What is this Indicator?
This indicator measures the proportion of households that are located within a 1/2 mile radius of a farmers’ market.

Why this is important: Farmers’ markets bring fresh, locally grown produce directly into the city promoting better nutrition and healthier living at a time when obesity and other ill effects of poor nutrition and lack of exercise plague our community. Farmers markets provide direct education about the relationship between land use, food production, and the efficient delivery of produce directly to consumers, especially for many urban residents without cars or convenient access to supermarkets. In addition to being a food resource, farmers markets also promote community hub. Additionally, they often offer nutrition and health promotion information to shoppers, and they can also support economic development through providing a sales venue for new food entrepreneurs.

Based on an assessment of San Francisco’s Farmers’ Markets conducted by SF Food Systems, a successful farmers’ market must have a suitable physical location, adequate community support, and secure financial support for start up costs. The locations must have ample space and adequate parking for both patrons who want to purchase large quantities of product. They should also be visible and accessible, and have cooperative weather.

However, proximity to a farmers’ market does not always equal true access and utility. Factors such as cost, hours of operation, dietary and cultural preferences, quantity and selection, and publicity about the farmers markets may impact access and utilization of the markets.

While farmers’ markets may be a valuable source of produce and community interaction for some residents, they may not allow residents to meet their full range of food needs. Because of their limited selection and hours of operation, the percent of the population within ½ mile of a farmers’ market may not be the best indicator of food access. Access to a full service grocery store would likely be a better indicator of true retail food access because they are generally open all days of the week and have a full range of food products.

The Community Target of 88 percent represents the highest scoring San Francisco neighborhood (South of Market).

Progress in the last year:
In 2008, the proportion of households within a ½ mile of a farmers market was 35% while the current year is 38%.

What is the current status?
Since 2007, when the percent of population within a farmers market was last measured, there has been the addition of new farmers markets in the Marina (Fort Mason), Mission, North Beach, South of Market, Glen Park, Stonestown, Upper Haight neighborhoods, and Downtown, but the loss of the Park Merced, Bayview, Earth Island, and University of San Francisco farmers markets, leading to an overall increase of two markets. The observed farmers’ market attrition has led to decreased farmers’ market access in Bayview and Inner Richmond neighborhoods, while the addition of the six new farmers markets has significantly increased access in parts of the city that previously lacked access to a farmers market. Unfortunately, these changes do not appear to have had a positive impact on lower income neighborhoods with poorer overall food access.

Due to market turnover, the Financial District is now the neighborhood with the greatest proportion of its population within ½ mile of a farmers’ market at 97%. Four neighborhoods that formerly had 0% of their population near a farmers’ market, Marina, Russian Hill, Glen Park, and North Beach, now all have more than 50% of their population within ½ mile of a market.

The Alemany Farmers Market has partnered with a community based organization, Campaign for Better Nutrition, to offer an incentive program to CalFresh/food stamp recipients, the Alemany Market Bucks Program. CalFresh clients spending $10 or more on produce at the market received an additional $5 in spending power. The program ran in the Spring and Summer of 2011. Under the program, 88% more CalFresh clients shopped at Alemany compared to when no incentive was offered earlier in the year. 82% of program participants said that the program increased their consumption of produce greatly,
What is needed to “move the needle”?
Continue to support the proliferation of farmers’ markets throughout the City, and publicize Food Stamp and WIC benefit acceptance at farmers’ markets. (It is important to note that farmers’ market access is probably not a critical indicator of food access since availability is periodic. Monitoring grocery store and produce outlet access would be preferred.)

Who are the Community Partners on this Indicator?
• Campaign for Better Nutrition
• San Francisco Agriculture Commissioner
• San Francisco CalFresh Office
• San Francisco Department of Public Health