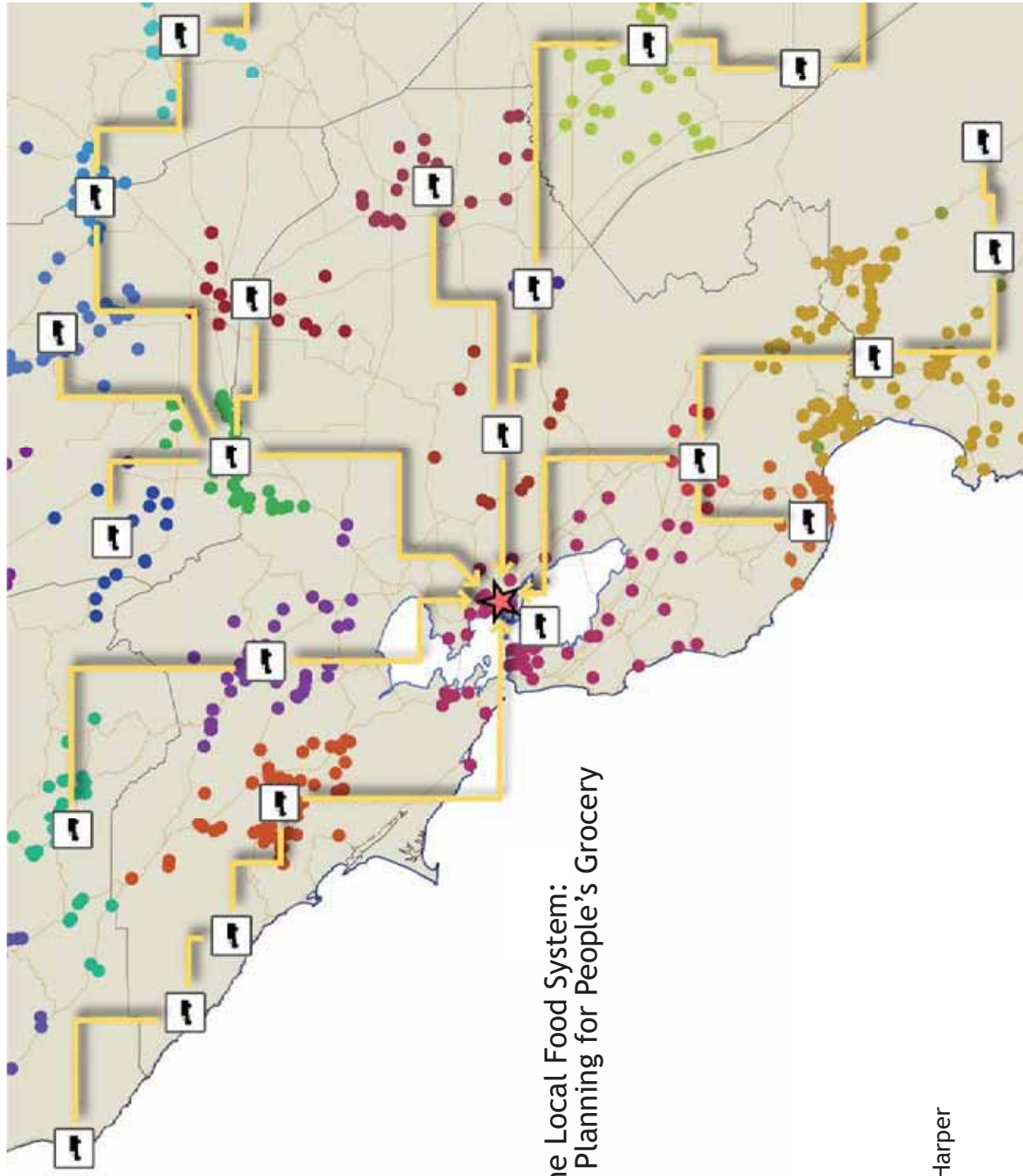




Repairing the Local Food System:
Long-Range Planning for People's Grocery

Alethea Marie Harper
Spring 2007

Repairing the Local Food System:
Long-Range Planning for People's Grocery

by

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Spring 2007

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	Date
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Spring 2007

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Dedicated to People's Grocery



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Allison Pratt at the Alameda County Community Food Bank, who answered endless questions when this project was just beginning.

All of you help me believe that food justice is an attainable goal.

NOTE TO THE READER

I hope this project will inspire you to think about food – where it comes from, who grows it, how it gets to your table, and especially how your choices impact quality, nutritional content and taste for you and your neighbors. For all the food justice organizations studied in this report, this was always the first step in creating an alternative to the industrial food system. People like you and me who believe there is a better way must have the courage to speak out and to build and test new ways of bringing fresh, nutritious food from nearby fields to our urban neighborhoods.

If you have any questions about this project or would like a full color copy, you can email me at alethea.marie@alum.berkeley.edu, or visit <http://foodsystms.hungrygoat.org>.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Project Summary

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The problem of community food justice is deeply connected to the problem of regional food distribution. Small farmers and struggling neighborhoods are frequently left out of the conventional, industrial food system. In order to connect local food producers with local consumers, it is necessary to repair and rebuild local distribution systems. Without an efficient, robust local food supply chain, local food will remain prohibitively expensive for consumers with limited budgets, and local growers will be compelled to sell their products to large distributors and processors at damagingly low prices. If networks of local distributors and processors could be established, farmers could be connected to local markets much more easily. This shorter supply chain would give both growers and consumers more control over the process, and result in higher profits for growers, and healthy, affordable food for consumers. Rebuilding local food networks is a crucial part of working for food justice.

INTRODUCTION

Like many inner-city neighborhoods in the post-industrial United States, West Oakland is a neighborhood in need of an economic anchor. Once a thriving industrial center with plentiful blue-collar jobs, West Oakland now finds itself with high unemployment, deteriorating housing stock, disheartening crime statistics, high rates of heart disease and diabetes, and a lack of fresh, healthy food. While access to high-quality food may seem like a small problem in comparison to pervasive crime and major health disorders, it is

in fact a quiet crisis on par with these other problems. Repairing the local food system is one step in the process to reinvigorate West Oakland's food culture and local economy.

Walking out of a typical house in West Oakland in search of a meal, one is confronted with a landscape sometimes known as a “food desert”. While unhealthy junk food abounds, finding a healthy meal is next to impossible. There are corner stores, but they stock the cheap, processed, high-calorie, low-nutrient food products that consistently bring in a profit and almost never expire. Fast food

restaurants offer a dizzying array of processed and fried foods at rock-bottom prices. Satisfying hunger pangs with a bag of chips or a burger is easy and comes at a low up-front cost, but the health consequences of this kind of diet can be expensive and ultimately deadly.

Nurturing the body with healthful fresh produce is a complicated, time-consuming task in this part of the city. The neighborhood's long isolation from convenient access to fresh, healthy food means that many residents have never acquired the skills associated with preparing fresh food. There are a few stores in the neighborhood stocking fruits and vegetables, but the selection is limited, and quality is often poor. To get to a full-service grocery store, it is necessary to leave the neighborhood entirely; a complicated matter for the many West Oakland residents without access to a car. Getting to a store by bus takes a long time, and coming home with bags of groceries is difficult, especially with a potentially long walk from the bus stop back home. When a carless individual can get a ride to a supermarket in an adjacent neighborhood, they tend to stock up on high-calorie, nonperishable foods rather than fruits and vegetables; they cost less, keep longer, weigh less, take up less space, and are easier to prepare, if they require any preparation at

all. Unfortunately, these foods are typically much less healthy.

Many West Oakland residents are acutely aware of these problems, and are working hard to make it known that this neighborhood needs and wants healthier food options. When a developer recently announced that their new shopping center would house a 99-cent store rather than the cooperative grocery store residents were hoping for, the Lower Bottoms Neighborhood Association circulated a petition among neighborhood residents expressing the community's desire

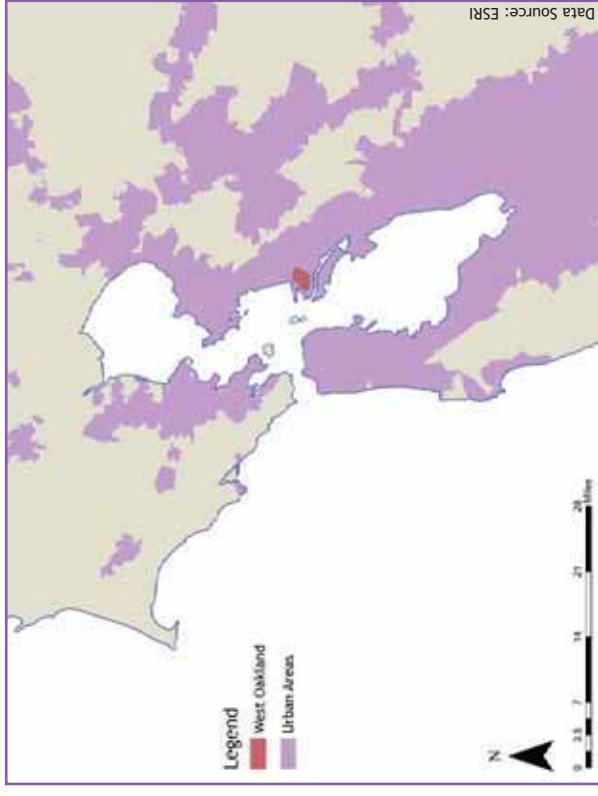


Figure 1.1
West Oakland and the Bay Area

for healthy foods. More than 1,000 people signed the petition.¹

In the interest of achieving equitable access to healthy food, this document will review existing conditions in the neighborhood and present a vision and implementation plan for improving access to fresh, healthy food for every resident.

Audience and Site

This document is written for People’s Grocery, a non-profit organization in West Oakland working “to develop a self-reliant and sustainable food system in West Oakland that fosters healthy and equitable community development.”² Their work inspired this project, and the final chapters represent a long-range plan for the organization and for the neighborhood. Much of the document will also be useful to other organizations in West Oakland and throughout the city, and to local food systems activists nationwide

I have made design proposals at three scales: the site-specific scale at West Grand and Market where I have prepared schematic designs for a new grocery store; the neighborhood scale where I have made recommendations for a West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan that includes minifarms, corner stores converted to produce

sales, and local food processing centers; and the regional scale where I have proposed a new food distribution system that will connect the local agricultural community with the West Oakland neighborhood. Please see figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 for the location of the neighborhood itself and of the future grocery store site.

Why study food systems?

To reinvent our cities as sustainable places and create a more equitable society, many patterns must be established ranging from

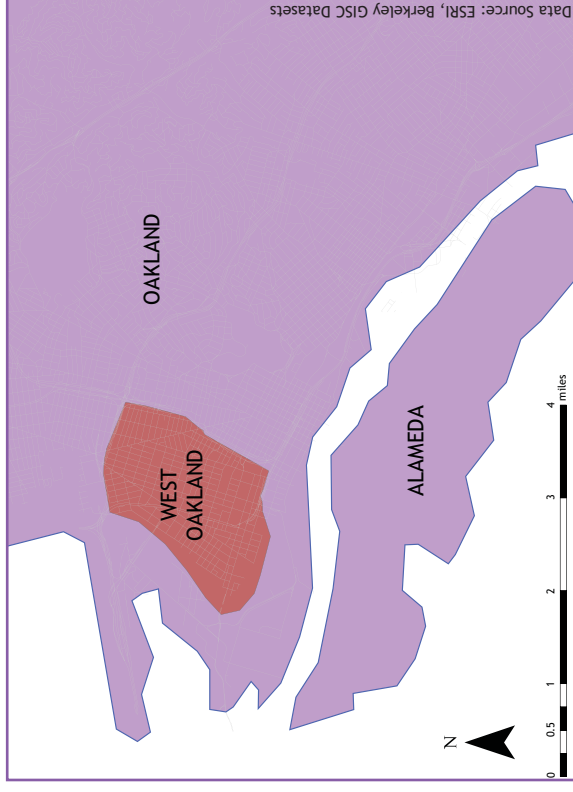


Figure 1.2
West Oakland

strong local economies to reduced dependence on fossil fuels to living in balance with natural systems. One of the major issues that must be addressed is food security, or food justice. The production and delivery of food is a deceptively simple problem. We all need to eat, and food must be grown somewhere. But what happens to food products between field and table can be enormously complex. The average supermarket food product travels over 2400 kilometers (nearly 1500 miles) before it reaches an end consumer;³ and many struggling neighborhoods do not even have convenient access to a supermarket.

Most of the issues documented here have been written about before, and many of the proposed strategies have been tried in other places. What this investigation and long-range plan is intended to accomplish is to provide a clear picture of the needs of one neighborhood, and information on how to implement a specific collection of programs in a specific place. Community gardens, localized foodsheds, cooking classes and neighborhood grocery stores are not new ideas. What is new is how to make these programs thrive in West Oakland, and in turn help that neighborhood to thrive.

The problem of community food justice is deeply connected to the

problem of regional food distribution. Small farmers and struggling neighborhoods are frequently left out of the conventional, industrial food system. In order to connect local food producers with local consumers, it is necessary to repair and rebuild local distribution systems. Without an efficient, robust local food supply chain, local food will remain prohibitively expensive for consumers with limited budgets, and local growers will be compelled to sell their products to large distributors and processors at damagingly low prices. If



Figure 1.3
People's Grocery Future Location

networks of local distributors and processors could be established, farmers could be connected to local markets much more easily. This shorter supply chain would give both growers and consumers more control over the process, and result in higher profits for growers, and healthy, affordable food for consumers. Rebuilding local food networks is a crucial part of working for food justice.

Why Buy Local?

Locally grown, processed and distributed foods possess a number of advantages over food provided through the industrial food system. The industrial food system is an approach to food production, processing and distribution that is based on the industrial model. Often equated with “factory farming”, this approach emphasizes high output at low cost, and depends on high volume achieved through mechanization, fertilizers, pesticides, and antibiotics.⁴ Animal welfare is one of the first casualties under this system, and other problems include pollution, depletion of soil fertility, high consumption of fuel and other resources, and lack of transparency. When something goes wrong in this system, it can take weeks to track down the source of the problem.

Locally grown foods have much shorter supply chains than their

industrial counterparts, which confer a number of benefits. First, a shorter supply chain means better traceability, or a known, verifiable path from field to table. Next, a shorter supply chain generally results in a smaller carbon footprint, because less fuel is used in transportation. Finally, a shorter supply chain means fresher, tastier, more nutritious foods can arrive at the store, because food shipped long distances is selected for durability, almost always at the expense of taste and nutritional content.

In his recent book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Michael Pollan explains that the industrial food system is “drenched in oil”, and that “it takes between seven and ten calories of fossil fuel to deliver one calorie of food energy on an American plate.” The bulk of the energy expenditure comes from processing and shipping.⁵ The astonishingly low price point of industrial foods would suggest that they are more efficiently produced than local foods, but this price is misleading. If food prices were adjusted to include realistic transportation costs, pollution costs, and other externalities, local food would be the clear winner. Under the industrial distribution system, consumers pay more for processing and shipping than for the nutritional value of the foods they buy; a local system with a shorter supply chain and minimized processing and packaging

could shift that balance considerably.⁶

We need to take advantage of a new movement that is afoot in the food realm. Stores such as Whole Foods have started marketing “locally grown” foods as another layer of desirability, in addition to their more familiar organic products, and people have begun to recognize the value of local food, to their health, to the local economy, and to the environment. Labeling the geographic origin of foods allows consumers to make a conscious decision to support growers and processors in their local area.

People’s Grocery is in a position to help create a market for locally grown foods in West Oakland, and improve the health of residents at the same time. Markets for locally grown foods will take time to develop; it is necessary to provide consumer education to help people understand why such foods are better for their health and for the community. A major component of repairing the local foodshed is consumer education. This education might take place in nutrition and cooking classes, helping to replace knowledge that has been lost over the years due to the lack of access to fresh, healthy, unprocessed foods and loss of connections to the land where such foods are grown. Making the leap from a diet of cheap, unhealthy,

addictive calories to a diet of minimally processed, nutritious, more expensive calories is not easy, and the leap will not be made all at once. Starting with small, simple steps such as substituting carrot sticks for potato chips will be crucial to long-term success.

It is an unfortunate fact that access to healthy, affordable food is often severely limited in low-income neighborhoods. Evidence shows that food justice can be achieved when several key elements are in place: localized foodshed, convenient access to fresh foods, affordability, balanced nutrition and consumer education. Working with the People’s Grocery in West Oakland, this investigation examines how best to achieve food justice, and what changes should be made to the urban landscape and transportation and distribution networks to reach this goal.

Before proceeding further, I will define several key terms commonly found in food systems literature. Establishing clear definitions of foodshed, food security, food (in)justice, and hunger will allow the reader to better understand the context and details of the rest of this document.

Definition of Foodshed

According to the FoodRoutes Network, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture and local food systems, “the term ‘foodshed’ is similar to the concept of a watershed: while watersheds outline the flow of water supplying a particular area, foodsheds outline the flow of food feeding a particular area. Your foodshed encompasses the farm, your table, and everything in between.”⁷ The term *foodshed* was probably first used by Walter Hedden in his 1929 book, *How Great Cities are Fed*. The term has enjoyed more frequent usage since Arthur Getz’s 1991 article “Urban Foodsheds”. As noted in “Coming Into the Foodshed”, published in the June 1996 issue of *Agriculture and Human Values*, “how better to grasp the shape and unity of something as complex as a food system than to graphically imagine the flow of food into a particular place?”⁸

Definition of Food Security

As defined by the USDA, food security is “the state in which all persons obtain a nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet at all times through nonemergency sources, including food from local production. Food security broadens the traditional concept of hunger, embracing a systematic view of the causes of hunger and

poor nutrition within a community while identifying the changes necessary to prevent their occurrence. Food security programs confront hunger and poverty.”⁹

Definition of Food Justice

The term food security was recently co-opted by the Homeland Security Department, and is often used to refer to protecting industrial-scale agriculture from biological attacks. To replace this term, and to convey the sense of social justice involved in the old food security movement, many people now use the term *food justice*, which is defined by People’s Grocery as the “human right to Healthy Food for Everyone.”¹⁰ Food justice has geographic, economic and social facets, which will be explored in detail in Chapter 2.

Definition of Hunger

In technical terms, hunger is “a feeling experienced when the glycogen level of the liver falls below a threshold, usually followed by a desire to eat. The usually unpleasant feeling originates in the hypothalamus and is released through receptors in the liver.”¹¹ Hunger also refers to “a compelling need or desire for food”, or “a shortage of food”.¹² A modern development in the history of hunger is the bizarre coexistence of overeating and malnutrition.

Consuming a calorie-rich but nutrient-poor diet will briefly satisfy hunger pangs, but will not provide the nutrients required for a healthy diet. Over-consumption of “junk” calories leads to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other diet-related ailments.

Hunger and Food Injustice

In a recent report, the USDA used the term “food insecure” rather than “hungry” to refer to people who were unable to obtain an adequate diet. As Senator Barbara Boxer pointed out in a letter to her constituents, many people do not know what “food security” refers to, but “most Americans are acutely aware of the meaning of ‘hunger,’ especially when used in official reports meant to describe peoples’ access to the food supply.”¹³ The Reverend David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, echoed Boxer’s concern, saying “[we] should not hide the word hunger in our discussions of this problem, because we cannot hide the reality of hunger among our citizens.”¹⁴ While it is important not to confuse readers by using unfamiliar terms like food insecurity without fully defining them, the term hunger does not fully express the problems of food access in this nation. People do generally understand what it means to be hungry, but the term does not always convey the

additional meaning of nutritional inadequacy that is implicit in the concept of “food injustice.” It is possible to eat a large meal with no nutritional content; a person who quells the sensation of hunger with cheap junk food is still experiencing food injustice. When writing for the general public, rather than for an audience of public health experts, it is best to refer to “hunger *and* food injustice” to convey the full extent of the problem. For the purposes of this document, I will refer to food (in)justice, with the understanding that it refers not just to lack of food, but lack of healthy, culturally appropriate food.

Food Justice and Sustainable Development

Food justice is one component of sustainability. Other components range from strong local economies to responsible environmental practices and appropriate regional planning policies. Jane Jacobs made a convincing case for the economic need for self-supporting city-regions in her 1984 classic, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*.¹⁵ Writers such as Paul Hawken, in *The Ecology of Commerce*, have pointed out the need to reorganize economies into localized webs with zero net waste production.¹⁶ Robert Thayer’s *LifePlace* demonstrates the sort of deeply satisfying connection to place that is

possible if we make an effort to live entirely within our bioregion.¹⁷ If urban-rural connections and urban agriculture programs were improved, foodsheds could be made considerably smaller and thus more sustainable.

Food Justice and the Regional Planning Process

In his article *Farming on the Urban Fringe*, Roger Blobaum suggests that food systems should be included when regional plans are drawn up. As he points out, regional plans typically cover transportation, housing, schools and recreation. *Food systems would be a logical addition.* Allowing important decisions about food sources and market locations to be made by agribusiness, large distributors and supermarket chains means that those decisions will be driven by the profit motive, not necessarily the public interest.¹⁸ A regional food system plan has the potential to reconnect producers and consumers through shorter supply chains, fuel the local economy, and improve food justice for all inhabitants. If food systems are included as an official, required element of regional plans, planners, policy makers and citizens will be encouraged to critically examine food systems, think seriously about the implications of the industrialized food system, and propose and test viable alternative systems. The last

section of this document can be thought of as a prototype for the food systems element of a neighborhood and regional plan.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

I hope to accomplish several things over the course of this project.

- I will demonstrate ways to **evaluate neighborhood food justice and agricultural potential** by drawing on current literature and experimental techniques, and applying them to West Oakland.
- I will summarize **best practices for achieving food justice**, to guide proposals for the West Oakland neighborhood.
- I will **inventory and analyze ongoing efforts in West Oakland**, to create a clear picture of work underway in the neighborhood.
- I will make a series of recommendations for **repairing the local food system**, ranging from creating an extensive demonstration garden on the grounds of a grocery store, to establishing a cooperative buying club to facilitate relationships between local growers and small local vendors.

The last section is the heart of the project, and is intended as a vision plan for achieving food justice in West Oakland.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

According to *Hunger: The Faces & The Facts*, published by the Alameda County Community Food Bank, 23% of Alameda County residents experience food insecurity to varying degrees. There are a number of grassroots efforts to improve food justice in Alameda County, including People's Grocery in West Oakland, School Market in Fruitvale, and the Alameda Point Collaborative in Alameda. The organizations working to improve food security in Oakland will benefit from this investigation, which will identify major obstacles, assess existing efforts, and make recommendations for the future based on studies of successful efforts throughout the country and careful analysis of existing resources.

KEY IDEAS

This project builds on a number of key concepts, which are developed in detail in the following chapters. Following is a selection of these key ideas:

- Supermarkets have abandoned low-income communities

- Lack of food justice and the resulting poor nutrition is contributing to health epidemics such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
- The poor do not *want* to eat unhealthy diets, but they often have no choice
- Our country does not have a “stable culture of food”
- Our food comes from “a global everywhere, yet from nowhere that [we] know in particular”
- Food systems should be included in regional plans
- Food democracy returns power to the eating public
- Restoring cultural knowledge on nutrition, gardening and cooking is vital to food justice
- Community gardens “[make] the food system visible in urban areas.”
- Reintroducing supermarkets and converting corner stores to produce sales can improve the local food supply
- It is possible to compete with the industrial food system by developing reliable relationships with local growers, streamlining the local distribution network, and reinvesting local money in the community.
- Helping people take advantage of the agricultural potential

of their own backyards can give people better, more affordable food choices, maximize the utility of urban land, and increase knowledge about food and nutrition.

Each of these concepts helps to form the framework of this investigation, which informs the recommendations for the future made in the last chapter.

METHODS

Over the course of this project, I employed several methods for gathering and synthesizing information. Following is a summary of my methods:

- **Literature review:** inventory of key ideas, leading theories and best practices for improving food justice.
- **Expert interviews:** identification of obstacles to food justice, description of ongoing efforts to improve food justice, identification of possible sites for gardens, grocery stores, education centers, and processing centers.
- **GIS mapping:** identification of resources or lack thereof, inventory of agricultural potential
- **Produce price and availability inventory:** provided a clear

picture of the severity of food injustice in West Oakland.

- **Case Studies:** provided toolkit of successful strategies, and a profile of organizations already working in West Oakland.
- **Fieldwork:** identification of possible sites for gardens, grocery stores, education centers and processing centers, and opportunity to become familiar with neighborhood culture.
- **Design exploration:** generated and refined possible solutions to site, neighborhood, and regional design and planning problems.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This report is broken down into six chapters, all geared toward creating a long-term plan for People's Grocery and West Oakland.

Document Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and Project Summary

This chapter introduces the reader to the project, the site, and the client.

Chapter 2: Evaluation of Neighborhood Food Justice and Agricultural Potential

This chapter introduces the reader to the causes and characteristics of food injustice, explains common methods for evaluating Community Food Justice, and discusses the state of food justice in West Oakland. To provide additional background information for the rest of the report, this chapter also lists known obstacles to achieving food justice.

Chapter 3: Strategies for Achieving Food Justice: Theory and Practice

This chapter summarizes common strategies for achieving food justice and outlines the efforts of several organizations throughout the country in a series of success story case studies. The work of these organizations represents best practices in striving for food justice.

Chapter 4: Ongoing Efforts in West Oakland: Inventory and Analysis

This chapter describes the efforts of several organizations operating in West Oakland, all working to improve access to healthy, affordable food.

Chapter 5: Repairing the Local Food System

This chapter describes each aspect of the project, starting with Part A: People's Grocery and Wellness Village Site Design, in which I describe the site design for a proposed grocery store; moving on to Part B: Long Range Planning for People's Grocery, in which I describe a business model for People's Grocery and neighborhood development plan for West Oakland; progressing to Part C: Assessment of Neighborhood Agricultural Potential, in which I describe and demonstrate a tool for assessing food production potential for three block typologies; and concluding with Part D: Repairing the Local Food System, in which I suggest ways to lay the groundwork for a relocated Bay Area food system. Finally, I outline the lessons learned on this project that could be applied in other communities.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter reviews the entire project, and lays out critical first steps for implementing the proposed plans.

Appendix 1: Glossary

This appendix provides a glossary of terms and phrases that may be unfamiliar to the reader, or that are used in an unconventional way.

Appendix 2: Resources

This appendix provides contact information for organizations featured in the text.

Appendix 3: Price and Availability Study

This appendix provides a copy of the data collection form I used for my food price and availability study.

PRODUCTS

Several important products are generated over the course of this study, and are included in this report:

- **Toolkit of Successful Strategies for Achieving Food Justice:** a series of case studies from around the country provides valuable insight into effective methods for achieving food justice
- **Inventory of Ongoing Efforts in West Oakland:** a series of case studies of each major food justice organization operating in West Oakland indicates that several groups are committed to the neighborhood and could work together to achieve common goals
- **Assessment of Food Justice in West Oakland:** a

comparison of price and availability of fresh produce in West Oakland and Rockridge demonstrates that food access in West Oakland is quite limited

- **West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan:** a long-range plan for West Oakland, with People's Grocery acting as a catalyst, includes a handful of new corner stores, a plan for converting existing corner stores to produce sales, a business model for efficiently linking local vendors with the nearby agricultural community, a network of teaching gardens and commercial minifarms, food processing centers, and neighborhood education centers, and schematic designs for this cooperative grocery store embody the organizations values, and include an extensive demonstration garden, outdoor social spaces, protected bike parking, and an enhanced pedestrian environment
- **Prototype Agricultural Potential Assessment Tool:** a prototype method for determining the agricultural potential of urban land reveals the neighborhood's potential for agricultural production, and provides a classification system for assessing and converting individual blocks
- **Local Food System Plan:** a long-range plan for the Greater

Bay Area agricultural community includes strategies for rebuilding a robust, efficient local distribution system as a competitive alternative to the industrial food system

USING THIS DOCUMENT

This report is intended as an assessment of current conditions in West Oakland, a handbook of successful strategies for achieving food justice, and as a vision plan for the next twenty years. While it is written for People's Grocery, the West Oakland neighborhood, and the Bay Area agricultural community, the lessons learned here can be applied in many places around the world.

CHAPTER 2

Evaluation of Neighborhood Food Justice

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Local food networks can foster human connections between growers and consumers, give city dwellers a palpable connection to the rural landscape, and give people more control over their food choices. Many people do not know how to cook or garden; reintroducing these skills helps people gain independence from agribusiness and learn better eating habits.

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this report, the idea of *food justice* was introduced and placed in the context of sustainable development and equity. Because it is important to understand what causes food *injustice* before making plans to restructure a neighborhood to achieve food justice, this chapter will introduce the reader to the causes and characteristics of food injustice, explain common methods for evaluating Community Food Justice, and discuss the state of food justice in West Oakland. This chapter will also list known obstacles to achieving food justice.

CAUSES OF FOOD INJUSTICE

Public health advocates have been voicing concerns about access to good nutrition in poor neighborhoods for years. Lack of food security and the resulting poor nutrition is contributing to health epidemics such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Food insecurity is often

a political problem; many people have lamented the existence of “want in the midst of plenty,” finding it ironic that hunger should exist in a nation with consistently enormous food production surpluses.¹ This situation is allowed to continue for a variety of reasons, revolving around the indifference of agribusiness toward poor urban populations, loss of connections between poor urban populations and the land, the avoidance of low-income communities by supermarkets, poorly structured farm subsidy programs, and the inadequacy of federal programs such as food stamps.

Agribusiness and Supermarkets

Agribusiness has distanced itself from problems of urban food security for several reasons. In *Sustainable Agriculture and Domestic Hunger*, Katherine L. Clancy explains that many large-scale farming operations feel that they already subsidize consumers because food prices in this nation are kept artificially low. However,

most aid packages and price support strategies designed for farmers ultimately benefit only the largest, richest operations, which are motivated only by profit, not philanthropy. While no farmer (or any other businessman) is interested in working for free, these large corporations have no real stake in the communities they market to. They grow subsidized commodities: wheat, corn, and soybeans, that are processed into unhealthy food and animal feed. There are few subsidies for vegetable farmers.² While a smaller grower with ties to their local community might make the effort to get their products into as many kinds of neighborhood as possible, the industrial food system is blind to local needs.

Starting after World War II, government policy was designed with the specific goal of moving people off farms and into factories, and consolidating the old patchwork of family farmers into larger and larger megafarms.³ Farming practices were realigned to focus on surplus production of a few subsidized commodities to feed the processed convenience food market and growing chains of supermarkets. To feed this new machine, monocropping production techniques and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations replaced crop rotation and pasture-based animal husbandry. A distribution system based on economies of scale, cheap oil, and enormous

supermarkets with loading docks and buying relationships with a handful of big distributors radically changed the face of agriculture and food distribution in this nation.⁴

Supermarkets have abandoned low-income communities because their policies are based purely on maximizing profit. The poor are essentially irrelevant to the mass market, and as such are left with limited choices and high prices. In their report “Neighborhood Groceries: New Access to Healthy Food in Low Income Communities,” Ed Bolen and Kenneth Hecht of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) explain that the urban poor have limited access to food because stores in their communities do not stock healthy food.⁵

David Dante Troutt documented the situation of low-income consumers in his report *The Thin Red Line: How the Poor Still Pay More*. In addition to studying the costs of housing, health care, and other basic needs, Troutt compared the cost of a standard market basket of food and average driving times to markets in several different Oakland and Los Angeles communities, and found that people living in low-income communities must pay more for food compared to people living in more affluent communities.⁶

Shortcomings of Federal Programs and Emergency Food Sources

The federal food stamp program is unable to adequately address hunger in this country. According to Clancy, “50% of the persons coming to food pantries are already food stamp recipients.”⁷ This indicates that the program is falling short of its goals. Furthermore, criteria to be eligible for food stamp benefits do not account for varying costs of living in different regions of the nation, and many eligible people do not receive food stamps because of “lack of information, access problems, and personal feelings about food stamp receipt.”⁸

Because they have no other viable options, many low-income people have come to depend upon emergency food sources for their day-to-day survival. Organizations such as food banks, pantries and soup kitchens were set up to assist people in crisis, but the lack of sufficient alternatives for the very poor has created a state of “chronic emergency” and caused these organizations to become permanent fixtures.⁹ In *Sweet Charity?*, Janet Poppendieck explains that emergency food suppliers are not appropriate long-term suppliers because of what she refers to as the “Seven Deadly

‘Ins’”: insufficiency, inappropriateness, (nutritional) inadequacy, instability, inaccessibility, inefficiency, and indignity.¹⁰ Despite these problems, reliance on emergency food assistance has increased over the years. Poppendieck reports that there were just a few food banks in the nation before 1980, and by 1991 there were 180 food banks, 23,000 food pantries, and 3,300 soup kitchens. As I will describe in more detail in Chapter 4, here in the Bay Area the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) has seen a 30% increase in demand for its services over the past five years,¹¹ and now serves 40,000 people every week.¹²

Describing about the situation in Canada, which is similar to that in the United States, Graham Riches asserts that the proliferation of food banks “[permits] the state to neglect their obligation to protect vulnerable and powerless people.”¹³ Riches feels that food banks can and should increase public awareness of food insecurity, but they are not an adequate solution to the problem.

ASPECTS OF FOOD JUSTICE

As noted in Chapter 1, food (in)justice has geographic, economic and social facets. Four broad topics, each related to these three themes, make up the most important aspects of food justice:

- Ease of **access** to food
- **Education** about food and nutrition
- The size and resilience of the **foodshed**
- The physical **design** of cities

Figure 2.1 illustrates the characteristics a community should possess in order to achieve food justice, and the gaps in the foundations of food justice in West Oakland. These diagrams are a distillation of the theories and studies you are about to read.

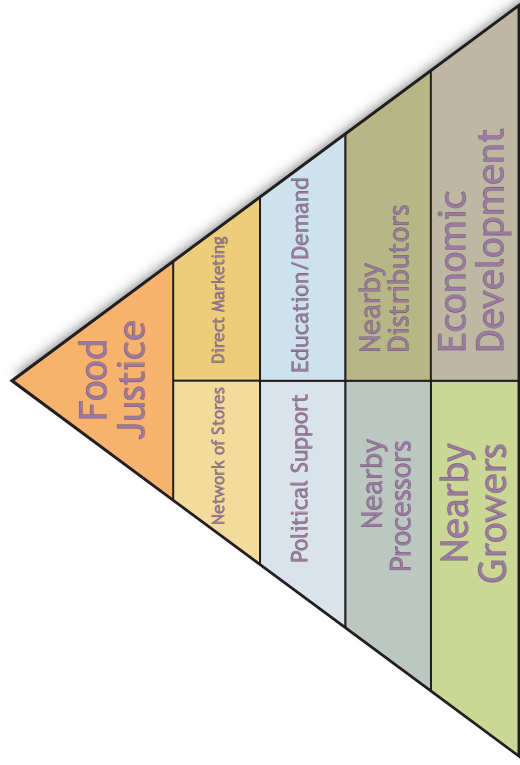
Access

In *Neighborhood Groceries*, Bolen and Hecht explain there are several aspects to the problem of urban food access: supermarkets have abandoned inner cities for the suburbs, the poor generally have limited access to transportation, and corner stores in inner city neighborhoods have limited inventories (mostly alcoholic beverages and snack foods). Smaller scale farmers and food distributors may be interested in serving inner city markets, but often lack the resources to do so.¹⁴ These access problems lead to diet-related health problems such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers, and lowered resistance to infection.¹⁵

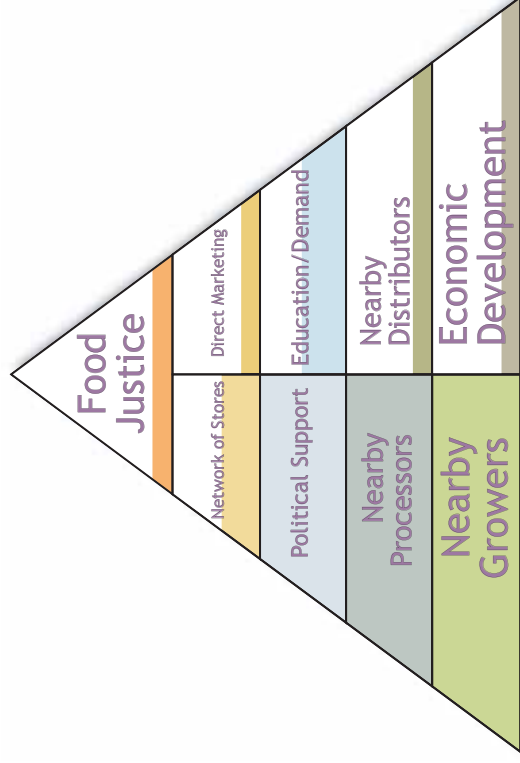
As Troutt explains in *The Thin Red Line*, “the major problem suffered by low-income consumers in Oakland is [lack of] proximity.”¹⁶ In 1992, Troutt found that there were 4,333 people per supermarket in Rockridge, a nearby middle-class neighborhood, while there were 16,445 people per supermarket in West Oakland. This disparity suggests that low-income consumers must travel farther within their own neighborhoods to reach a grocery store. Many low-income consumers leave their neighborhood to shop for groceries because “consumers believe that they will get better quality and pay lower prices in affluent areas.”¹⁷ In West Oakland, Troutt assures us that this is indeed the case. Later in this chapter, I will describe my own evaluation of the price and availability of fresh produce in West Oakland and Rockridge, which reveals that lack of proximity to grocery stores continues to be a major problem, but that price is less of a factor than sheer lack of availability.

Troutt uses driving time to market as a measure of convenience for different income groups. He found that 80% of consumers drive to grocery stores, though of course the poor must often plan ahead to share rides. As he explains,

...although most shoppers drive to market, the trip is



Robust Community



West Oakland

Figure 2.1
Components of Food Justice

quite different for each group. Ten percent of low-income shoppers share a ride... Meanwhile, 20 percent of middle-income shoppers can actually walk to market. Indeed, 16 percent of middle-income shoppers do walk to the market to meet their weekly needs. By contrast, 33 percent of low-income shoppers drive at least 11 minutes (and often much more) to reach the supermarket. For the sake of perspective, the approximately five mile drive from the center of the West Oakland study area to the center of the Rockridge study area is about 15 minutes during normal traffic.¹⁸

This means that a routine grocery shopping trip, while convenient for middle-income consumers, represents a serious time and planning commitment for low-income consumers.

The poor do not *want* to eat unhealthy diets, but they often have no choice. Several local studies have shown unmet demand for nutritious food among inner-city residents. In 1992, a study conducted by the UC Berkeley Walter A. Haas School of Business demonstrated that residents of Fruitvale in Oakland spent 80% of their food budget outside their own neighborhood, suggesting that if stores supplying a full line of grocery items at fair prices were located in low-income

communities, they would find a solid customer base. Furthermore, CFPA reports that there is “no distinction between income levels among health-conscious shoppers seeking highly nutritious food.”¹⁹ The health-conscious poor desire healthy food just as much as their more affluent counterparts.

When access to cheap junk food is easy and access to healthy food is difficult, maintaining a healthy lifestyle can become a Herculean task. A well-functioning local food system would provide convenient access to high-quality food sources to every member of the community. Ideally, every resident of a given neighborhood should be able to reach a market within a short walk, and frequent, reliable transportation options should be made available to those with limited mobility.

Education

Marion Nestle is the Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health at New York University. She has written extensively on the subjects of nutrition education and federal dietary guidelines. In her book *Food Politics*, she explains that the most important problem with dietary advice from the USDA is that scientific research indicates that Americans should eat *less*,

especially of foods like meat, dairy and sweets, but the financial interests of the food industry demand that we eat *more*. The result is that the USDA, which is supposed to promote public health *and* protect the interests of agriculture, is in a conflicted position, and issues watered-down advice that leaves Americans confused about diet and health. The emphasis on advice related to specific nutrients, rather than classifying particular foods as good or bad, is also due to industry influence. Nestle states that the main theme of her book is that “diet is a political issue,”²⁰ that the entanglement of scientific research and concern for public health with commerce results in the deplorable state of dietary advice in this country.²¹

Nestle explains how much careful interpretation must be done to tease out the real message behind vaguely worded dietary advice. The Dietary Guidelines, published every 5 years, are supposed to accompany the pyramid and provide more specific information, but the guidelines are expressed in terms of nutrients, and never explicitly tell people to eat less of any food. The language is rather weak, telling people to “Aim for fitness, Build a healthy base, and Choose sensibly.”²² There is no clear advice on *how* to choose foods that will provide the proper nutrients and avoid harmful fat, sugar and salt.²³

Besides the advanced literary skills required to decode federal dietary guidelines, our society has experienced a sharp decline in folk knowledge about what and how much to eat. Michael Pollan describes the problem succinctly in his recent book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. As the title suggests, Pollan often speaks in terms of the Omnivore’s Dilemma, which is a term that refers to the question of what to eat. As he puts it, “[when] you can eat just about anything nature has to offer, deciding what you *should* eat will inevitably stir anxiety...”²⁴ He explains that our country does not have a “stable culture of food”, since we are “drawn from many different immigrant populations, each with its own culture of food”. Without a culture of food to help with daily dietary decisions, we are “especially vulnerable to the blandishments of the food scientist and the marketer, for whom the omnivore’s dilemma is not so much a dilemma as an opportunity. It is very much in the interest of the food industry to exacerbate our anxieties about what to eat, the better to then assuage them with new products.”²⁵

Allison Pratt, Director of Policy & Services for the Alameda County Community Food Bank, points out that creating demand for healthy food is a big part of nutrition education, saying that “if a child grows up with access to produce, they will be more likely to

be a produce consumer when they grow up.”²⁶ A healthy local food system would include a strong educational component, ranging from nutrition education integrated into school curricula, to readily available dietary advice in grocery stores and community centers, to advertising campaigns emphasizing the benefits of fresh, local produce.

Foodshed

According to the FoodRoutes Network, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture and local food systems, “the term ‘foodshed’ is similar to the concept of a watershed: while watersheds outline the flow of water supplying a particular area, foodsheds outline the flow of food feeding a particular area. Your foodshed encompasses the farm, your table, and everything in between.”²⁷ The term *foodshed* was probably first used by Walter Hedden in his 1929 book, *How Great Cities are Fed*. The term has enjoyed more frequent usage since Arthur Getz’s 1991 article “Urban Foodsheds”. As noted in “Coming Into the Foodshed”, published in the June 1996 issue of *Agriculture and Human Values*, “how better to grasp the shape and unity of something as complex as a food system than to graphically imagine the flow of food into a particular place?”²⁸

In his book *Eat Here*, one of the arguments Brian Halweil presents for eating locally is the fact that most of the big cities on the East Coast of the US only have a two-day supply of food at any given time; if long-distance transportation networks broke down, these cities would not have local suppliers to turn to.²⁹ “Coming Into the Foodshed” reminds us that “[what] is eaten by the great majority of North Americans comes from a global everywhere, yet from nowhere that they know in particular.”³⁰ Besides fending off catastrophe, local food networks can foster human connections between growers and consumers, give city dwellers a palpable connection to the rural landscape, and give people more control over their food choices. Halweil, a senior researcher for the Worldwatch Institute, remarks out that many people do not know how to cook or garden, and that reintroducing this set of skills would help people to gain independence from the processed food industry and learn better eating habits. He also points out that if local food were made available in “inner-city food deserts”³¹ through farmers’ markets and CSAs, it could be 30-40% cheaper than food found in supermarkets.

Halweil quotes John Ellis, owner of Centerville grocery in Lincoln, Nebraska, who remarked “a lot of people have never seen real vegetables out of the ground with dirt on them”.³² This is indicative

of the modern disconnect between food production and food consumption. Halweil believes that repairing this connection could do much to improve the financial security of farmers, the health of city dwellers, the health of the environment, and the strength of human connections.³³

West Oakland's foodshed is currently very difficult to map, as food shipped into the neighborhood is part of the global industrialized food system, and as Halweil explains, each item travels an average of 1500 miles before it arrives on the shelf.³⁴ Processed foods typically have multiple origins, and the origin of any particular food item is extremely difficult to trace, and is often considered proprietary information. Anya Fernald of the California Alliance with Family Farmers points out that large distributors do not know the full pathway of the food they handle; unable to monitor the practices of all their suppliers, they simply take out large insurance policies in case one of their sources ships unsafe food.³⁵ When food is a mass-produced commodity, it becomes interchangeable and disassociated from place. A robust local foodshed would be very easy to conceptualize and to map; the vast majority of food products for sale in the neighborhood would be grown and processed within an hour or two's drive, and many products would be grown and

processed *within* the neighborhood. Each food product would possess local qualities that differentiate it from food produced in other regions, and considerably less energy would be expended on shipping. Models for this type of food system will be discussed in the next chapter.

City design and public health

In *Unhealthy Places*, Kevin Fitzpatrick and Mark LaGory discuss the social dynamics of culturally segregated, densely populated areas. They argue that these areas tend to have strong internal social networks, but lack connections to the outside. When the poor have limited transportation options, this results in "real spatial boundaries on the free flow of information and social interaction".³⁶ Within these boundaries, the ill effects of poverty are magnified. When all residents of a neighborhood are poor, the experience of each person is more difficult than it would be as one of a few poor people in an otherwise prosperous area with access to resources. The poor have few links to the power structure of cities, and are vulnerable to decisions made by others outside the community regarding such things as new development or the siting of toxic waste dumps.

It follows that these same neighborhoods are likely to have

constrained food choices.³⁷ Low-income neighborhoods are routinely under-served by food retail establishments, and when this is compounded with the fact that the poor tend to have limited transportation options, it becomes clear that access to a healthy diet is extremely difficult in low-income communities. There are spatial boundaries on access to healthy food as well as information and social interaction, resulting in the phenomenon popularly referred to as a “food desert”. A healthy local food system would include equal access to healthy food for all residents of the region, regardless of income.

In addition to the consequences of poverty described above, the poor have to contend with post-WWII auto-dependant city planning that has transformed American cities. Decades of auto-centric planning (and the accompanying neglect of public transportation and pedestrian-oriented city design) have made our cities next to impossible to navigate without a car, further widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY FOOD JUSTICE EVALUATION

After gaining an understanding of what food justice is, it is important to measure quantifiable aspects of food justice in order to determine

the magnitude of a particular neighborhood’s situation. A community food justice assessment provides a picture of a local food system and its strengths and weaknesses, and provides a starting point for improving the food system.

Assessment

Evaluating food justice for a particular neighborhood involves an analysis of demographics, food resources availability, accessibility, affordability, and local food production. This may be accomplished by using a Geographic Information System (GIS) to analyze census data and the locations of grocery stores, gardens or farms, and transit networks. The inventories of neighborhood grocery stores can be compared to a USDA baseline study to evaluate the quality and affordability of the local food supply.

Basic information on organizing an assessment team and a description of data collection, analysis, and representation techniques is provided in Janet Cohen’s *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*, prepared for the USDA. After providing background information, Cohen explains how to assess various aspects of community food security, or food justice. These include demographics, household food security, food resources availability, accessibility and

affordability, and local food production. Each section includes key questions to ask, and references to data collection tools found in the appendices. Cohen stresses the importance of setting up a way to measure progress with specific indicators, and emphasizes the usefulness of mapping all the information that is gathered. The USDA has performed national studies of food availability at several store types, based on a “market basket” of 142 basic food items. This baseline study makes it possible to compare food availability in a particular community to national averages. The Federal Food Security Measure can be used as a starting point for comparing household food security in a particular community to national averages.³⁸ I will use this study as a starting point for evaluating the level of food (in)justice in West Oakland.

For the purposes of this report, the inventories of several West Oakland food supply outlets have been compared to stores in Rockridge, using the USDA baseline market basket as a guide. Rockridge is a middle-class Oakland neighborhood a few miles from West Oakland. As I will explain in the following section, the two neighborhoods were compared in *The Thin Red Line* to demonstrate differences in cost and quality of basic goods, services and housing.

Further assessment of conditions in West Oakland was deemed unnecessary, since the recently published *Oakland Food System Assessment Report*³⁹ provides a sufficient picture of West Oakland’s needs. This report was prepared by two graduate students in the University of California, Berkeley Department of City and Regional Planning, and was completed in May 2006. At this point, further investigation is less critical than formulating strategies for improvement.

West Oakland Food Justice Evaluation

The *Oakland Food System Assessment Report* reveals that in West Oakland, a neighborhood of 19,000 people,⁴⁰ car ownership rates are among the lowest in the city, poverty levels are high, there is an abundance of convenience and liquor stores, and no national chain grocery stores.⁴¹ In fact, the only nearby grocery stores over 10,000 square feet are outside neighborhood boundaries. This means that many residents must rely on the inventories of convenience stores, or make a difficult, time-consuming, and expensive trip to a large grocery store outside the neighborhood. Figure 2.2, borrowed from the Oakland Food System Assessment, illustrates West Oakland’s car ownership levels. To put my study of neighborhood food

justice in context, I assembled basic GIS data on West Oakland’s needs and resources, including land use patterns, circulation, store locations, gardens, restaurants, public schools, libraries, recreation centers, senior centers, shelters, places of worship, vacant lots, and environmental hazards. Figures 2.3-2.12 illustrate this information.

The Thin Red Line analyzed the availability and cost of basic goods, services, and housing in West Oakland and Rockridge. Their food study concluded that Rockridge offered more food choices at better prices, and that West Oakland stores did not adequately serve that neighborhood’s needs. The report also concluded that 80% of all food shoppers, regardless of income and car ownership, drive to do their food shopping. Food shoppers are not walking or taking public transportation to markets for a variety of reasons, including unwalkable distances, inconvenient transit routes, infrequent service, and the difficulty of traveling long distances on foot or by bus with heavy, awkward grocery bags.⁴² This means that low-income consumers who do not own cars can only go to the market when someone can drive them there, which compounds a tendency among low-income consumers to buy high-calorie, nonperishable foods rather than fresh fruits and vegetables. When supermarket trips are infrequent and money is in short supply, it makes economic

sense to buy nonperishables that provide comparatively cheap energy.

For this inventory, I chose to focus on the cost and availability of fruits and vegetables because they form the foundation of a healthy diet, and because studies have shown them to be conspicuously absent from the diets of low-income people. My study builds on *The Thin Red Line*, and on *USDA Thrifty Food Plan* price studies.

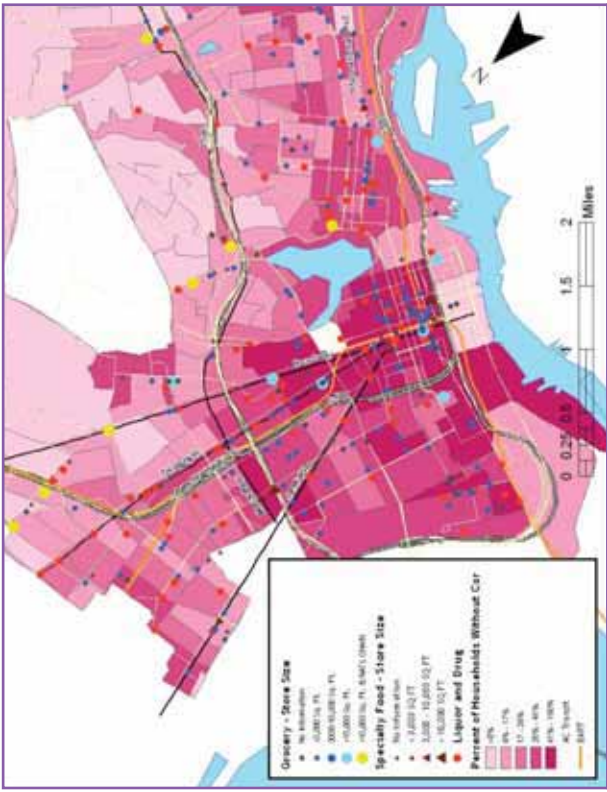


Figure 2.2
Food Retail and Vehicle Access

Source: Oakland Food System Assessment Report

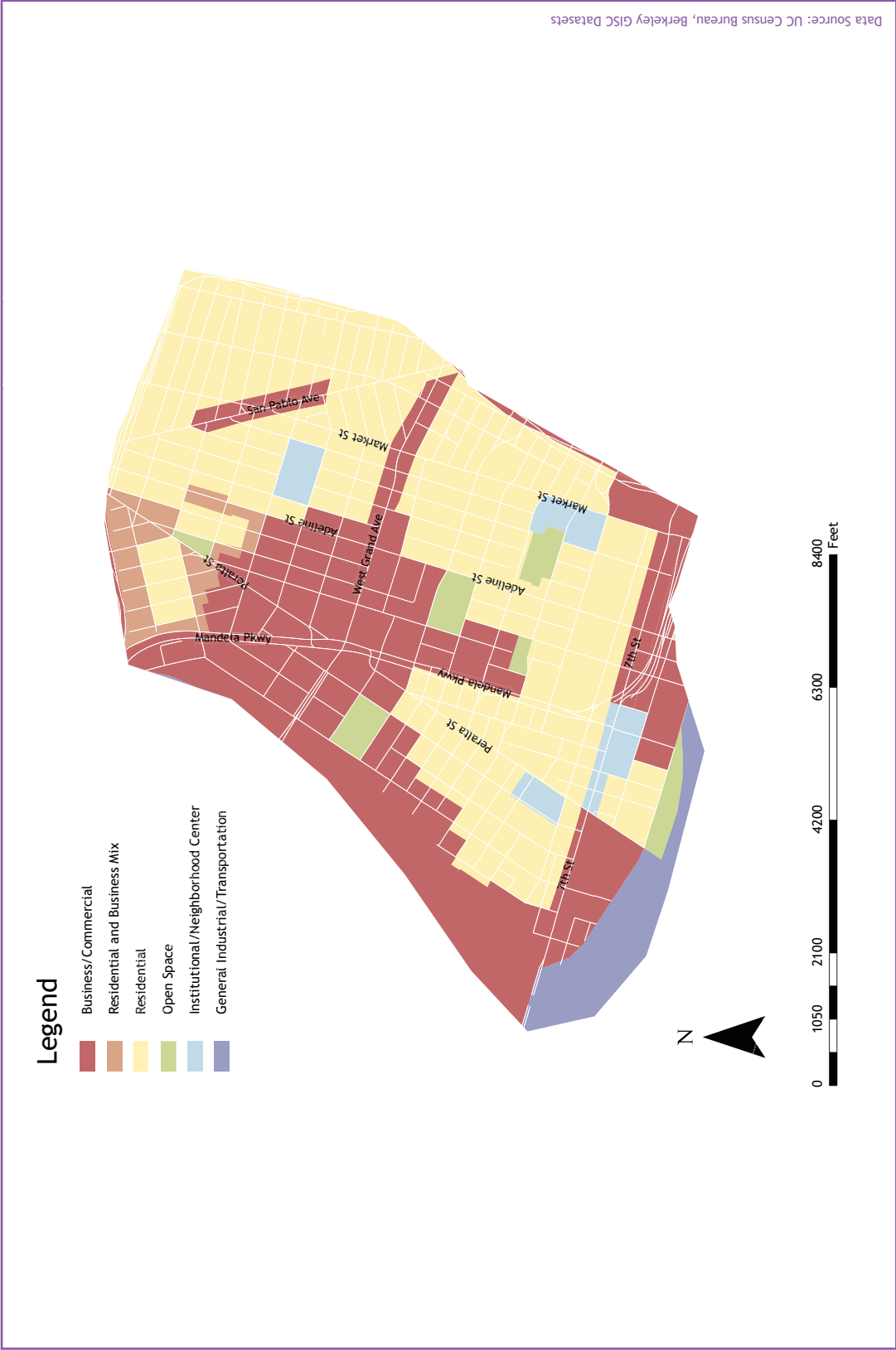
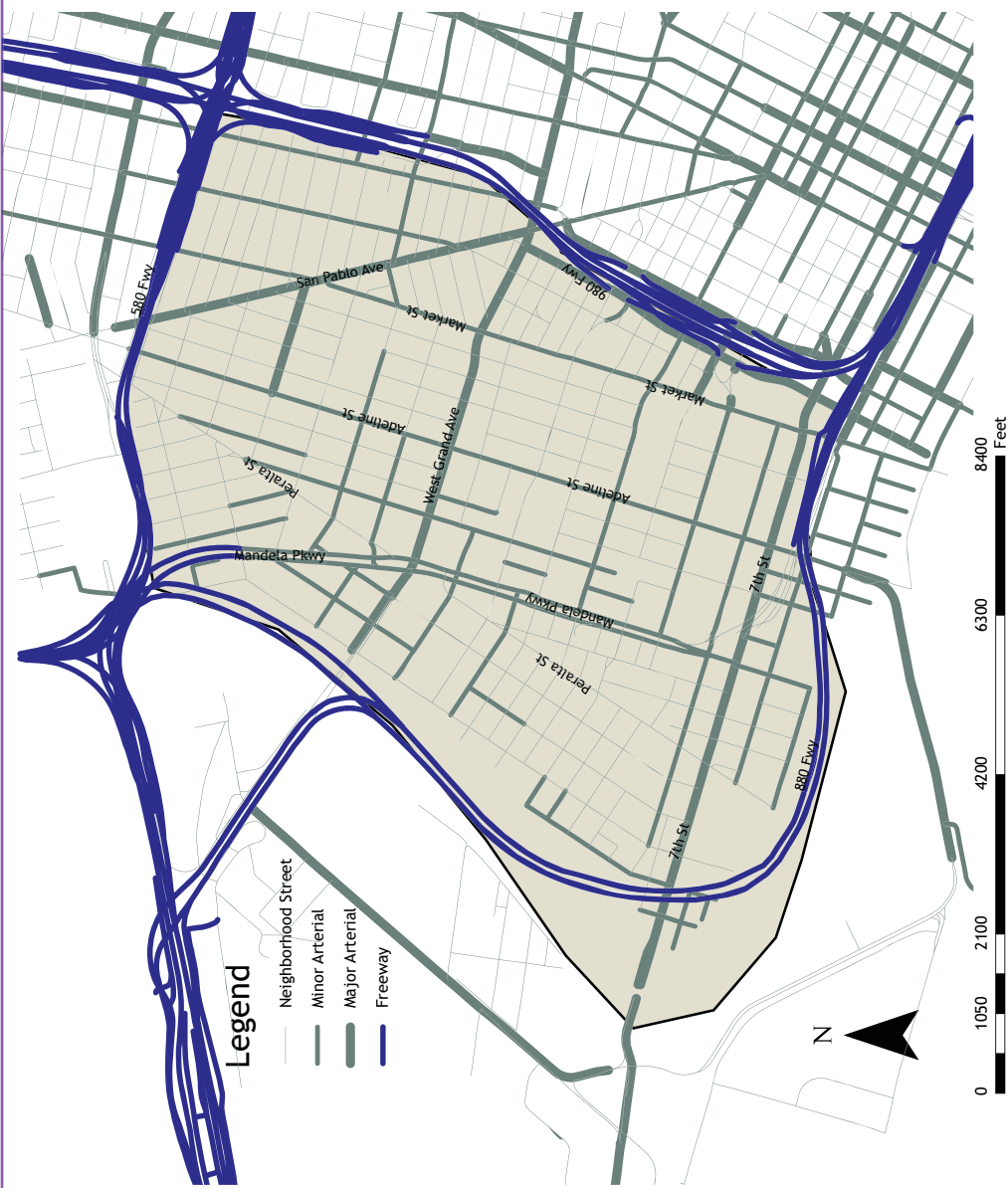




Figure 2.4
Population



Data Source: UC Census Bureau, Berkeley GIS Data

Figure 2.5
Circulation

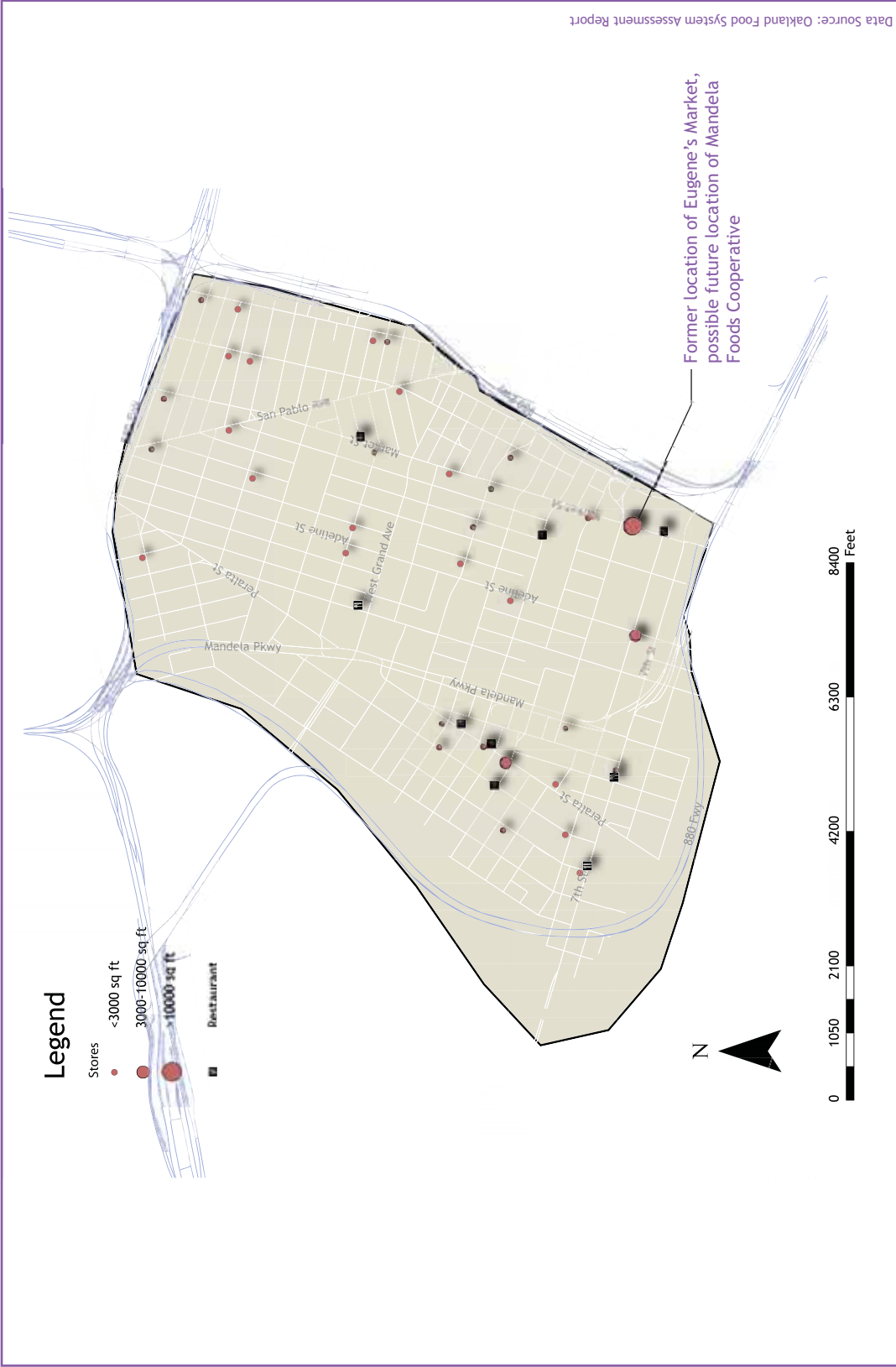


Figure 2.7
Food Stores and Restaurants

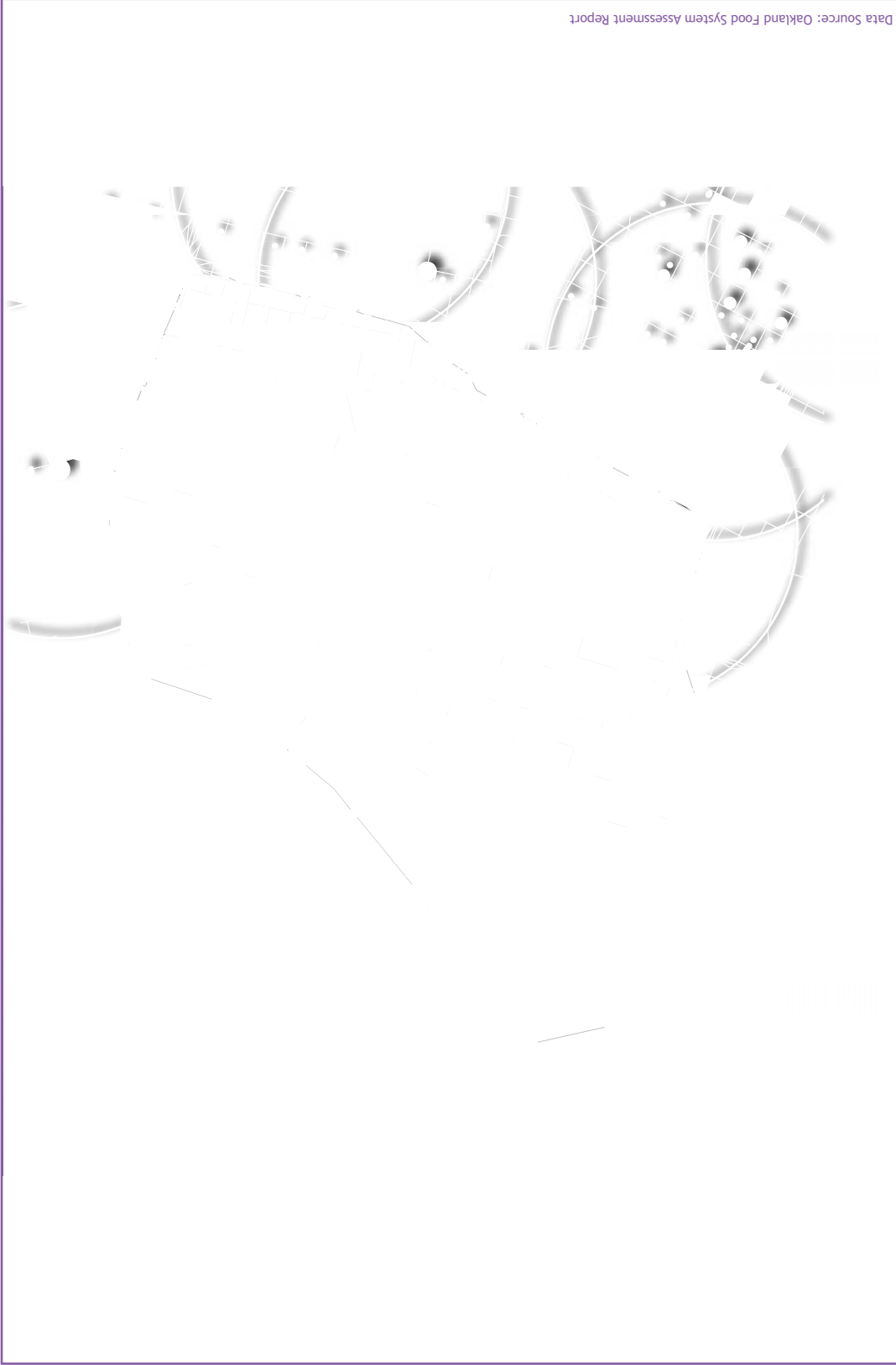
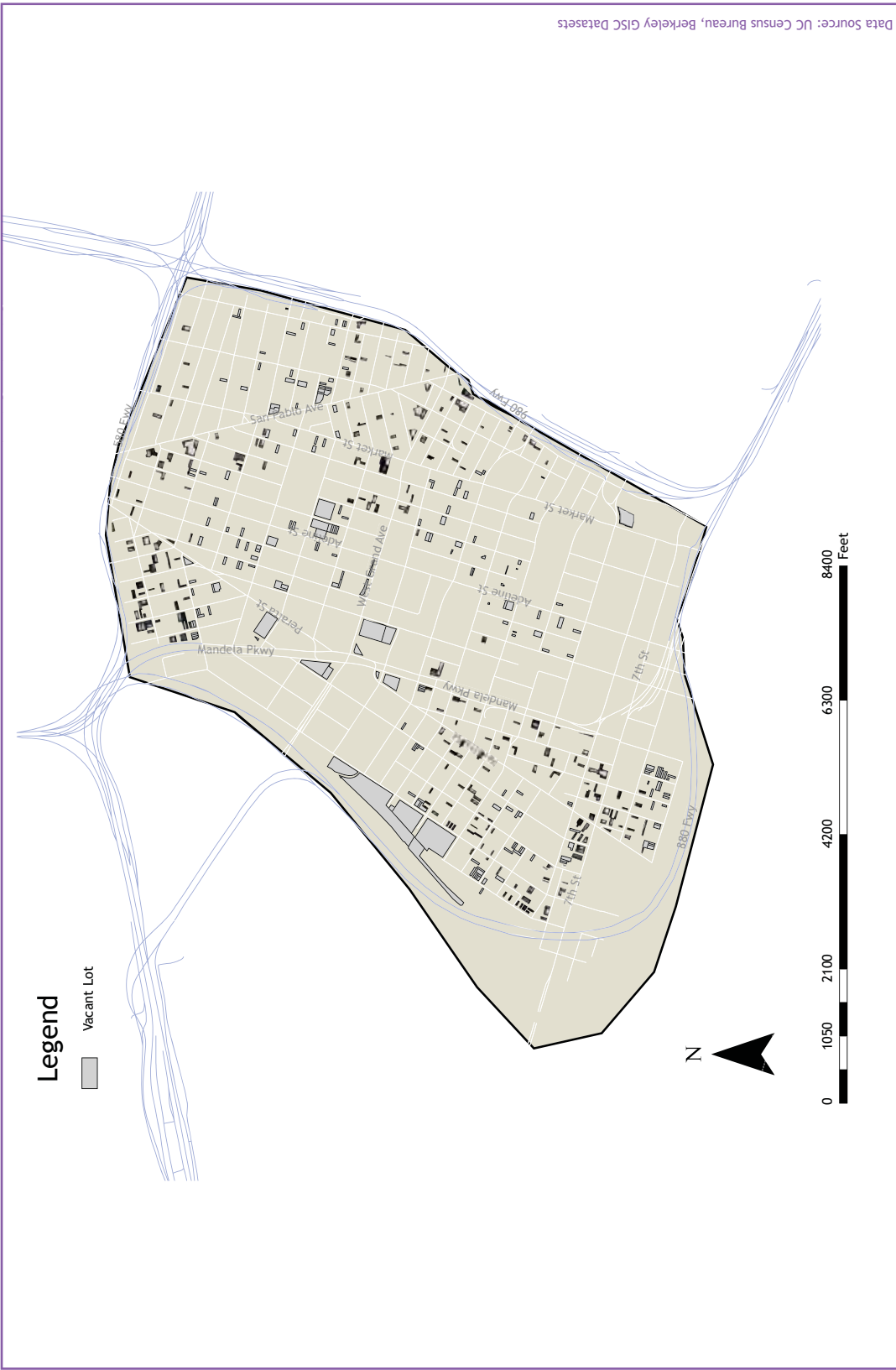


Figure 2.8
Food Stores and Walking Distance





The USDA issues annual cost studies of 142 basic food items, expressed in terms of overall cost of all 142 items. Costs of individual items are not made available, making comparisons to the baseline difficult if a store is missing some of the basic items. Because of this limitation, I chose to survey the cost and availability of fruits and vegetables in West Oakland in comparison with middle-class Rockridge, mirroring the study choices in *The Thin Red Line*. It should also be noted that the standard USDA list of basic fruits and vegetables is not flexible enough to reflect the preferences of different populations; the list seems to be based on a white middle-class diet.

West Oakland has an extensive network of corner stores, but the nearest supermarket is outside neighborhood boundaries. I visited a large supermarket in Rockridge, and the closest supermarket to West Oakland, which is located in nearby Pill Hill, outside the neighborhood boundaries. Paralleling the supermarket study, I visited a corner store in Rockridge, and a collection of four corner stores in West Oakland. Figure 2.13 illustrates the locations of each store, and Figure 2.14 illustrates the distribution of stores in West Oakland and in Rockridge. At each store, I recorded the price and availability of fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, canned fruits and

vegetables, and frozen fruits and vegetables. I based my list on the lists provided in the *USDA Thrifty Food Plan* for these categories. See Appendix 3 for a copy of my data collection form.

As might be expected, the Rockridge supermarket stocked each item on my list. As you can see in Figure 2.14, I found that the Pill Hill supermarket compares well with Rockridge in terms of price and selection, but because it relies on sales of overstocks, it has a

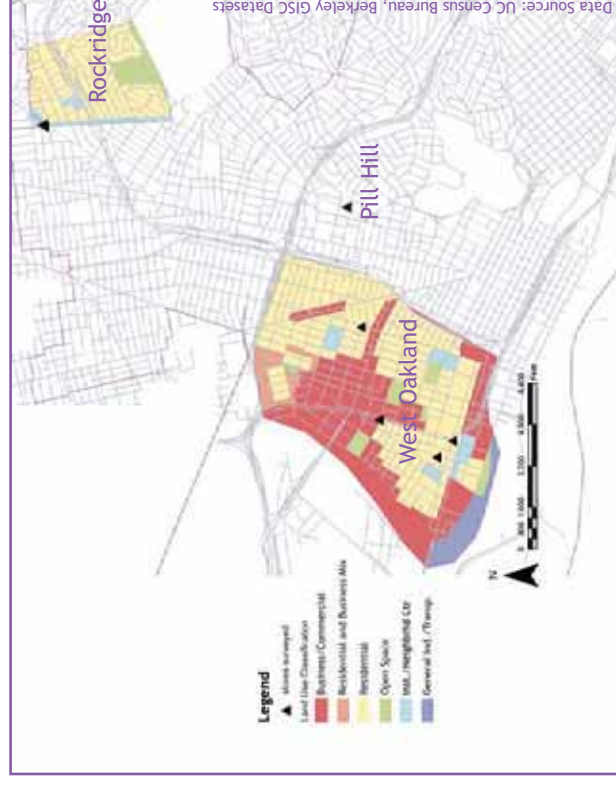


Figure 2.13
Surveyed Store Locations

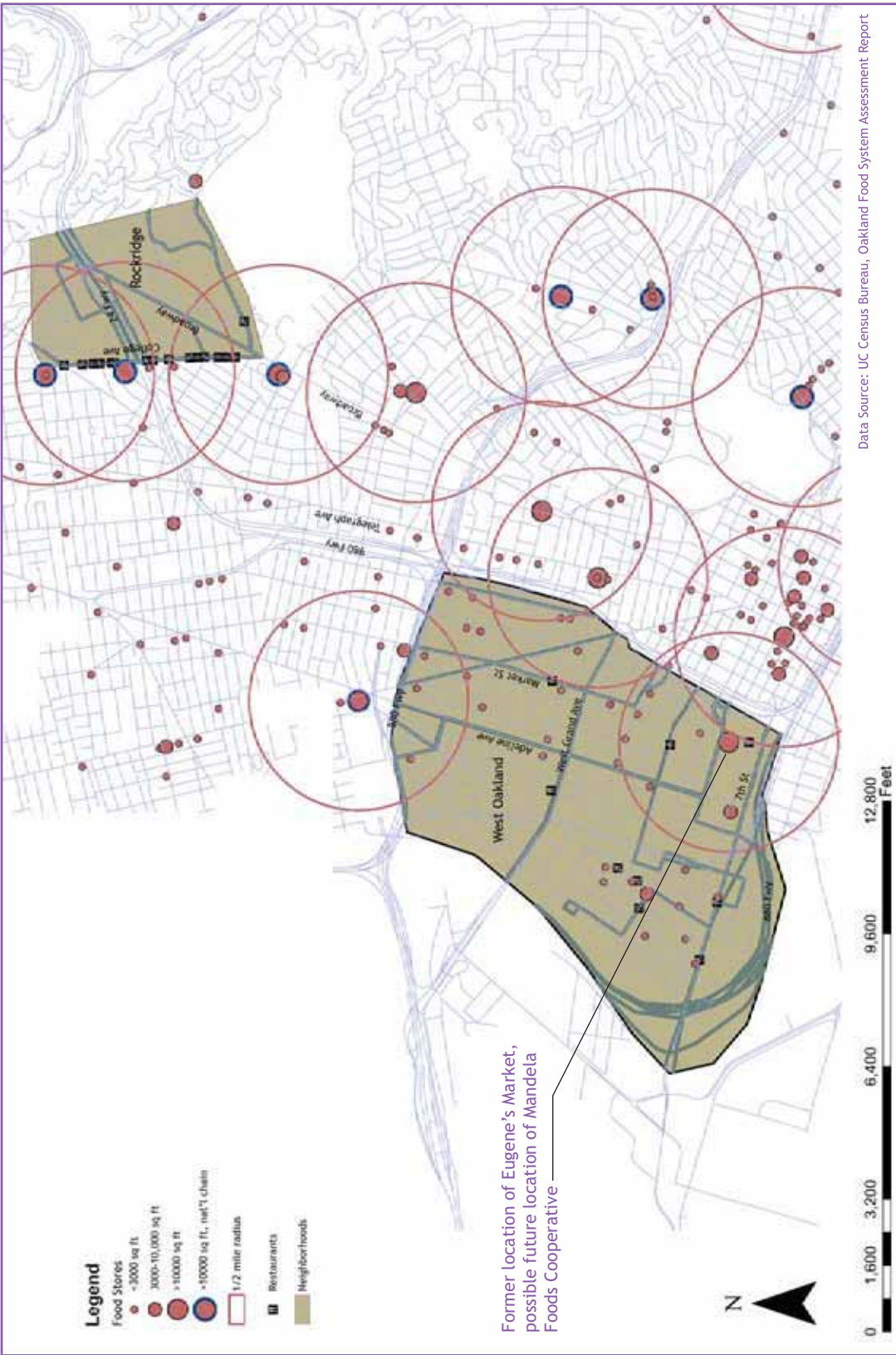


Figure 2.14
Food Market Distribution in West Oakland and Rockridge

somewhat unpredictable inventory. It is also located too far from the heart of West Oakland to adequately serve the neighborhood's needs.

The one supermarket over 10,000 square feet in West Oakland, Eugene's International at 8th and Market, closed suddenly in March 2007. A letter I found posted on the door stated the following: "We are very sorry for any inconvenience caused by the sudden and surprise closure of the grocery store. This closure took us as much by surprise as everyone else. We, the owners and managers of Jack London Gateway Shopping Center, are committed to securing a grocery store for this community and welcome your thoughts, suggestions and comments." The operators of the grocery store locked the store and disappeared; there is speculation that the store's inventory did not match the neighborhood's needs closely enough to allow the store to stay in business. The store may be reopened by Mandela Foods Cooperative (MFC) sometime in the future;⁴³ MFC is a new West Oakland-based organization planning to open a grocery store somewhere in the neighborhood.⁴⁴

Turning to the network of corner stores, the Rockridge corner store stocked all the fresh fruits and vegetables on my list, and a few of

the canned items. Maintaining a healthy diet by shopping at this store would be possible, and most of the prices compare favorably with the nearby supermarket. In West Oakland, the situation is very different. While prices for the items I did find did not differ significantly from supermarket prices, the four corner stores I studied provide very little selection. Very few of the fresh items on my list were in stock, and when they were, they were often wilted or overripe. Most stores stocked canned peaches, spaghetti sauce, and tomato sauce, and very few of the other items on my list. Purchasing the ingredients for a healthy diet at these stores is next to impossible. Figure 2.15 represents the results of this study.

The previous studies I have described and my own evaluation of the quality of local food stores make it clear that it is very difficult for West Oakland residents to obtain fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Figure 2.16 makes it clear that attempting to rely on the network of corner stores in West Oakland for day-to-day shopping needs leaves consumers with very poor access to healthy food, while maintaining a healthy diet in Rockridge is much easier. Without convenient access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other staples, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is extremely difficult.

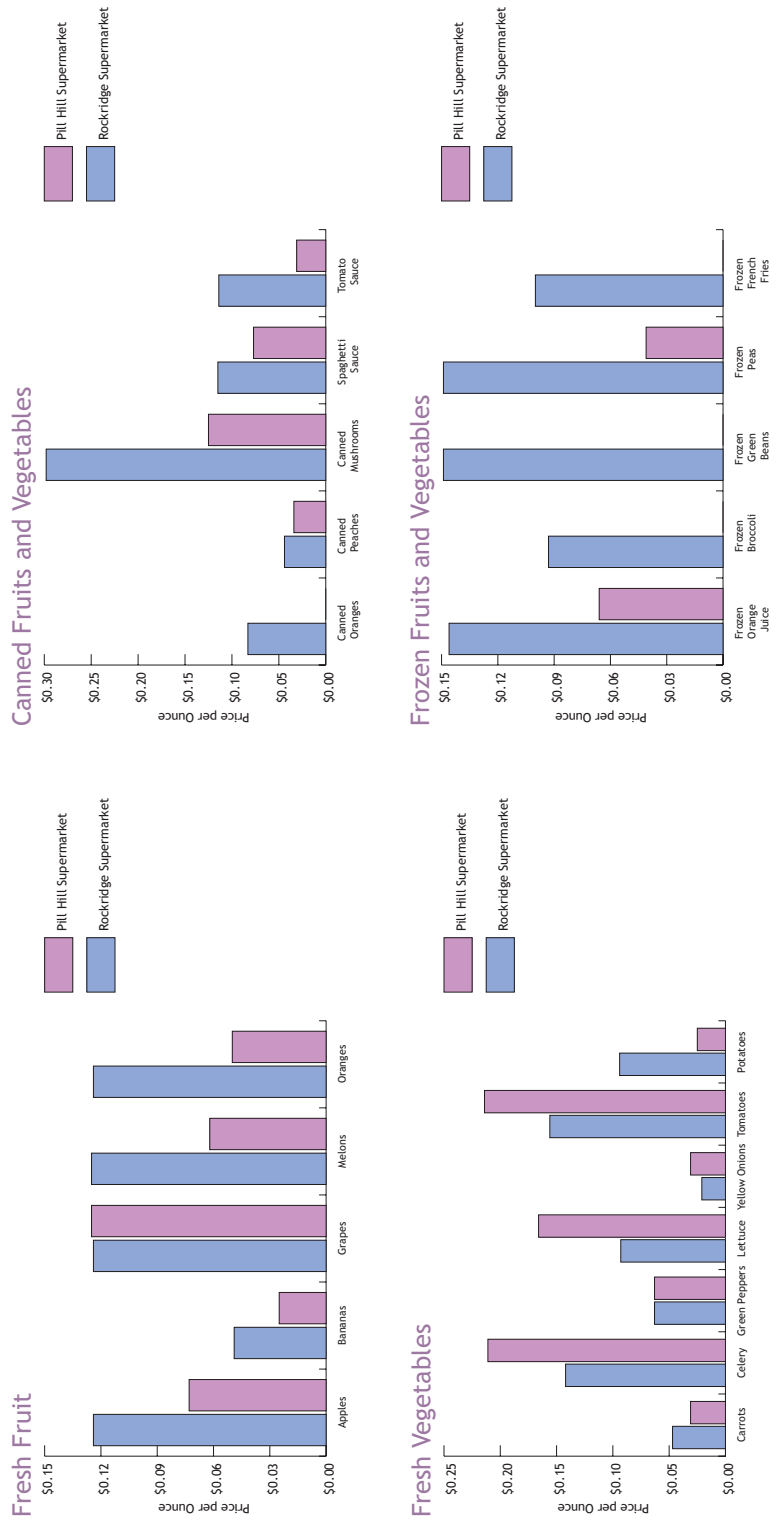
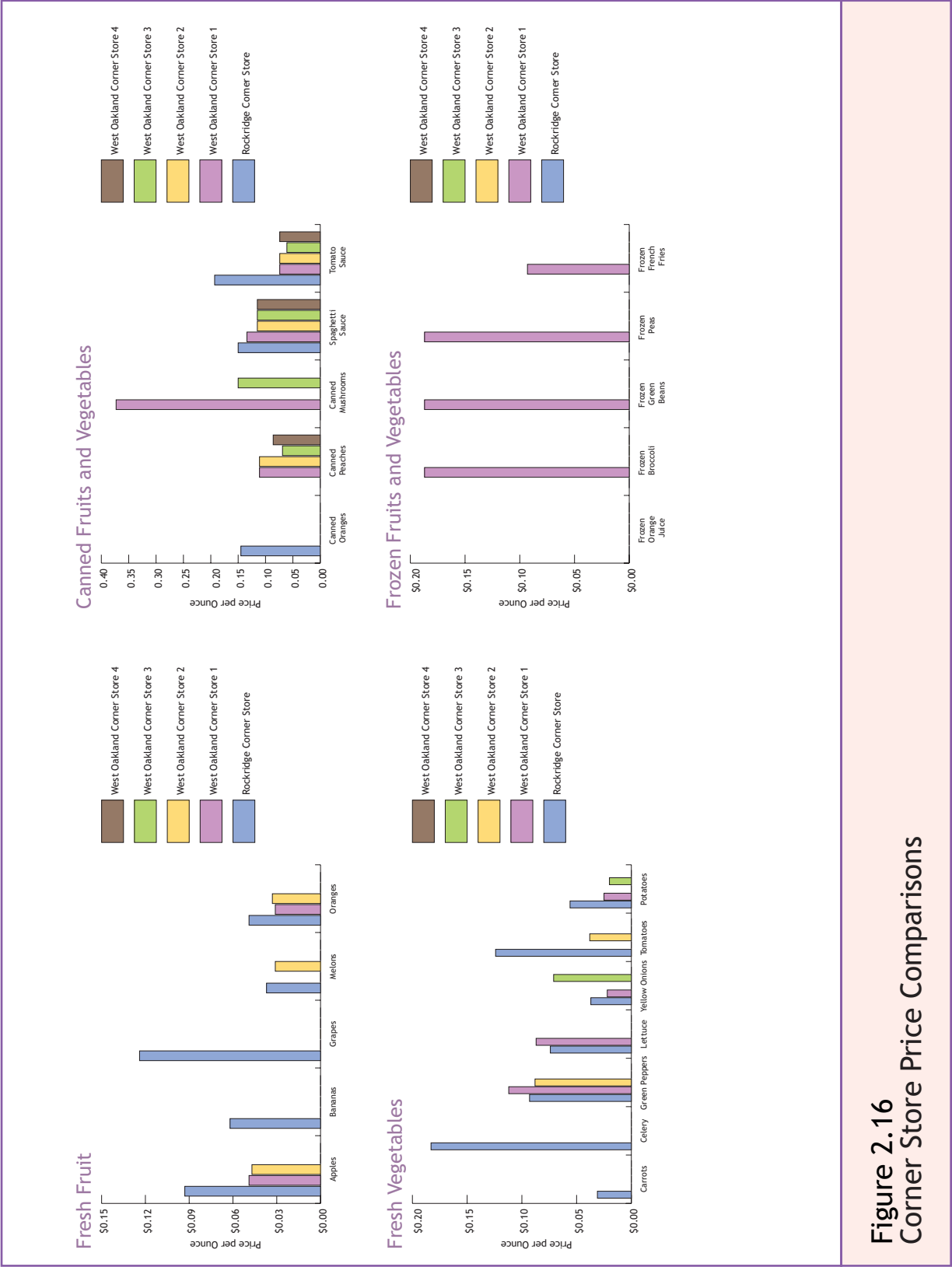


Figure 2.15
Supermarket Price Comparisons



	Rockridge Supermarket	Pill Hill Supermarket	Rockridge Corner Store	West Oakland Corner Stores
Apples	●	●	●	●
Bananas	●	●	●	○
Grapes	●	●	●	○
Melons	●	●	●	●
Oranges	●	●	●	●
Carrots	●	●	●	○
Celery	●	●	●	○
Green Peppers	●	●	●	●
Lettuce	●	●	●	●
Yellow Onions	●	●	●	●
Tomatoes	●	●	●	○
Potatoes	●	●	●	●
Canned Oranges	●	○	●	○
Canned Peaches	●	●	○	●
Canned Mushrooms	●	●	○	●
Spaghetti Sauce	●	●	●	●
Tomato Sauce	●	●	●	●
Frozen Orange Juice	●	●	○	○
Frozen Broccoli	●	○	○	○
Frozen Green Beans	●	○	○	○
Frozen Peas	●	●	○	○
Frozen French Fries	●	○	○	○

Figure 2.17
Availability Comparison

OBSTACLES

The main obstacle to food justice in West Oakland is lack of convenient access to healthy food. This point has been made again and again, in reports such as *The Thin Red Line, Neighborhood Groceries* and the *Oakland Food System Assessment*, and by experts such as Allison Pratt of the ACCFB and Brahm Ahmadi of People's Grocery.

Other major obstacles include lack of education about healthy eating, food advertising that pushes unhealthy food choices, the indifference of agribusiness and supermarkets toward poor urban populations, and a lack of connections between nearby small farmers and urban populations. Underlying many of these problems is the difficulty of securing land and capital to establish organizations and businesses to work for food justice.

SUMMARY OF KEY IDEAS AND FINDINGS

- Lack of food justice and the resulting poor nutrition is contributing to health epidemics such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
- The agribusiness and processed food industries have distanced themselves from problems of urban food

security

- Supermarkets have abandoned low-income communities
- The poor do not *want* to eat unhealthy diets, but they often have no choice
- Our country does not have a “stable culture of food”
- Our food comes from “a global everywhere, yet from nowhere that [we] know in particular”
- Reintroducing cooking and gardening skills would help people gain independence from agribusiness and learn better eating habits
- When all residents of a neighborhood are poor, the experience of each person is more difficult than it would be as one of a few poor people in an otherwise prosperous area with access to resources; auto-dependant planning exacerbates this problem
- It is very difficult for West Oakland residents to obtain fresh, healthy, and affordable food; as compared to Rockridge markets, healthy food in West Oakland is hard to find and is and of lower quality

CHAPTER 3

Achieving Food Justice: Theory and Practice

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Ordinary people should “declare food democracy,” and take back the local economy. By choosing to purchase locally grown products, “food democracy returns power to the eating public.” Shifting to a local food system requires a shift in consumer attitudes. Educating people to see value in nutritious food and a thriving local economy is one of the most important tasks of the local food movement.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter pairs summaries of common strategies for achieving food justice drawn from a review of current literature with case studies of several organizations throughout the country. Identifying the most written-about strategies and learning from what works in other communities will help identify ways to work for food justice in West Oakland.

ACHIEVING FOOD JUSTICE

The leading strategies for achieving food justice fall into six main categories: 1) creating a network of grocery stores by reintroducing supermarkets and retrofitting existing corner stores to sell produce; 2) reclaiming the local economy through direct marketing, recreating local distribution networks, and political action; 3) expanding urban agriculture efforts; 4) improving education about nutrition, cooking, and growing food; 5) improving access to the federal Food Stamp

program; and 6) and reducing unemployment.

These six strategies define the extent of current efforts to achieve food justice. They can be thought of as “action areas,” which must each be considered when working for food justice in any community. For the purposes of this report, I will focus on grocery stores, the local economy, urban agriculture, and education. Improving access to federal aid and reducing unemployment are very important tasks, but are beyond the scope of this project.

Here are several notable studies of success stories, examples of what can be accomplished with each strategy.

Grocery Stores: Reintroducing Supermarkets

As discussed in Chapter 2, supermarkets in low-income communities are few and far between. Reintroducing full-service grocery stores into low-income neighborhoods would significantly increase ease

of access to healthy food. As Wells Lawson of the Mandela Food Cooperative points out, the supply of healthy food must be in place if one is to create demand for that food.¹ PolicyLink, a nonprofit organization that promotes “policies to achieve economic and social equity”,² prepared a report entitled *Healthy Food, Health Communities* in which they outline a number of strategies for establishing new grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods. Rebecca Flournoy and Sarah Treuhaft, the principal authors of the report, point out that large markets require a large customer base. Maintaining profitability in a low-income area takes careful business planning. They go on to make recommendations to facilitate the establishment of new large-scale markets. First, new stores should use community organizations to help identify good potential employees, since managers will often be unfamiliar with local neighborhoods. Next, markets should offer free transportation with food purchases to increase the size of the potential customer base and the amount that each customer could transport. City departments should assist in selecting and obtaining appropriate sites. Finally, stores should study demographics and consumer preferences to aid them in stocking appropriate food choices.³

Grocery Stores: Corner Stores

Flournoy and Treuhaft point out that small stores have the added advantage of “relying on a smaller customer base and fitting into smaller spaces” than supermarkets. If many small stores with a good selection of healthy food are distributed throughout a neighborhood, more residents will be able to acquire healthy food within walking distance than if a single full-service grocery store were introduced. In the CFPA report *Neighborhood Groceries*, Bolen and Hecht explore the feasibility of maintaining small grocery stores in poor neighborhoods. Like PolicyLink’s recommendations for supermarkets, they conclude that if small stores choose their inventory carefully and have a large enough customer base, they can be successful. A collection of small stores could also form a “buying group” to achieve purchasing power similar to supermarkets. This would allow small stores to offer a larger selection at lower prices than would be possible if each store had to maintain an individual set of buying relationships with distributors.⁴

Bolen and Hecht outline another promising strategy for getting more small stores selling healthy produce into low-income communities. These neighborhoods often contain many convenience stores,

selling liquor, junk food, and various other nonperishable household goods. It is possible to retrofit existing corner stores to sell fresh produce, rather than bringing in entirely new stores. This option is often more feasible than establishing new stores; start-up costs are lower and a customer base is already in place.⁵

CFPA's study of School Market in the Fruitvale district of Oakland demonstrates that this strategy can be quite effective. This low-to moderate-income neighborhood, like West Oakland, is poorly served by supermarkets, and most small stores in the area do not carry nutritious foods. CFPA provided the services of an experienced mentor to Tom Ahmed, the owner of 1,300-square foot School Market. Nathan Cheng, the mentor, walked Ahmed through the process of converting to produce sales. CFPA and Ahmed himself provided funds for the conversion, and Cheng helped Ahmed with an advertising campaign. The retrofit has been quite a success. As Bolen and Hecht write,

“In the first month of the training period, School Market increased produce gross sales from under \$50 per week—typically from a few bags of potatoes—to more than \$500. By the end of the second month of training, the market

averaged \$600-700 in produce sales per week. The store sold more than 25 different fruits and vegetables, including some requested by new customers. The biggest sellers included bananas, apples, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, avocados, greens, onions, and lemons. During the same time period, milk sales increased five-fold. School Market's initial success has been sustained since the training period ended... Produce sales have remained constant, in the range of \$600-700/week even in the winter “down” period for fresh produce. Dairy sales have also maintained their higher levels.”⁶

In two months, this corner store increased its sales of produce fourteen-fold, proving that with careful planning and management, small stores can indeed successfully market produce in low-income communities. Retrofitting a small store to enable produce sales and providing a few months of training and mentorship is not enough to ensure long-term success. Succeeding in produce sales requires a determined store proprietor, the support of the community, and the support of people and agencies experienced with produce sales and corner store conversions.⁷ At School Market, Ahmed began to have trouble with a criminal element hanging out in front of his

store, which drove away some of his regular customers. Despite a burglary in 2005, produce sales have continued. Ahmed is optimistic about adding Mexican and Chinese food to meet the needs of his community.⁸

Grocery Stores: Case Study

PCC Natural Markets & PCC Farmland Trust in Seattle, WA



Type	of	Organization:
Cooperative	grocery	store with
seven	locations,	associated with a
farmland	trust	

Logo Source:
www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/farmtrust/

Contact: Trudy Bialic, Manager of Public Affairs

Mission: The co-op is dedicated to stocking local, organic foods and speaking out in support of sustainable agriculture.⁹ As stated in the co-op’s mission statement, “PCC Natural Markets provide the highest quality natural foods and products. We create and cultivate the marketplace for locally grown and organic products and are a vital community resource on food, nutrition, and environmental issues.”¹⁰ The Farmland Trust works to permanently protect Washington State farmland from development.¹¹ The mission of the Farmland Trust is to protect “land for farming and wildlife” along with “livelihood for farmers and farming communities,” to provide “local, fresh organic produce,” and to generate “loyalty between people who grow the food and the people who eat it.”¹²

Methods: The co-op has developed long-standing business relationships with growers in the Pacific Northwest. These growers supply most of the produce sold in the various PCC locations. PCC also publishes *The Sound Consumer*, which “is dedicated to informing and educating members and the public about food and agriculture, consumer concerns and co-op principles.”¹³ The co-op sponsors cooking classes, community events, and advocacy for local food and sustainable agriculture.¹⁴ The Trust purchases farmland outright, or protects it with conservation easements and bequests. Protected land is put into organic production permanently, and food grown on that land is often sourced to PCC markets.

Accomplishments: PCC Natural Markets has eight locations in the greater Seattle area. PCC Farmland Trust has preserved three farms since its founding in 1999, totaling 426.5 acres. The Trust helped the Sunfield Waldorf School save another 83-acre farm.¹⁵

Challenges: Farmland preservation is a race against the clock: Washington State lost 10% of its farms between 1997 and 2002, continuing a steady decline in the number of farms and number

of acres dedicated to farming.¹⁶

Lessons: Pairing a grocery store with a farmland trust streamlines the local food system, creating solid connections between growers and consumers.

Reclaiming the Local Economy

In *Eat Here*, Brian Halweil suggests that ordinary people should “declare food democracy,” and take back the local economy. By choosing to purchase locally grown products, “food democracy returns power to the eating public.” Halweil points out that global food corporations “have the power to demand low producer prices, while keeping consumer prices high.” But if small producers establish more direct links with markets in their area, they may be able to make a better living while helping local people gain access to better, more affordable food choices.¹⁷ One of the most impressive organizations that Halweil cites is the network of consumer cooperatives in Japan, which have 15 million members buying directly from farmers in a system similar to CSAs in this country. Bypassing the industrial food systems means that money spent on food could be reinvested in the community or region in which the food was grown. Because local production, processing and distribution networks have been systematically dismantled over the past decades, locally produced food is often priced higher than food grown and processed thousands of miles away. Both consumers and producers lose in this arrangement. Consumers don’t know where their food is coming from and pay more for processing

and shipping than for nutritional value, and farmers are paid very low prices for their crops. Americans have a distorted concept of appropriate food prices because the current industrial food system favors cheap, high-volume food production over all else, including maintaining the fertility of the land.¹⁸ The Spring 2001 issue of *The Natural Farmer* reports that for a 10-pound bag of potatoes that retails at \$1.91, the farmer was paid \$0.64.¹⁹ This means that most of the cost of food is added after it leaves the field. In “The Loss of Our Family Farms”, Mark Ritchie explains that our governmental policies have created “a two-tier system of agriculture, with a few large, corporate-type farms, and the remaining majority only farming part-time or on welfare.”²⁰

Locally produced food seems expensive for two main reasons. First, many farmers that sell to the local market also believe in sustainable farming practices, which result in higher food prices, but a much lower cost to society and the environment.²¹ Second, at the same time that many small farms have been forced out of business, the myriad of local processors and distributors that once served each region have been consolidated into centrally located entities. Local food must rely on a now-incomplete and less efficient distribution system. Networks are slowly being rebuilt through strategies such

as Community Supported Agriculture, Farmers' Markets, and Farm to School Programs. Enterprises such as People's Grocery are opening in neighborhoods that have been abandoned by traditional supermarkets. In *Weaving the Food Web: Community Food Security in California*, the Community Food Security Coalition has briefly documented many of these programs.²² Other efforts include improved transportation options such as the Neighborhood Ride program in Sacramento, California which provides shuttle services to supermarkets. Marco Barrantes' professional project, completed in UC Berkeley's Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning in the spring of 2004, offers an assessment of Berkeley's food security situation and provides resources for improvement efforts, including identification of possible urban agriculture sites, an explanation of how to find funding, and extensive profiles of existing programs and groups already working in the city.

Reclaiming the Local Economy: Case Studies

Toronto Food Policy Council, Toronto ON Canada



Type of Organization: Advocacy, Subcommittee of City Board of Health

Contact: Wayne Roberts, Project Coordinator

Mission: Dedicated to increasing public awareness of food security issues. Works to put food policy at the forefront of political agendas in Toronto. "The Toronto Food Policy Council partners with business and community groups to develop policies and programs promoting food security. Our aim is a food system that fosters equitable food access, nutrition, community development and environmental health."²³

Methods: An unusual partnership of urban and rural stakeholders, the Council is made up of "City Councillors, and volunteer representatives from consumer, business, farm, labour, multicultural, anti-hunger advocacy, faith, and community

development groups.”²⁴ The Council conducts research, writes discussion papers, raises funds, and advocates for policies that support local agriculture and equitable access to healthy food. The papers issued by TFPD are not official policy documents, but are intended to influence policymakers.²⁵

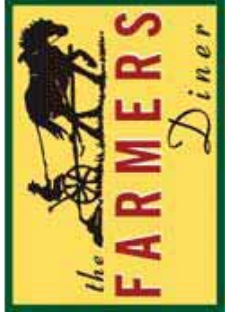
Accomplishments: Action areas for the TFPD include Food and Hunger; Health; Agricultural Land Preservation and Urban Planning; Economic Development; Urban Agriculture and Food Waste Recovery; Community Gardens; Communications, Capacity Building and Public Education.²⁶ A particularly effective effort was “a feasibility study of not-for-profit healthy food delivery system for Toronto’s low-income citizens.” The study resulted in the establishment of the “Field to Table” program, run by FoodShare since 1992. Field to Table “provides affordable, nourishing, regionally-sourced food to 15,000 people each month.”²⁷

Challenges: The Council is powerless to enact law, so must depend upon writing influential discussion papers and raising public awareness of food policy issues. As Sean Cosgrove of TFPD explains, a challenge facing any organization working

to change the structure of food systems is “the economic distortion generated by a global food system that does not use full-cost accounting for environmental and social cost-benefit analyses.”²⁸

Lesson: Political advocacy can influence governmental policies.

Farmers Diner in Quechee, VT



Logo Source:
www.farmersdiner.com

Type of Organization: Restaurant and central commissary

Contact: Tod Murphy, Founder

Mission: “The mission of The

Farmers Diner is to increase the economic vitality of local agrarian communities. The Farmers Diner creates great traditional [diner-style] foods using ingredients from farmers and producers who are as local as possible... We are shortening the road from the farm field to the diner plate... The Farmers Diner follows a simple design: buy great ingredients directly from area farmers and prepare great meals for local customers.”²⁹ Murphy plans to expand this model to provide regional food in communities across the country.³⁰

Methods: “The Farmers Diner is recreating the 1933 supply chain by connecting a web of producers with a central commissary and then distributing that food to The Farmers Diner restaurants.”³¹ Ultimately, diners will be grouped in “pods” of about five, served by one commissary for each pod.

Fresh farm products are delivered to the commissary, where they are processed before being delivered to the diner. This means that purchasing, delivery, and processing is handled in one location for each pod of diners, streamlining the process considerably. This model will be expandable indefinitely; when these pods are in place, each pod “will create an annual market of \$1,200,000 for local and regional farmers and producers.”³²

Accomplishment: One location of The Farmers Diner is open in Quechee, Vermont.

Challenges: Rebuilding local food distribution and processing infrastructure that has been dismantled over the last 60-70 years is an expensive task. Finding every necessary product within the region is made difficult because Vermont has lost much of its crop diversity due to the global food distribution model; each region of the world is encouraged to grow only what it grows best, and abandon other crops. Also, price competition with Big Food is difficult, since the industrial food system has the advantage of economy of scale and externalized costs, making the price of food artificially low.³³

Lessons: It is possible to compete with the industrial food

system by developing reliable relationships with local growers, streamlining the local distribution network, and reinvesting local money in the community. The demographics in Quechee, Vermont and West Oakland are very different, and Quechee is a semi-rural village, not an inner-city neighborhood. The most relevant aspect of this model for West Oakland is the concept of the pod, which can be adapted to other food retail models.

Growers' Collaborative, Southern California



Contact: Stephanie Johnson, General Manager

Mission: "Our goal is for our produce to reach you within 48 hours of being harvested so that it will be the freshest produce available to institutional customers in the California market."³⁴

Methods: Links small-scale growers with nearby large institutional clients such as schools, hospitals, and corporate cafeterias. Growers must practice organic, sustainable agricultural techniques. Purchasing is handled through an online ordering system.³⁵

Accomplishments: Online purchasing and delivery system in place for Ventura, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara Counties. Clients include Bon Appétit, a corporate food service management company. Educational programs accompanying farm-to-school efforts in low-income communities range from

lessons on the nutritional value of fruits and vegetable, to hands-on experience in school gardens. These programs “teach kids about the importance of eating healthy, but also simply to introduce them to the new experiences of eating fresh raw snap peas, crunchy broccoli, and sweet in-season tangerines.”³⁶

Challenges: Changing the purchasing patterns of large institutions will take long-term marketing campaigns to convince buyers that choosing local, healthy food is a priority. Competing with the low prices of enormous food distributors like Sysco is another challenge common to each organization working to rebuild the local economy.

Lessons: Large corporate or school clients are surprisingly open to buying from local organic growers if the process is easy. Large clients can be served by a collection of small growers if the ordering and distribution systems are efficiently designed.

Urban Agriculture

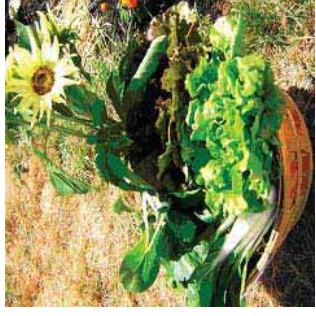
Urban Agriculture is defined by Wikipedia as “the practice of agriculture (including crops, livestock, fisheries, and forestry activities) within or surrounding the boundaries of cities.”³⁷ As demonstrated in Jac Smit’s writings for the Urban Agriculture Network, urban agriculture is on the rise in this country and around the world. Numerous organizations have sprung up to promote it, and the enormous capacity of the city to produce its own food is beginning to be appreciated. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a group of graduate students at Portland State University produced a report entitled *The Diggable City*, which identified opportunity sites for urban agriculture throughout the city of Portland, Oregon. Urban farms such as Greensgrow Farm in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania have opened in many urban centers. Some nations have gone so far as to create programs such as Argentina’s Pro-Huerta, a governmental organization designed to assist small-scale urban farmers.³⁸

The many forms that urban gardening may take and their economic and social benefits have been extensively documented in Laura Lawson’s *City Bountiful*.³⁹ Urban agriculture has the potential to put people from many walks of life in control of the sources

of their food. An interview with Sean Cosgrove of the Toronto Food Security Council, printed in *Community Greening Review*, addresses community gardens. Cosgrove feels that while community gardens cannot meet all the food needs of a neighborhood, they can “[make] the food system visible in urban areas.” This could provide an important starting point for organizing around the issue of food security.⁴⁰

Urban Agriculture: Case Study

Your Backyard Farmer, Portland OR



Logo Source:
www.yourbackyardfarmer.com

Type of Organization: Modified CSA

Contact: Donna Smith and Robyn Streeter

Mission: Your Backyard Farmer (YBF) provides “an innovative approach to Community Supported Agriculture thru urban backyard farming. Creating small sustainable organic farms at your backdoor. Providing fresh, in-season produce from your farm to your fork.”⁴¹ In a conversation with Smith, she stated that ultimately, “it’s about feeding the people.”⁴²

Methods: Instead of operating as a traditional CSA, with one farm delivering produce boxes to a set of clients, Streeter and Smith farm fragments all over the Portland metropolitan area. They typically work in their clients’ backyards, and for prices that are similar to or lower than CSA prices, they deliver fresh food to the doorstep.⁴³ Their website explains that “Farm sizes

depend upon the size of the family; typically a 20 x 20 sq ft area will feed a family of 4. A 15 x 15 sq ft will feed a vegetarian family of 2-3. A 10 x 10 sq ft plot will feed an individual or family of 2.”⁴⁴ YBF employs organic farming techniques, and all work is done by hand, with no heavy equipment. Planting is scheduled for a complete rotation of food through the entire growing season, ensuring a steady supply of produce for their clients. Weekly fees range from \$25-50 depending on the size of the farm, and are somewhat flexible according to income level. Your Backyard Farmer also has an informal partnership with Growing Gardens, an organization that helps low-income residents build their own backyard gardens. Growing Gardens supplies materials, seeds and transplants for three years, and mentoring for the first year. This program is similar to City Slicker Farms’ Backyard Garden Building Program, which I will describe in the following chapters. People who cannot afford YBF are directed to Growing Greener, and people who hear about Growing Greener but do not meet their income requirements are directed to Your Backyard Farmer.⁴⁵

Accomplishments: In Oregon, a farm can be composed of 50 parcels within a 100-mile radius, and still be legally considered

a farm. Smith and Streeter currently have 24 backyard farms in the ground, and plan to increase to 50 by next year.⁴⁶ Their clients are located all over the metropolitan area, and represent a broad range of income levels. In addition to providing farming services, Smith and Streeter teach their clients the skills they need to eventually take over farming their own yards, if they have the time and interest. The business has been successful from the beginning; Smith reports that they have been able to cut themselves paychecks since the second week of operation.⁴⁷ Clients tell that having access to their newfound “backyard bounty” inspires them to learn to cook better and healthier meals. As one client put it, “I know that if I have produce that’s really yummy and good, I’ll eat much more of it.”⁴⁸

Challenges: YBF would like to establish a large farm to act as a CSA for Portland residents who do not have space for a backyard farm. They are working with the city to obtain land, but it is a slow process.⁴⁹

Lessons: This operation reveals an untapped market. When the business was launched, the first telephone inquiries came in the same day fliers were posted, with the first farm sold the

next day. After the Oregonian ran an article on the business, they received 500 calls overnight. With 24 farms established in their first year, YBF promises to fill a new niche in local food production.⁵⁰ Helping people take advantage of the agricultural potential of their own backyards can give people better, more affordable food choices, maximize the utility of urban land, and increase knowledge about food and nutrition.

Education

From a nutritionist's perspective, Rhonda Dale Terry writes in *Introductory Community Nutrition* that according to the theory of health locus-of-control, it is important to help people see *how* dietary choices affect health, and to give them the knowledge and resources necessary to control their nutrition problems. This includes teaching people to read food labels critically, and ensuring access to food, nutrition information, and health care.⁵¹

In Chapter 2, we learned that creating demand for healthy food is a big part of nutrition education. We can begin to address our society's lack of nutrition knowledge and cooking and gardening skills by offering classes and mentoring programs through community centers, nonprofits, and other organizations. The Alameda County Community Food Bank maintains a long list of partner agencies, many of which offer such classes, and Allison Pratt stresses that education is a critical component for changing eating behavior.⁵² Organizations have sprung up in cities around the country that offer nutrition, cooking, and gardening classes.

Shifting to a local food system will require a shift in consumer attitudes as well. As New York State organic vegetable farmer

David Stern put it, “[what] I don’t understand is the consumer, who eats shit that kills them. I don’t know what’s going to get to them. I don’t see or know them as an ally.”⁵³ He cites an article in the *Finger Lakes Times*, in which a local woman stated, “I hate spending money on food. I could take this money and buy something useful.”⁵⁴ Educating people to see value in nutritious food and a thriving local economy is one of the most important tasks of the local food movement.

One possible strategy for changing consumer attitudes toward the industrial food system is to introduce labeling at the point of sale that lists geographic origin, number of gallons of gasoline consumed and square meters of carbon emitted during shipping, and pounds of chemical fertilizer applied during cultivation. The Community Alliance with Family Farmers prepared a study of the origin, path and carbon footprint of every food item on hospital food service menus for Kaiser Permanente, a large health care provider. For example, the CAFF “carbon calculator” revealed that every pineapple shipped to California generates 13 square meters of carbon. When consumers are provided with more complete information on the true cost of their purchasing decisions, they may begin to change their behavior.⁵⁵

Education: Case Studies

City Farmer, Vancouver BC



Photograph:
Courtesy of City Farmer

Type of Organization: Education and nonprofit information clearinghouse

Contact: Mike Levenston,
Executive Director

Mission: City Farmer “promotes urban food production and environmental conservation.”⁵⁶

Methods: Operating since 1981 with a mostly part-time staff, City Farmer runs educational programs on topics ranging from backyard composting to Integrated Pest Management. Classes are held at their 2500 ft² Compost Demonstration Garden, located in Kitsilano, a Vancouver neighborhood. The staff test new techniques in the garden, and pass along information on successful techniques. The grounds of their office, from the front walk to the backyard, act as a collection of demonstration projects on natural lawn care, green roofs, natural building techniques, composting, intensive gardening, composting

toilets, and rainwater harvesting. Since 1992, they have also maintained a website that is a wealth of information on urban agriculture. There are how-to pages, descriptions of experimental projects, links to other urban agriculture organizations around the world, copies of research papers, and a wide variety of other documents.⁵⁷

Accomplishments: The organization gives out roughly 300 worm bins each year, providing training and \$100 worth of materials for \$25 to anyone who enrolls in their composting classes. This is said to be the largest distribution of compost bins by a nonprofit in the world. City Farmer also provides the useful service of free publicity for urban agriculture organizations, and their online knowledge base helps connect individuals and organizations with common interests and goals. Seeing their role as information sharing rather than lobbying, they have provided a public face for urban agriculture efforts in Canada, appearing in the media frequently.⁵⁸

Challenges: The demonstration garden is located on publicly owned land in a popular Vancouver neighborhood. Because of land prices and desirability of the neighborhood, the site could

be vulnerable to development pressure. Obtaining an easement would be costly, but may be the best option.⁵⁹

Lessons: A small organization dedicated to testing urban gardening techniques and sharing their knowledge can help a community build its knowledge base, incubate interest in alternative uses for urban land, and share resources.

ALBA, Monterey CA



Logo Source:
www.albafarmer.org/about.php

Type of Organization: Nonprofit education

Contact: Brett Melone, Executive Director

Mission: “Our mission is to advance economic viability, social equity and ecological land management among limited-resource and aspiring farmers. Our goal is to create greater economic opportunities for small farms while promoting ecological land management and healthy local foods.”⁶⁰

Methods: “ALBA carries out its mission through training, demonstration, technical and marketing assistance, and access to land, at its two bi-lingual education centers in Salinas and Watsonville.”⁶¹ The ALBA model allows aspiring farmers to learn in a limited-risk environment, taking classes and leasing land at much less than market rate. ALBA also has an established network of buyers that new farmers may use. The first program that ALBA trainees complete is the *Programa Educativo para*

Pequeños Agricultores (PEPA), or Small Farmer Education Program. PEPA is a six-month course that covers all aspects of running a small organic farm. After PEPA, trainees may participate in the Aspiring Farmer Apprenticeship Program, where they farm a plot of land at the Rural Development Center. Aspiring farmers receive technical assistance, the support of a community of farmers, reduced rates for land rental and other costs, and the opportunity to market their products through *ALBA Organics*, which has an established network of buyers already in place.⁶²

Accomplishments: ALBA maintains two farm training centers and recently established *ALBA Organics*. The PEPA curriculum is accredited, and ALBA is cultivating relationships with farm-to-school programs. Over 500 farming families have benefited from ALBA’s work. Giving farmworkers the opportunity to transition to organic techniques and ultimately own their own farm has significant benefits, allowing these aspiring farmers to eliminate their exposure to toxic chemicals and better their economic circumstances.⁶³

Challenges: Making small-scale organic farming economically

viable is ALBA's ongoing challenge.⁶⁴

Lessons: Hands-on training in a reduced-risk environment is a very effective way to equip aspiring farmers with the skills they need to run a successful operation and take control of their economic situation.

Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI), Philadelphia PA

Type of Organization: University-Community Partnership

Contact: Danny Gerber, Director



Logo Source:
www.urbannutrition.org/about.html

Mission: The UNI website states “the Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI) is a university-community partnership that engages K-16+ learners in an active, real-world problem-solving curriculum that strives to improve community nutrition and wellness.”⁶⁵ This is accomplished by the use of a K-16 curriculum involving the University of Pennsylvania and nearby West Philadelphia public schools. The curriculum centers on “growing, cooking, eating and selling healthy foods.”⁶⁶ Programs are geared toward “increasing food and nutrition knowledge”, “increasing the supply of healthy foods”, and “encouraging and supporting active lifestyles.”⁶⁷

Methods: UNI runs several programs, spanning the school day and the entire calendar year. Programs during the school day include hands-on gardening lessons in gardens located on school grounds, food and nutrition lessons integrated into several

school subject areas, lunchtime cooking lessons, and fruit and vegetable stands in the schoolyard at the end of the school day. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, May through November, UNI students run a farmers' market stand selling produce from school gardens. UNI also offers job training in "urban agriculture, entrepreneurship and peer education." Trainings are offered after school and over the summer. Community outreach includes fitness and health programs offered to parents and other community residents.⁶⁸

Accomplishments: UNI runs a large garden, a greenhouse, and a farm. Their produce is sold at the Powelton Village Farmers' Market. UNI is working with several high school students to start a food coop in Mill Creek, another West Philadelphia neighborhood. Fitness programs are held at University City High School's athletic facilities, and youth development projects include a six-week long summer internship program that allows students to work 20 hours per week on a number of projects, ranging from gardening to peer education to drawing up a business plan for the future food coop.⁶⁹ The impact of some UNI programs has been quantified. A report drawn up by Penn anthropologist Francis E. Johnston and the UNI staff indicates

that the UNI fruit and vegetable stand has a positive influence on after-school snacking choices. On the day after the produce stand is open, fruit snacks almost double, and vegetable snacks almost triple. Compared with a non-UNI elementary school, UNI students choose healthier snacks even when the stand is not open.⁷⁰ UNI has received national recognition for its efforts: "in 2003 [UNI] was recognized with the National Academy of the Sciences' Best Youth Development Program Award and the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society's Best Schoolyard Garden Award. UNI was also recognized by the Robert Wool Johnson foundation as one of four national models for addressing the obesity epidemic and improving health and fitness in children and youth."⁷¹

Challenges: Expanding or duplicating the UNI model is an important next step. After more than a decade, UNI is operating at three schools and one church. The model is working well at the schools involved, but reaching a greater percentage of West Philadelphia children should be a priority. UNI describes itself as "[striving] to serve as a model for effective school-based health promotion programs that can be adopted and adapted to meet the needs of schools and communities around the world",

and is acknowledged as an effective organization. Next steps might include outreach and training for organizations interested in duplicating the model.

Lessons: Integrating education about food, nutrition and gardening into the curriculum of public schools ensures that children are exposed to healthy food and learn about healthy lifestyles from an early age. Giving children the opportunity to grow and sell healthy food increases their enthusiasm for healthy food, and often influences the eating habits of the entire family.

Edible Schoolyard, Martin Luther King Middle School, Berkeley, CA



Logo Source:
www.edibleschoolyard.org/homepage.html

Type of Organization: Nonprofit-run educational program based in a public school

Contact: Marsha Guerrero,
Director Special Projects, Chez
Panisse Foundation

Mission: “The mission of the Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School is to create and sustain an organic garden and landscape that is wholly integrated into the school’s curriculum and lunch program. It involves the students in all aspects of farming the garden – along with preparing, serving and eating the food – as a means of awakening their senses and encouraging awareness and appreciation of the transformative values of nourishment, community, and stewardship of the land.”⁷²

Methods: Instruction in the Edible Schoolyard is hands-on; students participate in every step of raising food plants:

garden maintenance, soil preparation, planting, cultivation, and harvesting. After harvest, they taste produce fresh from the garden, and learn to prepare food in the associated kitchen.⁷³

Accomplishments: According to the Chez Panisse Foundation website, over 3000 students at Martin Luther King Middle School have gone through the Edible Schoolyard program.

Challenges: Staff turnover and limited funding are perennial problems in urban public schools. Long-term success of a school-based program like this one depends upon dedicated staff and reliable funding. The support of the Chez Panisse Foundation is instrumental to the success of the Edible Schoolyard; other schools hoping to take on a project of this magnitude must plan for long-term funding and permanent staff.

Lessons: Hands-on childhood education is an excellent way to help people develop a taste and appreciation for healthy food that is likely to be lifelong. A parent wrote the following on their personal blog page: “In the garden, the children taste things they’ve helped grow. They feed the chickens. They learn about what fertilizer does. Did I mention that they taste things? It’s a big deal for all of them — they’re in there being asked to

put a tomato, or a pepper, or a piece of chard in their mouths. At home, they are unlikely to ever do this. At school, they do it at least half the time, if not more. At least half of THAT time, they discover a new taste they like. The other day my son told me, out of the blue, that he likes mint.”⁷⁴ The Edible Schoolyard has been operating since 1996, proving that idealistic programs like this can have real staying power when a reliable funding source and dedicated staff are in place.

Federal Aid: Increasing Access to Food Stamps

In her article “Sustainable Agriculture and Domestic Hunger,” Katherine Clancy documents the morally troubling reality of “want in the midst of plenty.” She suggests that if supply and demand could be realigned, the poor would not have to rely on surpluses, and farmers would not have to rely on price supports. She, with many others, feels that improving the food stamp program might be one of the keys to achieving food justice, so that the poor can participate in the money economy and make their own food and nutrition choices.⁷⁵

Pratt explains that the Food Bank’s number one strategy for helping their clients graduate from emergency food sources is to help people sign up for food stamps. There is considerable mythology and stigma surrounding food stamps, and the food bank works to overcome this as much as possible. Many people believe that in order to qualify for food stamps, you cannot have a job or own your own home. Many undocumented immigrants do not know that their US-born children are eligible for food stamp benefits. Many people feel ashamed that they need assistance, and may not know that the new food stamp program includes a card that looks and functions

like an ordinary debit card. The Food Bank also works for cost-of-living adjustments to the food stamp program, because the federal guidelines use the same income categories for the entire nation, despite the fact that it is more expensive to live in the Bay Area.⁷⁶

California Food Policy Advocates are working to link food stamps with MediCal and Healthy Families, two California low-cost health insurance plans. They hope to make food stamp eligibility an automatic benefit of these programs.⁷⁷ Extending that line of reasoning, if food stamps could be accepted at twice their face value when spent on fresh fruits and vegetables, demand for and access to these healthy foods might increase considerably in low-income communities. If the federal government committed to funding this innovation, the resulting health benefits and accompanying lower health care costs would likely be significant.

Reducing Unemployment

Another article in Community Greening Review quotes Mohammed Neru, former executive director of the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, stating, “it is time that Federal policies realize the need for grassroots economic initiatives, instead of the so-called welfare reform that further separates low-income communities

from sources of healthy food.”⁷⁸ In addition to linking low-income communities with better food sources, it is also important to address poverty and underemployment. This is an extremely complicated issue, and has to do with the structure of our society and the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor.

TOOLKIT OF STRATEGIES

Though these organizations are operating in other communities with other resources, populations and restrictions, certain strategies are robust enough to be adapted to other communities. The key lessons gleaned from this series of case studies are:

- **Pairing a grocery store with a farmland trust streamlines the local food system, creating solid connections between growers and producers.** People’s Grocery could adapt this model, sourcing food from their own farms, and from farms they help protect.
- **Political advocacy can influence governmental policies.** Developing relationships with political leaders and advocacy groups will help promote the work of People’s Grocery.
- **It is possible to create and alternative to the industrial**

food system by developing reliable relationships with local growers, streamlining the local distribution network, and reinvesting local money in the community. An important task for People’s Grocery will be working with like-minded organizations to rebuild the local distribution and processing infrastructure that has been lost over the past decades.

- **Large corporate or school clients are surprisingly open to buying from local organic growers if the process is easy. Large clients can be served by a collection of small growers if the ordering and distribution systems are efficiently designed.** People’s Grocery could adapt this model to source food for a network of small grocery stores and one or more full-service grocery stores.
- **Helping people take advantage of the agricultural potential of their own backyards can give people better, more affordable food choices, maximize the utility of urban land, and increase knowledge about food and nutrition.** City Slicker Farms has already begun a program helping people set up their own backyard gardens; People’s Grocery could help them expand this program to include

farming services provided by PG staff.

- **Hands-on training in a reduced-risk environment is a very effective way to equip aspiring farmers with the skills they need to run a successful operation and take control of their economic situation.** People's Grocery could offer a similar program in their network of urban farms and nearby periurban farms.
- **Integrating education about food, nutrition and gardening into the curriculum of public schools ensures that children are exposed to healthy food and lifestyles from a young age. Giving children the opportunity to grow and sell healthy food increases their enthusiasm for healthy food, and often influences the eating habits of the entire family.** People's Grocery could partner with local schools to incorporate food, nutrition and gardening lessons into the curriculum, and give children the opportunity for hands-on learning in school gardens.

CAVEATS

It is important to remember that any organization seeking to adapt any of the strategies detailed here should not blindly apply a method

that works in one community without making adjustments to fit the particular characteristics of the community they are working in. A central challenge to building a strong local foodshed is how to educate consumers to see the long-term value of healthy and somewhat local foods when they have been conditioned to expect the artificially low prices of the Big Food industry.

CHAPTER 4

Ongoing Efforts in West Oakland: Inventory and Analysis

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The number one cause of death in West Oakland is not violence, but heart disease.

INTRODUCTION

I am certainly not the first to attempt to address the problem of food justice in West Oakland, nor is the People's Grocery the only West Oakland organization dedicated to this issue. The trend is positive, but much remains to be done. This chapter describes the efforts of several organizations operating in West Oakland. They are all working to improve access to healthy, affordable food. They work toward this goal in a variety of ways, ranging from City Slicker Farms' network of minifarms and sliding scale produce price structure, to the People's Grocery mobile market that drives through the neighborhood, to the establishment of the Mandela Farmers' Market by Mo' Better Food and the West Oakland Food Collaborative.

FOOD JUSTICE EFFORTS IN WEST OAKLAND

In their master's project, *A Food Systems Assessment for Oakland, CA: Toward a Sustainable Food Plan*, Serena Unger and Heather Wooten of the UC Berkeley Department of City and Regional Planning described many of these organizations, and many others throughout the city of Oakland. For the purposes of this document,

I will describe several organizations operating in West Oakland in more detail, in hopes that by listing the various strengths of these groups, it may be possible to find ways to collaborate and meet the common goal of food justice for West Oakland.

CASE STUDIES

To better describe the variety of efforts, this section lays out case studies of several West Oakland food justice organizations. The first set of case studies describe the focus areas, contact person, mission, methods, accomplishments, challenges, lessons and innovations of People's Grocery, City Slicker Farms, and the Alameda County Community Food Bank. Following these is an outline of the contributions of several other organizations. Figure 4.2 maps the location of many of these organizations and their major projects in the neighborhood.

	Establishment/Conversion of Stores	Direct Marketing	Alternative Marketing	Gardens	Farms	Education-Nutrition	Education-Growing	Emergency Food	Economic Development	Urban-Rural Outreach	Partnership Building
People's Grocery	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
City Slicker Farms		•	•	•	•	•					•
Mo' Better Foods/Mandela Farmers' Market	•	•	•			•		•		•	
Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardens		•		•		•		•	•	•	•
Alameda County Community Food Bank						•					•
West Oakland Food Collaborative*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
St. Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room							•				

* Consortium of several organizations

Table 4.1
Food Justice Organizations Operating in West Oakland

Legend

- ☆ People's Grocery - Temporary Location
- ☆ People's Grocery - Wellness Village
- ☆ People's Grocery - Garden/Farm
- ☆ People's Grocery - Office
- ▲ City Slicker Farms - Garden/Farm
- ▲ City Slicker Farms - Office
- Mandela MarketPlace - Project
- Mandela MarketPlace - Office
- ◆ Mo' Better Food - Farmers' Market
- ◆ OBUGS - Garden
- ◆ OBUGS - Office
- ◆ OBUGS - Teaching Site
- Saint Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room
- McClymonds Culinary Arts Program



Figure 4.2
Map of Food Justice Organizations Operating in West Oakland

Narrative Case Studies

People's Grocery



Logo Source:
www.peoplesgrocery.org

Type of Organization: Nonprofit

Focus Areas: Establishment/
Conversion of Stores, Direct
Marketing, Alternative Marketing,
Gardens, Farms, Education-
Nutrition, Education-Growing,
Economic Development, Urban-
Rural Outreach, Partnership
Building

Contact: Brahm Ahmadi, Co-Founder and Executive Director

Mission: The People's Grocery website states "the number one cause of death in West Oakland is not violence, but heart disease."¹ This sobering fact is one of the driving forces behind the organization's work. The organization's mission "is to develop a self-reliant, socially just and sustainable food system in West Oakland through community-based, youth-focused and innovative social enterprises, urban agricultural projects,



Posters at the Food & Justice Camp
photo: www.peoplesgrocery.org



Mobile Market
photo: www.peoplesgrocery.org

educational programs and public policy initiatives that foster healthy, equitable and ecological community development.”²

This mission is also expressed in the organization’s stated goals:

- Short-Term Goals:
 1. Expand our nutrition education programs to a larger audience
 2. Develop additional urban gardens in Oakland
 3. Expand our farm from 2 acres to 5 acres and increase annual yield by 30%
 4. Build programs for youth tied to employment and leadership development.
 5. Develop a full-service cooperative grocery store in West Oakland
- Long-Term Goals:
 1. Educate residents about food systems, sustainable agriculture, health eating & nutrition.
 2. Provide access to locally grown, healthy, and affordable food.
 3. Engage youth as active participants in their

food system.

4. Promote self-reliance through employment, training, and local business development.
5. Produce food locally and promote urban and sustainable agriculture.
6. Build a sustainable, effective, well-functioning staff and organization.³

Ahmadi hopes to someday run a much larger farm that connects directly with the planned grocery store location, modeled loosely on PCC Natural Markets and Land Trust.⁴

Methods: People’s Grocery runs several interrelated programs, covering nutrition education, reduction of diet-related diseases, urban agriculture, support for local food systems, youth development, and employment. Programs include the Mobile Market, AgPark, nutrition education, youth development, and planning for full-service cooperative grocery store. Longer term planning includes localizing the distribution, processing and packing of food, and ultimately selling local produce under the People’s Grocery label.⁵ Current programs include:

- *Healthy Snack Delivery Program*, providing nutritious

snacks and nutrition education to Oakland schools and after-school programs

- *Bulk Buying Program*: makes high-quality organic food available at wholesale prices
- *Mobile Market*: Truck drives a set route through the neighborhood twice weekly, offering fresh, healthy food at wholesale prices to more than 400 members.
- *AgPark*: People's Grocery has a 2-acre plot in Sunol as part of the AgPark established by Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE), where produce is grown for distribution in West Oakland. Also provides jobs for youth.

Sunol AgPark

photo: www.peoplesgrocery.org

- *Urban Gardens*: Five gardens in West and North Oakland. Two are in association with schools, one with the YMCA. Provides organic produce, community gathering place, and hands-on learning. Weekly workdays at each garden provide opportunities for the community to get involved. Locations include:

- 55th Street Community Garden, 1167 55th Street
- Y Garden, 3265 Market Street



55th Street Garden

photo: www.peoplesgrocery.org

- Hoover Garden, 890 Brockhurst Street
- Ralph Bunche Garden & Greenhouse (with CSF), 1240 18th Street
- 59th Street Spiral Garden (with Spiral Gardens), 888 59th Street
- *Backyard Gardening Assistance*: In conjunction with City Slicker Farms; see description in CSF section.
- *Food & Justice Camp*: Educational camp for low-income youth, covering food systems, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and physical activity.
- *Adult Nutritional Cooking Class*: Series of classes geared toward learning to prepare healthy, balanced meals.
- *Garden Nutrition Program*: Gardening, nutrition and cooking classes for kids.
- *Peer-2-Peer Education Program*: Classes taught by young people to young people, covering nutrition and healthy eating.
- *Be-Heal-thy Team*: Puts together a series of events for young people, revolving around nutrition and healthy eating.⁶

Planned programs include:

- *Growing Food, Jobs and Justice*: A newly proposed program that will connect local restaurants with local produce, including the Sunol farm. This for-profit venture will capitalize on the cachet value of local food to help fund the non-profit aspects of PG.
- *SOUL Box*: Another newly proposed program, this is a modified CSA that will provide “seasonal organic unrefined local” (SOUL) food to low-income consumers, especially food stamp recipients. This program will depend partly on the proceeds from *Growing Foods* for funding.
- *Cooperative Grocery Store*: The store is scheduled to open within 1½ -2 years, and will be the first full-service grocery store to operate in West Oakland in several years. The site will include an extensive demonstration garden, and the store itself will include a teaching kitchen offering cooking and nutrition classes. The relationship between the store and the AgPark will be unusual; very few grocery stores are also involved in growing their own food.⁷

Accomplishments: Established in 2001 by Brahm Ahmadi and Malaika Edwards, People’s Grocery now supports the impressive list of programs listed above. The two-acre farm was planted for the first time in the summer of 2006, and is expected to expand over the coming years. In 2006, Mobile Market membership increased to 411 customers, the network of gardens produced 1,895 lbs of food, and 1,070 children received healthy snacks every week.⁸

Challenges: Ahmadi points out that there is a disconnection between different aspects of the production chain, with the result that “real localism” is an elusive goal.⁹ Goals for the future include establishing a “local, closed-loop food system that provides local jobs” and encompasses growing, processing and retailing.¹⁰ West Oakland is a geographically large neighborhood, and reaching a significant portion of the population is difficult. The full-service grocery store will greatly increase PG’s impact on the community.

Lessons and Innovations: Working with the community to strengthen the neighborhood from within is more effective than bringing in teams composed entirely of outsiders. PG has been

quite successful in involving neighborhood children, youth and adults, making their impact on the community much more personal. The Mobile Market is a fresh new idea in alternative marketing, and the SOUL Box has great potential. Approaching the problem of achieving food justice with a diversity of programs allows PG to gauge which programs are working, and make adjustments to better serve the neighborhood. Developing some programs that will bring in a profit will allow PG to run other programs that would ordinarily require outside funding.

City Slicker Farms



Logo Source:
www.cityslickerfarms.org

Type of Organization:

Nonprofit

Focus Areas: Direct Marketing,
Alternative Marketing, Gardens,
Farms, Education-Nutrition,
Education-Growing, Partnership
Building

Contact: Willow Rosenthal, Executive Director

Mission: “We prioritize serving vulnerable low-income communities of color who have least access [sic] to fresh organic produce. Our farms promote positive health outcomes; empower children and adults to learn about the connection between ecology, farming and the urban environment; demonstrate the viability of a local food-production system; and promote self-reliance.”¹¹

Methods: City Slicker Farms operates a network of seven community gardens and minifarms, helps residents to establish backyard gardens, and accepts donations of food scraps for their



Center Street Farm
Aerial imagery: TerraServer



Chicken & Bee Hives
photo: www.cityslickerfarms.org



Urban Farming
photo: www.cityslickerfarms.org

composting operation. Programs include:

- *Urban Farming:* A network of market farms on formerly vacant lots are cultivated to provide organic produce directly to curbside farm stands and to the Mandela Farmers' Market. Locations include:
 - The Annex Farm, 1167 5th Street
 - Center Street Farm, 16th and Center Streets
 - Jubilee West Garden, 1485 8th Street
 - The Secret Garden, 5105 Genoa Street
 - West Oakland Woods Farm, 537 Lewis Street
 - Ralph Bunche School Nursery, 1240 18th Street (with PG)
 - Orinda Farm, 69 Oak Road, Orinda¹²

- *Backyard Garden Building Program:* Piloted in 2004, and by 2005 ten backyard gardens had been installed. They hope to reach 50 more residents in 2006.¹³ This program helps residents to establish their own gardens by providing a raised bed, a trellis, a fruit tree, and vegetable starts. A team that helps the resident to build their garden delivers the materials, and follow-up

advice and materials are available through the Alameda County Master Gardeners program.¹⁴

- *Compost program:* Picking up scraps on bicycle rickshaws, CSF composts “wood chips and sawdust, restaurant and home kitchen scraps, garden clippings, and animal manure.”¹⁵ The finished products are used in CSF farms, or delivered to residents by rickshaw.
- *Educational workshops:* A series of free garden, nutrition and cooking classes.¹⁶
- *Seed saving:* CSF propagates plants for their gardens and for sale.¹⁷
- *Volunteer opportunities:* All CSF programs depend on volunteer labor.¹⁸
- *West Oakland Food Resources Newsletter:* Established in 2005, the newsletter is published three times per year and includes profiles of West Oakland food justice organizations, articles on health and nutrition, a calendar, and a map of West Oakland urban agriculture projects.¹⁹

Accomplishments: Established in 2001 by Willow Rosenthal and Nancy Eastep and financially supported by OBUGS, CSF

tracked their accomplishments in 2004 and 2005. The six gardens and urban market farms yielded 3,000 pounds of organic produce in 2004, and 5,000 pounds in 2005. They hope to generate 8,000 pounds in 2006. The produce, eggs and seedlings are sold at the Center Street Farm, and at the Mandela Farmers' Market. They continue to host free gardening workshops and school visits, and the Backyard Garden Building Program grows steadily.²⁰

Challenges: West Oakland is a large neighborhood, and reaching a significant portion of the population is difficult. None of CSF's programs bring in significant revenue, so the organization is dependent on financial sponsorship from groups such as OBUGS.

Lessons and Innovations: Everything sold by CSF is priced on a sliding scale with three categories: Free Spirit, Just Getting By, and Sugar Daddy/Sugar Mamma. Customers pay nothing at all, Safeway prices, or Whole Foods prices, respectively.²¹ The *Backyard Garden Building Program* allows residents to enjoy a certain level of autonomy in obtaining a healthy diet and lifestyle. The composting program makes sustainable waste management practices visible and understandable.

Partnership Potential: CSF and PG are already collaborating on the *Backyard Garden Building Program*. Other areas for partnership could include classes and composting.

Alameda County Community Food Bank



**ALAMEDA COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK** Type of Organization:
Nonprofit

Logo Source:
www.accfb.org

Focus Areas: Education-Nutrition, Education-Growing,
Emergency Food, Partnership Building

Contact: Suzan Bateson, Executive Director

Mission: “To alleviate hunger by providing nutritious food and nutrition education to people in need, educating the public and promoting public policies that address hunger *and its root causes*”²² (emphasis added). They are dedicated to increasing access to underused federal programs such as Food Stamps and WIC, and have set the ambitious goal of *eliminating* childhood hunger in Alameda County.²³

Methods: Established in 1985, the Alameda County Community Food Bank is a very unusual food bank. In addition to the traditional role of providing emergency food to those in need, the ACCFB is very active in advocacy and outreach. An important component of the Food Bank’s work is centered on nutrition education. According to Teresa Harnden Lambert,



Alameda County Community Food Bank, Oakland CA
photo: www.accfb.org/tour.html



Food Bank Refrigerator
photo: www.accfb.org/tour.html



Warehouse Staging Area
photo: www.accfb.org/tour.html

the Food Bank's Nutrition Education Coordinator, curricula developed so far include:

- *Kids Can Cook*: a hands-on approach to nutrition education for children
- *Nutrition In Recovery*: geared toward recovering addicts
- *Foods that Boost Immunity*: designed to assist HIV patients in improving their health²⁴

Pratt emphasized that marketing, or creating demand, is an important part of nutrition education. Giving fresh produce to someone is unhelpful if that person does not want to use that food, or know how to prepare it. She laments that it is “so ironic that in California, where we grow enough produce to feed the entire nation, agricultural workers and the urban poor can’t afford to buy produce.”²⁵ The Food Bank’s main strategy for helping their clients graduate from emergency food sources is to help people sign up for food stamps. As explained in Chapter 3, this often involves dispelling myths about food stamps and addressing feelings of shame associated with asking for assistance. In addition to these advocacy and outreach

programs, ACCFB acts as a traditional food bank. ACCFB is a member of America’s Second Harvest, California Association of Food Banks, and California Hunger Action Coalition. Day-to-day activities include soliciting donations of food and capital, organizing shipments and donations as they come in, and coordinating the work of 300 member organizations.²⁶

Accomplishments: The Food Bank serves 40,000 people every week.²⁷ In the past year, the ACCFB has succeeded in replacing the poundage of soda they once distributed with fresh produce. This bold step means refusing donations from large corporations like PepsiCo, and instead cultivating relationships with growers and agricultural distributors. The Food Bank is hoping to distribute 3 million pounds of produce in the coming year.²⁸

Challenges: Between 2001 and 2005, the Food Bank has seen a 30% increase in demand for its services.²⁹ This astonishing increase can be traced to a number of related factors: the high (and increasing) cost of living in the Bay Area, the ongoing decrease in purchasing power for minimum wage earners, and the disappearance of the middle class as the gap between rich and poor gets wider. According to the California Budget Report,

the low-wage sector of the Bay Area labor market has stagnated, while high-wage earners continue to see pay increases. All this implies that in order to address hunger, it will indeed be necessary to identify and eliminate the root causes of hunger.

Lessons and Innovations: The traditional role of a food bank has been expanded to address the reasons that people find themselves in need of emergency food. Being active in advocacy and outreach helps the ACCFB move toward their goal of eliminating hunger more effectively than addressing only the symptoms. The Food Bank's progressive stance on providing access to fresh produce should serve as a model for other emergency food suppliers.

Partnership Potential: The Food Bank is willing to partner with People's Grocery to provide materials and training for nutrition education. The Food Bank could also provide an helpful business model to emulate: ACCFB acts as an umbrella organization, contributing to the efforts of 300 member agencies in Alameda County. Similarly, People's Grocery could handle ordering, processing, warehousing and distribution for a network of small, franchised neighborhood grocery stores and

for existing corner stores that wish to diversify into produce sales.

Outlined Case Studies

Mo' Better Food

Type of Organization: Nonprofit, part of the Familyhood Connection 501(c)(3).

Focus Areas: Establishment/Conversion of Stores, Direct Marketing, Alternative Marketing, Education-Nutrition, Education-Growing, Economic Development, Urban-Rural Outreach

Contact: David Roach, Founder

Mission: To “cultivate and sustain a long lasting partnership between Black farmers and predominately Black communities.”³⁰

Methods: Education and outreach programs centered in McClymonds High School. Plans are in the works for corner store conversions, the delivery of produce boxes, and the establishment of a grocery store in the neighborhood.³¹

Accomplishments: Operation of the Mo' Better Food Farmers Market (previously known as the Mandela Farmers Market) at

7th Street and Mandela Parkway.

Challenges: The population of black farmers in California is currently very small. It may be wise to enlist the support of a larger segment of the farming community to ensure the success of the farmers' market and other programs.

Lessons and Innovations: Connecting black farmers with a black community has the potential to spark a revolution in local attitudes toward the land and toward food production, processing, and consumption.

Partnership Potential: People's Grocery and Mo' Better Food could coordinate their efforts to ensure that the two grocery stores are sited properly to serve the entire neighborhood without competing excessively for the same customers.

Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardens

Type of Organization: Nonprofit

Focus Areas: Direct Marketing, Gardens, Education-Nutrition, Education-Growing, Economic Development, Urban-Rural Outreach, Partnership Building

Contact: Margaret Majua, Director

Mission: To “strengthen families and build community through educational programs offered in a network of neighborhood gardens, green spaces and farmers markets.”³²

Methods: OBUGS works with schools, community groups, and neighborhood youth, supports garden-building projects, and participates in the Mandela Farmers’ Market.³³ OBUGS also acts as a fiscal sponsor for several other projects.

Accomplishments: OBUGS offers hands-on classes at several elementary schools, an after-school program, and a summer camp. The organization helps to manage four gardens, runs a youth program, and supports the Mandela Farmers’ Market.³⁴

Challenges: Since their garden network consists of four

gardens, and much of their program is geared toward education, developing a model for expansion or for helping their students build their own gardens could be a key to the long-term effectiveness of their educational efforts.

Lessons and Innovations: Focusing most of their efforts on children and youth means that lessons learned by children are probably shared with each child’s family, and that the children grow up with knowledge about gardening, food and nutrition that will help them maintain healthy eating habits.

Partnership Potential: People’s Grocery could work with OBUGS to expand their network of urban gardens and farms and to increase opportunities for children and youth.

West Oakland Food Collaborative

Type of Organization: Consortium of nonprofits, agencies, and individuals

Focus Areas: Establishment/Conversion of Stores, Direct Marketing, Alternative Marketing, Gardens, Farms, Education-Nutrition, Education-Growing, Emergency Food, Economic Development, Urban-Rural Outreach, Partnership Building

Contact: Dana Harvey, Director, Environmental Justice Institute

Mission: WOFC developed a three-year strategic plan to improve food justice in West Oakland.³⁵ The plan was intended to “create an infrastructure for building a food secure West Oakland, with a focus on systemic community development approaches.”³⁶ Particular emphasis was placed on farmers’ markets, corner store conversions, and greening projects.

Methods: Drawn together by the Environmental Justice Institute and supported by University of California Sustainable Agriculture and Research Program (UC SAREP) funds.³⁷ In the planning phase, participating organizations included

People’s Grocery, Mo’ Better Food, City Slicker Farms and the Environmental Justice Institute. These organizations participated in a collaborative planning process.

Accomplishments: Development of strategic plan, creation of Mandela Farmers’ Market

Challenges: Coordinating the efforts of several organizations with similar goals but different approaches to accomplishing those goals has proved difficult. Mo’ Better Food no longer participates in WOFC.³⁸

Lessons and Innovations: If the organizational challenges could be overcome, coordinating the efforts of West Oakland nonprofits is a compelling idea.

Partnership Potential: People’s Grocery could remain involved with WOFC to continue planning for the neighborhood, including community members in the process as much as possible.

Saint Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room, 675 23rd Street

Type of Organization: Charity

Focus Areas: Emergency Food

Contact: Ron Smith, Dining Room Manager

Mission: “Organized locally, Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charities and justice. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul collaborates with other people of good will in alleviating need and addressing its root causes, making no distinction in those served.”³⁹

Methods: “Each day, the Free Dining Room serves 1,000 hot meals to homeless and low-income men, women and children. Additionally, the Free Dining Room provides bag lunches to seniors and those with a medical referral, and distributes meals to 17 satellite locations in Alameda County.”⁴⁰ Other SVdP programs focus on clothing, shelter, health care, substance abuse support, legal assistance and employment training.⁴¹

Accomplishments: “The Free Dining Room serves 550,000 hot, nourishing meals each year.”⁴²

Challenges: Providing emergency food to those in need is an important role to fill, but the fact that it is necessary is indicative of Alameda County’s unsolved hunger problem.

Lessons and Innovations: SVdP has experience coordinating large groups of volunteers, up to 800 at a time.⁴³ This type of management experience could be a good resource for other area nonprofits.

Partnership Potential: People’s Grocery could work with the Free Dining Room to ensure that meals served are prepared from local, organic produce, and that those served by the Dining Room are given the opportunity to get involved with PG gardening and nutrition projects and other education and skill development programs.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

These organizations provide a strong framework on which to build ongoing efforts to improve food justice in West Oakland. Many goals and strategies are shared between these organizations, suggesting that there may be many opportunities for cooperation. With lofty common goals, this collection of small organizations would be better served by working together than by competing with one another. Many of these organizations do work together on some of their projects; this could be an excellent starting point for a “West Oakland Food Justice Coalition,” an alliance between these like-minded organizations designed to coordinate efforts, share effective strategies, and enhance the effectiveness of each organization’s work. Learning from what worked and did not work for the West Oakland Food Collaborative, this organization could take on large projects that would be too large for any one organization.

Challenges

- Dependence on outside funding
- Much local infrastructure must be rebuilt
- Large geographic area
- Continually rising cost of living

- Duplication (rather than magnification) of efforts

Best Strategies

- Mobile Market
- SOUL Box
- Diverse funding sources, including internal sources
- Backyard Garden Building Program
- Networks of urban farms and gardens
- Advocacy
- Peer-to-peer education
- Plans for cooperative grocery stores and associated farms
- Partnerships with like-minded organizations

CHAPTER 5

Repairing the Local Food System

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Over the next twenty years, the geography of food in West Oakland will evolve to include local production and processing, a robust network of high-quality food stores, teaching gardens and minifarms, and community education centers. Neighborhood residents will be employed in every aspect of the new food system, the People's Grocery lines of foods will be stocked in neighborhood stores, and the People's Grocery flagship store will be a treasured neighborhood resource. Introducing People's Grocery as a cooperative buying club will simplify relationships between local producers and small vendors. This structure will allow a new local food system to take root in West Oakland.

INTRODUCTION

Just as a well-designed local food system must take into account both local conditions and regional patterns, these design proposals approach the problem of food justice for West Oakland and better markets for nearby farmers through a long-term plan for the West Oakland neighborhood in conjunction with a strategic plan linking small-scale regional producers, distributors and vendors with the West Oakland market.

This chapter describes each aspect of the project, starting with *Part A: Long Range Planning for People's Grocery*, which includes a business model for People's Grocery, the West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan, and site design for a proposed

grocery store; moving on to *Part B: Assessment of Neighborhood Agricultural Potential*, which demonstrates a tool for assessing food production potential for three block typologies; and concluding with *Part C: Repairing the Local Food System*, which suggests ways to lay the groundwork for a relocated Bay Area food system.

VISION

People's Grocery has a vision for West Oakland as a place where everyone has convenient, affordable access to healthy food. The plans laid out below could help fulfill that vision. The neighborhood will be served by the People's Grocery cooperative grocery store, a network of smaller stores selling fresh produce, local food processing centers to minimize shipping cost, gardens and minifarms to

maximize the self-sufficiency of the neighborhood, and educational programs based in stores and existing community centers. West Oakland will have a close relationship with nearby agricultural communities, with each community lending their support to the other for mutual gain. All of this will add up to allow West Oakland and its residents to achieve food justice.

REVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

As you can see in Figure 5.1, West Oakland's population is concentrated in a crescent, excluding a former industrial area. Most services are distributed within this more populous crescent, with industrial uses and large vacant lots located in areas of lower population. Smaller vacant lots can be found throughout the crescent. The neighborhood possesses an extensive network of corner stores, but the inventory of these stores tends to be limited to liquor, junk food, and a few canned goods. Access to fresh food is extremely limited, with the nearest supermarket located outside the neighborhood boundaries. In addition, the West Oakland neighborhood has one of the lowest rates of car ownership in the city.¹ This means that the least mobile populations in Oakland must either find their way to a full-service grocery store outside their neighborhood or depend on poorly

stocked corner stores. The neighborhood also contains a small but growing network of community gardens, and a large collection of vacant lots.

Hazardous and toxic materials are a serious issue in West Oakland. Though they can be found throughout the neighborhood, they tend to be concentrated in the industrial zone. Some activities are more sensitive to the presence of contaminated soil than others; while processing centers could be built over contaminated soil, new gardens should be sited on the cleanest available soils.

Much of this document was dedicated to understanding the causes and consequences of food *injustice*. I will repeat them here to remind the reader of the importance of planning for food *justice* in West Oakland:

- Lack of food justice and the resulting poor nutrition is contributing to health epidemics such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
- The industrial food system has distanced itself from problems of urban food security among the urban poor
- Supermarkets have abandoned low-income communities
- The poor do not *want* to eat unhealthy diets, but they often

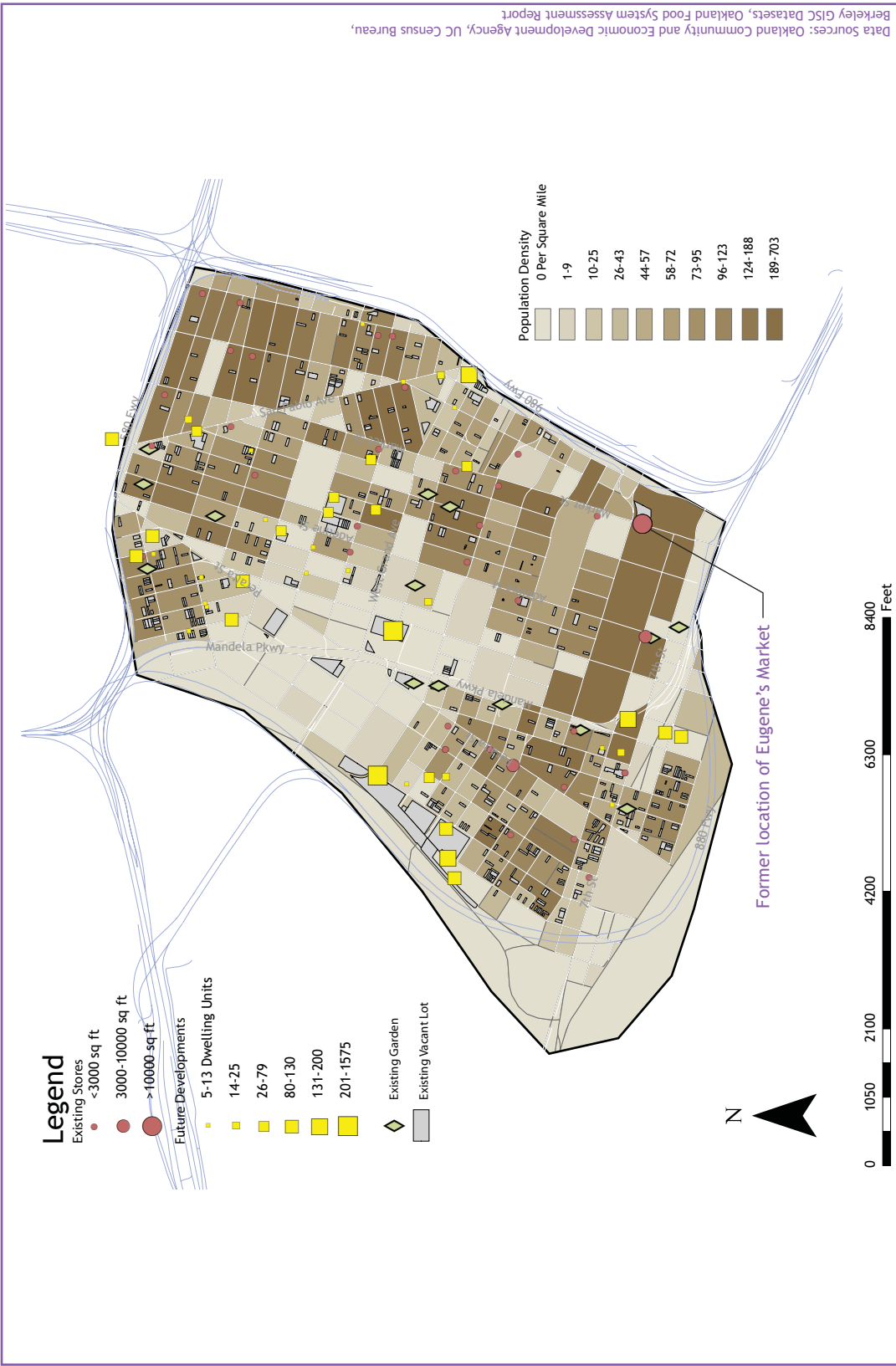


Figure 5.1
West Oakland Existing Conditions

have no choice

- When all residents of a neighborhood are poor, the experience of each person is more difficult than it would be as one of a few poor people in an otherwise prosperous area with access to resources
- It is difficult for West Oakland residents to obtain fresh, healthy, and affordable food; as compared to Rockridge, food in West Oakland is more expensive and of lower quality

REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

This document presented numerous strategies for achieving food justice. Some of these will be incorporated into my proposals for the neighborhood, including:

- **Grocery store associated with demonstration garden** to attract and educate customers
- **Cooperation between schools, places of worship, and nonprofits** to provide education centers
- **Buying club and network of large and small grocery stores** to improve local food access
- **Grocery store associated with land trust** to protect and

strengthen local food supply from start to finish

- **Local food processing centers** to bolster the local economy
- **Regional distribution centers** to create efficient local food system
- **Diverse funding sources, including internal sources** to ensure robust finances
- **Backyard garden building program** to give people more control over their food choices, maximize the utility of urban land, provide educational opportunities, and provide connections to the land and natural systems
- **Networks of urban farms and gardens** to maximize the neighborhood's potential to feed itself, and provide employment opportunities

STEPS TO REPAIRING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Neighborhood food justice and a robust local food system go hand-in-hand, and must be achieved by addressing several scales simultaneously, from the block to the neighborhood to the region. These scales are interdependent; for example, if a network of small stores is to be able to stock local food, the farming community and

the neighborhood must work together. Each of three scales are considered in succession, beginning with site-specific design of the People's Grocery and Wellness Village, moving on to a strategic plan for the entire neighborhood and to a demonstration of a block-level agricultural potential assessment tool, and finally broadening the lens to take in the greater Bay Area and the steps that can be taken to build a stronger local food system.

PART A: LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR PEOPLE'S GROCERY

As we have seen, the pervasive lack of access to fresh, healthy, affordable food in low-income neighborhoods has contributed to epidemics of diet-related disease. Because it is unlikely that agribusiness or supermarket chains will address problems of food injustice, it is imperative that local communities take control of their food systems, or as Brian Halweil would say, "declare food democracy".

Building on the analysis of existing conditions in the neighborhood and best practices from across North America presented in earlier chapters, I produced a Neighborhood Development Plan for West Oakland, with People's Grocery as a catalyst. I have also allowed the methods, accomplishments and challenges of each organization

working in the neighborhood to inform my ideas for the future. This section can be considered a prototype for the "Neighborhood Food System" element of a general plan.

People's Grocery is preparing to open a 15,000 square foot full-service cooperative grocery store in the heart of West Oakland. They are currently focusing their efforts on acquiring a site at West Grand Avenue and Market Street, while simultaneously preparing to open a 5,000 square foot temporary location at 24th Street and San Pablo Avenue. The smaller temporary store will allow People's Grocery to establish itself as a trusted neighborhood business, while preparing for the more complicated task of running a large full-service grocery store.²

Vision

Over the next twenty years, the geography of food in West Oakland will evolve to include local production and processing, and a robust network of large and small stores carrying healthy produce and prepared foods. Neighborhood residents will be employed in every aspect of the food supply chain, from production to processing to retail. The People's Grocery line of foods will be stocked in every neighborhood store, and the People's Grocery flagship store, with its

lively outdoor environment, cooking school, and welcoming aisles of locally grown food, will be a neighborhood gathering place.

People’s Grocery is poised to play a critical role in the effort to achieve food justice in West Oakland. As a young, energetic organization that has caught the attention of the neighborhood and the Bay Area sustainability movement, People’s Grocery will be a driving force behind the proposed West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan. People’s Grocery will help create a network of local food sources in the form of the People’s Grocery flagship store, numerous small stores, teaching gardens, and commercial minifarms. They will encourage the conversion of underused land to agricultural and food processing uses to increase the community’s self-sufficiency, and help create and expand educational centers to share knowledge about gardening, food and nutrition. All this will be described in the section entitled *West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan*.

At the flagship store mentioned above, Ahmadi would like to create a physical setting for People’s Grocery that embodies the organization’s mission and goals. The completed site will include a food forest demonstration garden, high-quality, pleasant facilities

for bicyclists and pedestrians, climate-appropriate planting and stormwater infiltration basins, and an overall design that accommodates multiple uses, from parking to outdoor festivals. In the section entitled *People’s Grocery and Wellness Village Design Components* I will describe the site plan in detail.

West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan

Over the next twenty years, the geography of food in West Oakland will evolve to include local production and processing, a robust network of high-quality food stores, teaching gardens and minifarms, and community education centers. Neighborhood residents will be employed in every aspect of the new food system, the People’s Grocery lines of foods will be stocked in neighborhood stores, and the People’s Grocery flagship store will be a treasured neighborhood resource. Working in partnership with other like-minded organizations, People’s Grocery will be active in building upon West Oakland’s resources to create these new opportunities for the neighborhood. Figure 5.2 illustrates the physical aspects of the Neighborhood Development Plan, while Figure 5.3 is a conceptual diagram of the proposed business model.

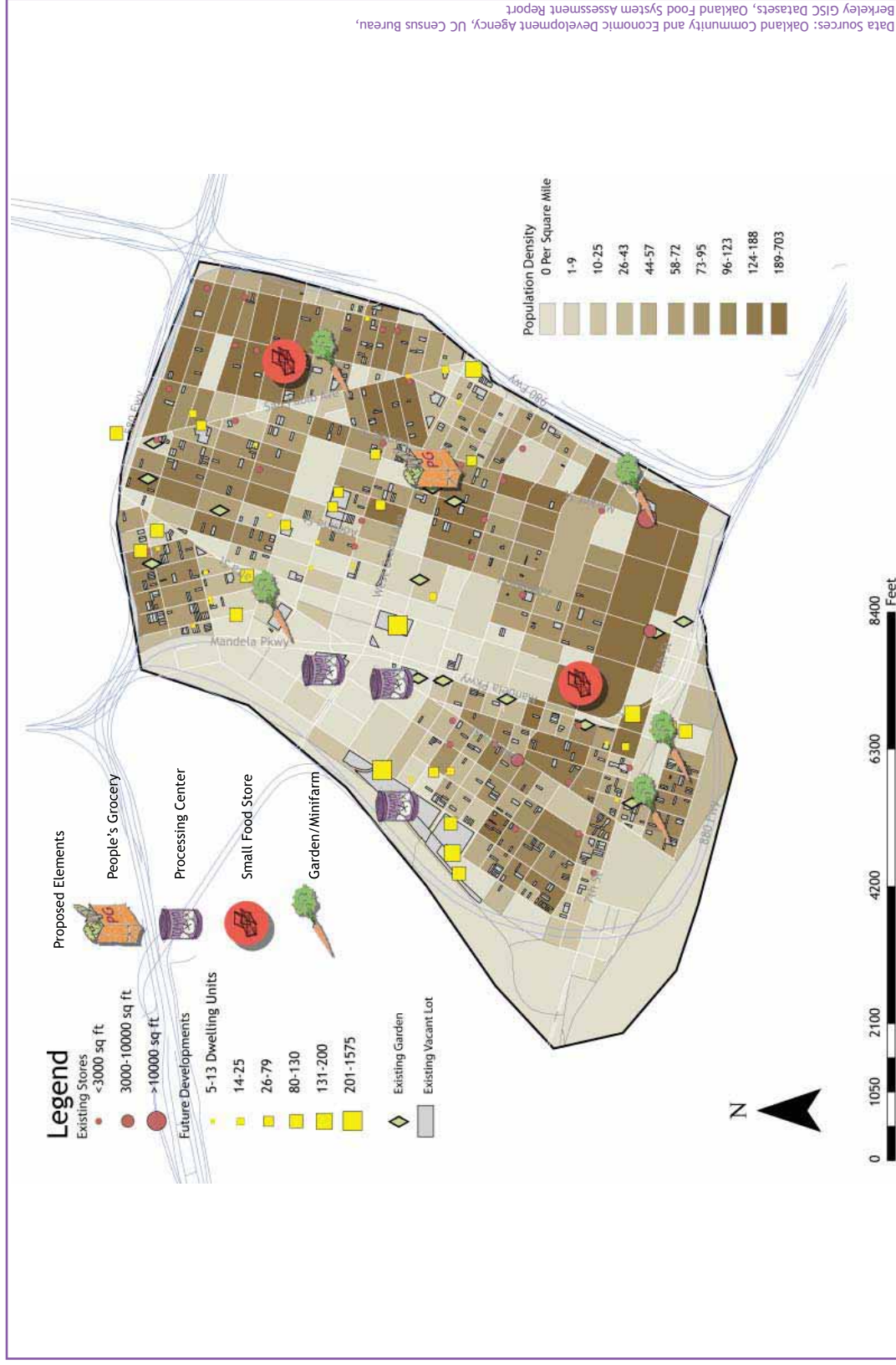
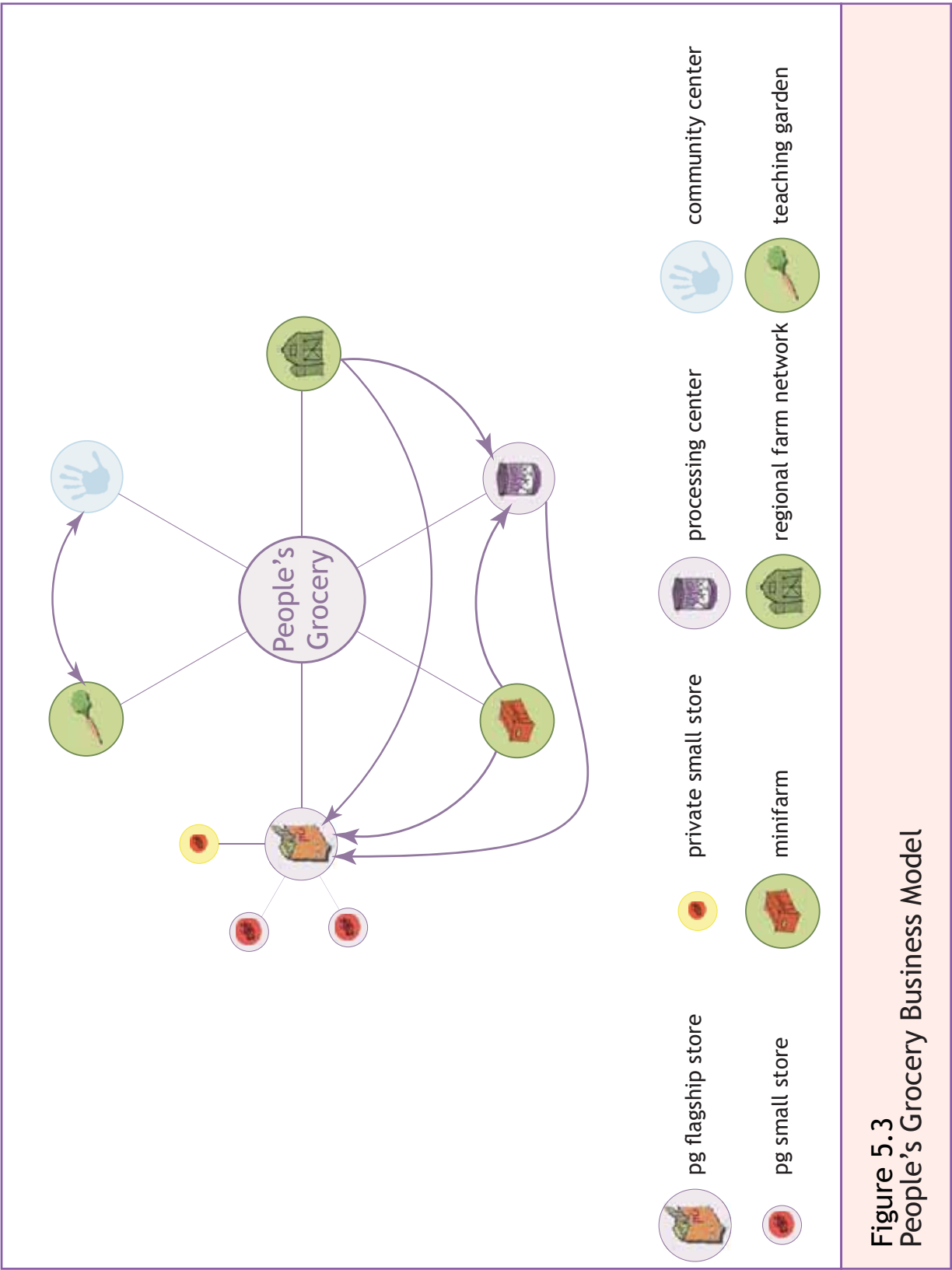


Figure 5.2
West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan



People's Grocery Business model

Connecting small growers and distributors with a collection of small vendors can be difficult. Without a cooperative to streamline buying relationships, each store and grower must establish separate relationships with one another. This can be prohibitively expensive for small operations, and can result in higher prices for consumers.

The complexity of Figure 5.4 illustrates this problem.

Introducing People's Grocery as a cooperative buying club will simplify relationships between local and regional producers and small vendors. Figure 5.5 illustrates the dramatic simplification of the distribution system made possible by this approach. Taking advantage of data on the locations of nearby producers and processors provided by California Certified Organic Farmers, this structure will allow a new local food system to take root in West Oakland.

People's Grocery will operate four new vending types in West Oakland:

- *Flagship Store*: this large, full-service cooperative grocery store, located in the wellness village, will be the first step,

and will establish PG's reputation in the neighborhood.

- *New Small Store*: two new small stores are proposed, sited in areas of high population density. These stores will operate under the PG name to increase walkable access to healthy food and to serve as a first step in transitioning West Oakland's corner stores to intensified sales of fresh produce and healthy staple foods.
- *Converted Small Store*: PG will assist existing store managers with the retrofit and learning process to add produce sales to their stores. Stores may operate independently, or join the PG buying club.
- *Store-Within-a-Store*: existing store managers who wish to offer produce in order to serve their customers better, but do not have the time or inclination for a full conversion, can opt to have PG's non-profit arm manage a produce case within their store.

The West Oakland community desperately needs convenient access to healthy, affordable food. Figure 5.6 shows the current distribution of stores in the neighborhood, with a half-mile radius around the larger stores to indicate reasonable walking distance. Much of the neighborhood is not within walking distance of a store over 10,000

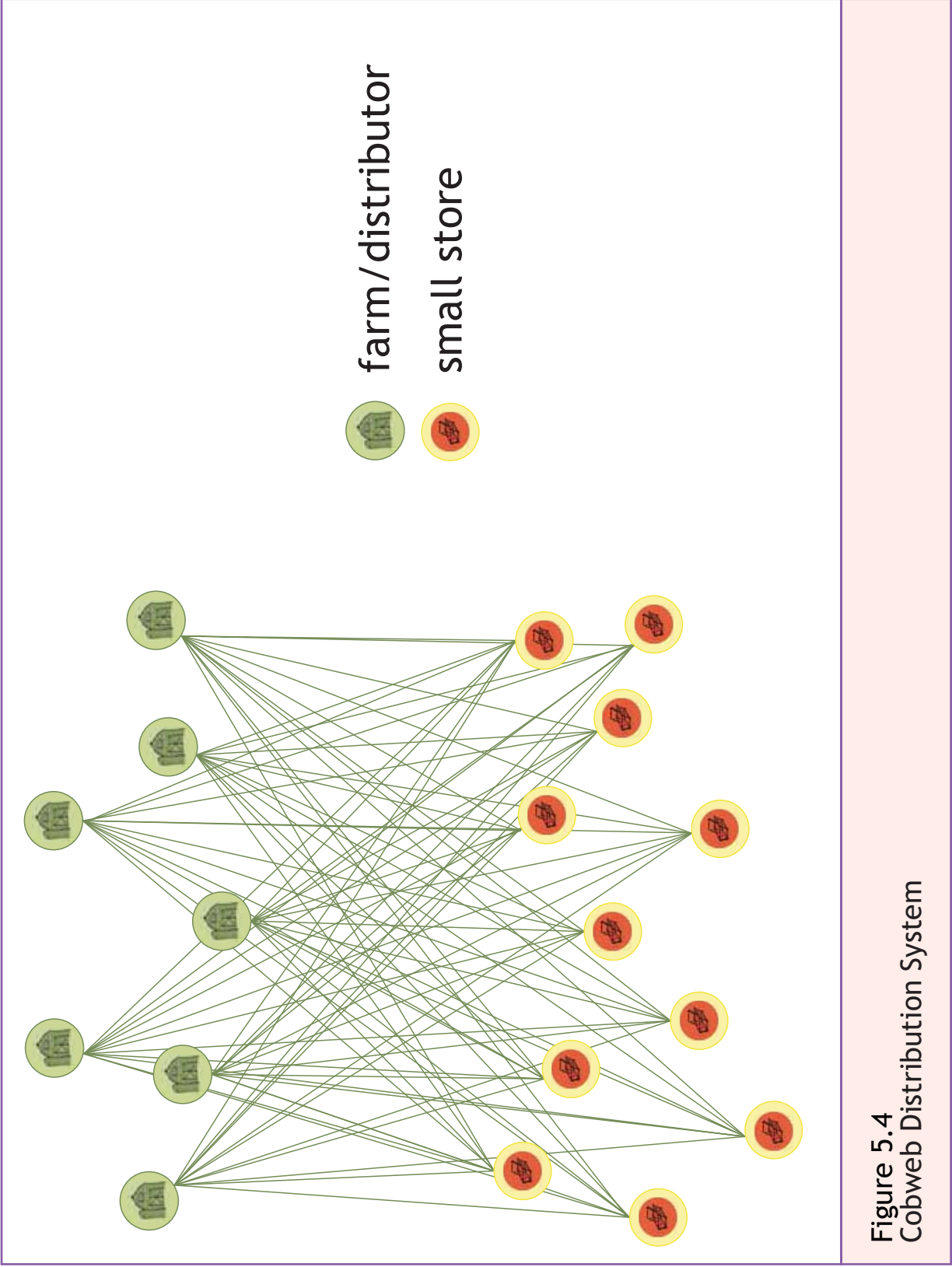


Figure 5.4
Cobweb Distribution System

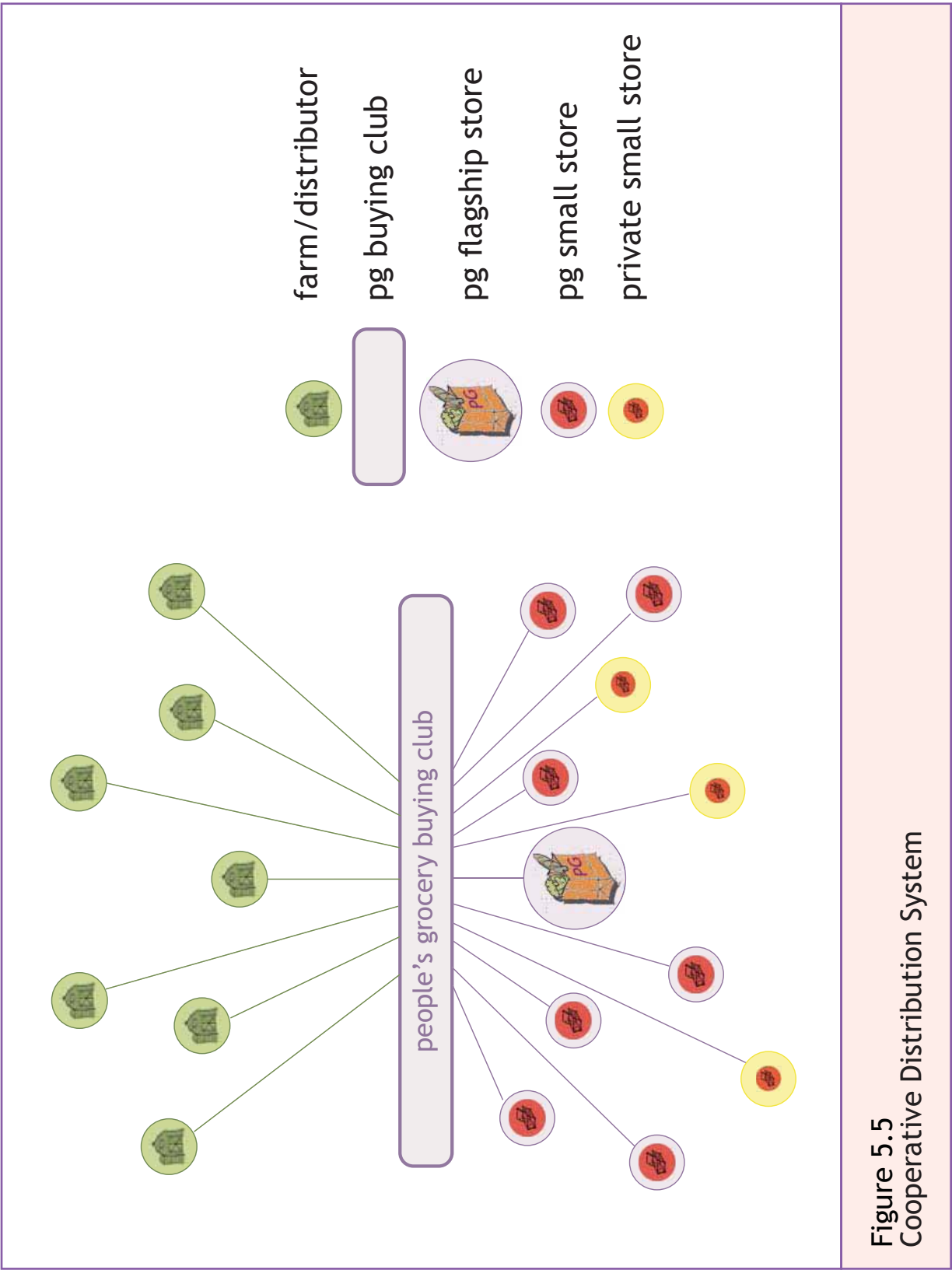


Figure 5.5
Cooperative Distribution System

square feet, despite the favorable population density and pending new developments illustrated in Figure 5.7. People’s Grocery is poised to meet this underserved demand.

Build Partnerships

The organizations profiled in Chapter 4 each have something to offer in the struggle to achieve food justice. Working with these organizations, rather than duplicating their efforts, will allow People’s Grocery and each allied organization to maximize its contributions to the neighborhood. For example, Mo’ Better Food is quite adept at outreach to African American farmers and to local schools, the Alameda County Community Food Bank offers nutrition classes, and City Slicker Farms has extensive experience in backyard gardening. Enlisting each of these agencies to contribute to the Neighborhood Development Plan will make the plan more robust.

Establish Teaching Gardens

A critical component of PG’s work in West Oakland is the formation of a network of teaching gardens. These gardens will contribute to the food justice movement by providing some local produce (both for private use and for commercial purposes), but also by providing

learning and employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. These are spaces that encourage learning about food production and healthy eating, with an emphasis on youth development programs. These gardens are sited on vacant lots that are not affected by toxic materials.

Introduce Commercial Minifarms

In addition to teaching gardens, a collection of commercial organic minifarms will help strengthen the local food supply. Each minifarm will be placed in an area of reasonably high population density, with a consolidated area of vacant land. Strategies for maintaining control of land in the case of development pressure will include the establishment of a land trust, and transfer of development rights. These minifarms will help supply produce to the PG network of stores, and provide employment opportunities for neighborhood residents.

Open Processing Centers

Once People’s Grocery is well established as a grocery store, they will diversify into food processing through renovation of old facilities, and by building at least one new processing center on large vacant lots. New facilities could be shared with other small

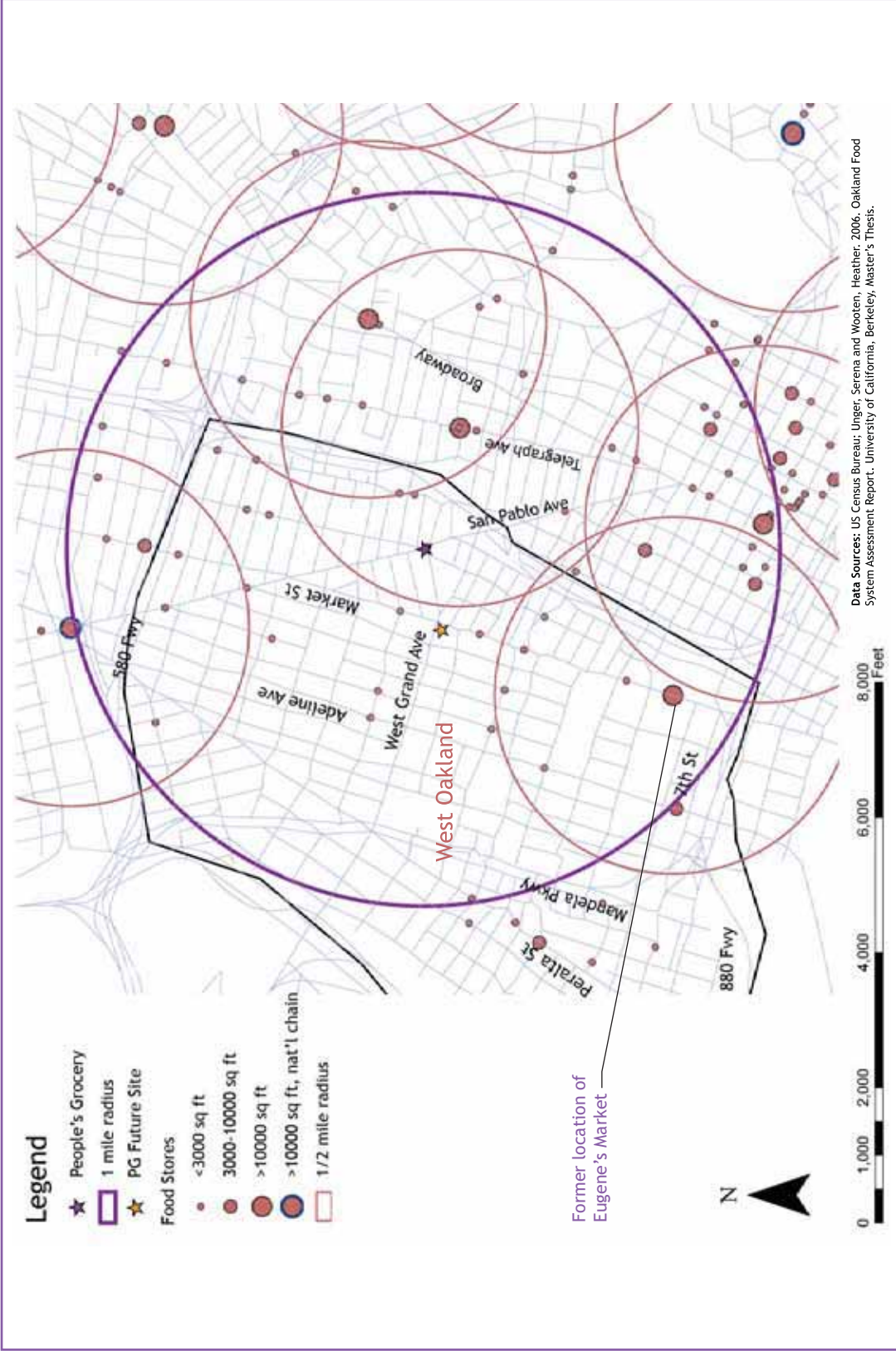


Figure 5.6
Meeting the Market: Existing Stores

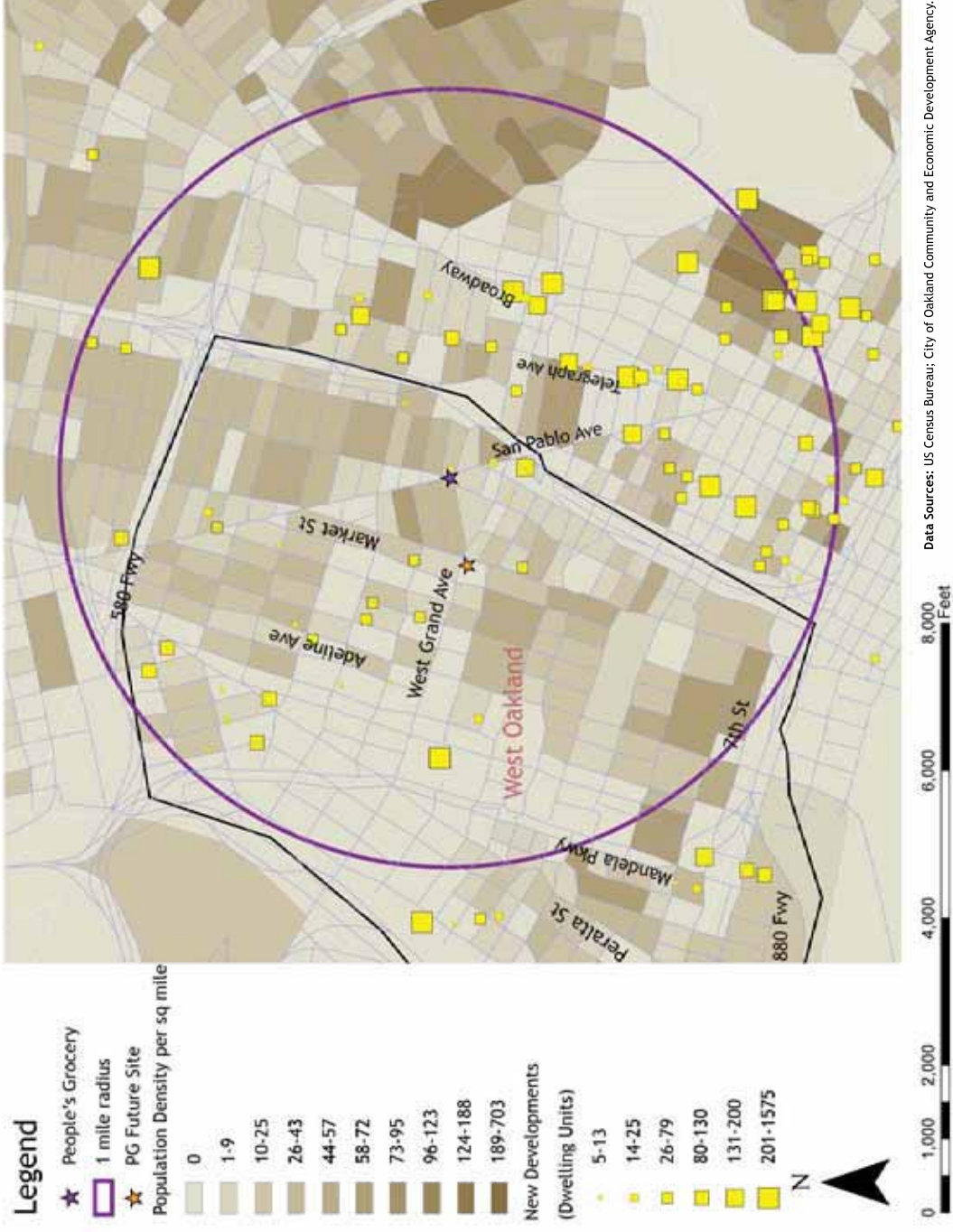


Figure 5.7
Meeting the Market: Population and Proposed Developments

entrepreneurs. These facilities will process produce from affiliated farms, both from the neighborhood and from nearby agricultural communities, and will sell under the People’s Grocery house label. Branding local food with the recognizable People’s Grocery name will help create recognition of and demand for locally grown and processed food when paired with PG’s marketing plan (outside the scope of this project). These centers will not be dependent on social activity patterns and can be placed in parts of the neighborhood where population density is lower. Demand for fresh, unprocessed food will be difficult to create; providing fresh, minimally processed products like pre-cut fruits and vegetables will help People’s Grocery compete with convenience-food culture.

Reach Out with Enhanced Community Centers

Working in partnership with schools, places of worship, and organizations like the Alameda County Community Food Bank to share facilities and expertise, community centers will be established to restore cultural knowledge through gardening, cooking, preserving, and nutrition classes. Other programs could include shared community kitchens, and farmer training programs for aspiring urban and periurban farmers. More facilities could be built

as demand increases. These community centers will help create demand for fresh, local food.

People’s Grocery and Wellness Village Design Components

The West Grand and Market store will anchor a “wellness village” that will include a large demonstration garden and other businesses related to a healthy lifestyle, such as a yoga school, health care offices, and a café selling fresh, local foods. This store will make fresh, local, healthy, culturally appropriate food available at affordable prices. The wellness village will cover an entire city block, and will provide opportunities to learn about a healthy lifestyle, and to purchase all the necessities for achieving a healthy lifestyle. The wellness village will give this low-income community the ability to choose a healthier lifestyle and combat the diet-related diseases that plague the neighborhood.

In order to create a welcoming place with an educational component attached to every part of the site, Figure 5.8 shows that the design includes a “food forest” demonstration garden; a dedicated bike entrance and bike parking area; outdoor café space; chess tables seating area; a back façade with windows and greenery; bulb-

outs at street corners to enhance the pedestrian environment; large windows onto the cooking school at the back of the store; infiltration swales throughout the site; trellises over parking bays; photovoltaic panels on the grocery store roof; a welcome arch at each entrance to the site; and an overall design that allows the parking lot to be transformed into an ideal festival space. Figure 5.9 shows the view from West Grand and Market, before and after the arrival of People’s Grocery.

Food Forest Demonstration Garden:

This garden contains components that would be found in any teaching garden in the People’s Grocery network, from a grand entrance formed by a bean trellis, to a shady gazebo for gatherings, to a composting system and a full complement of food forest plants. The design of the garden was inspired by permaculture techniques, especially as described in Toby Hemenway’s handbook *Gaia’s Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture*, and Bill Mollison and Reny Mia Slay’s classic *Introduction to Permaculture*. Key principles include creating a “sun trap” with taller trees at the north side of the garden, allowing maximal sun access throughout the garden; planting narrow beds close to the garden entrance for

plants with a long harvest period; planting wider, spiral-shaped beds for plants that are harvested all at once; integrating a compost system into the design; and covering every possible square inch of the garden with plants to maximize growing space and use water resources efficiently. Table 5.10 lists plant materials for the garden and the rest of the site.

As you can see in Figures 5.11 – 5.13, the garden’s major elements include the following:

- *Bean Trellis:* Forms an archway over the main entrance path, providing shade and a “grand entrance” to the garden. Plants are rooted in a series of geometric narrow beds, described below.
- *Gazebo:* Provides a shady gathering place at the heart of the garden. Similar in design to the gazebo at the People’s Grocery 55th Street Garden, the gazebo will be hand-built of rustic timbers harvested nearby.
- *Tool shed:* Built using natural materials and traditional techniques demonstrated at the City Farmer garden in Vancouver, this structure provides secure storage for tools and other equipment.

- *Compost system:* A collection of compost bins and piles demonstrates several techniques for waste cycling, all suitable for backyard applications.
- *Tall trees:* Large fruit and nut trees are planted on north side of the garden to avoid shading out other plants. This creates a sun trap at the center of the garden.³
- *Small trees:* Smaller fruit and nut trees are planted on east and west sides to form visual edge. Their smaller size minimizes their shading of nearby plants.
- *Narrow beds:* Plants that have long harvest period, such as tomatoes and cucumbers, are planted in a series of narrow geometric beds at the entrance to the garden. These beds are conveniently located and easy to walk around to facilitate frequent harvesting.
- *Wider spiral beds:* Plants that are harvested all at once, such as corn and potatoes, are planted in these larger beds further into the garden. Situated along a spiral access path, bed space is maximized while path space is minimized. Plants are planted in tight cluster rather than straight rows, maximizing the productivity of each bed.
- *Herb spiral:* A raised mound at the center of the garden

provides visual interest as well as an ideal planting arrangement for herbs. The slope of the mound creates a series of microclimates according to the sun exposure and drainage of each part of the mound. This makes it possible to plant herbs with different cultural requirements close together.⁴

- *Ground cover:* Space beneath fruit trees is planted in dense ground covers that prevent weeds from invading the garden.⁵
- *Hedge:* A dense hedge of thornless blackberry completes the visual enclosure of the garden on the south side. The hedge can be pruned to maintain sun access for other plants.

Bike Entrance and Bike Parking:

By providing a protected bike parking area, a dedicated bike entrance, and elements such as a water fountain, tire pump, and shade trees, we will create high-quality bike facilities. Figure 5.14 illustrates these amenities. This approach will encourage customers to come to the store by bicycle, and may attract cyclists from the surrounding neighborhoods as well.

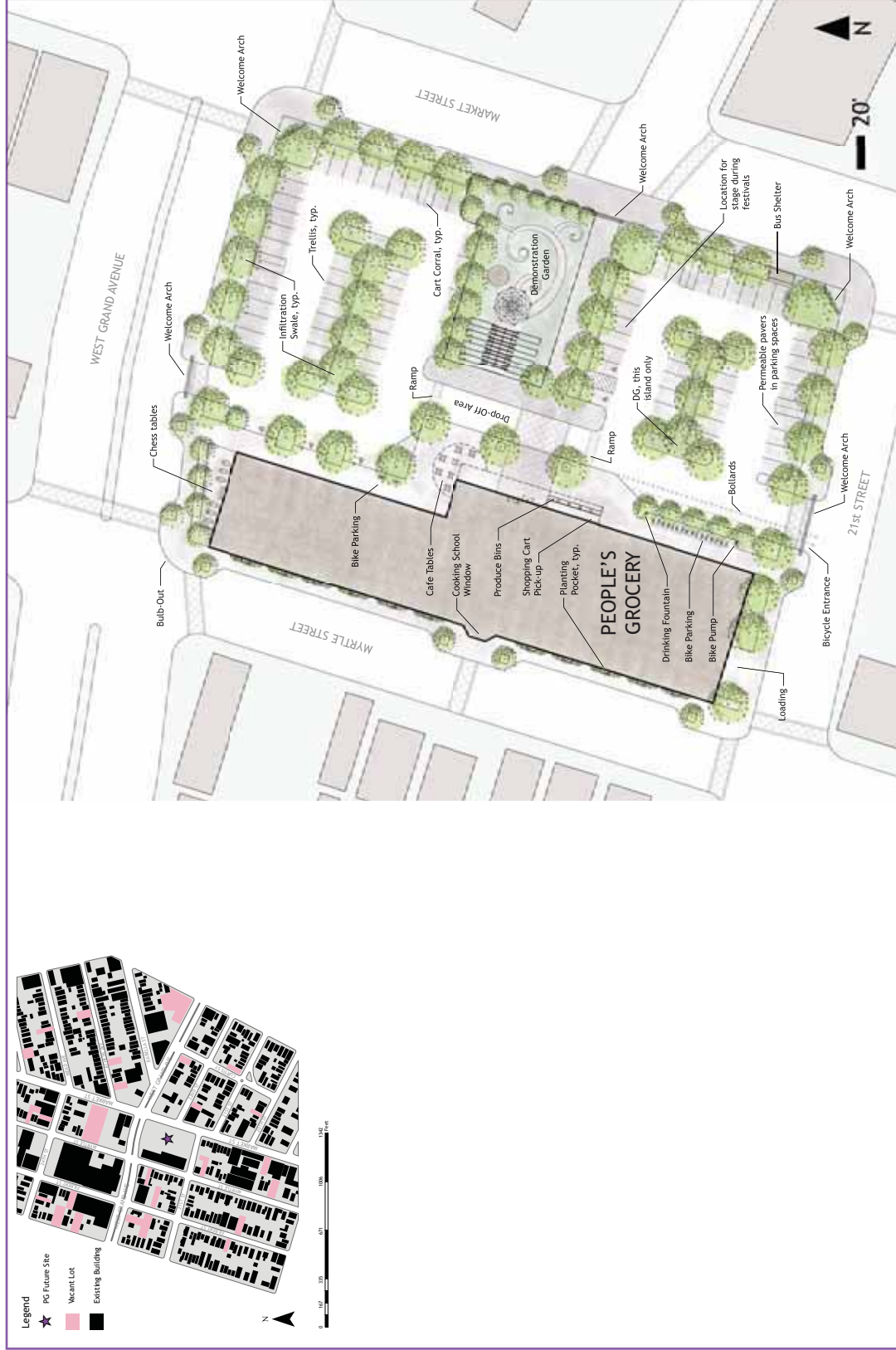


Figure 5.8
People's Grocery Store Site Design

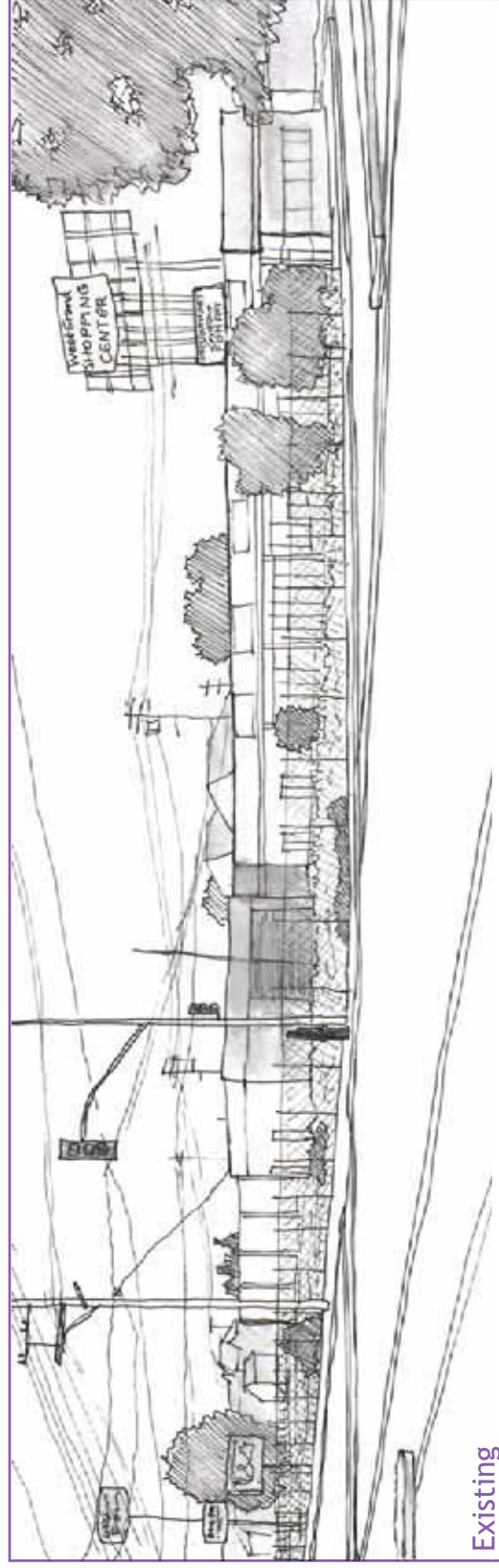


Figure 5.9
View from West Grand and Market

PARKING LOT TREES

Acacia
Black Locust
Coast Live Oak
English Walnut
Honey Locust
PARKING LOT SHRUBS/GC
Bearberry (Kinnickinnick)
Creeping Phlox
Creeping Thyme
Honeysuckle
Japanese Barberry
Witchhazel
Stonecrop (Sedum)

PLAZA TREES

Apricot
Lemon
Peach
Persimmon
Pomegranate

WALL CLIMBING PLANTS

Bamboo
Espaliered Fruit Trees
Maypop (Passionflower)

FOOD FOREST PLANTS

Beet
Broccoli
Bush Bean
Carrot
Chard
Corn
Cucumber
Eggplant
Fennel
Garlic
Hops
Leek
Lettuce
Melon
Okra
Onion
Pea
Pole Bean
Potato
Pumpkin
Spinach
Strawberry
Thornless Blackberry
Tomato
Zucchini

FOOD FOREST TREES

Almond
Apple
Fig
Mulberry
Peach
Plum
Pomegranate

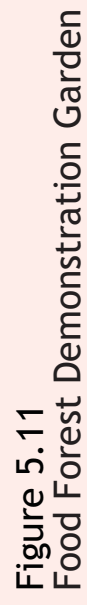
FOOD FOREST HERBS

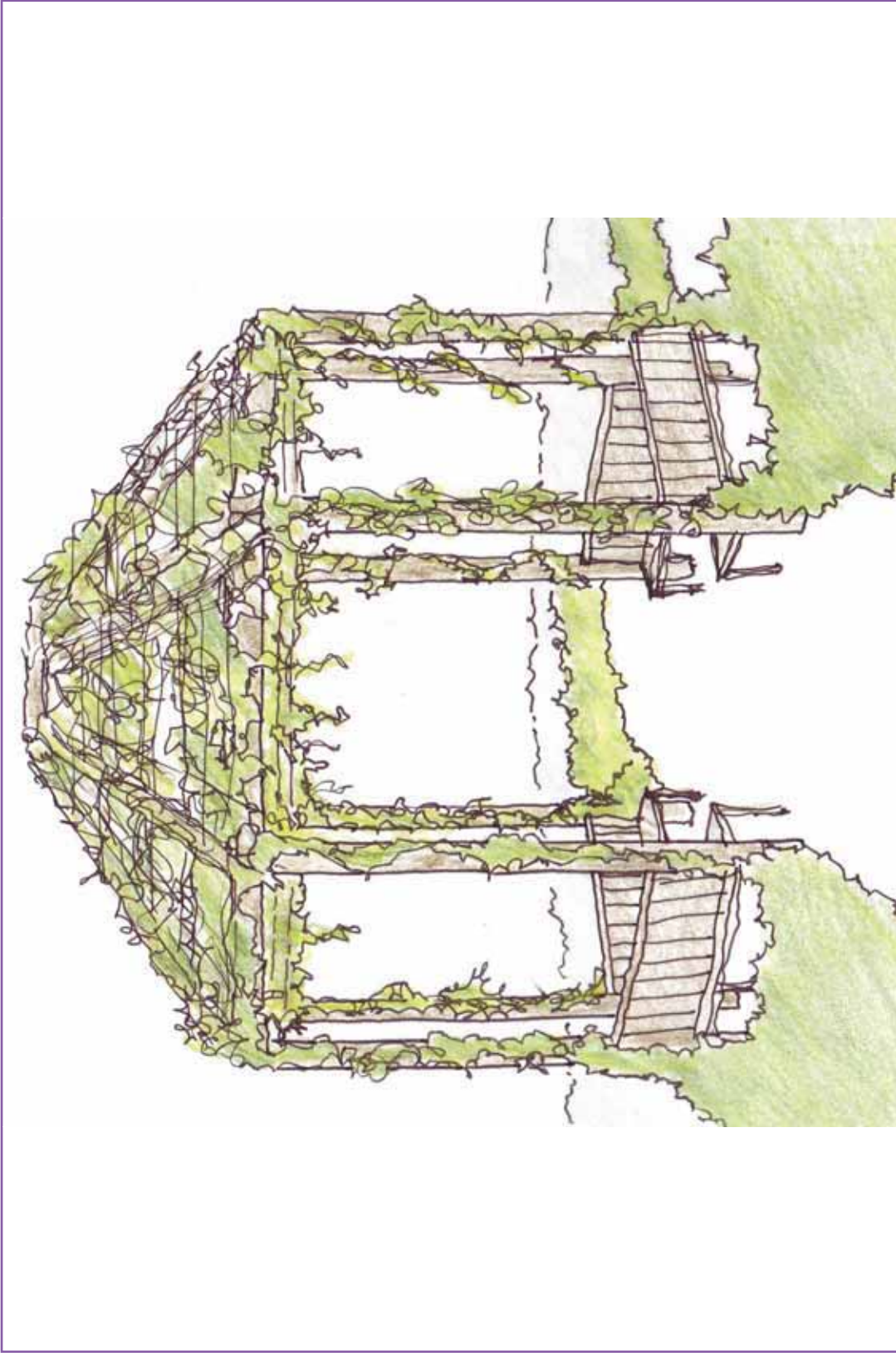
Chamomile
Chives
Cilantro
Mint
Nasturtium
Oregano
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage
Tarragon
Thyme

FOOD FOREST GC

Clover
Creeping Thyme
Star Jasmine
Wild Ginger

Figure 5.10
Plant List





Figures 5.12
Gazebo

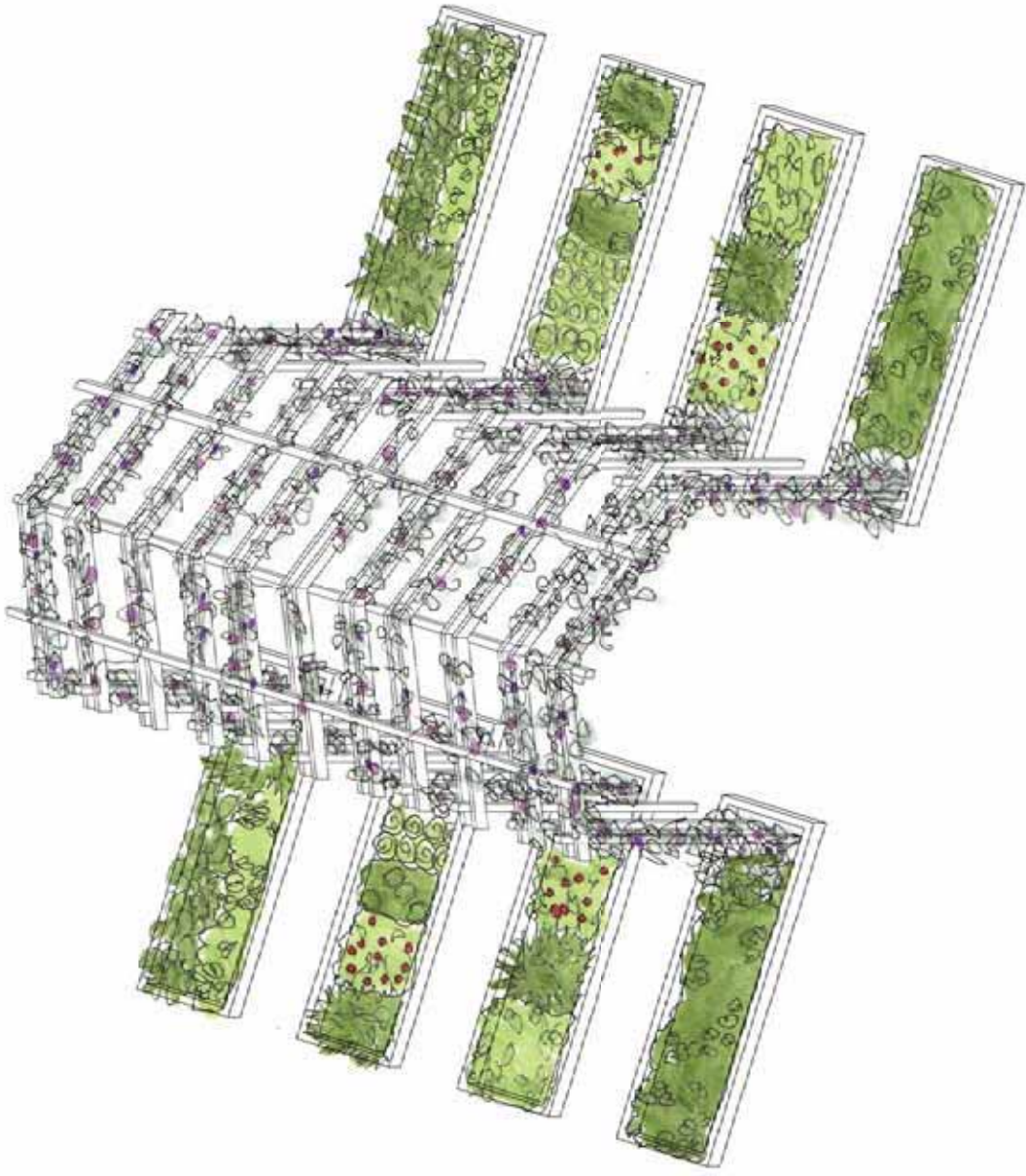


Figure 5.13
Bean Trellis

Outdoor Café Space:

As you can see in the site plan, a seating area adjacent to the in-store café provides a pleasant outdoor extension of the grocery store. Creating this kind of amenity in a space conventionally dedicated to parking expresses the values of PG, and encourages customers to use the site as a social hub.

Chess Tables:

This secondary seating area across the driveway from the outdoor café provides a quiet space for socialization. As you can see in Figure 5.15, this space will allow visitors to observe the activity on other parts of the site without being in the middle of it.

Treatment of Back Façade:

The formerly blank back wall of grocery store building is activated with espaliered fruit trees and a large window into the cooking school, described below and illustrated in Figure 5.16. A sidewalk bulb-out for mid-block crossing is also provided. This wall faces a residential street, and the treatment of this space projects the store's attitude toward its neighbors. Caring for this part of the building and creating a pleasant green environment signals to residents that PG cares about its community.

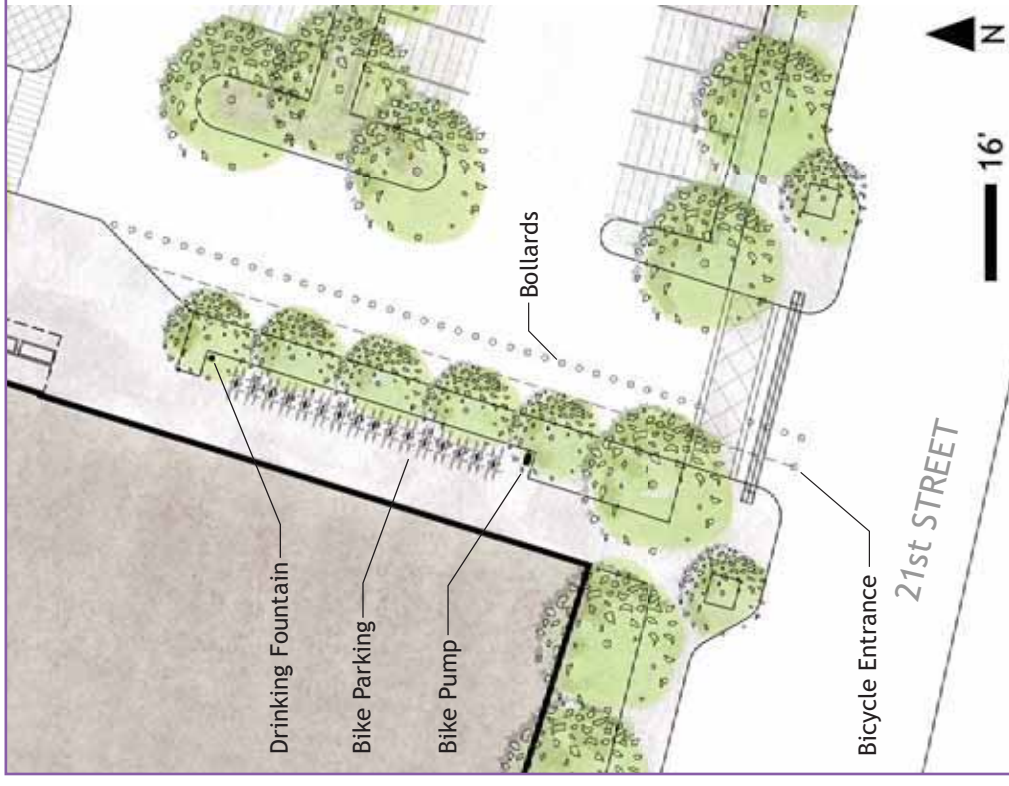


Figure 5.14
Bicycle Facilities

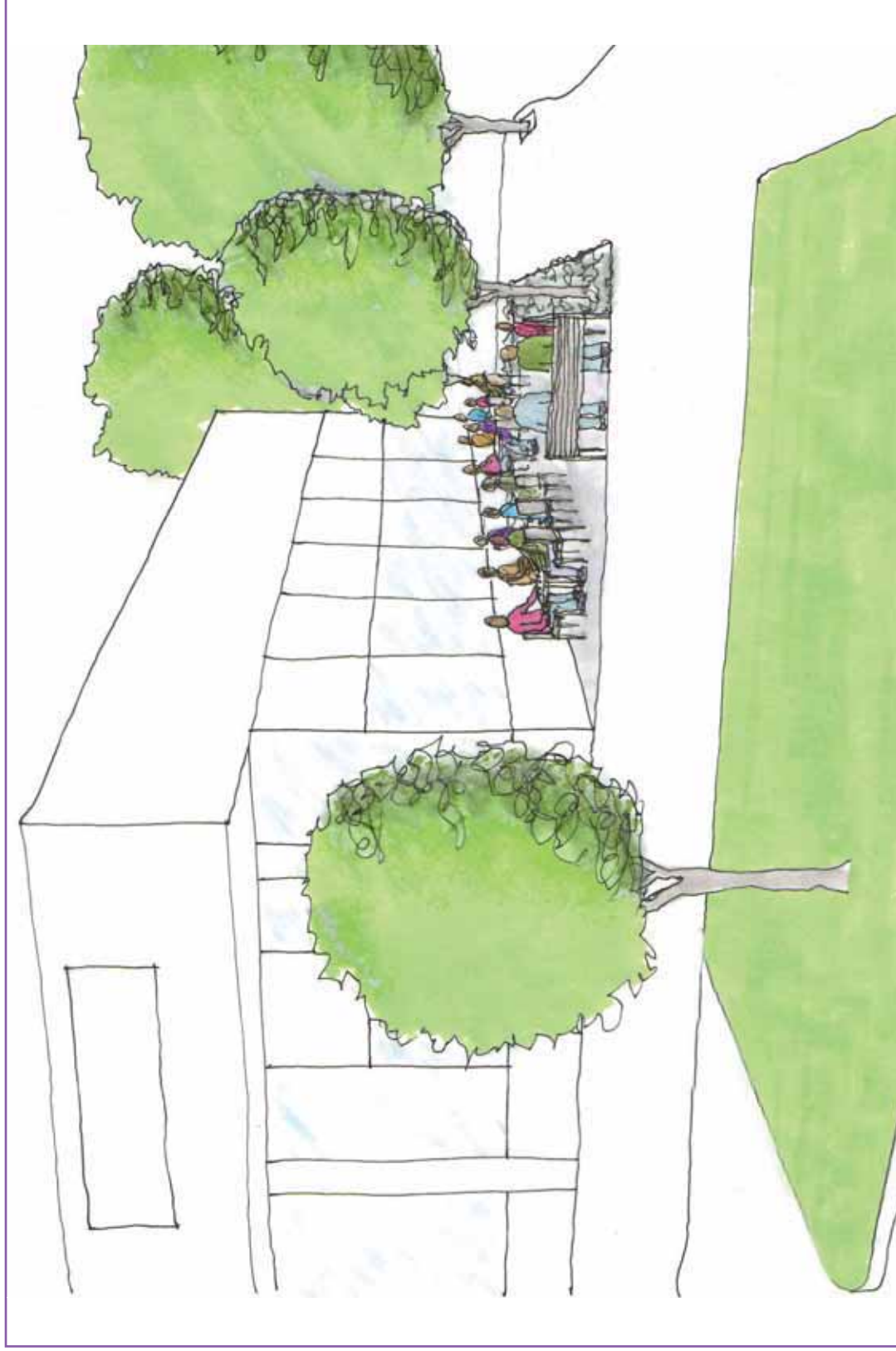
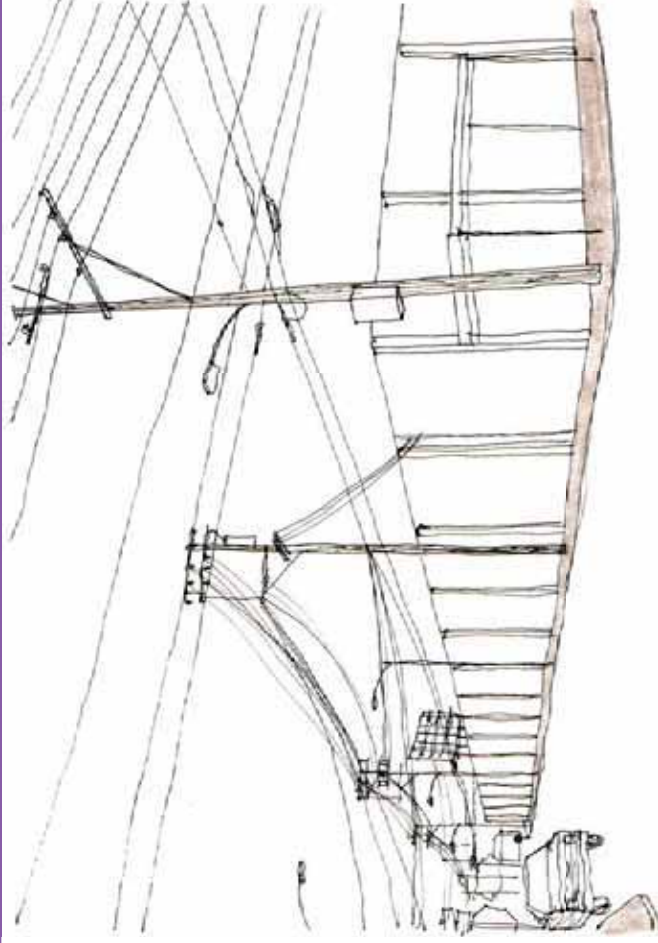
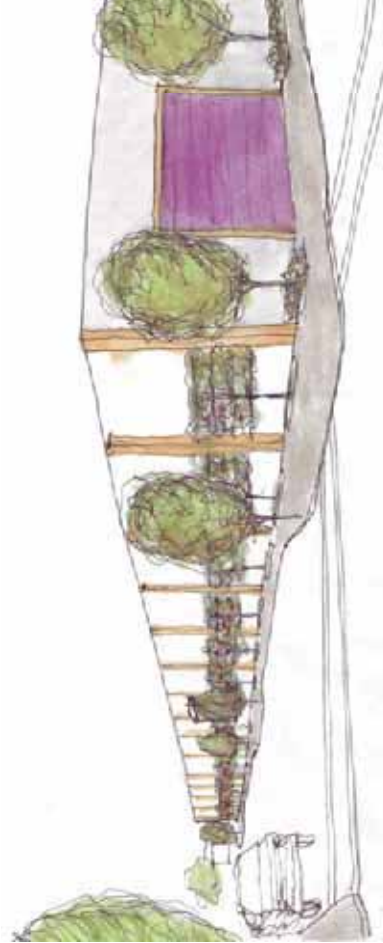


Figure 5.15
Chess Table Pocket Seating Area



Existing



Proposed

Figure 5.16
View of Back Façade

Cooking School Windows:

A large bay window on Myrtle Street provides neighbors and passers-by with a glimpse of the activities in the PG cooking school, further activating the Myrtle Street façade and encouraging viewers to enter the store.

Bulb-Outs:

At each crosswalk adjacent to the grocery store site, the pedestrian environment is enhanced by the creation of bulb-outs. These bulb-outs widen the sidewalk to the edge of the parking lane, improving visibility and increasing space for street planting.

Infiltration Swales:

The planting islands between parking bays are designed to capture storm water runoff and allow it to infiltrate into the soil, rather than directing water into sewers. These islands and the trellis structure described below are shown in Figure 5.17.

Trellises over Parking Bays:

Each parking bay is shaded by a trellis supporting climbing vines. This reduces the heat island effect common to parking lots, and creates a pleasant environment for customers and neighbors.

Welcome Arches:

Figures 5.18 and 5.19 show large tubular steel and wire mesh archways, to be placed at the corner of West Grand and Market and 21st and Market, and at each entrance to the site. These arches will display the People's Grocery name and logo, and will also act as trellises. This visual element will mark the entrances to the site and increase visual recognition of the grocery store and wellness village.

Photovoltaic Panels:

The roof surface of each building on the site will be dedicated to photovoltaic panels, generating a portion of the wellness village's energy needs on site and further demonstrating PG's values and the neighborhood's potential for self-sufficiency.

Flexibility by Design:

There are no curbs in the parking lot, and removable tire stops allow the space to be transformed into an unobstructed festival space. The row of parking spaces south of the demonstration garden can hold a moveable bandstand. The planting in middle parking bay on the south side of the site is designed to accommodate foot traffic.

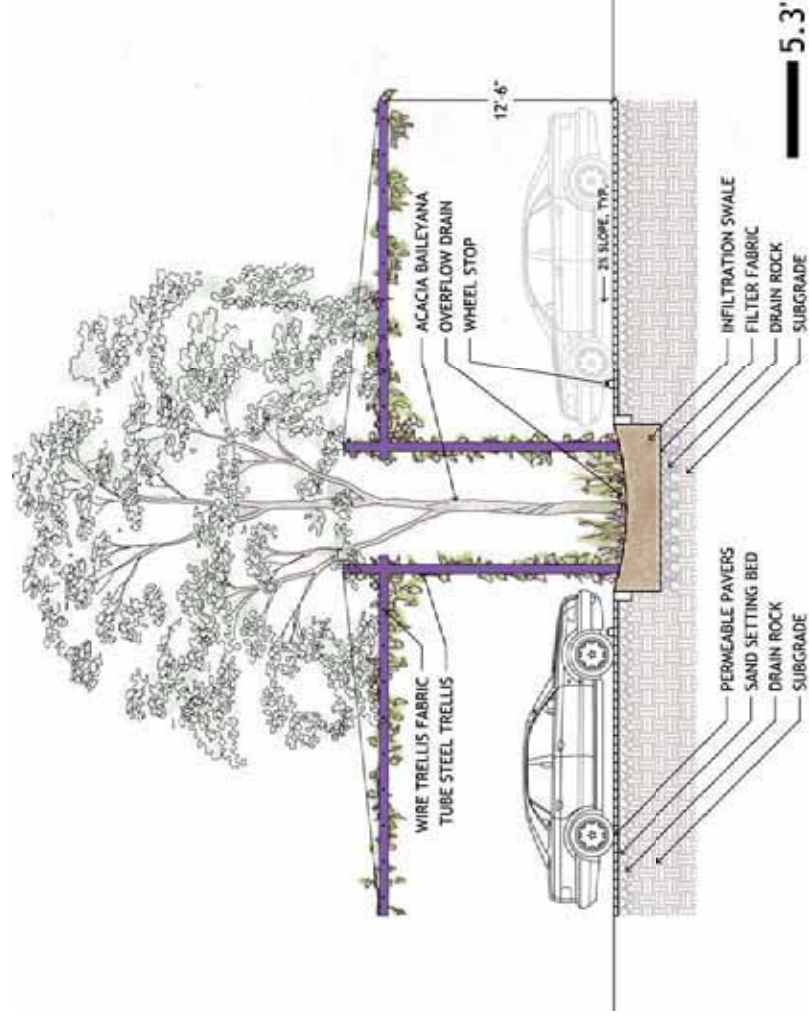


Figure 5.17
Infiltration Swale and Trellis

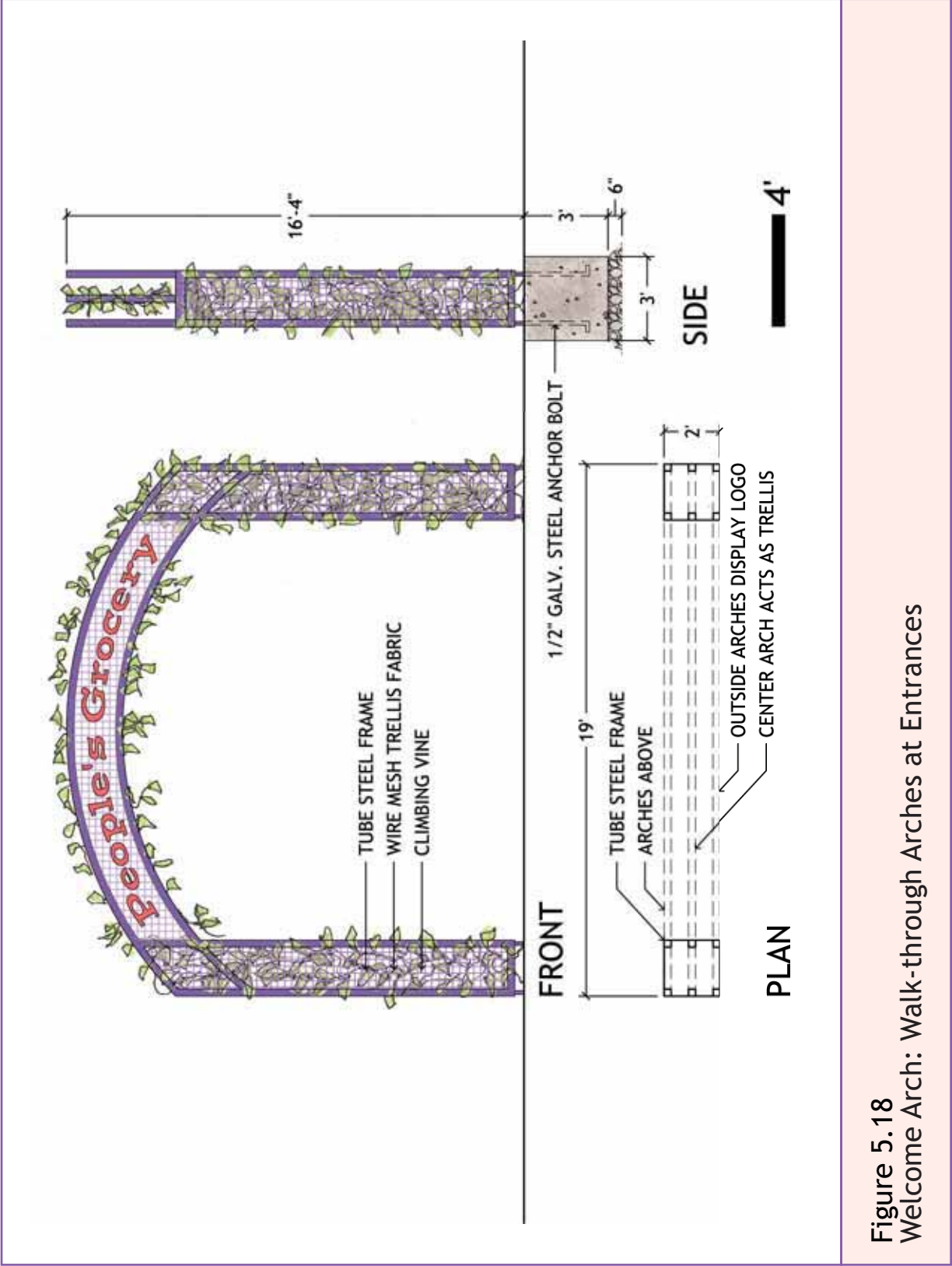


Figure 5.18
Welcome Arch: Walk-through Arches at Entrances

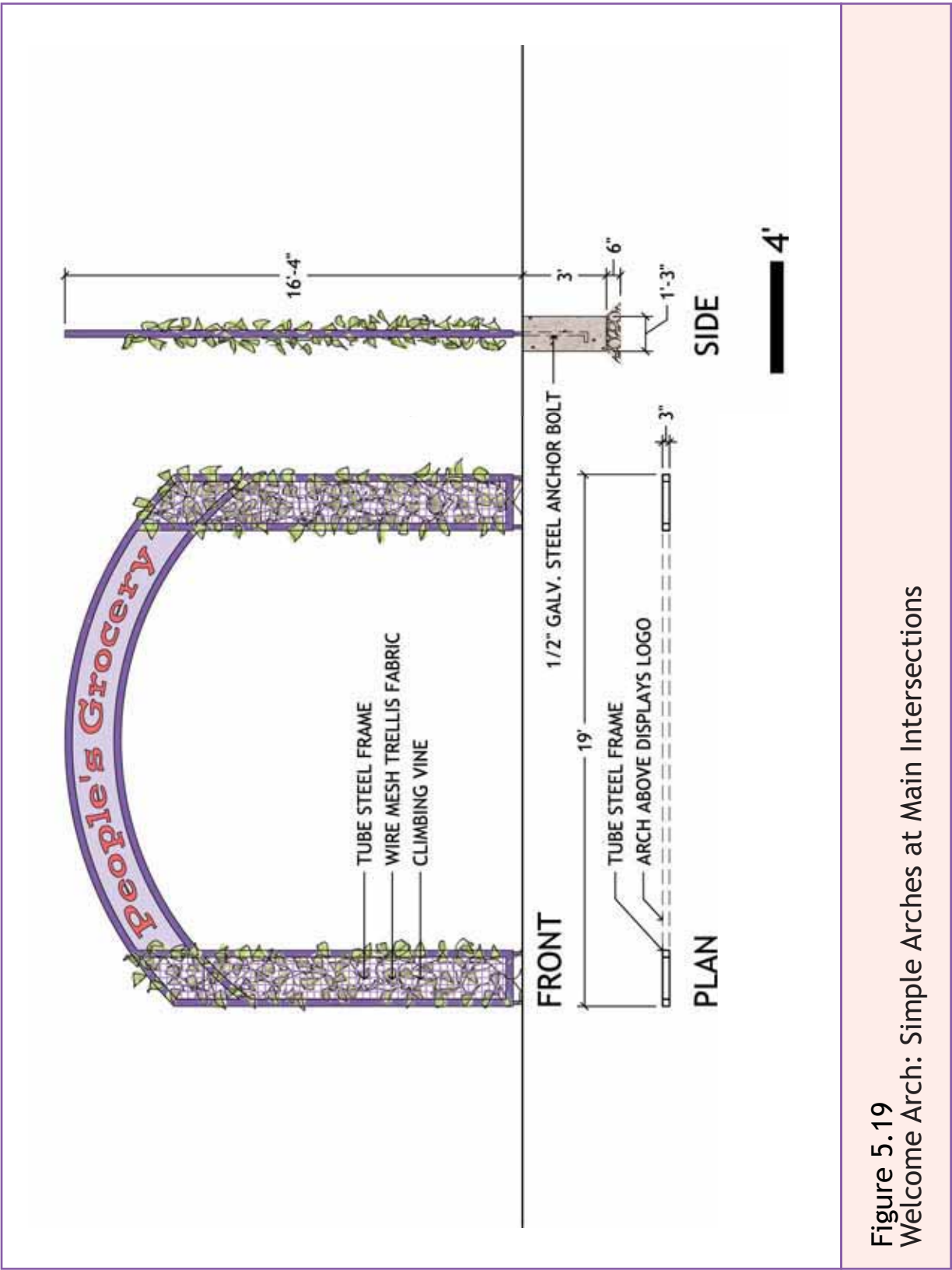


Figure 5.19
Welcome Arch: Simple Arches at Main Intersections

PART B: NEIGHBORHOOD AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL

Urban land can be used for housing, parks, industry, commerce, schools, museums, and almost anything imaginable, including productive agriculture. Many urban neighborhoods have agricultural potential hidden in plain sight, in the form of vacant lots, underused yards and parking lots, and expansive rooftops. The first step in harnessing the potential of urban land to feed its neighbors is to map available land. The *Agricultural Potential Assessment Tool* described below can be used to demonstrate what proportion of a neighborhood's surface area could be used for agricultural production. Since this investigation targets potentials, rather than existing conditions, it is a useful exercise for identifying the neighborhood's latent resources. I used techniques learned from similar projects in Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada to generate this tool; these techniques are described briefly in the section below entitled *Precedents for Determining Agricultural Potential*.

Vision

The *Agricultural Potential Assessment Tool* will provide a method for evaluating the potential of underused urban land, and lay out

guidelines for converting that land to agricultural use. Land suitable for the People's Grocery network of gardens and minifarms was identified in Part A; this investigation will produce a tool to be used by any member of the West Oakland community, or adapted for use in other communities. The tool could be included in the appendices of a city's General Plan, and made available on the interactive GIS websites becoming more common on city government websites. It could also be housed on the People's Grocery website as a free resource for the public. This tool could be used by a block association interested in transforming their neighborhood, by an entrepreneur looking for urban farmland, or by city government interested in establishing Urban Agriculture Enterprise Zones. Once the agricultural potential of a block or an entire neighborhood can be mapped, the possibility of converting that land to agriculture becomes more tangible.

According to John Jeavons, biointensive farming techniques make it possible to grow one person's diet on as little as 4,000 square feet.⁶ Biointensive methods are well suited to an urban environment, where space is limited, but potential garden tenders and end consumers are nearby. Since one acre is 43,560 square feet, every acre of idle urban land could provide a complete diet for ten people. A more

conservative estimate is that each acre could provide all the fruits and vegetables needed for ten people.

Precedents for Determining Agricultural Potential

In Portland, a group of graduate students at Portland State University produced a report entitled “The Diggable City”. They used GIS data on publicly-owned sites to determine which lands were suitable to “community gardens, small-scale agriculture, large-scale agriculture, and agriculture on impervious surfaces or poor soil.”⁷ Classification criteria included site size, water access, vegetative cover, and surface material.⁸

In Vancouver, City Farmer used a collection of digital orthophotos to conduct a visual analysis of several city blocks. They divided the land in each block into eight categories: lane, boulevard, house, garage, public sidewalk, front yard, back yard and private pavement. After conducting an initial classification of the land, the results were groundtruthed and adjusted. They found that in a typical city block in Vancouver, 1/3 of the land area was already vegetated and had potential for food production.⁹ They posted the results of this study on the City Farmer website, in hopes that other individuals and organizations may be inspired to analyze their neighborhoods,

using the City Farmer project as an example.¹⁰

West Oakland Agricultural Potential Prototype Study

Building on the Portland and Vancouver examples, I developed a prototype *Agricultural Potential Analysis Tool* for West Oakland. Using a collection of GIS data covering the entire neighborhood, including orthophotos and a layer depicting vacant lots, I developed a system of land type classification. Vacant lots were assumed to be available for conversion to agricultural uses, and were checked against the orthophotos to see if they were indeed vacant. I visually analyzed remaining land to identify non-vacant public and private land with potential for development as backyard gardens, community gardens, and minifarms. After analyzing the land types in each study area, I generated minimal and maximal conversion scenarios for each block. These conversion diagrams demonstrate how to use land type data to make decisions about how to reuse specific kinds of land.

Vacant lots can be found throughout West Oakland. While some of them are slated for new development, many remain waiting for productive uses. Figure 5.20 maps vacant lots and proposed developments, illustrating that there is an abundant supply of vacant

lots that could be converted to agricultural use.

Selecting Prototype Study Areas

To make this prototype tool as useful as possible, I selected three study areas from the map of vacant lots and proposed developments, each representing a different ratio of vacant lots to occupied lots, and each ultimately suitable for a different level of conversion.

These study areas are shown in Figure 5.21, and are categorized as follows:

1. >50% vacant
2. 25-50% vacant
3. <25% vacant

According to the quantity of vacant land on each block, these study areas could accommodate commercial minifarming, extensive community gardens, or simple backyard gardens. These three block types will make it easy to understand how to apply the analysis tool to any block in the neighborhood.

Prototype Analysis

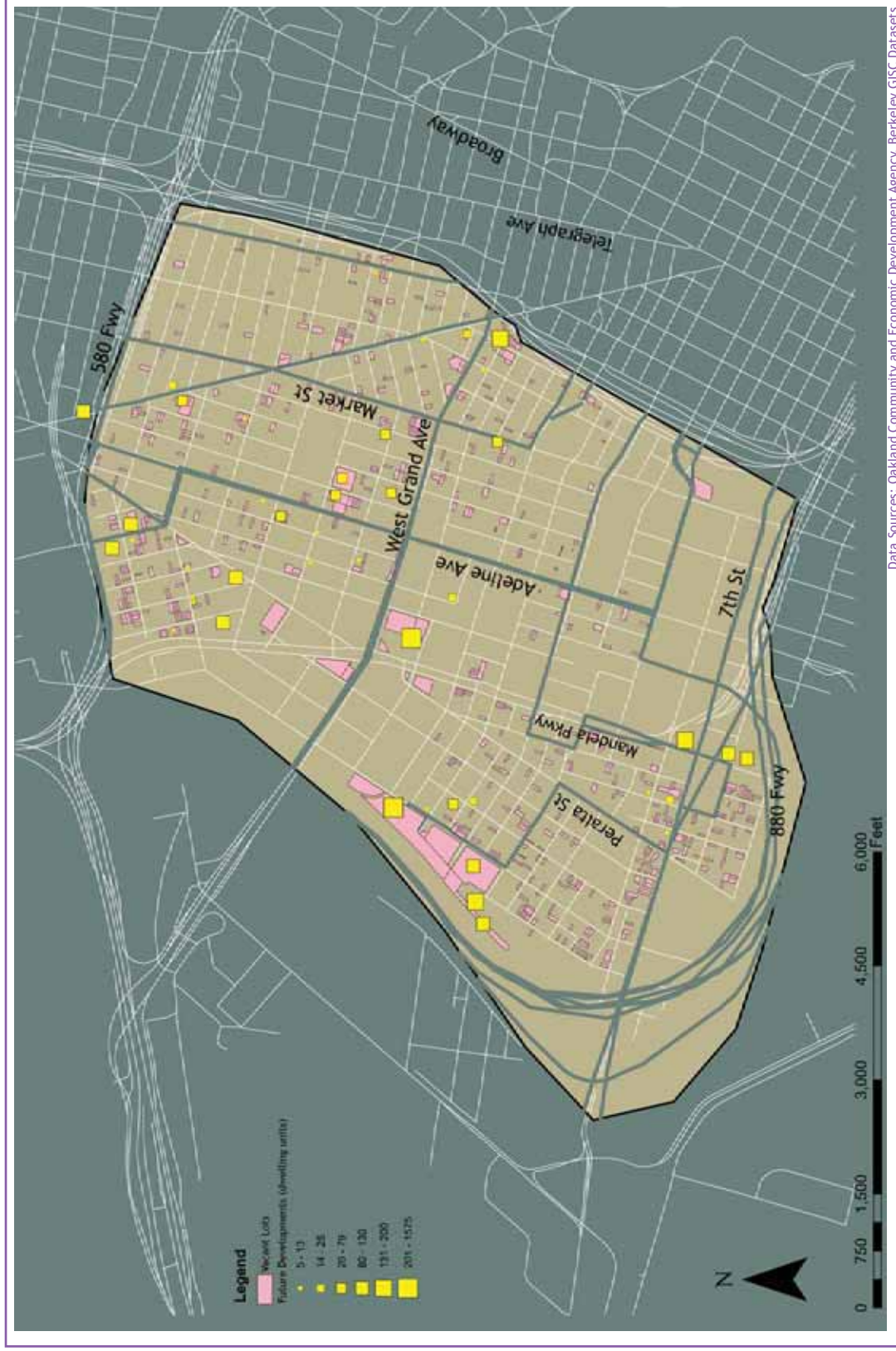
For each study area, I applied the following land classification types:

- Building
- Front yard
- Back yard
- Dense vegetation
- Parking
- Paving
- Sidewalk
- Street
- Vacant Lot

I created a new GIS layer for land type, with each of the nine categories represented. I traced the boundaries of each land type to generate a coverage, or collection of polygons, for each layer. The resulting maps, shown in Figures 5.23, 5.25, and 5.27, guided the conversion plans for each block, described in the next section.

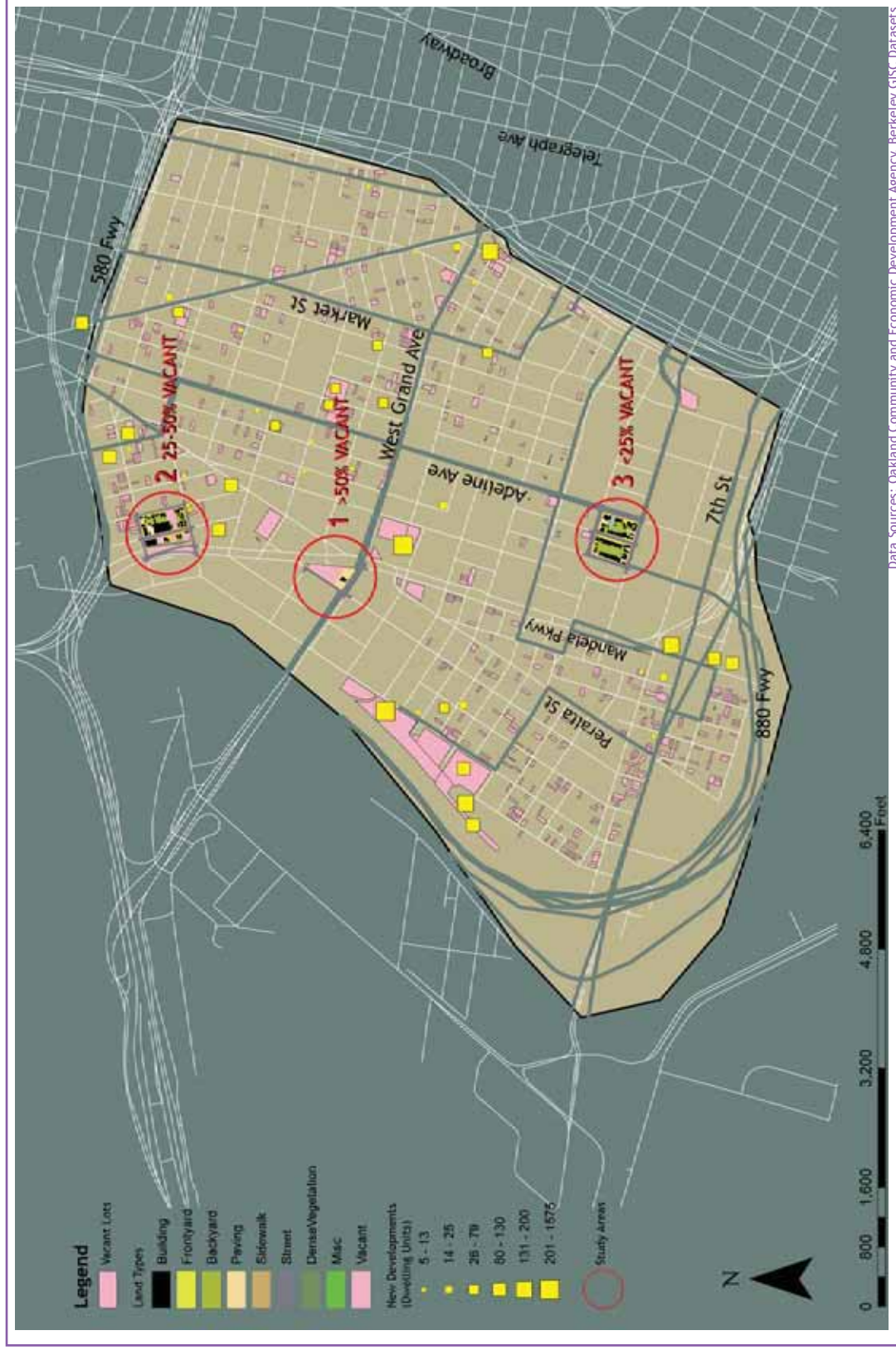
Prototype Block Conversion Plans

After classifying all the land on each block, I created conversion patterns for each block type, based on the ease of conversion of each land type, and the type of landowner or stakeholder who would be involved in the conversion. These patterns are intended as guides for the conversion of individual blocks throughout the neighborhood.



Data Sources: Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency, Berkeley GIS DataSets

Figure 5.20
Vacant Lots and Proposed Developments



Data Sources: Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency, Berkeley GIS DataSets

Figure 5.21
Agricultural Potential Analysis Study Areas

Table 5.22 lists land types, ease of conversion, responsible parties, and best agricultural uses.

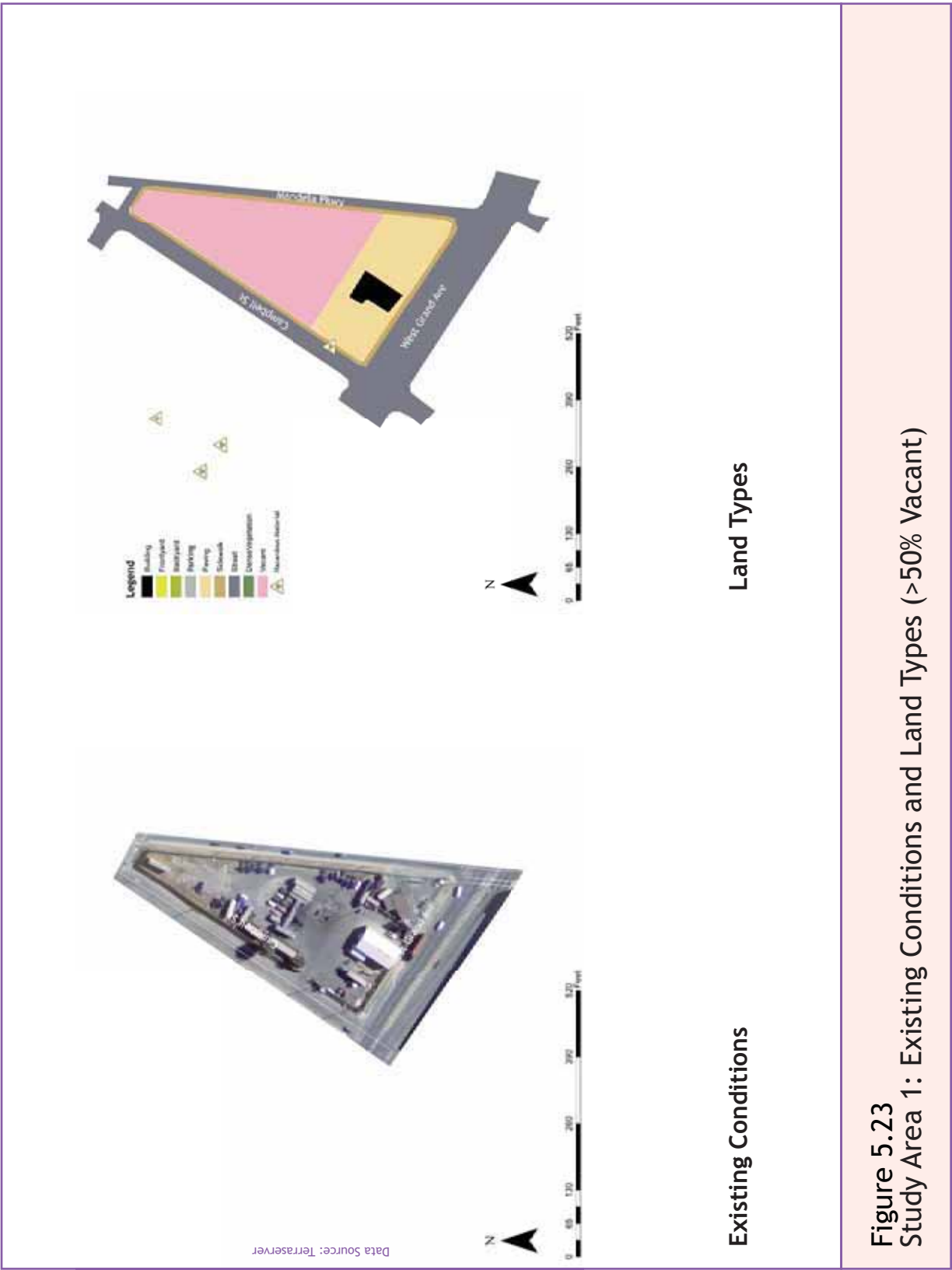
As mentioned earlier, I created two conversion scenarios for each block: minimal and maximal. These conversions are illustrated in Figures 5.24, 5.26, and 5.28. Minimal conversions consist only of land types deemed easy to convert; maximal conversions include land types that are moderately difficult to convert, but exclude those that are classified as difficult. These conversions all follow the recommended agricultural use listed for each land type in Table 5.22, according to the size and ownership of the parcel in question. Private land such as yards could become private gardens;

large rooftops could support gardens for a community of apartment dwellers; underused parking and paving areas could become either private or community gardens, and vacant lots could become community gardens, or be converted to commercial minifarms. These conversions would all be motivated by the desire to maximize West Oakland’s ability to produce its own fresh, healthy food at very low costs.

Illustrating the neighborhood’s potential with these diagrams and making the diagrams and analysis tool available to the public could help People’s Grocery pique the interest of neighborhood residents and mobilize them in the effort to create a network of minifarms

Land Type	Ease of Conversion	Responsible Parties	Agricultural Use
Building	Difficult; moderately difficult for large roofs	Landowner and/or tenant	Private or community roof garden
Front yard	Easy	Landowner and/or tenant	Private garden
Back yard	Easy	Landowner and/or tenant	Private garden
Dense vegetation	Difficult	Landowner	None
Parking	Moderately difficult	Landowner	Private or community garden
Paving	Moderately difficult	Landowner	Private or community garden
Sidewalk	Difficult	City	None
Street	Difficult	City	None
Vacant Lot	Easy	Landowner and/or city	Community garden or commercial minifarm

Figure 5.22
Land Types and Convertibility



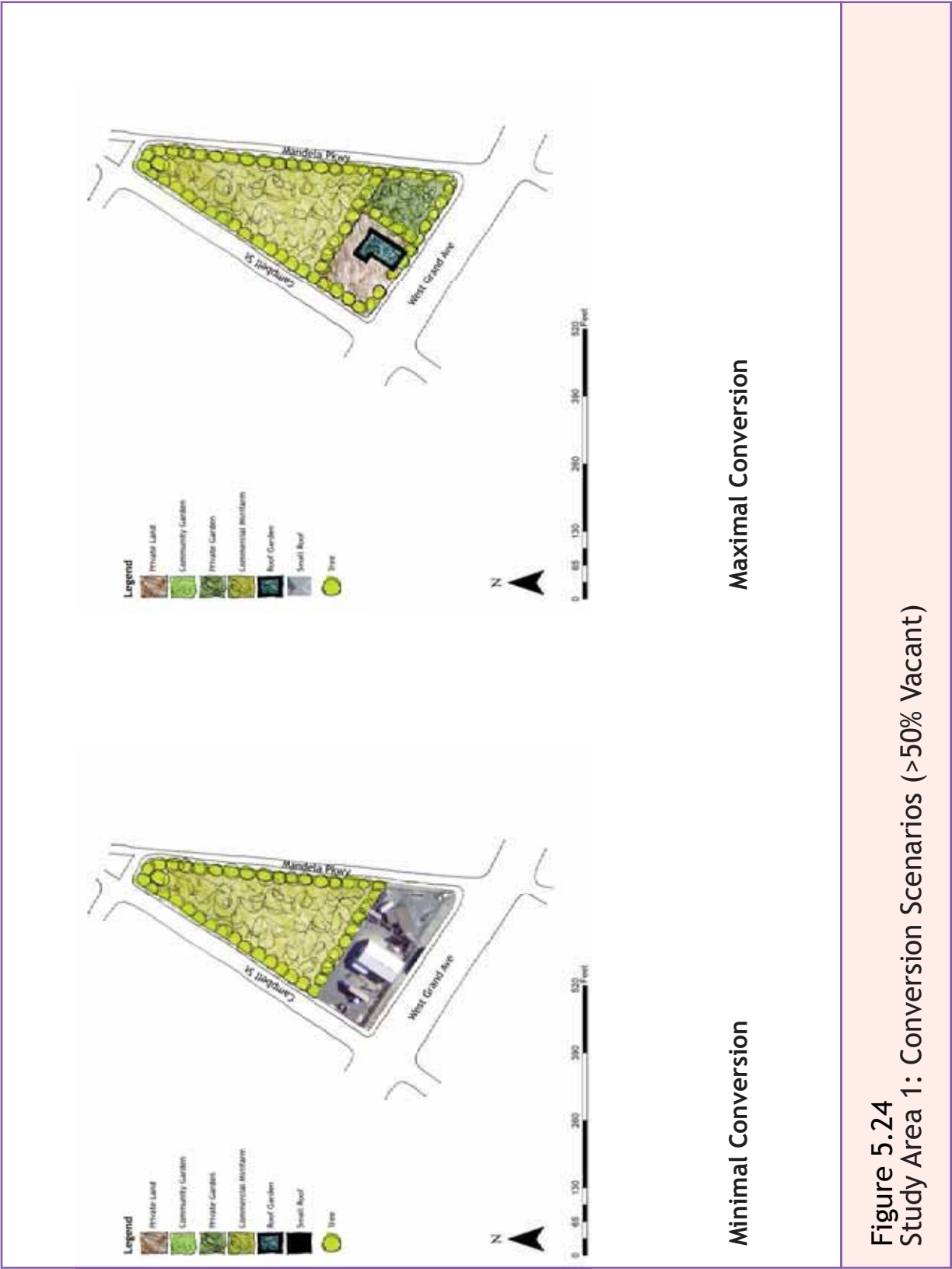




Figure 5.25
Study Area 2: Existing Conditions and Land Types (25-50% Vacant)



Figure 5.26
Study Area 2: Conversion Scenarios (25-50% Vacant)

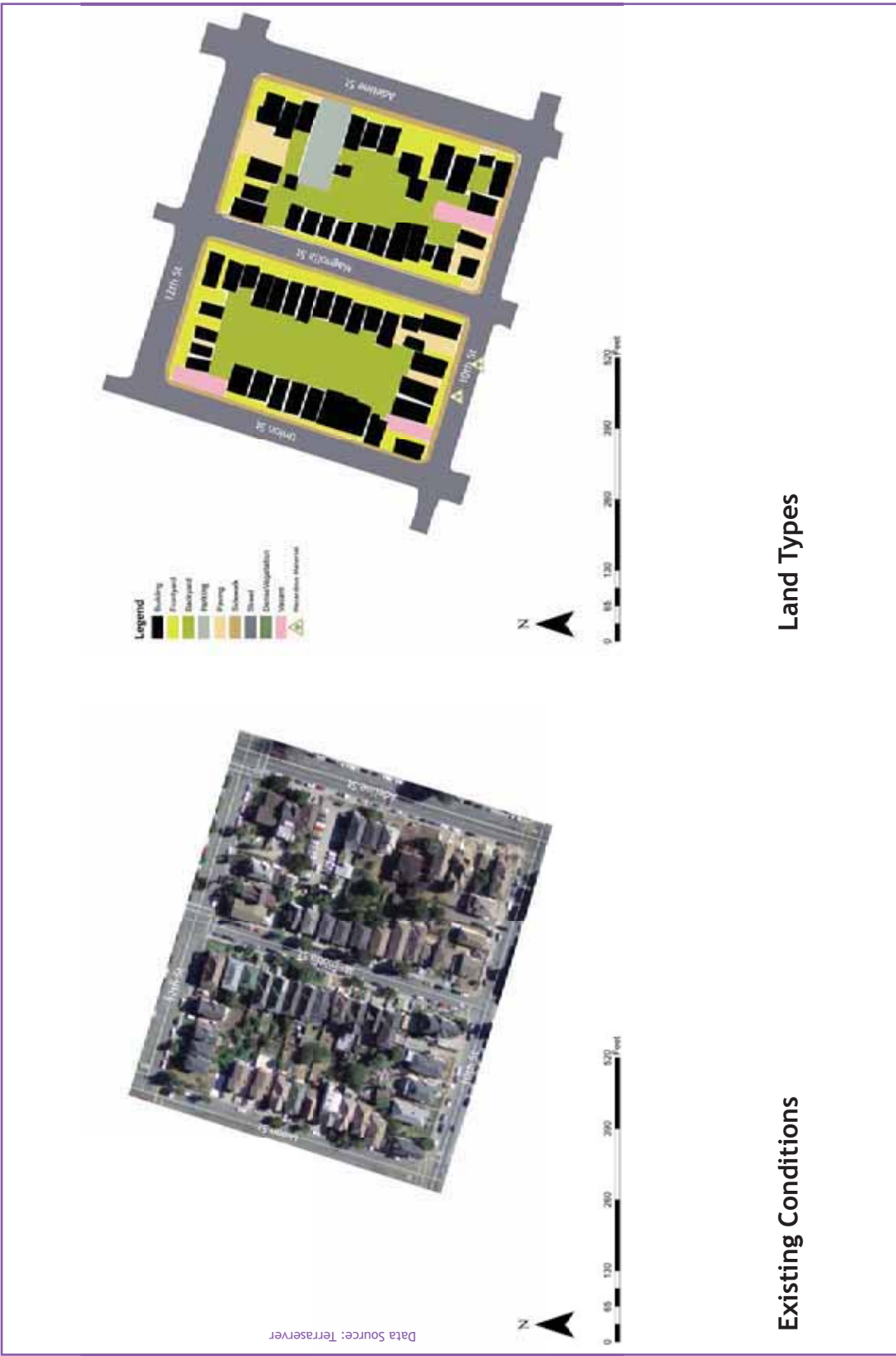


Figure 5.27
Study Area 3: Existing Conditions and Land Types (<25% Vacant)



Figure 5.28
Study Area 3: Conversion Scenarios (<25% Vacant)

and gardens. The diagrams may be thought of as agricultural zoning maps, illustrating the potential of each land type. If, as mentioned above, one acre of land could provide fruits and vegetables to ten people, then the 78.6 acres of vacant land in West Oakland (5% of the neighborhood's land area) could feed 786 people (4% of the neighborhood's population), and the large vacant lot in Study Area 1 could feed 13 people.

Considerations for Future Use

My intent in conducting this inventory was to demonstrate the potential for converting underused land to agricultural use, not to assess the work that would need to be done to make each piece of land farmable. Some sites are brownfields, others are disused residential land. All would require soil studies and other analysis before conversion to agricultural use, but that is outside the scope of this project. Table 5.29 presents additional information that

Agricultural Use	Information to Gather and Possible Sources	Planting Methods
Private Garden	Soil quality: <i>soil testing</i> Possible contaminants: <i>hazardous material dataset included in tool, soil testing</i> Sun patterns: <i>field observation</i>	Raised beds In-ground beds Containers
Community Garden	Soil quality: <i>soil testing</i> Possible contaminants: <i>hazardous material dataset included in tool, soil testing</i> Sun patterns: <i>field observation</i> Land tenure: <i>discussion with landowner</i>	Raised beds In-ground beds Containers
Roof Garden	Weight limit: <i>discussion with landowner and engineer</i> Waterproofing: <i>discussion with green roof consultant</i> Water access: <i>discussion with landowner</i> Pedestrian access: <i>discussion with landowner</i>	Containers with lightweight soil mix
Commercial Minifarm	Soil quality: <i>soil testing</i> Possible contaminants: <i>hazardous material dataset included in tool, soil testing</i> Sun patterns: <i>field observation</i> Pedestrian access: <i>field observation</i> Vehicular access: <i>field observation</i>	Raised beds In-ground beds Greenhouses Hydroponics (on contaminated sites)

Figure 5.29
Table of Additional Considerations

should be gathered about parcels in question before converting to agricultural use:

PART C: REPAIRING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

The final component of this project is a strategic plan for restructuring the local food system. This will involve local political support for new stores, infrastructure, and jobs; relationship-building with nearby farmers; and support of efforts to build regional distribution centers. The proposals described below have been shaped by the research described in the first four chapters of this document, and by proposals and suggestions made by Ecotrust and by California Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF).

Portland-based Ecotrust recently completed the Vivid Picture Project for the state of California. Requested by the Roots of Change Fund in 2004, this project presents comprehensive research on the current state of California's food system, and the changes that will be needed to make the system sustainable.¹¹ Selected recommendations most relevant to this project are summarized below:

- Towns and cities should have Food Departments responsible for ensuring equitable food access for all residents

- Zoning regulations should include food-access-per-capita requirements
- The minimum wage should be raised and middle-income jobs created
- Direct marketing opportunities should be strengthened by mapping producers and potential consumers
- Market demand for regional brands should be developed
- Establishment of new small stores and restaurants should be encouraged with a business incubator program¹²

In a conversation with Anya Fernald of CAFF, she remarked that vertically integrated cooperatives, where businesspeople handling all aspects of the production of a particular food item belong to the same local cooperative, are one of the great strengths of European food systems.¹³ Applying this approach in Oakland would result in a transparent, traceable food system with potentially stronger links to place and community.

As I have explained, there is currently a disconnect between the agricultural community and urban markets. There is also a disconnect between supermarket chains and West Oakland. A new local food system for West Oakland and the Bay Area would reconnect West

Oakland residents to affordable, convenient sources of food, and provide opportunities to connect rural and urban communities. The plan described below is a prototype for the Food Systems element that should be incorporated into regional plans.

Vision

The industrial food system, among its many other problems, does a great disservice to small- and medium-scale growers, and to low-income communities. As described in the Neighborhood Development Plan above, People's Grocery will develop and market a line of locally processed foods and strengthen West Oakland's network of stores. To complement these efforts, People's Grocery and West Oakland will form a partnership with the smaller growers in the greater Bay Area, thus creating a local food system that bypasses the industrial food system. This partnership between growers and urban residents would provide a decent living for farmers, and healthy, affordable food for the people of West Oakland. To work, and to be price competitive with the industrial system, it will be necessary to create a very efficient network of strategically placed processing and distribution centers, minimizing the number of times a food product changes hands or is loaded into

a truck between field and table. In addition, Oakland should have a Department of Food to monitor food access throughout the city and mandate change as necessary to comply with new food-access-per-capita requirements.

Regional Plan

Mapping the Agricultural Community

California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) is an organic certification organization, and also engages in consumer education and advocacy for the organics movement.¹⁴ I chose to focus on organics, because businesses in the organic industry tend to be smaller than conventional operations that source to the industrial food system (though this is not always the case), are often cut out of conventional distribution channels, and tend to be concerned about food justice.¹⁵ I worked with CCOF staff to obtain a copy of their database of organic growers, ranchers, processors, distributors and other support businesses, representing a large sample of the organic operations in California. Their members fall into the following categories, with many members playing more than one role:

- Grower
- Seed/Transplant Grower

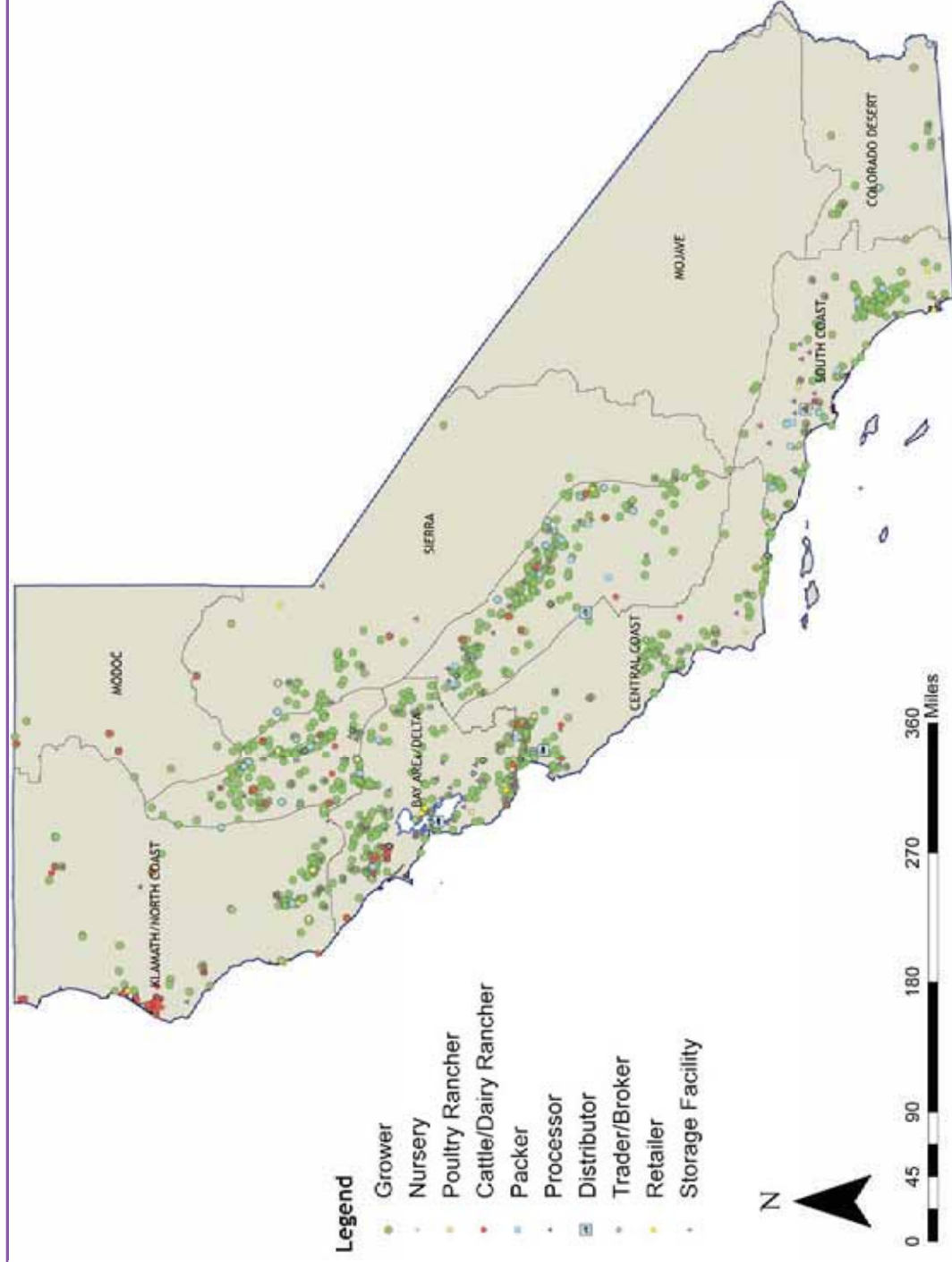
- Poultry Rancher
- Cattle/Dairy Rancher
- Processor
- Packer
- Distributor
- Trader/Broker
- Retailer
- Storage Facility

I geocoded the address of each member business to generate a map revealing location patterns for organic growers and ranchers and the small- and medium-scale agricultural support industry. Figure 5.30 shows the distribution of CCOF members throughout California. As you can see, organic businesses can be found in all the rich agricultural regions of the state, from the San Joaquin Valley to Monterey to the Sonoma Valley.

Once each member business was assigned a point defined by latitude and longitude, I looked for logical ways to cluster growers into geographically defined groups. A hierarchical linear clustering algorithm was used to achieve this.¹⁶ The algorithm is written in R, an open-source statistical analysis language,¹⁷ and works by coalescing

the closest two points (member businesses) at the midpoint of the line segment joining the points. Each resulting point is weighted according to the number of original points represented. This was repeated until a desired number of points remained. Several cluster scenarios were generated, ranging from 20 to 100 clusters. Figure 5.31 illustrates this range of possible cluster scenarios, and shows that at 100 clusters CCOF businesses fall into clearly defined, manageable groups that could easily share warehousing and distribution services.

The CCOF members close to the Bay Area are mapped in Figure 5.32, and will be encouraged to source foods to West Oakland. As you can see, there is great agricultural bounty in the greater Bay Area that is currently not getting into West Oakland. I chose the bioregion as the best geographic indicator of “localness”, since bioregional boundaries are based on soils, climate and watershed, rather than politics. The most significant clusters for food production close to the Bay Area are centered in Sonoma, Solano, and Santa Cruz counties, all in the Bay Area – Delta bioregion. Slightly further afield, Yolo County in the Sacramento Valley bioregion, Merced county in the San Joaquin Valley bioregion, and Monterey county in the Central Coast bioregion are home to other nearby clusters of



Data Sources: California Certified Organic Farmers Member Database, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, ESRI

Figure 5.30
CCOF Members in California

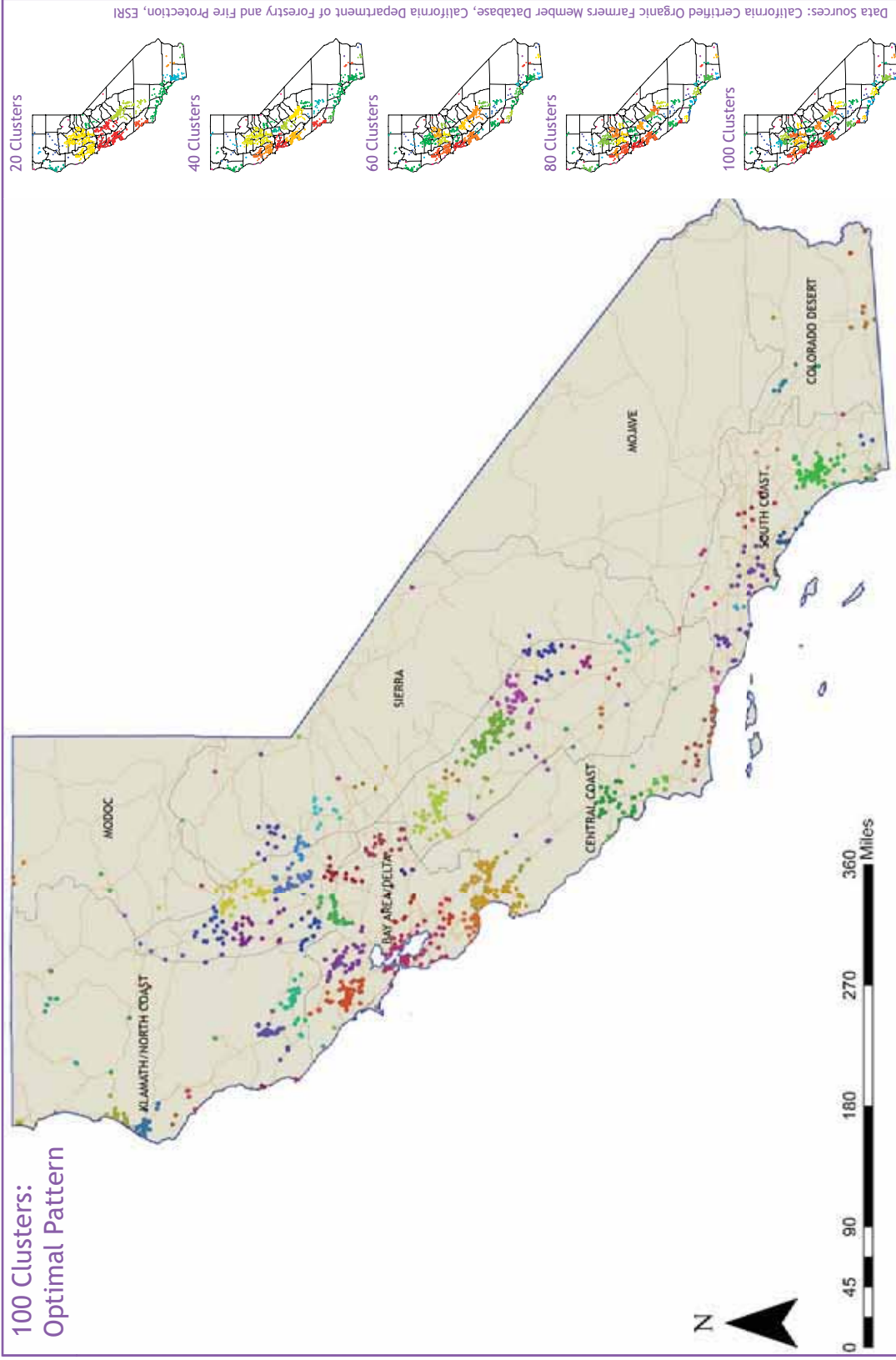


Figure 5.31
Cluster Diagrams and Optimal Cluster Pattern

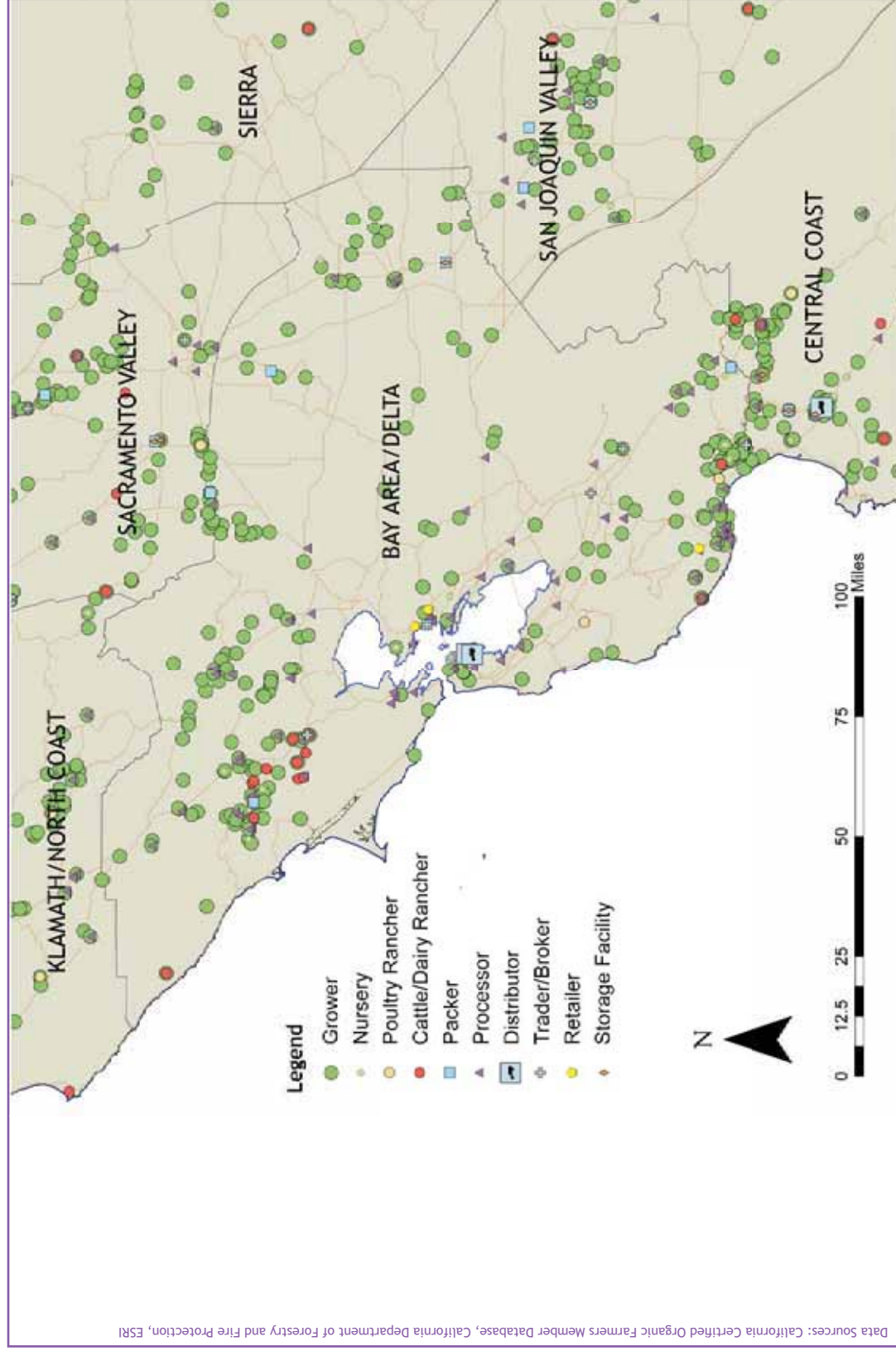


Figure 5.32
CCOF Members in the Bay Area

growers.

Many growers and ranchers seem to be missing convenient distribution centers. The geographic center of each cluster of growers would be ideal places for new distributors to be located, as illustrated in Figure 5.33. This will create short supply chains with food changing hand only a couple of times between field and table, keeping prices affordable for the neighborhood and profitable for growers. If we replace the local and regional distribution infrastructure that has been dismantled over the past few decades, farmers will be able to make a decent living, and fresh, affordable food will be available to our cities. When efficient packing, processing and distribution facilities are rebuilt for local food systems, it will be possible for local food to compete with the industrial food system. Figure 5.34 is a conceptual diagram illustrating a repaired local food system.

Integration with the West Oakland Neighborhood Development Plan

West Oakland will be served by a network of commercial mini-farms and processing centers within the neighborhood, and by a regional network of small- and medium-scale farms. As described in Part A, these farms will supply stores in the neighborhood through the

People's Grocery buying club. They will also be served by network of cooperative distribution and processing hubs (including those within West Oakland) designed to keep shipping routes short and efficient, and to minimize the number of middlemen involved in the process. With fewer middlemen involved, the price of a product is marked up fewer times between field and table.

Some farms at the edge of the city will be part of the People's Grocery Land Trust, the same trust protecting mini-farms in West Oakland, and some would actually be run by People's Grocery. This new food system will represent a truly local foodshed, and if designed efficiently, will be price competitive with food from further afield. In addition, this new local system will provide local jobs at every step of the way, another benefit to a community in search of a reliable economic base.

Whenever plans are made to improve the infrastructure, physical environment, or other systems in a struggling neighborhood, the risk of gentrification must be confronted. While too many improvement plans result in the displacement of the original residents, a neighborhood can be transformed without pushing out any residents. In fact, the most powerful transformations are those

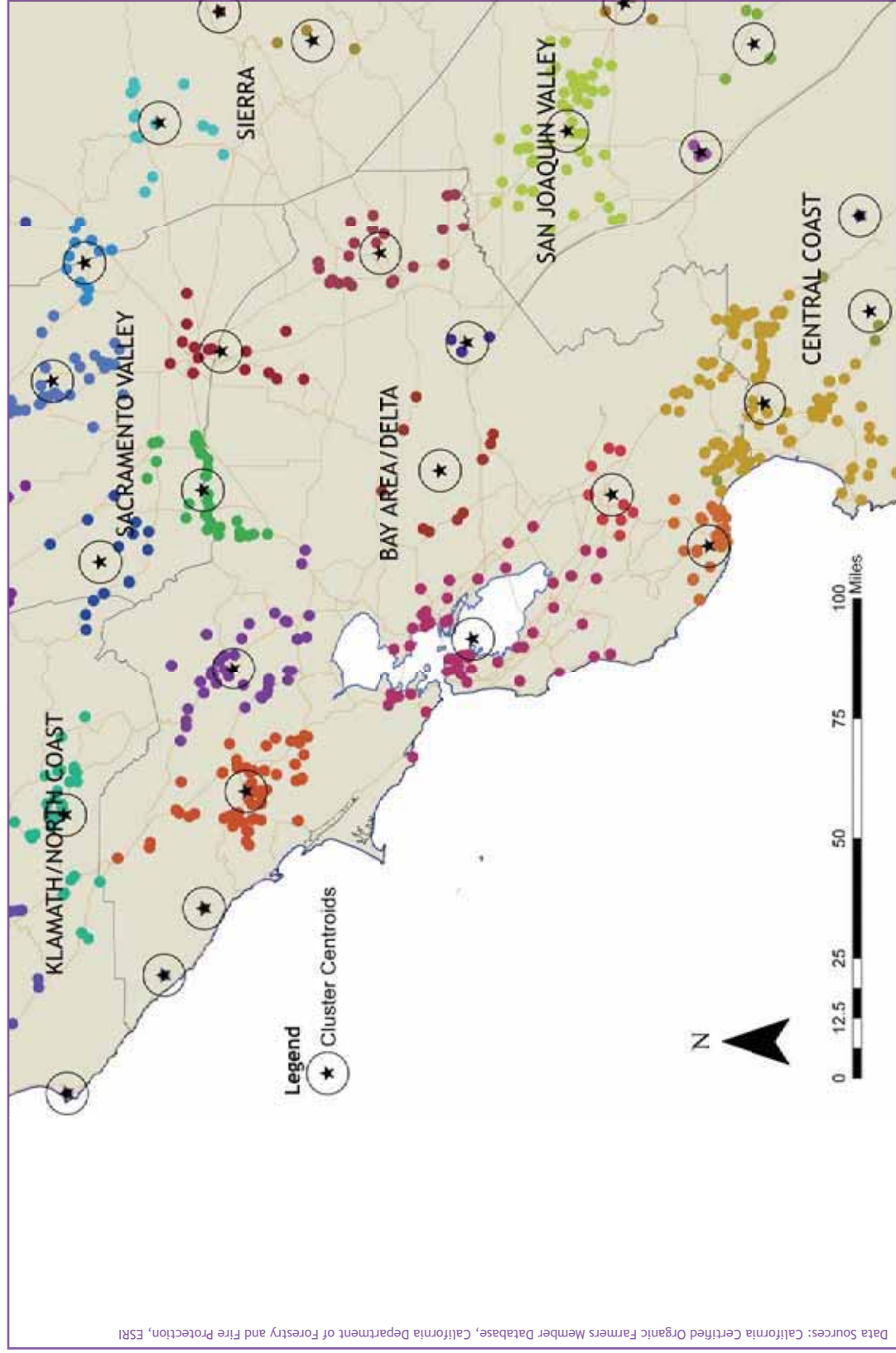


Figure 5.33
Bay Area Clusters

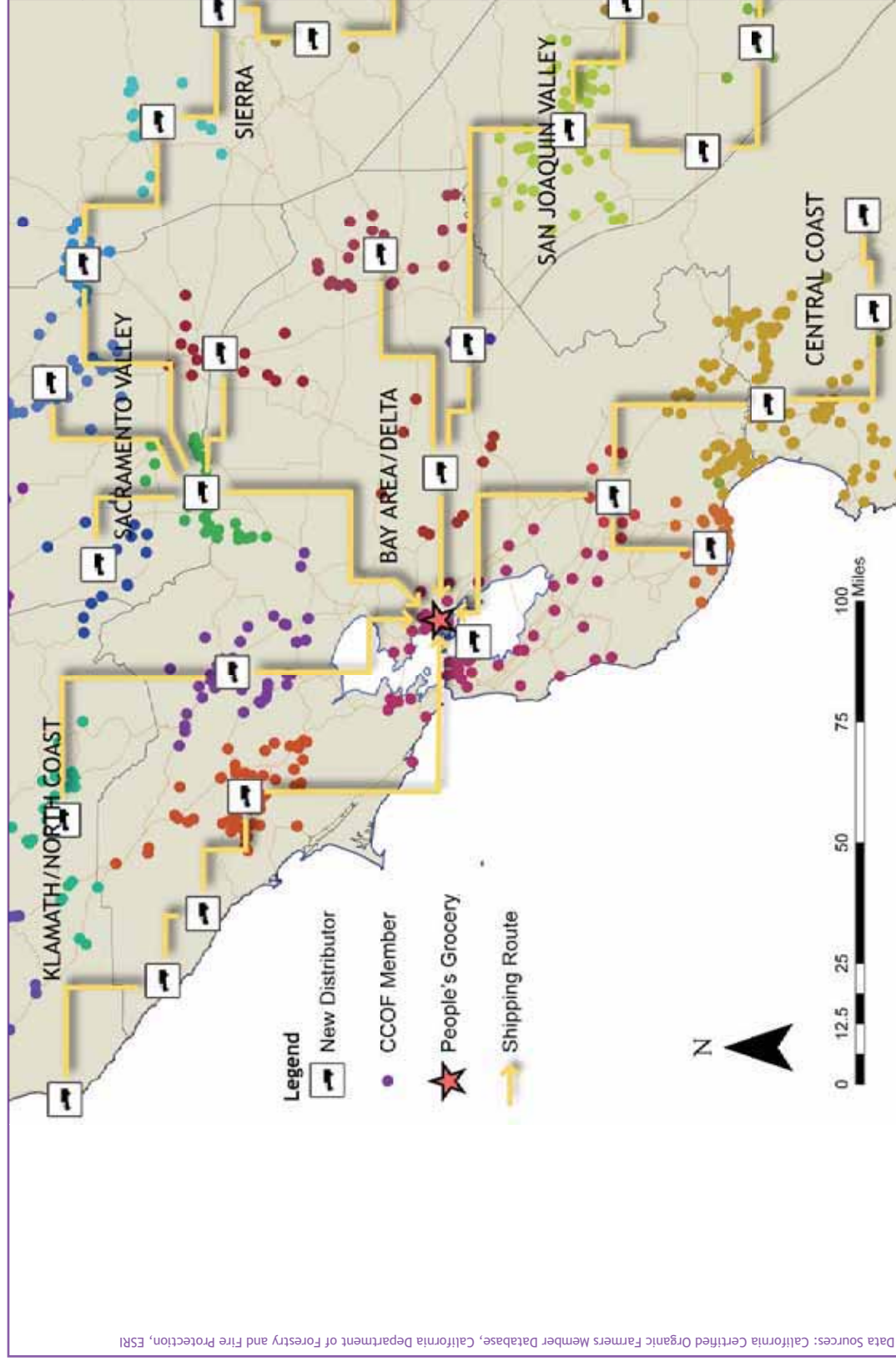


Figure 5.34
Repaired Local Food System

that better the lives of each resident and uplift a neighborhood en masse. When infrastructure and other physical improvements are coupled with economic development, an entire community can change its destiny. If the West Oakland community takes control of its food system, the neighborhood and nearby farming communities could work together to create a new future, one that ensures healthy living and a better livelihood for each member of the community.

Oakland Department of Food and Food Access Zoning

Last spring's *Oakland Food System Assessment Report* proposed the creation of an Oakland Food Policy Council; I suggest that an organization with the power to enact laws is also necessary. A Department of Food incorporated into the city governance structure will ensure that food justice comes to the top of the city agenda, on equal footing with clean water and well-maintained roads. One of the first tasks of the proposed Oakland Department of Food should be to enact minimum food access zoning, to ensure the presence a full-service grocery store within walking distance of every Oakland resident. Other appropriate roles for this new department will include monitoring the safety and nutritional content of the food supply, setting and enforcing local-sourcing requirements, and

helping stores, institutions, nearby growers, and private citizens with the transition to a local food system.

Barriers

There are significant obstacles to (re)establishing local trade. Interstate commerce laws compel states to allow shipment of produce across their borders, and much local infrastructure has been dismantled in favor of the petroleum- and refrigeration-dependent industrial food system. This system maximizes profits to big business, but does so at the expense of nutritional content, local culture, and the public health. Many of the costs of this system are externalized, creating artificially low food prices. These costs include pollution, erosion, loss of soil fertility, diet-related diseases, and energy. In order to compete with this system, it will be necessary to design an extremely efficient local system, and create consumer demand for better products.

SUMMARY

This plan is intended to guide and inspire the work of People's Grocery and the local activist and agricultural communities over the next twenty years. Starting with a cooperative grocery store, expanding to a development plan for the entire neighborhood, and working

up to a new local food system, this plan addresses neighborhood food justice at several interrelated scales. Local production, self-sufficiency, and the restoration of cultural knowledge and local bonds are stressed at every level, creating a vision for a thriving neighborhood and a robust local food system. The proposals made here for People’s Grocery and for West Oakland should be thought of as models to be adapted to local needs in other communities in the Bay Area and around the world.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

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NEXT STEPS 147

With the support of the neighborhood, the city, nearby agricultural businesses, and financial patrons, People's Grocery will be able to become a catalyst for positive change.

REVIEW

Beginning with definitions of food justice and foodshed and working through an examination of existing conditions and best practices, this document sets out a series of proposals for repairing the West Oakland food system. In Chapter 1, I laid out four major objectives for the project: evaluating neighborhood food justice and agricultural potential, summarizing best practices for achieving food justice, inventorying and analyzing ongoing efforts in West Oakland, and recommending ways to repair the local food system. By evaluating neighborhood food justice in Chapter 2, it became clear that West Oakland faces serious obstacles to universal food justice, but that significant aspects of the framework for improvement are already in place; the neighborhood possesses a network of small stores and education centers, but store inventories must be overhauled and comprehensive nutrition education programs put in place. The summary of best practices for achieving food justice provided in Chapter 3 serves to inspire and guide recommendations later in the document, demonstrating that real change is possible. The inventory

of ongoing efforts in the neighborhood summarized in Chapter 4 indicates that a variety of dedicated, energetic organizations are already working for food justice, and that momentum is building. The recommendations for repairing the local food system described in Chapter 5 represent feasible action items to be taken on by People's Grocery, neighborhood residents, the City of Oakland, and nearby agricultural communities.

NEXT STEPS

With the support of the neighborhood, the city, nearby agricultural businesses, and financial patrons, People's Grocery will be able to become a catalyst for positive change. And several aspects of this project will be the subjects of continuing work. First, extending the food justice gap analysis to calculate West Oakland's untapped buying power will make the case for new grocery stores in the neighborhood and encourage benefactors to invest in People's Grocery. Second, quantifying employment opportunities represented by new food processing centers, minifarms, and food retail, will demonstrate the value to the neighborhood. Third, advertising West Oakland's

potential, both in job creation and agricultural production, to the neighborhood and potential investors will help build momentum for these plans. Fourth, refining the regional distribution model will lay the groundwork for entrepreneurs to rebuild needed infrastructure and establish distribution businesses. Finally, working for the establishment of a Department of Food will ensure that the food system becomes a priority for the city.

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APPENDIX 1: Glossary

Agribusiness: As explained by Wikipedia, “[among] critics of large-scale, industrialized, vertically integrated food production, the term *agribusiness* is used as a negative, synonymous with *corporate farming*. As such, it is often contrasted with family farm. Some negative connotation is also derived from the negative associations of “business” and “corporation” from critics of capitalism or corporate excess.”⁹¹

Food Justice: People’s Grocery describes food justice as “healthy food for everyone.” The term food security (see below) was recently co-opted by the Homeland Security Department, and is often used to refer to protecting industrial-scale agriculture from biological attacks. To replace this term, and to convey the sense of social justice involved in the old food security movement, many people now use the term *food justice*.

Food Security: As defined by the USDA, food security is “the state in which all persons obtain a nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet at all times through non-emergency sources, including food from local production. Food security broadens the traditional concept of hunger, embracing a systematic view of the causes of hunger and poor nutrition within a community while identifying the changes necessary to prevent their occurrence. Food security programs confront hunger and poverty.”⁹²

Food System: The concept of a *food system* expands on the *foodshed* (see below) to encompass how and where food is processed and handled between the field and the table.

Foodshed: According to the FoodRoutes Network, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture and local food systems, “the term ‘foodshed’ is similar to the concept of a watershed: while watersheds outline the flow of water supplying a particular area, foodsheds outline the flow of food feeding a

particular area. Your foodshed encompasses the farm, your table, and everything in between.”⁹³

Hunger: The term hunger is often used interchangeably with the term malnutrition, which is defined by Wikipedia as “a general term for the medical condition caused by an improper or insufficient diet. It most often refers to *undernutrition* resulting from inadequate consumption, poor absorption, or excessive loss of nutrients, but the term can also encompass *overnutrition*, resulting from overeating or excessive intake of specific nutrients. An individual will experience malnutrition if the appropriate amount, kind or quality of nutrients comprising a healthy diet are not consumed for an extended period of time. An extended period of malnutrition can result in starvation.”⁹⁴

Locally grown: Food grown (and processed) close to the place it is consumed, preferably within the same bioregion. Local is a relative term, and shifts according to the location of nearby farms.

APPENDIX 2: Resources

Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)

Brett Melone, Executive Director

PO Box 6264

Salinas, CA 93912

831.758.1469

www.albafarmers.org/Homepage.html

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Suzan Bateson, Executive Director

P.O. Box 2599

Oakland, CA 94614

510.635.3663

www.accfb.org

City Farmer – Canada’s Office of Sustainable Agriculture

Michael Levenston, Executive Director

Box 74561, Kitsilano RPO

Vancouver, BC V6J 4P4

Canada

www.cityfarmer.org

City Slicker Farms

Willow Rosenthal, Founding Director

737 Henry Street

Oakland, CA 94607

510.763.4241

www.cityslickerfarms.org

The Edible Schoolyard

Marsha Guerrero, Director Special Projects, Chez Panisse Foundation

Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School

1781 Rose Street

Berkeley, CA 94703

510.558.1335

www.edibleschoolyard.org

Farmers’ Diner

Tod Murphy, Founder

PO Box 729

Washington, VT 05675

802.883.9984

www.farmersdiner.com

Growers Collaborative

Stephanie Johnson, General Manager

PO Box 363

Davis, CA 95617

530.756.8518

www.caff.org

Mo’ Better Food

David Roach, Founder

PO Box 10677

Oakland, CA 94610

510.776.4178

www.mobetterfood.com

Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardens
Margaret Majua, Director
1724 Mandela Parkway #5
Oakland, CA 94607
510.465.4660
www.obugs.org

PCC Natural Markets & PCC Farmland Trust
Trudy Bialic, Manager of Public Affairs
4201 Roosevelt Way NE
Seattle, WA 98105
206.547.1222
www.pccnaturalmarkets.com

People's Grocery
Brahm Ahmadi, Executive Director
3265 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
510.652.7607
www.peoplesgrocery.org

Saint Vincent de Paul Free Dining Room
Ron Smith, Dining Room Manager
675 23rd Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510.451.7676
www.svdop-alameda.org

Toronto Food Policy Council
Wayne Roberts, Project Coordinator
277 Victoria Street, Suite 203
Toronto, Ontario M5B 1W1
Canada
416.338.7937
www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm

Urban Nutrition Initiative
Danny Gerber, Director
Franklin Building Annex
3451 Walnut Street, P-117
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215.898.1600
www.urbannutrition.org

West Oakland Food Collaborative
Dana Harvey, Director, Environmental Justice Institute
920 Peralta Street
Oakland, CA 94607
510.436.7466
www.wo-foodcollaborative.org

Your Backyard Farmer
Donna Smith and Robyn Streeter
www.yourbackyardfarmer.com

APPENDIX 3: Price and Availability Study

Data Collection Form

Food Item	Brand/Variety	Item Weight/Unit (Desired)	Item Weight/Unit (Actual)	Price (Lowest Cost)
Fruit-fresh				
Apples, any variety (bagged or loose)		Per lb		
Bananas		Per lb		
Grapes (green or red)		Per lb		
Melon (cantaloupe, honeydew, or watermelon)		Per lb		
Oranges, any variety (bagged or loose)		Per lb		
Vegetables-fresh				
Carrots, unpeeled (bagged or loose)		1-lb bag		
Celery, bunch		Per lb		
Green pepper		Per lb		
Lettuce, leaf (green or red)		Per lb		
Onions, yellow (bagged or loose)		Per lb		
Tomatoes (any variety)		Per lb		
Potatoes (any variety)		5-lb bag		
Fruit-canned				
Oranges, mandarin (juice or light syrup)		15-oz can		
Peaches, any variety (light syrup)		29-oz can		
Vegetables-canned				
Mushrooms, pieces		4-oz can		
Spaghetti sauce, any variety		26-oz jar		
Tomato sauce, any variety		8-oz can		
Fruits and vegetables-frozen				
Orange juice, concentrate		12-oz can		
Broccoli, chopped		16-oz bag		
Green beans, any variety		16-oz bag		
Green peas, any variety		16-oz bag		
French fries, any variety		32-oz bag		

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

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- 2 Ahmadi, Brahm. People's Grocery Business Profile.
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