry and Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems (Cotterill); 2) grocery shuttles for resident of low income communities (Moore); 3) regulatory and tax incentives for urban grocery development (Goldman); 4) public-private partnerships among entrepreneurs and community organizations (Winne); and 5) municipal and federal policies to support the financing, development, and operations of new grocery stores, new funding streams to support inner city economic development (Lindor and Winne) (U.S. House of Representatives 1992).

The hearing did not lead to immediate federal policy actions per se, but it generated political awareness of the visceral nature of disinvestment in poorer urban communities as exemplified by access to grocery stores. Additionally, it reinforced the critical role of CDCs as key drivers of economic development, even in spite of dwindling federal funding channels and limited organizational capacities for retail-oriented initiatives. Finally, while the hearing did not result in immediate federal policy actions around grocery stores, it would pave the way for a new era of federal revitalization policies advantageous to urban grocery development.
C. Grocery stores and the push for “inner city revitalization”

The Clinton-era (1993-2001) marked a resurgence of federal urban policies within a new context of community development. As such, the “urban grocery gap” was situated within broader discussions on how best to leverage the private sector, the burgeoning “community development industry” (Yin 1998), and government to systemically address urban poverty and disinvestment.

In line with the scope and intent of Clinton-era federal urban revitalization policies, scholars of business, economic development, and community planning looked to these CDC experiments as further confirmation of the need for modes of “inner city revitalization.”

For example, Bendick and Egan (1993) argued for mutual integration of community development and business development to more systemically address the symptoms of urban poverty. Namely, community development activities can become a boon to business by expanding the pool of potential employees, improving service delivery, rehabilitating real estate. And yet, business alone may not impart the trickle down social impacts, which may be best provided in the form of community development activities including social services, housing rehabilitation, and workforce development. Ultimately, business that serves community goals and vice versa, may be more effective in revitalizing poor communities than one singular approach. Bendick and Egan's (1993) view reflects a longstanding divide between social and economic goals in community development practice, despite integrated efforts through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and subsequent practices by CDCs. And yet the gradual diminishing of funding for business-oriented activities by CDCs reflected the continued challenge to truly marry these largely disparate approaches to neighborhood revitalization.

Bendick and Egan (1993) begin to suggest the business benefits brought on by community development, however pre-eminent business scholar, Michael Porter, perhaps made the most influential argument for business development in the “inner city.” In his seminal article, “The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City,” Porter argued that entitlements and social investments alone may not mitigate urban poverty. Rather, inner cities must create wealth in order to redistribute wealth through “private, for-profit-initiatives and investments based on economic self-interest and competitive advantage” (Porter 1995, 56). Furthermore, contrary to perceptions, inner cities are poised for successful economic development given their locational benefits, untapped market demands, an available workforce, and potential for regional economic development. In a follow-up piece, Porter highlighted CDC-supermarket partnerships as models of how “the private sector is already waking up to the potential of inner cities” and how “entrepreneurs are creating businesses that cater to the distinct needs of inner city consumers” (Porter 1997, 14-15).

Critics have argued that Porter’s model oversimplifies the solution to urban poverty (Johnson, Farrell, and Henderson 1996), understates the role of minority-owned and locally-owned businesses in economic revitalization (Bates 1997), and discounts the role of government and community development corporations in encouraging private investment (Fainstein and Gray 1996). Yet Porter has been credited for widening ongoing discussions about inner city revitalization to encompass the question of retail.
Porter put forth his proposal amidst growing research on the magnitude of urban grocery and retail gaps26 (Cotterill and Franklin 1995; Alwitt and Donley 1997) and continued suburban retail expansion due to available land, lower development costs, looser zoning laws, and higher purchasing power (Donohue 1997). Still Porter elicited a strong response from grocery retailers in particular, who began reentering poorer underserved communities in the early 1990s in part due to new federal incentive programs (Committee for Economic Development 1995; Abell 1998).

Although federal programs specifically focused on grocery stores would emerge in the 2010s, the Clinton Administration initiated a string of federal urban revitalization programs that would provide preliminary solutions to the urban grocery gap. The first of these programs was Empowerment Zone program, which aimed to combine the economic incentive structure of the statewide Enterprise Zones27 with workforce development and social services. Administered by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development since 1993, the program provides competitive block grants to local governments for collaborative economic and workforce development activities.

Within weeks of the Empowerment Zone program’s announcement, the Food Marketing Institute issued a report strongly advocating federal incentives for supermarket development in poor communities by highlighting the industry’s readiness to address urban disinvestment:

“Supermarkets . . . provide basic products and services essential to human life and health…It is often at the supermarket that young people have their first job experience. This uniquely positions the industry to take a leadership role in developing proactive programs to address the societal and economic challenges facing urban and other neglected neighborhoods” (White 1993).

While some cities leveraged Empowerment Zone funding for development of supermarkets,28 LISC created a program as a response to the urban grocery gap specifically. Also in 1993, LISC created The Retail Initiative (TRI), a $24 million corporate equity investment fund that provided equity capital for supermarket-anchored retail centers in inner city locations. Even in its early stages, TRI did not bring expected financial returns due to increased development costs and limited CDC capacities for retail operations (Lawson 2005). Still many projects have continued to be funded through this program—it is reported that as of 2012, LISC has invested over $100 million in 59 supermarkets and food markets across the country (Proscio 2006).

26 The widely cited study, “The Urban Grocery Gap” confirmed findings of previous reports that revealed that lower income consumers on public assistance tend to lack private automobiles and tend to live in communities without supermarkets. Through an survey of 21 of the nation’s largest cities, the authors found that certain cities fared worse than others further exacerbated by federal cuts in food assistance programs in previous years (Cotterill and Franklin 1995).

27 As most CDCs shifted away from an economic development focus amidst diminishing federal funds, the Reagan and Bush administrations aimed to address urban disinvestment Enterprise Zones, a well-practiced business attraction method prevalent in parts of Asia and Great Britain since the 1970s. Federal enterprise zones legislation never managed to pass through Congress, but the Reagan administration instead, sold zones to state and local governments (Riposa 1996, 541). Today, nearly all 50 states have implemented Enterprise Zone programs at one point in their history since the early 1980s, which at the time had mixed impacts on new business development and poverty alleviation (Dabney 1991; Dowall 1996; Wilder and Rubin 1996; Greenbaum and Engberg 2000). CDCs have also used Empowerment Zone funding for supermarket development (Abell, United States, and National Congress for Community Economic Development 1998).

28 The cities of Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Gary, Indiana are among thirty Empowerment Zone recipients that have leveraged federal monies specifically for the development of supermarkets (Kaufman 1996; American Planning Association 2007; Haughney 2010; ChangeLabs Solutions 2013).
TRI coincided with the expansion of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), another financial mechanism central to CDC-supermarket partnerships in the mid 1990s. Established through the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994, CDFIs were administrated through the U.S. Department of Treasury,

“...To promote economic development, to develop businesses, to create jobs, and to develop commercial real estate; To develop affordable housing and to promote homeownership; and To provide community development financial services, such as basic banking services, financial literacy programs, and alternatives to predatory lending” (CDFI Fund 2013).

Both LISC and CDFIs largely followed the logic of Porter’s model of inner city revitalization by building capacities of CDCs to undertake retail development. Still the CDC-supermarket partnership model proved to be the most commonly applied in cities with well-established CDCs. For example, Pathmark supermarket (already a partner of NCC) partnered with BSRC, Harlem-based, Abyssinian Development Corporation, Newark-based New Community Corporation (for the second time) for joint venture partnerships featuring local hiring, and job training programs. Although the Pathmark supermarket partnerships have been touted as successes, some note that small business owners often saw it as a threat (Lavin 2000).

As a further extension of these programs, LISC developed the New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) in 2000. The program was designed to attract private investment in designated “Community Development Entities” who then invest in underserved communities. Administered by the CDFI Fund within the U.S. Treasury, NMTC rewards investors within seven years of a tax benefit on the cash value of their eligible investment, across any type of business or real estate investments (The Reinvestment Fund 2011, 2). NMTC became a core funding source for CDCs and CDFIs, maintaining the Empowerment Zone’s focus on job creation and economic development but an added emphasis on individual retail developments:

“...Implicit in the policy concept of “New Markets” is the economic linkage of business investment and job creation. In addition to increasing employment opportunities, investments in these targeted communities can also increase the quality of life by providing essential services such as fresh food access, education and healthcare to name a few” (The Reinvestment Fund 2011, 2).

Overall, for Michael Porter and his counterparts, the 1990s represented an era where communities and governments made new demands of the private sector and willingly offered the means to do so. As such, the Empowerment Zone program, CDFIs, and LISC’s retail incentive programs represented a reorientation of federal urban poverty programs towards private sector investment.

And yet, the promise of a new era of community reinvestment produced mixed outcomes. Indeed, these programs have succeeded in catalyzing private investment in many underserved communities. As such, grocery stores and other neighborhood retail have the potential to boost

---

29 The Community Reinvestment Act of 1974 already set the stage for equitable housing and commercial lending practices.
30 The U.S. Treasury describes a CDE as “a domestic corporation or partnership that is an intermediary vehicle for the provision of loans, investments, or financial counseling in Low-Income Communities (LICs). Benefits of being certified as a CDE include being able to apply to the CDFI Fund to receive a New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) allocation to offer its investors in exchange for equity investments in the CDE and/or its subsidiaries; or to receive loans or investments from other CDEs that have received NMTC allocations.” (U.S. Treasury 2013)
market activity, tax revenue, social cohesion, and overall neighborhood desirability (Chapple and Jacobus 2009, 21). Yet evaluations of Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Zones and New Markets Tax Credits have revealed only modest improvements in job creation, business growth, poverty alleviation, and overall community well-being (Spencer and Ong 2004; Busso and Kline 2008; Chapple and Jacobus 2009; Freedman 2012). Certain types of neighborhood retail may even contribute to gentrification and the displacement of lower income households (Zukin et al. 2009; Sullivan and Shaw 2011). While some studies suggest that supermarkets and grocery stores do not have the same gentrifying effects as high end boutiques and specialty retail (Freeman and Braconi 2004), there is continued debate about the true impacts of retail development in underserved urban areas.

Regardless, these programs paved the way for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, raising similar questions about the true benefits of government-led private investment in retail.

III. Community food security and the federal food access agenda

CDC-supermarket partnerships and associated federal neighborhood revitalization programs prioritized grocery stores as a mode of retail revitalization largely for their social and economic functions. In parallel, grocery stores entered into a separate set of urban policy agendas around anti-hunger and food security.

A. From community food security and food access on a policy agenda

Food security was part of a national policy concern since 1930s and 1940s with the instatement of the first Food Stamp program and the National School Lunch Act of 1946 (Haering and Syed 2009, 9). Although the initial goals of the Food Stamp program was primarily focused on hunger alleviation, some argue that it was focused more on assisting farmers by purchasing food surpluses and feed the poor (Allen 1999, 118). The School Lunch Act was premised in improving childhood health, when almost half of potential draftees were rejected due to physical ailments traceable to malnutrition. Essentially, access to nutritious and healthy food was part of national security agendas—whether keeping the U.S. self-sufficient in terms of its food needs or as a way to ensure the health of future citizens.

And yet by the 1960s, hunger became a central national policy issue with growing medical research and journalistic accounts of childhood hunger in poor urban communities (Berry

---

31 Numerous studies have found that neighborhood amenities such as grocery stores influence residential location. For example, Chapple and Jacobus (2009) refer to hedonic housing price models and literature on the back-to-the-city movement including: Eugene Birch’s Brookings Institution report: “Who Lives Downtown” and geographer Neil Smith’s 1996 book “The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City.”

32 Since 2008, the Food Stamp Program has been known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and are now administered through Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (EBT) instead of stamps. The Depression-era Food Stamp Program was temporarily discontinued in 1943 for wartime rations but was reinstated by the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s (Haering and Syed 2009, 11). Berry (1984) evaluates the role of the public media in setting the agenda for anti-hunger policies in “Feeding hungry people: Rulemaking in the food stamp program.”
The Kennedy administration reinstated the Food Stamp Program, which was later expanded to include a School Breakfast Program and what is now known as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In cities across the U.S., anti-hunger movements proliferated against the backdrop of the civil rights, free speech, and anti-war movements. Between 1969 and 1970, the Office of Economic Opportunity funded the first anti-hunger voluntary associations, including the Food Research and Action Center, based in Washington D.C. (Eisinger 1998, 93).

Amidst continued local advocacy around childhood malnutrition and hunger, in December 1969, Nixon initiated his own “war on hunger” at a White House conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health noting, “the moment is at hand to put an end to hunger in America itself. For all time” (Office of the White House 1969). The conference resulted in an expansion of federally funded food assistance programs. For the decade that followed, federal food programs expanded its focus on cash subsidies and vouchers—all premised in a “medical model” of hunger and malnutrition (Allen 1999, 118). However, the anti-hunger movement would shift more broadly towards “food security,” with growing research and evidence of the connections between socio-economic status and hunger.

During the early years of Reagan administration, social assistance programs experienced significant reductions amidst an economic recession (Nestle and Guttmacher 1992, 186). As a result, existing emergency food providers reported an abrupt rise in the use of their services by ‘the new poor,’ suddenly under-resourced children, youth, and families (Nestle and Guttmacher 1992, 186). Evaluations of food assistance recipients at the time further confirmed that the risk of hunger multiplied with increasing poverty and reduced food assistance benefits (Physician’s Task Force on Hunger in America 1984 in Nestle and Guttmacher 1992, 186).

Amidst this crisis, the Reagan administration looked to private sector food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens to meet increasing food demands. These circumstances elicited a strong response from anti-hunger, anti-poverty, and social justice activists who began promoting “community food security” policies in the late 1980s and 1990s. The culmination of these early efforts was the Community Food Security Coalition, a national network of activists promoting new provisions in the 1995 U.S. Farm Bill ensuring community food security: that “all persons obtaining at all times a cultural acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local non-emergency sources.” The proposed 1995 Community Food Security Empowerment Act called for reductions in traditional food assistance programs and instead the creation of a new competitive grants program for community food projects in low income, underserved communities. Already prior to the Community Food Security Act, the U.S. had a long history of community-based and local government community garden programs (Lawson 2005), counterculture food movements involving food buying clubs and cooperatives (Belasco 2007), and community-driven food assistance programs (Patel 2011). However, the Act was distinct in

---

33 A citizen’s board wrote the first report on the prevalence of hunger in the U.S., called “Hunger USA.” A television documentary, “Hunger in America” was known to have raised public awareness on the issue, which would catch the attention of federal policymakers and the Nixon Administration.

34 Passed every five years, the U.S. Farm bill consists of the primary agricultural and food policy for the U.S.

35 The legislation defined “community food project” as an initiative that requires “a one-time infusion of Federal assistance to become self-sustaining and that is designed to: (1) meet the food needs of low-income people; (2) increase the self reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues (U.S. House of Representatives 1995).”
its focus integrating social equity, economic justice, environmental sustainability through community-based means (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996).

As of 1996, the Act was included in the Farm Bill, authorizing the USDA Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program, which allocates $16 million over the course of seven years with guidance from the Community Food Security Coalition. Through a competitive application process, the USDA administers one to three-year matching grants ranging from $10,000-300,000. The community food security movement distinguished itself from the anti-hunger movement by focusing on community food needs (as opposed to individual/household needs) through community food planning, direct marketing, community gardening, food assistance, farmland protection, food retail strategies, and associated community and economic development (Allen 1999, 120). Of these community development activities, the Act called for an integration of community food security activities with that of community development initiatives:

“Community development initiatives (e.g., empowerment zone activities) could be linked directly to community food security type projects (farmers’ markets, community gardens, new food access-related transportation projects, food processing enterprises, etc.). Efforts to relocate supermarkets in inner city areas through joint venture arrangements with community groups represent another empowerment strategy” (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996, 199-200).

This component of the Community Food Security Act explicitly aligned with the goals of federal urban policies programs namely, The Empowerment Zone and LISC’s TRI programs. Despite its emphasis on “entrepreneurial” projects, the structure, scope, and size of the grant program inherently limits the extent to which funds can be leveraged for larger capital projects, like the development of a grocery store or supermarket:

“The purpose of the CFP is to support the development of projects with a one-time infusion of federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining. CFPs should be designed to create community-based food projects with objectives, activities and outcomes that are in alignment with CFPCGP primary goals. Preference will be given to CFPs designed to:

(i) Develop connections between two or more sectors of the food system;
(ii) Support the development of entrepreneurial projects;
(iii) Develop innovative connections between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; or
(iv) Encourage long-term planning activities, and multi-system, interagency approaches with collaborations from multiple stakeholders that build the long-term capacity of communities to address the food and agricultural problems of the communities, such as food policy councils and food planning associations.

Examples of CFP Projects include, but are not limited to, community gardens with market stands, value chain projects, food hubs, farmers’ markets, farm-to-institutions projects, and marketing & consumer cooperatives. All projects must involve low-income participants (USDA 2012).”

A limited number of CFP grantees have gone on to leverage smaller scale projects into plans for grocery stores and supermarkets, however the majority of funded projects included community gardens, small-scale farmers markets, and food planning activities. Many of these projects—particularly community gardens—have been touted for their contributions to individual and community health (Walczek, Mattson, and Zajicek 1996; Armstrong 2000; Wakefield et al. 2007), environmental sustainability (Irvine, Johnson, and Peters 1999; Twiss et al. 2003; Holland 2004), social cohesion (Lyson 2004; Shinew, Glover, and Parry 2004; Saldivar-Tanaka and
Krasny 2004) and local economic development (Lyson 2004; Twiss et al. 2003). And yet others acknowledge that community food projects such as community gardens represent the continued deferral of social responsibilities to the non-government sector against the backdrop of government cut-backs and neoliberalism (Pudup 2008, 1230).

Grocery stores and supermarkets would still be considered the “gold standard” of food access initiatives, amidst growing research on food deserts and the connections between grocery store access and racial and socio-economic disparities in health.

B. Health disparities and food deserts
In the early to late 1990s, a growing body of public health research confirmed that low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected by higher rates of morbidity, mortality, and both acute and chronic diseases (House and Williams 2000; Lantz et al. 2001; Williams and Collins 2001). In line with the principles of environmental justice, scholars generally have agreed that where people live matters when it comes to individual and community health. Not only do poor residents tend to live in communities near environmentally hazardous industries (Austin and Schill 1991; Colquette and Robertson 1991).36

These are also generally divested communities which lack “health promoting” facilities, be it recreational space, social services, health care, and/or healthful food outlets. The lack of supermarkets and grocery stores in poor communities was already well established through previous research, however this new generation of public health researchers sought to define the implications that this phenomenon has on community health.

In the early to mid 1990s, British scholars came to define these under-resourced communities as “food deserts” (Lang and Caraher 1998; Cummins and Macintyre 1999). The term grew out of a research project on the symptoms of urban poverty in the UK, where in food deserts were known as:

“areas of cities where cheap, nutritious food is virtually unobtainable. Car-less residents, unable to reach out-of-town supermarkets, depend on the corner shop where prices are high, products are processed and fresh fruit and vegetables are poor or non-existent (The Independent, 11 June 1997; cited in Whitehead, 1998, p. 189).” (Wrigley 2002, 2032)

Wrigley (2002) notes that in spite of its vague definition, “the metaphor of the ‘food desert’ inspired robust policy debates on the connections between place, socio-economic status, and health. Although early research exhibited largely confirmed the findings of domestic research on the “urban grocery gap”—that poorer communities lack large chain retailers (including supermarkets) but have a higher concentration of smaller food stores, be it convenience stores, ethnic markets, and liquor stores. Subsequent studies such as the ‘Food Deserts in British Cities’ project suggested that the lack of supermarkets in combination with other factors—access to health, diet-lifestyle preferences, socio-economic status—contribute to health disparities (Reisig

36 Building on two decades of health promotion activities within the U.S. Health and Human Services, in 2000, the agency released a report, Healthy People 2010, which identified the improvement of quality of life and elimination of health disparities as its main goals.
Furthermore, early studies found that the new urban grocery stores increased “healthy food” (i.e., fruits and vegetables) consumption among lower income residents (Wrigley et al. 2002).

Domestically, this initial scholarship inspired hundreds of ‘food desert’ studies since 2000, ranging from academic studies, government-sponsored assessments, health assessments, and GIS analyses (Beaulac, Kristjansson, and Cummins 2009). These studies tend to use different definitions of what food deserts are and entail—some tend to define food deserts in terms of the number of grocery stores or lack thereof, while others focus on the type of quality of foods (Walker, Keane, and Burke 2010, 876). The most widely cited early study on food deserts emphasized the connections between food access, wealth, and racial make-up of neighborhoods, noting that supermarkets abound in higher income areas while convenience and fast food stores dominate in low-income areas (Morland et al. 2002).

Subsequent studies found similar trends regarding the distribution of stores and their impacts: poorer residents tend to pay 3-37% more for food items at small stores compared to residents shopping at suburban supermarkets (a phenomenon called ‘food segregation’) and available food is often processed and of poor quality (Hendrickson, Smith, and Eikenberry 2006; Segal 2010). Residents living in areas without a grocery store or supermarket tend to be of ethnic minority groups and with higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and diet-related diseases (Gallagher 2006; M. Gallagher 2007; Babey and Diamant 2008; Neff et al. 2009). In light of these findings, researchers continued to suggest that increase access to supermarkets might lower prevalence of obesity, improved fruit and vegetable consumption, and better diet quality among African Americans, low income households, and pregnant women (Beaulac, Kristjansson, and Cummins 2009, 4).

These initial studies were subject to both praise and critique. Local governments readily looked to these studies to justify new programs and initiatives to support efforts to address food access issues locally. And yet, some researchers were more concerned with the conceptual basis of the term ‘food desert,’ which failed to account for the ways that poor communities have managed to cope in spite of grocery stores or supermarkets. For example, some argued that areas defined as food deserts in fact are replete with smaller food retailers, which contribute to food security and may present future opportunities to do so (Short, Guthman, and Raskin 2007; Raja, Ma, and Yadav 2008). Others—particularly the mass media—also questioned the still inconclusive connection between the development of supermarkets and improved health outcomes.

C. Neighborhood and municipal responses to food deserts
Overall, food desert research made a strong public health case for developing new grocery stores in underserved communities, despite sometimes conflicting, and inconclusive evidence. As community-based food projects continued to expand through the early 2000s, a new generation of food activists sought to reframe the community food security movement to encompass social justice, human rights, and economic self-reliance through food systems (Wekerle 2004; Levkoe 2006; Allen 2008). Inspired by international peasant farmers and environmental justice movements, “food justice” activists approached food access issues through programs and entrepreneurial activities focused on engaging disenfranchised populations in directly revitalizing their communities. As such, ‘food justice’ is more squarely premised in “ensuring
the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed and accessed and eaten are shared fairly (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010, 6).”

Frequently cited examples of the distinctive “food justice approach” include People’s Grocery in West Oakland and Growing Power in Milwaukee. People’s Grocery was established in 2002 with the goal of “build[ing] a local food system that improves the health and economy of West Oakland” (People’s Grocery 2011). Its foundational programs comprised a youth-run community garden, nutrition education programs, Community-Supported-Agriculture37, and a mobile grocery market—all pursued with the ultimate goal of developing a grocery store in West Oakland. Although this program was discontinued in 2009, a for-profit subsidiary of People’s Grocery is developing plans and securing financing for a new grocery store in West Oakland.

Established in 1993 by former professional basketball player, Will Allen, Growing Power is an organization that whose mission is “to grow food, to grow minds and to grow community” (Growing Power 2011a). Initially focused on vermiculture38 and aquaponics39, the organization has expanded to include a community center, grocery store, and fourteen greenhouses in both Milwaukee and Chicago.

These models of “food justice” have been readily replicated across the country, with a distinct focus on connecting food production and retail to serve broader community goals. Organizations such as People’s Grocery also define their work explicitly as a response to food deserts.

Alongside of these activities, Philadelphia-based CDFI, The Reinvestment Fund initiated the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), the first statewide financing program specifically designed to attract supermarkets and grocery stores to underserved urban and rural communities. The program sought to combine community development and health goals through grocery development, as represented by its objectives:

“[To] stimulate investment of private capital in low-wealth communities; remove financing obstacles and lower operating barriers for supermarkets in poor communities; reduce the high incidence of diet-related diseases by providing healthy food; create living wage jobs; and prepare and retain a qualified workforce (The Reinvestment Fund 2013).”

The program was established in 2004 through a public-private partnership between non-profit organization, The Food Trust and The Reinvestment Fund following dissemination of a 2001 report “Food For Every Child: The Need for More Supermarkets in Philadelphia” confirmed the findings of other studies of food deserts. As a response to the findings, the Philadelphia City Council convened a task force, which recommended the creation of a statewide initiative focused on incentivizing grocery store development. Eventually in 2004, state representatives and then Governor Ed Rendell enacted an economic stimulus package, which allocated $30 million for the

37 Community Supported Agriculture refers to a type of farm in which consumers purchase farm “shares” in return for a weekly or bi-weekly box of the farm’s harvest.
38 Vermiculture involves the creation of “worm compost,” nutrient rich organic fertilizer made from the by products of earthworms. Growing Power uses worm compost on all of its growing beds and as a value-added product available for purchase at local markets (Growing Power 2011b).
39 Aquaponics refers to a food production method that integrates aquaculture (fish cultivation) and hydroponics (food growing using nutrient solutions instead of soil). Growing Power’s aquaponic system involves the cultivation of tilapia and perch in large tanks of water; the water from the fish tanks is then filtered and used as a nutrient solution to grow crops such as tomatoes and salad greens.
creation of the FFFI. The Reinvestment Fund then leveraged another $120 million through the New Markets Tax Credits program and private banks (The Reinvestment Fund 2011b, 3).

Since its inception, the program has offered grants of up to $250,000 and loans ranging from $25,000 to $7.5 million primarily to independent, locally owned businesses including green grocers, food cooperatives, and full-service supermarkets. These grants and loans primarily support predevelopment, acquisition, equipment, construction costs, start-up costs, and employee recruitment/training (The Reinvestment Fund 2013). As of June 2010, the FFFI financed 88 grocery stores comprising $73.2 million in loans and $12.1 million in grants (The Reinvestment Fund 2013).

Overall, community food security movements combined with the growing body of research on food deserts represented the beginnings of a strong public health agenda around the development of grocery stores in low-income communities and communities of color. The term and concept of ‘food desert’ managed to make the well-established urban grocery gap visceral. And yet the limitations of this early research began to exhibit the very complexity of food access issues in low-income communities of color understated by the simplicity of the term food deserts. Still the emergent public health voice around food deserts served to reinvigorate old discussions about the urban grocery gap to new ends. Accordingly, the “metaphor” of the ‘food desert’ provoked both a community-based and local government response, which marked the beginnings of an expanded set of social and economic goals around grocery development as evident in today’s context.

IV. Converging grocery store agendas: public health and neighborhood revitalization

By the late 2000s, food deserts captured the attention of researchers, journalists, policymakers, the grocery industry, and the general public. Food deserts would enter into federal policy agendas provoking a new set of research and local accounts calling the basis of food deserts into question. And yet, despite debates over the characterization of supermarkets as a proxy for “healthy food access,” grocery stores would form the basis for the federal program devoted entirely to the subsidization of grocery stores in underserved areas.

A. From food deserts to a federal policy agenda
The momentum around food deserts in late 1990s to mid 2000s reached a critical point with the 2009 USDA-sponsored national survey, “Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences.” Congress commissioned the study as part of the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (formerly known as the U.S. Farm Bill to assess the magnitude of food deserts in the U.S., identify its causes and impacts, and to outline policy recommendations (USDA Economic Research Service 2009). In contrast to previous studies, this study was the first ever, national assessment of food deserts (previous studies tended to evaluate food deserts on a neighborhood or municipal scale).

Over the course of one-year, the USDA worked in collaboration with the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies for
U.S. Census data analysis, interviews, and focus groups. In November 2009, the USDA released the final report, which defined food deserts as:

“a census tract with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable food retail outlet (USDA Economic Research Service 2009).”

Overall, the report confirmed the findings of past studies:

• Food deserts do exist. Two percent of U.S. households live more than a mile from a supermarket without access to a private vehicle;
• Residents living in low income areas spend more time traveling to a grocery store than more affluent residents,
• Supermarkets and grocery stores tend to have lower prices (confirming ‘food cost segregation’); and
• Community-based food access issues have inspired a host of community-based food projects (USDA Economic Research Service 2009).

Yet distinctively, the report concluded that food deserts affect a “small percentage” of U.S. households and that it was unclear whether physical access or personal income posed more of a barrier to healthy food access:

“Area-based measures of access show that 23.5 million people live in low-income areas (areas where more than 40 percent of the population has income at or below 200 percent of Federal poverty thresholds) that are more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. However, not all of these 23.5 million people have low income. If estimates are restricted to consider only low-income people in low-income areas, then 11.5 million people, or 4.1 percent of the total U.S. population, live in low-income areas more than 1 mile from a supermarket...It is unclear whether food access or income constraints were relatively greater barriers for these households” (USDA Economic Research Service 2009, 2).

Furthermore, the study found that further research was necessarily “to conclusively determine whether some areas with limited access have inadequate access” (USDA Economic Research Service 2009, 3). Despite the mixed findings, the authors strongly recommended policies and programs to expand healthy food access in underserved communities. This includes: 1) incentive programs to attract new stores and improving existing ones (with particular reference to FFFI), 2) community-based programs such as corner store conversion, 3) transportation improvements to make supermarket access easier and more affordable, 4) policies that specify healthy food offerings fore retailers authorized to participate in the SNAP program, and 5) the integration of grocery planning with housing and community development.

Months prior to the release of the report, Oakland-based think tank, PolicyLink, The Reinvestment Fund, and The Food Trust began working with the Office of the White House to develop a national version of the Pennsylvania FFFI. The release of the USDA study was further affirmation of their efforts. In months following, a series of initiatives laid the groundwork for a comprehensive federal program to address food deserts nationally.

The USDA study would provide the evidence base for a “Food Environment Atlas,” an online national food desert locator, designed to identify counties with limited supermarket access. The USDA created the tool specifically to locate priority areas for future interventions. The development of this online tool coincided with the instatement of Let’s Move, national childhood obesity prevention campaign launched by First Lady Michelle Obama in early February 2010.
The program was premised in “solving the problem of childhood obesity in one generation” through youth/parent nutrition education, healthy school lunches, healthy food access, and physical activity (Let’s Move 2013). Finally, in late 2009, the City of New York announced its own version of the Pennsylvania FFFI, called the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program. Distinct from the FFFI, the FRESH program was designed to offer zoning variances, real estate tax reductions, and sales tax exemptions to grocery operators seeking to expand or develop new stores in underserved areas (FRESH 2013).

Late February 2010 represented the culmination of all of these efforts with President Obama’s announcement of the National Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), a $400 million public-private loan program administered jointly by the USDA, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the New Market Tax Credits program of Department of the Treasury. As noted in the press release, the HFFI was designed to address the problem of food deserts and their associated public health and economic impacts:

“The Healthy Food Financing Initiative will promote a range of interventions that expand access to nutritious foods, including developing and equipping grocery stores and other small businesses and retailers selling healthy food in communities that currently lack these options. Residents of these communities, which are sometimes called “food deserts” and are often found in economically distressed areas, are typically served by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer little or no fresh produce. Lack of healthy, affordable food options can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Through this new multi-year Healthy Food Financing Initiative and by engaging with the private sector, the Obama Administration will work to eliminate food deserts across the country within seven years. With the first year of funding, the Administration’s initiative will leverage enough investments to begin expanding healthy foods options into as many as one-fifth of the nation’s food deserts and create thousands of jobs in urban and rural communities across the nation (Treasury Public Affairs 2010).”

The press release further noted that the HFFI was developed in alignment with the goals of the Let’s Move campaign and as “part of the Administration’s efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and communities by employing place-based approaches (Treasury Public Affairs 2010).”

In the year that followed, HFFI administered its first cycle of grants to sixteen organizations across the country for initiatives ranging from CDC-chain supermarket partnerships, farmers markets, and business incubation programs (Office of Community Services 2013). The HFFI inspired newly elected Chicago mayor, Rahm Emanuel convene a ‘Food Desert Summit’ to meet with major grocery retailers to discuss a plan for eliminating food deserts. Soon following in July 2011, the First Lady hosted her own summit with major food retailers, where she secured commitments for store expansion from Supervalu, Walgreens, Walmart, and regional retailers. Together, the retailers agreed to newly develop or expand 1500 stores over a five-year period. Additionally, the First Lady’s summit resulted in the creation of California-based counterpart of the Pennsylvania FFFI, the California FreshWorks Fund. A project of statewide health foundation The California Endowment, the $200 million public-private partnership was created to finance a variety of “healthy food retailing” initiatives (Office of the First Lady 2011).

---

40 Supervalu is the third largest grocery retailing company in the U.S. and currently operates around 2500 stores nationwide including Cub Foods, Farm Fresh, Hornbachers, Save-A-Lot, Shop N’ Save, and Shoppers Food.
B. Reactions to federal actions
Despite the continued momentum around food deserts at local, state, and federal levels, researchers and journalists questioned the extent to which the development of grocery stores in food deserts truly improved neighborhood conditions.

For example, in an article titled “If you build it, they may not come,” The Economist criticized the HFFI for underemphasizing cost barriers to healthy food access and assuming behavioral changes as a result of grocery development:

“No surprise, then, that neither USDA nor the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies has been able to establish a causal link between food deserts and dietary health. In fact, both agree that merely improving access to healthy food does not change consumer behavior. Open a full-service supermarket in a food desert and shoppers tend to buy the same artery-clogging junk food as before—they just pay less for it. The unpalatable truth seems to be that some Americans simply do not care to eat a balanced diet, while others, increasingly, cannot afford to. Over the last four years, the price of the healthiest foods has increased at around twice the rate of energy-dense junk food. That is the whole problem, in an organic nutshell (The Economist 2011).”

Several subsequent studies further reinforced these critiques. A controversial longitudinal study in the Archives of Internal Medicine questioned the connection between food environments and diet quality (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011). Over a 15-year period, researchers monitored eating habits of thousands of residents in four cities. The study found that proximity to fast food retailers increases the risk for poor dietary quality and obesity (in alignment with past studies). And yet, proximity to supermarkets did not impact fruit and vegetable consumption (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011). Ultimately, the researchers conclude that supermarkets may not be enough to change unhealthy diets.

And yet, a string of subsequent studies similarly refuted the idea that obesity could be combatted through grocery development. A 2012 study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that poor neighborhoods were not all food deserts. While some tended to have a higher concentration of liquor stores and fast food restaurants (in alignment with previous studies), others also tended to have a larger concentration of grocery retailers compared to suburban areas (Lee 2012). In line with the previous study, this was among research that suggested no correlation between supermarket proximity and dietary patterns (Lee 2012; An and Sturm 2012).

These studies were subject to their own critiques, in part due to the differences in the study populations—be it low income men (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011), children (Lee 2012), or young adults (An and Sturm 2012). Despite competing claims regarding the efficacy of supermarkets in addressing obesity, grocery retailers have been reentering urban areas for the past decade, with more incentives than ever. Several retailers have created “urban format” stores, such as Walmart Neighborhood Market, Fresh and Easy (Tesco), and Tesco Express. Community-based organizations have continued to seek out alternatives to these types of stores—be it through farmers markets and/or cooperatives.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I situated Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods in a national policy context by tracing the rise of grocery stores as an urban policy and planning concern. Through a historical review and policy analysis, I find that the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative is the latest in a long history of efforts to address urban poverty through government intervention and private sector investment. As such, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative has repackaged Clinton-era revitalization programs (i.e., New Markets Tax Credits) for a specific mode of community reinvestment. And yet compared to previous efforts, public health is now a driving force of economic decisions about underserved urban communities. As a result, a broader network of actors—community-based organizations, non-profits, and industry associations—are claiming a stake in urban revitalization through grocery store development.

It is too early to tell whether the Healthy Food Financing Initiative will truly overcome the limitations of past federal urban revitalization efforts. Yet, this program raises the question of whether grocery stores provide quick buildable results or truly long-term solutions to food access, health, and disinvestment. For example, does grocery development represent a return to the “build-it-and-they-will-come” basis of place-based revitalization strategies? Do current policies in fact place greater expectations of the private sector to “fix” social problems? Is health now the “new green”—a basis for 21st Century corporate social responsibility (Gunther 2013)? Will the subsidization of grocery stores ultimately “fix” the problem of food access?

Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are situated in this unique moment where national policy narratives come to bear on local approaches to grocery development. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, policy trends might provide a framework for implementation, but ultimately local institutions dictate the possibilities of grocery development and urban revitalization more broadly.
Introduction

Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are the products of both an evolving federal policy context (as noted in Chapter 2) as well as unique local circumstances. In order to understand the drivers and outcomes of these cases, this chapter explores how policymakers, politicians, planners, community leaders, and residents have historically responded to neighborhood change in Bayview and West Oakland respectively.

I focus on three distinct historical moments to highlight the relationship between neighborhood change and institutions: 1) wartime economic development and the military-industrial complex (1940s); 2) redevelopment as a response to postwar decline (1950s); and 3) federal urban policy and the local response (1960s-1970s).

Overall, I show how Bayview and West Oakland have been shaped by the interacting roles of federal urban policy, planning/redevelopment, and community-based practice. And yet, place-based factors create different conditions for neighborhood revitalization. In San Francisco, the relative containment of urban poverty elicited piecemeal planning and community-based responses. In Oakland, the citywide dispersal of disinvestment perpetuated a reliance on federal assistance, sweeping physical planning/redevelopment activities, and in turn, a fervent community response. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are embedded in these larger histories of neighborhood change.

I. Wartime economic development and the military-industrial complex (1940s)

A. Bayview Hunters Point: Shipbuilding and early trajectories of community and economic life

The San Francisco Bay Area’s mid century economic development was defined by shipbuilding and wartime industries, giving root to the social, economic, and physical circumstances that would come to define Bayview and West Oakland rise and eventual decline. Before the war, Bayview was already a tight-knit ethnic community of Scandinavians, Irish Americans, Italians, Maltese, and Chinese residents who worked in a variety of fishing, food processing, and manufacturing industries along San Francisco’s southeast coast.

A small community of African Americans emerged near Hunters Point beginning in the 1910s, many of whom lived and worked at Southern Pacific Railroad’s depot on Third Street, the community’s primary transportation and commercial corridor. Bayview comprised a small community of African American railroad workers and Pullman Porters, most of whom settled around the terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad in West Oakland.

41 The Pullman Rail Company famously created a sleeper car that required the porters to be African American. This gave rise to the Pullman Porters and a community of African American rail workers in West Oakland and other parts of the country.
Historically, the Hunters Point Shipyard served as the focal point of San Francisco’s maritime industry. Spanning 638 acres, it was the largest dry dock on the West Coast and was operated by former U.S. steel and shipbuilding conglomerate, Bethlehem Steel (SF Redevelopment 1996, 2). By the 1930s, homes, restaurants, saloons, and farms gradually proliferated on and around the Shipyard to accommodate what was now a community of several thousand residents. At the time, Bayview and the shipyard at Hunters Point were largely recognized as a separate district, geographically isolated due to its hilly landscapes and coastal frontage to the San Francisco Bay. As the City of San Francisco’s streetcar, arterial road, and system of bridges expanded through the 1930s, Bayview continued to lack public transportation and basic neighborhood amenities.

These concerns gave rise to one of Bayview’s earliest neighborhood groups, the Hunters Point Improvement Association. Residents lobbied city agencies for transportation improvements but also organized their own community-led infrastructure projects including street paving, street lighting installation, and sewer infrastructure development (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 10-12). Among these efforts was the Hunters Point Cooperative Grocery, a resident-led storefront buying club that grew out of community discussions the inconvenience of about the inaccessibility of grocery stores in the community. Similar to contemporary issues around grocery access, the closest grocery store was two miles outside of a neighborhood. Most residents neither owned cars nor had access to public transportation (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 91).

In 1939, the U.S. Navy acquired the Hunters Point shipyard under the War Powers Act and transformed it into the largest wartime shipbuilding center in the world. The newly developed shipyard would span 979 acres of filled and unfilled land comprising six dry docks, over two thousand buildings, and seventeen miles of railroad tracks (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 10). The expanded shipyard catalyzed road paving, infrastructure development, and the creation of a bus and cable line closer to the community (SF Redevelopment 1996, 6). Through eminent domain privileges of the War Powers Act, the Navy acquired all remaining non-Navy shipyard property and worked with the San Francisco Housing Authority to construct over 12,000 new units of housing (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 95).

Amidst wartime labor shortages, the Navy aggressively recruited shipyard workers from across the nation. Their “open” employment policy brought an influx of African Americans involved in the Great Migration at the time. Between 1940 and 1943, San Francisco’s black population rose from 2,000 to 12,000 (SF Redevelopment 1996, 6). At its peak, the shipyard employed 18,000 workers, one third of which consisted African Americans. The community’s sizable stock of unrestricted housing also drew African Americans from other parts of San Francisco. As a result, Bayview’s population nearly quadrupled between 1940 and 1950, marking its gradual transformation from an ethnic immigrant community to a burgeoning black enclave (Jeffries 2006; Kelley and VerPlanck 2010).

---

42 The War Powers Act is an emergency law, which greatly expanded the powers of the executive branch during wartimes. At an urban level, the War Powers Act enabled certain forms of eminent domain to support wartime defenses.

43 Most of San Francisco’s black population lived in other ethnic enclaves in the city, namely the Filmore District (now called the Western Addition) and to a lesser extent, Japantown. Rampant housing shortages affected all San Francisco residents during wartimes. San Francisco’s black population encountered greater challenges in securing adequate housing, given discriminatory practices by landlords and speculative builders.
Soon after the war, San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA) acquired most of the former worker housing and developed new public housing using a “neighborhood pattern” policy: “the racial make-up of a particular project would match the population of the surrounding neighborhood (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 98).” As a result, SFHA properties were segregated even with unrestricted housing in other parts of Bayview. Thus, African Americans concentrated in the older, often inadequately maintained worker housing units.

B. West Oakland: Industrial growth, redevelopment, and community resistance
Like Bayview, West Oakland was defined by midcentury industrial development but distinctively, its “fortunes had been tied to transportation from the beginning” (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2004, 46). Historically, West Oakland served as a suburban outpost of San Francisco, which developed around the Port of Oakland and the terminus of the Transcontinental Railroad (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2004, 31). Beginning in the 1870s, African Americans settled into West Oakland, which was the headquarters of the Pullman Palace Car Company and the first African American union, the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters.

By the 1920s and 1930s, West Oakland became a regional hub of light industries and food processing facilities—all readily known for their acceptance of women and ethnic minority workers. Among the nationally-prominent industries in West Oakland were: Carnation Creamery, Goebel Brewing, Consumer’s Yeast (later known as Red Star), Grandma’s Baking, Heinz, Nabisco, Del Monte Foods, General Electric Lamp Works, Western Paper, Co-op Garment Manufacturing, and Independent Iron Works (Groth and Gutman 1997, 217-218). Between 1910 and the early 1940s, a growing contingent of Mexicans, Cubans, Central Americans, and Puerto Ricans migrated to Oakland to work in West Oakland’s food processes and manufacturing plants. Many of these factory workers lived in cottages and worker housing units within the industrial areas of West Oakland.

By the turn of the century, West Oakland—like Bayview—became the receiving end for wartime laborers as well as San Francisco residents displaced by the 1906 earthquake. And by the 1930s, West Oakland grew into a diverse ethnic community of African Americans, Latinos, European Americans, Portuguese, Irish, Mexicans, Japanese, and Chinese Americans. As noted by Praetzellis and Praetzellis (2004), West Oakland developed into a tight knit community:

“With the exception of some anti-Chinese sentiment, the American and immigrant subsets in the population mix seem to have gotten along fairly well. That general ethnic harmony became a point of pride and a valued part of West Oakland’s collective identity (30).”

As the main corridor for the railroad and Port of Oakland vehicular access, Seventh Street grew into a thriving commercial district lined with hotels, restaurants, theaters, nightclubs, and bars. The community’s growing jazz and blues scene drew nationally prominent musicians, giving West Oakland the title, “Harlem of the West.” And yet by the late 1930s, West Oakland (and Oakland) as a whole experienced the economic decline. Portions of the community’s residential areas became dilapidated, as working and middle class families increasingly struggled to maintain their properties (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2004, 44).
As World War II approached, like Bayview West Oakland was a focal point of the Bay Area’s wartime industries. In 1940, Oakland’s 170-acre Outer Harbor (west of West Oakland’s residential areas) was developed into the Oakland Army Base and Naval Supply Center for wartime cargo shipments, shipbuilding, and fuel and industrial waste storage. West Oakland experienced a rapid influx of new residents as Kaiser Industries recruited thousands of African American and Mexicans to the Bay Area. Between 1940 and 1945, Oakland’s black population increased fourfold from 8500 to around 37,000 (Valrey 1993, 15).

And yet, not all of West Oakland stood to benefit from wartime economic activity. For example, historians argued that the Army Base was “spatially separate [and] did not integrate much with the community, nor substantially boost commerce on the Seventh Street business strip (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2004, 44).” Beyond the Army Base, West Oakland was overcrowded with new residents as well as poor African Americans unable to live or work in other parts of Oakland.

Unlike Bayview, the end of the war marked the beginnings of systemic decline for West Oakland. The Army Base continued to operate on a limited scale, but the rail industry entered into a recession with consumer demands for automobile travel. West Oakland was hit hard by the decline of the rail industry leading to massive layoffs, unemployment, and concentrated poverty extending into the 1950s. Postwar economic conditions, layoffs, and salary cuts already provoked a wave of general strikes nationwide, the largest of which was the Oakland General Strike of 1946. Suddenly unemployed West Oakland residents joined to strike, demanding union recognition, the continuation of childcare, fair housing, and fair employment (Valrey 1993, 15). The Oakland General Strike ended after three days when the City of Oakland promised police neutrality in future strikes. Still the situation in West Oakland worsened, as more unemployed African Americans concentrated into the community’s already overcrowded, inadequately maintained housing.

Overall, wartimes dramatically transformed Bayview and West Oakland, physically, socially, and economically. Decisions about regional economic development (and national security) meant that the poorest (also non-white) populations would be concentrated in particular areas. Bayview and West Oakland bear testament to this phenomenon. Significantly, even amidst wartime prosperity were the ominous beginnings of struggles yet to come—particularly institutionalized racism, environmental pollution, retail gaps, and housing conditions. Finally, while pre-dating the federal urban policies of the 1950s, both communities experienced the beginnings of large-scale planning (albeit military-driven) and its community impacts. This would set the stage for neighborhood revitalization institutions in the coming decades.

44 Kaiser Industries operated four shipyards on the West Coast including the Kaiser shipyard in Richmond, CA. During the war times, President/CEO, Henry Kaiser established Kaiser Permanente—the first Health-Maintenance-Organization (HMO) in the U.S.—primarily to provide healthcare for shipyard workers. Kaiser Industries post-war operations included steel, aluminum, and home building.

45 The strike was initiated by 400 mostly white, female retail workers and eventually grew to a citywide strike of 130,000 people of varied socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. The three-day strike ended when the City of Oakland promised police neutrality. The retail strike however, lasted for an additional five months before being resolved.
II. Redevelopment as a response to deindustrialization (1950s)

A. Bayview Hunters Point: Neighborhood change and redevelopment

With the creation of the Housing Act of 1949, cities across the nation created redevelopment agencies to address the urban housing conditions and the physical symptoms of postwar economic decline. In San Francisco, redevelopment initially focused on the Western Addition, the city’s other center of African American culture. As large areas of the Western Addition were cleared for the construction of government, displaced residents found refuge in Bayview (Hartman 2002). The community was known as safe haven where working class blacks could buy homes, access amenities, find well-paying jobs, and send their children to integrated schools (BVHP Project Area Committee 2002, 15). As noted by a former Bayview resident:

“Nobody had to go downtown for anything. Third Street, the neighborhood's full-service shopping center, boasted shoe stores, furniture sellers, ice cream parlors, and several cinemas including the Bayview Theater where the Bank of America is now located (Jeffries 2006).”

And yet, residents of Bayview’s hillside communities (mainly around the shipyard) were still physically cut off from Third Street amenities. Limited public transportation access further challenged daily life to the point that Bayview children had to take taxis to get to and from neighborhood schools (SF Redevelopment 1996, 22).

Even Bayview’s better off populations were soon confronted by crises. In 1954, the Navy laid off thousands of shipyard workers. Some residents managed to relocate and find new work elsewhere, but many (particularly African Africans) remained. Unemployment combined with segregated housing contributed to concentrated poverty in and around the older, barrack-style worker housing that lined shipyard (SF Redevelopment 1996, 15).

By the mid 1950s, residents organized to address Bayview’s worsening physical and economic conditions. A group of hillside residents formed the Hunters Point Project Committee to lobby the city for housing rehabilitation, improved transportation access, and recreational areas. The group convinced the Housing Authority to convert a former Army gymnasium into a community recreational center. The group was unsuccessful in acquiring funds for housing rehabilitation, but managed to garner support for additional community centers (SF Redevelopment 1996, 17).

Despite being subject to redlining, Bayview comprised what was considered prime real estate—the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land within the City of San Francisco. In an effort to boost urban economic development amidst deindustrialization and urban sprawl, the City of San Francisco lured the New York Giants baseball team to San Francisco with the promise of a new stadium. Funded by a 1954 bond issue, the San Francisco Department of Parks and Recreation began filling and expanding Candlestick Point, an undeveloped area south of the Hunters Point shipyard. Simultaneously, the Hunters Point Reclamation District, a state-funded agency representing local business interests, pursued its own plans to expand other portions of Candlestick Point into new industrial facilities. The industrial plan was tabled due to technical difficulties but the Candlestick Point stadium proceeded (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 107). The stadium broke ground in 1958 and would eventually go on to be the home venue for the San Francisco 49ers football team. Overall, new investment beckoned even as other parts of Bayview lagged behind.
B. West Oakland: The “Industrial Garden” and Urban Renewal

Compared to Bayview, West Oakland’s postwar situation was far more dismal. overcrowded housing, dwindling neighborhood retail, and unemployment pervaded West Oakland as the city as a whole struggled to rebound after the war. Downtown Oakland property values declined more than 50% between 1925 and 1955 (Self 2003). Disinvestment wreaked havoc throughout Oakland. As discussed extensively by Self (2003) in American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland, Oakland’s solution to postwar urban decline followed the logic of the “industrial garden”—the redirection of industry to the suburbs with strong links to Oakland’s urban core.

Already prior to the war, the Oakland Chamber of Commerce created the Metropolitan Oakland Area Program (MOAP) to encourage industrial development in newer parts of Alameda County. For example, during wartimes, Seventh Street businesses and food processing facilities either closed or moved to newer suburbs in southern Alameda County (Valrey 1993, 15). Beginning in 1949, West Oakland’s revitalization was emphasized housing rehabilitation and transportation infrastructure development in service to this vision of the “industrial garden.”

In 1949, the City of Oakland declared West Oakland a “blighted” area and commenced a series of large-scale redevelopment projects from the mid 1950s into the 1960s. The first of these projects was the Cypress Freeway, a double-decked viaduct designed to connect southern Alameda County to Downtown Oakland and San Francisco. In 1957, after seven years of planning and development, the freeway opened to equal praise and critique. On one hand it was touted as a marvel of highway engineering as the first double-decked viaduct in the country. On the other hand, the freeway cut through a four-mile square area in the heart of West Oakland, displacing six hundred families and dozens of businesses (CalTrans 2011, 1). While freeway access was temporarily improved for San Francisco and East Bay residents, West Oakland was left even more physically isolated from its surrounding metropolitan area (Self 2003; Rhomberg 2004).

In the meantime, in 1954 federal authorities amended the Housing Act of 1949 to provide funding to cities for housing and “urban renewal” projects. The renamed Housing (or Urban Renewal) Act of 1954 46 shifted the focus of previous programs away from “clearance” and “blight removal” to “urban renewal” more broadly. As a result, cities across the nation created redevelopment agencies to leverage federal funds. In Oakland, a group of mostly white business leaders and politicians organized the Oakland Citizens Committee for Urban Renewal (OCCUR) convinced the City of Oakland to create a Redevelopment Agency and citywide Urban Renewal Plan (Self 2003, 176). The plan would call for the redevelopment of a 250-block area of West Oakland, beginning with the Acorn Project, a ten-block housing and commercial development on West Oakland southeastern border with Downtown Oakland (Rhomberg 2004, 128).

Despite opposition from local business owners and residents, city council approved the project in 1957, and construction would take place over the course of twelve years. Nearly 9,000 residents

---

46 The California State Community Redevelopment Law of 1946 already authorized the creation of redevelopment agencies. However, Oakland’s Redevelopment Agency was created in 1956 after OCCUR’s strong lobbying.
were forced to relocate without assurance of returning. This was just the beginning of a string of large-scale projects that would in turn created, a “large scale public racial crisis” in West Oakland (Self 2003, 170).

Overall, the 1950s begin to highlight Bayview’s and West Oakland’s varied capacities to rebound from postwar economic decline. As city officials determined the next phases of their industrial growth, West Oakland would become more directly impacted by the modus operandi of urban decline at the time: large-scale solutions for large-scale problems. Additionally, federal urban policies and associated redevelopment activities became central in this first wave of revitalization efforts. As with previous decades, residents continued to find venues to respond to the most immediate crisis—be it through neighborhood coalitions or labor unions.

III. Federal urban policy and the local response (1960s-1970s)

A. Bayview Hunters Point: Experiments in community action
By the 1960s, the physical and economic symptoms of disinvestment permeated Bayview, turning it more so into an impoverished black enclave. By 1960, Bayview was nearly 50% African American (compared to 21% in 1950). By 1970, the community was 76% African American.

The Shipyard shifted its focus from ship servicing to aircraft modernization and nuclear research. This meant that there was more of a need for high skilled technical workers than low skilled labor as in previous decades. Between the Korean War (1950-1953) till the closing of the shipyard in 1974, the number of employees decreased from 10,000 to 7,500 (SF Redevelopment 1996). Between 1960 and 1970, Bayview’s unemployment rate doubled from 3.6% to 7.3%. City agencies estimated that unemployment rates continued to rise to over 10% just by 1971. Housing remained the most critical concern among residents amidst worsening conditions at hillside public housing developments and the former temporary wartime housing.

Residents organized to address these concerns. For example, in 1965, amidst mass closings of grocery and food stores along Third Street, a group of Bayview a group of African American residents leveraged federal community development funds to form a second Hunters Point Cooperative. Residents maintained a storefront for seven years before closing operations due to financial difficulties. And yet, urban anthropologist, Arthur Hippler, attributed the store’s failure to disparities between the “middle class” values of the store operators and that of Bayview residents noting: “telling someone that they need to be educated about food…is a way of telling them they need an education” (Hippler 1974, 140). Still, other residents regarded the cooperative as a necessary experiment in community self-reliance, despite its outcomes (SF Redevelopment 1996, 38).

Accordingly, some residents organized to leveraged community development funds through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to create block groups, parent groups, local Economic

---

47 The first Hunters Point Cooperative in the 1930s ceased operations sometime either in the 1940s or 1950s. The exact date has not been specified in archival documents.
48 See Chapter 2.
Opportunity Councils, and Youth Opportunity Centers. Other groups led protests against a neighborhood grocery stores in light of its discriminatory hiring practices (Jeffries 2006). In March 1966, residents organized to protests and mass sit-ins at the Housing Authority office around housing conditions and the evictions of unemployed residents unable to pay rent (SF Redevelopment 1996). A group of neighborhood matriarchs, known as the “Big Five” and Oakland-based Black Panthers49 were among the primary lead political organizers in the community.

Months later in September, hundreds of residents organized in what become known as the Hunters Point Rebellion or Race Riot of 1966, after a white policeman shot a black teenage resident who reportedly stolen a car. Riots broke out all along Third Street, and soon escalated into pervasive neighborhood vandalism and violence. After several days of intense altercations between Bayview residents, local politicians, and police, then California Governor Pat Brown declared martial law and brought in the National Guard to patrol Third Street (BayView 2011). The riots ceased, but many argue that Bayview would never be the same. For many residents, the riots were not simply about racial injustices; the brazen acts of violence by Bayview youth “underscored the deep depression within the projects, the isolation of the community, and the disenfranchisement of its ethnic residents” (SF Redevelopment 1996, 39).

In the aftermath of the event, the once vibrant Third Street was dotted with boarded up former businesses that either relocated or ceased operations after the riots. A growing tension emerged between the growingly disillusioned youth and the resilient matriarchs of the community. And yet, the mass media coverage of the riots thrust Bayview into a national spotlight and provoked local authorities to take action. Soon after the riots, city authorities allocated War on Poverty funds towards job training (particularly for Shipyard jobs), youth development, and anti-poverty. As of 1972, $8.6 million federal dollars were directed towards neighborhood revitalization programs, but with mixed outcomes (Kelley and VerPlanck 2010, 10).

In 1970, city authorities used Housing Act funds to rehabilitate some of the worst maintained hillside housing. And yet many relocated residents never returned to the community, compelling some residents to call such efforts, “urban removal.” Meanwhile, amidst declining activity, the Navy closed the shipyard in 1974. This meant a loss of over 5,000 workers at the time, all of whom were offered replacement jobs elsewhere on the Pacific Coast. Those who chose not to relocate would become part of the growing contingent of unemployed residents. These combined factors contributed to additional business closings on Third Street.

B. West Oakland: Resident mobilizations around place

By the 1960s, Urban Renewal projects were well underway and West Oakland still remained the most distressed area in the city. By 1960, one-third of its residents lived below the poverty line compared to 13% citywide. West Oakland lost a quarter of its population between 1960 and 1966. In 1964, Oakland was one of several cities designated as a “depressed area” under the federal Redevelopment Act (Rhomberg 2004, 137). Overall, Oakland at-large relied heavily upon

---

49 See next section.
federal anti-poverty funds during the 1960s and 1970s due to its dire economic situation, large population of disenfranchised ethnic groups, and high unemployment.

It was within this context that subsequent redevelopment projects ensued in West Oakland. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Acorn project was followed by subsequent large-scale redevelopment projects, mostly affecting Seventh Street and its immediately surrounding areas. In 1960, the U.S. Postal Service announced plans for a postal distribution facility on the west end of Seventh Street abutting the Port of Oakland. Beginning in 1960, twelve city blocks of Victorian homes were razed and construction continued till 1969. One resident noted to the San Francisco Chronicle, ‘The Post Office did more damage than anything, as far as I’m concerned because they destroyed 400 homes (Vree 2006).’

In 1966, as the U.S. Postal Service distribution center was being constructed, the City of Oakland embarked on plans for the construction of the BART. As suburbs to connect San Francisco, Oakland, and its outlying areas in alignment with the vision of the “industrial garden.” To save costs, the BART line was constructed as an elevated line running along six blocks of Seventh Street—which residents argued was to the detriment of businesses and West Oakland’s remaining Latino enclave on the southern segment of the community. By the time the BART construction was completed in 1973, many of Seventh Street’s businesses either relocated or closed (Vree 2006). Overall, between 1960 and 1966, more than 5,100 housing units were removed as a result of the Acorn housing development, the U.S. Postal Service, and the BART (Rhomberg 2004, 125).

And yet, during the 1960s, more than any era in West Oakland’s (and the nation’s) history, residents organized coordinated responses to continued large-scale redevelopment projects. In 1962, the Oakland Redevelopment Authority set upon plans to demolish and redevelop Oak Center, a fifty-block residential area north of the Acorn project. Troubled by extensive demolition plan for the area, a group of residents formed the Oak Center Neighborhood Association to devise a response. Following two years of aggressive lobbying, the Neighborhood Association convinced the Oakland Redevelopment Authority change the plans to allow ¾ of the property to be rehabilitated rather than razed (Rhomberg 2004, 133-134).

By the mid 1960s, numerous disparate groups organized around neighborhood issues spanning poverty, unemployment, labor discrimination, and health. Among the most renowned of these efforts was of the Black Panthers. Growing out of previous resident mobilizations against urban renewal, the Black Panthers.

In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, formed the Black Panther Party (BPP) in response to the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X, police brutality, and the plight of poor African Americans nationally. Espousing socialist, anti-capitalist doctrines, the BPP quickly went from a West Oakland-based coalition of black revolutionaries to a 10,000 member national network of black power activists. In West Oakland, the BPP’s activities comprised ranged from political organizing, citizen policing (hence their iconic uniforms), and “survival” programs focused on economic self-reliance and self-determination. In West Oakland specifically, the latter involved

50 Pressman (1978) and Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) extensively investigate Oakland’s challenges in managing and properly implementing projects funded through the War on Poverty programs.
the provision of free social services lacking in the community including a free breakfast program for children, medical clinics, clothing distribution programs, and classes on politics and self-defense. Notably, West Oakland BPP leaders entered into Oakland politics in the 1970s; this includes guiding Oakland’s implementation of the Model Cities program to running for local mayoral and even Presidential offices. 51

Other groups mobilized around redevelopment specifically. In 1966, African Americans, Mexicans, and working class whites came together to form Justice of Bay Area Rapid Transit (JOBART) (Rodriguez 1999). After unsuccessful attempts at halting BART’s construction, members lobbied aggressively for minority hiring policies, JOBART members joined the West Oakland Planning Council to lobby for local control of Oakland’s Model Cities program. The council would go on to represent 165 organizations in West Oakland, eventually claiming representation the local Model Cities committees (Self 2003, 163). Their participation enabled minority firm contracts and cooperative partnerships for subsequent West Oakland Model Cities’ projects.

Overall, the 1960s highlighted the intractable problem of urban poverty and the institutional challenges that come with their possible solutions. Particularly in West Oakland, planning and social movements alike revolved around the dramatic impacts of large-scale redevelopment.

Conclusion

Despite comparable social and economic circumstances, neighborhood revitalization has entailed different types of practices across Bayview and West Oakland. In Bayview, no one set of institutions dominated neighborhood revitalization efforts from the 1940s to the 1970s. In West Oakland, community-based practices emerged as a strong counterforce to federal urban policy and planning/redevelopment.

In spite of its gradual industrial decline, federal urban policies and large-scale redevelopment dominated more so in other parts of San Francisco than in Bayview. Still, Bayview was subject to the impacts of these projects, as exemplified by the mass migration of displaced Western Addition residents into Bayview during the 1960s. While neighborhood decline persisted through the 1970s, community-based responses were sporadic (e.g., Hunters Point Cooperative Grocery and various resident organizing in the 1960s). Even these experiments did not give way to the coordinated community-based practices that defined West Oakland’s neighborhood revitalization legacies. As such, Bayview’s future has rested upon leveraging the financial and organizational capacities of the City of San Francisco for neighborhood improvements.

In contrast, West Oakland’s location within an economically struggling city meant that it relied more heavily upon federal urban poverty programs to address disinvestment locally. As a result,

51 BPP co-founder, Bobby Seale ran for Mayor of Oakland in 1973. Although he won the primary election, he eventually lost to incumbent John Reading. In spite of his loss, the 1973 election had the highest voter turnout in Oakland’s history (both among blacks and West Oakland residents at-large) (Self 2003). In 1968, BPP member, Eldridge Cleaver was a Presidential candidate for the Peace and Freedom Party, receiving .05% of the vote.
from the 1950s to the 1960s, federal urban policy and planning/redevelopment defied revitalization efforts, with drastic impacts on the physical, social, and economic environment of West Oakland (e.g., Cypress Freeway, West Oakland BART, U.S. Postal Service). And yet community-based practices sought to take control of revitalization efforts with equal force. This is perhaps best represented by West Oakland’s strong legacies of the Black Panthers. As such, community-based practices were rooted in neighborhood life, building in both structural critiques of top down planning and unique local framings of neighborhood issues.

Overall, this historical context sets the stage for understanding the drivers and outcomes of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. In line with historical institutionalism, past decisions about Bayview and West Oakland have shaped the implementation of both stores. For example, the palpable differences between the stores suggest possible path dependencies with industry-defined economic development in Bayview and community-based planning in West Oakland, respectively.

At the same time, past neighborhood revitalization efforts highlight the beginnings of distinct governance structures and framing processes in both communities. In line with sociological institutionalism, federal urban policies, planning/redevelopment, and community-based practices all embodied particular framings of how revitalization should occur. Additionally, these institutions dictated certain modes of governance among government officials, community leaders, and residents.

In the following two chapters, I elaborate on the role of institutional patterns in defining the courses of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods.
Chapter 4:
The Convergence of Public Health and Retail Revitalization Agendas:
The Case of Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market,
Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco

“On behalf of the Obama administration…and the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, I want to congratulate the Bayview community. I want to congratulate Fresh and Easy and San Francisco…You know, we hear too often the term these days food deserts. Ten percent of our communities in the United States are considered food deserts …Bayview…working with Fresh and Easy, you are a food desert no more. There is access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable food. Today, what this is all about is eliminating food deserts.”

- Herb Schultz, Regional Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Fresh and Easy Grand Opening at 5800 Third (Office of the Mayor 2011)

“Today, what I feel with this store opening, with the commitment that has been made, I feel it is all about health, neighborhood vitality, it is all about jobs, and it is about fulfilling old promises in this city. This is what this store represents.”

- Ed Lee, Current Mayor of San Francisco, August 24, 2011, Fresh and Easy Grand Opening at 5800 Third (Office of the Mayor 2011)

Introduction

Judging from local press coverage on August 24, 2011, the grand opening of a new Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market in Bayview was quite a cause for celebration. The first new grocery store in the community in two decades, the Fresh and Easy represented both a step forward in efforts to address food deserts in San Francisco while operationalizing a longstanding commitment by city agencies to revitalize Bayview Hunters Point. And yet, this rhetoric of hope and social betterment around grocery stores is neither exclusive of Bayview Hunters Point nor the Fresh and Easy store itself.

In this chapter, I tell the story of how and why a Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market—a self-service discount retailer operated by British supermarket retailer, Tesco—would become the preferred solution to grocery disparities in Bayview Hunters Point. Through an exploration of the institutional drivers, planning/governance processes, and outcomes of the store, I show how public health practice at the city level (typically a county level function) incrementally served to legitimize food access as a public policy concern. This would broaden the focus of revitalization activities to encompass health and urban disinvestment. At the same, the strong mayor legacy of San Francisco meant that as neighborhood revitalization activities would become integrated in the Office of the Mayor, so would grocery development. The entry of Fresh and Easy into the U.S. market represented both a political and economic opportunity to fulfill unrealized promises around revitalization in Bayview. Ultimately, Fresh and Easy aligned with national policy narratives and with a city government’s vision of how best to revitalize Bayview.
In the following sections, I trace key institutional moments leading up to and during the planning of the Fresh and Easy store: 1) neighborhood revitalization and the rise of grocery stores as a local concern (1993-2004); 2) housing revitalization, transit-oriented development, and mayoral grocery agendas (2004-2007); 3) Starts, stops, and the path to the Fresh and Easy development (2007-2013); and 4) conclusions.

I. Neighborhood revitalization and the rise of grocery stores as a local concern (1993-2004)

The eventual focus on grocery development within planning and public health practice was the culmination of decades of efforts to revitalize Bayview following the closing of the Hunters Point shipyard in 1974 and its aftermath. Third Street, the neighborhood’s primary commercial and transportation corridor (and its public front to San Francisco) thus would become a logical starting point for redevelopment. Following a spike in unemployment and drug-related crime in the 1980s and early 1990s due to the national crack epidemic (Bowser 1989), Third Street gained a reputation for being the battleground for increasing drug and gang-related crime. At this time, Third Street earned the title of being an “economic development wasteland,” where the fear of crime deterred not only new residents and but even local restaurants from delivering food to the community (Bowman 1996).

While the closing of the shipyard contributed to economic decline, it exacerbated longstanding environmental health issues in the community. Residents’ disproportionate exposure to air and water-borne environmental contaminants gave root to strong movements around environmental justice beginning in the 1970s, which would continue on into the 1990s. And yet the exposure to environmental hazards combined with socio-economic status meant that even through the 1990s and 2000s, Bayview residents have had the highest hospitalization rates in San Francisco for adult and pediatric asthma, diabetes, and heart disease (Katz 2006).

Thus by the mid to late 1990s, efforts to improve Bayview Hunters Point had a dual focus on public health and retail revitalization. Grocery store development represented an integration of these agendas, which previously were pursued as separate streams of revitalization practice.

A. Planning practice, revitalization, and the focus on Third Street

“We stroll along the southeast strip of Third Street and it is clear this part of San Francisco has been left way behind. There are no trendy coffee shops, fruit stands, supermarkets or even fast-food chains that in every other part of town beckon customers by the thousands with glowing neon signs and overpowering aromas. No, the Bayview - Hunters Point district is a commercial stepchild -- underdeveloped and financially malnourished at the foot of a glitzy metropolis renowned for its economic know-how.” (Johnson 1997, San Francisco Chronicle)

Planning practice relevant to Bayview was often torn between addressing the symptoms of poverty in Bayview and revitalizing Third Street. Neighborhood plans initially focused on Third Street, shifting from an emphasis on physical rehabilitation to community-based revitalization.

---

52 This includes efforts to rehabilitate former military housing units and new office development as per the India Basin Industrial Park Plan of 1969.
Beginning with the South Bayshore\textsuperscript{53} Plan (1986), Third Street was one of six areas\textsuperscript{54} within the community with a focus on the rehabilitation of former military housing, commercial retail, and limits on new liquor stores—all in hopes of improving the alleged “unattractive appearance and seedy economic character” of Third Street (Chen 1991).\textsuperscript{55} Soon after the plan was adopted, in 1989, the San Francisco voters approved a half-cent sales tax that would support transportation improvements. Third Street was identified as a high priority area for further research and improvement amidst longstanding resident concerns over the lack of reliable public transportation service in Bayview and access between Southeast portions of San Francisco to other parts of the city.

The first wave of Third Street improvements began in the early 1990s. The San Francisco MUNI completed initial plans for an extension of the city’s light rail system to South San Francisco via Third Street\textsuperscript{56}, emphasizing the role of the corridor in spurring future housing and economic development. In 1992, the Bayview and the greater eastern San Francisco’s region was designated as a federal Enterprise Zone,\textsuperscript{57} resulting in payroll tax credits and business incentives for new enterprises (Eckhouse 1992). Further adding to the momentum around the revitalization of Third Street was the “Third Street Corridor Study: Economic Development and Market Analysis” (1993), which characterized Third Street as a struggling commercial district, but a prime real estate opportunity given its views, land availability, and affordable housing prices compared to San Francisco.

Among the findings were: 1) the most requested types of retail included supermarkets, pharmacies, hardware, and clothing stores; and 2) 94% of local worker and household consumer dollars were estimated to be spent outside of the community due to inadequate retail outlets on Third Street (Sedway and Associates 1993, 33, 3). That said, based on an economic analysis, they found that increasing housing density and attracting new residents was essential in creating a “critical mass of consumers” to support additional retail including a grocery stores, general merchandise store, apparel and specialty retail (Sedway and Associates 1993, 5). Furthermore, based on their economic analysis and interviews with major retailers\textsuperscript{58}, the report recommended that business development on Third Street should be focused on “facilitating private revitalization efforts, mitigating existing barriers to business development, and intervening in market focuses that have historically limited opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses” (Sedway and Associates 1993, 56). Overall, the study made a strong case for directing formula retail development (be it large scale supermarkets, general merchandise stores,  

\textsuperscript{53} Planning authorities originally called the community “South Bayshore” despite being known as either Bayview or Hunters Point by its residents.

\textsuperscript{54} The other areas defined in the plan were: India Basin/Hunters Point Hill, South Basin east of Third Street, Candlestick Point State Recreation Area, Bayview Hill, Silver Terrace, and Third Street.

\textsuperscript{55} The plan led to the creation of the South Bayshore Community development corporation to serve as a “citizen watchdog” to the implementation of the plan. One of the accomplishments of the SBCDC was creating a civic forum that led to the formation of the BVHP PAC, which stewarded the process of developing the BVHP Community Revitalization Plan.

\textsuperscript{56} Muni competed the Bayshore Corridor Systems Planning Study in 1994, recommending an extended light rail light down the median of Third Street to extend to the Bayshore Caltrain Station (a regional train system). In 1996, Muni officially began the Third Street Light Rail project. Following several years of additional feasibility and urban design studies and authorization from the Federal Transit Administration, the project broke ground in 2002 and was open for use in 2004.

\textsuperscript{57} See Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{58} Home Express, Costco and Walmart all saw Third Street as a less than ideal real estate opportunity citing poor visibility from the highway, population density, median income, security and safety.
and department stores) to the industrial areas in the Northwest and Southeast parts of the community while maintaining the focus of Third Street on small business to the extent possible.

However, this focus would shift in the mid 1990s, as more parts of the community were designated as redevelopment zones, namely the Hunters Point Shipyard (following its decommissioning in 1994), and a 2,700-acre area comprising Third Street. Given the neighborhood’s new designation as a redevelopment area, California state legislation mandated the creation of the Bayview Hunters Point Project Area Committee (BVHP PAC) in 1997, a citizen advisory council, which would oversee the implementation of portions of the redevelopment plan. The traction of these plans as well as the creation of new venues for community participation in planning contributed to marked shift in the rhetoric of Bayview’s revitalization at this time:

“This time there is hope in Bayview Hunters Point that the pattern of the 1960s will not be repeated if the city agrees to help transform the dilapidated Third Street corridor into a healthy neighborhood. Some residents of the area are willing to give the Redevelopment Agency a fresh chance to keep its promises. What they are seeking is not only better environment for the southeastern corner of San Francisco, but an opportunity to stay where they live so they can enjoy the benefits change would bring (SF Chronicle 1994).”

As momentum grew around the revitalization of Third Street, city authorities planned for larger scale redevelopment at the Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Park, the area surrounding the stadium for the San Francisco 49ers football team. Bayview was central to mayoral election of 1995, with then incumbent Frank Jordan and challenger Willie Brown (who would become the city’s first African American Mayor) both promising voters “400 jobs for people living in Bayview Hunters Point” (Examiner Graphics 1995). And yet, despite progresses made in planning, implementation was stalled by unexpected challenges, delays, and unusual circumstances. In 1997, the Candlestick Point plan was tabled after a federal extortion investigation traced back to 49ers team leadership. The implementation of the Third Street Rail was delayed due to state and federal funding shortcomings. Still, residents and the BVHP PAC maintained their focus on the future of Third Street and the revitalization of the existing Bayview community, through the development of the Bayview Community Revitalization Concept Plan (2002).

Led by the BVHP PAC in collaboration with planning and redevelopment agencies, the plan was intended to be “a resource to serve community members beyond planning: to build consensus, address new revitalization programs, and guide proposed development according to the community vision (BVHP Project Area Committee 2002, 2).” Unlike the South Bayshore plan, this proposal for revitalization went beyond redevelopment. As noted in the introduction by Supervisor Sophie Maxwell, also a long- time environmental justice and community health advocate:

“There are changes that are going on right now. There are more changes to come. Your property values and quality of life will increase as quality conveniences such as great things like fresh fruit and vegetables, theater and entertainment, great restaurant and eateries, cultural amenities like museums, jazz houses and much more become a part of the community. Along with these amenities will come economic development via entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as career oriented jobs. Through dedicated grassroots efforts, we can ensure that the plans for the community are two fold in that they are working on both the long-term and the immediate growth. Bayview Hunters Point is taking its place among the other great communities in San Francisco and will be known for its good quality of life and services for its residents and
visitors…There have been many plans before this one. This time we are getting things done. The PAC, together with the community, can integrate the old and the new ideas to create the best BVHP ever. I, together with you, will be working hard at improving the totality of our existence: our health, our homes, our daily life, and our future via a promotion of the Revitalization Concept Plan (BVHP Project Area Committee 2002, vi)

These revitalization strategies were premised in promoting positive changes in the community to combat the negative impacts of gentrification through local business development, the creation of affordable housing, and community participation. As such the main pillars of the revitalization strategy encompassed were to focus on four major areas of the community— Town Center, Northern Industrial District, Hunters Point Shoreline, and South Basin District based on the following broad goals:

1) Promote local economic and employment development first;
2) Improve education, training, and employment opportunities for residents;
3) Focus coordinated investments in high priority areas where they will have the greatest visibility and impact;
4) Encourage civic participation through interactive public processes and foster cultural development through the arts;
5) Conserve existing housing and provide new housing;
6) Address environmental problems and identify opportunities that increase the quality of life;
7) Improve the physical environment and transportation systems (4-5)

Grocery stores were part of a broader retail revitalization strategy to recapture sales lost to retail leakage in the community in line with the Third Street Study (1993) (BVHP Project Area Committee 2002, 34). But in contrast, the argument for a community grocery store was part of a vision of a “balanced approach to development; all tailored to serve local, ethnically diverse retail commercial needs and desires” (BVHP Project Area Committee 2002, 32). Overall, the Bayview Concept Plan and redevelopment plans focused on physical, place-based strategies that set the stage for Third Street’s revitalization.

Amidst these efforts to redevelop Bayview, a small but robust cohort of anti-redevelopment activists in Bayview critiqued any and all new plans as ‘recipes for gentrification’ (Strickland 2006). Despite the vocal opposition of these residents—who believed that redevelopment dollars needed to be directed to residents directly— community efforts to halt redevelopment plans never progressed.

Overall, during the 1990s and early 2000s grocery stores were framed as part of a larger “retail gap” in the community, as exemplified in the Third Street Corridor Study (1993). Although this study made specifications for how business development should occur on Third Street (i.e., small business), subsequent plans couched grocery development within a more generalized view of revitalization.

B. Public health practice, food access, and the reframing of environmental health

“[San Francisco] is a city where blacks have little clout, few cultural institutions and only one remaining neighborhood, the homely, lonely Bayview Hunters Point, best known for a sewage treatment plant and a radioactive Superfund site. For many blacks here, San Francisco is the sweetheart who loved ‘em and left
Although public health issues in Bayview Hunters Point have always had a place basis, public health practice was largely pursued as a set of initiatives largely separate from efforts to revitalize Third Street (apart from the environmental clean up efforts associated with the redevelopment of the Shipyard). The entry of food access concerns into public health practice positioned SFDPH to become a key partner in the development of the Fresh and Easy in subsequent years.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, community organizing around environmental health issues in Bayview would lead to an expanded focus on food access both within local community activities and within the work of the SFDPH. A critical first step in the road to the Fresh and Easy was the institutionalization of food systems into public health practice, which occurred through a series of successive plans, programs, and community-based initiatives between 1993-2004.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, a group of elderly Bayview residents met frequently to discuss the problem of ‘corner stores.’ Their concern was that these stores, which primarily sold cigarettes and alcohol were contributing to vandalism and crime on Third Street. Their solution was to improve the quality of food offered at local corner stores, and in the mid 1990s, began mobilizing community residents around food security. One of these community leaders was Sophie Maxwell, an active environmental justice activist later represented Bayview as Supervisor from 2000-2010 (Breckwich Vásquez et al. 2007, 343).

In parallel to these efforts, environmental justice activists in Bayview Hunters Point pressured SFDPH to address resident concerns about the potential connection between high cancer and asthma rates and polluting industries in the neighborhood. At the time, food issues were addressed to the extent that they fit within the realm of statewide programs on food assistance and health codes for commercial food enterprises (McLeod 1997; Wagner 1997). This led to the creation of a government-community coalition called the Health and Environmental Task Force (HEAP) in 1999, which conducted surveys about residents’ concerns on environmental health to find that more than chemical contamination, residents were concerned about crime, lack of access to grocery stores and high-priced, poor quality foods at the corner stores that dominated the neighborhoods retail environment (Corburn 2009, 108). The findings of this survey and the response it drew from SFDPH marked “discursive shift in what counted as an environmental health issue” first for residents, and as a result, for SFDPH (Corburn 2009, 109). As further summarized by Corburn (2009):

“The collaboration with the community helped make visible to the agency that local environmental justice claims were more than just the desire for less pollution but rather a series of interrelated demands for economic justice, safe and affordable housing, access to healthy and affordable food, and concerns about neighborhood safety and violence (Bhatia 2003). The broad view of environmental health articulated by Bayview residents reflected core social determinants of health and challenged the agency to devise a strategy to engage with non-health specific city policies and programs to promote community well-being (108).”

The survey results bolstered political will around food access. SFDPH leadership eagerly embarked upon collaborative activities with a cross cutting focus on health, food access, and
environmental issues”\textsuperscript{59}. The first of these initiatives was a partnership between the Environmental Health Section of SFDPH, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG), the city’s former flagship urban agriculture advocacy organization, and Literacy for Environmental Justice, a Bayview-based youth environmental justice advocacy organization. SFDPH staff trained Bayview youth to administer a survey that aimed to identify the barriers for healthy food access in the community. The survey revealed that corner stores were the primary food sources for Bayview residents and yet they supplied a limited amount of the fresh foods demanded by residents (Corburn 2009, 110).

Several recommendations for improvements came out of the survey: to attract a full service grocery store, create new farmers markets, encourage corner stores to offer better quality foods, and identify healthy fast food retailers. This project would lead to discussions between the collaborative and the San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency, who agreed to establish a shuttle bus that would run between Bayview and grocery stores and farmers markets in adjacent neighborhoods (Corburn 2009, 111). This work also served as the basis for youth-run food enterprises, which eventually discontinued due to administrative difficulties and the dismantling of SLUG in 2001.\textsuperscript{60} And yet, this collaboration and the data gathered by youth would form the basis for a subsequent collaboration focused on improving healthy food selections at Bayview corner stores.

This includes a subsequent collaboration involving the Tobacco Free Project within the Environmental Health Section of SFDPH. Beginning in 2002, SFDPH staff partnered with LEJ to educate youth and communities about the impacts of the tobacco industry on local communities and “the relationship between health and the corporate dominance of the food system” (Breckwich Vásquez et al. 2007, 344). For SFDPH staff, understanding the impacts of the tobacco industry meant evaluating food security in Bayview.\textsuperscript{61} Thus, SFDPH staff worked with LEJ youth who called themselves “Youth Envision” advocates to collect data on health behaviors, daily nutrition habits, and the possible changes that might compel residents to shop locally (Breckwich Vásquez et al. 2007, 345).

Youth participants also conducted interviews with storeowners and produced GIS maps that overlaid the food environment with bus routes and residential information. This analysis revealed that corner stores tended to devote two percent to fresh foods (largely because alcohol and cigarette sales were more profitable) and that larger food stores were at least a mile away from most Bayview residents. Furthermore, some residents reported one-hour commutes and at times found that public transportation would require one hour and for some, an average of three bus transfers to the nearest supermarket (Breckwich Vásquez et al. 2007, 346).

This assessment broadened the evidence base on the Bayview’s food environment, which had not been fully captured in redevelopment plans being developed at the time. Significantly, these findings led to the creation of the Good Neighbor program in 2002, a voluntary policy that provided incentives and technical assistance to corner stores to expand their selection of fresh produce. In return for equipment upgrades and technical assistance for store conversions, stores

\textsuperscript{59} Personal interview, Paula Jones, San Francisco Department of Public Health
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Personal Interview, Susana Hennessey-Lavery, San Francisco Department of Public Health.
were asked to allot a total of 30% of their inventory to healthy foods (10% to fresh produce), accept food stamps, and limit tobacco and alcohol advertising (Corburn 2009, 111).

In the course of developing this program, SFDPH and LEJ garnered the support of food security and environmental justice advocate, Supervisor Sophie Maxwell who established the Good Neighbor Task force to support the development of the first corner store pilot project in 2003. Through the administrative support of the Task Force and funding support from SFDPH, SuperSave, a longstanding meat market in the community made renovations to the store to support more fresh produce. Furthermore, Youth Envision advocates hosted in-store press events, taste testing, and work with local communications specialists to develop a media campaign to raise awareness about the Good Neighbor program. Although LEJ is no longer leading in efforts to expand the Good Neighbor Program to other local stores, perhaps its most lasting impacts include the statewide adoption of the Good Neighbor principles as part of the AB 2384 Healthy Food Purchase Program, which aims to increase availability of fresh foods in low income neighborhoods. Part of the legislation would authorize technical assistance to food retailers to support healthy food purchasing at retailers within low-income communities throughout the state of California.  

Although these early efforts did not focus as much specifically on grocery development, it created an evidence base that supported community concerns around access to healthy food and expanded the purview of the SFDPH to understand the role of food retail (generally) in agency wide goals around health promotion and preventative health. In 2002, SFDPH parlayed these temporary projects into the creation of a comprehensive food systems program called San Francisco Food Systems (SF Food Systems). A public-private partnership between the San Francisco Foundation and SFDPH, SF Food Systems was established “to assess and address the upstream, root causes of hunger, food insecurity, obesity and other food-related issues in San Francisco (San Francisco Food Alliance 2005, vi).” This program gave root to citywide coalitions such as the San Francisco Food Alliance, premised in policy advocacy and education around food that is produced and distributed in ways that are “environmentally sound, socially equitable and economically viable (San Francisco Food Alliance 2005, vi).” Prior to the creation of SF Food Systems, SFDPH’s focus on food access still focused primarily on nutrition and health promotion. SF Food Systems broadened the focus on food systems to encompass production, consumption, distribution, and recycling of food, while serving as a facilitator between city agencies.

Together, the HEAP, various SFDPH partnerships with community organizations, and SF Food Systems contributed to an agency-wide shift which “reflected their new commitment to engage in the non-health specific forces that shape health inequities” (Corburn 2009, 115). [See Table 4]

---

62 The language from the legislation on Healthy Corner Stores: “Strategies aimed at small grocers in targeted low-income neighborhoods to increase the offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables in those communities. In selected pilot program communities, the department shall provide targeted food retailers with support or assistance to obtain refrigerated produce display cases through the assessment of the feasibility of a variety of financing methods including, but not limited to, leasing, lending, small business and economic development support, and other time-limited strategies. The department shall also provide technical assistance to targeted retailers on the purchase, storage, marketing, and display of fresh produce. The department shall use available federal funds for this technical assistance, where appropriate (“AB 2384 Assembly Bill - CHAPTERED” 2013).
Table 4: Neighborhood revitalization and the grocery agenda in Bayview (1993-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLANS / PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third Street Corridor Study (1993)</td>
<td>Sedway and Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayshore Corridor Systems Planning Study (1994)</td>
<td>SF MUNI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bayshore Plan (1986)</td>
<td>SF Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayview Community Revitalization Plan (2002)</td>
<td>BVHP PAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Environmental Task Force (HEAP) (1999-2001)</td>
<td>SFDPH Environmental Health, residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Food Assessment (1999-2001)</td>
<td>SFDPH Environmental Health, SLUG, LEJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Envision / Good Neighbor Project (2001-2004)</td>
<td>SFDPH Tobacco Free Project, LEJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Neighbor Task Force (2004-)</td>
<td>SFDPH, LEJ, SuperSave market, Supervisor Maxwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Food Systems, San Francisco Food Alliance (2002-)</td>
<td>SFDPH, San Francisco Foundation, food activists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Housing revitalization, transit-oriented development, and mayoral grocery agendas (2004-2007)

By 2005, progresses seemed to be made on both planning and public health fronts in Bayview. The Third Street Rail neared its completion. Local authorities approved the first phase of the Hunters Point Shipyard plan. Community-based health initiatives around food access issues enabled public health practitioners to begin to scratch the surface of the symptoms of health disparities in the neighborhood. A neighborhood previously perceived as a downtrodden, undesirable part of San Francisco was now being seen as a unique development opportunity.

With the steady expansion of Bay Area’s high-tech industry in the early 2000s and increased demand for moderately priced housing in San Francisco came a new realization about the city’s last undeveloped land: that more than ever before Bayview was crucial in supporting the future growth of San Francisco. As plans for the Hunters Point Shipyard coalesced\(^63\), the purpose of the Third Street would now shift from a focus on small-scale, incremental business development to transit-oriented-development.

\(^{63}\) Over the next decade, this will entail over 20,000 new housing units, 300 acres of park development, 700,000 square feet of new retail, and 2.5 million square feet of office development centered on green technology (Office of Workforce and Economic Development 2012).
And yet, even as city officials touted the promise of the Third Street Rail, Angelo King, then Chair of the BVHP PAC found the eventual completion of the project in 2006 promising not enough to repair years of entrenched disinvestment:

“The light rail is pretty, but until we start building up the commercial corridor, until it's safer, it is not going to provide the economic boom one would have thought when they put it here” (Aguilar 2006).

Some residents expressed concern about unrealized promises around construction jobs and business relocation plans during the construction of the Third Street Rail (Aguilar 2006; Hard Knock Radio 2011). For others, among the most significant concern was around the gentrification of the neighborhood and the eventual disappearance of what is considered to be San Francisco’s last black neighborhood (Aguilar 2006; McNamara 2006). The tension between serving the existing population and attracting new residents continue to be at the core of the second wave of revitalization activities in Bayview.

A. 5800 Third and the opportunity for grocery development
Even before the completion of the Third Street rail, housing developers approached Bayview with a new level of confidence and hope. While redevelopment amendments to the Bayview Redevelopment Plan had not included specific proposals for new housing development, developers took it upon themselves to prospect new properties along Third Street. Among the first of these efforts was the construction of 5800 Third, which would become the home of the Fresh and Easy store.

In early 2003, Walnut Creek-based developer, Levin, Menzies & Associates in association with Lennar Homes (also the developer for the Shipyard) would enter into contract to purchase a 5.75 acre site at the corner of Third Street and Carroll Street for the development of a 103,000 square foot mixed-use residential and commercial development (Kagan 2012). At the time, the property housed a former Coca Cola bottling plant adjacent to one of the main stops along the Third Street rail line still being completed. Levin, Menzies & Associates’ original plan was to demolish the existing structures and construct 338 market rate condominiums, 47 below-market rate units (12% would be allocated towards affordable housing units as per San Francisco’s planning code) and 13,000 square feet of ground floor retail. Initially, this southern segment of Third Street had been defined as the “Health Center” activity node of Bayview — an area intended for senior housing and “amenities serving an aging population, and commercial activities focused on medical and supportive services” (SFRA 2006, 11). Yet Levin, Menzies & Associates were among several housing developers (including BRIDGE Housing based in Oakland) who were actively prospecting this formerly industrial part of the community for development opportunities.

For Robert Kagan, Vice-President of Levin, Menzies & Associates, the decision to develop new market rate housing in Bayview was motivated largely by “growth potential” and the promise of transit-oriented-development to come, Bayview as noted in early news coverage on the project: “This is probably the only place in San Francisco, where by San Francisco standards, you can get moderate-priced housing (Vega 2005).”
In April 2004, Levin, Menzies & Associates initiated a public comment process for the proposed plans (Southeast Community Facility Commission 2005). The draft Environmental Impact Review (EIR) of the project conducted by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency noted that although the 5800 Third plan was a slight departure from the “Health Center” focus of the area, it would contribute to a steady improvement of the southern segment of the Third Street corridor from ‘large lot, low density and institutional uses to more intense transit-oriented, mixed-use residential/commercial/“Production, Distribution, Repair” (PDR) development’ (SF Planning Department 2005). Houston-based developer, Noteware Development was designated as the project developer with the first phase of project slated for completion in the winter of 2009 and the second phase planned for 2010. Prices for the market units were planned to start in the mid $500s with the below-market-rate units for the mid $200s (Socket Site 2007). As of late 2005, environmental remediation and construction of the condominium units was underway, but the use of the 13,000 square feet ground floor retail space had not yet been determined.

B. Neighborhood revitalization and the role of Mayor Gavin Newsom

“Since becoming mayor at 36, four acts have defined him in unexpected ways. Marrying men to men and women to women; joining a picket line of locked-out chambermaids and busboys; spending his weekends hanging out in Bayview and Hunters Point; and tackling the city's most intractable problem, homelessness, with his controversial Care Not Cash program” (Weiss 2005, San Francisco Chronicle)

On the heels of the 2003 mayoral election, Bayview residents were fatigued from the stops and starts and forlorn hopes of revitalization despite progresses made with the Third Street Rail and Hunters Point Shipyard. Some residents argued that Mayor Brown “failed the Bayview” with failed promises of jobs, among the most critical concerns of residents. In 2003, although Bayview would have its lowest percentage of voter turnout in recent history at 29%, this did not prevent Gavin Newsom from garnering the support necessary to claim the 2003 election (Gordon 2003).

Newsom, then a Supervisor appointed by former Mayor Brown, ran on a platform of “uniting the city” and addressing the needs of neglected communities. Within his first two months of his term, Newsom was known for taking drastic measures in support of same-sex marriage, getting rid of the welfare system, creating a citywide health plan to cover uninsured San Franciscans, and bringing focused attention to still struggling communities, particularly Bayview.

Among his first neighborhood revitalization initiatives was the Communities of Opportunity (COO) program, which he called "among [his] proudest initiatives and the one that [he] will be focused on disproportionately during the next four years if given a chance”(Vega 2006). The program began by creating a new community center, introducing wireless internet access, and resident-led street cleanup and job training programs. Starting in Bayview, COO would be expanded to surrounding neighborhoods in 2006— namely Visitacion Valley. Products of the program included the creation of youth jobs program following a spike in gun violence in the community in early 2004. The programs included a Summer Youth Garden Project and the Mayor’s Vocational Project—both designed to engage youth living in public housing projects in

---

64 PDR Ranges from small businesses to light/heavy industries focused that require flexible space, cheap rents and some separation from housing (e.g., manufacturing, processing, utilities, packing, wholesale, distribution, storage, repair).
a combination of paid skills training and community service activities (Levy and Sebastian 2004). Other efforts include beautification and facilities rehabilitation of Alice Griffith public housing development, just north of the Candlestick Stadium (DelVecchio 2005).

Created in 2005, HOPE SF would be created as another comprehensive neighborhood revitalization initiative, and San Francisco’s own version of the federal HOPE VI program. Bayview again, was central to the early implementation of the program, with Hunters View—a public housing development in the northern part of the community—designated as the first pilot project to be followed by five other housing developments across San Francisco. Soon after taking office, Newsom turned his attention to Hunters View, repairing bullet-ridden basketball courts and potholes. The conditions of Hunters View were what Newsom said, “became the inspiration and example for HOPE SF” (Knight 2007). With Hunters View as a pilot project, HOPE SF aimed to rebuild the seven of the most challenged public housing developments in the city.

In concert with these revitalization initiatives, in 2005, Newsom stewarded the creation of the Neighborhood Marketplace Initiative (NMI), a public-private partnership the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the Bay Area chapter of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The NMI was implemented in Bayview and eight other neighborhoods with a multifaceted focus on small business development, business retention and attraction, workforce development, neighborhood beautification initiatives, and commercial district planning. A key outcome of Bayview’s NMI was the creation of the Third Street Action Plan in 2005.

Building on the Third Street Corridor Study (1993) and the Bayview Community Revitalization Concept Plan (2002), the Third Street Action Plan channeled the expertise of the Bayview business community in a revised vision of the corridor in wake of the completion and operation of the Third Street Rail (Third Street Business Development Collaborative 2005, 21). Compared to previous plans, the Third Street Action Plan further attached physical sites to the needs of community residents. Among the recommendations was a proposal for possible grocery stores sites along the “Northern Gateway” of Third Street, just south of San Francisco’s Dogpatch and Mission Bay neighborhoods:

“Located at the crossroads between the Bayview, the Hunter’s Point Shipyard, and the “Dogpatch”, the Northern Gateway area of Third Street – between Jerrold and Arthur/Cargo Avenues (Islais Creek) – is a mixed-use neighborhood where industrial uses and neighborhood-serving commercial uses complement each other. A new full-service supermarket on the large parcels at Third and Evans will provide a much-needed amenity to the Bayview and other surrounding neighborhoods; complementary retail will provide services to industrial and government workers in the nearby businesses. Existing large-scale and light industrial will remain, and new light-industrial businesses that complement emerging clusters of biotechnology in Mission Bay and food production in the Bayview will be developed. This growth of new industry will transform empty warehouses and derelict land into an active production zone providing quality employment for area residents. A limited amount of new housing will be developed to minimize environmental impacts on new residents and leave industrial uses intact” (Third Street Business Development Collaborative 2005, 21).

---

65 See Chapter 2.
Although the plan did not lead directly to implementation strategy for a grocery store, it created an institutional pathway between existing and new Bayview business owners and the Office of the Mayor. Accordingly, it provided a venue for small business and culturally focused development in line with the original vision for Third Street in the Third Street Corridor Study and the Bayview Community Revitalization Concept Plan. This is further emphasized in Bayview’s NMI program administered by the Office of Economic and Workforce Development:

“The Bayview Hunters Point is a historical African American district in the southeastern part of San Francisco and is home to a plethora of soul food cafes, jazz and blues clubs, the historic Bayview Opera House, Candlestick Park and more. Residential streets are lined with decorative gardens that are cared for by residents and friends of the Bayview. Today the Bayview is home to a high concentration of families with children, new housing and retail developments. As you stroll down the commercial corridor you will see bright murals painted by local artists, both reflecting and commemorating African American culture and heritage and neighborhood diversity. Third Street offers delicious dining choices, family owned cafes with internet access, a community art gallery, and a beautiful town plaza where folks can gather for events such as the International African Marketplace or shop for fresh produce at the Farmers Market. The Bayview district is on the pulse of becoming the next commercial retail destination. Stop by and experience the renaissance” (Office of Economic and Workforce Development 2007).

The combination of the NMI and the Third Street Action Plan would begin to put grocery on a government agenda. However, according to the MOEWD, the catalyst for the focus on grocery stores in Bayview was the sudden closing of several major grocery stores throughout San Francisco between 2006 and 2007. This included longtime regional chains such as Delano’s IGA, Cala Foods, Bell’s, and Albertson’s—all stores with a long history in the Bay Area, but closed due to years of profit losses and increasing debt. In late 2006, Newsom in collaboration MOEWD staff hosted a town meeting to discuss the state of the grocery industry in San Francisco and ways to address the massive store closings and unmet grocery store demands.

Following this meeting, Newsom charged MOEWD with the responsibility with attracting new grocery stores to several neighborhoods in San Francisco. This included a personal promise to Bayview residents to bring a grocery store to Third Street (Temple 2007). With undeveloped city property at a premium, MOEWD began investigating existing retail spaces that could accommodate grocery stores. Simultaneously, staff approached numerous independent and corporate grocers alike, including Safeway, Trader Joe’s, Lucky’s, and Sacramento-regional chain, Nugget Markets. In 2007, as MOEWD widened their search for a willing grocery operator, Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market, a newly established grocery chain, responded to their request.

C. MOEWD and the beginnings of grocery planning in Bayview
A subsidiary of British grocery retailer Tesco, Fresh and Easy was established in in late 2006-2007, specializing in discount foods and packaged, prepared dishes. It was established its first store in Southern California in 2007 and was steadily seeking expansion opportunities in Northern California just as they were approached by MOEWD staff.

---

66 Personal interview, Amy Cohen, Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development.
67 International competition and the consolidation have been attributed to as the causes of this trend in San Francisco’s grocery industry.
68 Personal interview, Amy Cohen, Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development.
In 2007, British supermarket conglomerate, Tesco established the Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market following two decades of research on the U.S. consumer market. As noted in the New York Times’ first media coverage of Tesco’s entry into the U.S., Tesco specifically sought out untapped markets not yet availed by its main global competitors, Walmart, and Carrefour:

“The Tesco strategy can be considered an end run around the world's other giant retailers, Wal-Mart and Carrefour, which have recently been withdrawing from difficult markets after a race to plant flags in as many countries as possible…Tesco knows that confronting Wal-Mart head-on in Wal-Mart's home market would be suicidal. By slipping in through a neglected niche, Tesco hopes to build a business where even Carrefour fears to tread” (Smith 2007).

Freshness, affordability, and environmental sustainability would become the main pillars of the Fresh and Easy format. In contrast to other value food retailers in the U.S., Fresh and Easy distinguished itself by offering low cost, private label grocery items and a wide selection of additive-free, prepared packaged foods. Energy-saving building design and self-service checkouts (meaning a reduction in store employees) were among the strategic measures taken to reduce operating costs while ensuring value-priced goods. Entering untapped markets, particularly food deserts was a primary goal of the Tesco strategy. As reflected in the mission of the company, the store was premised providing healthy food at low cost:

“You deserve wholesome food that doesn't cost your whole paycheck. That's why we offer a range of our own brand products and freshly prepared meals. We never use high-fructose corn syrup, added trans fats, artificial colors or flavors in any Fresh and Easy brand products. We also realize you probably have some favorite top name brands. So in addition to our own Fresh & Easy brand products, we carry a nice variety to make it convenient for you. Best of all, we offer everything at honest, low prices for everyone” (Fresh and Easy 2013).

For Fresh and Easy staff, Bayview was not necessarily the draw to San Francisco, but rather the means for expanding more widely into the Bay Area market. As noted by individuals associated with the store development,

“We met with a couple independents, but the biggest attraction we got was Fresh and Easy because we learned that they were just starting out, they wanted to sign a lot of leases or buy a lot of property…They had signed one lease already quietly, but they were gearing up to do a lot more. So we basically said if you guys go to Bayview we’ll help you with all your other stores in San Francisco. And so once we kind of got their agreement, and we had a conversation where the Mayor was literally on the phone with the CEO of Fresh and Easy saying, ‘Do this for us, because everyone else had said no.’”

Southeast Food Access (or SEFA, a coalition of residents, community leaders and public health practitioners) bolstered the Bayview case by presenting Fresh and Easy the results of a resident food preferences survey, which confirmed the demand for a full-service grocery by Bayview residents. Organized informally in 2006 and established formally in 2008, SEFA was formed by SFDPH staff previously associated with the Good Neighbor Program “to encourage partnerships and collaboration in order to achieve a vibrant and robust food system for all in BVHP” (Southeast Food Access 2012).

Following a site feasibility analysis based on Fresh and Easy’s typical urban store footprint, MOEWD determined the most appropriate site for the Fresh and Easy to be the ground floor

---

69 Anonymous interview.
retail space of the soon to be constructed 5800 Third condominium development. Project developer, Noteware Development and equity partner, Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group, were amenable to MOEWD’s proposal given that a retail strategy had not yet been determined for the ground floor retail. Thus, MOEWD worked with Fresh and Easy, developers, and architects to redesign the building floor plan, which involved increasing the ground floor retail space from 13,000 to 21,000 and reworking the ground floor access for service delivery while maintaining the originally planned number of condominium units (SF Planning Department 2007). MOEWD offered tax breaks to Noteware Development. Fresh and Easy ultimately opted to own the ground floor retail space as a commercial condominium.\(^7\)

In the process of redesigning the plans to accommodate the Fresh and Easy store, Noteware Development gained the support of the BVHP PAC by agreeing to include a $750,000 community benefits package during the entitlement process focused on youth job training, senior services, first-time homeownership opportunities, and local business development (Goldman Sachs Group 2007). Over two years after the plans for 5800 Third were approved, and after the necessary changes made in the development plans to accommodate a Fresh and Easy store, on December 13 2007, Mayor Gavin Newsom hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for the project. At the ceremony, the Mayor emphasized the role of the Fresh and Easy in the revitalization of the Third Street corridor:

> “I made a commitment to the community to improve Bayview-Hunters Point and make it a place that is safe and healthy for families. This project will be a flagship in our broader efforts to support the newly revitalizing Third Street corridor, and its presence will ensure that the community is a place where families will want to move and stay (Office of the Mayor 2007).”

Representatives from Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group characterized 5800 Third and the planned Fresh and Easy store, as part of its corporate responsibility:

> “A project like 5800 Third Street demonstrates our firm's commitment to using our own capital to bring moderately priced, quality housing that working families can afford and much needed retail space to neighborhoods that have suffered from disinvestment. It also shows how the public and private sectors can work together to really make a difference” (Goldman Sachs Group 2007).

Overall, the integration of the Fresh and Easy into plans for 5800 Third represented a momentous coalescence of multiple agendas—around grocery development, revitalization, and health [See Table 5].

---

\(^7\) Personal interview, Amy Cohen, Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development.
Table 5: Neighborhood revitalization efforts in Bayview (2004-2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood-wide</th>
<th>PLANS / PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunters Point Shipyard/</td>
<td>Neighborhood wide</td>
<td>Lennar Corporation, SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candlestick Point Plan (2005)</td>
<td>HOPE SF- Hunters View plans</td>
<td>Office of the Mayor, SF Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2004-2007)</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities of Opportunity</td>
<td>Office of the Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program (2005-2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Street</td>
<td>Neighborhood Marketplace</td>
<td>MOEWD, LISC, Third Street Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative/ Third Street Action Plan</td>
<td>Project, residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5800 Third plans (2004-2007)</td>
<td>Levin, Menzies, and Associates,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lennar Homes, Noteware Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh and Easy plans (2006-2007)</td>
<td>MOEWD, Tesco, Noteware Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Starts, stops, and the path to the Fresh and Easy development (2007-2013)

The process that ensued involved a series of negotiations, delays, and restarts leading to the eventual opening of the Fresh and Easy store in August 2011.

A. Delays, downturns, and eventual progresses
2008 began with the construction of the ground floor podium of 5800 Third, but suddenly came to halt in April. With 80% of the foundation complete, project developer, Noteware Development declared bankruptcy amidst the housing market crash and economic downturn of 2008. As Fresh and Easy waited out the storm, it halted construction of all new stores and backed out of plans to locate at the Jack London Gateway shopping center in West Oakland [See Chapter 5], noting that the site was simply not viable for the company (Burt 2008). Because the site was in a redevelopment zone, the city had tight controls on subleasing, which would require a living wage agreement for sub-leasers and their staff. Fresh and Easy argued against compliance with local laws on the grounds that their wages are competitive despite not being the within California and Oakland living wage criteria (Burt 2008). In the meantime, Goldman Sachs Urban Investment Group conducted their own search for a new developer, settling upon Holliday Development, a local developer known for jumpstarting housing investment in Bay Areas often neglected communities— this includes San Francisco’s South of Market (SOMA) district in the 1980s and 1990s, and Oakland’s West Oakland neighborhood in the 2000s.

By early 2009, Holliday Development took over the project. By June 2010, the first 140 condominium units were ready for habitation, and the retail shell space was completed. That October, former Mayor Willie Brown and Supervisor Sophie Maxwell hosted a celebration of what was now called the “Carroll Station area” of the neighborhood. In contrast to the vision of a small business-based, culturally-focused Third Street as exemplified in Bayview’s NMI program, the anticipated grocery, the Fresh and Easy bolstered the marketing of 5800 Third as a “transit-
oriented-development” attractive to new residents. This is reflected in the promotional material for 5800 Third:

“Holliday Development, Goldman Sachs, and Citi Community Capital invite you to a light lunch to celebrate the arrival of Carroll Station. After 10 years of hard work, vision, and investment, the Bayview has finally arrived at Carroll Station. Discover San Francisco’s newest neighborhood as we prepare to welcome 1000 new residents over the coming year, including mixed income and senior housing, new restaurants, groceries, parks, and the King Pool. -

LIVE 5800 Third Street Homes
SWIM Martin Luther King Jr. Pool
RETIRE Bayview Hunters Point Multipurpose Senior Services
SHOP Fresh and Easy, the Bayview’s first GROCERY STORE in 50 years
PLAY Bayview Park
DINE Crossroads Cafe Delancey Street (Holliday Development 2010)"

As of December 2010, the original plan to open its “flagship” Northern California store in Bayview was again delayed from early spring to summer 2011. The company ended the year with a total of 155 small format stores in California, Arizona, and Nevada since 2007, and the closing of 13 underperforming stores in November (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2011). In January 2011, Fresh and Easy added two more San Francisco locations to this list—a store within a former Albertson’s store in San Francisco’s Outer Richmond neighborhood and a new construction in the Mission District. Around the same time, the exterior of the Bayview store was fully complete, but interior finishing plans were temporarily halted as Tesco awaited approval from the California Alcohol-Beverage Control (ABC) for its application to sell hard liquor at the store.

The legislation at the time prohibited any new retail development from conducting off-site liquor sales—a requirement that would have prevented Fresh and Easy from gaining approval for store renovations. Fresh and Easy customarily sold wine and beer at its other stores and wanted to do so at the Bayview location. SEFA and the Hunters Point Project Area Committee (the community’s primary advisory body to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency) actively advocated for a change in the legislation to allow off-site liquor sales at any new grocery stores in Bayview and food stores over 5,000 square feet. The eventual adoption of this request was much to the chagrin of some local anti-alcohol community groups but enabled Fresh and Easy plans to proceed (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2011).

As construction continued following approval of the alcohol license, Fresh and Easy worked with Young Community Developers, a youth job training organization to recruit Bayview residents. In preparation for an August 2011 grand opening the store hired 21 of its 40 employees from the Bayview zip code and 72% of the total hires were from San Francisco.

B. Community protests and momentous grand opening
Days before the planned opening of the store in August, residents and community groups were found demonstrating outside what was to be main entrance of the Fresh and Easy store. Representatives from the San Rafael-based non-profit advocacy group, Alcohol Justice led demonstrations regarding the perception of easy access to alcohol due to the self-service format of the store. Bruce Lee Livingston, CEO of Alcohol Justice told the press, just one day before the grand opening: “These are machines that will be doing the checkout of alcohol. Under state law
it’s supposed to be a person selling alcohol to individuals (CBS San Francisco 2011).” Furthermore, residents contested that the store did not make plans to accept Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) coupons, even though reporters note that Fresh and Easy applied to participate in the program (Gray-Garcia 2011)\textsuperscript{71}.

The day of the grand opening, the demonstrations continued, this time with representatives from both local and national organizations including United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union, NAACP, and Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, a neighborhood based faith-based labor rights group. Members of the NAACP reinforced the sentiments of Alcohol Justice, in the protests against self-service alcohol sales:

> “We have serious alcohol problems in this neighborhood. And we know the kinds of things that abuse of alcohol leads to, both dysfunction within our families and dysfunction and violence within our communities” (KQED 2011).

Others demonstrated outside the building contesting the lack of affordable housing options within 5800 Third, on the grounds that the new development was an effort to ‘gentrify and move poor people out of the neighborhood (BayCity News 2011). And others expressed concern over the lack of unionization, which Fresh and Easy public relations consultants argued was offset through the company’s offering of benefits for workers that work more than 20 hours a week. Just four months earlier, UFCW organized demonstrations at twenty-five Fresh and Easy stores throughout California (24 in Southern California and the Walnut Creek store in Northern California). The demonstrations were partly in response to the lack of unionization and threats by Fresh and Easy corporate staff towards workers wishing to form a union (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2011). As early as 2010, the Human Rights Watch, a New York based watchdog group issued a report with evidence calling Tesco a labor rights violator on the grounds that they carried out ‘aggressive campaigns to keep their employees in the United States from organizing and bargaining, violating international standards and, often, US labor laws.’ (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2010). Although Tesco has been known to have a relationship with union workers in the UK, some argue that they treat their “foreign workers” in the U.S. without the same accountability (Fresh and Easy Voice 2012).

In contrast to the demonstrators outside the store, for the community residents, local leaders, and San Francisco’s government staff inside the store, the Fresh and Easy store was a cause for celebration. In line with District 10 Supervisor Malia Cohen saw the Fresh and Easy as equally an investment in community health and neighborhood business:

> “Fresh and Easy is making more than just a business investment in the community. They are making an investment in health in providing access to fresh, high-quality food to a neighborhood that has historically lacked access to better options for generations” (Mieszkowski 2011).

For current Mayor Ed Lee, the store represented the culmination of efforts to make up for past mistakes and unrealized promises to the Bayview community:

\textsuperscript{71} There is one Fresh and Easy store in Southern California that accepts WIC (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2011). The company started applying to accept WIC in 2010, but the state placed a moratorium the issuance of new WIC licenses (CA Grocers 2013).
“[This] is a model for the rest of what we do in the city. It can be done, and we know that. We just have to get a success story out here to make sure that it can happen. So fulfilling a promise of jobs, neighborhood vitality, health of our neighborhoods. That is what this store represents. It is part of a movement that we started years ago with Gavin Newsom’s promise” (Office of the Mayor 2011).

C. Outcomes
Trade journals have reported on Fresh and Easy’s continued profit losses, which have amounted to nearly $250 million annually since 2010 (Fresh and Easy Buzz 2011). Although the exact sales numbers are not currently available for the Bayview store, San Francisco government staff anecdotally suggested that it was the lowest performing store of the three Fresh and Easy stores. Individuals associated with the project note that Tesco expected that the Bayview store would not be profitable but pursued the project as a “favor” to the city than a profit-motivated venture:

“It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I think that we actually used the power of the mayor to get something done without having to do a whole lot else…We knew that Fresh and Easy was expansionist and that they wanted our help and that they were a chain store. And we have a lot of regulations that limit chain stores. So they wanted to ingratiating themselves with us. I tried to get them to go to the Tenderloin right after that, and the site that was somewhat centrally located, but it was in a really crappy block and they didn’t feel the need to go this time because they’d already done a favor for us. [The Bayview store is] an example of a store—they were going to do it based on their numbers, not on us giving them money. They didn’t really need the money, they needed to have a certain amount of stores that would make money. …[This was] an example of a store—they were going to do it based on their numbers, not on us giving them money. They didn’t really need the money, they needed to have a certain amount of stores that would make money. So I think some of my lessons learned are that no matter what numbers you produce, they’re going to have data that they look at that tells them whether a store will work or not.”

Among residents, the store has had mixed reviews. After the grand opening, the local press reported widespread enthusiasm among residents living in the immediate area (Cote 2011). And yet, nearly one year later, staff of the HOPE SF program noted that many residents (particularly those living at the Hunters View housing development) find that neither the Fresh and Easy nor recent new amenities in the neighborhood address their needs and preferences:

“When [Fresh and Easy] opened, many residents said, ‘oh wow, we have a grocery store finally.’ But, I don’t think anyone goes there. [That part of the community] is still very deserted and they pay each other to get rides to Safeway. They don’t go to Fresh and Easy on the rail. That’s not [their] lifestyle. They’ll take a bus somewhere, but they won’t go to the rail. It’s very odd. There’s infrastructure there, but it’s not something that appeals to them in that way.”

Along these lines, a Bayview resident/activist saw the Fresh and Easy as not a symbol of progress but rather another “attack from redevelopment” designed to attract new residents instead of serving existing ones:

“The Bayview, Mission and Portola neighborhoods are peopled with a lot of multi-generational, multi-lingual mamas and families in poverty like mine, who need access to affordable fruits and vegetables and non-hormone-filled meat like Fresh and Easy sells, but are these stores really being built for us? As well, like so much of San Francisco and the whole Bay Area, these communities are under attack from redevelopment and gentrification efforts. Removal and evictions of poor families and elders happen every day in the City to make way for the corporate veneer of Lennar and John Stewart properties, condominiums, lofts and the rich young people they are built for. So who is Fresh and Easy for?” (Gray-Garcia 2011)

Anonymous interview.
Despite its mixed reviews for the Bayview store, Fresh and Easy finalized plans for three additional stores in San Francisco’s Portola, Outer Richmond, and Mission District neighborhoods—all stores proposed for previously vacant supermarket sites. Both the Portola and Outer Richmond stores opened in late 2011 and early 2012. In the Mission District, despite promises of 100% local hiring and locally commissioned mural on the proposed store’s facade, residents rose in fierce opposition to the plans. As reflected in a Planning Commission meeting regarding the store, resident concerns reflect those of Bayview store opponents, in terms of the lack of unionization and self-checkout sales:

“I am speaking in opposition to the project, and would like to explain my point about why I feel it is not needed and not appropriate for that site for the mission district. It is mainly because of who Tesco, their parent company, really is. They are a global Walmart. This is not a target for the Mission District...We are rich in terms of food, in terms of businesses. We are not under served at all. It is not a food desert. There are other communities that are suffering as food deserts' -- deserts. In past communities, they have not kept their promises. They are opposing the new state law around alcohol...Then they are refusing WIC. They have had the opportunity to submit exemptions to the band. The state told them. They knew last year that they were coming into the mission and Bayview. They knew. I think we need to base our decisions on their track record. Not their promises or their do-good handshakes” (Board of Supervisors 2012).

However, plans were put on hold when in December 2012, after months of speculation, Tesco announced that it will exit the U.S. (Supermarket News 2012). Soon after, trade journals reported that store hours were reduced at 199 Fresh and Easy locations, resulting in employee layoffs and personnel changes (Supermarket News 2012). In response to residents concerns in Bayview, Fresh and Easy sent this letter to its customers:

‘Dear Judy,

Thank you for being a Friend of Fresh and Easy. We wanted to reach out to you to address numerous news and online reports about the future of our stores. Our parent company Tesco is conducting a strategic review of Fresh and Easy - they're looking at all options to find the best outcome for the neighborhood market that you - and we - have come to love. While we don't know exactly what that outcome will be, or if Tesco will continue to own the company, we’re confident that Fresh and Easy can continue to be your favorite market. We want to assure you: we don't have plans to close stores. We're still committed to providing delicious, wholesome and affordable food every day. We're still Fresh and Easy; open for business with everything that you enjoy about our store, with even more exciting things to come. That's why we're going to keep on fighting the good food fight. Now, more than ever, we appreciate your energy in our stores and being able to share a smile with you. We look forward to seeing you soon and thank you for your continued support.

- The Fresh and Easy Team
“Still Fighting the Good Food Fight”

For Fresh and Easy workers, the news of Tesco’s exit also came as a surprise. In response, workers at the Outer Richmond and Silver Avenue store locations began organizing around Fresh and Easy’s lack of transparency about sales and operating costs. As reflected in the group’s website, despite their disappointment with Tesco’s lack of transparency, Fresh and Easy workers remained vested in making the store model successful:

73 This store is 1.5 miles from the Bayview Fresh and Easy.
“When Fresh and Easy opened its doors five years ago, we came hoping to work for a different kind of grocery store – a grocery store that was driven by values and let us put our customers first. But now, Fresh and Easy’s future is uncertain. Our jobs and our company’s future are at stake. It is time for us all to come together to find the positive solutions that deliver a better experience for our customers and help Fresh and Easy prosper” (Fresh and Easy Voice 2012).

Individuals associated with the project\(^{74}\) noted that Fresh and Easy’s challenges were in fact implicated in the challenges of new commercial construction, particularly for grocery stores:

> “Fundamentally it’s hard to start a grocery store where there wasn’t one before. I’ve seen it now because all those other stores that were vacant have pretty much gotten filled in the last six years. The stores that go in where there was a store are much more of a no-brainer. I think that the Fresh and Easy that went in in the Outer Richmond is a much more successful store. I don’t think that’s because of income or density necessarily, as much as that people were already going to that store. But you could ask them; I don’t know what they would say.”

Furthermore, government staff acknowledge that for Bayview specifically, “formula retail” should be concentrated in other parts of the community to allow smaller retail stores and local businesses to locate on Third Street, noting “If anything, Fresh and Easy should have been in the Shipyard…Let’s support the local and the independent organizations on Third Street.”\(^{75}\)

As of August 2013, 5800 Third was nearly sold out with plans for additional housing development currently underway:

> “Selling out Fast! With only 1- three bedroom townhomes, 2- one bedrooms and 3- two bedroom homes remaining, now is the time to discover the best value in San Francisco with the new homes at 5800 Third Street. These generously sized homes are located at Carroll Station on the new Third Street light rail and minutes from freeway access. With 3.5% FHA Financing available, this vibrant community is bringing new opportunities for San Francisco living. Limón Rotisserie, the Corner Cafe and Fresh and Easy Grocery store compliment three lush courtyards and community spaces” (5800 Third Street 2013).

By early September 2013, 5800 Third sold out. Days later, business news outlets reported that Fresh and Easy was acquired by Yucaipa Companies, a Los Angeles-based private equity company specializing in leveraged buyouts of regional supermarket chains since 1986.\(^{76}\) The company purchased 150 of the 200 Fresh and Easy stores across California, Arizona, and Nevada. Although nineteen Bay Area store locations will stay open, the Bayview store was one of 50 stores slated for closing. In response, Supervisor Malia Cohen issued a public statement expressing her disappointment:

> “I am deeply disappointed that Fresh and Easy did not include the Bayview community in this process. As a City we have made consistent efforts to be a part of the discussion to ensure that the Bayview community was not harmed by the failures of Fresh and Easy to capitalize on the economic opportunities in San Francisco. Fresh and Easy may point to the low-performance of the existing Bayview store as the primary

---

\(^{74}\) Anonymous interview.

\(^{75}\) Anonymous interview.

\(^{76}\) Yucaipa Companies acquired multiple regional grocery retailers on the West Coast during the 1990s. In the early 2000s, the company purchased major retailers A&P, Supervalu, and Colorado-based Wild Oats Markets. The company is also a major shareholder of Aloha Airlines, Barnes & Noble, Barney’s New York, Pathmark grocery stores, and Golden State Foods (a major supplier for McDonald’s fast food stores). CEO and Managing Partner, Ron Burkle is also part owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins National Hockey League team.
reason for why it was not included in the acquisition agreement. However, this statement does not take into account that Fresh and Easy made little effort to support the day-to-day operations of the store. As a City family we made countless offers to meet with the general manager of the store to discuss neighborhood marketing campaigns in order to ensure it would remain successful.

I understand that this decision will force many residents to leave the Bayview community to purchase their groceries elsewhere. Immediately after learning of this decision, myself and the Mayor’s Office are working to meet with Yucaipa Companies to discuss the potential of including the Bayview store in their sale agreement. Additionally, we have already begun conversations with local grocers about potentially acquiring the site if Yucaipa does not reconsider purchasing the Bayview location. I am committed to working with the community to determine the future of this important asset, continue our economic revitalization efforts on the Third Street corridor and ensure that the Bayview community continues to have access to healthy and affordable food options (Cohen 2013).”

In the days following Supervisor Cohen’s statement, Fresh and Easy announced a 25% closing sale at its Bayview store. A group of newer Bayview residents distributed an online petition for a Trader Joe’s at the Fresh and Easy location. On September 22, 2013, the Bayview Fresh and Easy officially closed (Somerville 2013). Local news outlets reported that existing Fresh and Easy stores may be rebranded under Wild Oats Markets, a Colorado-based natural foods chain recently acquired by Yucaipa Investments. Meanwhile, some retail experts expressed optimism for Fresh and Easy’s next phase noting that ‘Yucaipa has tremendous experience in the fresh food and grocery area. The bulk of its stores will survive (Ross 2013).’

In the meantime, new residents and non-resident activists embarked on a variety of community-based food strategies. For example, in 2012, local business firm, Andrea Baker Consulting launched the Bayview Community Pop-Up Market at the Bayview Opera House—just several blocks north of the Fresh and Easy site. Since 2012, the market has taken place every Thursday evening featuring artisanal food vendors from Bayview and surrounding areas. The project is part of the Bayview Underground Food Scene, a Bayview food business incubator also established by Andrea Baker Consulting with support from MOEWD and Supervisor Malia Cohen (Bayview Underground Food Scene 2013).

Additionally, since 2011, SFDPH has expanded community food projects as part of the Bayview Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Initiative, a comprehensive health promotion initiative funded by Kaiser Permanente. As part of this program, SFDPH created the Food Guardians program, which trains Bayview residents to become food justice and nutrition awareness advocates. To date, four residents have successfully enrolled in the program and have led efforts to improve healthy food options at existing Bayview food stores. As of early 2013, the Food Guardians have collaborated with store owners to provide new shelving, produce bins, and produce refrigeration units at three corner stores: Kennedy’s Grocery (Third Street and McKinnon), Ford’s Grocery (Oakdale and Lane), and Lee’s Market (Revere and Jennings). As of the writing of this dissertation, the Food Guardians are planning future corner store conversations with technical support from SFDPH and local architecture firm, Sutti and Associates (Southeast Food Access 2013).
Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how Bayview’s Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market represented a convergence of public health and neighborhood revitalization agendas catalyzed by citywide grocery closures and a renewed focus on neighborhood retail within the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD). When Fresh and Easy opened in 2011, it was considered an optimal solution as an urban format grocery store catering to food deserts and national public health goals. And yet, even successful consensus building processes between Fresh and Easy, MOEWD, SFDPH, and Bayview residents, failed to sustain the store. The store ultimately closed due to Tesco’s business failings. Still, the expansion of corner store conversions and pop-up food markets highlight the promise of alternative strategies, albeit amidst rapid gentrification. Ultimately, Fresh and Easy did not deliver on its promises, but government agencies, residents, and non-resident activists continue to use the rhetoric of public health to spur revitalization.

This case offers important lessons about governance of neighborhood revitalization in Bayview. Significantly, in contrast to past revitalization efforts (See Chapter 3), Fresh and Easy was in part a product of planning/ redevelopment (with a focus on transit-oriented development) and public health institutions [See Table 6].

Starting in the 1990s, the closing of the shipyard and the construction of the Third Street Rail created new conditions for revitalization now defined by transit-oriented development. And yet the definition of what transit-oriented development meant shifted over the course of two decades. For example, early neighborhood plans were oriented towards local business owners and residents. However, the development of 5800 Third and arguably Fresh and Easy were premised in efforts to attract new residents into Bayview. Collaborative processes involving government officials, community leaders, and residents supported these decisions about transit-oriented development (albeit despite some resident opposition). Yet physical development ultimately took priority over previously stated community goals. Fresh and Easy provided the opportunity to append community goals around food access to transit-oriented development.

Along these lines, public health—as an institution—proved to be a driving force of decisions about revitalization. As a consolidated city-county, the Department of Public Health (typically a county authority) has been a critical piece of the San Francisco’s neighborhood revitalization machine. Beginning in the 1990s, SFDPH leveraged residential mobilizations around environmental health for a series of initiatives that bridge public health and neighborhood revitalization goals. Fresh and Easy exemplified the broadening of public health practice from a focus on services to place-based development. As such, public health narratives around Fresh and Easy were political amenable but insufficient in providing a long-term solution to food access issues in Bayview. This suggests that certain types of public health practice have limitations when integrated with place-based neighborhood revitalization.

As I will show in Chapter 5, the Mandela Foods case provides additional clues into how grocery stores might be developed in ways less vulnerable to global business cycles institutional limitations.
### Table 6: Bayview Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRESH AND EASY DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006- MOEWD grocery search, Fresh and Easy U.S. entry</td>
<td>2011- Fresh and Easy grand opening 2013- Store replacement plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011- Fresh and Easy grand opening 2013- Store replacement plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOCAL POLITICS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mayor Willie Brown’s Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard plans</td>
<td>Mayor Gavin Newsom’s administrative shifts and Bayview rev. agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLANNING/REDEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td>Third Street Rail and Corridor Planning, Hunters Point Shipyard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HOPE SF, 5800 Third and other Third Street TOD plans progress</td>
<td>Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point plans progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC HEALTH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food retail collaborations with community groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Southeast Food Access coalition work with Fresh and Easy and community groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE</strong></td>
<td>Environmental justice and corner store conversion organizing</td>
<td>Anti-gentrification and community garden organizing</td>
<td>Third Street Corridor Project plan development with MOEWD</td>
<td>Community-based food retail efforts, continued anti-gentrification organizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5:
Integrating Community-Based Goals with Neighborhood Revitalization Agendas:
The Case of the Mandela Foods Cooperative, West Oakland

“The store is a testament to the strength, talent and tenacity of the worker owners. It demonstrates what a dedicated group of residents can accomplish in partnership with their public agencies and the support of the non-profit foundation community.”
- Dana Harvey, Founder, Mandela Foods Cooperative, Press Release on Grand Opening (BRIDGE Housing 2009)

“Rather than wait for someone else to do it, sometimes if you want to make change, you just have to step up and do it yourself. But know that you don’t have to do it alone. There’s real power in community. The Mandela Foods Cooperative is daily proof of that fact.”
- James Berk, worker-owner, Mandela Foods Cooperative (Henry 2011)

Introduction

The grand opening of the Mandela Foods Cooperative (“Mandela Foods”) on June 9, 2009 was more than a mere ribbon cutting for the residents, government leaders, and community supporters who attended. It was the first community-owned grocery store in West Oakland following a decade of activist-driven efforts to leverage federal investments in neighborhood revitalization towards community-defined ends. For Mandela Foods, its founders, and worker-owners, grocery development is not simply about addressing public health disparities or consumer demand. It is part of a much broader alternative vision of how neighborhood revitalization ought to occur in West Oakland—that is through, community-owned businesses and community-based development.

In the previous chapter, I explored how grocery stores entered into public health, planning, and eventual Mayoral revitalization agendas in Bayview. The eventual implementation of the Fresh and Easy Neighborhood market represented a convergence of distinct public health and revitalization agendas around grocery development involved an expansion of existing modes of planning, public health, and economic development practice into new realms. In this chapter, I tell the story of how West Oakland residents and activists pursued grocery development as a means to a longstanding neighborhood goal of community-led economic development. Like Fresh and Easy, Mandela Foods adopted the language of national policy narratives but reframed them to align with neighborhood goals of economic empowerment, social justice, and community self-reliance.

In the following sections, I discuss the key institutional drivers and subsequent governance ‘episodes’ leading up to the development of Mandela Foods: 1) federal interventions in neighborhood revitalization and early experiments in community-based planning (1985-1997); 2) housing revitalization, Seventh Street, and alternative visions of transit-oriented-development; 3) the maturation of community-based planning to the Mandela Foods Cooperative (2001-Present); and 4) conclusions.

Between 1980 and 1990, Oakland was hard hit by a national wave of manufacturing plant closings, which resulted in the loss of 10,000 jobs and 100 factories. Deindustrialization disproportionately affected Oakland’s black population mostly living in West and East Oakland, who historically depended on industrial jobs for generations. As Walker (1997) notes, “crack swept through Oakland like the Black Plague, wasting a whole generation” and contributed to the Black Panthers’ (particularly founder, Huey Newton’s) fall from grace (38). Furthermore, gang wars, organized drug-related crime in Oakland’s flatlands contributed to its status as the most crime-ridden city in California in the 1990s, with at least one homicide every other day (R. Walker 1997, 38-39). To some, the final breaking point was the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which brought down a one-mile segment of the Cypress Freeway bisecting the neighborhood, killing 42 people and destroying hundreds of homes and offices throughout Oakland. And yet from the wreckage arose a revived spirit among West Oakland residents, eager to reunify the neighborhood that had been physically divided for decades.

Prior to the earthquake, West Oakland was a focal point of federal interventions in poverty alleviation including Urban Renewal, Model Cities, and several precursors to the Enterprise/Empowerment Zone programs of the 1990s. This was the case even more so after the earthquake, wherein disaster recovery efforts were now coupled with longstanding (and at times competing) city-led and community-led visions of neighborhood revitalization. In particular, the deeply ingrained culture of community-based planning sheds light on the institutional mechanisms that undergirded the processes and purposes of the Mandela Foods Cooperative.

A. Acorn Supermarket, retail development, and the rise of community-based planning

“Oakland is the black hole in the midst of economic prosperity all around the metropolis. Yet Oakland is also a city of hope, vibrant with personal exploration, political experimentation and cultural expression by people of many colors and many nations. While Oaklanders have been beat down, locked up and left out so many times, they have carved out a small space to breathe in white America, conservative California, the bilious Bay Area. Like the galactic bodies, the urban black hole is where the greatest energy is straining to escape” (Walker 1997, 2).

In the mid 1980s, housing rehabilitation was the primary focus of local planning and redevelopment efforts in West Oakland. And yet city authorities, residents, and community leaders alike long grappled with the question of how to reintroduce retail onto Seventh Street, the neighborhood’s historic commercial and transportation corridor. In 1978, redevelopment authorities undertook one of its first comprehensive efforts to do so following the designation of Seventh Street as targeted Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Zone (Rosen 1989; Oakland Office of Community Development 1992).

In 1971, three years after the completion of Acorn Apartments, a 678-unit high rise public housing complex, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency designated a seven-acre property at the corner of Seventh Street and Market Street as site for Acorn Plaza, a “neighborhood retail shopping center to serve consumer needs and create new economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs of small businesses” (Oakland Redevelopment Agency 1973, 4). The Oakland
Redevelopment Agency envisioned the plaza to be anchored by a full-service grocery store in order to make the West Oakland a “progressive neighborhood” replete with daily conveniences. Although plans for the store for slow to progress, by the mid 1970s several residents developed an interim strategy in the wake of lacking food stores in the community: a food pantry and resident-run farmers market called the West Oakland Food Project (Hart-Banks 1980). Three years into the plans, city authorities still had neither secured financing nor an operator for the proposed grocery store. In 1980, without any positive leads from independents, regional, and national chains, City Councilors and members of the West Oakland Food Project urged the Redevelopment Agency to subsidize a farmers market on the Acorn Shopping Center site—that is, as an interim strategy until an operator was confirmed.

The construction of the plaza commenced after the City of Oakland secured $1.23 million from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce and $2.6 million in municipal bonds. A local business owner purchased the property and agreed to operate a supermarket and draw additional retail tenants to the plaza. In February 1985, more than ten years following the original designation of the plan, the Acorn Supermarket opened for business alongside of eleven other retail tenants including a locally-owned drugstore, dry cleaners, bakery, and a restaurant. It was described in newspapers at the time as the “first and only” shopping center to be financed through the U.S. Department of Commerce (Stewart 1985).

Two years after its opening and in spite of strong opening sales, the Acorn Supermarket closed amidst annual profit losses of $180,000 due to poor sales (Stewart 1987b). Following the closing of the store, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency acquired the property and selected Alex Hahn, another local business owner to operate the store. The store opening was delayed, when Hahn refused to open the store if he was forced to hire union workers, due to the high costs associated with unionization. Then Mayor Wilson intervened and attempted to persuade the local Retail Clerks Union to unionize the market after one year of operations. City Council eventually sided with Hahn, despite some council members concern over non-union employment in city-owned facilities. The controversial outcome of the store compelled local journalists to rebuke the Acorn Plaza as “half-empty failure” (Stewart 1987a).

The Acorn Plaza debacle would become fodder for local elections in 1987—progresses made in grocery development were a boon to electoral votes while failures were used as political ammunition against candidates. In the 1987 city council election, Frank Matarrese, District 5 (East Oakland) candidate and then leader of the Oakland Community Organizations ran on a platform emphasizing retail development. As he said to his voters: “No effort is being made to keep businesses here. The city needs to woo supermarkets the way they woo developers” (Stewart 1987a).

Around the time the Acorn Shopping Center opened, Oakland experienced a temporary spike in speculative real estate and Downtown civic projects (i.e., the convention center, Jack London Square, the Oakland ice rink). Redevelopment authorities also refocused their attention to other parts of West Oakland as residents mobilized around redevelopment. For example, in 1986, the West Oakland Project Area Committee (WOPAC)—an elected body of residents serving as advisors to the Oakland Redevelopment Agency—strongly urged the Oakland Redevelopment

---

77 PACs were required for redevelopment areas according to 1972 California Redevelopment Law.
Agency to expand the existing redevelopment project area to comprise the remainder of the neighborhood. Two redevelopment areas, Oak Center and Acorn, had been designated back in the 1960s, but WOPAC proposed the remaining to focus on housing development, commercial revitalization, and aesthetic improvements. Accordingly, the Oakland City Council approved the proposal and local planning authorities commenced work on the West Oakland Preliminary Redevelopment Plan (1988), which aimed to translate WOPAC’s broader visions into actionable strategies. The plan would further specify general benchmarks for housing, economic development, zoning changes, and aesthetic improvements, wherein Seventh Street was considered critical in “concentrating economic resources...[to] serve as a catalyst for future private sector investment and in turn provide employment opportunities for project area residents” (Oakland Office of Community Development 1988, 2). At the time, Oakland Main Post Office and the West Oakland BART station dominated Seventh Street.78 A further boon to retail revitalization activities, West Oakland was designated a federal “Commercial Revitalization Zone / Enhanced Enterprise Community,” subjecting the community to additional incentives for retail development (Brown and Fiester 2007).79

As these planning activities took place, residents formed community development corporations (CDCs) to pursue their own plans for mixed-use development. For example, community-based developers, West Oakland Economic Development Corporation (WOEDC) and Oakland Community Housing Incorporated developed plans for Slim Jenkins,80 a proposed mixed-use development with 32 units of below market and market-rate housing and 6000 square feet of ground floor retail space. The project was to be “the heart of a hoped-for neighborhood renaissance” with funding support from the California Housing Finance Agency and HUD’s Community Development Block Grant program site preparation activities.

However, the California Housing Finance Agency backed out amidst construction delays and the lack of a business plan for the retail development (Stewart 1991). Soon after, WOEDC and Oakland Community Housing Incorporated closed their funding gaps through the use of city funds. Finally, in 1992, the housing units were successfully completed. However, as of 2013 the commercial space remained largely vacant including only a thrift store and restaurant. Falling short of both resident and citywide expectations, then Mayor Elihu Harris recommended that the city foreclose on the property. Ultimately, the property was retained despite management turnovers and resident complaints about maintenance requests, rent increases, and security issues.

Despite mixed successes, these experiments in planning and implementing retail represented a parallel movement of city-led redevelopment strategies and community-based responses towards the goal of retail revitalization.

B. Loma Prieta earthquake recovery efforts and the community response

78 See Chapter 2 for details on Urban Renewal projects in West Oakland.
79 Under 1987 state law, nearly every industrial city in California was designated a state Enterprise Zone (Walker 1997, 30).
80 The development was to be called Slim Jenkins in commemoration of Slim Jenkins Supper Club, once a focal point of West Oakland’s historic Seventh Street blues entertainment district.
And yet these efforts came to a halt when the Loma Prieta earthquake swept the Bay Area in October 1989. The 7.1 scale earthquake left a path of destruction spanning San Francisco, Oakland, Watsonville, Santa Cruz, and Monterey. Oakland was among the worst hit with severe damage to over 975 homes and over 2000 residents displaced (Oakland Office of Community Development 1992, v). And most significantly for West Oakland, the earthquake brought down over a one-mile span of the Cypress Freeway—a controversial Urban Renewal project that had physically divided the community for nearly forty years—resulting in 42 fatalities. Both in West Oakland and Oakland overall, homelessness peaked as many poorer African Americans were forced out of the single room occupancy hotels that had crumbled as a result of the earthquake (Salazar 2006).

As noted by the Oakland Office of Community Development (1992), the approach to disaster recovery was ‘to tap all funding sources to their fullest extent and to use City and Agency funds only to provide last resort financing after all other available state and federal funding has been used’ (v). As a result of the earthquake, the City of Oakland leveraged funds from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), the Small Business Association (SBA), the California Housing Rehabilitation Program, state emergency funding programs (e.g., CALDAP-R), and federal housing development grants (e.g., Low Income Housing Tax Credits).

And yet, despite the rampant destruction, some called collapse of the Cypress Freeway, a “tragic blessing in disguise” (Killian 2005). On one hand, the earthquake exacerbated longstanding resource disparities in West Oakland. Yet on the other hand, it provided a new opportunity to undo the mistakes of the past by rebuilding West Oakland in the vision of its residents. Within 48 hours of the earthquake, residents, members of the Oak Center Neighborhood Association, BART, Port of Oakland, and Alameda County banded together to create the Citizen’s Emergency Relief Team (CERT) to preside over reconstruction and rebuilding efforts (CalTrans 2011, 5). The reconstruction plans that would follow refocused attention on Seventh Street while mobilizing residents around redevelopment and environmental justice concerns.

In 1990, after Caltrans presented a plan to fully reconstruct the freeway at its former location, CERT participants worked with city and county officials to develop an alternative plan that would reroute the freeway around the perimeter of the Port of Oakland. Caltrans agreed to entertain these plans as well as other alternatives and created a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to preside over continued reconstruction efforts. As noted by Caltrans, in their own report regarding the reconstruction efforts, the CAC “frequently used the language and symbolism of environmental justice to articulate its positions”, arguing that environmental health hazards caused by car exhaust fumes would exacerbate already high rates of infant mortality and acute and chronic diseases (CalTrans 2011, 6).

In 1991, after assessing several alternatives for the Cypress Freeway, Caltrans responded to pressure from the City of Oakland, CERT, and West Oakland citizens, and chose the rerouted
freeway plan\textsuperscript{81} and was praised for “restoring unity back to the community” (Oakland Post 1997). Despite concerted efforts by Caltrans to engage residents in information and job training sessions for the freeway replacement, a group of residents living in the “Lower Bottom” area of West Oakland were concerned about the continued proximity of the freeway to their homes. They proposed that the freeway be relocated even further west to avoid all instead of most residential areas in the southern segment of West Oakland. Caltrans rejected their request, noting that the alignment proposed by residents would create sharp turns forcing cars to slow to potentially unsafe freeway speeds (CalTrans 2011, 10). In response, in March 1993, residents of the Lower Bottoms filed a lawsuit against Caltrans alleging that the project would expose 7000 residents to high levels of noise, carbon monoxide, ozone, lead, and other pollutants adversely affecting community health and lowering property values. Other members of the West Oakland community (including CERT) challenged the lawsuit on the grounds that the original replacement plan had majority support. As a compromise, Caltrans agreed to include additional mitigation measures to protect residents against environmental health hazards such as landscaping, sound walls, and soundproofing.

Residents concerns were temporarily allayed, but conflicts emerged again when cancer-causing chemicals were discovered on one of the demolition sites. This time, residents of the Lower Bottoms as well as members of resident councils throughout the neighborhood urged Caltrans to conduct an environmental cleanup. However, with the approval of the California Department of Toxic Substances Council, Caltrans managed to forgo intensive clean up efforts and instead continued construction. In 1997, another resident association, the Chester Street Block Association filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation arguing that Caltrans again violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by failing to remediate environmental hazards disproportionately exposed to low-income residents of color. After two years of deliberations and continued pressure from state representatives, state assembly members, and city council member Nancy Nadel, Caltrans agreed to remove any remaining contaminants from the site (CalTrans 2011, 11).

The project would become the most expensive freeway project in the Bay Area with a near $1.1 billion budget, 90% of which came from federal emergency relief funds. After nine years of delays, the Cypress Freeway was fully completed. Federal Highway authorities further noted: “West Oakland residents got what they wanted and those involved learned a lot along the way” (Jackson 1998). Caltrans touted their efforts as an example of “environmental justice in decision making” and a successful coordination with community members and local leaders (CalTrans 2011, 16).

Although the earthquake recovery efforts encompass a different scope and scale of neighborhood revitalization activities, the rerouted freeway created new opportunities to physically rehabilitate the community and better integrate Seventh Street revitalization efforts with others in the community. Furthermore, it galvanized resident mobilizations around environmental health, which would set the stage for subsequent plans for Seventh Street.

---

\textsuperscript{81} The other alternatives included: 1) no build alternative involving no changes to the remaining freeway, 2) rebuilding of the structure as is, 3) rebuilding the structure with transit improvements, 4) rebuild the freeway west of the existing structure, 5) rebuilding an elevated freeway west of the existing structure, 6) rebuild the freeway west of the existing structure with additional strategies to improve transit and reduce congestion (CalTrans 2011, 7).
C. Mobilization of place-based movements around redevelopment

Even prior to the earthquake, residents—particularly a cohort of middle-aged, black women—organized residents around community issues spanning environmental hazards from industry and toxic dumping sites, gang-related crime, and gentrification. Of relevance to future planning processes around the Mandela Foods, the early 1990s also involved even stronger efforts by cohorts of residents to thwart new housing development in favor of job-generating development such as light industrial and retail. For example, in 1991, members of the Oak Center Neighborhood Association (the same organization that participated in CERT) vocally opposed plans for a 16-unit townhouse within the Oak Center redevelopment area, which they believed was passed through City Council without full consideration of resident needs and preferences. Residents saw the project as exceedingly high density for a part of the community comprised mostly of single-family homes. Plans were eventually passed and residents conceded.

And yet, in 1994, when West Oakland development company, Taylor Community Services Corporation (an affiliate of Oak Center’s Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church) proposed to adapt a former Nabisco facility into 80 multi-family units, the Oak Center Neighborhood Association would not relent. Even after Taylor Community Services Corporation agreed to personally finance the $11 million proposed development, residents argued that it was inconsistent with adjacent land uses (primarily single-family homes) and again, did not promote job and workforce development. As one resident noted to the local press at the time:

“We have numerous houses with for sale signs and for rent signs, and we don't need housing. We need money, and we can use the building to set up a flea market type of development where we can sell various products and make some money for ourselves” (Aikens 1994).

More generally, residents concerns gained more legitimacy with local planning and redevelopment authorities as a result of the sustained consensus building processes for Cypress Freeway replacement project. For example, in 1992, the Oakland Office of Economic Development and Employment sponsored the creation of the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization (CWOR), an advisory council charged with the responsibility of re-visioning revitalization strategies for West Oakland post-Loma Prieta. Comprised of members of the CERT, the West Oakland Commerce Association, various resident associations, and faith-based organizations in West Oakland, the coalition embarked upon a one-year planning process attended by over 350 residents, businesses, non-profit associations, churches, and community groups.

This process culminated in the “West Oakland Visions and Strategies Report” (1994), which aimed to “describe a community’s perspective of a revitalized West Oakland” as it relates to economic development, housing, transportation, education, land use, human and social services, recreation, environment, infrastructure, and crime and safety (Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization 1994). Additional issues discussed the plan included the reuse of the former site of the Cypress Freeway (now renamed the Mandela Parkway), the re-use of the nearly

82 In the early 1980s, when speculative developers began acquiring and renovating blocks of Victorian homes in West Oakland, Jubilee West, a faith-based non-profit followed suit, instead focused on rehabilitating old homes for needy West Oakland residents (Carroll 1985).
decommissioned Oakland Army Base, minority equity policies on hiring and contracting for Cypress replacement project, Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community governance structures, and mitigation strategies around gentrification.

In contrast to previous plans, this plan highlighted the need for affordable, healthy food options in West Oakland amidst studies at the time, which found that the existing Acorn Supermarket charged 36% more for produce of lesser quality compared to grocery stores in North Oakland’s affluent Rockridge neighborhood. Furthermore, the plan further suggested that economic development goals for West Oakland should have a concerted focus on: 1) supporting existing businesses that reinvest revenues into the West Oakland local economy; 2) economic development that prioritizes local hiring and minority workforce development; 3) supporting “community-owned small businesses which provide goods and services that promote community self-sufficiency”; and 4) community participation in the implementation of the West Oakland revitalization plan. Other recommendations included land use changes to promote economic development along Seventh Street, conversion of industrial uses into “live-work development,” housing development strategies that include after school programs and job training for youth, environmental mitigation efforts—all development that ensured that “West Oakland residents will not be displaced as the result of revitalization activity” (Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization 1994, 35). In effect, this plan was a bold statement by residents to shift the existing course of revitalization efforts to greater community ends.

Another significant part of the plan included its assessment of re-use strategies for the 1 ¼-mile extent of Mandela Parkway from 3rd to 34th Street. The four strategies included plans developed by a local architecture and urban design firm, a coalition of residents, the West Oakland Commerce Association, and the Federation of African American Contractors. The alternatives included several proposals for an afro-centric commercial district83 but with different designations of parking and recreational facilities, and a single proposal for a fully landscaped linear park with a series of outdoor plazas. The resident-led proposal was a combination of these other proposals, with an emphasis on community-owned businesses:

“A people friendly, pedestrian oriented plan for the entire Parkway with an Afrocentric building and landscape theme. The proposal calls for community owned businesses with employment opportunities for local residents. This proposal makes no parking on the median a must, and includes recreational, entertainment and social functions. An additional element of this plan calls for businesses to have their parking requirements met but clearly states that parking is not to be on the median” (Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization 1994, 72).

Residents and the West Oakland Commerce Association ultimately could not come to a consensus regarding the inclusion of commercial retail and parking along the proposed new parkway development. Following the dissemination of the West Oakland Vision and Strategies

83 The other three alternatives were described in the report as follows: 1) An Afrocentric cultural, historical and small business landscaped theme for the entire parkway’ with no parking on the median, but with alternative off-street parking and other parking areas. (Smith, Harden and Amenhotep); 2) A shared parking and cultural-recreational usage with beautification and landscaping for the entire Parkway, with parking earmarked at the northern end towards Emeryville. (West Oakland Commerce Association); 3) An Afrocentric cultural, historical, landscaped usage, and a resident-friendly pedestrian-oriented usage, which prefers non-median parking, yet provides opportunity for commercial/retail development at 7th Street (Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization 1994, 72).
Plan (1994), local business interests won out and the parkway was designed and developed as primarily a linear park terminating at Seventh Street.

Overall, the mid 1980s to 1990s represented the evolution of both city-led efforts to revitalize West Oakland in the aftermath of the earthquake, and community-based responses, which translated to both mobilization efforts and the creation of alternative development plans. In subsequent years, these dual tracks would converge and diverge as West Oakland revitalization increasingly centered around Seventh Street and eventually the area surrounding the West Oakland BART (the future home of the Mandela Foods Cooperative). [See Table 7]

### Table 7: Neighborhood Revitalization in West Oakland (1985-1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLANS / PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakland Preliminary Redevelopment Plan (1988)-plan for Acorn Plaza</td>
<td>West Oakland Project Area Committee, Oakland Redevelopment Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oakland Visions and Strategies Report (1994)</td>
<td>CERT, West Oakland Commerce Association, resident associations, churches (Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II. Housing revitalization, Seventh Street, and alternative visions of transit oriented development (1998-2003)

By the late 1990s and early 2000s post-Loma Prieta revitalization plans reached their maturation point. The newly rerouted freeway was completed and detailed plans for the Mandela Parkway commenced, several HOPE VI grants were secured for housing rehabilitation efforts previously delayed by the earthquake. At the same time, environmental justice activists and residents emboldened from successes in rerouting the Cypress freeway now pursued new efforts centered on Seventh Street and previously unaddressed environmental health issues in the neighborhood. As the Acorn Plaza continued to experience turnovers, food access entered more squarely into neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Seventh Street and the area surrounding the West Oakland BART station would become the physical space and place where these distinct practices would converge. Seemingly, planners, city authorities, community-based organizations, and residents all moved towards a similar goal
of transit-oriented development,—the creation of a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly Seventh Street corridor centered around the West Oakland BART station. And yet, Mandela Foods would grow out of continued efforts by residents and community-based organizations to define the modalities of transit-oriented-development according to their terms.

A. Housing rehabilitation and a city’s vision of Transit Oriented Development

“Drugs, crime, toxic hazards, isolation, poverty, unemployment and blight. If these ingredients sound like the recipe for a doomed neighborhood, think again. West Oakland still has all of them in abundance but it's also being touted as the next up-and-coming place to live and do business. Sheer insanity? Maybe, but something weird is happening in West Oakland, something that makes the Mission District's whirlwind transformation look slow and rational. So I began to research the mystery of West Oakland's overnight appeal. And gradually its bizarre leap from slum to upper-income-suburb-in-the-making didn't only appear understandable but peculiarly inevitable. Location is probably the number one reason people give to explain the neighborhood's sudden popularity...Ironically, neglect has made the neighborhood deliciously attractive. Like so many gentrification fairy tales, West Oakland is like Cinderella. Poverty and misfortune preserved a rare sort of purity and beauty, a purity that princes (or lesser gentry-fiers) were destined to fall in love with.” - San Francisco Chronicle coverage of West Oakland gentrification (Lloyd 2001).

Soon after the completion of the rerouted freeway, resident associations, particularly the Oak Center Neighborhood Association urged for the creation of an emergency redevelopment area in and around the fallen Cypress Freeway to prevent possible use of eminent domain (Zimmerman 2009, 112). Subsequently, Caltrans donated a one-acre plot of land spanning at 13th, 14th, and Center Streets for the implementation of the Mandela Parkway. Even despite being implemented as an expansive neighborhood green space (instead of a neighborhood commercial district), local authorities projected that the new parkway would attract new investment into West Oakland given the “reopening” of the neighborhood and its easy access to the new freeway.

In the late 1990s, growing awareness of West Oakland’s locational benefits attracted developers and new residents to West Oakland. Individual investors, mortgage lenders, technology workers ventured into West Oakland, purchasing and rehabilitating many of its older Victorian homes (DelVecchio 2000). Holliday Development, Emeryville-developer and the future developer of Bayview’s Fresh and Easy grocery store acquired a former Amtrak passenger depot partially destroyed by the earthquake, in hopes of rehabilitating it into new housing and commercial development. Technology businesses sought out sites for future office development, given its proximity to a tight mesh of fiber optic data distribution lines along its former railroad infrastructure lines—this was considered ideal for businesses handling large amounts of data.

Around the same time, as immediate earthquake recovery efforts were nearly completed, Oakland planning and redevelopment authorities refocused on their attention to citywide plan updates and developing a new course of action for citywide planning efforts. Between 1995-1998, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency hosted a series of community meetings to discuss how the goals of the West Oakland Vision and Strategies Plan would translate to actionable strategies for the West Oakland section of the Oakland General Plan (Oakland Community

84 Here I am distinguishing between “Transit Oriented Development” (Capital T), a normative paradigm of planning practice based in New Urbanist principles, and “transit-oriented development”, the more general practice of revitalizing areas near transit hubs premised in institution-defined goals.

85 According to California Redevelopment Law, general plans have to be updated every five years.
Economic Development Agency 1998, 187). Apart from defining strategies for the Oakland Army Base (which was officially decommissioned in 1998), the plan identified six proposed “Transit-Oriented-Development” districts. The West Oakland BART station was among one of these districts, which was selected as the only station directly linking San Francisco and Oakland and also serving four BART routes (Oakland Community Economic Development Agency 1998, 43).

Although the Seventh Street was prioritized in previous plans, the Oakland General Plan attached a broader vision of “Transit-Oriented Development” to its previous goals. And yet in line with the community’s West Oakland Vision and Strategies Plan (1994), the plan aimed to support “efforts to improve the Mandela Parkway corridor, to develop an afro-centric commercial area, and retain the nearby South Prescott residential neighborhood” (Oakland Community Economic Development Agency 1998, 189).

In parallel to these planning efforts, the Oakland Housing Authority pursued and completed long delayed housing rehabilitation plans for several properties previously been flagged by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for their unsafe and unsanitary conditions. In 1998, the City of Oakland added to its arsenal of federal funding packages with a $12.7 million HOPE VI grant to replace two dilapidated public housing developments in West Oakland along Chestnut Street. In early 1999, following ten years of coordination with the Acorn Resident Council, BRIDGE Housing completed a dramatic renovation of the Acorn towers into a lower density residential district. Then in September 1999, the Oakland Housing Authority secured another $10 million in HOPE VI funds to revitalize the Westwood Gardens, a 46-unit public housing development across from the West Oakland BART on Seventh Street. At the time, the Oakland Housing Authority and city authorities expected to leverage the HOPE VI funds into another $38 million in order to develop Mandela Gateway, a proposed 168-unit mixed income apartment and town home complex with 20,000 square feet of ground floor retail and office space.

Berkeley-based, New Urbanist planning firm, Calthorpe Associates (with Michael Willis Architects) was selected to developed initial plans for the three-block area, which aimed “to incorporate a broader income mix of tenants and to increase the local demand for retail services” (Slingluff 2006, 10). Additionally, the Mandela Gateway plan was developed in alignment with regional “Transit-Oriented-Development” goals of increasing residential opportunities in walkable distance of BART stations (Slingluff 2006, 10). For BRIDGE Housing, a local affordable housing developer, which served as the project developer, Mandela Gateway

---

86 Calthorpe and Associates also developed conceptual plans for HOPE VI projects in Oakland.
87 Calthorpe and Associates is an urban design firm established by Peter Calthorpe, one of the founding members of the Congress for New Urbanism, a national advocacy organization premised in combating urban sprawl through walkable, mixed-use, and transit-rich development. Peter Calthorpe is known for developing the concept and practice of “transit-oriented-development,” which emphasized placing commercial uses, mixed-income housing, jobs, and civic uses in walkable distance of transit stops (P. Calthorpe 1995). Calthorpe and Associates in combination with the Congress for New Urbanism and its members strongly aligned themselves with the HOPE VI program soon after its establishment in 1993. HUD would officially adopt the principle of New Urbanism and thus many HOPE VI projects nationally would be designed and developed by New Urbanist/transit-oriented focused firms (Elliott, Gotham, and Milligan 2004, 376).
represented a comprehensive effort “to reestablish Seventh Street as a retail corridor” (BRIDGE Housing 2012).88

Initially, the Mandela Gateway plan was not coordinated with West Oakland redevelopment plans at the time. However, after the Oakland Housing Authority secured HOPE VI funds, city authorities saw the Mandela Gateway as an opportunity to transform the area around the West Oakland BART station into a “transit village” —similar to the Fruitvale Transit Village in East Oakland, completed in the early 1990s (City of Oakland 1999). In combination with the Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency’s (i.e., Redevelopment Agency) initial mixed-use development plans for the Oakland Army Base89, Mandela Gateway was to serve as a cornerstone of transit-oriented-development both in West Oakland and Oakland at-large:

“No other single location in West Oakland could be redeveloped with more impact on the image and opportunities of the community than the Westwood site. Changing the current conditions of blight, dilapidated housing and grunge uses into quality, well-designed mixed income housing with resident and transit oriented retail, commercial and open space will transform this gateway location at the most important transit stop in the BART system” (Oakland Housing Authority in Slingluff 2006, 9).

In a press release about the Mandela Gateway, Oakland Housing Authority director, John Gresley touted the plans as a catalyst for revitalization in West Oakland:

"We recognized what the residents knew all along, that the essentials for a healthy community were already in place: hard-working families and a terrific location adjacent to downtown jobs and easy transportation access to the entire Bay Area. What the community needed was a boost, the kind of jump start that quality affordable housing provides, which helps people dramatically improve their standard of living and attracts other forms of community investment, like small businesses and new services" (Oakland Post 2002).

Overall, the Mandela Gateway represented a different kind of hope for city authorities and residents; journalists called the project a harbinger of “the long-awaited rebirth of West Oakland’s Seventh Street corridor” (Oakland Tribune 2003).

B. Alternative transit-oriented development plans

In 1997, just before the Oakland Housing Authority embarked upon plans for Transit Oriented Development around the West Oakland BART station, a coalition of residents developed their own “transit village” on the other side of the BART station at Fifth Street and Mandela Parkway. The Alliance for West Oakland Development (AWOD), a coalition comprising residents involved in the Cypress Freeway reconstruction efforts and the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization, developed a strategy for what they called, the “Mandela Transit Village.” Their plan: a five story parking structure with 110 housing units, and 41,000 square feet of commercial space aimed to be leased to local business owners. Their version of transit-oriented development was based in a similar form and aesthetic of the Mandela Gateway project, but with a focus on

88 Oakland Housing Authority owned the property housing the Mandela Gateway, but BRIDGE Housing was to control the property under a lease agreement signed with the City of Oakland in 2003 (Green 2007).
89 Initial Oakland Army Base plans called for a 13-acre, $400 million development comprising affordable housing, retail uses, and an entertainment complex with ice-skating rink and movie theater. Then Mayor Jerry Brown also entertained a proposal for a casino and horseracing track at the Oakland Army Base, but the plan was subsequently tabled. CWOR also developed a proposal for an Eco Park with 50% of jobs directed towards low-income residents.
local ownership. In a press release regarding their proposal, a member of the AWOD noted: “We looked at all the public parcels around BART and knew the only way to prevent gentrification was for the community to begin acquiring sites” (Ginsburg 2004). Local journalists further described the project as a “community-based investment to assist the revitalization of West Oakland” (Oakland Post 1999).

In 1997, the Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency granted AWOD $50,000 of their $5.4 million federal City’s Enhanced Enterprise Community grant to determine a workforce development strategy for the project. Soon after, AWOD worked with local designers and consultants to develop a design plan and evaluate potential sites around the West Oakland BART. City Authorities were largely supportive of AWOD’s proposal, despite concerns about the market feasibility of the project. To convince authorities, AWOD solicited the input of a Chicago-based transit village expert, who determined that the combination of West Oakland’s location, BART ridership, and available housing stock would make it a marketable development (Michael Willis Architects et al. 2001). In October 1999, following additional deliberations over possible sites, the Bank of America agreed to invest $2.5 million to finalize a joint venture with AWOD for the development of the Mandela Transit Village. Although it would take several years, and the closure of the Red Star Yeast factory (see next section) to secure a site, this plan represented residents’ intent to retain the vision of community-based businesses as put forth in the West Oakland Vision and Strategies Plan (1994). They further noted that the intent of their transit village was “to create a sense of ownership and transfer local assets to local residents. It is a step toward wealth” (Ginsburg 2004).

Recognizing the assemblage of efforts focused on some form of transit-oriented development, in 2000, the Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency contracted local consultants to devise a synthetic assessment of existing and proposed development around the West Oakland BART. This involved both the Mandela Gateway, city-led strategies for streetscape improvement, and the AWOD proposal all loosely placed in a broader vision for a “West Oakland Transit Village”:

“Although it lacks the density and is compromised by industrial uses and too many surface parking lots, much of what is already in place around the West Oakland BART Station has aspects of a transit village in terms of being a walkable area with relatively small blocks consistently developed with visually interesting, human-scaled buildings. However, at this stage, the name “West Oakland Transit Village” can only be said to be a planning concept and not an actual place” (Michael Willis Architects et al. 2001, 10).

Overall, the West Oakland Transit Village was an effort to coordinate existing plans in hopes of creating a broader vision for Seventh Street and the West Oakland BART station. Despite being based in separate—at times competing visions—of how mixed-use development should occur, the plan emphasized that all of these strategies represented the same goal “to get people out of their cars, off BART, and into the future collection of shops and restaurants that will dot the area” (Burt 2003).

---

90 As of 2004, following the closure of the Red Star Yeast factory along Seventh Street, the group purchased a 3 1/3 acre parcel that would comprise the first phase of their transit village, 110 condominiums that would be sold as both market rate and affordable units.
C. Grocery stores back on the agenda: exploring the bounds of community-based planning

Even as visible progresses were made along Seventh Street and a massive influx of federal and local investment in neighborhood revitalization, in June 1996, the Acorn Supermarket closed amidst massive profit losses (Fagan 1995). At the time, the owner attributed the failure of the store to local competition and the challenges of surviving the grocery market as an independent retailer. And yet local journalists noted that the Acorn Supermarket’s demise did not necessarily come as a surprise or disappointment; residents had long complained about the shortcomings of the store and were vocal about attaining a better supermarket on par with those found in neighboring areas:

“A permanent “closed” sign on Acorn might suit many neighbors just fine. But they want more. They want what they have been battling for over the past two decades: fresh food at an affordable price. They want a new, good supermarket. Something like the Lucky’s or Safeway’s that other people in suburbs like Alameda, or even just other, more prosperous areas of Oakland, take for granted” (Fagan 1995).

Soon after the closing of the Acorn Plaza in June 1996, the City of Oakland acquired the Acorn Plaza and worked with non-profit developer East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) to begin a national search for an operator. Meanwhile, the Oakland Community Organization (an Oakland-wide faith-based coalition) and various resident councils initiated their own efforts to attract Safeway and Albertson’s to the community, but to no avail (Sample 2001). In October 1997, the local news reported that a Super T market was scheduled to open at the Acorn Plaza in May 1998. However, Super T market backed out unexpectedly soon after.

In parallel to these citywide efforts to re-establish a supermarket in West Oakland, residents in West Oakland were developing their own community-based food initiatives. Beginning in 1995, McClymonds High School teacher, David Roach established Familyhood Connection, a non-profit organization that partnered with schools and community-based organizations to improve food access within African-American communities. As an activist and an instructor of business courses at McClymonds High School, Roach came from a lineage of black power activists and was also a strong proponent of Booker T. Washington’s guiding philosophy of the Tuskegee Institute, which emphasized economic empowerment through self-reliance (Alkon 2012, 6).

In 1996, in the wake of a pending discrimination lawsuit by African-American farmers across the nation against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Roach organized a conference in San Francisco, “Mo’ Better Food: Who Will Supply Healthy Food for the African American Community?” As African American farmers organized around the nation, Roach initiated the Mo’ Better Farmers Market, a student-run farmers market supplied by African American farmers at McClymonds High School. For Roach, the farmers’ market provided a hands-on lab for students taking his business courses at McClymonds High School while providing a new market for African American farmers in the California Central Valley.

Roach’s work was not as much a reaction to the Acorn Plaza, but a response to the national movement around the status of African American farmers and the lack of healthy food access as experienced by his students in West Oakland. As Roach described in a recent compilation of his work:
"The relationship between Mo’ Better Food and The African American Farmers of California began with our organization, The Familyhood Connection in front of my father’s sandwich shop in 1997. The sandwich shop was called Mack’s Meat, located on MacArthur and 91st in East Oakland. On that day, the farmers sold their produce on the sidewalk in front of the sandwich shop. At the time, I was the Director of the Business Academy at McClymonds High School. Prior to McClymonds, I taught at Castlemont High School, where one of my students returned to visit with her newborn child. She was feeding her child candy in my classroom. I asked, “why are you feeding your child candy and not fruit? Her response was, “where am I going to find some fruit around here Mr. Roach?” Her comment stayed with me. The following year, we established a permanent farmers market in front of McClymonds in front of the school (Roach 2012, 5)."

In 1999, as the Mo’ Better Farmers’ Market entered its second year of operations, the City of Oakland revised its strategy for the Acorn Plaza. EBALDC entered into a partnership with West Side Community Development Corporation (a coalition of resident-community developers), the West Oakland Marketplace Advancement Company (a coalition of Acorn Apartments residents), and Portfolio Property Investors. The partnership was established as the Community Plaza Development, LLC. As joint partners of the Acorn Plaza, the partnership collaborated with Oakland Community Organizations and its then leader Ron Snyder to resume their national search for an operator. In 1999, three years following the closing of Acorn Supermarket, Community Plaza Development secured a lease with a Los Angeles-based independent grocer specializing in inner city retail. The store was renamed Gateway Foods and the Plaza was now known as the Jack London Gateway. A resident told the press at the time: "We wanted a big, name-brand store. Everybody wanted it. I don't hear that complaint anymore" (Sample 2001). At the time the store was considered a resounding success: it offered reasonable prices and high quality goods in a clean, hygienic environment desirable to West Oakland residents and employees. Two years into operation, the store claimed to be doing well but “not setting any records” (Sample 2001).

Despite the continued challenge to maintain a grocery store at the now Jack London Gateway, the Community Plaza Development’s efforts represented a continued effort to develop grocery retail in particular, in the vision of residents as defined in the West Oakland Vision and Strategies Plan (1994).

Overall, this period in West Oakland’s revitalization history illustrates the disparate yet mutually contingent efforts to address critical issues in West Oakland. Planning and redevelopment authorities, community-based organizations, and residents simultaneously moved towards a focus on Seventh Street and transit-oriented-development around the West Oakland BART station. Be it the Mandela Gateway HOPE VI development, the Mandela Transit Village, or the grocery store at Jack London Gateway, community-based planning continued to grow alongside and with respect to city-led redevelopment efforts. And yet the question of how to appropriately pursue retail development continued to perplex redevelopment authorities and residents alike. In spite of numerous plans for rehabilitated and new housing, redevelopment authorities remained skeptical about the future of neighborhood retail development in West Oakland:

“Until West Oakland supports a larger population base, substantial new community-serving retail is unlikely to have with sufficient market support. Limited opportunities, however, may exist for niche market retailers, such as the Pan-African concept or retailers seeking synergies with emerging special uses, such as artist studios. In addition, there may be a limited amount of retail demand for neighborhood convenience retail (e.g., food stores, household supplies, office supplies, restaurants, and cafes, etc.). These will be
driven by other land use activities within West Oakland, such as residential and commercial uses” (Michael Willis Architects et al. 2001, 19).

The group of residents that would go on to establish Mandela Foods undertook this challenge, within broader efforts to develop transit-oriented-development in the vision of West Oakland residents. [See Table 8]

Table 8: Neighborhood revitalization and community planning in West Oakland (1998-2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLANS / PROGRAMS</th>
<th>ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood-wide plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland Army Base (1998-)</td>
<td>Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency, Coalition for West Oakland Residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandela Gateway HOPE VI plan (1999)</td>
<td>Calthorpe Associates, Acorn Resident Council, BRIDGE Housing, Oakland Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandela Transit Village (1997-1999)</td>
<td>Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization, CERT, residents (Alliance for West Oakland Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oakland Transit Village (2001)</td>
<td>Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency, Oakland Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery stores/ Food retail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. The maturation of community-based planning and the Mandela Foods Cooperative (2001-Present)

After delays in the construction process, the Mandela Gateway celebrated its grand opening in May 2003 just as the Mandela Parkway was nearing its completion. Also in 2003, Emeryville-based development company, Holliday development pursued an expansive plan for 1500 market rate homes at the site of the former Southern Pacific train station at 16th and Wood Street.

Members of the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization would go on to participate in the Seventh Street/McClmonds Corridor Neighborhood Improvement Initiative, community-capacity building initiative resulting in the creation of workforce development programs and the People’s Community Credit Union, the first financial institution in the community in decades.91

91 Beginning in 1997, as a result of redevelopment progresses in West Oakland, residents and community-based organizations were able to leverage additional funds and institutional partnerships to address social and environmental issues in the neighborhood. The Seventh Street/McClmonds Corridor Neighborhood Improvement Initiative (NII), a resident-led program (and eventually non-profit organization) which supported community capacity building initiatives and allocated grant funds for
In 2002, resident participants of this initiative would go on to create the West Oakland Environmental Indicators project (WOEIP), a resident-led environmental justice organization focused on neighborhood air quality issues around the Port and Seventh Street. The result of a participatory research collaborations with Oakland-policy think tank, The Pacific Institute, WOEIP used community-based research findings to reroute diesel trucks away from residential areas and helped lead to the closure of Red Yeast factory, a polluting factory adjacent to the West Oakland BART. Administered by the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization, the WOEIP further integrated environmental justice goals with the overall improvement of the area surrounding the West Oakland BART.

The culmination of these institutional shifts gave birth to ‘food justice’ initiatives spanning urban gardens and farmers markets—all premised in empowering disenfranchised residents through involvement in sustainable food systems projects. An offshoot of ongoing environmental justice and community-based planning, food justice movements created the social infrastructure for Mandela Foods. The eventual store development grew out of these resident mobilizations and the opportunities for ground floor retail within the completed Mandela Gateway housing development.

A. Coalition building around food systems in West Oakland

“WELCOME THRU WEST OAKLAND. ENJOY OUR 53 LIQUOR STORES.” Dissident street posters along West Grand Street during rerouting of 580 freeway through West Oakland (2007)

In 1999, the Alameda County Cooperative Extension contracted Dana Harvey, a staff member at the Environmental Justice Institute) and her husband, a member of the WOEIP, to assist in gathering data for a food assessment for West Oakland. The findings from the report entitled “West Oakland Food Security Project,” indicated that in spite of the existence of a grocery store, the preponderance of liquor stores and fast food establishments made West Oakland “food insecure”. It was reported that West Oakland exceeded the state limit for liquor stores by 28 stores. Soon after a community meeting where the results of the report were discussed, Margaret Gordon—a longtime member of the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization and a leading figure in the WOEIP—approached Harvey and requested her assistance in determining a strategy to address food access issues in West Oakland.

Through the Environmental Justice Institute, Harvey initially worked with Margaret Gordon and several environmental justice organizers to develop a community plan, premised in the question

workforce and youth training programs, a shuttle running between West Oakland senior housing sites and local retail stores, a health clinic, and People’s Community Credit Union.

Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) describe food justice as “ensuring the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed and accessed and eaten are shared fairly” (6).

The Cooperative Extension is the arm of the University of California, which provides educational and technical resources of the University available to the community. UCCE is an integral part of the Division of Environmental Health in Department of Public Health in Alameda County.

Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace.

A 1994 California state law limited liquor licenses to one per 2,500 residents in a given census tract, but existing businesses were grandfathered in.

Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace.
“how do you create a food secure community?” In the meantime, two longtime West Oakland residents turned a vacant lot into the Linden Street community garden. Roach’s Mo’ Better Farmers Market gained a small but consistent following. Harvey connected with West Oakland’s burgeoning food justice activists and created West Oakland Food Collaborative (WOFC) to further defined priorities around food access as it relates to public health disparities and disinvestment in the community, which included: 1) create a farmers market, 2) create a community-owned grocery store, 3) work with minority farmers, 4) support small business, and 5) work with corner stores. As noted by Harvey in her description of WOFC’s goals: “It wasn’t just about a grocery store, it was community ownership. It was economic development.”

In 2001, after securing an additional $280,000 grant from the USDA Community Food Projects program and seed funding from the Alameda County Department of Public Health, WOFC focused their first efforts in creating a neighborhood-wide farmer’s market. In the meantime, a younger generation of non-resident environmental justice turned ‘food justice’ activists joined WOFC, while going on to create People’s Grocery, a mobile grocery market and urban agriculture program in West Oakland. Roach discontinued the farmers market at McClymonds High School and instead worked with the WOFC to develop a larger farmers market including both farmers and artisanal food purveyors based in West Oakland.

In February 2003, the Mandela Farmers Market celebrated its grand opening at Fifth Street and Mandela Parkway, adjacent to the West Oakland BART Station (Nakao 2003). Expanding upon Roach’s work, the market hosted African-American farmers but also involved a cooperative management strategy. Specifically, each vendor paid to have a booth at the market, which would go towards funding market manager. Vendors were allowed to vote on organizational changes and strategies at the market. As the market ended its first year of operations, Roach disbanded from the WOFC, opting to administrate the Mandela Farmers Market under the auspices of his non-profit organizations, Mo’ Better Foods and FamilyHood Connection. In the meantime, Harvey focused her own efforts on the second goal defined in the original strategic plan of the WOFC: to establish a community-owned grocery store.

Overall, WOFC channeled existing community-based planning and environmental justice organizing work to address related concerns around food access, health disparities, and disinvestment. Significantly, WOFC provided the organizational structure and vision that would establish a foundation for subsequent efforts to address food access concerns through retail initiatives.

97 Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace.
98 Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace.
99 Established in 2002, by three young professionals experienced in youth engagement and environmental justice work in West Oakland, People’s Grocery is premised in administering local programs that “build a local food system that improves the health and economy of West Oakland (People’s Grocery 2010c).” Through a variety of programs including urban agriculture, Community-Supported-Agriculture6, nutrition education, youth internships and leadership training, People’s Grocery seeks to not only improve food access in West Oakland but also create a model of economic development premised in the principles of sustainability, health and self-reliance.
100 This is not the same retail outlet as the Mandela Foods Cooperative. Both the farmers market and the eventual cooperative bore the name “Mandela.”
B. Mandela Gateway and community-based plans for ground floor retail

“If successful, the [Mandela Gateway] development could begin to heal the emotional scars of widespread urban renewal that decimated the Seventh Street commercial district and several blocks of West Oakland homes. But already the plans are drawing heat from some local entrepreneurs who say their efforts to open new businesses in the retail spaces are not getting the same consideration as other more established stores or cafes. The storefronts remain empty rather than taking a chance on first-time businesses that might need a break in the rent or small loan to get off the ground, they say.” - Oakland Tribune coverage of Mandela Gateway (Burt 2004a)

In April 2003, just as Harvey began exploring the possibilities of establishing a cooperative grocery store in West Oakland, the Mandela Gateway hosted a groundbreaking ceremony attended by Oakland’s political elite. Among the attendees was then Mayor Jerry Brown, who promised to create opportunities for local entrepreneurship through new development in West Oakland. Although Harvey was not present at the groundbreaking, she received a notice in the mail announcing the construction of the apartments and the ground floor retail, which was tentatively allotted for a full-service grocery store. Harvey and remaining WOFC members solicited pro bono legal assistance and input from residents interested in entrepreneurship opportunities, in hopes of determining an alternative strategy for the ground floor retail. Their plan built upon the idea of African-themed marketplace as articulated in the West Oakland Visions and Strategies Plan (1994):

“Our initial plan was that the community would actually buy the retail space...[through] a land trust type model. So on the corner [would be] a 11,000 food cooperative. Then we had a guy who had a photocopy company, and a woman who made pies, and another guy who had a little food stand who wanted to do fish and chicken. Then a group of students at McClymond’s High School had spent two years designing a community center on this side of the block through a [UC Berkeley service learning course] called the Y Plan...So we put all this together...a fabulous, community-owned opportunity that will establish this great cultural center [in West Oakland].”

In the early fall of 2004, the Harvey and the WOFC took their plan to the Oakland Housing Authority requesting free rent and community ownership of the 11,000 tenant anchor space. At the time, Housing Authority staff members explained to local journalists, that the proposal needed to illustrate financial feasibility in order to gain their support:

“We cannot at the Oakland Housing Authority allow our funds to be used without some rents. Of course we are willing to give rental breaks to new tenants that move in. For some businesses that are not well capitalized, it's hard for them to pay the rent and make tenant improvements all at once...We're quite willing to help in those early months with rent concessions and we'll even help with the tenant improvements, but we can't (let them) go in there without a proposal. We don't want to set people up to fail” (Burt 2004b).

The Housing Authority then referred the group to BRIDGE Housing, the developer and now property manager for the Mandela Gateway. Although BRIDGE Housing was initially supportive of WOFC, the ground floor retail was planned with the intent of attracting “credit tenants” in order to pay off Housing Authority loans for the Mandela Gateway. As these deliberations continued, a local Korean grocer purchased the Gateway Foods space at Jack

---

101 Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace.
102 Credit retail tenants are national retail operators with an established credit rating.
London Gateway, and began plans to convert the store into an Asian market (again renamed, Eugene International Market). With little indication of store problems, the former owner of Gateway Foods told the press that “the community did not support him and it was time to move on” (Burt 2004c). Store workers were allowed to retain their jobs, but many residents complained that the store lacked variety and failed to accommodate the preferences of West Oakland’s still majority African-American population.

As of December 2004, amidst these continued challenges at Jack London Gateway Harvey elicited the advice of the business students at the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, who hosted a community clinic to assist aspiring independent business owners in the area. Through their advice Harvey decided to pursue plans for the community-owned grocery store in particular and would subsequently hire Wells Lawson, then a Master of City Planning student at UC Berkeley (and later Chief Financial Officer of Mandela Foods), to further develop a business plan. This time she invited new members into the WOFC to provide input and participate in the planning process; this included members Rainbow Grocery (a cooperative grocery store in San Francisco) and the Black Dot Collective, a coalition of West Oakland artists actively pursuing plans to develop an urban farm, arts businesses, and performance venues near the Mandela Gateway. WOFC named the store, Soul Foods Cooperative, and secured additional grants from The California Endowment, and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund to complete the business plan.

In the meantime, Harvey incorporated Soul Foods Cooperative and developed promotional material with local designers before returning to BRIDGE Housing with their revised proposal. In order to make the ground floor retail financially feasible, BRIDGE Housing sought a lease of $2 per square foot, which Harvey and WOFC attempted to negotiate down to $1 per square foot. BRIDGE Housing denied the proposal opting to work with a retail consultant to discuss possible uses for the anchor tenant space with community residents. As of January 2005, the Oakland Housing Authority and BRIDGE Housing determined that Walgreens or another chain pharmacy would serve as the ideal tenant due to its size and location. BRIDGE Housing presented this possible strategy at subsequent community meetings, only to be met with widespread criticism and dissent from residents. Local journalists noted that some residents decried the Walgreens’ proposal as a contributor to gentrification and a “sinister plot to undermine the health and dignity of West Oakland residents” (Thompson 2005). Others meeting attendees suggested a community-based alternative such as an African-American pharmaceutical collective, in order to combat (what they considered) the gentrifying efforts of chain stores in the neighborhood:

“Gentrification. People often throw that word around without really understanding what it means. Usually, it means the long process by which young middle-class professionals buy up homes in working-class neighborhoods and gradually drive up property values and rents so that indigenous residents are forced to move elsewhere. But to activists in West Oakland, gentrification is a drugstore.” (Thompson 2005)

Ultimately, Walgreens and other pharmacies walked away from the proposal primarily due to the income levels of the community, which they believed would limit profits. In response, BRIDGE Housing staff noted,

‘The numbers don’t work. They expressed what they called shrinkage, volume going out the back door. You can call it redlining, but that’s the business decision they made.’ (Thompson 2005)

---

103 Personal interview, Wells Lawson, San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Community Investment.
Dana Harvey was among the critics of the Walgreens proposal arguing that the plan would ‘turn Oakland into South Emeryville’ compromising the ‘community-envisioned Mandela Transit Village’ also underway (Thompson 2005). She further argued that chain drug stores like Walgreens,

“take profits out of a neighborhood, offer minimum-wage jobs that cost communities more than they're worth, and cripple the self-esteem of low-income shoppers by monitoring them with security cameras” (Thompson 2005).

By June 2005, several stores signed leases for the Mandela Gateway, including Heavenly Grounds Coffee, a Berkeley-based coffee shop, the People’s Community Credit Union (created as a result of the 7th Street McClymonds Corridor project) and a Subway sandwich shop (Burt 2005). A local fashion designer, Skylier Blancard Crowder, began developing a business plan for a locally owned boutique, but backed out when asked to put up her home as collateral for a tenant improvement business loan (Burt 2009). At the time, WOFC and Harvey again revised their business plan in hopes of securing the 11,000 square foot space amidst Walgreen’s fallout.

As new retail tenants occupied Mandela Gateway, internal tensions stunted WOFC’s efforts. The original plan was to develop a cooperative ownership model through Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) owned by West Oakland residents who would also serve as worker-owners. However, some WOFC members wanted their organizations to claim a larger stake in the store. In late 2005, after failing to come to a consensus, the WOFC disbanded but Harvey continued her efforts under a revised store name and concept focused on health, economic empowerment, and community self-reliance:

“Mandela Foods Cooperative was born out of a community spirit to see improved health in the community. The Cooperative took the name Mandela Foods to support the concept and plan to develop Mandela Transit Village at the West Oakland BART Station - also a community dream that will soon become a reality. A full service grocery retail store, and nutrition education center, Mandela Foods started as an idea and has evolved into a viable community business, with a strong financial and business package” (Lawson 2006).

With her consultants, Harvey went back to BRIDGE Housing, this time with a more detailed business plan and operations strategy. BRIDGE Housing agreed to consider their proposal and offer rent concessions if they hired a general manager and raised $500,000 (in four months) to cover the first three years of rent. In return, BRIDGE Housing would offer the lease and contribute $250,000 towards tenant improvements (Green 2007). Subsequently, Harvey reorganized her group of consultants into 501(c)3 called the Mandela MarketPlace, and began aggressive fundraising efforts. Under this new organizational structure, Mandela Foods was to be the first of multiple community-based enterprises incubated by the Mandela MarketPlace:

“To work in partnership with local residents, family farmers, and community-based businesses to improve health, create wealth, and build assets through cooperative food enterprises in low income communities” (Mandela MarketPlace 2012).

Individual Development Accounts are matched savings accounts usually operated by credit unions, which supplement the savings of low-income households. For businesses like cooperative grocery stores, IDAs can provide seed capital or funding to further expand businesses.
Upon BRIDGE’s request to better define the operations strategy for the store, Harvey hired Berkeley-based independent grocer, Nathan Cheng as a retail consultant and a trainer for future worker-owners. Harvey and her supporters considered this tentative lease agreement a momentous win. As local reporters noted:

“All in the worst of times, Dana Harvey never gave up on her dream of starting a community food cooperative in the heart of West Oakland. It would be worker-owned and feature fresh, nutritious foods and other products produced by local artisans. Now, after months of lobbying, threatening, cajoling and negotiating, Harvey’s dream -- the Mandela Foods Cooperative -- is starting to take shape. She has worked out the financial details and hopes to soon sign a lease with Bridge Housing, Inc., for a large store space in the Mandela Gateway apartment complex on Seventh Street. If all goes well, the co-op could be open by late summer” (Burt 2006a).

C. Gains, losses, and eventually a lease agreement

“The urban renewal frenzy of the mid-1960s wiped out neighborhoods and the once-vibrant Seventh Street commercial district in West Oakland, but little by little, there are signs the area is poised to make a comeback. The People's Community Partnership Federal Credit Union recently relocated to a larger and more visible site in the Mandela Gateway apartment complex on Seventh Street, offering West Oakland’s only banking and lending services. It joins a Subway restaurant that opened for business in August and a home ownership assistance center that has offered classes since the spring. If things go as planned, a new cooperative grocery store will open there next year. -Oakland Tribune coverage of redevelopment progresses in West Oakland” (Burt 2006b).

In 2006, Harvey and Mandela MarketPlace aggressively pursued both financial and political support for Mandela Foods. In February 2006, they approached the West Oakland Project Area Committee (WOPAC), which comprised previous collaborators from the WOEIP. WOPAC strongly vouched for the project in public hearings, emphasizing its revitalization goals for Seventh Street while addressing the need for more healthy food options in the community (Redevelopment Agency of the City of Oakland 2007). West Oakland’s Councilwoman Nancy Nadel, also emerged as a vocal supporter of the project, emphasizing its contributions to community health and economic development:

“The local, worker-owned co-op retains all the profits in the community and has control over the quality of goods sold which in this case will be healthful food in a community that has serious nutritional needs. The national chain takes the profits out of the community and provides goods that didn't sell in some other store, predominantly plastic goods that have a short life and wind up in a landfill. There is no organic produce, likely no locally grown produce; only some stores have produce at all…The successful worker owned cooperative model is the key to lifting people out of poverty, giving them the opportunity to increase their capital and become self-sustaining, a model Oakland needs to replicate in many West and East Oakland neighborhoods where the city historically made the mistake of concentrating poverty (Lawson 2006).

With the support of both WOPAC and Nadel, in late February 2006, the WOPAC motioned to approve a $200,000 redevelopment grant to cover the 15 month rent guarantee required by BRIDGE Housing. And yet, in spite of strong political support and numerous private donations

---

105 Personal interview, Wells Lawson, San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Community Investment.
106 Since 1997, the WOPAC served as a publicly elected body of representatives who live, work, own property or represent a community organization within the West Oakland Redevelopment Project Area. WOPAC members were previously been involved in prior planning processes in West Oakland, including the Cypress Freeway replacement, the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project as well as early efforts to secure a grocery store at the former Acorn Plaza.
from local residents and community-based organizations, Harvey and Mandela MarketPlace were unable to meet BRIDGE Housing’s initial deadline of April 2006. Harvey requested an extension and garnered the support of Nadel, who agreed to contribute $100,000 of her discretionary funds towards tenant improvements. As Harvey and Mandela MarketPlace requested additional extensions, BRIDGE Housing began exploring other tenant options with their retail consultant.

Then, during the first week of December 2006, BRIDGE Housing notified the West Oakland community that 99 Cent Only (a national discount food retail store) had put in an offer for the 11,000 square foot anchor retail space. Staff from BRIDGE Housing called the 99 Cent Only proposal, “as close to Walgreens as a store can be without a pharmaceutical component. They have clean, well-stocked stores… it would be a great use of the space, and is consistent with what it was originally designed for” (Burt 2006c).

They further noted that the chain agreed to develop the store without the use of government subsidies. Although Mandela MarketPlace was backed by numerous supporters both inside and outside of West Oakland, resident views about the store’s feasibility were mixed: some residents looked forward to the 99 Cent Only as an economical alternative to grocery stores in the area while others (particularly newer residents) strongly felt that locally-owned retail is the way forward for West Oakland (Green 2007). Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace, and her supporters publicly denounced BRIDGE Housing’s decision to pursue the 99 Cent Only plan and began a community-wide campaign opposing the project. The public protests continued for several months until BRIDGE Housing came back to Mandela MarketPlace with a counter offer—a 2,300 square foot space within the Mandela Gateway complex. Initially, Harvey turned down the offer in hopes of securing a larger retail space elsewhere in the community.

As of January 2007, much of the ground floor retail space at Mandela Gateway remained vacant. The Eugene International Market closed abruptly without notice to local residents or its workers. At the time, the only confirmed retail outlet in West Oakland was the 99 Cent Only store, which signed its lease soon after. Several months would pass till Harvey decided to accept BRIDGE Housing’s offer. At this time WOPAC renewed their support for the project. In June 2007, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency approved a $200,000 tenant improvement grant to support interior renovations to support grocery stocking and prepared foods sales (Redevelopment Agency of the City of Oakland 2007). Beginning in 2008, renovations of the retail space commenced with an expected store opening in the summer of 2008.

However, construction was delayed due to unexpected difficulties with the building’s mechanical systems and budget overruns from additional construction and project supervision costs. In December 2008, Nathan Cheng, then general manager for the store, went back to WOPAC for an additional $58,000 matching grant (Redevelopment Agency of the City of Oakland 2009). As the 99 Cent Only store neared completion Harvey made a special request to BRIDGE Housing—to restrict the store’s square footage for produce, dairy, and meat to fifty square feet to ease competition for Mandela Foods. BRIDGE Housing complied and in January 2009, 99 Cent Only opened for business. Meanwhile, just a few doors down, Mandela Foods resumed store
renovations. In June 2009, after nearly a decade of planning, stops, starts, and unexpected delays, the Mandela Foods Cooperative celebrated its grand opening.

D. Outcomes

“No neighborhood revitalization is one thing, but just meeting the neighborhood needs, it’s like the primary thing. [West Oakland residents] would like a nice drug store, they’d like a nice financial institution, but first they want a grocery store.” - City of Oakland Planning Department staff

In 2012, following turnovers among its six worker-owners and financial difficulties, Mandela Foods reported being “in the black” for the first time since its opening. Additionally, Mandela Marketplace continues to support other related ventures including nutrition education workshops in collaboration with the Alameda County Department of Health, a local distribution network comprised of local producers who supply the cooperative and local corner stores, and a corner store conversion program where youth deliver fresh produce to corner and liquor stores for added selection and sales. Harvey herself has begun consulting community groups interested in cooperative enterprise in other parts of the Bay Area. Additionally, as of 2012, she has been working with the East Bay Legal Center to explore the feasibility of acquiring the still vacant grocery store space at Jack London Square. Harvey’s ultimate goals is still, to find a larger retail space for Mandela Foods and convert the current store into a cafe-restaurant. As of the time of this writing, Harvey began exploring the possibility of applying for Healthy Food Financing Initiative grants to support these future ventures. Although some residents have been generally supportive of the store, others have either never frequented the store or prefer to purchase lower cost and larger selection of items at the 99 Cent Only store or surrounding grocery stores.

At the same time, discount retailer, Foods Co aggressively began pursuing store sites in Oakland’s poorer flatlands in 2009 and negotiated the use of eminent domain to acquire property for the construction of a store in West Oakland. Harvey and food justice activists drawing from People’s Grocery and City Slickers Farm, a newly formed urban community farm in West Oakland, organized to oppose the City Council’s initial approval of the measure in October 2010. Although Foods Co’s plans were temporarily tabled in 2011, the City of Oakland Planning Commission has resumed deliberations about its entry into West Oakland in 2013.

As Mandela Foods found its stride, other community-based food initiatives and planning efforts have progressed. Brahm Ahmadi, former member of the WOFC and co-founder of People’s Grocery, initiated his own efforts to develop a new grocery store in West Oakland. As of the time of this writing, Ahmadi initiated a crowd-sourced funding campaign to raise money to acquire property and newly construct a 12,000 square foot grocery store. The proposed site located at West Grand Avenue and San Pablo Avenue (about a half mile north of Mandela Foods) was explored by other retailers but opted for other locations in the East Bay (i.e., Costco). Urban agriculture has proliferated with the expansion of City Slickers Farm and Kijani Grows, a hydroponic food growing facility. For some, Mandela Foods serves as a catalyst for the Mandela

107 Personal interview, Patrick Lane, Oakland Planning Department.
108 Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela Marketplace.
109 Personal interview, Wells Lawson, San Francisco Office of Community Investment.
110 This refers to any type of start-up fundraising campaign involving individual private donations through social network channels (i.e., Kickstarter, Indigogo) instead of traditional private, public, and philanthropic grant providers.
Transit Village, AWOD’s housing and mixed-retail project, which secured the former Red Star Yeast Factory site in late 2009:

“DESTINATION- WEST OAKLAND! During your visit, make sure to cross the street, visit and shop at the Mandela Foods Cooperative Grocery Store and on the other side of BART, visit the Mandela Transit Village, which hosts Kijani Grows Aquaponic demonstration model. All of this is located at the West Oakland BART station” (Roach 2012).

Still, for city authorities, residents, and community leaders alike, the question of how to appropriately develop grocery retail in West Oakland—be it community-owned or chain—remains unanswered. For one Oakland Planning staff, the availability of appropriately scaled sites and the price of urban land continue to be barriers to grocery and retail development more general in West Oakland:

“The big issue in West Oakland is the price of land because Oakland’s developed and the housing values—a lot of our commercial allows residential in it, particularly the strip areas allow both residential and commercial, and so it’s difficult to pay for the land for retail where they just want parking. Costco really wanted a store in West Oakland, and it just happens to be between three of their stores. Richmond, San Leandro, I think, and San Francisco. So this is right in the middle and they’re high volume stores on all sides so they wanted to cut the volume a little bit in their other stores because they’re kind of crowded and people hesitate to go to them at times, and so they wanted that, but they couldn’t pay enough money. So retail wants a lot of parking and it’s hard to find land cheap enough. They needed it kind of in the low 20s a square foot and property in West Oakland, even at the bottom of the market is 40ish.”

Other staff members at the Oakland Planning Department suggest that city authorities and West Oakland residents alike should consider the possibility of an entirely different model of grocery retail—smaller scale markets that determine ways to co-exist with larger chains by leveraging current federal grocery incentive programs:

“Rather than one 70,000 square foot market, what if you had three 15 or 20,000 square foot markets? Prototype being Farmer Joes, out in the Dimond District, I believe, that’s 15,000 or 12,000 square feet…One of them maybe at the Foods Co site. One at the Bart site, one up at the Peralta and [one at the] City Slicker Farms farm site. It seems to make reasonable sense to me. So what I think needs to happen is a couple things. One, the community has to be educated that smaller markets are not necessarily more expensive—that smaller markets can be better [and] that smaller markets can help the community more by keeping the money in the market, especially if it’s a cooperative. On the other side, you have to be able to work with the market folks to say, ‘Here’s where funds are. Here’s where they are available. Here’s what Michelle Obama is doing, and here’s what her program is, and here’s where you can call, and the application, and how you fill it out. I don’t think a lot of people know how to do that.”

Still, for many residents this progress simply scratched the surface of the larger issues of crime, unemployment, and poverty that continue to plague West Oakland. Redevelopment for some, is still a “graft” on the community, where many residents wonder whether any new development—be it Mandela Foods or any number of proposed condominium developments—are truly for them. As noted by a West Oakland rap artist currently living at the Acorn Apartments:

“Yes they're putting money into the city; they're rebuilding but they're not putting money back into the right places. They're not putting money into the schools so while they're rebuilding the structures, the buildings,

111 Personal interview, Patrick Lane, Oakland Planning Department.
112 Personal interview, Jeff Chew, Oakland Planning Department.
they're not rebuilding the community, the people. So the people is [sic] getting worse. It's a lot worse from when I was a youngster. People might have thought I was crazy but now the people that is [sic] coming up under me they is even more sick. I can't say it's getting better. I really think it's getting worse” (Billy Jam 2011).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how West Oakland’s Mandela Foods Cooperative represented a convergence of longstanding community-based agendas around economic self-reliance and emerging concerns around neighborhood revitalization, public health, and ‘food justice’. Unlike Bayview, grocery stores were always on the urban agenda, in large part due to the continued struggles to maintain the community’s only supermarket at the Jack London Gateway (formerly Acorn Plaza). And yet, in many ways, the development of Mandela Foods was catalyzed by a series of rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake. As such, Mandela Foods became a part of broader efforts to redefine revitalization efforts (to the extent possible) in the vision of West Oakland residents and activists.

Interestingly, like Bayview, housing revitalization and transit-oriented development created the physical opportunity for grocery development. Mandela Gateway provided the blank canvas for community-based retail long desired by residents and activists. Compared to Fresh and Easy, the process of developing the store was turbulent at times. And yet ultimately, Dana Harvey conceded her original vision, opting to develop a 2300 small market and café—albeit gaining considerable financial and political support from city government agencies in the process. Indeed, Mandela Foods offered an alternative to the large-scale solutions that long dominated in West Oakland. And while the community still does not have a full-service grocery store, it does have Mandela Foods and a number of smaller scale alternatives [See Table 9].

This case highlights several important lessons about the governance of neighborhood revitalization in West Oakland. Compared to Fresh and Easy, Mandela Foods closely captures West Oakland’s established history of community-based practice. Although the store exists within a new era of revitalization, it represents the ideals of economic self-reliance and social equity not unlike the work of the Black Panthers and resident environmental justice activists. Despite the fact that Mandela Foods is one of many community-based projects initiated by non-resident activists, it still involved the traditional politics of protest well practiced by West Oakland residents past and present.

Significantly, unlike Bayview, West Oakland community-based actors have used the rhetoric of public health to advance community goals as represented by Mandela Foods. At the same time, Dana Harvey and her collaborators defined health goals within the context of broader community-based economic development goals. In this way, public health and community reinvestment were attached to particular values about how neighborhood revitalization should occur in West Oakland. The Mandela Foods case suggests that such values were perhaps not captured in the Fresh and Easy business model.

Broadly, the Mandela Foods case suggests that food access and disinvestment issues might not be addressed through one seemingly comprehensive solution (i.e., a chain supermarket), but
through many small solutions. In the next Chapter, I explore these implications further through a deeper analysis of the historical and sociological factors that characterize the differences across both cases.

Table 9: West Oakland Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MANDELA FOODS DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2001- West Oakland Food Collaborative plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2008- Mandela Foods space negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2009- Mandela Foods grand opening, program expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011-Healthy Food Financing Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL POLITICS</td>
<td>Mayor Elihu Harris revitalization efforts, Oakland Army Base</td>
<td>Mayor Jerry Brown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNING/ REDEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Earthquake recovery efforts, Acorn Supermarket closing</td>
<td>Mandela Gateway and other HOPE VI projects approved</td>
<td>TOD planning around West Oakland BART station</td>
<td>Mandela Gateway, new housing development, attempted expansion by Fresh and Easy</td>
<td>Supermarket vacancies, discount retailer expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC HEALTH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999- Food security community engagement processes</td>
<td>ACDPH funding support</td>
<td>ACDPH collaborations with Mandela Foods and community organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE</td>
<td>Organizing around freeway reconstruction</td>
<td>Community plans, continued EJ organizing early food justice organizing</td>
<td>Beginnings of food justice organizing, continued EJ organizing and community-based development</td>
<td>Continued environmental justice, and food justice organizing</td>
<td>Continued food justice organizing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6:  
A Comparative Institutional Analysis of Grocery Development in Bayview and West Oakland

Introduction

In Chapters 4 and 5, I explored how a similar set of issues around food access and disinvestment elicited different responses in Bayview and West Oakland. In this chapter, I aim to understand why by analyzing the contextual factors that explain the variations across Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. To do this, I use an integrated historical-sociological institutional framework to account for the full range of contextual factors that explain the differences across Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods [See Table 10].

Table 10: Institutional Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of Analysis</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Sociological</th>
<th>Expanded Historical</th>
<th>Historical-Sociological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions, events</td>
<td>Path dependencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Historical]</td>
<td>Critical junctures</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors, frames, interactions</td>
<td>Actors and governance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sociological]</td>
<td>Framing processes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The historical portion of this analysis involves an investigation of the broader historical context in which grocery development occurs. In line historical institutionalism, I examine the sequencing of key events and the role of institutions pertinent to Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods. Key findings of this analysis are as follows:

- Neighborhood revitalization legacies shape grocery store development.
- Critical junctures established the institutional context for grocery development.

---

113 See Chapter 1 for a detailed summary of my integrated historical-sociological institutionalist framework.
114 This refers to planning applications of historical institutionalism (Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005; Ganapati 2007).
115 I understand institutions as both formal and informal norms that become routinized into established forms of social action (Healey 1999). As noted in Chapter 3, this dissertation focuses specifically on five institutions: 1) federal urban policy, 2) local politics, 3) planning/development, 4) public health, and 5) community-based practice.
The sociological portion of this analysis involves an investigation of the planning processes and outcomes of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods specifically. In line with sociological institutionalism,\textsuperscript{116} I analyze Bayview and West Oakland-specific actors, how they frame grocery stores within the context of neighborhood revitalization, and the nature of their interactions with one another. Key findings of this analysis are as follows:

- Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect both national policy narratives and locally-specific framings of neighborhood revitalization.
- It matters who sets the grocery agenda and how.

Overall, this analysis reveals that the distinction between Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods is not purely a qualitative difference between a corporate chain store and a community-based cooperative. Rather, the driving forces and eventual implementation of these stores reflects differing institutional contexts and with it, differing capacities to respond the multi-faceted neighborhood issue of food access. Bayview and West Oakland alike, government agencies, community-based organizations, and residents are conditioned to respond to neighborhood issues in different ways.

I. Historical Analysis

A. Neighborhood revitalization legacies shape grocery store development.

As noted in Chapter 3, neighborhood revitalization\textsuperscript{117} efforts in Bayview and West Oakland are characterized by interacting relationships between federal urban policy, planning/redevelopment, and community-based practice. The Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods cases illustrate how neighborhood revitalization becomes redefined and reframed through grocery development. I showed how grocery development also enters into political and public health agendas.

Whether due to field-specific trends, societal shifts, or neighborhood-specific conditions, these institutions have certain path dependencies\textsuperscript{118} while adapting to changing times and circumstances. And yet, despite being packaged into a new set of policies and programs, this dissertation has revealed that grocery development is entrenched in existing debates, dilemmas, and institutions of neighborhood revitalization broadly.

In the first sense, food deserts represent a new dimension of federal urban policy, by expanding the scope of previous neighborhood revitalization policies to encompass public health [See Chapter 2]. And yet, these policies are not unlike the federal subsidies for affordable housing, bank loans, and commercial revitalization in areas deemed “blighted” and “distressed.” In alignment with community development policies since the 1960s, food access policies represent

\textsuperscript{116} This refers to planning application sociological institutionalism (Healey 1999; González and Healey 2005; Alexander 2005; Healey 2007; Verma 2007).

\textsuperscript{117} My conception of neighborhood revitalization draws upon Zielenbach's (2000) definition: “a way of addressing the social and economic problems of cities” involving “place” and/or “people”-based strategies (4).

\textsuperscript{118} Broadly, “path dependency” refers to the idea that institutional legacies shape political and economic outcomes (Pierson 2000; Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005). See Chapter 1 for further explanation of how I am drawing upon this concept.
another government incentive for neighborhood revitalization but focused on an expanded set of goals around reinvestment, social welfare, and now health specifically. The broadening of federal policy mandates has implications for how neighborhood revitalization goals are defined and pursued at the local level.

For more locally contingent institutions and their associated practices, grocery development captures both historical contingencies and new institutional paths. For example, Fresh and Easy could be considered an extension of San Francisco’s history of industry-led planning efforts (i.e., Navy Shipyards), pro-growth mayoral politics (Fainstein and Fainstein 1983; Mollenkopf 1983; Hartman 2002), and place-based public health initiatives bolstered by San Francisco’s status as a consolidated city-county [See Chapter 2]. Accordingly, in many ways Mandela Foods echoes West Oakland’s patterned history of resident-led movements around racial and economic justice dating back to the Black Panthers, environmental justice movements, and community-based alternatives to federal interventions in planning (Self 2003; Rhomberg 2004).

At the same time, grocery development represents a reorientation of existing institutions towards an expanded set of goals. In Bayview and San Francisco at-large, grocery stores—at least temporarily—became defined within the scope of the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD) and the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH). In West Oakland and Oakland at-large, grocery stores became the basis of food justice movements, an extension of previous mobilizations around environmental justice, health, and community-based development.

Finally, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods represented a new era of neighborhood revitalization activities. In both communities, public health became part of the revitalization toolkit unlike previous decades. This is particularly the case in Bayview, with the involvement of SFDPH in the Fresh and Easy project. Accordingly, for government officials and planners in particular, grocery development was not simply about addressing longstanding resident concerns. Rather it was equally (if not more) about meeting regional housing demands in line with statewide benchmarks for greenhouse gas emission reductions. As such, transit-oriented development now became part of the revitalization toolkit, representing new terms and conditions for planning/redevelopment practice in general.

Contrary to the universalizing themes of federal food access policies [See Chapter 2], local approaches to grocery development are deeply contextual, historical, and place-based. Historical legacies around neighborhood revitalization establish a certain institutional context for addressing emerging issues.

B. Critical junctures established the institutional context for grocery development.

The distinct planning orientations of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods (i.e., city-led versus community-based) echo Bayview’s and West Oakland’s institutional legacies around

---

This refers specifically to the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (known as Senate Bill or SB 375), which former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law in 2008. The law requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations to develop Sustainable Communities Strategies that reduce vehicular greenhouse gas emissions through transit-oriented development and sustainable land use planning.
neighborhood revitalization. A closer examination of these neighborhood histories reveals that grocery stores entered into existing institutional practices during key moments of political and economic transition.\footnote{Historical institutionalists call such occurrences “critical junctures,”\footnote{\cite{Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005}} momentary shifts in path dependent processes that influence particular political and/or economic outcomes (Low, Gleeson, and Rush 2005). I focus on several illustrative moments of transition that highlight important themes about institutions relevant to grocery development.}

In San Francisco, the period between 2004-2007 represented a key period of political and economic transition significant to the eventual development of Fresh and Easy [See Table 11]:

- In 2004, the election of Mayor Gavin Newsom was soon followed a reorganization of the Office of the Mayor, namely the consolidation of the Offices of Economic Development and Workforce Development.
- In 2005, the Office of the Mayor established a series of neighborhood revitalization programs focused on specific sites and issues relevant to Bayview, namely HOPE SF and the Communities of Opportunity program. At the same time, the creation of the Neighborhood Marketplace Initiative and a public-private partnership with the Bay Area Chapter of LISC would channel resources towards small business development and commercial district planning, giving rise to the Third Street Action Project.
- In 2006, several major grocery retailers closed their stores citywide. At the same time, members of the Third Street Action Project created the Third Street Action Plan (2005), which outlined opportunity areas for a grocery store in Bayview. It should be noted that food access was already on a neighborhood agenda due to previous collaborations between SFDPH and community groups as well as resident organizing around community gardens. The Third Street Action plan represented an alignment of food access and commercial revitalization goals.
- In 2007 as MOEWD began its search for a national operator, 5800 Third and other housing development with ground floor retail were underway along Third Street. At the same time, Fresh and Easy had just entered the U.S. market and was steadily expanding into Northern and Southern California. Southeast Food Access emerged as a coordinated voice of government agencies and community residents regarding food access issues in Bayview.

This distinct shift in the politics of neighborhood revitalization combined with unexpected external events—citywide grocery closings and the establishment of the Fresh and Easy store chain—put grocery stores on a neighborhood and citywide agenda unlike years past. Significantly, 5800 Third and other new market-rate housing developments created both the physical space and an added consumer base for a potential new neighborhood grocery store.

Oakland experienced similar shifts between 2004-2007—namely a change in political leadership from one strong mayor to another (i.e., Elihu Harris to Jerry Brown), neighborhood grocery closings, and the same regional housing demands that produced a residential boom (and as a result new retail space and consumer demand). And yet these events neither had the same impacts nor direct relevance to the development of Mandela Foods. Instead, a different type of catalytic event—the Loma Prieta earthquake—set off a chain of events, which created new circumstances for neighborhood revitalization particularly between 1989-2003. As a result, West Oakland’s “critical junctures” were drawn out over the course of over a decade as Oakland—and
its institutions—recovered from the earthquake’s social, economic, and physical impacts [See Table 12]:

- Following the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, Caltrans organized a citizen’s council—the Citizen’s Emergency Relief Team (CERT)—to preside over freeway reconstruction efforts. Between 1990 and 1991, CERT and various citizens advisory committees mobilized community support and convinced Caltrans to reroute the freeway away from West Oakland’s residential areas. Caltrans adopted additional mitigation measures during the construction process due to resident concerns about environmental externalities.
- In 1992, Oakland Office of Economic Development and Employment (Oakland’s counterpart to MOEWD) sponsored the creation of the Coalition for West Oakland Revitalization in the wake of the earthquake recovery efforts. Members of CERT and community organizations drawing from all parts of West Oakland participated in the group.
- Between 1993 and 1994, multiple community meetings and deliberations would culminate in the creation of the West Oakland Visions and Strategies Plan (1994). The plan expressed the need for better quality food options in West Oakland and for community-owned businesses that leveraged resident preferences and interests.
- Between 1995 and 1996, residents pursued efforts to actualize elements of the West Oakland Visions and Strategies Plan amidst the closing of Acorn Supermarket, the neighborhood’s only supermarket due to poor sales and ineffective management.
- From 1997-2003, the lack of a grocery store galvanized a loosely organized coalition of environmental justice organizers in West Oakland (including Dana Harvey). Many of the same residents involved in CERT leveraged their previous work into neighborhood-wide environmental justice and community-based development campaigns (i.e., West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project and the Alliance for West Oakland Revitalization). Dana Harvey collaborated with a new cohort of environmental and economic organizers to create the West Oakland Food Collaborative (and initial plans for a food cooperative) as plans for the Mandela Gateway and transit-oriented-development around the West Oakland BART commenced.

Apart from West Oakland’s inherent economic and geopolitical differences, grocery development emerged from a different set of initial conditions around neighborhood revitalization largely due to the social, economic, and physical impacts of the Loma Prieta earthquake. In effect, earthquake recovery efforts galvanized existing resident movements, beckoned local authorities to reconsider resident concerns in new development, and established institutional capacities for the eventual the broader institutional groundwork for Mandela Foods.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRESH AND EASY DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006- MOEWD</td>
<td>2011- Fresh and Easy grand opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>grocery search, Fresh and Easy</td>
<td>2013- Store replacement plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997- Community Food Security Act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL POLITICS</td>
<td>Mayor Willie Brown’s Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard plans</td>
<td>Mayor Gavin Newsom’s administrative shifts and Bayview rev. agenda</td>
<td>Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point plans progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNING/REDEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Third Street Rail and Corridor Planning, Hunters Point Shipyard</td>
<td>HOPE SF, 5800 Third and other Third Street TOD plans progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC HEALTH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Food retail collaborations with community groups</td>
<td>Southeast Food Access coalition work with Fresh and Easy and community groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE</td>
<td>Environmental justice and corner store conversion organizing</td>
<td>Anti-gentrification and community garden organizing</td>
<td>Third Street Corridor Project plan development with MOEWD</td>
<td>Community-based food retail efforts, continued anti-gentrification organizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12: West Oakland Neighborhood Revitalization Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MANDELA FOODS DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL POLITICS</td>
<td>Mayor Elihu Harris revitalization efforts, Oakland Army Base</td>
<td>Mayor Jerry Brown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNING/REDEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Earthquake recovery efforts, Acorn Supermarket closing</td>
<td>Mandela Gateway and other HOPE VI projects approved</td>
<td>TOD planning around West Oakland BART station</td>
<td>Mandela Gateway, new housing development, attempted expansion by Fresh and Easy</td>
<td>Supermarket vacancies, discount retailer expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC HEALTH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ACDPH funding support</td>
<td>ACDPH collaborations with Mandela Foods and community organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICE</td>
<td>Organizing around freeway reconstruction</td>
<td>Community plans, continued EJ organizing early food justice organizing</td>
<td>Beginnings of food justice organizing, continued EJ organizing and community-based development</td>
<td>Continued environmental justice, and food justice organizing</td>
<td>Continued food justice organizing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Sociological Analysis

A. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect both national policy narratives and locally-specific framings of neighborhood revitalization.

As described in Chapters 4 and 5, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods reflect distinct normative agendas around grocery stores and of neighborhood revitalization generally. Fresh and Easy represents a convergence of public health and neighborhood revitalization agendas, both in alignment with federal policy agendas and local concerns. In comparison, Mandela Foods brings together community-based agendas around economic self-reliance with emerging concerns around neighborhood revitalization, public health, and ‘food justice’. And yet, embedded within these normative agendas are different framings of what neighborhood revitalization is and

---

121 My conception of “frames” draws upon Schon and Rein's (1993) definition: “a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation is made sense of and acted on (146).” As such frames are based in a set of norms, values, and beliefs situated in individuals and in institutions. Accordingly, framing processes pertain to the dynamic process of articulating the nature of a policy problem and how it should be addressed.
ought to be, whether in Bayview or in West Oakland. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are simply different solutions to the same problem; they reflect different versions of how grocery development contributes to neighborhood revitalization—be it through economic development with a public health purpose or transit-oriented-development.

First, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods both espouse an integrated focus on health, job creation, and economic development in alignment with the goals of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative:

“The Healthy Food Financing Initiative will promote a range of interventions that expand access to nutritious foods, including developing and equipping grocery stores and other small businesses and retailers selling healthy food in communities that currently lack these options. Residents of these communities, which are sometimes called “food deserts” and are often found in economically distressed areas, are typically served by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer little or no fresh produce. Lack of healthy, affordable food options can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Through this new multi-year Healthy Food Financing Initiative and by engaging with the private sector, the Obama Administration will work to eliminate food deserts across the country within seven years. With the first year of funding, the Administration’s initiative will leverage enough investments to begin expanding healthy foods options into as many as one-fifth of the nation’s food deserts and create thousands of jobs in urban and rural communities across the nation (Treasury Public Affairs 2010).”

As described by Mayor Ed Lee (and in alignment with the focus of lead agency MOEWD), Fresh and Easy defines these goals in the most general sense.

“Today, what I feel with this store opening, with the commitment that has been made, I feel it is all about health, neighborhood vitality, it is all about jobs, and it is about fulfilling old promises in this city. This is what this store represents (Office of the Mayor 2010).”

Mandela Foods emphasizes such a multi-faceted approach—economic development, jobs, and health. However, Mandela Foods emphasizes a particular type of job creation (worker-ownership), economic development (community-based, independent), and public health focus (community education and empowerment). Like Fresh and Easy, Mandela Foods claims provide more than a place for residents to shop. Yet, distinctively Mandela Foods seeks to align these grocery store goals with broader community goals:

“Mandela Foods is a worker- and community-owned retail grocery store and nutrition education center in West Oakland that addresses economic empowerment and community health. A catalyst for change, Mandela seeks to transform a neighborhood into a dynamic, healthy and prosperous community for the benefit of residents, employees, commuters, and local farmers (Mandela Foods Cooperative 2012).

Second, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods capture different framings of how grocery store fits into ongoing transit-oriented-development efforts. Fresh and Easy fulfills a certain vision of a livable, walkable, new “community” at Carroll Station on Third Street. As described by 5800 Third developer, Holliday Development, Fresh and Easy is part of a palette of amenities that contribute to “Carroll Station’s” marketability:

“Holliday Development, Goldman Sachs, and Citi Community Capital invite you to a light lunch to celebrate the arrival of Carroll Station. After 10 years of hard work, vision, and investment, the Bayview has finally arrived at Carroll Station. Discover San Francisco’s newest neighborhood as we prepare to
welcome 1000 new residents over the coming year, including mixed income and senior housing, new restaurants, groceries, parks, and the King Pool.

LIVE 5800 Third Street Homes
SWIM Martin Luther King Jr. Pool
RETIRE Bayview Hunters Point Multipurpose Senior Services
SHOP Fresh and Easy, the Bayview’s first GROCERY STORE in 50 years
PLAY Bayview Park
DINE Crossroads Cafe Delancey Street (Holliday Development 2010)"

Mandela Foods is also part of a vision of transit-oriented-development respective to the West Oakland BART station, but one defined according to community terms. As represented by the original vision of the Mandela Foods, transit-oriented-development was to be achieved through community-based development:

“Our initial plan was that the community would actually buy the retail space...[through] a land trust type model. So on the corner [would be] a 11,000 food cooperative. Then we had a guy who had a photocopy company, so he was going to do photocopies, and a woman who made pies, and another guy who had a little food stand who wanted to do fish and chicken. Then a group of students at McClymond’s High School had spent two years designing a community center on this side of the block through a [UC Berkeley service learning course] called the Y Plan...So we put all this together...a fabulous, community-owned opportunity that will establish this great cultural center [in West Oakland].”

In many ways these contrasting framings capture inherent differences between a chain grocery store compared to a community-based cooperative. This analysis begins to suggest how malleable normative agendas around grocery stores can be. In many ways, frames become tools for publicly legitimizing novel approaches to longstanding issues—whether to gain political and/or financial support.

B. It matters who participates in grocery development and how.
Overall, there are similarities and differences among grocery development actors, which can be traced back to Bayview and West Oakland’s respective institutional legacies (i.e., mayor-led revitalization efforts in Bayview versus community-based alternatives in West Oakland). Through a closer examination of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods’ planning processes, I find that there is a relationship between actors and how grocery development is ultimately pursued.

Overall, the actors directly involved in the planning and implementation of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods draw from a similar palette of neighborhood revitalization institutions with several distinct differences [See Figure 5 and 6]:

First, Bayview involves the participation of an exogenous actor—corporate retailer, Fresh and Easy. In contrast, Mandela Foods is itself a reaction to such exogenous actors, as a grocery retailer embedded in a long history of community-based practices. Effectively, different types of grocery retailers entail varied definitions of how grocery development should be pursued and for whom.

122 Personal interview, Dana Harvey, Mandela MarketPlace
Second, actors associated with federal urban policy do not play a direct role in either the Fresh and Easy or Mandela Foods planning processes. And yet, as discussed in the previous section, national discourses around the public health functions of grocery stores enter into the rhetoric of both Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods.

Third, local politicians were central at different points in both cases. From its inception, Fresh and Easy was a community project with a political purpose. Mayor Gavin Newsom played an unusual role as a key instigator of grocery development with administrative direction from MOEWD. While Mandela Foods did not engage mayoral leadership in this manner, Councilperson Nadel emerged as a key enabler of Mandela Foods upon the request of Dana Harvey and West Oakland residents. Overall, Mayor Newsom and Councilperson Nadel functioned as “political entrepreneurs,”\(^\text{123}\) leaders who used their political position to facilitate a new trajectory of neighborhood revitalization focused on grocery development.

Fourth, planning and redevelopment actors similarly included developers, planning authorities, and citizen planning councils. And yet, these distinct actors played different roles in part due to the varied organizational and financial structures of 5800 Third, a privately funded, market-rate condominium and Mandela Gateway, a publicly funded, HOPE VI affordable housing complex. Distinctively, in West Oakland, BRIDGE housing would become ultimate decider of Mandela Foods’ fate, given its role as both developer and property manager of Mandela Gateway. Furthermore, unlike San Francisco, Oakland planning and redevelopment authorities were key sources of financial and political support, without which Mandela Foods would not have been able to progress. In both cases, citizen planning councils—be it the BVHP PAC or the WOPAC—served as coordinated community voices in support of both projects.

Next, public health practitioners varied partially due to Bayview and West Oakland’s respective institutional legacies (see previous section). Distinctively, government-community coalition Southeast Food Access emerged as lead supporter of Fresh and Easy and the revised liquor laws that would permit its sale of alcoholic beverages. Effectively, Bayview’s deeply ingrained public health agendas around food access were a boon to Fresh and Easy, even in spite of its inconsistent public health claims. In contrast, public health practice was not as rooted in West Oakland neighborhood revitalization efforts (again in part due to Oakland’s governance structure). And yet Mandela Foods and food justice movements in West Oakland used the rhetoric of public health to justify the need for community-based food retail.

Finally, community-based actors functioned differently in Bayview and West Oakland. In Bayview, community-based practices integrated government activities around planning and public health, as represented by supporting role of Southeast Food Access and BVHP PAC during the planning process. In West Oakland, community-based practice was the entire premise of Mandela Foods, as mentioned earlier. Instead of a local politician, a community activist (Dana Harvey) in conjunction with key collaborators defined the goals of grocery development according to different, community-defined terms.

\(^{123}\) This concept is related to Kingdon’s concept of the policy entrepreneur, in that both “entrepreneurs” that use their political position, creativity, and resourcefulness to redefine problems and spur policy innovations. Political entrepreneurs are distinct in that they refer to actors involved in politics, but not necessarily with a strict policy focus (Sheingate 2003).
Conclusion

Overall, this analysis reiterates how Bayview and West Oakland are conditioned to address similar problems in different ways. The involvement of particular actors—be it local politicians or lead community activists—highlights the differences in both the rhetoric and practical realities of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods.

On a theoretical level, this analysis suggests how grocery development might be conceptualized and how historical contingencies might serve as key drivers of institutional change. Food access initiatives—be it community gardens, farmers markets, or grocery stores—are not necessarily entirely new modes of practice; they are extensions of existing norms around neighborhood revitalization. With this assumption, this analysis shows how existing institutions take on new policy issues—the Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods cases illustrated that in many ways, these projects did not represent significant departures from established norms around neighborhood revitalization. And yet, in both cases, the decision to pursue grocery development (be it Mayor Gavin Newsom/MOEWD or Dana Harvey/Mandela Marketplace) meant that existing institutions needed to include a new set of considerations particularly as it relates to the social impacts of new development.

On a practical level, this analysis raises important questions about the efficacy of grocery development and the extent to which metropolitan and neighborhood-level authorities hold the appropriate resources to address emergent issues in the ways prescribed by federal policies. Even anecdotally, it is evident that grocery stores did not provide a cure-all solution to public health and disinvestment issues. Instead, both projects provided a temporary improvement to the food environment, but did not necessarily reach the most vulnerable populations of Bayview and West Oakland. Furthermore, there was a marked difference between the rhetoric and the realities of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods—grocery stores are being cast as a ‘people-based’ solution and “social project” even though in reality, they reinforce the ‘build-it-and-they-will-come’ mentality of many ‘place-based’ neighborhood revitalization efforts such as new housing and transit-oriented-development. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods exist on this spectrum between a business and community project (the question is, can a grocery store be both?). This raises the question of whether gentrification and the influx of higher income populations into previously distressed areas is a pre-condition for grocery development to be at all financially viable.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

Whether discount chain stores or community-based cooperatives, privately funded or publicly subsidized, government-led or community-based, grocery store development is a challenging, complex, and at times precarious task implicated in broader questions about how best to revitalize poor communities.

In Chapter 2, I illustrated how the current normative agendas around urban grocery stores are in fact, not a new phenomenon. Normative planning paradigms from the Garden City to New Urbanism consider grocery stores as central to the creation of livable, walkable urban neighborhoods. Within federal urban policy, urban grocery development was previously pursued as a form of retail revitalization, now it would be understood as a multi-faceted solution to the lack of grocery stores, health disparities, and economic disinvestment. Overall, I find that the shifting role of grocery stores reflect the changing rhetoric and practice of neighborhood revitalization, which itself has been defined and refined through institutions.

These broader policy narratives around grocery stores become critical in understanding how grocery store development is pursued locally. In Chapter 3, I show how Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are not just products of these broader national trends in federal urban policy. Rather these stores are as much a product of history and of local institutions. By highlighting three key historical moments from the 1940s to the 1970s, I show how neighborhood revitalization has always been defined by the interacting roles of federal urban policy, planning/redevelopment, and community-based practice. Historical contingencies begin to explain why Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods took distinct institutional forms.

Along these lines, national policy narratives and local institutional contexts together shape urban grocery development. In Chapter 4, I show how Fresh and Easy store was the result of a convergence of government agendas around public health and neighborhood revitalization. As such, a city-defined grocery agenda entailed a largely top-down planning process that aligned with the corporate model of the Fresh and Easy store. Ultimately, Fresh and Easy aligned with national policy narratives and with a city government’s vision of how best to revitalize Bayview.

In Chapter 5, I show how Mandela Foods was the result of an integration of community-based revitalization agendas into local practice. As such, an activist-defined grocery agenda entailed a community-based planning process that aligned with the community-based, cooperative model of the Mandela Foods Cooperative. Like Fresh and Easy, Mandela Foods adopted the language of national policy narratives but reframed them to align with neighborhood goals of economic empowerment, social justice, and community self-reliance.

Indeed, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods represent two vastly different responses to a similar set of issues. As such both stores involved a different set of actors, institutions, and scope/scale
of implementation. And yet, they both capture the rhetoric of national policies albeit to different community ends. Additionally, they reflect distinctive neighborhood revitalization legacies, critical moments of institutional capacity building, localized versions of national policy narratives, and the role of charismatic leaders in grocery store implementation.

This dissertation was not meant to be an evaluation of Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods but rather a contextual analysis of the practical realities of implementation. The goal of this dissertation was to use these critical questions to delve into the inner workings of urban grocery development and of neighborhood revitalization more generally. This dissertation revealed the complexities that come with implementing grocery stores in poor underserved communities. And yet, this dissertation is not just about urban grocery development but about broader questions of urban governance and neighborhood revitalization. As illustrated by these cases, the progresses and challenges of urban grocery development have implications for how policymakers, planners, and community leaders pursue neighborhood revitalization efforts. In the next section, I explore several broader critical questions for future research and policy.

I. The problem of problem definition

These cases reveal important questions about how policy problems are defined and how “problem definitions” might complicate policy implementation. As noted in Chapter 2, the lack of grocery stores has been defined as a policy problem since the 1990s, with growing research on the urban grocery gap and the potential role for inner city revitalization. However, the rise of public health research on food deserts redefined the urban grocery “problem” in terms of health disparities and to a lesser extent disinvestment. As purported by the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, if the problem is defined as “food deserts” then the solution certainly is the establishment of grocery stores. However, is the problem in fact food deserts? Is the definition of the problem as food deserts limiting the scope of possible solutions? Are federal food access policies truly defining the problem appropriately?

Some scholars argue that the very usage of the term food deserts privileged grocery store development as a normative solution over other possibilities. Shannon (2013) argues that the term “elevat[es] a single optimized rationality defined primarily through nutrition and cost” (13). Donald (2013) argues that current policy discourses invoke solutions that promote the status quo rather than questioning the social structures that have produced resource inequities in the first place:

“The current discourse…frames the problem as one primarily of inaccessibility to local fresh foods [and] endorses solutions by which some people bring nutritious ‘good’ food to others and teach those people how to eat it…These solutions do not address the broader issues of affordability and need or the dynamics of the agro-industrial food system that limits what personal responsibility can do (234-235).”

In sum, because policies have been defined in a certain way, they point to solutions that may not in fact address the deeper roots of the problem. Furthermore, the politics of policymaking means that policies may be defined and implemented in a way that did not resemble its initial goals (Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Stone 1997). This dilemma is not specific to food deserts but rather quite pervasive among federal interventions in urban poverty more generally. The multi-
dimensional nature of urban poverty has always challenged local implementation (Pressman 1978; Pressman and Wildavsky 1984). As such, federal interventions in urban poverty have entailed reducing the complex problem of urban poverty into digestible, actionable components, focused on single issues and single types of interventions be it housing, workforce development, and/or social reform more generally (Marris and Rein 1972; McFarland 1978). Indeed, narrowing the scope of complex urban problems—be it urban poverty or the lack of grocery stores—may simply be necessary for any action.

Still, this dissertation showed that problem definitions matter when it comes to local implementation. For example, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods are themselves reflections of a certain type of problem definition and solution, as defined by local institutions. In both cases, grocery store development was pursued not as a solution to food deserts but rather to locally defined issues around disinvestment and health. Grocery store development was tied more to particular visions of how neighborhood revitalization can and should occur. National policy narratives might have provided a broader framework for problem definition and action, but local institutions redefined the problem according to their own terms.

Undoubtedly, the complexity of food access issues will continue to pose a challenge to both policy and implementation. Perhaps the role of federal policies is to define the food access issues in broader terms. Ultimately this might entail moving beyond the assumption that food deserts as an adequate characterization of the problems faced by poor communities.

II. Methods matter

Problem definition matters for local implementation. Future policies and practices are also contingent upon how researchers choose to study food access and related issues. As noted in Chapter 1, this dissertation sought to disengage urban grocery stores from their association with food deserts through a historical and institutional analysis. Current research focuses largely on redefining how food deserts are measured (Eckert and Shetty 2011; Leete et al. 2011) and critiquing the societal structures that have contributed to food disparities more generally (Guthman 2011; Donald 2013; Shannon 2013).

However, ‘food desert’ research tends to fall into the same trap of current federal food access programs. As mentioned earlier, the term ‘food desert’ bounds a complex problem in a way that makes the solution of “grocery stores” almost artificially logical. Research can play an important role in defining the grocery “problem” in broader terms and thereby improve current federal food access programs. For example, this dissertation used institutional analysis to understand food access issues and their solutions in relation to historic patterns of disinvestment, urban institutions, and neighborhood revitalization. As such, both Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods show that improving food access is ultimately about addressing disinvestment and urban poverty.
Although this approach has its limitations,124 this dissertation suggests that future food access research must employ a true food “systems” approach: research methodologies that employ ecological understandings of food access issues and their relationship to other urban phenomena. This type of exploratory qualitative research might complement the wide body of quantitative and spatial analyses of grocery stores and food environments.

III. Grocery stores are not enough

Fresh and Easy closed and Mandela Foods remains. And yet, the future of both stores remains uncertain as does their potential impacts on health and economic reinvestment in Bayview and West Oakland, respectively. The question still remains, are grocery stores enough to solve the multifarious problems faced by low-income communities?

In both cases, it was unclear whether Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods truly contributed to health and economic reinvestment in Bayview and West Oakland residents. However, it is apparent that Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods were established based on different long-term goals. Fresh and Easy was ultimately about profits. Mandela Foods is about community building. Still, in both cases suggest that the “build-it-and-they-will-come” approach to neighborhood revitalization (in the form of grocery stores) has its limitations.

This is not unlike the classic dilemmas of “people versus place” in neighborhood revitalization—that is, should poor communities be improved through programs and services that promote upward mobility or should they be improved by repairing the physical indicators of disinvestment (Halpern 1995). Since the 1990s, neighborhood revitalization efforts have emphasized “place-based” initiatives with attempts at their integration with people-based initiatives (Crane and Manville 2008). As such, urban grocery development is fundamentally a place-based initiative. Mandela Foods however, represented an attempt at integrating “people-based” services with the retail functions of the cooperative (albeit through a subsidiary non-profit organization).

While further research needs to be done to determine the true impacts of new grocery stores on their local communities, this dissertation suggests that grocery stores are not enough. Fresh and Easy was not permanent solution to food access issues as hoped by local officials, community leaders, and residents. Meanwhile, Mandela Foods provided a partial solution to a problem that extends beyond food access or grocery stores. Ultimately, grocery stores are one, of many ways to address food access and related issues.

Planners and critical geographers alike have used quantitative and spatial analyses to arrive at the same conclusion: that researchers need to use new methods for determining the true nature of food access issues and that many small alternatives—small food businesses, ethnic markets, gardens, farmer’s markets—might far better in poor communities than a single large solution (i.e., supermarkets). Some argue for more support of corner store conversions and efforts to improve food offerings at existing businesses in poor communities (Short et al. 2007; Raja et al. 2008). In

---

124 Similar to other types of institutional analysis, this dissertation emphasized institutions as opposed to political-economic factors and power relationships as it relates to urban grocery stores.
an analysis of the impacts of closed supermarket in New Haven, Connecticut, Russell and Heidkamp (2011) suggest that “large” solutions may bring more risks especially if they fail:

“Such a system, dominated as it is by the supermarket model of food supply, leads one to question its resilience, or the ability of a community to withstand outside disruptions to its normal functioning” (1198).

Indeed, in today’s consumer market there is perhaps no substitute for a full-service grocery store. However, policymakers, planners, and community leaders must consider the opportunity costs that come with grocery development.

IV. Grocery stores: under what conditions?

I began this dissertation with the larger goal of understanding whether governments should continue to incentivize urban grocery stores and if so, under what conditions? Longitudinal mixed-methods studies are necessary to provide a complete, evidence-based answer to this question. Still, this dissertation does suggest several pathways for future discussion.

Overall, Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods suggest that current policies and grocery incentive programs have inaccurate assumptions about what a grocery store can truly accomplish in a poor underserved community. Fresh and Easy offered a “full service” grocery option in Bayview, but for a limited period of time (20 months). As noted in Chapter 4, it was debatable whether the store truly met the need for groceries in the community or if it primarily served the new residents of 5800 Third and surrounding new housing developments. Given its recent closing, whether Fresh and Easy contributed to economic development, jobs, and health is now a moot point.

Comparatively, Mandela Foods would appear to be a resounding success by the very fact that it has survived. Still, the size of store contributes to its limited reach; it cannot boast the size, variety, and number of jobs created compared to its larger chain store counterparts. At best, the store might influence the health, livelihoods of a limited few. And yet, Mandela Foods is premised in longer term community building goals that rest upon its integration into the West Oakland community.

Overall, this suggests that the goals of improving “health” through grocery stores might be more political than practical. Thus, policymakers might consider the reframing the goals of grocery incentive programs to emphasize community reinvestment within the context of health. The now discontinued Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) (which the federal Healthy Food Financing Program is based on) provides some clues for such changes:

“The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) was a statewide financing program, was designed to attract supermarkets and grocery stores to underserved urban and rural communities. Developed as a public-private partnership, FFFI served the financing needs of operators in communities where infrastructure costs and credit needs were not met by conventional financial institutions. The initiative used market analysis, leveraged capital, and public policy to stimulate supermarket development and increase the availability of fresh food in low-income neighborhoods.

The objectives of the program were to:

• stimulate investment of private capital in low-wealth communities;
• remove financing obstacles and lower operating barriers for supermarkets in poor communities;
• reduce the high incidence of diet-related diseases by providing healthy food;
• create living wage jobs; and
• prepare and retain a qualified workforce (The Reinvestment Fund 2013).”

While the Pennsylvania FFFI was premised in addressing health, it defines the lack of grocery stores as a problem of disinvestment. Thus the primary goal of the program is to “stimulate investment” around grocery stores. Additionally, the Pennsylvania FFFI attached particular values to the goal of creating jobs unlike the current federal program—namely the emphasis on “living wage jobs” and the retention of a steady workforce. This difference in emphasis raises the question of whether the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative’s program emphasized health over the quality of jobs and economic returns brought by grocery store development. Fresh and Easy exemplifies this policy conundrum.

That said, there is a continued need for policies that truly address complex nationwide health crises such as childhood obesity and health disparities. However, for grocery stores to even come close to addressing health goals, they must first be successful as a form of community reinvestment.

V. Considerations for future research and policy

Overall, this dissertation suggests that federal grocery incentive programs should: 1) maintain a broad framework that enables local communities to define food access problems and their solutions on a case-by-case basis, 2) encourage diverse solutions not limited to grocery stores and supermarkets, and 3) emphasize community reinvestment goals. Future research and policies can enable policymakers and practitioners to move towards these goals.

First, future policies might be improved through studies that highlight the realities of grocery store implementation. Potential research topics might involve the following: 1) an evaluation of the planning processes and outcomes of stores receiving Healthy Food Financing funding; 2) a longitudinal analysis of Fresh Grocer and the recipients of the nation’s first grocery incentive program, the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative; 3) a multiple case study analysis of how residents cope without supermarkets and when neighborhood supermarkets close (expanding on Russell and Heidkamp’s (2011) study). These are among the types of studies that can provide policymakers with a better sense for progresses and shortcomings of grocery store implementation.

Second, in light of the closing of the Fresh and Easy and the potential uncertainties of Mandela Foods, policies and programs must better account for the challenges that come with maintaining new grocery stores in underserved areas. Current grocery incentive programs are focused largely on the planning and construction of new stores. However, what happens if a store such as Fresh and Easy cannot maintain operations? Granted, Fresh and Easy was not subsidized, but it still raises the question of how government programs might not only support but sustain grocery stores in poor communities—that is, if that has been deemed the appropriate solution considering other alternatives. Still, this may not be a question for policy solely. Where relevant, local governments and community organizations play an important role in leveraging institutional
capacities to sustain grocery stores in poor communities. At the same time, a failed (i.e., closed) grocery store should be indication that perhaps other alternatives should be explored.

Third, in order to improve current policies and programs, policymakers must address the question of what truly defines successful grocery development. Is success defined by the development of the store in itself? Is success the maintenance of a store amidst continued disinvestment? Is success defined by the improvement of economic conditions in a poor community as a result of grocery stores? Is success ultimately not defined by the development of grocery stores at all, but by the extent to which the process encourages community building? Institutions—be it federal urban policy, planning, public health, community-based practice—play important roles in better defining the role of grocery stores and their measures of success. As represented by Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods, success might be defined in different ways. Yet, measuring success is critical to developing grocery stores that at least move towards their stated goals.

Overall, this dissertation captured a unique moment in our nation’s history of federal urban policy and neighborhood revitalization practice. Fresh and Easy and Mandela Foods together comprise a microcosm of a complex, ever-evolving set of issues with no single definitive solution. This dissertation explored one solution to the problem of ‘food deserts: grocery stores. Stories of local implementation might help policymakers, researchers, and community leaders to determine whether this solution is always the best one.
References


http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/05-06/bill/asm/ab_2351-2400/ab_2384_bill_20060913_chaptered.html.


http://changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning/resources/us-department-health-a-0.


Cornu, Sharon. 2012. “‘We’re Not Trying to Be San Francisco or Emeryville, We’re Trying to Be a Better West Oakland’ (Community Voices).” Oakland Local, May 13. http://oaklandlocal.com/article/%E2%80%9Cwe%E2%80%99re-not-trying-be-san-francisco-or-emeryville-we%E2%80%99re-trying-be-better-west-oakland%E2%80%9D-commun.


Ginsburg, Marsha. 2004. “TRANSITION - Affordable Housing Rises at West Oakland BART Station, Bringing Hope to a Proud Neighborhood That’s Been down on Its Luck for Decades.” San Francisco Chronicle (CA), May 9, FINAL edition.


Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. 2012. “Place-Based Strategy Road Map”. Austin: Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.


POWER. 2012. “Bayview Organizing Project.” POWER.


Pressman, Jefffrey. L, and Aaron. Wildavsky. 1984. Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It’s Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two


———. 2007. “Executive Summary: Conditions Use, 3132 Clement Street.”


Treuhaft, Sarah, Michael Hamm, and Charlotte Litjens. 2009. “Healthy Food For All: Building Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems in Detroit and Oakland”. PolicyLink and Michigan State University.


## Appendix A: Grocery store definitions

Table 13: NAICS Classifications for Grocery Stores (NAICS Code 4451) (U.S. Census Bureau 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>44511/445110 Supermarket and other grocery (except convenience) stores</strong></td>
<td>Establishments generally known as supermarkets and grocery stores primarily engaged in retailing a general line of food, such as canned and frozen foods; fresh fruits and vegetables; and fresh and prepared meats, fish, and poultry. Included in this industry are delicatessen-type establishments primarily engaged in retailing a general line of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44512/445120 Convenience Stores</strong></td>
<td>Establishments known as convenience stores or food marts (except those with fuel pumps) primarily engaged in retailing a limited line of goods that generally includes milk, bread, soda, and snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4452 Specialty Food Stores</strong></td>
<td>Establishments primarily engaged in retailing specialized lines of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44521/445210 Meat Markets</strong></td>
<td>Establishments primarily engaged in retailing fresh, frozen, or cured meats and poultry. Delicatessen-type establishments primarily engaged in retailing fresh meat are included in this industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44522/445220 Fish and Seafood Markets</strong></td>
<td>Establishments primarily engaged in retailing fresh, frozen, or cured fish and seafood products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44523/445230 Fruit and Vegetable Markets</strong></td>
<td>Establishments primarily engaged in retailing fresh fruits and vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44529 Other Specialty Food Stores</strong></td>
<td>Establishments primarily engaged in retailing specialty foods (except meat, fish, seafood, and fruits and vegetables) not for immediate consumption and not made on premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Supermarket</strong></td>
<td>Stores offering a full line of groceries, meat, and produce with at least $2 million in annual sales and up to 15% of their sales in GM/HBC. These stores typically carry anywhere from 15,000 to 60,000 SKUs (depending on the size of the store), and may offer a service deli, a service bakery, and/or a pharmacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fresh Format</strong></td>
<td>Different from traditional supermarkets and traditional natural food stores, fresh stores emphasize perishables and offer center-store assortments that differ from those of traditional retailers—especially in the areas of ethnic, natural, and organic, e.g., Whole Foods, Publix GreenWise, The Fresh Market, and some independents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superstore</strong></td>
<td>A supermarket with at least 30,000 sq. ft., generating $12 million or more annually and offering an expanded selection of non-food items. Specialty departments and extensive services are offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warehouse Store</strong></td>
<td>Grocery store with limited service that eliminates frills and concentrates on price appeal; items may be displayed in their original shipping cartons rather than placed individually on shelves. Stores may also sell bulk food and large size items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Super Warehouse</strong></td>
<td>A high-volume hybrid of a large Traditional Supermarket and a Warehouse store. Super Warehouse stores typically offer a full range of service departments, quality perishables, and reduced prices, e.g., Cub Foods, Food 4 Less, and Smart &amp; Final.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited-Assortment Store</strong></td>
<td>A low-priced grocery store that offers a limited assortment of center-store and perishable items (fewer than 2,000), e.g., Aldi, Trader Joe’s, and Save-A-Lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>The small corner grocery store that carries a limited selection of staples and other convenience goods. These stores generate approximately $1 million in business annually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15: Food Marketing Institute Non-Traditional Grocery Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Club</td>
<td>A membership retail/wholesale hybrid with a varied selection and limited variety of products presented in a warehouse-type environment. These 120,000 square-foot stores have 60% to 70% GM/HBC and a grocery line dedicated to large sizes and bulk sales. Memberships include both business accounts and consumer groups, e.g., Sam's Club, Costco, and BJ's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supercenters</td>
<td>A hybrid of a large Traditional Supermarket and a Mass Merchandiser. Supercenters offer a wide variety of food, as well as non-food merchandise. These stores average more than 170,000 square feet and typically devote as much as 40% of the space to grocery items, e.g., Walmart Supercenters, Super Target, Meijer, and Fred Meyer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar Store</td>
<td>A small store format that traditionally sold staples and knickknacks, but now sales of food and consumable items at aggressive price points account for at least 20%, and up to 66%, of their volume, e.g., Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Store</td>
<td>A prescription-based drug store that generates 20% or more of its total sales from consumables, general merchandise, and seasonal items. This channel includes major chain drug stores such as Walgreens and CVS but does not include stores/chains, e.g., The Medicine Shoppe, that sell prescriptions almost exclusively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Merchandiser</td>
<td>A large store selling primarily hardlines, clothing, electronics, and sporting goods but also carries grocery and non-edible grocery items. This channel includes traditional Walmart, Kmart, and Target stores, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Commissary</td>
<td>A format that looks like a Conventional grocery store carrying groceries and consumables but is restricted to use by active or retired military personnel. Civilians may not shop at these stores which are referred to as commissaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>