

Sonoma County General Plan 2020

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT

Appendices A-B

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department

2550 Ventura Avenue

Santa Rosa, California 95403

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Appendix A
Environmental Justice Technical Report



Sonoma County

Environmental Justice Technical Report

May 2024



Prepared by
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Glossary

Access to Healthcare

The timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes.

Cost Burden

The extent to which gross housing costs, including utility costs, exceed 30 percent of gross income, based on data available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Critically Underserved

Communities having a ratio of less than three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents as defined by the California Statewide Park Program.

Disadvantaged Community

An area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or;

An area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

Disproportionate Effects

Term used in Executive Order 12898 to describe situations of concern where there exists significantly higher and more adverse health and environmental effects on minority populations, low-income populations, or indigenous peoples.

Environmental Justice (EJ)

The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (Government Code Section 65040.12, subd. (e)).

Fair Treatment

The principle that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences from industrial, municipal and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies. In implementing its programs, CalEPA has expanded the concept of fair treatment to include not only consideration of how burdens are distributed across all populations, but the distribution of benefits as well.

Food Desert

A region or neighborhood with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or a healthy, affordable food retail outlet.

Food Insecurity

The condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs.

Linguistic Isolation

The condition at which there is no person within a household over the age of 14 who speaks English proficiently.

Low-Income Community

A census tract with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the Government Code.

Meaningful Involvement

Potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment and/or health; the public’s contribution can influence the regulatory agency’s decision; the concerns of all participants involved will be considered in the decision-making process; the decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.

Minority Populations

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, population of people who are not single-race white and not Hispanic. Populations of individuals who are members of the following population groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; or Hispanic.

Overcrowding

A unit occupied by 1.01 persons or more per room (excluding bathrooms and kitchens).

Percentage

A ‘percentage’ is not a relative score. A ‘percentage’ is simply a score assigned to a subject out of a hundred.

Percentile

A “percentile” rank is a way of ordering subjects compared to others in a sample. For a given dataset, percentile represents that value in the distribution or level, at or below which, a certain percentage of score lies.

Pollution Burden

The potential exposures to pollutants and the adverse environmental conditions caused by pollution.

Public Facilities

Public facilities include, but are not limited to, public improvements, services, and community amenities. These facilities may include government buildings, schools, public transit, public open space, streets and roads with safe and adequate infrastructure, as well as community and cultural centers.

Tribes

When used in this document, “tribes” refers to federally recognized tribes. Federally recognized tribes include any Indian or Alaskan Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1944, 25 U.S.C.479a.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The following report provides a desktop analysis of the environmental justice context in unincorporated Sonoma County. The report was developed to inform the creation of policies focused on environmental justice for the County's General Plan 2020, consistent with the latest State legislation. In 2016, California Government Code Section 65302 expanded the mandatory requirements of the General Plan to require an emphasis on the role of environmental justice in urban planning. Cities and counties with disadvantaged communities, as defined, are required to adopt an environmental justice element in their general plan or integrate environmental justice policies into the elements of their general plan "upon the adoption or next revision of two or more elements concurrently."¹ To inform policies related to environmental justice, public agencies must assess the existing environmental justice issues facing their jurisdiction. In addition to the research presented in this report, the County is in the process of soliciting input from community members, community leaders, community-based organizations, Tribal governments, and other nongovernmental agencies to further inform a baseline understanding of the environmental justice issues facing Sonoma County. In concert with this report, input gained during the community engagement process will help to shape the County's General Plan environmental justice policies.

¹ Government Code Section 65302(h)(2)

² California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA). 2017. SB 1000 Implementation Toolkit. <https://caleja.org/2017/09/sb-1000-toolkit-release/> (accessed March 2023).

1.2 Environmental Justice

What is Environmental Justice?

Historically, negative environmental impacts have disproportionately affected marginalized populations, including low-income communities and racial/ethnic minorities.² These communities often face a range of environmental burdens including increased exposure to air pollutants, unsafe drinking water, and contaminated facilities/structures, and commonly have relatively limited access to public resources. This inequity can be traced to discriminatory governmental policies and actions, land-use planning trends, enforcement deficiencies, and lack of equitable community engagement, among other factors.

Environmental justice is a concept focused on addressing the systemic, unjust environmental burdens placed on historically disadvantaged communities, especially low-income populations and people of color. California law defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."³ Efforts towards environmental justice have aimed to improve the status of historically disadvantaged communities through equitable planning and policy decisions. In California, the Planning for Healthy Communities Act of 2016 (Senate Bill 1000) was established to

³ Government Code Section 65040.12, subd. (e)

integrate environmental justice in local and regional planning practice. Senate Bill 1000 requires jurisdictions to identify disadvantaged communities (termed “Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities” in Sonoma County) within their planning area and incorporate environmental justice into their general plans through targeted policies. These policies shall do the following:

“Identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by means that include, but are not limited to, the reduction of pollution exposure, including the improvement of air quality, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.

Identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process.

Identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.⁴”

Section 3 of this report outlines how Sonoma County’s EJ Communities were identified in compliance with Senate Bill 1000 and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines.

Environmental Determinants of Health

People’s health and opportunity are influenced by multiple factors, including their built and social environments. This report is measuring the negative impacts of environmental conditions across six key focus areas, which are required to be addressed in general plans by the California Government Code. These six focus areas are

referred to throughout this report as environmental determinants of health:

- Pollution Burden
- Access to Public Facilities, Services, and Community Amenities
- Health and Physical Activity
- Healthy Food Access
- Safe and Sanitary Housing
- Civic Engagement in the Public Decision-Making Process

Sections 4 through 9 of this report summarize the existing environmental conditions across these topic areas affecting EJ Communities in the County.

1.3 A Note on Data

This report largely uses data at the census tract level. A census tract is a geographic boundary that is often the smallest geographic scale for which complete data is available. Census tracts may not follow commonly understood neighborhood boundaries. To help understand the findings and maps in this report, Table 2 provides general community names for each census tract identified as an EJ Community.

Much of the data that informed this report was obtained from the California Environmental Protection Agency’s (CalEPA) CalEnviroScreen tool, a data-based index that provides a relative, rather than absolute, evaluation of pollution burden and health vulnerabilities across California. CalEnviroScreen ranks each census tract in California relative to other census tracts by providing percentile scores for 21 indicators of pollution burden and health

⁴ California Government Code Section 65302(h)(1)

vulnerability. These percentile scores are referenced throughout this report to demonstrate how EJ Communities in Sonoma County are impacted relative to other communities across California.

Other primary data sources include the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) and information derived from relevant plans, reference materials, and reports prepared by County agencies and departments, or local community organizations that are actively engaged in efforts to improve the lives of residents of Sonoma County.

The summary of community conditions in this report is not exhaustive and does not incorporate the lived experiences of Sonoma County residents and employees. This report is intended to serve as a “desktop” technical summary of environmental factors that may influence health in Sonoma County. For a more complete understanding of the environmental justice issues in Sonoma County, community engagement and outreach will be conducted throughout the planning process and will prioritize opportunities to involve and gain input from EJ Communities.

2 Community Background and Local Historic Context

Historically, and still today, environmental impacts disproportionately affect low-income residents, people of color, and other marginalized communities. Understanding the historic context and local demographics in Sonoma County is fundamental to developing comprehensive and equitable environmental justice policies.

2.1 Notable Community History

Sonoma County has a rich history characterized by a multitude of diverse cultures. The first residents of Sonoma County were Native American tribes, including the Pomo, Coast Miwok, and Wappo tribes, who lived in the region for approximately 12,000 years prior to European arrival.⁵ The Coast Miwok tribe occupied southern parts of the County from Petaluma, Valley Ford and the city of Sonoma, and west to the Pacific Ocean and Bodega Bay. The Central Wappo tribe lived in the northern part of the Russian River Valley, around northern Santa Rosa and Healdsburg. The Western Wappo territory consisted of the Alexander Valley from Lytton Springs to the Geyserville area. The Kashia Pomo tribe resided in the central coast area of the County, from Bodega to Stewart's Point. The Southern Pomo inhabited the area surrounding Highway 101, from Rohnert Park to Cloverdale.⁶

Father Jose Altimer, a Spanish missionary, founded the Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma in what is now the city of Sonoma and planted several thousand grapevines surrounding the mission.⁷ Once the mission was established, many Native Americans were converted to Catholicism and forced to work on farms. Throughout the remainder of the 19th Century, the Native American population severely declined due to disease, enslavement, and confiscation of tribal lands.⁸ Areas that were once populated by Native American tribes were bestowed to Mexican citizens as large land grants called *rancheros*.⁵

Throughout the latter half of the 19th Century, Chinese immigrants, many of whom arrived during the gold rush and to work on the railroads, planted the majority of the County's grapevines. Racial tensions between white and Chinese residents grew during this time. White residents prevented Chinese residents from being hired and refused patronage to shops that employed Chinese workers, forcing Chinese residents to move away which caused the Chinese population in Sonoma County to drop drastically.⁹

During the early 20th Century, a large number of Mexican immigrants came to work on vineyards throughout the County. Between, 1942 and 1964, thousands of Mexican immigrants were permitted to work in the United States through the Bracero Program, leading to considerable growth of the Mexican population

⁵ City of Sonoma. 2017. History of Sonoma. <https://www.sonomacity.org/history-of-sonoma/>

⁶ Sonoma County Tourism. 2023. Native American Heritage in Sonoma County. <https://www.sonomacounty.com/articles/native-american-heritage-sonoma-county>

⁷ County of Sonoma. 2023. Sonoma County Historic Overview.

<https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/planning/historicresources/sonomacountyhistory/sonomacountyhistoricoverview>

⁸ Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau. 2023. About Sonoma Valley.

<https://www.sonomavalley.com/plan-your-visit/about-sonoma-valley/>

⁹ Grace Hwang Lynch. 2017. Chinese Laborers Built Sonoma's Wineries. Racist Neighbors Drove Them Out. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/07/13/536822541/the-forgotten-chinese-who-built-sonoma-s-wineries>

in Sonoma County. Termination of the Bracero Program ended Mexican immigration to the United States. Afterward, about 5,000 former Braceros stayed in Sonoma County and began to form their own ties to the community with help from local Catholic churches.¹⁰ During the 1980s and 1990s, immigration to California from Mexico and Latin America increased again but has since plateaued.¹¹

Today, Sonoma County is still a diverse community with populations from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. The County's population has doubled since 1980, with a population of approximately 482,650 residents in 2022.⁷ The majority of the population identifies as non-Hispanic/non-Latino white (62 percent of the total population). The largest racial/ethnic minority consists of Hispanic/Latino residents (28 percent of the total population), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander residents (five percent of the total population). Black/African American and Native American/Alaskan Native residents each make up only two percent of the population.¹² About 15 percent of County residents were born outside of the United States and an estimated 29,000 residents are undocumented immigrants.¹¹

Much of the County land remains in agricultural use, with cattle grazing and dairy farms in southwestern parts of the County and vineyards covering northern parts of the County. Farmworkers play a vital role in the current economic landscape of the County. In 2017, 6,715 permanent farmworkers and 7,664 seasonal farmworkers were employed in Sonoma County, a number that is steadily growing each year. Cities along Highway 101 are growing in population as well and provide housing and services with a mix of business parks and commercial shopping centers.⁷ Alongside

agriculture, tourism represents another significant industry within the County, accounting for over 17,000 jobs. Many tourism-related jobs are located in the unincorporated County and provide low wages that fail to keep up with the rising cost of living. In recent years, the County has been challenged by wildfires and the Covid-19 pandemic, which have worsened the affordable-housing shortage, economic insecurity, and health impacts that disproportionately harm minority communities.¹¹

2.2 Planning Area Description

The County's General Plan establishes a blueprint for land use, development, and public action for the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County not governed by the nine incorporated cities. This report analyzes the environmental justice context for all census tracts in the unincorporated County, referred to as the "planning area." This planning area was used to determine the location of Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities within the unincorporated County. The State of California also designates all lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes as disadvantaged (Senate Bill 535), which includes Stewarts Point Rancheria, Dry Creek Rancheria, and the Kashia Coastal Reserve within Sonoma County. The Kashia Coastal Reserve qualified as a disadvantaged area since the lands were purchased and returned to the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians. However, this area is currently uninhabited. Therefore, the Kashia Coastal Reserve is not discussed in any further detail for the purpose of this report. The Sonoma County planning area is depicted in light brown in Figure 1, below.

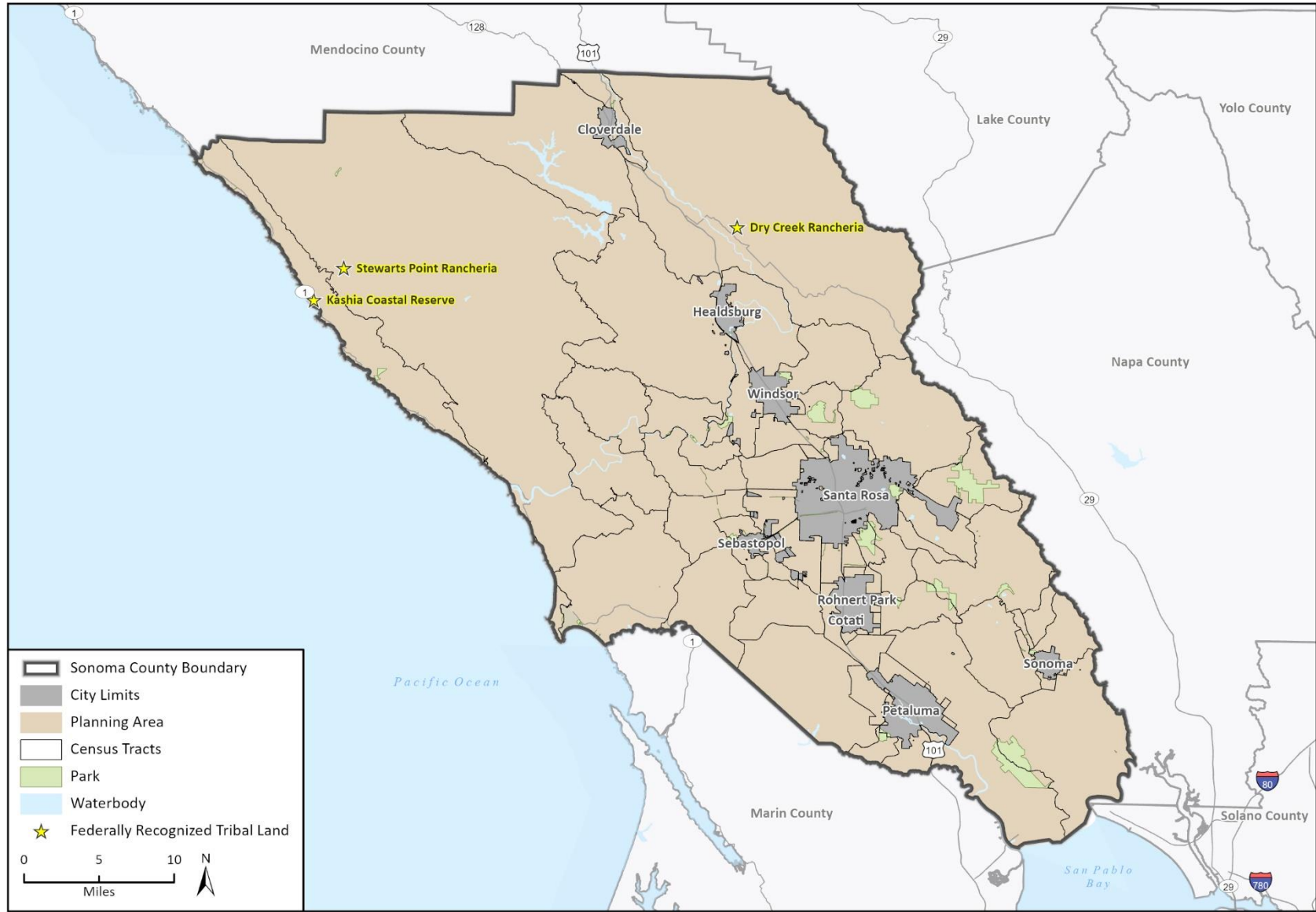
¹⁰ Museum of Sonoma County. 2023. The Bracero Program. <https://museumsc.org/bracero-program/>

¹¹ Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council. 2022. A Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update.

<https://upstreaminvestments.org/Microsites/Upstream%20Investments/Documents/Archive/Portrait-of-Sonoma-County-2021-Report.ADA.pdf>

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. 2023. Quickfacts, Sonoma County, California. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/sonomacountycalifornia>

Figure 1 Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 1 Sonoma County Planning Area

3 Environmental Justice (EJ) Community Identification

3.1 State Guidance

Senate Bill 1000 (Government Code Section 65302) defines disadvantaged communities as:

“An area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or;

An area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”

This definition provides public agencies two ways to identify disadvantaged communities: CalEPA’s designated disadvantaged areas, or any area that is low-income that experiences disproportionate environmental burdens. Many jurisdictions, including Sonoma County, use a combination of both approaches as recommended by the California Office of Planning and Research (OPR).

Senate Bill 1000 defines a low-income community as:

“A census tract with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of

state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the Government Code.”

This definition also establishes two ways to identify low-income communities further explained below:

- 1) A median household income at or below 80 percent of California’s median income (\$90,100 in 2021¹³); or
- 2) A median household income at or below the Department of Housing and Community Development’s low-income threshold based on each census tracts average household size.

Census tracts within the planning area that have median household incomes meeting either of these thresholds were considered low-income for the purposes of Environmental Justice (EJ) Community identification.

3.2 Methodology Summary

To identify EJ Communities within Sonoma County, the County first utilized CalEPA’s CalEnviroScreen 4.0 to identify any area classified by the CalEPA as “disadvantaged.” The tool uses a formula-based system to assign all California census tracts with a score that represents a community’s environmental burden. This score is known as the CalEnviroScreen *Overall Score*. The State designates communities with a CalEnviroScreen *Overall Score* within or above

¹³ California Department of Housing and Community Development. 2021. Revised State Income Limits for 2021. <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/income-limits/state-and-federal-income-limits/docs/Income-Limits-2021.pdf>

the 75th percentile as disadvantaged communities.¹⁴ No communities in the planning area are within or above the 75th percentile in CalEPA's CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tool.

After using CalEnviroScreen, the County evaluated census tracts with significant pollution and housing burdens. Census tracts that met either of the two criteria below are identified as EJ Communities in this report:

- Any planning area census tract that scored at or above the 50th percentile for the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 *Overall Pollution Burden* metric;
- Or,
- Any planning area census tract that is low-income and has one of the following accompanying conditions:
 - The census tract has any individual pollutant indicator at or above the 75th percentile; **or**
 - The census tract has a housing burden score at or above the 75th percentile.

This methodology was developed with input from the County's Equity Working Committee (EWC), an advisory group composed of community members assembled by the County project team to guide the planning process for the Environmental Justice and Public Safety Element updates to the County's General Plan. Three potential methodologies were presented to the EWC for feedback and selection. The EWC also reviewed other tools and reports that

evaluate vulnerability and health to vet the chosen methodology, including the Center for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index¹⁵, the California Healthy Places Index¹⁶, and the 2021 update to the Portrait of Sonoma County Human Development Index.¹⁷

Housing burden was identified by the EWC as one of the most important determinants of well-being. Housing-burdened households spend a greater proportion of their income on housing, which has cascading impacts on health. Housing-burdened households have fewer financial and time resources available for health care, healthy food, and healthy behaviors such as exercise. High housing costs relative to income often force individuals and families into unhealthy living conditions, including overcrowded or unsafe housing (e.g. mold and lead exposure, water intrusion, pest infestation, etc.). The risk for and experience of displacement can also impact both mental and physical health, and exacerbate health impacts. Because access to safe, decent, and affordable housing is inherently linked to other environmental inequities, housing burden was included as a factor in determining which census tracts in Sonoma County should be considered EJ Communities.

Table 1 identifies the EJ Communities in the Sonoma County planning area by census tract number and name as used in the Portrait of Sonoma County. Table 1 also specifies which EJ Community census tracts have been identified by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) as Equity Priority Communities, which are census tracts that are or have historically been underserved.¹⁸ The table contains an overview of the various

¹⁴ A 'percentile' rank is a way of ordering subjects compared to others in a sample. For a given dataset, percentile represents that value in the distribution or level, at or below which, a certain percentage of score lies. In contrast, a 'percentage' is not a relative score. A 'percentage' is simply a score assigned to a subject out of a hundred.

¹⁵ Center for Disease Control. 2023. CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index. <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html> (accessed June 2023).

¹⁶ Public Health Alliance of Southern California. 2023. Healthy Places Index. <https://www.healthypacesindex.org/> (accessed June 2023).

¹⁷ Sonoma, County of. 2021. Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update. <https://upstreaminvestments.org/impact-make-a-change/portrait-of-sonoma-county> (accessed March 2023).

¹⁸ Metropolitan Transportation Commission. 2024. Equity Priority Communities. <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities> (accessed April 2024).

indicators used to qualify each identified EJ Community. The location of the 22 EJ Communities as well as the three EJ Tribal Communities are identified in the Sonoma County planning area are shown in Figure 2, below. Each table within this report

organizes EJ Communities in the planning area by region within the County (i.e., Northwest County, Central West County, Central County, South County).

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Table 1 Environmental Justice Communities Criteria

Census Tract	Low Income?	Housing Burden	Overall Pollution Score	Pollutant Indicators (Percentiles)												
				Ozone	P.M 2.5	Diesel PM	Pesticide	Toxic Release	Traffic	Drinking Water	Lead	Cleanup Sites	Groundwater Threats	Hazardous Waste	Impaired Water Bodies	Solid Waste
Sonoma County	N/A	N/A	25	10	9	35	46	9	41	30	36	17	61	39	50	43
Northwestern																
East Cloverdale	Yes	51	50	17	5	25	70	<1	8	25	85	86	86	36	59	80
West Cloverdale	Yes	24	18	17	3	2	50	<1	4	24	24	86	61	17	67	68
Jenner/ Cazadero	Yes	32	34	12	2	<1	45	<1	1	68	51	82	70	17	7	90
Central West																
Guerneville	Yes	81	10	12	2	2	58	1	9	9	70	0	35	4	59	87
Forestville/Rio Nido	Yes	36	27	12	3	5	73	1	22	49	39	0	76	36	72	72
Russian River Valley	Yes	45	32	12	3	15	77	1	11	68	41	0	68	17	77	95
Monte Rio**	Yes	90	15	12	3	2	55	<1	5	41	58	0	52	17	59	83
Central																
Middle Rincon South*	Yes	63	8	11	9	61	2	1	52	5	36	0	81	17	51	3
Brush Creek*	Yes	54	8	11	9	66	0	1	49	5	32	0	81	19	51	3
Kawana Springs	Yes	47	23	8	8	34	53	3	41	38	46	4	82	54	51	12
Olivet Road*	Yes	6	19	8	8	18	60	2	39	5	28	6	70	46	51	76
Taylor Mountain	Yes	68	78	8	9	77	52	4	85	64	36	64	97	76	51	87
Wright**	Yes	47	51	6	7	17	60	2	34	18	51	62	96	85	67	90
Bellevue**	Yes	83	58	6	8	31	26	5	73	69	47	46	89	76	44	98
West End*	Yes	40	47	11	9	66	0	2	77	5	62	38	98	58	44	91
Shiloh South	No	36	67	11	7	50	78	1	77	23	33	97	60	93	33	98
Southern																
McKinley	Yes	39	64	11	13	68	26	23	85	18	74	58	88	63	51	59
Downtown Cotati	Yes	14	27	6	10	69	43	6	70	24	24	0	41	17	77	64
West Cotati/ Penngrove	Yes	84	65	8	9	29	55	13	60	50	38	64	83	80	77	89
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	Yes	86	17	14	12	37	62	40	32	19	72	0	60	4	24	0
Petaluma Airport/ Arroyo Park	No	13	63	12	12	11	68	32	64	37	7	43	93	78	97	98
Sonoma City South/ Vineburg	Yes	61	10	14	16	39	76	45	9	36	7	0	32	27	24	0

Note: Cells highlighted in green denote indicators that meet criteria for EJ Communities

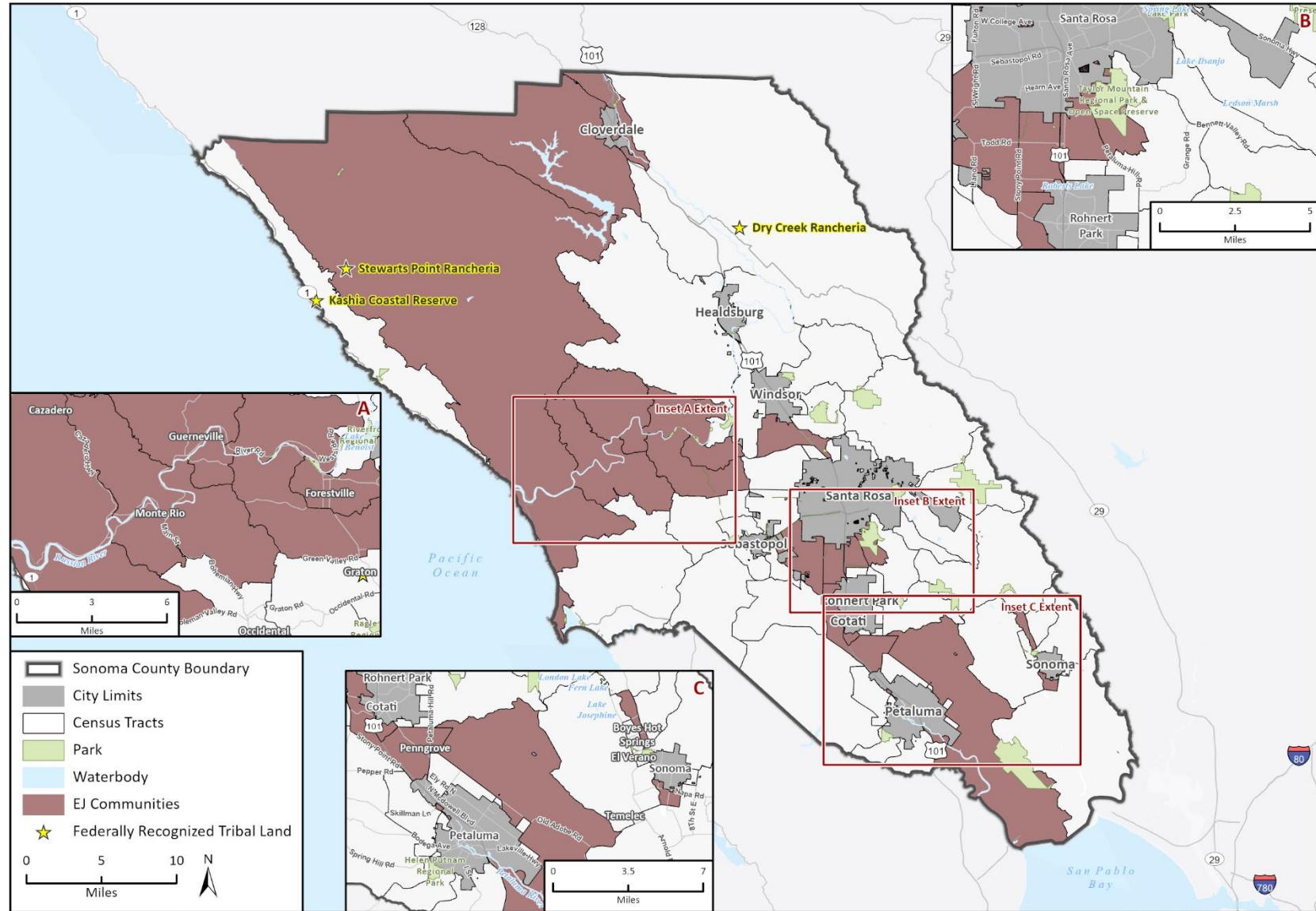
* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa

** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community

Sources: CalEnviroScreen 4.0; Center for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index; California Healthy Places Index; Portrait of Sonoma County Human Development Index

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Figure 2 Environmental Justice Communities in the Planning Area



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Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2022; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2022; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

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Fig X Sonoma County DACs

3.3 Sonoma County EJ Communities

Table 2 and Table 3 provide an overview of demographics and characteristics of each of the EJ Communities present in Sonoma County. Table 2 includes the census tracts and community names of each EJ Community along with total population, the 2021 Portrait of Sonoma County Human Development Index score, and a general description of the area. Note that population estimates may not accurately represent the population of residents in each census tract living within the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County because some census tracts are partially within incorporated City limits.

Table 3 includes the racial and ethnic makeup of each EJ Community, median household income, age demographics, and educational attainment of the residents within each EJ community, and the rates of unemployment. As seen in the table below, many of the EJ Communities have median household incomes lower than that of the median household income for the entire County. In addition, for some EJ Communities, the rate of residents who either did not complete high school or 9th grade is higher on average. Unemployment rates vary across EJ Communities. However, at least 15 of the EJ Communities either meet or exceed the County's unemployment rate.

Table 2 Overview of EJ Communities

Census Tract Number	Name	Population	Portrait of Sonoma County Human Development Index (HDI) Score	Description
Northwestern				
1542.01	East Cloverdale	3,959	4.37	The East Cloverdale EJ Community includes the unincorporated area east of Cloverdale city limits to River Road and Geysers Road, extending north to the County boundary and south to Asti. The area largely hosts agricultural lands with some industrial land near the Cloverdale Municipal Airport and the Highway 101/Highway 128 connection, and a few rural residential neighborhoods northeast of the City of Cloverdale. Highway 101 runs north to south through the Community, and the Russian River runs parallel to the Highway along the east side of the City. The Community includes the Cloverdale River Park, which offers Russian River access.
1542.02	West Cloverdale	6,050	5.93	The West Cloverdale EJ Community includes the unincorporated area west of Cloverdale city limits and Dutcher Creek Road, south to Stewarts Point Skaggs Springs Road and west to Rockpile Road, including the northern half of Lake Sonoma. The area including and abutting Lake Sonoma is publicly owned with agricultural and resource lands encompassing the majority of the Community. Small rural residential neighborhoods and industrial areas are located near the southern and northern city limits of Cloverdale.
1543.04	Jenner/Cazadero	2,455	5.30	The Jenner/Cazadero EJ Community is the largest in acreage spanning as far south as Bodega Bay to the northern boundary of the County, and to the east to include Cazadero, Annapolis, and the lower half of Lake Sonoma. The Community includes the coastal communities along Highway 1 until shortly past Jenner, where the borders narrow east and continue to extend north. The Community includes the Sereno Del Mar, Carmet, and Jenner by the Sea subdivisions among others. Most of the Community is agricultural and resource land on mountainous terrain, with the exception of the southern half of Lake Sonoma and other publicly owned lands and parks along the coast. Jenner and Bodega Bay have small commercial areas along Highway 1.
Central West				
1537.04	Guerneville	4,071	4.80	The Guerneville EJ Community abuts the Monte Rio EJ Community to the northeast, and includes the unincorporated communities of Guerneville and Rio Nido, the latter of which consists mainly of summer homes and cabins as well as a bar/restaurant, public pool, small resort hotel, and theatre. The Community also contains Armstrong Redwoods State Park. The town of Guerneville has a commercial core surrounded by visitor serving commercial uses near the Russian River. Outside of the core commercial and visitor serving areas are single family residential neighborhoods, and small pockets of rural residential development, and agricultural and natural resource lands.
1537.05	Forestville/Rio Nido	3,936	5.90	The Forestville EJ Community is east of Guerneville along River Road and near Highway 116. The Community includes the town of Forestville north of Front Street, as well as the Mirabel Heights and Rio Dell neighborhoods, the Forestville School Academy and Laguna High School. The Community is home to popular parks such as Steelhead Beach Regional Park and the Forestville Youth Park. The commercial core of Forestville along Front Street has local serving retail and restaurants.
1537.06	Russian River Valley	4,440	6.30	The Russian River Valley EJ Community is situated between Forestville and Guerneville, south of the Russian River and north of Green Valley Road, and includes the Summerhome Park neighborhood and other nearby rural residential subdivisions. South of the River are agricultural and resource lands with a few pockets of limited commercial properties, and rural residential neighborhoods near Forestville and Ross.
1537.03	Monte Rio**	3,506	4.91	The Monte Rio EJ Community is located along the Russian River in West Sonoma County, and includes the Villa Grande, Guernewood, and Monte Rio neighborhoods. The Community borders are south of Cazadero and north of Camp Meeker, bordered roughly to the west by Cazadero Highway and to the east by Green Valley Road and Old Cazadero Road. The Community has many visitor serving opportunities including the Northwood Golf Club, Vacation Beach, and other beaches and outdoor recreation opportunities along the Russian River. Land uses in Monte Rio consist of small rural residential subdivisions off State Highway 116 and off Moscow and River Roads across the river; recreation and visitor-serving and local commercial development interspersed with rural residential parcels along both sides of State Highway 116 in the center of town, and across the river along Main Street; and natural resource land or timberland beyond the subdivisions. The larger commercial area along State Highway 116 consists of a small resort with cabins, convenience store/deli, small market, restaurant, small movie theatre, community hall/theatre, and church. The smaller commercial area along Main Street consists of a small market and bar.
Central				
1525.01	Middle Rincon South*	4,352	6.06	The Middle Rincon South EJ Community is comprised of several unincorporated islands north and south of Highway 12 within northeast Santa Rosa. The community is near Howarth Park, Spring Lake Regional Park, and several neighborhood parks. Nearby schools include Douglas Whited Elementary, Binkley Elementary, Maria Carrillo High School, and Rincon Valley Middle School. All properties within this community have rural residential land use designations.
1522.02	Brush Creek*	6,510	5.94	The Brush Creek EJ Community consists of several unincorporated islands within northeast Santa Rosa, near Montecito Boulevard. This community is close to grocery stores and restaurants, and Rincon Valley Regional Library, and nearby schools include Brush Creek Montessori School, Rincon Valley Middle School, Maria Carrillo High School and Madrone Elementary School. All properties within this community have rural residential land use designations.
1514.01	Kawana Springs	8,050	4.45	The Kawana Springs EJ Community is north of Rohnert Park, bordered by Warrington Road to the south, Petaluma Hill Road to the west, Kawana Terrace to the north, and extending into Taylor Mountain Regional Park to the east. The community largely comprises land extensive agriculture and diverse agriculture land use designations, with a small limited industrial area along the northern section of Petaluma Hill Road.
1530.06	Olivet Road	8,199	5.25	The Olivet Road EJ Community is a pair of rural residential pockets west of Santa Rosa off of Guerneville Road. The community is nearby neighborhood serving retail including grocery stores and several restaurants.
1514.02	Taylor Mountain	9,853	4.20	The Taylor Mountain EJ Community is in the unincorporated area of southwest Santa Rosa, bordered by Mountain View Avenue to the south, Highway 101 to the west, and Petaluma Hill Road to the east. The community includes the southern segment of Santa Rosa Avenue and the Bellevue neighborhood. There is a mix of land use designations along Santa Rosa Avenue, including medium and high density residential, industrial, and commercial. The western side of this community is designated for diverse agriculture. There is some access to stores and restaurants, and the community is home to Taylor Mountain School. This community is subject to the South Santa Rosa Area Plan.
1533	Wright**	12,385	4.68	The Wright EJ Community includes the unincorporated area west of Roseland, south of Highway 12, east of the Laguna de Santa Rosa and the City of Sebastopol, and west of Stony Point Road. Llano Road, Todd Road, and South Wright Road run through the Community. Wright Charter School, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Trail and Wetlands Preserve, and retail and restaurant options in Sebastopol are nearby. The Community's core in agricultural land with low density residential and rural and agricultural residential neighborhoods near Highway 12 and along Stony Point Road.
1532	Bellevue**	8,327	4.16	The Bellevue EJ Community borders the City of Santa Rosa to the north and roughly comprises the area south of Bellevue Avenue, west of Highway 101, north of Wilfred Avenue, and east of Stony Point Road, and includes the Moorland neighborhood and Andy Lopez Unity Park. Nearby schools include Elsie Allen High School and Bellevue Elementary School. A majority of the Community is designated for rural residential land uses, with heavy and limited rural industrial uses concentrated along Standish Avenue, Todd Road, West Robles Avenue, and South Moorland Avenue. There are also a residential neighborhood with low to high densities along Highway 101 and Moorland Avenue. The Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) system travels north and south through the Community. There are few neighborhood serving retail opportunities within the Community.
1530.02	West End*	6,864	4.22	The West End EJ Community is an unincorporated island in west Santa Rosa off of West College Avenue in the Clover Drive neighborhood. This community is nearby Finley Community Park, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, and various retail stores and restaurants. This community receives sewer and water service from the City of Santa Rosa.

Census Tract Number	Name	Population	Portrait of Sonoma County Human Development Index (HDI) Score	Description
1527.02	Shiloh South	5,342	5.44	The majority of the Shiloh South EJ Community is west of Highway 101 between the City of Santa Rosa and the Town of Windsor, bordered to the north and south by Shiloh and River Roads respectively. Significant roadways in this community include Airport Boulevard, North Laughlin Road, Shiloh Road, and Old Redwood Highway. This community comprises the Sonoma County Airport, the airport SMART station, the Sutter Santa Rosa Regional Hospital, the boundaries of the Airport Industrial Area Specific Plan, and the southern end of the Mark West neighborhood, east of Highway 101. The core of this community is designated for industrial land uses surrounded by agricultural lands, with urban residential and commercial areas in Larkfield to the east. There are few schools and stores nearby.
Southern				
1509.01	McKinley	5,053	5.67	This EJ Community is an approximately 70-acre portion of a census tract that is largely within Petaluma city limits. The community includes the properties just north and south of the Petaluma Village Premium Outlets, situated between Petaluma Boulevard and Highway 101, with parcels that have diverse agriculture and general commercial land use designations. High levels of pollution burden qualified this census tract as an EJ Community.
1512.04	Downtown Cotati	2,987	N/A	This EJ Community includes a cluster of unincorporated rural residential properties south of Downtown Cotati and the southern Cotati city limits. It is bordered by Old Redwood Highway North to the west, East Railroad Avenue to the south, and the SMART railroad tracks to the east. Zoning in this community is Agricultural and Residential. The Downtown Cotati area is home to a variety of businesses, including restaurants, shops, and art galleries. Nearby schools and parks include Rainbow Bridge Montessori, Mixed Greens Preschool, Helen Putnam Park, and Lady Bug Park.
1512.01	West Cotati/Penngrove	7,069	5.23	The West Cotati/Penngrove EJ Community wraps around the east side of Rohnert Park and Cotati along Stony Point Road, stretches west through Penngrove, and south to Petaluma city limits. Stony Point Road, Petaluma Hill Road, Old Redwood Highway North, the SMART railroad, and Highways 116 and 101 run through this community. This community includes most of Penngrove's commercial core along Main Street, Penngrove Elementary School, Bright Skies Montessori, and Graton Resort and Casino. Land uses include rural residential and agricultural designations near Rohnert Park and Cotati, and a mix of low density residential, commercial, industrial, and public facilities designations in Penngrove.
1503.05	Fetters Springs/ Agua Caliente West**	6,183	4.44	The Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West community is bordered to the east by Sonoma Creek, to the north by Madrone Road, to the west by Highway 12, and to the south by Agua Caliente Creek just north of Verano Avenue. Boyes Boulevard and West Agua Caliente Road cross the community from east to west. There are several wineries and tasting rooms in the area, as well as a number of hiking and biking trails. The area is home to Larson Park, Flowery Elementary, Sonoma Charter School, and a number of businesses along the Highway 12 corridor. This EJ Community intersects with the Springs Specific Plan boundary. While the abutting census tracts to the east and west were not identified as EJ Communities under the County's methodology, it should be noted that those census tracts share similar social and economic characteristics.
1506.12	Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park	4,676	6.71	This EJ Community abuts the eastern edge of the City of Petaluma and runs north to Lichau Creek near Penngrove and south to the County border at San Pablo Bay. The Petaluma Airport is located at the western edge of this EJ Community, and its major roadways include Adobe Road, Lakeville Highway, Petaluma Boulevard South, Highway 101, and Highway 116. The community is largely composed of land extensive agriculture, diverse agriculture, and public facilities land uses, and is home to Old Adobe Elementary School, the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park, Tolay Lake Regional Park, and Sears Point.
1502.03	Sonoma City South/ Vineburg	4,561	5.45	The Sonoma City/Vineburg EJ Community borders are Fifth Street East to the east, East Watmaugh Road to the south, Sonoma Creek to the west, and the southern edges of the City of Sonoma to the north. Highway 12 bisects the community from north to south. The community is largely composed of rural residential land use, with a handful of limited commercial and agricultural parcels. There are a few businesses along Highway 12, including a wine shop, Sonoma TrainTown, a plant nursery, as well as a church and private school.
* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa				
** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community				
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2021 Portrait of Sonoma County				

Table 3 EJ Community Demographics and Characteristics

Region and Census	Race/Ethnicity						Age Demographics			Median Household Income	Educational Attainment			Percent Unemployed (%)
	Hispanic (%)	White (%)	African American (%)	Native American (%)	Asian American (%)	Other/ Multiple (%)	Children < 10 Years (%)	Population 10 64 Years (%)	Elderly >64 Years (%)		Highschool Graduate or Higher (%)	9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma (%)	Less than 9 th Grade (%)	
Sonoma County	25	66	1	<1	4	43	11	80	18	81,018	89	5	6	4
Northwestern														
East Cloverdale	48	47	<1	2	2	<1	17	70	13	64,309	74	13	13	4
West Cloverdale	19	71	1	<1	5	3	11	65	24	72,317	91	5	3	2
Jenner/ Cazadero	10	79	0	5	3	4	4	42	54	62,153	94	3	3	6
Central West														
Guerneville	12	84	<1	0	2	3	6	68	26	60,901	94	6	1	3
Forestville/Rio Nido	12	80	<1	<1	3	4	5	71	25	69,081	94	3	3	6
Russian River Valley	8	83	0	2	1	6	7	68	25	64,746	98	2	<1	0
Monte Rio**	7	85	2	<1	2	4	7	70	24	59,761	92	7	1	11
Central														
Middle Rincon South*	20	67	2	<1	8	3	16	73	11	69,933	93	5	2	1
Brush Creek*	24	66	<1	0	5	4	9	67	25	67,887	90	5	6	5
Kawana Springs	42	39	2	2	12	4	14	79	7	71,539	73	10	18	8
Olivet Road	35	54	3	<1	3	5	13	69	18	69,722	86	6	8	3
Taylor Mountain	52	36	3	2	6	1	11	79	9	50,059	75	11	14	6
Wright**	55	32	4	0	6	3	9	78	13	79,528	77	9	14	5
Bellevue**	55	32	4	0	6	3	17	75	8	69,280	75	10	16	6
West End*	51	36	3	<1	4	4	16	76	8	81,911	78	7	15	4
Shiloh South	30	59	1	<1	3	6	13	73	14	85,321	88	2	5	2
Southern														
McKinley	32	57	1	0	3	7	15	73	12	64,772	93	4	3	7
Downtown Cotati	21	72	<1	0	3	3	13	73	15	70,438	89	3	8	4
West Cotati/ Pennngrove	26	68	<1	<1	4	2	13	65	22	72,985	88	9	3	4
Fetters Springs/ Agua Caliente West**	64	27	<1	0	<1	9	16	75	9	66,510	69	11	21	1
Petaluma Airport/ Arroyo Park	20	70	0	0	5	4	10	72	18	109,028	95	2	3	4
Sonoma City South/ Vineburg	17	78	<1	0	3	2	5	59	36	71,875	89	7	4	3

* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa
** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

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4 Pollution Burden

4.1 Overall Pollution Burden

Pollution burden is an environmental determinant of health that disproportionately impacts Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in Sonoma County. Currently, marginalized and low-income populations across the United States face a disproportionate burden of pollutant exposure.¹⁹ Numerous studies by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have consistently demonstrated the detrimental impact of environmental pollution on historically marginalized populations. Research has shown that these populations face higher levels of pollution, resulting in increased health risks and disparities. The consequences of this unequal exposure to pollution are notable. Marginalized communities suffer from higher rates of respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, and other health issues linked to pollution.²⁰

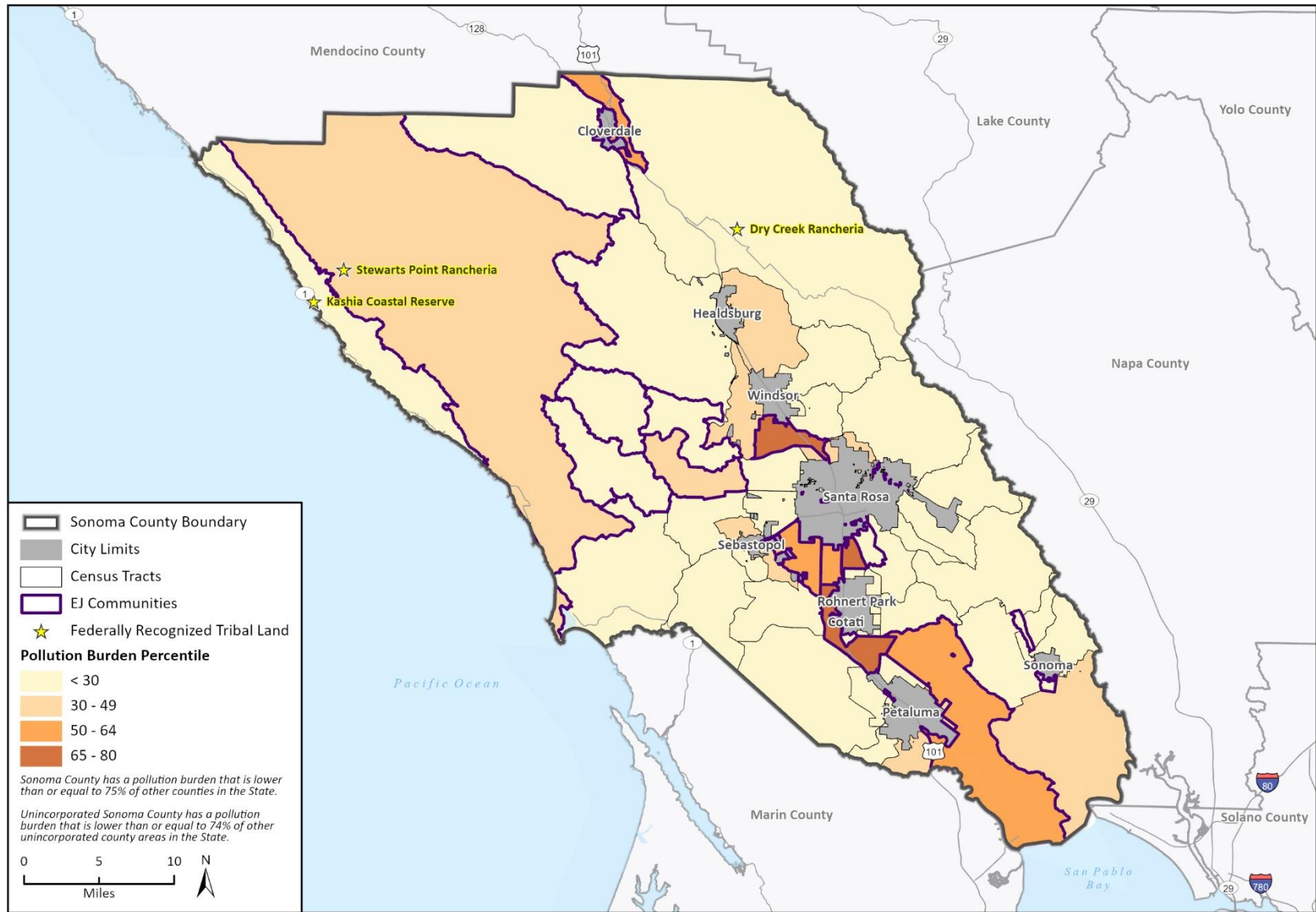
The CalEPA CalEnviroScreen tool (Version 4.0) measures pollution burden on California communities using a 'Pollution Burden Percentile'. This metric uses a variety of pollution indicators to establish a pollution burden score for each census tract in California.

Assigned scores for each census tract are based on the presence and/or burden of each pollution indicator within that area. Scores are expressed using a percentile ranking that compares each census tract score in relation to other census tracts within California. A high percentile indicates that a census tract has a higher pollution burden score relative to other communities across the state. Overall, the state of California scored in the 50th percentile for Pollution Burden. Sonoma County has an average Pollution Burden score of 25.1. As shown in Figure 3, the Sonoma County planning area, eight (8) EJ Communities have a Pollution Burden percentile score that exceeds the 50th percentile of census tracts across the state, as shown in Table 1. Elevated Pollution Burden scores indicate that Sonoma County EJ Communities have significant exposure to environmental pollution relative to the state average. EJ Communities in Sonoma County with the highest pollution burden are primarily located in the southern portion of the planning area. A detailed assessment of pollution burden based on census tract is included in Section 4.2 of this report.

¹⁹ Tessum, C. W., Paoletta, D. A., Chambliss, S. E., Apte, J. S., Hill, J. D., & Marshall, J. D. (2021). PM2.5 pollutants disproportionately and systemically affect people of color in the United States. *Science Advances*, 7(18).

²⁰ Bullard, R. D., Johnson, G. S., & Torres, A. O. (2019). *Environmental Justice in the United States: Myths and Realities*.

Figure 3 Overall Pollution Burden Scores by Census Tract in the Planning Area



4.2 Individual Pollution Indicators

To determine the ‘Pollution Burden’ metric, the CalEnviroScreen tool (Version 4.0) assesses a range of individual pollutant indicators for census tracts across California. These individual pollution indicators include air pollutants, water pollutants, and material pollutants that one can be exposed to in the home. Table 4 outlines the CalEnviroScreen scores for individual pollution indicators in the planning area by region within the County. Below is an overview of CalEnviroScreen Pollution Burden indicators and how they impact the County’s EJ Communities and Sonoma County overall.

Diesel PM. Diesel particulate matter (DPM) is emitted by diesel engines and is considered a Toxic Air Contaminant.²¹ DPM impacts are characterized by carcinogenic risk and by chronic (i.e., long duration) and acute (i.e., severe but of short duration) effects on human health.²¹ The average percentile score for the impacts from DPM on census tracts in California is 50. Sonoma County has an average DPM score of 34.9. CalEnviroScreen scores indicate that the Taylor Mountain EJ Community in the central portion of the County (census tract 6097151402) has significant levels of DPM relative to all other census tracts in California; both score in the 77th percentile.

Pesticides. Pesticides applied in agricultural areas can drift into neighboring communities and are associated with illness and, in some cases, longer-term health conditions, such as birth defects or cancer.²² The state of California scored in the 18th percentile for overall pesticide use and exposure. CalEnviroScreen indicates a higher presence of pesticides in the County, assigning the entirety of the County a score of 45.5. CalEnviroScreen scores of pesticide use indicate a moderately elevated presence of applied pesticides for all of the EJ Communities in the County planning area. However,

three EJ Communities in the Russian River Valley, Shiloh South, and Sonoma City South/Vineburg census tracts (census tracts 6097153706, 6097152702, and 6097150203) score above the 75th percentile for pesticide pollution relative to all other census tracts in California. The Russian River Valley census tract EJ Community located in central County scores the highest in the 78th percentile.

Traffic. Although California has established strict standards for vehicle emissions, high levels of traffic on major roads and highways still produce high rates of vehicle-related pollution emissions across the State. Automobile exhaust can contain toxic chemicals that are associated with cancer, make it difficult to breathe, and can be associated with low weight and premature births. Children who live or go to schools near busy roads have higher rates of asthma and other lung diseases than children living in areas located farther from roads.²² The average percentile score for traffic related impacts on California census tracts is the 50th percentile. Sonoma County has a lower average traffic impact percentile score of 40.5.

CalEnviroScreen scores indicate that EJ Communities in the central and southern regions of the County experience moderate to elevated traffic when compared to EJ Communities in the northwestern and central west portions of the County. The EJ Community located at the McKinley census tract (census tract 6097150901) in the southern portion of the County scores in the 85th percentile.

Children’s Lead Risk from Housing. High levels of lead exposure can lead to a range of detrimental health outcomes, including anemia, weakness, and kidney and brain damage. Lead poisoning can often result from lead exposure at home due to the use of contaminated

²¹ California Air Resource Board. 2022. Ambient Air Quality Standards Designation Tool. Madera County. Available at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/aaqs-designation-tool> (accessed March 2023).

²² World Health Organization. 2016. Preventing Disease Through Healthy Environments. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565196> (accessed May 2023).

materials such as lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older buildings. Lead exposure can also occur through contaminated air, water, and soil. Census tracts in California score on average in the 50th percentile for impacts for lead risk. On average, census tracts within Sonoma County have percentile scores for lead risk from housing that measured at 36.4 percentile relative to all California census tracts. Children's lead risk from housing across EJ Communities in the County vary, with some census tracts in the southern portion of the County scoring as low as the 7th percentile. However, one EJ Community located at the East Cloverdale census tract in the northwestern portion of the County (census tract 6097154201) scores in the 85th percentile.

Cleanup Sites. Cleanup sites are areas that are contaminated with harmful chemicals and require remediation to remove the contaminants. Information from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and US EPA was used to assess exposure to cleanup sites. People living near cleanup sites may be more exposed to chemicals from the sites than those living farther away. Census tracts in California score on average in the 33.7 percentile for impacts from cleanup sites. The average Sonoma County census tract scores lower, averaging in the 17th percentile. Impacts from cleanup sites vary greatly across the County EJ Communities, with some census tracts scoring below the 10th percentile and others scoring above the 80th percentile. Three of the four highest scoring EJ Communities for this indicator are located in the northwestern portion of the County. However, the highest scoring EJ Community is in the central portion of the County, in the Shiloh South census tract (census tract 6097152702) and has a 97th percentile score.

Groundwater Threats (from leaking underground storage tanks). Hazardous chemicals are commonly stored in containers, which are housed on land or in underground storage tanks. Leaks from underground storage tanks can contaminate soil and groundwater. People who live near contaminated groundwater may be exposed

to chemicals moving from the soil into the air inside their homes. Common groundwater pollutants include gasoline and diesel fuels at gas stations, as well as solvents, heavy metals and pesticides. Leaking tanks can affect drinking water and expose people to contaminated soil and air. The average CalEnviroScreen percentile score for groundwater threats in California was 37.8. On average, census tracts in Sonoma County score higher than the State average, with census tracts averaging in the 61st percentile for groundwater threats. Impacts from groundwater threats are relatively high across EJ Communities in Sonoma County, with nearly half of all EJ Community census tracts scoring above the 75th percentile. Of the 13 highest scoring EJ communities, seven are located in the central west portion of the County, with the remaining spread throughout the County.

Impaired Waters. Streams, rivers, and lakes are used for recreational purposes and may provide water for drinking or agriculture. When water is contaminated by pollutants, the water bodies are designated as impaired. CalEnviroScreen uses a unique criterion for identifying the impacts of impaired water bodies on the surrounding community. This criterion involves identifying the State Water Resource Control Boards List of Impaired Water Bodies and calculating the number of pollutants listed in streams or rivers that fell within 1 kilometer (km) or 2 km respectively of a census tract's populated blocks. Each California census tract is then scored based on the sum of the number of individual pollutants found within and/or bordering it. The average California census tract scores in the 32nd percentile for impaired waters while the average census tract in Sonoma County scores in the 50th percentile. In general, impaired water body impact scores in the EJ Communities are higher than the County and state average, with two-thirds of EJ Communities scoring between the 50th to 72nd percentile. The highest scoring EJ Community is in the Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park census tract (census tract 6097150612) which has a 97th percentile score. County census tracts located in the southern

portion of the County have higher levels of impact from impaired water bodies than census tracts located elsewhere in the County.

Hazardous Waste. Waste created by commercial or industrial activity can contain chemicals that may be dangerous or harmful to health. Only certain regulated facilities are allowed to treat, store, or dispose of this type of waste and are distinct from cleanup sites which correspond to contaminated sites. Hazardous waste includes a range of different types of regulated waste, including household compounds, such as automotive products, and waste materials produced by factories and businesses. CalEnviroScreen measures hazardous waste impact scores based on a census tract's proximity to specific Large Quantity Hazardous Waste Generators.²³ Permitted hazardous waste facilities were selected from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) database.²⁴ Hazardous waste generators were identified from the DTSC Hazardous Waste Tracking System for 2018 to 2020; only large quantity generators were included in the identification.

The average percentile score for hazardous waste impacts on California census tracts was the 48th percentile. Sonoma County census tracts score lower than the state average with an average percentile score of 39.1. There is a large disparity in the percentile scores across Sonoma County EJ Communities, with scores ranging from below the 10th percentile to above the 90th percentile. Local impacts from hazardous waste tend to be focused on the EJ Communities located in the central and central west geographic areas of the County. This is likely due to the extensive amount of hazardous waste generators located in industrial areas along the U.S. 101.

Solid Waste Sites. Solid waste facilities are places where household garbage and other types of waste are collected, processed, or stored. Landfills, transfer stations, and composting facilities are considered solid waste sites. These facilities can release air pollutants and impact water quality if the compounds present in waste leach into soil. CalEnviroScreen measures impacts from solid waste sites by scoring solid waste facilities based on the type of facility, violations received, and how much waste it handles.

The average solid waste percentile score for California census tracts is 28.1. Sonoma County census tract score higher than the state average, with an average County score within the 43rd percentile for solid waste sites. CalEnviroScreen scores for County census tracts show that there are large disparities in the impacts that solid waste sites have across Sonoma County, depending on the community. Almost half of all EJ Communities have significantly higher solid waste percentile scores than all other California census tracts, scoring at or above the 75th percentile. Census tracts with the highest percentile scores are spread throughout the County.

Ozone, PM_{2.5}, Toxic Release, Drinking Water. As shown in Table 4, all EJ Communities across the planning area have relatively low percentiles for ozone and PM_{2.5}. Similarly, percentile scores for toxic release impacts are relatively low. However, three census tracts score notably higher than the remainder of the planning area (30th percentile or higher) for toxic release. These three census tracts are all EJ Communities in the southern portion of the County. In addition, drinking water percentiles are moderate throughout the County with no EJ Community scoring above the 68th percentile.

²³ Large Quantity Generators (LQGs) generate 1,000 kilograms per month or more of hazardous waste or more than one kilogram per month of acutely hazardous waste (Source: U.S. EPA, 2023).

²⁴ The DTSC maintains a record of known and potential hazardous substance release sites under its jurisdiction within the EnviroStor database.

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Table 4 Pollution Indicator Percentile Scores for Environmental Justice Communities

Indicators and Percentile Scores														
Census Tract	Pollution Burden	Ozone	P.M2.5	Diesel PM	Pesticide	Toxic Release	Traffic	Drinking Water	Lead	Cleanup Sites	Groundwater Threats	Hazardous Waste	Impaired Water Bodies	Solid Waste
Sonoma County	25	10	9	35	46	9	41	30	36	17	61	39	50	43
Northwestern														
East Cloverdale	50	17	5	25	70	<1	8	25	85	86	86	36	59	80
West Cloverdale	18	17	3	2	50	<1	4	24	24	86	61	17	67	68
Jenner/ Cazadero	34	12	2	<1	45	<1	1	68	51	82	70	17	72	90
Central West														
Guerneville	10	12	2	2	58	1	9	9	70	0	35	4	59	87
Forestville/Rio Nido	27	12	3	5	73	1	22	49	39	0	76	39	72	72
Russian River Valley	32	12	3	15	77	1	11	68	41	0	68	17	77	95
Monte Rio**	15	12	3	2	55	0	5	41	12	0	52	17	59	83
Central														
Middle Rincon South*	8	11	9	61	2	1	52	5	36	0	81	17	51	3
Brush Creek*	8	11	9	66	0	1	49	5	32	0	81	19	51	3
Kawana Springs	23	8	8	34	53	3	41	38	46	4	82	54	51	12
Olivet Road	19	8	8	18	60	2	39	5	28	6	70	46	51	76
Taylor Mountain	78	8	9	77	52	4	85	64	36	64	97	76	51	87
Wright**	51	6	7	17	60	2	34	18	51	62	96	86	67	90
Bellevue**	58	6	8	31	26	5	73	69	47	46	89	76	44	98
West End*	47	11	9	66	0	2	77	5	62	38	98	58	44	91
Shiloh South	67	11	7	50	78	1	77	23	33	97	60	93	33	98
Southern														
McKinley	64	11	13	68	26	23	85	18	74	58	88	63	51	59
Downtown Cotati	27	6	10	69	43	6	70	24	24	0	41	17	77	64
West Cotati/Penngrove	65	8	9	29	55	13	60	50	38	64	83	80	77	89
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	17	14	12	37	62	40	32	19	72	0	60	4	24	0
Petaluma Airport/ Arroyo Park	63	12	12	11	68	32	64	37	7	43	93	78	97	98
Sonoma City South/ Vineburg	10	14	16	39	76	45	9	36	7	0	32	27	24	0

* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa
** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community
Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2023.

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4.3 County Initiatives to Support Reduced Exposure to Pollution

- **Pesticide Use Enforcement Program.** While State law preempts local regulation of pesticides, the Sonoma County Department of Agriculture, Weights & Measures implements the Pesticide Use Enforcement Program. The function of this program is to oversee, monitor and evaluate the use, records, storage and sales of pesticides as required in the California Food and Agricultural Code, the California Code of Regulations and the Business and Professions Code. In carrying out these functions, the department protects food, feed and fiber sources, the environment and people, including the public and agricultural workers.
- **Sonoma County General Plan.** The Public Safety, Water Resources, and Land Use Elements of the County's General Plan contain policies aimed to prevent and limit air and water pollution, and exposure to hazardous materials.

Key Takeaways

- Pollution exposure for EJ communities in Sonoma County is predominately associated with cleanup sites, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, impaired water bodies, and solid waste.
 - Cleanup sites: While percentile scores associated with cleanup sites are generally low across the EJ Communities, the Shiloh South EJ Community (census tract 6097152702) scored well above others in the 97th percentile.
 - Hazardous Waste: There is a large disparity in the percentile scores across Sonoma County EJ Communities, with scores ranging from below the 10th percentile to above the 90th percentile. EJ communities located in the central and

central west geographic areas of the County face the greatest level of impacts.

- Groundwater Threats: EJ communities in Sonoma County have relatively high impacts from groundwater threats, with nearly half of all EJ community census tracts scoring above the 75th percentile.
 - Impaired Waters: EJ communities in Sonoma County have relatively moderate impacts from impaired water bodies, with two-thirds of EJ communities scoring between the 50th and 72nd percentile. The Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park census tract has the highest score.
 - Solid Waste Sites: There are large disparities in the impacts of solid waste sites across Sonoma County EJ communities, with almost half of all EJ communities having significantly higher solid waste percentile scores compared to other census tracts.
- Certain EJ communities are also experiencing high pollution exposure to Diesel PM, Pesticides, Traffic, and Children's Lead Risk from Housing.
 - Diesel PM: The Taylor Mountain EJ Community have significant levels of Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM) relative to other census tracts in California.
 - Pesticides: EJ communities in the Russian River Valley, Shiloh South, and Sonoma City South/Vineburg have moderately elevated levels of pesticides compared to other census tracts in California.
 - Traffic: EJ communities in the central and southern regions of Sonoma County experience moderate to elevated traffic pollution compared to EJ communities in other parts of the County.
 - Children's Lead Risk from Housing: Lead exposure from housing varies across EJ communities, with some census

tracts in the southern portion of the County scoring low and the East Cloverdale census tract scoring notably high.

- Cleanup Sites: While percentile scores are generally low across EJ Community for cleanup sites, the Shiloh South EJ Community scores within the 97th percentile.

5 Access to Public Facilities, Services, and Community Amenities

Access to public facilities and resources is an environmental determinant of health that is required to be addressed by jurisdictions under California Gov. Code Section 65302(h)(1)(A). In the Government Code, “public facilities” include, but are not limited to, public improvements, services, and community amenities.²⁵ These facilities may include government buildings, schools, public transit, public open space, streets, and roads with safe and adequate infrastructure, as well as community and cultural centers. Low-income and minority communities have historically had fewer public investments in their neighborhood and less access to critical public resources.²⁶ Refer to Section 6, *Health and Physical Activity*, for additional information on the health impacts associated with the availability of green space and the built environment.

Adequate access to open and green spaces, and safe active transportation infrastructure is essential to enabling physical activity. Lack of physical activity is associated with increased levels of chronic disease, including heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.²⁷ Communities with adequate access to these community facilities and services are therefore more likely to have better health outcomes. Low-income communities and minority communities tend to have decreased access to those key contributors to physical activity, and thus may be disproportionately impacted by the negative results of physical inactivity.²⁸ The environmental context

within a community can serve to promote or discourage levels of physical activity for residents.

The following discussion provides an overview of a range of public facilities available in Sonoma County, and evaluates community accessibility to these facilities, including:

- Schools
- Government Buildings
- Parks and Open Space
- Bike Lanes
- Sidewalks
- Public Transit

5.1 Parks and Open Space

The availability of greenspace (parks, fields, open space) in proximity to housing can create opportunities for physical activity and social interaction.²² Both physical activity and social interaction have been linked to improved health outcomes. The cities and towns of Sonoma County have primary responsibility for providing

²⁵ Government Code Section 65302(h)(1)(A)

²⁶ Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment (OEHA). 2021. Indicators of Climate Change in California: Environmental Justice Impacts. <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/climate-change/document/climatechangeej123110.pdf>

²⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2022. Lack of Physical Activity Factsheet. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/physical-activity.htm> (accessed March 2023).

²⁸ California Environmental Protection Agency. 2022. CalEnviroScreen 4.0. <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-40> (accessed June 2023).

parks and recreation services to their residents²⁹. Each of the nine incorporated cities owns and manages parkland, and offers recreation programs. Sonoma County Regional Parks (SCRPP) provides recreation opportunities on 15,506 acres across 58 parks, trails, and marinas.³⁰ Regional Parks' mission is to preserve irreplaceable natural and cultural resources and offer opportunities for recreation and education that enhance the quality of life and well-being of Sonoma County's residents and visitors. Regional Parks is also responsible for developing parks and trail facilities in unincorporated urban service areas until the area is either annexed, or another service providing entity is established.³¹

The County's regional parks allow for a range of activities including camping, fishing, and hiking. The following is a list of County-run regional parks available to the residents of Sonoma County:

- Crane Creek Regional Park
- Doran Regional Park
- Foothill Regional Park
- Gualala Point Regional Park
- Helen Putnam Regional Park
- Hood Mountain Regional Park and Preserve
- Maddux Ranch Regional Park
- Maxwell Farms Regional Park
- North Sonoma Mountain Regional Park and Preserve
- Ragle Ranch Regional Park
- Riverfront Regional Park
- Shiloh Ranch Regional Park

- Sonoma Valley Regional Park
- Spring Lake Regional Park
- Steelhead Beach Regional Park
- Stillwater Cove Regional Park
- Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Preserve
- Tolay Lake Regional Park
- Westside Regional Park

Community parks also include facilities such as sports fields or courts, skateparks, dog parks, picnic areas, nature areas, parking, and restrooms for users. The following is a list of County-run community parks available to residents in Sonoma County:

- Andy's Unity Park
- Bird Walk Coastal Access
- Cloverdale River Park
- Ernie Smith Community Park
- Guerneville River Park
- Kenwood Plaza Park
- Larson Park
- Moran Goodman Park
- Running Fence – Watson School Historic Park
- Shaw Park

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPP) measures park access and park proximity. According to the CDPP, 26 percent of residents of Sonoma County live farther than a half mile

²⁹ Sonoma, County of. 2015. Draft Integrated Parks Plan.
<https://sonomaCounty.ca.gov/a/107609> (accessed March 2023).

³⁰ Sonoma, County of. 2021a. Parks for All Annual Report 2020-2021.
https://parks.sonomaCounty.ca.gov/Microsites/Regional%20Parks/Documents/Learn/Funding/MeasureM-ParksForAll_AR-2019-2020.pdf (accessed March 2023).

³¹ Sonoma, County of. 2015. Draft Integrated Parks Plan.
<https://sonomaCounty.ca.gov/a/107609> (accessed March 2023).

from a park. Those planning area communities within adequate proximity to parks are primarily located adjacent to incorporate cities.

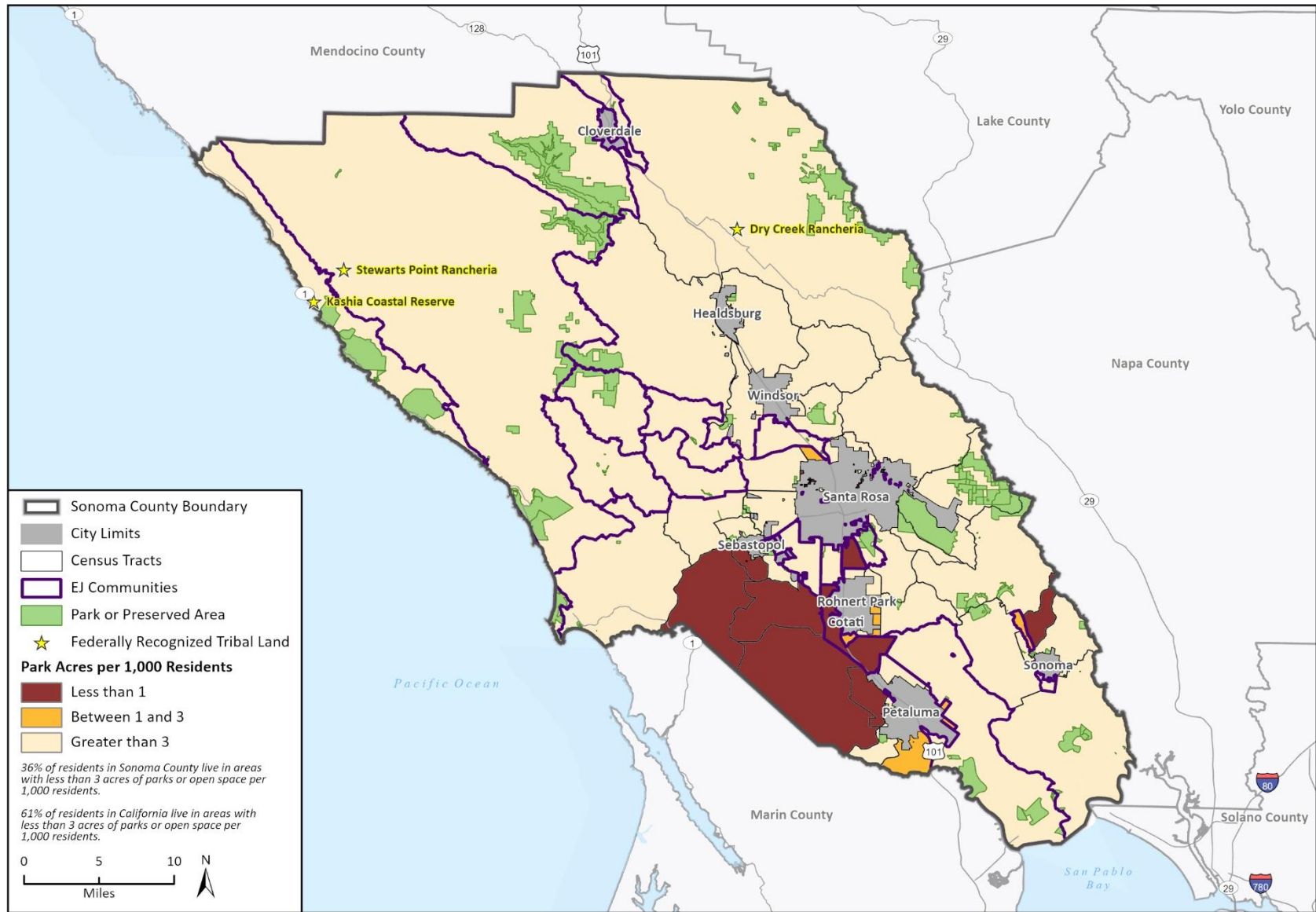
When it comes to park access, the CDPP defines “critically underserved” communities as those communities having a ratio of less than three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.³² Three acres per 1,000 residents is a State recognized park standard established by California State Parks to measure park access. According to the California Statewide Parks Program, 36 percent of residents of Sonoma County live in areas with less than 3 acres of parks or open space per 1,000 residents. Figure 4 depicts park access per 1,000 residents by census tract in the planning area irrespective of

whether a park is a County-run park or a park run by a local municipality.

Most Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities within the planning area have adequate access to park space. However, there are census tracts with low-access to park space located in the southern portion of the County. Of the census tracts experiencing low access to park space, the EJ Communities located at the West Cotati/Penngrove and Taylor Mountain census tracts (census tracts 6097151201 and 6097151402) have less than one acre of park space for each 1,000 residents. The Downtown Cotati and Fethers Spring/Agua Caliente West EJ Communities (census tracts 6097151204 and 6097150305) have one to three acres of park space available for each 1,000 residents.

³² Public Resources Code Section 5642

Figure 4 California Statewide Park “Critically Underserved” Communities in the Planning Area



5.2 Schools

Schools are a critical public facility that ensure that communities receive the educational resources necessary for capacity building. In addition, school facilities serve as a space for recreation and socialization that may contribute to improved health outcomes. There are 48 school districts that provide kindergarten through 12th grade education in Sonoma County. This includes 31 elementary school districts, six unified school districts, and three high school districts.³³ Within these districts there are a total of 165 public schools, including 53 charter schools.³⁴ While data was not available on commute times specific to Environmental Justice (EJ) communities due to the scope of this analysis and collected data, most of these schools are located in incorporated cities and are less prevalent as further from cities and into less populated unincorporated areas. Given the geographic layout of schools in the County, commute times for students living within unincorporated areas are likely to be much longer, and schools are likely to be less accessible through active modes of transportation, including walking or biking.

The following is a list of the public schools in the planning area:

- Buena Vista High School
- Dunbar Elementary School
- Forestville Academy
- Forestville Elementary School
- Fort Ross Elementary School
- Geyserville Elementary School

- Geyserville New Tech Academy
- Guerneville Elementary School
- Guerneville Primary School
- Harmony Elementary School
- Horicon Elementary School
- Kashia Elementary School
- Kenwood Elementary School
- Laguna High School
- Monte Rio Union High School
- Montgomery Elementary School
- Penngrove Elementary School

In addition to ensuring that schools are accessible to youth in EJ Communities, it is also important that students are able to maintain their attendance and learning. In response to requests from educators, policy makers, and stakeholders across the state, the California Department of Education (CDE) has developed a Stability Rate measure to identify the number and percent of students who receive a “full year” of learning in the same school.³⁵ A “full year” represents a typical California public school academic year (July 1 – June 30). However, there is no standard or commonly accepted definition for a “full year” of learning in one school.³⁵ The Stability Report is intended to be a tool to help educators, parents, and other stakeholders across the state to better understand the needs of

³³ Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). 2023. District Map. https://www.scoe.org/files/district_map.pdf (accessed March 2023).

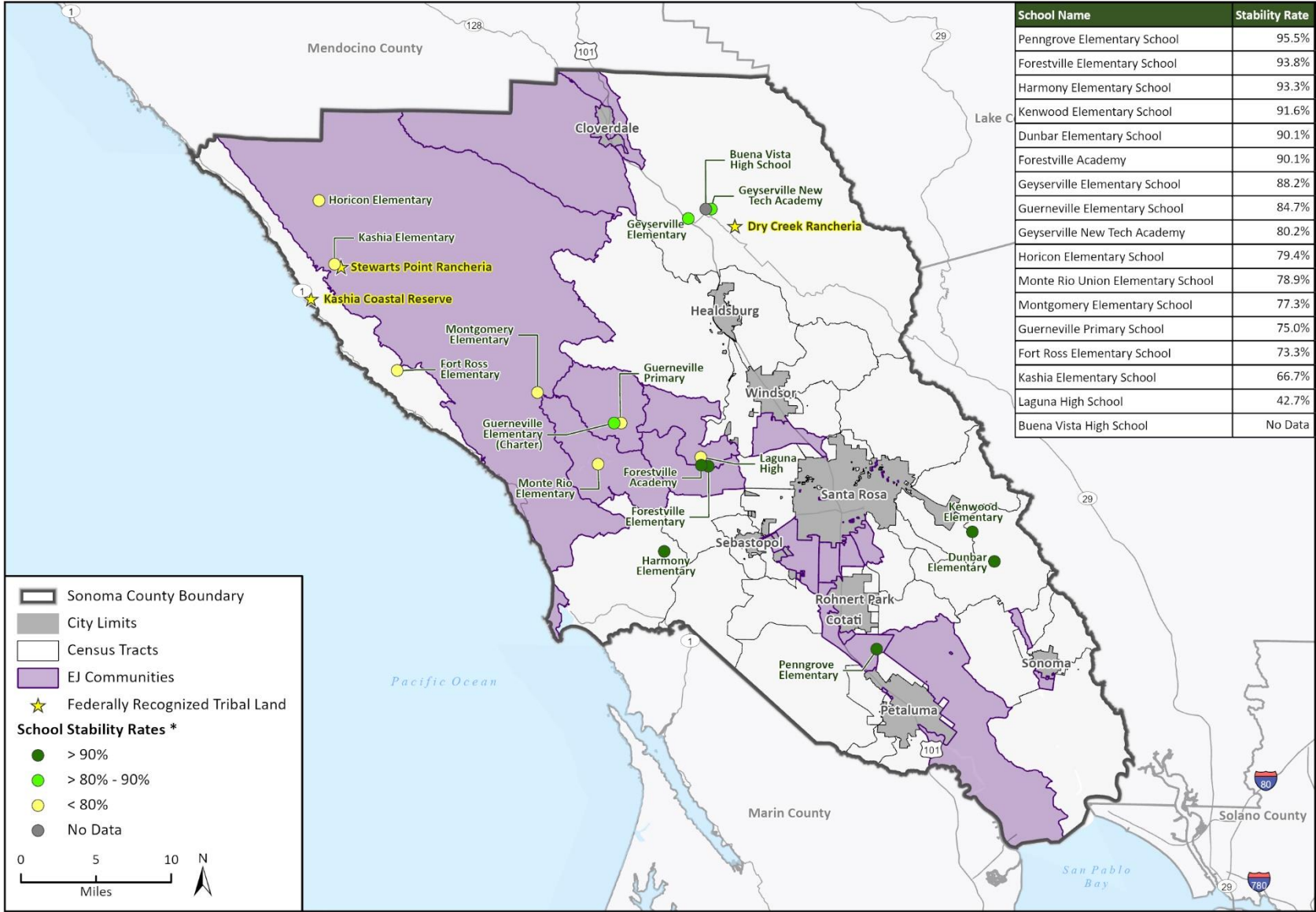
³⁴ Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). 2021. Education Facts for Sonoma County Schools. https://www.scoe.org/blog_files/Ed%20Facts%202020-21%20draft.pdf (accessed March 2023).

³⁵ California Department of Education (CDE). 2023. School Stability Rates. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/srinfo.asp> (accessed March 2023).

students and schools. The stability rates for schools and school districts in the planning area are shown Figure 5, below.

From 2020 to 2021, Sonoma County has a 90.9 percent stability rate, meaning 90.9 percent of students completed a “full year” of learning in the same school. This is slightly higher than the State average of 89.7 percent. Out of all schools and districts located in the unincorporated County, Laguna High School in the West Sonoma County School District has the lowest stability rate of 42.7 percent. More than half of all students enrolled in 2021 did not complete a “full year” of learning at Laguna High School. Laguna High School is located in the Forestville/Rio Nido EJ Community (census tract 609713705). Kashia School District and Kashia Elementary School has the second lowest stability rate of 66.7 percent. This means that a third of all students enrolled at the beginning of an academic school year did not complete a “full year” of learning. Kashia Elementary School is located within the Jenner/Cazadero EJ Community (census tract 6097154304) in the northwestern portion of the County near Stewarts Point Rancheria.

Figure 5 School Stability Rates in the Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024. Additional data provided by Sonoma County, 2023; CDE, 2023; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.
* State average stability rate is 89.8% and County average stability rate is 91.6%.

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Fig 10 Sonoma County School Stability Rates

5.3 Bike Lanes

Biking is a relatively low-cost mode of transportation that allows for greater access to necessary resources for those who cannot operate or do not have access to automobiles. The development of bicycle infrastructure such as bike lanes can increase food access, increase opportunity for exercise (i.e., improve access to parks and open space), and improve connectivity to regional transit.³⁶ Safety is the most frequently cited barrier to bicycling. The Sonoma County Vision Zero Action Plan reported that rural areas, equity priority communities (census tracts that have likely been disadvantaged and faced historic underinvestment), and areas of concentrated poverty are disproportionately affected by traffic safety concerns. These areas represent a lower percentage of the County's roadway mileage but a higher percentage of the County's fatal and injury crashes. Equity priority communities also has a disproportionately high number of the County's high injury intersections, defined as intersections with an elevated risk of crashes resulting in an injury or fatality.³⁷

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only three percent of commuters in the planning area commute by walking, while an additional two percent commute via bike, taxi, or other resources.³⁸ Low rates of commute via active transportation in the planning area may be an indicator of inadequate infrastructure, including sidewalks and bikeways. However, development of active

transportation infrastructure is notably challenging in rural areas and areas with a widespread geography, such as Sonoma County.

There are three primary types of bike lanes in Sonoma County: Class I, Class II, and Class III. Class I provide a separated right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians with minimal crossings of motorized traffic, Class II provide a striped lane for one-way bike travel on a street or highway, and Class III provide shared use with pedestrians or vehicles. Sonoma County has 91 miles of Class I bike lanes, 167 miles of Class II bike lanes, and 61 miles of Class III bike lanes.³⁹ It should be noted that this is the total mileage of bike lanes throughout the entirety of the County, including incorporated areas.

The commute analysis presented in the Sonoma County Transportation Authority's (SCTA) Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014) indicates that one percent of unincorporated County residents biked to work. Based on the findings of the SCTA Countywide Bicycle Master Plan, there is no indication that bicycling is a reliable source of commuting in the planning area. Additionally, the setting of unincorporated Sonoma County indicates that the planning area may not be adequately served by much of the existing bicycle infrastructure. However, the SCTA Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan also indicated that 289 bicycle and pedestrian projects have been proposed for the

³⁶ Castillo EC, Campos-Bowers M, Ory MG. 2019. Expanding Bicycle Infrastructure to Promote Physical Activity in Hidalgo County, Texas. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2019;16:190125. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd16.190125>external icon (accessed March 2023).

³⁷ County of Sonoma, Sonoma County Department of Health Services, and Sonoma County Transportation Authority. 2022. Sonoma County Vision Zero Action Plan. https://scta.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Sonoma-Vision-Zero-Action-Plan_Final-1.pdf

³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. S0801 Commuting Characteristics by Sex. https://data.census.gov/table?q=Commuting&g=050XX00US06097_1400000US06097150203_

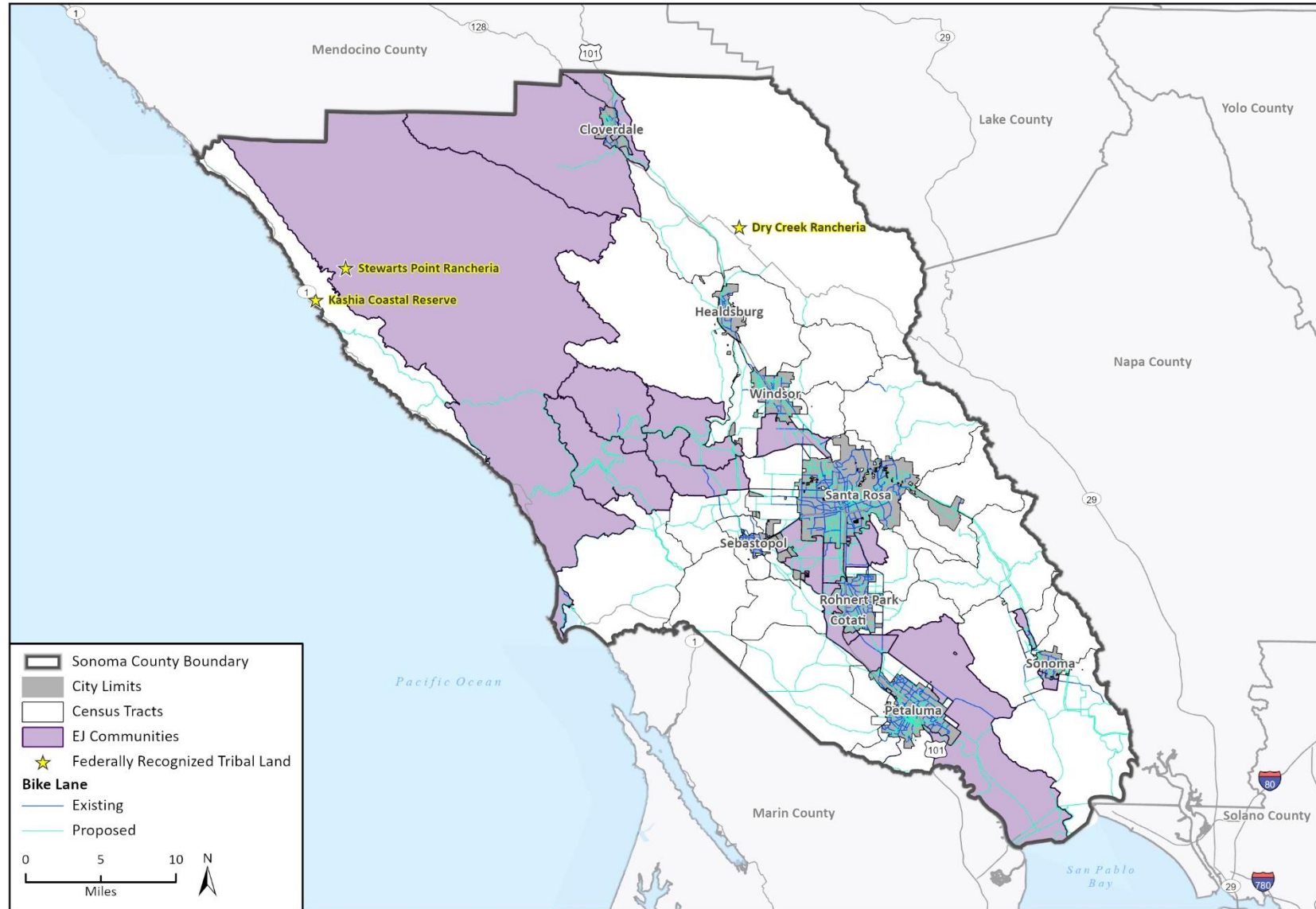
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³⁹ Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA). 2014. SCTA Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. https://scta.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BikePedPlanUpdate2014_final.pdf (accessed March 2023).

unincorporated County including a total of 193.70 miles of Class I lanes, 388.96 of Class II lanes, and 187.47 miles of Class III lanes.³⁹

Figure 6 identifies the existing and planned bicycle lanes in Sonoma County.

Figure 6 Bicycle Lanes in the Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by Sonoma County Transportation Authority Countywide Bicycle Plan, 2017; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 12 Sonoma County Bike Access

5.4 Sidewalks

Sidewalks provide an essential platform for transportation for those who cannot or choose not to utilize an automobile. Similar to bicycle infrastructure, sidewalk accessibility can promote physical activity and therefore contribute to better health outcomes within a community. Ideally, sidewalks provide safe space for pedestrians, help interconnect mass transit services, and act as public spaces for food, commerce, and leisure. Regardless of mobility needs, poorly maintained sidewalks create safety hazards, impact physical movement, and reduce overall quality of life.

The 2010 Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan indicates that automobile-oriented road design, poor pedestrian connectivity, and lack of adequate sidewalks in the unincorporated County create a relatively unfriendly environment for pedestrians. In older towns and incorporated cities throughout the County, sidewalks have been maintained. However, systems gaps are often found between the oldest and newest developments in the County. This pattern has also been prevalent in the County's unincorporated areas. There are several major barriers to safe pedestrian travel in Sonoma County including freeways such as Highway 101, and high-speed roadways that prioritize vehicle mobility. Discontinuity of the County's pedestrian system can make travel challenging and unsafe.

In Sonoma County there appears to be no relation between the lack of car ownership and higher walk commute percentages.³⁹ However, it is likely that in areas where there is a lower rate of car ownership, people choose to take transit rather than walking or biking. Currently, only 7.9 percent of residents walk or bike everywhere they go, 13.6 percent walk or bike from home to school, and 9.4 percent walk or bike from home to other locations.³⁹ In the unincorporated County, only 2.95 percent of people employed above the age of 16 walk during their commutes.³⁹

More robust County-maintained sidewalks are mostly seen in incorporated areas and larger city centers. For example, east of Fulton between Windsor and Santa Rosa, the County maintains a larger area of sidewalks, including curb ramps and crosswalks. However, areas west of Santa Rosa, such as the Wright census tract EJ Community (census tract 609715153300), have very limited County-maintained sidewalks or pedestrian facilities.³⁹ Similarly, EJ Communities in the northwestern portion of the County where towns are more spread out and rural, such as in the Jenner/Cazadero EJ Community (census tract 6097154304) near Stewarts Point Rancheria, have little to no County-maintained sidewalks or pedestrian facilities.

5.5 Public Transit

The availability of public transit can improve resource accessibility and maintain mobility for residents without automobile access.²² New and expanded public transportation options can improve health and health equity by reducing traffic crashes and air pollution, increasing physical activity, and improving access to medical care, healthy food, necessary services, employment, and social connection. Access to public transportation has been shown to promote physical activity when people walk to and from all transit stops. A robust public transit system can also encourage residents to seek timely medical care which they otherwise may not have access to and connect residents with healthy food options that may not be available in their area. As of 2018, approximately 2.1 percent of Sonoma County residents use public transit and 9.7 percent use carpool or ridesharing programs.³⁹

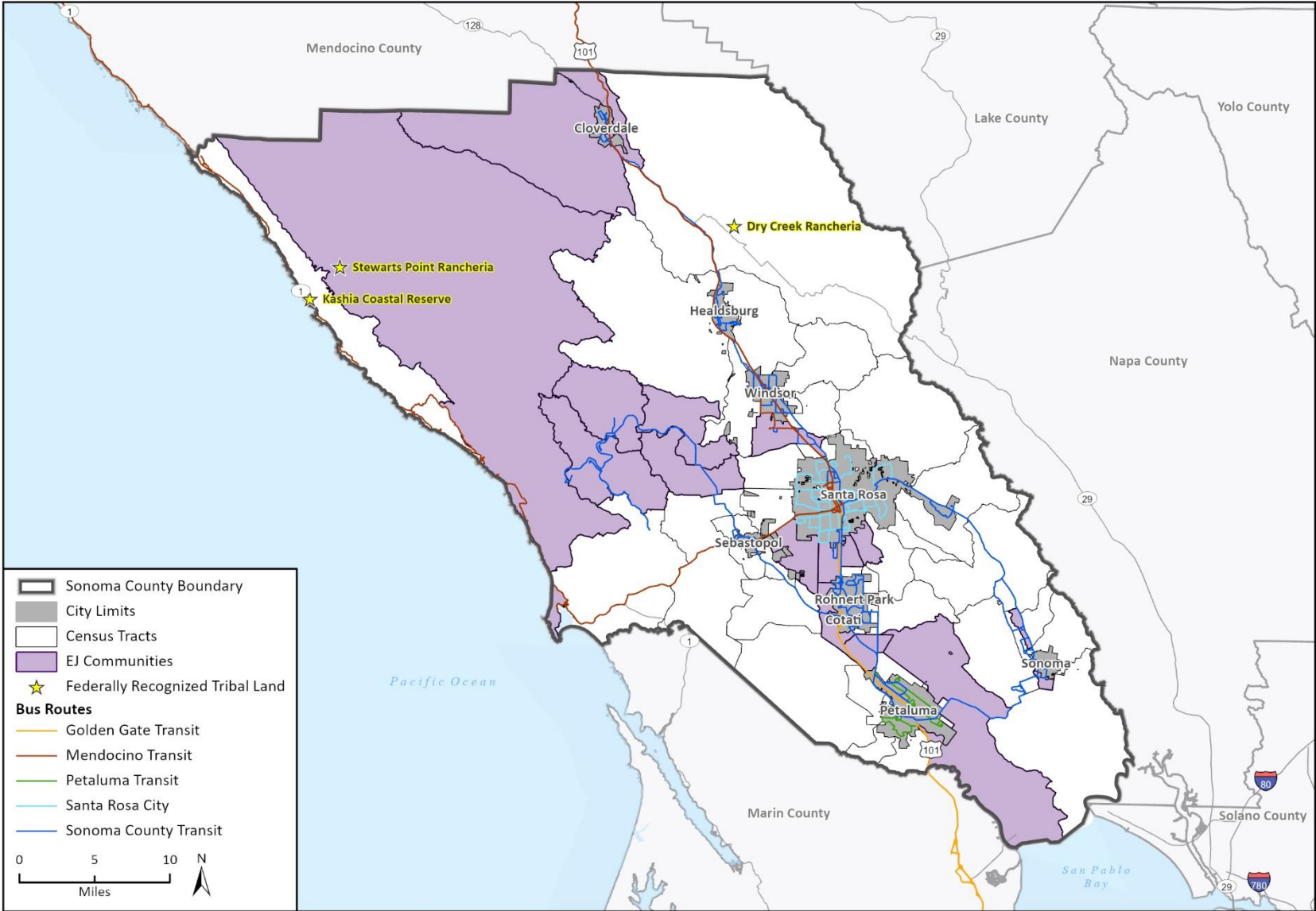
Sonoma County Transit (SCT) provides Countywide and local inner-city service, including in unincorporated areas of the County. Although not in the unincorporated County, Santa Rosa CityBus, Healdsburg Transit, Cloverdale Transit and Petaluma transit provide inner city service. Residents in the planning area are likely to rely on

both transit in the unincorporated County as well as inner city services. Eighty-nine (89) percent of weekday trips in the County are intra-County, of which large percentages originate in the unincorporated planning area.³⁹ While SCT offers a variety of routes and connections, there is still limited access to these services in some parts of the County. For example, none of SCTs fixed routes directly access the Jenner/Cazadero census tract EJ Community (census tract 6097154304) in the northwestern portion of the County, where Stewarts Point Rancheria is also located. Residents in this area would either need to walk, bike, utilize paratransit services, or take personal vehicles to connect to the nearest SCT stations in or between Cloverdale and Healdsburg. Bus routes within the planning area are shown in Figure 7, below.

SCT offers 20 different fixed-route bus routes that travel north or south between Cloverdale and Petaluma, and east or west between Sonoma and Monte Rio. In addition, SCT routes have the following connections for specified travel in or out of the County:

- **Amtrack Thruway** bus service provides service between McKinleyville and Martinez with stops in Sonoma County, Mendocino County, Solano, and Napa Counties. Sonoma County pickup locations include Cloverdale, Healdsburg, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park and Petaluma.
- **Golden Gate Transit** operates transit services within Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, and Contra Costa Counties. SCT Routes 12, 14, 20, 30, 34, 40, 42, 44, 48, 60, and 62 connect with Golden Gate Transit routes in Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, and Petaluma.
- **Greyhound** provides daily service out of Santa Rosa. Northbound service travels to Humboldt County. Southbound service travels to San Rafael, Oakland, and San Francisco.
- **Mendocino County Transit** offers services within Mendocino County. Mendocino County Transit routes 65 and 95 which connect with SCT routes in Santa Rosa.
- **Petaluma Transit** operates within the City of Petaluma. SCT Routes connect with Petaluma Transit services in Petaluma.
- **Santa Rosa CityBus** provides service in the City of Santa Rosa. SCT Routes connect with CityBus services in Santa Rosa.
- **SMART** is a rail transit service operating between the Sonoma County Airport Boulevard station and Larkspur. Sonoma County stops are provided at Guerneville Road (Santa Rosa), Railroad Square (downtown Santa Rosa), Rohnert Park, Cotati and Petaluma.
- **Sonoma County Airport Express** provides transportation services to and from the San Francisco and Oakland airports.
- SCT also offers **ADA Paratransit Service** which offers shared rides independent of trip purpose. Paratransit Service primarily serves origins and destinations within ¾ of a mile from regular fixed-routes at the same hours and days as fixed-route service. Paratransit services may be reserved up to a week in advance and ticket prices range between \$1.20 to \$3.00 depending on the fare zone. Tickets may be used in lieu of paying a cash fare and having exact change. Paratransit tickets have no expiration date and may be used at any time towards the fare on any Sonoma County Paratransit trip.

Figure 7 Transit Routes in the Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by Sonoma County Transportation Authority Countywide Bicycle Plan, 2017; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

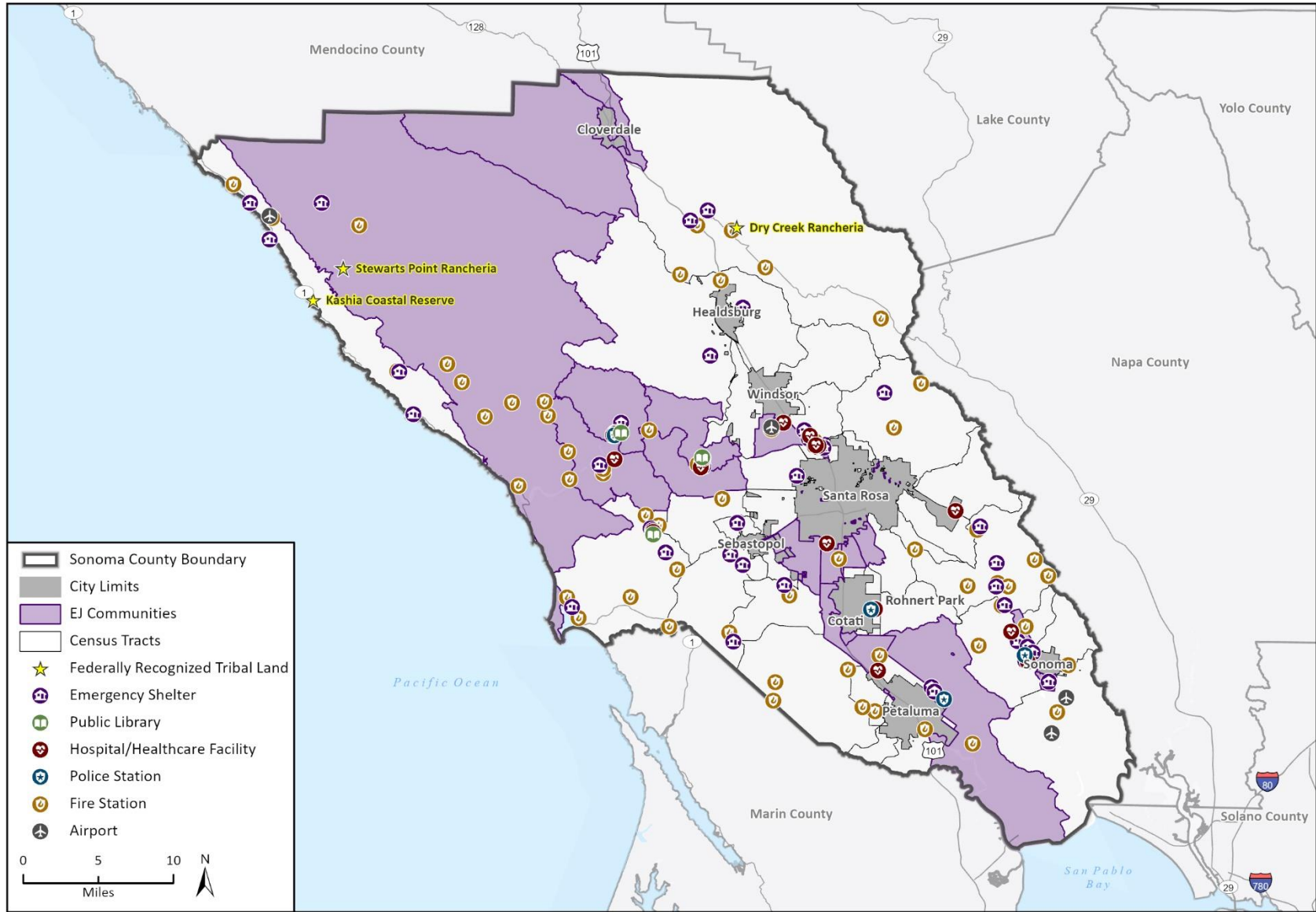
22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 13 Sonoma County Bus Routes

5.6 Government Buildings

The availability of government buildings connect EJ Communities with necessary services that contribute to the health, education, and safety of residents. As shown in Figure 8, government buildings and facilities are in closer proximity to major urban centers such as Sonoma, Santa Rosa, and Sebastopol. Emergency centers are more commonly located in the central and southern portions of the County, limiting access to the northern and central west portions. Libraries are located primarily in the central west portion of the County, with much less availability in the northern, central, and southern portions of the County.

Many other government facilities can be found in and around the EJ Communities apart from the East Cloverdale and West Cloverdale census tracts. Neither of these tracts contain any government buildings or services such as police stations, fire stations, libraries, emergency shelters and hospitals. Similarly, the Jenner/Cazadero EJ Community census tract has services centered in the southern portion of the census tract, with the northern portion of the EJ Community lacking many of the same services except for a single emergency shelter and fire station. This northern portion of the Jenner/Cazadero EJ Community is in proximity to the Stewarts Point Rancheria.

Figure 8 Government Facilities in the Planning Area



5.7 County Initiatives to Support Access to Public Facilities

A number of County departments and agencies play a role in providing, maintaining, and planning for public facilities within the unincorporated county. The following are recent examples of initiatives that seek to ensure adequate access to a range of public facilities:

- **SCTA Active Transportation Plan:** The Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) was awarded a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Transportation Planning Grant to develop a Countywide Active Transportation Plan (CAT Plan). The CAT Plan will be a major update to the SCTA Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan adopted in 2014, and will define priorities for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, identify strategies for the implementation of associated projects and programs, and support countywide bicycle and pedestrian coordination.
- **Sonoma County Strategic Plan 2021-2026.** The Sonoma County Five-Year Strategic Plan includes a number of goals and objectives to address gaps and inequities in services. For example, **Resilient Infrastructure Pillar, Goal 1, Objective 4** seeks to establish neighborhood service hubs in West County, Cloverdale, and Sonoma Valley to improve access to County services in those areas. At the time of this writing, the County has established locations in West County and Sonoma Valley for these satellite service centers, bringing important economic assistance, child support and health services to underserved communities.

Key Takeaways

- **Parks and Open Space:** Sonoma County has a significant number of regional and community parks, offering various recreational opportunities such as camping, fishing, and hiking. Most Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities have adequate access to park space, but there are EJ communities with low-access. Low-access communities are primarily located in the southern portion of the County.
- **Schools:** There are 165 public schools in Sonoma County, including elementary, unified, and high school districts. Schools are predominantly located in incorporated cities, making commute times longer for students living in unincorporated areas. Laguna High School has the lowest stability rate, with only 42.7% of students completing a full year of learning. Laguna High School is located in the Forestville/Rio Nido EJ Community (census tract 609713705).
- **Bike Lanes:** Biking is not a prevalent mode of transportation in Sonoma County, with only 2% of commuters using bikes. The County has various types of bike lanes, but the overall infrastructure is inadequate, especially in rural areas. Proposed projects aim to improve bike infrastructure, including the addition of over 300 miles of bike lanes.
- **Sidewalks:** Walking is not the primary form of transportation for most residents, and sidewalk accessibility is limited, particularly in unincorporated areas. County-maintained sidewalks are more prevalent in incorporated areas and larger city centers. EJ communities in rural areas have little to no County-maintained sidewalks.
- **Public Transit:** Public transit plays a vital role in improving resource accessibility and mobility for residents without automobiles. Sonoma County Transit (SCT) provides Countywide and local inner-city service, but there are still areas with limited access to transit services, including EJ Communities. The EJ

community in the northwestern portion of the County lacks direct access to any SCT routes.

6 Health and Physical Activity

Environmental injustices, such as unequal exposure to environmental hazards and limited access to healthcare, contribute to health disparities among marginalized communities. Marginalized communities are often located in areas with higher levels of environmental hazards, such as industrial facilities, waste disposal sites, or contaminated water sources. These hazards can lead to various health problems, including asthma, cardiovascular diseases, low birth weight, cancer, and other illnesses. Therefore, unequal exposure to environmental hazards can contribute to health disparities between different communities.

Marginalized communities facing environmental injustices may also experience barriers to accessing healthcare services. Limited availability of healthcare facilities, affordability issues, lack of health insurance, transportation challenges, and language barriers can hinder individuals' ability to seek timely and appropriate healthcare. As a result, the health outcomes of these communities may be further compromised.

6.1 Key Health Demographics

This section describes the following health conditions in the EJ Communities that are the most directly linked to exposure to environmental health hazards and limited access to healthcare: asthma, cardiovascular disease, and low birth weight. These three health impacts are used as indicators in CalEnviroScreen and are often the result of other compounding indicators. For example, areas with poor air quality due to the presence of DPM, toxic

releases, or pesticides may increase the risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma. Similarly, areas with poor environmental quality limit residents' ability to participate in safe and healthy outdoor activities, increasing their risk of other health impacts.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic lung condition that creates breathing difficulties. It's caused by swelling in the airways that can lead to symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath and chest tightness. People with asthma can be especially susceptible to pneumonia, flu, and other illnesses. Throughout California, asthma rates have significantly increased in the last three decades.⁴⁰ As of 2022, asthma is present amongst 8.7 percent of California's population. The prevalence of asthma within Sonoma County is slightly higher at 11.9 percent.⁴¹

The average rate of asthma related emergency department visits for census tracts in Sonoma County Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities is lower overall than the average rate for census tracts in the state of California as a whole. Figure 9 depicts the CalEnviroScreen percentile scores for Asthma Emergency Department visits in the planning area relative to other California census tracts. On average, census tracts in the State of California score in the 50th percentile and census tracts in Sonoma County score in the 39th percentile for asthma according to CalEnviroScreen. Geographically, EJ Communities in the central western portions of the planning area tend to have higher rates of asthma related visits to the emergency department. Asthma-related

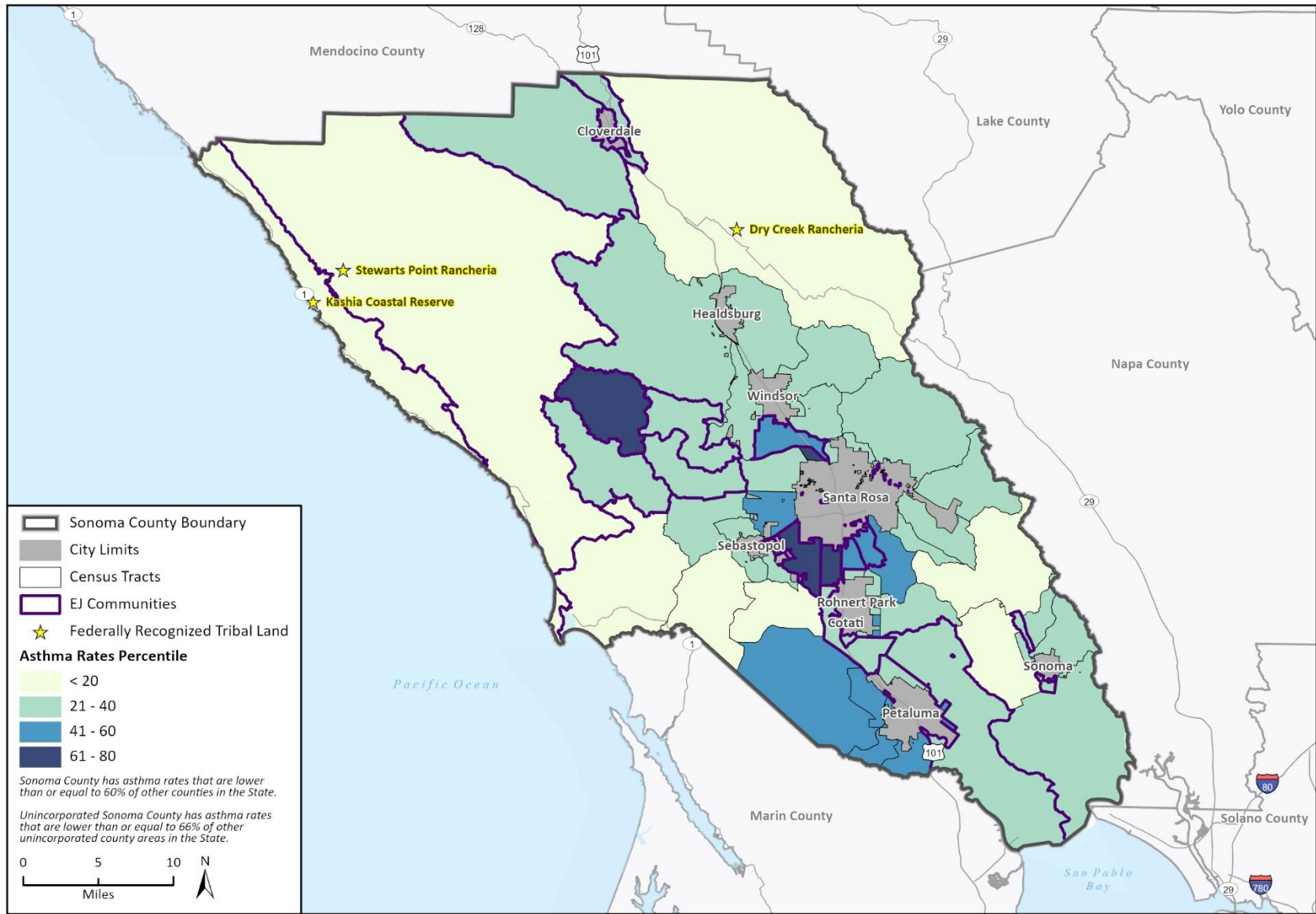
⁴⁰ California Department of Public Health (CDPH). 2022. Asthma. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/DEOD/ECDC/EP/Pages/Asthma.aspx> (accessed March 2023).

⁴¹ California Department of Public Health (CDPH). 2022. California Asthma Dashboard. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/DEOD/ECDC/EP/Pages/CaliforniaBreathingCountyAsthmaProfiles.aspx> (accessed March 2023).

visits to the emergency department were measured by the number of visits per 10,000 people to account for population disparities. Only two (2) EJ Communities in the planning area has a percentile score for asthma emergency visits above the 75th percentile. Those

two (2) EJ Communities are located in the Wright and Bellevue census tracts (census tracts 6097153300 and 6097153200), both within the central portion of the County, around the City of Santa Rosa.

Figure 9 Asthma Rates by Census Tract in the Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 5 Sonoma County Asthma Rates

Cardiovascular Disease

Lack of physical activity is associated with an increase in death resulting from heart disease and stroke.⁴² Cardiovascular disease refers to conditions that involve blocked or narrowed blood vessels of the heart. There are several risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease including diet, lack of exercise, smoking, and exposure to air pollution. Other risk factors include high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol. On average, Sonoma County census tracts have a CalEnviroScreen score of 38.4 percentile for cardiovascular disease. As shown in Figure 10, the rate of cardiovascular disease (measured by the number of heart attacks per 10,000 people) was varied throughout EJ Communities in Sonoma County. However, similar to asthma rates, the EJ Communities located at the Wright and Bellevue census tracts (census tracts 6097153300 and 6097153200) in the central portion of the County both scored above the 80th percentile.

Low Birth Weight

Babies who weigh less than five and a half pounds at birth are considered to have a low birth weight. Low birth weight can be caused by poor nutrition, maternal stress, lack of prenatal care, pollution and smoking.⁴² According to the CalEPA, low birth-weight babies may face a greater risk of developing asthma or other chronic diseases later in life. California has an overall CalEnviroScreen score within the 50th percentile for low birth

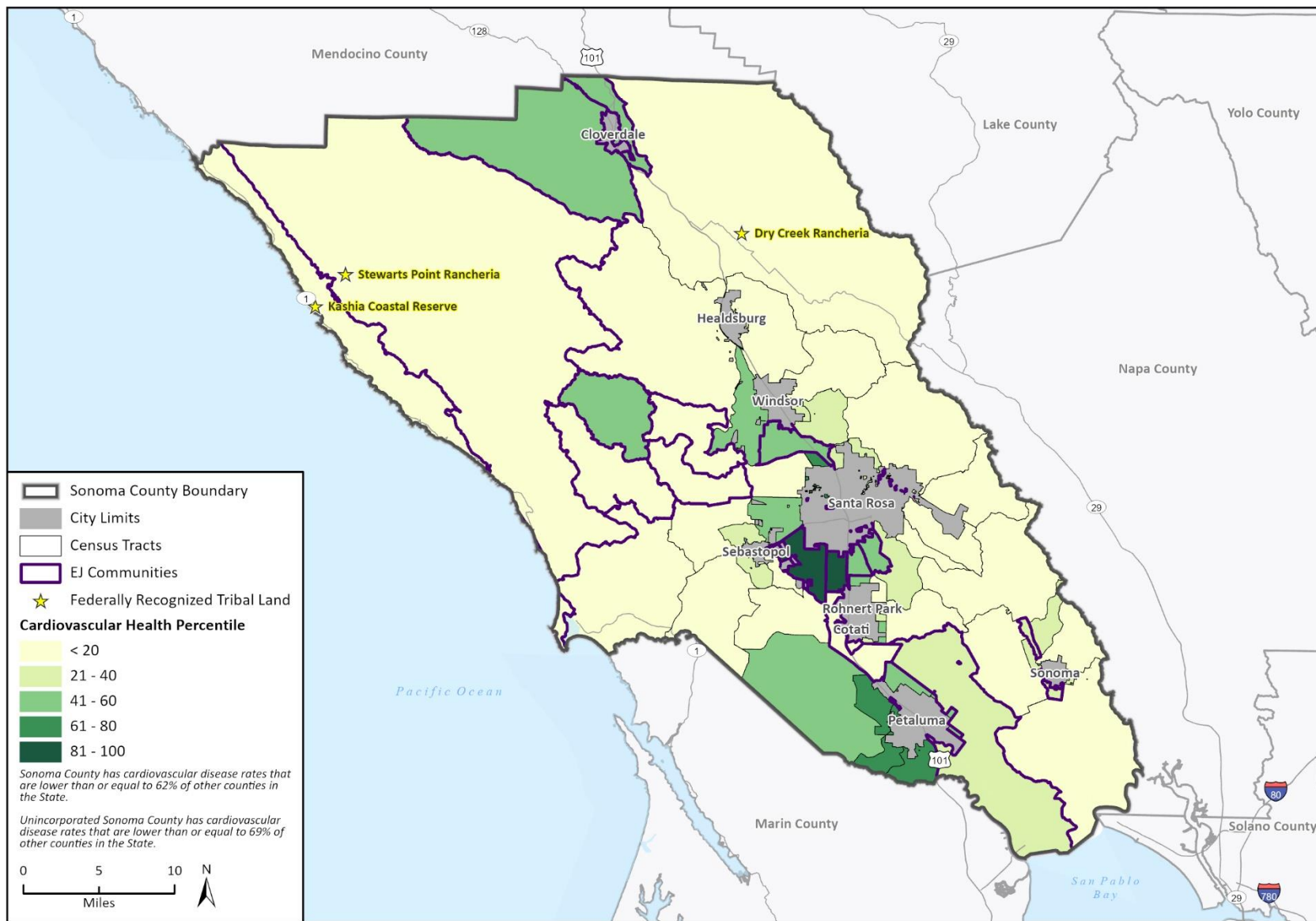
weight. On average, Sonoma County has a CalEnviroScreen score of 27.1 for low birth weights, significantly lower than the California percentile. In the Sonoma County planning area, there are no census tracts with significantly elevated percentiles for low birth weight (75th percentile +). However, the East Cloverdale census tract EJ Community (census tract 6097154201) in the northwestern portion of the County, as well as the adjacent northwestern census tract containing the Dry Creek Rancheria tribal land (census tract 6097154100) both has low birth weight percentiles above the 60th percentile.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy is a statistical measure that estimates the average number of years a person is expected to live based on various demographic factors such as their birth year, gender, and location. It is typically calculated by analyzing mortality rates and population data. Life expectancy is an important measure because it provides valuable insights into the overall health and well-being of a population. According to the 2021 update to the Portrait of Sonoma County, the life expectancy in Sonoma County is 82.2 years.⁴⁴ There are notable variations in life expectancy in the Sonoma County depending on racial/ethnic background. The life expectancy for Sonoma County's Black residents is ten years shorter than any other racial and ethnic group in the County. Life expectancy for Latinos in Sonoma County is over two years longer than life expectancy for Latinos at the state level.

⁴² Stanford Medicine Children's Health. 2023. Low Birth Weight. <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=low-birthweight-90-P02382>. Accessed April 2023.

Figure 10 Cardiovascular Disease Rate in the Planning Area



Basemap provided by Esri and its licensors © 2024.
Additional data provided by CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; Priority Population Investments 4.0, 2021; Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023.

22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 6 Sonoma County Cardiovascular Health

6.2 Healthcare Access

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine define access to health care as the “timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes.”⁴³ Many people face barriers that prevent or limit access to needed health care services, which may increase the risk of poor health outcomes. Seeking care for these conditions can be particularly challenging for people within EJ Communities due to cost, lack of health insurance, transportation barriers, and limited healthcare resources.

According to the 2021 update to the Portrait of Sonoma County, Sonoma County has seen an increase in insured individuals and fewer people living in poverty. Between 2014 and 2021, the number of uninsured adults in the County decreased from 15 percent to six (6) percent.⁴⁴ There are large variations in insurance coverage amongst adults in Sonoma County EJ Communities. Generally, insurance coverage is highest in EJ Communities near the central and southern portions of the County while fewer adults have coverage in the northwestern part of the County. Some EJ Communities within the County that are near dense population centers have the lowest rates of coverage. For example, only 81.4 percent of adults are insured in the Taylor Mountain census tract EJ Community (census tract 6097151402) in the unincorporated area south of Santa Rosa.⁴⁵ Similarly, only 81.6 of adults are insured in

the West End census tract and 84.4 percent of adults are insured in the Olivet Road census tract EJ Communities (census tracts 6097153002 and 6097153006) west of the City of Santa Rosa.⁴⁵

These rates of health insurance coverage are much lower than both the State and County rates of coverage. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 92.5 percent of people are insured in the state of California. On average, Sonoma County has an insurance coverage rate of 93.9 percent.⁴⁵

6.3 County Initiatives to Support Community Health

The Sonoma County Department of Health and Human Services provides a variety of programs and supportive services to promote, develop and sustain the physical health of individuals, families, and communities.

[Sonoma County Regional Parks](#) organizes and partners with local organizations on community outreach programs to reduce financial barriers to park access and promote park use as a healthy activity. Annual low-cost vehicle entry passes are available for Sonoma County residents with limited incomes. The Regional Parks River Shuttle is a low-cost transportation option for visiting Steelhead and Sunset beaches on the Russian River.

⁴³ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2023. Access to Health Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/access-health-services#:~:text=The%20National%20Academies%20of%20Sciences%2C%20Engineering%2C%20and%20Medicine,focus%20on%20how%20these%20barriers%20impact%20under-resourced%20communities.> (accessed March 2023).

⁴⁴ Sonoma, County of. 2022. A Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update. <https://upstreaminvestments.org/Microsites/Upstream%20Investments/Documents/Archive/Portrait-of-Sonoma-County-2021-Report.ADA.pdf> (accessed March 2023).

⁴⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. S2701 Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States. https://data.census.gov/table?q=ethnicity&t=Health+Insurance&g=040XX00US06_050XX00US06097_1400000US06097150203,06097150305,06097150612,06097150901,06097151201,06097151204,06097151310,06097151401,06097151402,06097152202,06097152501,06097152702,06097153002,06097153006,06097153200,06097153300,06097153703,06097153704,06097153705,06097153706,06097153902,06097154201,06097154202,06097154304 (accessed June 2023).

Key Takeaways

- **Asthma:** Asthma-related emergency department visits in Sonoma County Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities are lower on average compared to the average for all census tracts in the state of California. However, EJ Communities in the central western portions of Sonoma County have higher rates of asthma-related emergency department visits, particularly in the Wright and Bellevue census tracts.
- **Cardiovascular Disease:** On average, Sonoma County census tracts has a CalEnviroScreen percentile score of 38.4 for cardiovascular disease. The rate of cardiovascular disease varies greatly throughout EJ Communities in Sonoma County, but the Wright and Bellevue census tracts in the central portion of the County have rates above the 80th percentile, significantly higher than the County average.
- **Low Birth Weight:** In Sonoma County, the average CalEnviroScreen census tract score for low birth weight is 27.1, indicating a relatively lower prevalence. However, the East Cloverdale census tract EJ Community and the adjacent census tract containing the Dry Creek Rancheria tribal land both have birth weight percentiles above the 60th percentile.
- **Healthcare Access:** Sonoma County has seen an increase in insured individuals and a decrease in the number of uninsured adults from 15 percent to 6 percent between 2014 and 2021. However, there are variations in insurance coverage among adults in Sonoma County EJ Communities. Generally, insurance coverage is highest in EJ Communities near the central and southern portions of the County, while coverage is lower in the northwestern part of the County. Some EJ Communities near dense population centers have the lowest rates of coverage.

7 Healthy Food Access

Access to healthy food is a key determinant of positive health outcomes and quality of life. Adequate food access means that food is affordable, nutritious, and within an accessible distance from home. Limited access to healthy food options can lead to negative health outcomes, such as higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related diseases. These health disparities are often more prevalent in marginalized communities, exacerbating existing inequalities. By providing equal access to healthy food, environmental justice aims to improve overall public health and reduce health disparities. Food access can be measured by two indicators: food insecurity and the presence of food deserts.

Sonoma County has a vibrant community of individuals, companies, and organizations working toward growing a sustainable food system in the County, including Ag Innovations, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Food Systems Alliance (FSA), Petaluma Bounty, California FarmLink, and Farmers Guilds in Sebastopol and Sonoma Valley. These organizations develop plans, capacity, and knowledge to support a sustainable food system at the state and regional levels. The County worked with these and other organizations to develop the Food Action Plan that provides a guiding framework for food systems change.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Sonoma, County of. 2012. Sonoma County Healthy and Sustainable Food Action Plan. https://aginnovations.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SCFSA_FAP.pdf (accessed March 2023).

⁴⁷ Feeding America. 2023. Food Insecurity among Overall (all ages) Population in Sonoma County. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/County/2020/overall/california/County/sonoma> (accessed March 2023).

7.1 Food Insecurity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. The food insecurity rate in California is 10 percent of the total population, with 72 percent of those food insecure people considered eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).⁴⁷ Poverty and unemployment are key drivers of food insecurity. According to Feeding America, the food insecurity rate in Sonoma County was 8.3 percent as of 2021, with approximately 41,080 people defined as food insecure, slightly below California's overall rate of 10 percent.⁴⁷ Of those who are classified as food insecure, 42 percent are eligible for SNAP. These statistics include incorporated areas of the County and are not available at the census tract level.

According to the County's Department of Human Services, between the years 2011 and 2018, the number of missed meals was lowest in 2018.⁴⁸ However, in 2018, there remained a 14-million meal shortfall between what low-income residents could purchase and what local non-profits, government programs such as CalFresh, school meals, group meals for seniors, and home-delivered meals could provide. In 2018, approximately 60,000 low-income households in Sonoma County could not afford enough food to eat three full meals each day.

⁴⁸ Sonoma, County of. 2020. Annual Sonoma County Hunger Index Reports that 1/3 of Residents Went Hungry in 2018. <https://sonomaCounty.ca.gov/hunger-index-2019> (Accessed March 2023).

7.2 Food Deserts

“Food desert” refers to a region or neighborhood with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or a healthy, affordable food retail outlet.⁴⁹ The USDA maintains a Food Access Research Atlas that identifies food deserts by census tract within the United States. For the purposes of the Food Access Research Atlas, low-income and low-access census tracts are defined below:

- **Low-income (LI).** A census tract with a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, or median family income at or below 80 percent of the statewide or metropolitan area median family income.
- **Low-access (LA).** A census tract with at least 500 people or 33 percent of the tract’s population living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket or grocery store.

Based on the definitions above, there are six food deserts in Sonoma County. All food deserts in the County are also identified Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities. In addition to the six food deserts, there are over 15 census tracts dispersed throughout the planning area that are not considered low income but have low access to grocery stores or other healthy, affordable food centers. As shown in Figure 11 below, there is no clear geographic trend in low-access census tracts in the planning area, as low access tracts are present in the northwestern, central western, and southern portions of the County. However, there is a trend in the presence of food deserts, with three of the six census tracts being located southwest of Santa Rosa.

⁴⁹ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2011. Mapping Food Deserts in the United States. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2011/december/data-feature-mapping-food-deserts-in-the-us/> (accessed March 2023).

7.3 County Initiatives to Support Healthy Food Access

The Sonoma County Department of Health and Human Services administers [CalFresh](#), a food and nutrition program that is part of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). CalFresh provides monthly benefits to recipients to help pay for groceries. There are also a number of local organizations that supply food to those in need or coordinate meal provision, including the Redwood Empire Food Bank, Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul, the Sonoma County Council on Aging, and Petaluma Bounty.

In 2016, the [Sonoma County Food System Alliance](#) collaborated with the Sonoma County Department of Health Services to create the Sonoma County Healthy and Sustainable Food Action Plan, which provides a road map with a shared community vision and goals for the local food system.

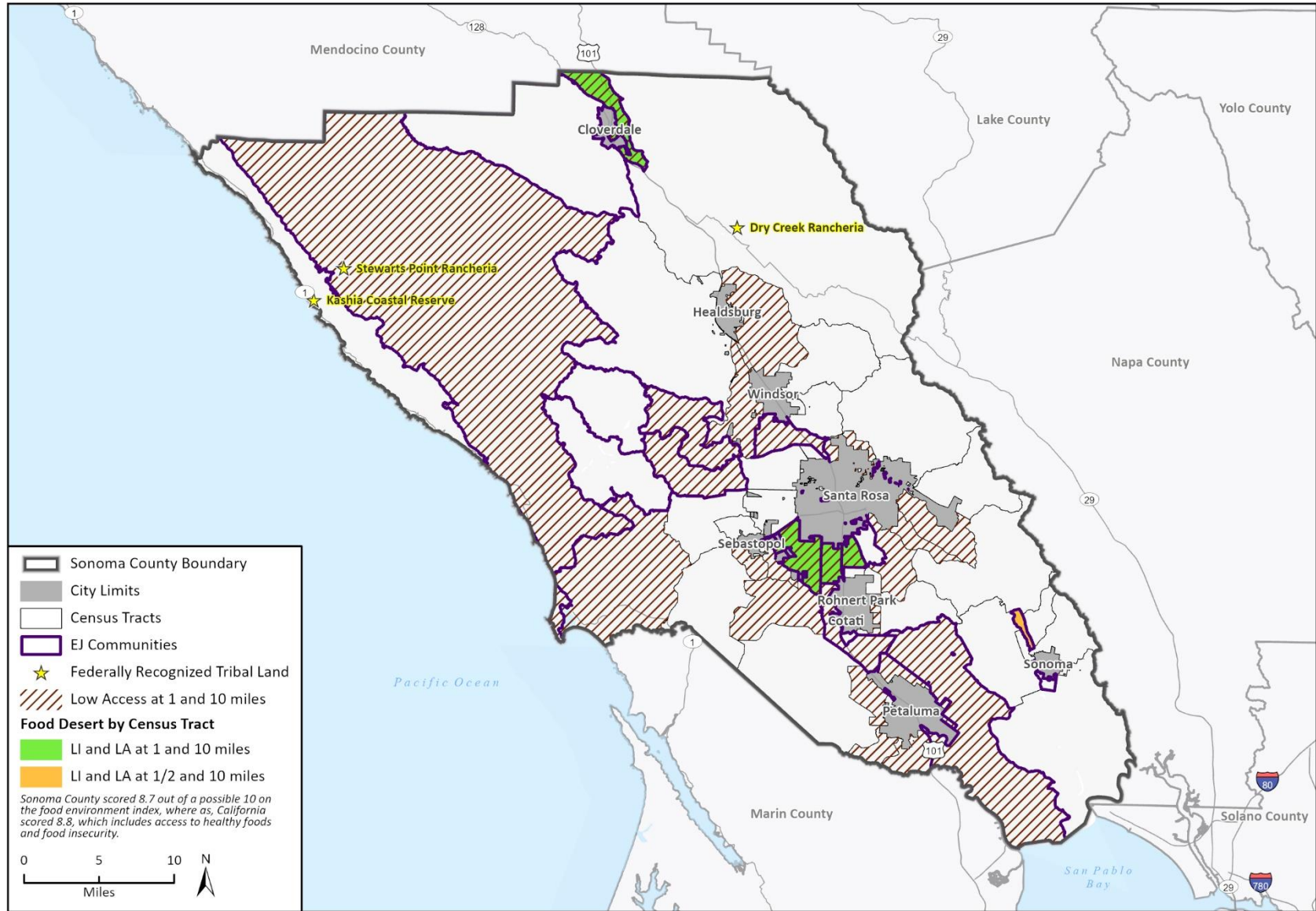
Key Takeaways

- **Food Insecurity in Sonoma County:** The food insecurity rate in Sonoma County is 8.3 percent, slightly below California's overall rate of 10.5 percent. Approximately 41,080 people in Sonoma County are considered food insecure. Out of those classified as food insecure, 42 percent are eligible for SNAP benefits.
- **Missed Meals and Low-Income Residents:** Between 2011 and 2018, the number of missed meals in Sonoma County was lowest in 2018. However, there was still a shortfall of 14 million meals in 2018 between what low-income residents could afford and the assistance provided by non-profit organizations,

government programs like CalFresh, school meals, group meals for seniors, and home-delivered meals.

- **Food Deserts:** Six communities in Sonoma County are identified food deserts, all of the six are Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities.

Figure 11 Food Deserts Across the Planning Area



8 Safe and Sanitary Housing

Safe and sanitary homes contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and families. Adequate housing conditions, including access to proper sanitation and ventilation, reduce the risk of diseases and exposure to environmental hazards. Environmental justice recognizes that everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background, deserves to live in a safe and healthy home environment.

Marginalized communities, often including low-income neighborhoods and minority communities, are more likely to experience substandard housing conditions. These communities may face challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate maintenance, limited access to sanitation facilities, pest infestations, lead-based paint, mold, and other indoor pollutants.⁵⁰ These unsafe housing conditions can have adverse health effects, exacerbating existing health disparities and environmental injustices. For additional information regarding lead risk from housing please refer to Section 4, *Pollution Burden*, for additional information on lead risk from housing.

8.1 Housing Cost Burden

Cost burden is defined by Title 24 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Code of Federal Regulations Section 91.5 as “the extent to which gross housing costs, including utility costs, exceed 30 percent of gross income, based on data available from the U.S. Census

Bureau.” Households spending a minimum of 30 percent of their total gross income on housing costs are considered cost burdened, whereas households spending over 50 percent on housing costs are considered severely cost burdened.

According to the Sonoma County Housing Element (2023), affordable housing is housing which costs no more than 30 percent of a low-, very low-, or extremely low-income household’s monthly gross income.⁵¹ As household income increases, rates of cost burden generally decrease. Extremely low-income households have the highest rate of cost burden among all income levels in the County, while above moderate-income households have the lowest. In addition, renter households are more likely to experience cost burden than homeowner households. Approximately 56 percent of all renters and 32 percent of all homeowners experience cost burden in unincorporated Sonoma County. Non-white households, especially Black/African American and Native American households, and non-family households also have higher rates of severe cost burden than white households and family households. Approximately 36 percent of senior residents in the unincorporated County are housing cost burdened.⁵¹ It was also found that many households within unincorporated County are cost burdened due to stagnant wages and increasing housing costs. In addition, many homes within the unincorporated County have high costs due to the rural nature of these homes. For example, some homes require on-site waste disposal in rural areas not served by public facilities

⁵⁰ Krieger, J., & Higgins, D. L. 2002. Housing and health: time again for public health action. *American journal of public health*, 92(5), 758–768.

<https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.92.5.758> (accessed March 2023).

⁵¹ Sonoma, County of. 2023. Sonoma County Housing Element.

<https://permitsonoma.org/Microsites/Permit%20Sonoma/Documents/Long%20Range%20Pla>

ns/Proposed%20Plans/Housing%20Element/March%20HCD%20Revised%20Review%20Draft/SOCO%20HCD%20Revised%20Draft%20Housing%20Element%20-%20rev%203.13.23-a_119727.pdf (accessed April 2023).

which drives up the cost both for the development of housing and existing costs of housing.

CalEnviroScreen measures housing burden by census tract by identifying the percent of households that are both high in housing cost burden (paying greater than 50 percent of their income to housing costs) and low in income (making less than 80 percent of the HUD Area Median Family Income). Sonoma County received a CalEnviroScreen score of 42.5 for housing burden. Comparatively, the state of California has a percentile score of 50.2 for housing burden. Figure 12 and Table 5 below show the CalEnviroScreen housing burden percentiles across Sonoma County. Approximately a fourth of all identified Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in Sonoma County were above the 75th percentile for housing burden

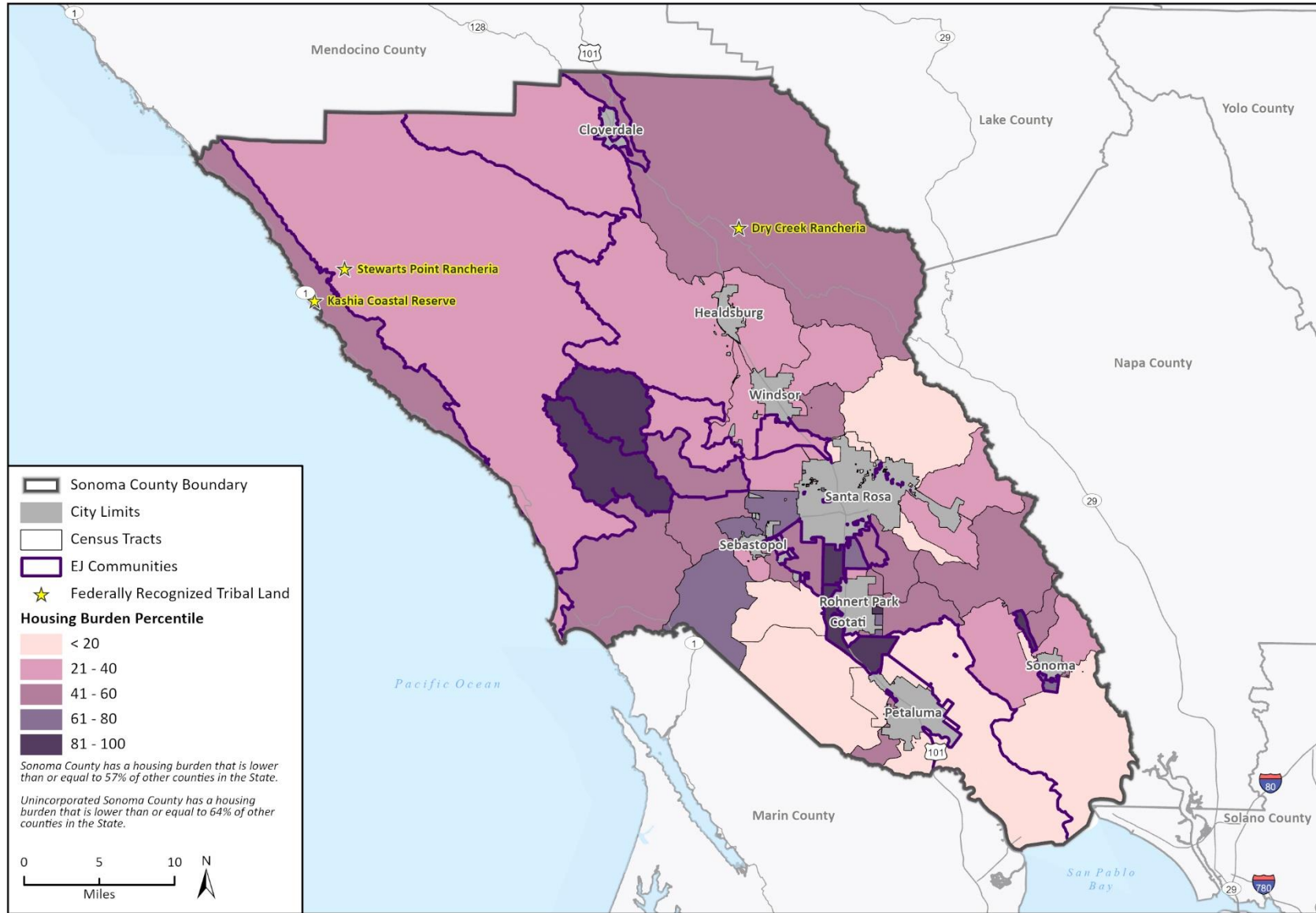
for all census tracts in the state. Those EJ Communities are located in the Guerneville, West Cotati/Penngrrove, Fethers Springs/Agua Caliente West, Monte Rio, and Bellevue census tracts (census tracts 6097153704, 6097151201, 6097150305, 6097153703, 6097153200). More than 25 percent of the population in each of these tracts are affected by housing cost burden. Generally, EJ Communities located in the southern portion of the County tend to have higher percentages of overpayment by renters of over 50 percent. No EJ Communities within the northwestern portion of the County were identified as being cost burdened.

The Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report and Appendix B contains further detail on housing cost burden within the County.

Table 5 Housing Cost Burden by Environmental Justice Census Tract

Region and Census Tract	Housing Burden	
	Percentage of Population Affected	Percentile Score
Sonoma County	N/A	43
Northwestern		
East Cloverdale	17	51
West Cloverdale	12	24
Jenner/Cazadero	14	32
Central West		
Guerneville	25	81
Forestville/Rio Nido	15	36
Russian River Valley	16	45
Monte Rio**	30	90
Central		
Middle Rincon South*	20	63
Brush Creek*	18	54
Kawana Springs	17	46
Olivet Road	7.6	6
Taylor Mountain	21	68
Wright**	17	47
Bellevue**	26	83
West End*	15	40
Shiloh South	15	36
Southern		
McKinley	15	39
Downtown Cotati	10	14
West Cotati/Penngrove	27	84
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	27	86
Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park	10	13
Sonoma City South/Vineburg	20	61
* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa		
** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community		
Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0		

Figure 12 Housing Burden Scores Across the Planning Area



8.2 Overcrowding

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) defines an overcrowded unit as one occupied by 1.01 persons or more per room (excluding bathrooms and kitchens).⁵² According to the 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, approximately 13 percent of all renter-occupied housing units and four (4) percent of all owner-occupied units in the unincorporated County were considered overcrowded or severely overcrowded. For reference, the statewide overcrowding percentage was 8.2 percent.

People with low income are more likely to live in overcrowded homes. Overcrowding increases risk of respiratory infections and activation of tuberculosis.⁵² The presence of major overcrowding within the planning area may be a significant risk factor for poor health outcomes within the community. According to the State of Housing in Sonoma County (2022) report, the Springs neighborhood near the Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West EJ Community (census tract 6097150305) in Sonoma Valley has the highest rate of

overcrowding, with approximately 29 percent of households deemed to be overcrowded.

Nearly 30 percent of homes within the Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West EJ Community are overcrowded. In addition, the EJ Community at the Jenner/Cazadero census tract (census tract 6097154304) in the northwestern region of the County has 16 percent of homes recorded as being overcrowded. The Jenner/Cazadero census tract is where Stewarts Point Rancheria is also located. All EJ Community census tracts and the corresponding overcrowding percentiles are shown in Table 6, below.

The Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report and Appendix B (2022) contain further detail on overcrowding within the County.

⁵² California Department of Housing and Community Development. 2023. Overpayment and Overcrowding. <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding> (accessed March 2023).

Table 6 Overcrowding by Environmental Justice Census Tract

Region and Census Tract	Percentage of Population Effected
Sonoma County	5
Northwestern	
East Cloverdale	9
West Cloverdale	6
Jenner/Cazadero	16
Central West	
Guerneville	5
Forestville/Rio Nido	4
Russian River Valley	2
Monte Rio**	2
Central	
Middle Rincon South*	4
Brush Creek*	4
Kawana Springs	7
Olivet Road	3
Taylor Mountain	12
Wright**	7
Bellevue**	11
West End*	12
Shiloh South	7
Southern	
McKinley	10
Downtown Cotati	10
West Cotati/Penngrrove	7
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	29
Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park	1
Sonoma City South/Vineburg	1

* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa

** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Table (B25014 Tenure by Occupants)

8.3 Substandard Housing

The U.S. Census Bureau identifies substandard housing based on two primary housing problems: (1) Households without hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet and a bathtub or shower; and (2) Households with kitchen facilities that lack a sink with piped water, a range or stove, or a refrigerator. According to the Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report, less than one percent of owner households and just over two percent of renter households lack kitchens or have plumbing deficiencies.⁵³

The Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report and Appendix B (2022) contain further detail on substandard housing within the County.

8.4 Homelessness

Homelessness remains an important challenge in many communities across the state. Rising housing costs result in increased risk of community members experiencing homelessness. The last Point-In-Time Count in Sonoma County, conducted in 2022, was 2,893 people experiencing homelessness. This constitutes a five percent increase in people experiencing homelessness in the County from 2021. Around 5 percent of the community members experiencing homelessness were in the unincorporated County, many of which reside in West County and Sonoma Valley.⁵³

The most common type of households experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County are those without children in their care. Among households experiencing homelessness that do not have children,

71.2 percent are unsheltered.⁵⁴ Of those households experiencing homelessness with children, most are sheltered in emergency shelters.⁵⁴

Of those experiencing homelessness, White (Hispanic and Non-Hispanic) account for 64.7 percent of the homeless population in Sonoma County.⁵⁴ Latino residents represent 28.2 percent of the population experiencing homelessness.⁵⁴ Black and Native American people, who make up approximately 1.5 and 1 percent of the population respectively, represent 6 percent and 9 percent of unhoused individuals in Sonoma County.⁵³ Other special needs populations that are statistically more likely to experience homelessness in Sonoma County include LGBTQ youth, people who have been in the foster care system, and people with disabilities.⁵³

In addition, many individuals experiencing homelessness are also impacted by severe issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Homeless individuals are commonly challenged by chronic substance abuse, with 1,015 homeless residents reporting this condition.⁵⁴ Of those, 80.5 percent are unsheltered.

Homelessness amongst students in Sonoma County has also been a persistent issue. Although Sonoma County has seen a 12.9 percent decrease in the population of students experiencing homelessness since the 2016-17 school year, 44.4 percent of the Sonoma County total student population is still experiencing homelessness.⁵⁴

The Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report and Appendix B (2022) contain further detail on homelessness within the County.

⁵³ Sonoma, County of. 2023. Sonoma County Housing Element Technical Background Report. https://permitsonoma.org/Microsites/Permit%20Sonoma/Documents/Long%20Range%20Plans/Proposed%20Plans/Housing%20Element/March%20HCD%20Revised%20Review%20Draft/SOCO%20HCD%20Revised%20Draft%20Housing%20Element%20TBR%20-%20rev%203.13.23-a_119726.pdf (accessed June 2023).

⁵⁴ Sonoma, County of. 2022. Appendix B: Housing Needs Data Report. <https://permitsonoma.org/Microsites/Permit%20Sonoma/Documents/Long%20Range%20Plans/Proposed%20Plans/Housing%20Element/Sonoma%20County%20HCD%20Review%20Draft%20Housing%20Appendices.pdf> (accessed June 2023).

8.5 Lead Risk from Housing

Lead poisoning can often result from lead exposure at home due to the use of contaminated materials such as lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older buildings. Lead exposure can also occur through contaminated air, water, and soil. Census tracts in California scored on average in the 50th percentile for impacts for lead risk. On average, census tracts within Sonoma County have percentile scores for lead risk from housing that measured at 36.4 percentile relative to all California census tracts. This County metric is relatively low. Children's lead risk from housing across EJ Communities in the County varied, with some census tracts in the southern portion of the County scoring as low as the 7th percentile and others scoring up to the 85th percentile. The EJ Community located at the East Cloverdale census tract in the northwestern portion of the County (census tract 6097154201) scored in the 85th percentile.

8.6 County Initiatives to Support Access to Safe & Sanitary Homes

The County of Sonoma's 2023-2031 Housing Element sets forth the County's housing priorities and goals for the next eight years to provide safe and adequate housing for all residents. The goals and policy focus areas include:

- Sustain Existing Housing Programs and Housing Units
- Promote the Use of Urban Sites
- Increase Production of Affordable Units
- Maintain Funding for Affordable Housing
- Promote and Expand Housing for Special Needs

- Encourage Equitable and Sustainable Housing

The Housing Element's Housing Action Plan includes over 30 programs designed to implement the above goals and related policies to address the existing and projected housing needs of Sonoma County. The Housing Action Plan includes continuance of existing efforts and new initiatives to support safe and equitable housing through programs that affirmatively further fair housing such as the development of a Housing Equity and Action Plan (31), implementing a Proactive Outreach Plan (Program 32), and continuance of a Fair Housing Program (Program 29) among others.

Key Takeaways

- **Overcrowding:** Approximately 13 percent of renter-occupied housing units and 4 percent of owner-occupied units in the unincorporated County are considered overcrowded or severely overcrowded.
- **Cost Burden:** Approximately a fourth of all identified Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in Sonoma County were above the 75th percentile for housing burden relative to all census tracts in the state. Those EJ Communities are located in the Guerneville, West Cotati/Penngrove, Fethers Springs/Agua Caliente West, Monte Rio, and Bellevue census tracts.
- According to the Sonoma County Housing Element (2023) Technical Background Report, less than one percent of owner households and just over two percent of renter households lack kitchens or have plumbing deficiencies.
- Data from the most recent Point-In-Time count indicates that homelessness is on the rise in Sonoma County, with White individuals, including Hispanic and non-Hispanic, account for 64.7 percent of the homeless population, while Latinx residents represent 28.2 percent.

9 Civic Engagement in the Public Decision-Making Process

Equitable planning requires community engagement that creates opportunities for and actively encourages all residents to participate in the local decision-making process. Senate Bill 1000 affirms that public agencies should develop community engagement programs in a manner that strategically involves Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities and other protected classes. By involving and engaging EJ Communities and other historically underrepresented groups in decision-making processes, policymakers can more effectively develop solutions for issues that impact the health and well-being of these communities.

Language needs and a lack of time or resources (e.g. child care, financial resources, transportation) are often barriers to participation for historically marginalized or underrepresented groups. Successful outreach and engagement utilize tactics that reduce accessibility barriers to improve opportunities for meaningful participation.

Broadband access, language, and age are all acute conditions of Sonoma County's diverse population that can limit participation and inclusion in civic engagement in the public decision-making process. Each of these qualities offer new challenges when connecting with a broader audience and require varying forms of communication in order to ensure that all members of a community have equal opportunities for public participation.

9.1 Historically Marginalized Groups

Historically marginalized groups have and continue to be underrepresented in public decision-making processes, in large part due to systemic inequities that create physical, social, and financial

barriers to participation. Governmental and institutional systems often do not account for diverse and intersectional identities and lived experiences across race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, and citizenship status.

EJ Communities experience disproportionate pollution and environmental burdens and socioeconomic stress because of historic underrepresentation in planning and policy decisions. The EJ Communities identified and referenced throughout this report are not exclusive from the historically marginalized groups listed below; EJ Communities may include persons that identify with one or more of the below population groups.

Population groups that have historically been underrepresented in government planning processes or marginalized include the following:

- **All tribal communities.** Across the United States, tribal communities have historically been marginalized and excluded from government processes. According to the 2021 update to the Portrait of Sonoma, Native Americans make up less than 1 percent of the Sonoma County population but are overrepresented among Sonoma County residents who are unhoused. Additionally, among racial and ethnic groups, Native Americans in Sonoma County have substantially higher-than expected 2020 mortality rates.⁵⁵
- **Undocumented immigrants.** Undocumented individuals are historically underrepresented in government and decision-making within the United States often due to lack of trust in local institutions, linguistic isolation, and economic hardship. Six (6) percent of the Sonoma County population is considered to

be an individual residing in the United States without legal documentation.

- **Individuals with a disability.** Individuals with disabilities are often excluded from local government engagement due to lack of accessibility. Twelve (12) percent of the Sonoma County population are individuals with access and functional needs (physical and mental).⁵⁵
- **Single-female heads of households.** Single female heads of households, as defined by the U.S. Census as female householders with children under 18-years-old and no spouse/partner present, often face high levels of work-life conflict and financial hardship, which can make for engaging in traditional forms of decision-making processes more difficult.
- **LGBTQIA2S+ communities.** LGBTQIA2S+ are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness. LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are homeless often experienced family rejection or abuse related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sixteen percent of Sonoma County residents who are unhoused identified as LGBTQIA2S+.⁵⁵
- **Low wage workers,** including workers in agriculture or the service industries. Farmworkers in Sonoma County do not earn enough money to meet their basic needs and are more likely to experience food insecurity than Sonoma County's poorest residents. In 2019, one in ten hospitality and tourism workers in Sonoma County lost their jobs due to Covid-19.⁵⁵
- **People experiencing mental health illness.** Since 2017, Sonoma County has experienced a series of disasters that are contributing to a mental health crisis. People who belong to one or more marginalized groups are more likely to experience mental health challenges.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Sonoma, County of. 2022. A Portrait of Sonoma County: 2021 Update. <https://upstreaminvestments.org/Microsites/Upstream%20Investments/Documents/Archive/Portrait-of-Sonoma-County-2021-Report.ADA.pdf> (accessed March 2023).

- **Latino Residents.** Latino residents of Sonoma County has a lower Human Development Index score than their Asian and White counterparts. In addition, Latino residents has significantly lower educational attainment rates than Sonoma County whites and earn \$15,000 less, on average.⁵⁵
- **Black residents.** Black residents of Sonoma County has a lower Human Development Index score than their Asian and White counterparts. In addition, Sonoma County's Black residents have a lifespan ten years shorter than any other racial and ethnic group in the County and have lower educational attainment rates than the County average.⁵⁵
- **Asian residents.** Asian residents of Sonoma County have a lifespan two years shorter than Californians overall and earn \$14,000 less than their White and Black counterparts, despite having higher levels of educational attainment.⁵⁵

9.2 Broadband Access

Adequate availability of broadband internet allows for populations to access important materials and tools to sustain employment and participate in social and civic life. According to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Broadband mapping, census tracts in the central, central west, and southern portions of the planning area have limited access to fixed and mobile broadband internet. According to the Sonoma County Broadband Action Plan (2021), the County currently lacks a comprehensive, cohesive, and diverse broadband network. Underserved communities are usually located in low density and high-cost rural areas where wireline deployment can be expensive and cost prohibitive due to lower demand.⁵⁶ Fiberoptics is lacking throughout Sonoma County. In

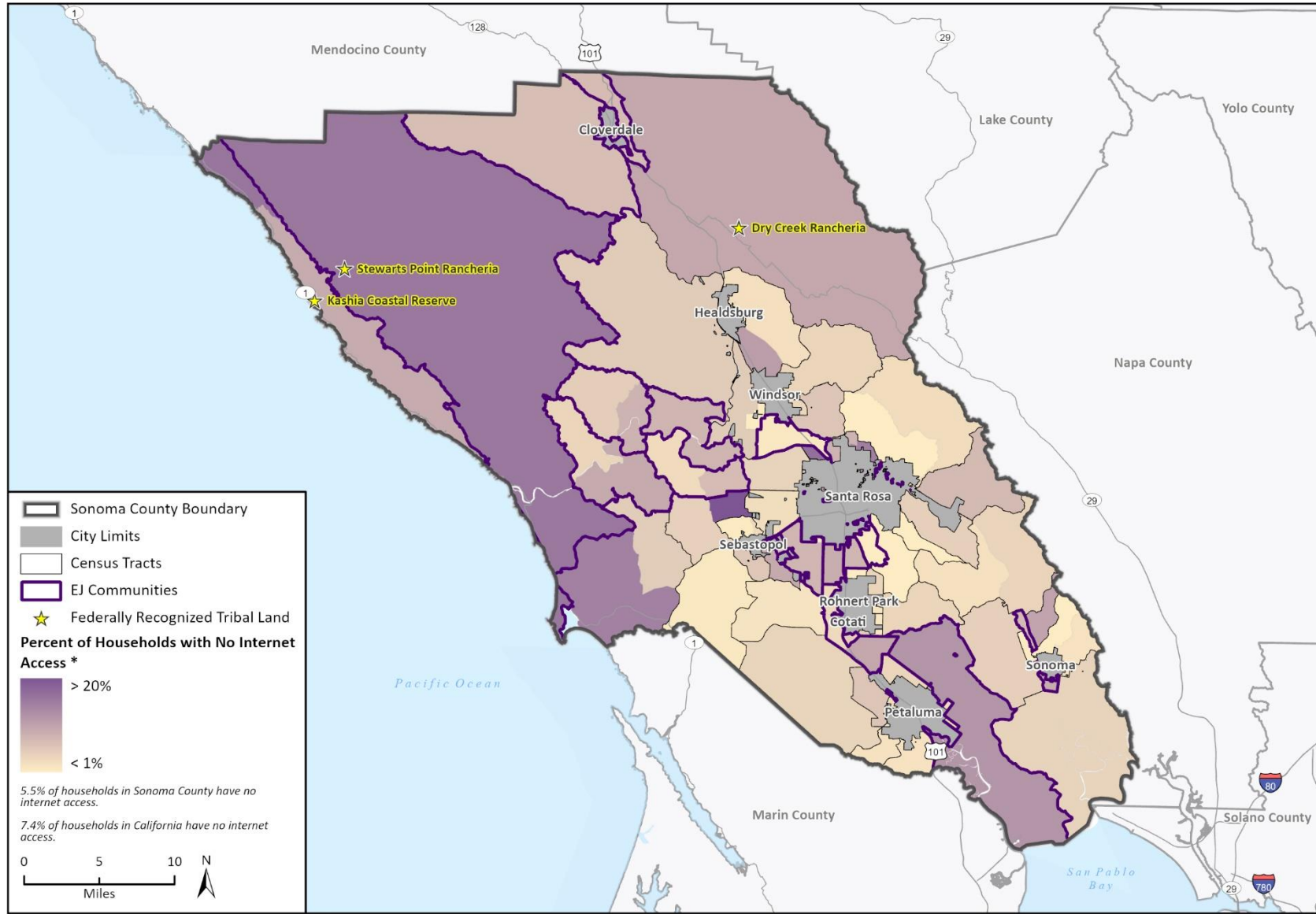
⁵⁶ Sonoma, County of. 2021. Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan. Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan (sonomaedb.org) (accessed March 2023).

addition, existing infrastructure is either failing or outdated in unserved communities.⁵⁶ In areas where infrastructure is not a primary challenge, some communities still experience barriers due to affordability, technology access, and digital literacy.

Because of the infrastructure necessary to support broadband access, rural communities across the United States are less likely to have access to adequate internet. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 22.3 percent of Americans in rural areas do not have

access to sufficient broadband internet. Figure 13 depicts broadband access within the County. Mobile broadband internet is less available in the northwestern and southern portions of the County. Notably, over 20 percent of households in the EJ Community located in the Jenner/Cazadero census tract (census tract 6097154304) in the northwestern portion of the County lack access to internet. This census tract includes Stewarts Point Rancheria.

Figure 13 Broadband Access Across the Planning Area



22-12991 EPS Sonoma Co EJ Tech Report.aprx
Fig 9 Sonoma County Broadband Access

9.3 Population Age Demographics

Understanding the age demographics within a community is essential to the development of an engagement strategy that reaches a broad group of residents. Depending on the distribution of age across a population, different approaches to outreach and community interaction should be explored. Aging populations may be less proficient in using online engagement tools or less able to attend evening civic meetings. Younger populations within a community may be less able to engage through traditional outreach methods (phone calls, newspaper outreach, etc.) and/or midday meetings. To develop an appropriate engagement strategy, public agencies should assess local age demographics to determine what approaches and tools would best meet community needs.

In 2021, the largest age group represented in Sonoma County was the older adult aged population, which encompasses the age group

from 55 to 59 years old. In addition, roughly one in every five people was age 65 or older.⁵⁷ Table 7 shows the age demographics for individual EJ Communities within the planning area. Twelve EJ Communities have greater than 15 percent of their population at or above the age of 65, including all four EJ Communities within the central west region of the planning area. Three of four EJ Communities in the northwestern portion of the County has greater than 15 percent of their population at or above the age of 65. This includes the Jenner/Cazadero census tract EJ Community (census tract 6097154304), containing Stewarts Point Rancheria. EJ Communities with greater than 15 percent of their population at or below the age of 10 were present in all regions of the County except for the central west portion.

⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Table (S0101 Age and Sex)

Table 7 Age Demographics by Environmental Justice Census Tract

Region and Census Tract	Total Population	Age Demographics		
		Children < 10 Years (Percent)	Population 10-64 Years (Percent)	Elderly >64 Years (Percent)
Sonoma County	499,772	11	70	19
Northwestern				
East Cloverdale	3,959	17	70	13
West Cloverdale	6,050	11	65	24
Jenner/Cazadero	1,528	4	42	54
Central West				
Guerneville	4,071	6	68	26
Forestville/Rio Nido	3,936	5	71	25
Russian River Valley	4,440	7	68	25
Monte Rio**	3,506	7	70	24
Central				
Middle Rincon South*	4,352	16	73	11
Brush Creek*	6,510	9	67	25
Kawana Springs	8,050	14	79	7
Olivet Road	8,199	13	69	18
Taylor Mountain	9,853	11	79	9
Wright**	12,385	9	78	13
Bellevue**	8,327	17	75	8
West End*	6,864	16	76	8
Shiloh South	5,342	13	73	14
Southern				
McKinley	5,053	15	73	12
Downtown Cotati	2,987	13	73	15
West Cotati/Penngrove	7,069	13	65	22
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	6,183	16	75	9
Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park	4,676	10	72	18
Sonoma City South/Vineburg	4,561	5	59	36

* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa

** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Table (S0101 Age and Sex)

9.4 Linguistic Isolation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 40 percent of the population in California speak a language other than English at home. Households that are considered linguistically isolated are those households where no person over the age of 14 speaks English proficiently.⁵⁸ For these households, English-only community engagement strategies are not sufficient to meaningfully gather input. Identifying predominant language demographics within a jurisdiction, translating written materials to relevant languages, and including translation services at events and meetings make engagement activities more accessible and result in better service provision and policy development. According to the Sonoma County Community Development Commission Language Action Plan (2019), approximately 11.26 percent of the County is linguistically isolated. According to the 2019 Sonoma County Latino Scorecard prepared by Los Cien, a local non-profit, linguistic isolation was found in approximately 30 percent of the Latinx population in Sonoma County.⁵⁹

The CalEnviroScreen linguistic isolation indicator measures the percentage of households in each census tract in which no one over

the age of 14 speaks English well. The linguistic isolation percentages outlined in Table 8 indicate varied rates of linguistic isolation throughout the County's EJ Communities. Four EJ Communities scored above the 60th percentile, and of those four, only the East Cloverdale EJ Community (census tract 6097154201) in the northwestern portion of the County scored above the 75th percentile.

Across the County, the primary language spoken by persons with limited English proficiency was Spanish.⁶⁰ Numerous census tracts within the planning area also have significant portions of the population who speak "Asian and Pacific Islander Languages" as classified by the U.S. Census. The "Asian and Pacific Islander Languages" census label is a broad label that encompasses twenty-three languages, including Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Khmer. Integrating the local language context into community engagement strategies supports equitable and comprehensive planning processes within Sonoma County.

⁵⁸ Siegel, P., Martin, E. and Bruno R. 2001. Language Use and Linguistic Isolation. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2001/demo/li-final.pdf> (accessed March 2023).

⁵⁹ Lo Cien. 2019. 2019 Sonoma County Latino Scorecard. https://www.los cien.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Latino-Scorecard-2-pager_English-FINAL.pdf (accessed March 2023).

⁶⁰ Sonoma, County of. 2019. Sonoma County Community Development Commission Language Access Plan.

https://sonomaCounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/General/Sonoma/Sample%20Dept/D eapartment%20Information/Plans%2C%20Policies%20and%20Reports/_Documents/2019%20L anguage%20Access%20Plan.pdf (March 2023).

Table 8 Linguistic Isolation by Environmental Justice Census Tract

Region and Census Tract	Linguistic Isolation	
	Percentage of Population Effected	Percentile Score
Sonoma County	N/A	28
Northwestern		
East Cloverdale	14	76
West Cloverdale	3	21
Jenner/Cazadero	1	8
Central West		
Guerneville	2	13
Forestville/Rio Nido	2	12
Russian River Valley	0	0
Monte Rio**	2	12
Central		
Middle Rincon South*	4	32
Brush Creek*	2	15
Kawana Springs	6	45
Olivet Road	3	20
Taylor Mountain	14	74
Wright**	10	60
Bellevue**	9	56
West End*	9	56
Shiloh South	1	2
Southern		
McKinley	N/A	N/A
Downtown Cotati	6	45
West Cotati/Penngrrove	1	8
Fetters Springs/Agua Caliente West**	13	72
Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park	3	25
Sonoma City South/Vineburg	0	1

* Unincorporated island in City of Santa Rosa

** Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Equity Priority Community

Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0

9.5 County Initiatives to Support Civic Engagement

Office of Equity and Community Engagement, Language Access

Plans. The purpose of the Sonoma County Five-Year Strategic Plan's Racial Equity Pillar is to provide the County with a framework to institutionalize equity and address disparate impacts on people of color, both internally throughout the County organization and in the broader community.⁶¹ The pillar offers 12 specific objectives across four primary goals to guide the County's equity work during the five-year performance period. In alignment with the goals of this pillar, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors created the Office of Equity (OoE) in August 2020, and in December 2022 the Board adopted the following mission for the Office of Equity:

"To work in authentic and collaborative partnerships within County government; with Black, Indigenous, and communities of color; and with community members who are disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities to:

- Recognize and disrupt systemic harm,
- Redesign structures and direct resources towards healing, liberation, and belonging,
- Build transparency and accountability in County institutions, policies, and culture."

As part of the OoE's goal to expand their efforts in addressing racial equity in the County, the office assembled the Sonoma County Equity Core Team in 2021. The Core Team is made up of 76 members representing 25 County departments. The Core Team

focuses on expanding the OoE's capacity to work in alignment with the Racial Equity and Social Justice Pillar of the Five-Year Strategic Plan.⁶² Since development of the Core Team, the OoE has established several milestone programs including the Racial Equity Learning Program and the Race Affinity Groups, and has incorporated additional foundational trainings to assist the OoE in understanding the impact and critical need for facilitated affinity spaces.

In September 2022, the Board of Supervisors approved consultant agreements to develop a language access plan, a community engagement plan, and policy recommendations for all County departments. Both plans are essential to ensuring the County effectively reaches and responds to the needs of communities that have been historically marginalized and underserved by government processes. Recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 public health emergency severely and disproportionately impacted minority communities and other marginalized communities. These crises have highlighted the need and responsibility for language access and community engagement policies and procedures to effectively communicate, reach, and engage all residents, especially in times of emergency.

Access Sonoma Broadband Access Plan. On June 8, 2021, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan. The purpose of the plan is to explore the creation of a publicly governed broadband entity. This entity could deploy, own, and manage broadband infrastructure within Sonoma County, reducing the cost barriers for broadband providers, and closing the regional digital divide.

⁶¹ Sonoma, County of. 2023. Racial Equity and Social Justice. <https://socostrategicplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Racial-Equity-and-Social-Justice-status-updates-1-26-23.pdf> (accessed March 2023).

⁶² Sonoma, County of. 2023. Racial Equity and Social Justice. <https://socostrategicplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Racial-Equity-and-Social-Justice-status-updates-1-26-23.pdf> (accessed June 2023).

Key Takeaways

- Residents with disabilities, LBTQIA+ individuals, and communities of color have greater difficulty participating in the public decision-making process due to a lack of physical and technological accessibility, higher rates of homelessness, and lower educational attainment on average.
- **Broadband Access:** Sonoma County lacks a comprehensive, cohesive, and diverse broadband network, particularly in central, central west, and southern portions of the County. Underserved communities, mainly in rural areas, face limited access to fixed and mobile broadband internet due to high costs and inadequate infrastructure.
- **Age Demographics:** The older adult aged population (55 to 59 years old) represents the largest age group in Sonoma County in 2021. Roughly one in every five people is aged 65 or older.
- **Linguistic Isolation:** Approximately 11.26% of Sonoma County residences are considered linguistically isolated Spanish is the primary language spoken by persons with limited English proficiency, and significant portions of the population speak various "Asian and Pacific Islander Languages."

Appendix B

Engagement Activity Summaries

Equity Working Committee

Agendas and Meeting Summaries

EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting #1 – December 13, 2022

Objectives & Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- Introduce County project team and EWC members
- Set expectations for the group's role
- Provide an overview of the EJ Element project including scope of work and timeline
- Introduce and discuss the concept of environmental justice and what it means in the County
- Discuss and select a preliminary methodology for mapping EJ communities in the County
- Introduce the concept of climate change vulnerability, and discuss populations in the County that may be vulnerable to climate change impacts

Agenda

TIME	SECTION TOPICS
6:00 – 6:05 pm	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom reminders • Welcome and introduction of County project team
6:05 – 6:25 pm	Overview of Equity Working Committee (EWC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the group • Expectations • Introductions of EWC members and what EJ means to them
6:25 – 6:30 pm	Overview of EJ & Safety Elements and Meeting #1 Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project overview and schedule • Meeting agenda and objectives
6:30 – 7:00 pm	Environmental Justice — Mapping of EJ Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of EJ mapping • State mapping methodology • Options to refine methodology • Group discussion on methodology
7:00 – 7:20 pm	Safety Element — Climate Change Vulnerability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals of Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) • Sensitive populations • Social sensitivity index • Group discussion on sensitive populations
7:20 – 7:30 pm	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting • General Q&A

Welcome Packet

1. Meeting #1 Agenda
2. Environmental Justice Fact Sheet (attached)
3. EWC and EJ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) (attached)

EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting #2 – January 24, 2023

Objectives & Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- Reflect on the discussion from EWC Meeting #1 and how feedback has been incorporated
- Build consensus on the updated EJ Community/DAC Map
- Discuss the strengths, challenges, and priorities of EJ Communities in Sonoma County
- Review next steps for the EWC

Agenda

TIME	SECTION TOPICS
6:00 – 6:05 pm	Welcome Back and Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom reminders • Expectations of EWC • Stipends and translation
6:05 – 6:20 pm	Meeting #2 Objectives and Reflection on EWC Meeting #1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today's agenda and materials • What we heard • Updates to the Safety Element social sensitivity index • Updates to EJ Communities mapping
6:20 – 6:40 pm	Environmental Justice — Mapping of EJ Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresher on EJ Communities mapping process • Review of updated EJ Communities map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comparison to other indices of health and vulnerability • Large-group discussion on support of EJ Communities map
6:40 – 7:20 pm	Environmental Justice — Strengths and Challenges in EJ Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to EJ Technical Background Report • Breakout room discussions by geographic area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ North and west county (Russian River, coast, and Cloverdale) ○ Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park ○ South county (Sonoma and Petaluma)
7:20 – 7:30 pm	Next Steps and Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future meetings • General Q&A

Meeting Materials

Attached are the following materials for reference prior to the second meeting:

- A. PowerPoint Presentation
- B. Updated EJ Community Maps
 - o Countywide map with & without inset maps
 - o Inset maps of Russian River/Coast, Santa Rosa/Rohnert Park, and Petaluma/Sonoma
- C. Updated Social Sensitivity Index Map
- D. Portrait of Sonoma County map of census tracts
 - o We will compare this index to the County's EJ Communities Map.
- E. CDC Social Vulnerability Index map of Sonoma County census tracts
 - o We will compare this index to the County's EJ Communities Map.
 - o Note: This map was obtained through the California Healthy Places Index mapping program and the map depicts each census tract as ranked in comparison to other Sonoma County census tracts.
 - o To learn more about the CDC Social Vulnerability Index and explore the data used, visit:
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>
- F. California Healthy Places Index map of Sonoma County census tracts (for comparison to the County's EJ Community Map)
 - o We will compare this index to the County's EJ Communities Map.
 - o Note: This map was obtained through the California Healthy Places Index mapping program and the map depicts each census tract as ranked in comparison to other Sonoma County census tracts.
 - o To learn more about the CA Healthy Places Index and explore the data used, visit:
<https://www.healthyplacesindex.org/>

Meeting #1 Follow-Up

Response to Comments

Below is a list of common feedback we received during meeting #1 and in the feedback survey we sent to the EWC after the meeting.

- **Materials should be provided several days in advance.**
 - o County response: The County will make every effort to provide materials no later than the Friday before Tuesday evening EWC meetings.
- **The maps needed more geographic context to easier locate neighborhoods and communities within the County.**
 - o County response: Additional context has been added to the updated EJ Community maps for better understanding, including community and City labels, certain roadway labels, and local green space and waterbody landmarks.
- **The EJ Community maps may not "tell the whole story."**
 - o County response: While the mapping process is a legal requirement by the State with the goal of identifying low-income areas that are *disproportionately* burdened by pollution and other health issues. The mapping process is not meant to minimize the complexities of environmental justice issues or reduce community experience into yes/no determinations of impact. Mapping is an important first step before we can talk about solution-oriented policies



and programs to advance health in designated EJ Communities in addition to broader Sonoma County.

- **Communities at the margins, or “pockets” of disadvantage in larger census tracts may be left out.**
 - County response: The project team explored the suggestion from EWC members to perform our EJ Community screening analysis using census block groups instead of census tracts. Data is very limited at the census block group level, particularly in the State-required analysis categories such as pollution. A Countywide analysis at the block group level would be an expensive and time-consuming process. With limited financial and data resources available, the project team has determined the most appropriate path is to proceed with census tract level analysis. Using relevant data combined with the EWC’s input, EJ Community mapping should include all areas of disproportionate disadvantage. Policy can also be a helpful tool to ensure that disadvantaged communities along the fringe of mapped EJ Communities are not neglected. When the project reaches the policy development step, the project team looks forward to exploring policy concepts with the EWC to address health concerns in areas adjacent to and within EJ Communities, as well as within Sonoma County more broadly.
- **Smaller breakout rooms would be helpful.**
 - County Response: The project team will plan for smaller breakout rooms to help ensure every member’s input is fairly heard.
- **Some EWC members took more than their fair share of discussion time in breakout rooms.**
 - County Response: The project team will seek to improve facilitation so that everyone’s voices are represented. We will also explore other ways to facilitate more meaningful and fair discussions, including smaller breakout rooms and technological collaboration tools.

EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

MEETING 2 - BREAKOUT SESSION

EJ COMMUNITIES IN WEST COUNTY, THE RUSSIAN RIVER AND THE COAST

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West County Health Centers • Russian River Senior Center • Great open space engagement • Non-profit support for climate resilience • A “coalition of do-gooders” within the community • River to Coast Children’s Services supports the Latino community • St. Elizabeth’s Church is a connector • Graton Day Labor Center • Social service/community-focused non-profits • Local food production – Sonoma COAD has a food group • Farmers markets in Timber Cove • Points of connection for mutual support • Culture, and resident gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flooding impacts (e.g. disruption of food services during flood events) • Wildfire • Wood smoke pollution • Transportation • Communication vulnerability • Lack of high school, forcing local youth to travel outside of the area to Analy High School • The West County and Russian River distinction • Lack of broadband internet • Tourist traffic during the summer • Latino stores are in Santa Rosa and transportation is difficult • Low-income individuals often rent garages that flood • High housing costs, driven by tourism • Homelessness • Unpermitted construction because the County permitting office is far away • Lack of housing options that are nonstandard (e.g. multiple families) • Flooding of unpermitted housing displaces renters because they can’t hold landlords accountable • Mold remediation is needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication between the supportive organizations • People are scared of enforcement agencies • The community doesn’t trust the County



EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

MEETING 2 - BREAKOUT SESSION

EJ COMMUNITIES IN SANTA ROSA & ROHNERT PARK

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catholic charities• The Moorland Neighborhood Action Team's coordination with different government agencies and non-governmental organizations such as the Food Bank and Safe Routes to School• Sonoma County Indian Health is moving into the old K-Mart location• Mobile crisis units have launched• Community resilience – the creation of community threads• Faith-based support, including fostering/caring for children• Ongoing outreach with youth groups<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ "If you treat youth like leaders they will become leaders."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education disparity between different areas of the City• Lacking access to areas to grow food• Housing quality and affordability• The permitting process is too expensive to expand housing• Taylor Mountain is the only option for recreation• Poor sidewalk accessibility along Santa Rosa Avenue• People visit the area to shop then leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investment in south Santa Rosa area:• Sidewalks, trails, amenities, and parks• Better access to transportation• Opportunities for young adults participate in the public decision making process• Improvements for walkability• Public art and murals

EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

MEETING 2 - BREAKOUT SESSION

EJ COMMUNITIES IN SONOMA AND PETALUMA AREA

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working class • Families and cultural belonging • Nearby to parks and open spaces • Lots of non-profits, particularly Food For All / Comida Para Todos, Sonoma Overnight Support (SOS), Homeless Action Sonoma, • New grassroots non-profit VIDA • Sonoma City Council's "valley-level view" and openness to work with the County on shared services • Neighbor to neighbor response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standing groundwater • Unsheltered community • Some organized shelters have unsanitary conditions • Language access still lacks • Undocumented communities not part of the conversation • Information from the government is often skewed and doesn't represent the whole picture • Low wages and high-cost burdens • Insecure housing – threat of displacement • Traveling to parks and open spaces can be difficult for some groups (e.g. people with disabilities, those without a car) • Creeks/streams cause drainage issues • Transportation to/from rural areas – access to medical services and during emergency evacuation • Internet access is poor in rural areas • Power outages • Lost a major taxi provider in the area and Uber isn't effective since there is not enough drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A library in the Springs area • Better access to healthier and culturally appropriate food • More opportunities to hear community stories, particularly from underrepresented communities (e.g. people with disabilities, Latinos) • Safe and sanitary homes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sonoma Valley feels like an island that isn't actively engaged by the County and is often represented by groups that aren't connected with people most affected• Cell phone reception is poor and should be priority for safety reasons• Overcrowding is a known issue in Sonoma Valley• Not enough partnerships and coordination among non-profits/community-based organizations for more effective service• Lack of culturally competent community-based organizations• Low-educational attainment• Public transportation and paratransit are difficult during flooding	
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EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting #3 – April 11, 2023, at 6 pm

Objectives & Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- Report out on EJ Technical Report, Survey Launch and Los Cien Event
- Build consensus on which communities should be engagement priorities
- Solicit and understand best practices for public participation that the project team can use as it sets up engagement in the future.
- Review next steps for the EWC

Agenda

TIME	SECTION TOPICS
6:00 – 6:05 pm	Welcome Back and Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoom reminders• Expectations of EWC
6:05 – 6:10 pm	Report Out <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey Launch• Los Cien Event
6:10 – 6:15 pm	Policy making framework <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report out on EJ Technical Report• How should EWC lead the policymaking in conjunction with staff?
6:20 – 6:40 pm	Communities of focus for engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding our mandates from the State for public participation• How should we apply an equity lens to our public participation
6:40 – 7:00 pm	Learning from the EWC: Best Practices for Engaging on the EJ/Safety Element <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best activities• Best communication tools• Best places to go assignment
After 7:00 pm	Parking lot questions (optional)



EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting 3 Summary Highlights

Pop-Ups

- Make our set-up attractive
- Have something to keep kids entertained – popsicles, toys, etc.
- Locations/Events/Partners
 - May 9th Preparedness Fair in Sonoma Valley
 - Booker Hall – partner with La Luz
 - Foodbank Days, partner with Food for ALL
 - Farmer's markets (Wednesday night markets in Santa Rosa)
 - Juneteenth event in South Park
 - [Promotores](#) in Cloverdale

Focus Groups

- Use for hard-to-reach groups (e.g. farmworkers, individuals with reduced literacy)
- Partner with trusted organizations
- Make it a hybrid format if possible to maximize participation
- Have an incentive (e.g. stipends, gift cards, food)
- A focus group is best option to connect with people with disabilities
- Connect with community health workers from the Department of Health Services

General Outreach/Promotion Comments

- Utilize local radio stations – do an interview and advertise pop-up event
- Offer to hold presentations on the project to community organizations (COAD and Graton Day Labor Center offered to host us)
- Many community organizations doing work in similar spheres already have data/information on the same questions – don't hesitate to reach out and see if they have background they can share as a better jumping off point than starting from scratch
 - Hold a listening sessions with these organizations (NBOP, LatinX student congress)
- Community health workers would be a great source of information
- Asset mapping is a great exercise

Surveys

- Less of a priority than focus groups or pop-ups
- Have a "how did you hear about this survey" question at the end
- Survey literacy is a barrier for some who can't read or write
- Need a better elevator pitch explaining why taking this survey may benefit them
- Utilize community organizations and EWC members' networks to send out survey links
- Burbank housing survey distribution

EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting #4 – August 1, 2023, at 6 pm

Objectives & Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- Refresher and update on work completed to date
- Provide an overview of the policymaking process
- Review 9 policy issue areas for the Safety and EJ Elements, and discuss desired outcomes and strategies to achieve those outcomes
- Review next steps for the EWC

Agenda

TIME	SECTION TOPICS
6:00 – 6:05 pm	Welcome Back and Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom reminders • Expectations of EWC
6:05 – 6:15 pm	Report Out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin. Draft Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment • Admin. Draft Environmental Justice Technical Background Report
6:15 – 6:30 pm	Policy making Frameworks and Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWC Role • Tonight: Discuss 1) Policy issues and opportunities, 2) desired outcomes, and 3) strategies to address policy issues • Next meeting: Review refined policy concepts and discuss resources to support policy implementation
6:30 – 6:55 pm 6:55 – 7:20 pm 7:20 – 7:50 pm	Breakout Discussions on Policy Topics (3 rounds) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the desired outcomes (e.g. specific objectives) for this policy issue? • What strategies would be most effective to address this policy issue and achieve the desired outcomes? • What programs or policies have you seen work well for under-resourced communities? • Report Out
7:50 – 8:00 pm	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWC Meeting 5 • Pop Ups
8:00 – 8:10 pm	Questions (optional)

Meeting Resources

- *Administrative Draft Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment*
- *Administrative Draft Environmental Justice Technical Background Report*
- *Safety Element Policy Framework*
- *EJ Element Policy Framework*

Pre-Meeting Preparation

1. Review the Executive Summary and Section 6 of the draft *Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment*.

Review the Introduction and the key takeaways in Sections 5-10 in the draft *EJ Technical Background Report*. Tables 1 and 2 in the *EJ Report* provide an overview of EJ Communities in the County.

These reports helped the County project team identify policy issue areas for the Safety Element update and new EJ Element.

2. Review both the *Safety and EJ Policy Frameworks*. These documents provide an overview of each of the policy issues we will be discussing at EWC Meeting 4, and offer examples of desired outcomes and strategies to help us start brainstorming potential policies during the breakout discussions.

The frameworks are provided in Microsoft Word format so that EWC members may use them as worksheets (if desired). Filling out the frameworks is not necessary to participate in the meeting, but we ask that, at minimum, EWC members review them beforehand to get familiar with what we'll be discussing.

Sonoma County

Safety Element Update & Environmental Justice Policies

Safety Element Policy Framework (Equity Working Committee Draft Version 1)

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, Drought

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection

All communities in Sonoma County are significantly exposed to poor air quality from wildfire smoke, including socially sensitive populations and Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities, which will experience disproportionate impacts because of the systemic inequities that they face. Changes in annual average maximum temperature by the end of the century will increase across the entire County with more frequent incidences of extreme heat. Impacts from extreme heat events are expected to compound poor health outcomes already being experienced by sensitive populations and EJ communities, particularly for those located near Feters Hot Springs-Agua Caliente, southwest of Santa Rosa, Forestville, Cloverdale, and south of Windsor. Impacts include heat-related illness, such as heat stress, heat stroke, and dehydration, which can be life threatening. During poor air quality and extreme heat events, cooling centers, hospitals, and emergency personnel are in high demand and these critical resources may be affected by power reliability, staffing, and inequitable community access to emergency facilities.

Desired Outcome

Example - Reduce the number of community members and workers exposed to poor air quality and extreme heat conditions. (Supported by EWC)

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Community awareness of the impacts of extreme heat
- Resources to support renters – most incentives are for owners, not renters
- Adequate resources and support to be safe during extreme heat/cold events

Strategies

Example – Retrofit Homes

- Create a County-wide program that provides owners and renters with the ability to improve their living conditions to create a healthier space. Partner with community-based organizations to deploy program in areas of highest need, including high social sensitivity and environmental justice communities. (Supported by EWC)

Example - Adapt Critical Facilities

- Prioritize weatherization improvements in critical facilities through the capital improvement planning process.



EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Programs to promote worker safety in extreme heat
- Financial assistance with utility costs during extreme heat/cold events
- Criteria for when to provide cooling and warming centers
- Resource provision at cooling/warming/evacuation centers such as battery/electricity for C-PAP machines, insulin refrigeration in case the power gets shut off, and N95s, etc
- Free public transit during extreme heat/cold events for easier transportation (e.g. to the Russian River, to warming/cooling centers)
- More public green space, shade for relief from heat
- Playgrounds should have shade trees (particularly those within or near high density residential developments) and should be designed with heat in mind to prevent burning

Issue 2: Water Reliability and Consumption

Water supply infrastructure, such as pipelines and pump stations, can be damaged by climate hazards, impacting water reliability throughout the County which has direct implications on wildfire mitigation, community members, agricultural production, and critical services. Extended drought conditions that impact availability of water supply can increase the cost of water and affect water quality, resulting in disproportionate impacts to socially sensitive populations and EJ communities. Water levels in groundwater basins throughout the County have declined in recent years due to lower-than-average rainfall and in some cases overdraft. This can result in reduced water availability, problems with existing wells, higher concentrations of water pollutants, and in some cases, intrusion of seawater into the aquifer, mainly along the southernmost parts of the County. Groundwater users that are not within a basin subject to the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) may have fewer options to address diminished groundwater resources.

Desired Outcome

Example – Maintain safe and reliable water sources for all community members, emergency services, and agricultural operations. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Transparency, clarity, and awareness about water supply
 - Concerns: there is misinformation about water supply
- Equal access to information about water supply
 - Concerns: the Press Democrat and Sonoma Water post information about water supply and water levels, but not everyone has access to the newspaper or the internet. The Sonoma Water website is also difficult to navigate.
- Transparency of water usage from different industries and water rights
- Affordable water rates
- Adequate noticing about changes to local water regulations that affect well owners
- Fair pricing of water that does not penalize larger families
- Provide free water conservation buckets to households (Santa Rosa does this)



Strategies

Example - Provide Safe and Reliable Water to the Community

- Provide resources to community members to incentivize water conservation and efficiency techniques. Expand educational outreach to include drought tolerant landscaping, low-flow appliances, and leakage repairs. **(Supported by EWC)**

Example - Secure locally Sourced Water for Emergency Services

- Identify areas with inadequate fire flow under extreme conditions to target improvements for supplementary water supplies.
- Provide County-wide water efficiency upgrades to divert and guarantee water for emergency services.

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Utilize school districts and local churches (particularly Spanish masses) for messaging about water supply and drought conditions
- Engaged County staff should attend community events to share information about water
 - Concerns: Staff that conduct outreach need to be adequately prepared and ready to engage with all populations
- Expand messaging about incentives for water conservation and efficiency (example: Sonoma Water's quarterly newsletter)
- Send early messaging about drought conditions before we've reached emergent conditions; do not utilize fear tactics

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Alerts and Evacuation

Emergency communications and timely evacuations are an essential part of emergency operation planning and community safety. Barriers to evacuation can stem from deficiencies in the electrical grid, transportation system, telecommunication systems, emergency facilities and services, evacuation locations, as well as inequitable access and distribution of resources. Inability to evacuate in a timely fashion during a hazardous event can create direct impacts to health and safety and exacerbate chronic health problems with socially sensitive populations and EJ communities at highest risk. Most Safety Element Survey respondents reported having taken steps to prepare for wildfires; however, over 40% reported financial constraints as one of the largest barriers to adequate preparation. Historically there have been several climate hazard events that prompted evacuations including but not limited to recent fires of Walbridge, Glass, and Kincade. Wildfire evacuations have typically affected northeast and eastern portions of the County.

Desired Outcome

Example - Increase the ability of the community to evacuate safely and timely from hazard zones using reliable infrastructure and systems. **(Supported by EWC)**

Example - Broaden the reach of emergency alerts to include all community members, particularly for those that face systemic inequities. **(Supported by EWC)**



EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Emergency preparedness not reactivity
- Cell coverage is spotty; need other source of information distribution
- Early and more communications about potential emergency events and the potential need to respond

Strategies

Example - Prepare the Community for Evacuation

- Facilitate neighborhood evacuation capacity assessments and evacuation preparedness drills in collaboration with community-based organizations.
- Address language and ADA-related barriers for accessing emergency preparedness resources and distribute resources in areas with high social sensitivity and EJ communities through partnerships with community-based organizations. **(Supported by EWC)**
 - Targeted outreach to those areas
 - County transportation plan for those specific groups or community/neighborhood level support
 - AFN committee – county transportation assessment

Example - Retrofit Critical Services to Better Evacuate the Community

- Create redundant and frequently tested back-up power systems and communication systems not reliant on electricity to alert and mobilize community members during evacuations. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Develop specific standards for alerts about controlled burns
- Nixle alerts need to be more widely distributed (people live and work in different areas)
- Neighborhood evacuation drills
- Promote emergency support resources, particularly who to call for help in different scenarios (911)

All Hazards/General Public Safety

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Equitable Community Safety

As climate change impacts occur, virtually all populations in a community will be affected; however, some individuals will be disproportionately impacted by climate hazards due to inequitable systems and structures. Areas of Sonoma County with the greatest concentration of socially sensitive populations are in the Cloverdale area, directly southwest of Santa Rosa, and around Fethers Hot Springs-Agua Caliente. Inequitable access to, and distribution of resources, critical services, and resilient infrastructure systems decreases the ability for sensitive populations to prepare for, cope and recover from climate impacts. Safety Element Survey respondents identified the following barriers to adequately preparing for climate



change: financial constraints, fear of rent increases if requesting home upgrades, physical limitations or disabilities or illness, social isolation, and language barriers.

Desired Outcome

Example – Resources, funds, infrastructure investments, and services will be equitably allocated based on greatest sensitivity and need. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Easy, accessible information about transportation resources available for evacuation
- Clear understanding of where there are evacuation transportation needs within the County and plan to respond to those needs during emergency events
- Increased access to health care during and post-emergency events
- Culturally responsive emergency planning and response (DHS during covid did a good job)
- Prioritize not just equity, but diversity and inclusion in all emergency planning and response
- Safe and accessible (for people with disabilities) pedestrian and bicycle network

Strategies

Example - Provide Resources for Hazard Prevention

- Create a program to provide low- or no-cost assistance for wildfire mitigation actions such as vegetation clearing for low-income, elderly, and differently abled community members.

Example - Increase Access to Healthcare Services

- Partner with the fire protection districts to provide affordable basic health care services during climate hazards events such as extreme heat events by setting up fire house clinics. **(Supported by EWC)**

Example - Create Centers of Community Resilience

- Partner with community-based organizations to establish weatherized resilience hubs with backup power to provide shelter and refuge from wildfires and extreme heat and offer resources and services related to emergency preparation, healthcare, and job opportunities. **(Supported by EWC)**

Example - Prioritize Equity in the Capital Improvement Process

- Prioritize investments in resilient infrastructure based on risk and the needs of socially sensitive populations and EJ communities.

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Neighborhood evacuation drills
- Build neighborhood/community-level capacity by training community leaders on disaster preparedness so they can provide resources and support within the neighborhood as trusted members of the community
- Promote emergency preparedness resources



- Staff involved with emergency planning should be more diverse and speak different languages
- Better support and involvement of Sonoma COAD and similar organizations in emergency planning processes and during response, particularly for communications
- Warming centers

Sonoma County

Safety Element Update & Environmental Justice Policies

Environmental Justice Policy Framework (Equity Working Committee Draft Version 1)

Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Pollution Exposure

Pollution exposure stems from various factors in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, including exposure to solid waste sites, pesticides associated with agricultural uses, and lead from paint used on older housing. Although several EJ communities have practically no impacts (2.5th percentile or lower) from solid waste sites, 13 EJ Communities scored above the 75th percentile for impacts, indicating a high exposure to pollution sources. The areas most impacted by solid waste sites are in the central and southern portions of the county. The Taylor Mountain EJ Community has significant levels of Diesel Particulate Matter relative to other census tracts in California. Additionally, EJ Communities in the Russian River Valley, Shiloh South, and Sonoma City South/Vineburg have moderately elevated levels of pesticides compared to other census tracts in California. Pesticide use was identified as a concern during EJ stakeholder group interviews, along with wildfire smoke. Lead exposure from housing also varies across EJ Communities, with some census tracts in the southern portion of the County scoring low and the East Cloverdale EJ Community scoring notably high.

Desired Outcome

Example - Reduce pollution exposure and protect people from its effects. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Protect farmworkers from pollution (air quality from wildfires, pesticide exposure, impaired water)
- Address noise pollution

Strategies

Example - Use Land Use Controls to Safely Locate Uses

- Use land use strategies to ensure sources of pollution are located away from EJ communities. **(Supported by EWC)**
- Require buffer zones around residential uses in EJ communities for locating uses that have the potential to harm the environment or residents.
- Implement measures on new development to avoid significant health risks related to pollution.

Example - Promote Safe Pesticide Use Practices

- Partner with local agricultural community members to reduce pesticide pollution through connecting them to grant opportunities and resources to implement best practices.
- Work with agricultural providers near EJ communities to implement organic growing practices by offering incentives and promotional programs.



EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Policies to prevent fumes from pesticides from entering households
- Policies to protect groundwater from fertilizer, pesticides/herbicides
- Disaster pay for farmworkers in hazardous conditions
- Free lead tests to households (San Francisco does this)
- Partner with the Russian River Alliance, Sonoma County Health Action

Issue 2: Clean Water and Environmental Stewardship

EJ Communities in Sonoma County have relatively moderate impacts from impaired water bodies, with two-thirds of EJ Communities scoring between the 50th and 72nd percentile, indicating these communities are near local bodies of water that are contaminated with pollutants, although drinking water contamination is not considered impacted. Nine EJ Communities have elevated levels of threats to groundwater from leaking underground storage tanks, and only four EJ Communities scored below the 60th percentile for groundwater threats from this issue. The Petaluma Airport/Arroyo Park census tract has the highest score.

Desired Outcome

Example - Achieve safe ground water and surface water standards in EJ Communities.

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Safe drinking water for everyone
- Accountability for pollution of groundwater
- Prevent pollution run off during storms

Strategies

Example - Promote Environmental Stewardship in Sonoma County

- Partner with local organizations and schools to hold regular cleanup events at and around local creeks and waterways. **(Supported by EWC)**
- Develop a multi-lingual outreach campaign that educates and trains residents and businesses on preserving and maintaining healthy watersheds.

Example - Minimize Waterway Pollution and Runoff

- Identify ways to minimize agricultural pollution spray and runoff, including organic farming methods, bioswale and groundcover vegetation plans, and field location and orientation. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Incentivize well water testing in EJ Communities
- Create a pesticides/herbicides testing program for groundwater and well water
- Ensure robust enforcement to make sure spills are cleaned up and not hidden
- Grant program to filter water and improve quality in homes



- Policies that prevent contamination rather than mitigate
- Incentive programs to remove or better manage underground storage tanks
- Utilize CBOs for community water contamination outreach
- Partner with native communities, and community organizations like the Russian Riverkeeper and the Russian River Alliance on programs

Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Parks and Open Space Access

Developed and/or publicly accessible open space and park areas are limited in some areas throughout the county. The EJ Communities located at the West Cotati/Penngrove, Taylor Mountain, Downtown Cotati, and Feters Spring/Agua Caliente West census tracts are all considered deficient. Although much of the areas surrounding these communities are open space and agricultural in nature, privately owned land restricts access to these areas and a lack of developed open space areas may create parking, trail access, and safety challenges as well as prevent access to people with disabilities, children, or to those who are elderly. Participants in the EJ stakeholder group interviews also expressed a concern with the inequitable distribution of parks. Barriers to accessing parks and open space flagged during the interviews included lack of transportation options, poor outdoor air quality, and limited time available due to multiple responsibilities.

Desired Outcome

Example - Increase access to parks and open space in Sonoma County EJ Communities in order to meet the established criteria of one acre of accessible parkland or open space per 1000 residents.

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Make parks financially accessible for lower-income communities
- Provide/improve transportation options to/from parks for all, especially people with disabilities

Strategies

Example - Improve Ease and Comfortability of Access

- Evaluate existing Complete Streets system gaps within EJ Communities and prioritize resources to provide necessary improvements. **(Supported by EWC)**

Example - Encourage Use of Existing Facilities

- Encourage the use of park spaces for community events and activities, hosted by local businesses and organizations.

Example - Increase Greenspace Availability and Maintenance

- Identify underutilized rights-of-way within EJ Communities to be converted into parklets or other recreational facilities.
- Identify private and public landowners in or accessible to EJ Communities conducive to joint use agreements.



EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Free Sonoma County Parks Pass for food-insecure, low-income households
- Make parks more physically accessible through improved transportation options to/from, and inclusion of features for people with disabilities
- Ensure park/trail maintenance and planning considers improvements for people with disabilities
- Conduct park planning outreach and engagement at local food pantries, churches, etc.
- More green space and trees should be required for higher density residential housing and in industrial areas
- Maintain existing parks
- Improve active transportation connections to parks

Community Health

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: Physical Health

Exposure to environmental health hazards has a direct impact on physical health, including increased rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and low birth weight. For example, areas with poor air quality due to the presence of Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM), toxic releases, pesticides, or wildfire smoke may increase the risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma. Similarly, areas with poor environmental quality limit residents' ability to participate in safe and healthy outdoor activities, increasing their risk from other health impacts. Both the Wright and Bellevue EJ Communities, located in the central portion of the county, score above the 75th percentile for asthma, as well as score the highest for cardiovascular disease.

Desired Outcome

Example - Improve the public health outcomes related to environmental health hazards for residents of EJ Communities. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Consistent health-related resources across jurisdictions to support more fair health outcomes
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Improve inequitable health outcomes

Strategies

Example - Raise Awareness About Risk and Risk Reduction

- Create a County-wide program to raise awareness about local asthma risks and at-home mitigation strategies to reduce asthma risks.
- Create a County-led home safety education program providing residents with information on risk of lead from housing, retrofits for maintaining healthier households, and programs to support other at-home mitigation practices.
- Partner with schools to develop an in-school early detection asthma screening program.



Example - Improve Environmental Conditions

- Broaden availability and accessibility of County-sponsored public recreation programs to provide opportunities for physical activity for all members of the community.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and herbicides on County-owned parks and publicly accessible open spaces.
- Identify and work with organizations to assist residents and landlords in securing funding for private building rehabilitation, including removal of lead paint, interior air quality improvements, and gas appliance replacement.

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Update the EJ Element based on changes in community conditions
- Communicate and align Sonoma County jurisdictions on health policy, programs, and planning
- Conduct outreach, particularly with the working class, to understand extent of health issues
- Provide accessible green space within/near high density residential areas

Civic Engagement

Issues and Opportunities

Issue 1: County Connections with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

Residents in EJ Communities face a variety of challenges when it comes to participating in civic engagement and the government decision-making process, as do communities that have a higher proportion of residents who are elderly, non-English speakers, or lack sufficient broadband internet access. Establishing meaningful partnerships with CBOs could aid the County in bridging the gaps in communication and building trust with residents to increase participation. CBOs play a unique role in each EJ Community and can therefore represent and communicate the needs of the people they serve. By adopting a collaborative approach to outreach that involves CBOs, more effective and meaningful engagement with the community can be fostered. In addition, forging these connections with CBOs facilitates the development of rapport and mutual trust between the organizations, residents, and County. Participants in the EJ stakeholder group interviews expressed support for creating additional opportunities for connection with CBOs as it has been successful in the past.

Desired Outcome

Example - Establish meaningful and long-lasting relationships with Community Based Organizations to increase engagement of EJ communities in local government decision-making processes. **(Supported by EWC)**

EWC Outcome Ideas –

- Embed CBOs in County decision-making process
- Improve capacity for CBOs to partner with the County
- Build language justice in County operations



Strategies

Example - Improve Existing and Future Partnerships

- Establish criteria for selection, a budget, and memorandum of understanding protocols for CBO stipends for participation in engagement, focus groups, and other mutually beneficial activities.
- Identify key CBOs that operate effectively within EJ Communities and meet the criteria for selection.
- Partner with respected CBOs to review the CBO partnership program to ensure it is fair, beneficial, and includes locally recognized and knowledgeable CBOs.

EWC Strategy Ideas –

- Embed CBOs in County decision-making process using the method used for the County Emergency Operations Center
- Create pathways for funding to support CBO capacity to work with the County
- Provide direct pathways of communication from CBOs to the Board of Supervisors and County leadership including CAO/Department heads
- Utilize CBOs to staff County Advisory Boards
- Provide technical assistance (particularly on grant applications) to increase CBO capacity to engage in County program implementation
- Create job opportunities and procurement opportunities for CBOs and BIPOC-led businesses through implementation of County plans or programs such as the EJ Element
- Streamline County contracting process for CBOs
- Provide stipends for participation in County efforts
- Compensate CBOs for partnering and staffing
- Conduct after-action/program evaluation sessions with CBOs to see
- Build relationships with frontline staff in the community
- Work with CBOs to create service hubs that include both County and CBO services
- Participatory budgeting



EQUITY WORKING COMMITTEE

Meeting #5 – August 29, 2023, 6 to 8 pm

Objectives & Agenda

Meeting Objectives

- Review the project's policymaking process
- Review 9 policy issue areas for the Safety and EJ Elements, and discuss draft policy ideas
- Learn from the EWC about community priorities and ways to improve draft policy ideas

Agenda

TIME	SECTION TOPICS
6:00 – 6:05 pm	Welcome Back and Reminders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoom reminders• Expectations of EWC
6:05 – 6:10 pm	Report Out <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reminder on Background Reports• Project Outreach
6:10 – 6:15 pm	Policymaking Process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EWC Role• <i>Policy Concept Papers</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tonight: 1) Review refined policy concepts and 2) Discuss resources to support policy implementation
6:15 – 6:45 pm 5 minute report out 6:50 – 7:20 pm 5 minute report out 7:25 – 7:55 pm 5 minute report out	Breakout Discussions on Policy Topics (3 rounds) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the goal for this policy topic reflect community priorities?• How can the policy ideas be improved or expanded upon to better align with community needs and priorities?• What existing or potential resources could be leveraged to implement the policy ideas?• Are there additional policy ideas that could help us reach this goal?• Which policy ideas are most important or most urgent?• Report Out
7:55 – 8:00 pm	Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EWC Meeting 6• Pop Ups
8:00 – 8:10 pm	Questions (optional)

Meeting Resources

- *Safety Element Policy Concepts Paper*
- *EJ Element Policy Concepts Paper*

Pre-Meeting Preparation

Review both the *Safety and EJ Policy Concept Papers*. These documents provide an overview of each of the policy issues, draft goals and policy concepts, and associated resources for the EWC to provide input.

The *Policy Concept Papers* are provided in Microsoft Word format so that EWC members may use them as worksheets (if desired). Filling out the *Policy Concept Papers* is not necessary to participate in the meeting, but we ask that, at minimum, EWC members review them beforehand to get familiar with what we'll be discussing.

Sonoma County

Safety Element Update & Environmental Justice Policies

Safety Element Policy Concept Paper (Equity Working Committee Draft Version 2)

Definitions

Issue: The topic of concern being addressed.

Goal: Recommended goal to strive toward.

Policy Concepts: Policy ideas for each goal that will guide the development of final policies and action items for the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements.

Resources: Existing or potential local, regional, State, or federal resources that could be leveraged to implement the policies and reach the desired goal.

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, Drought

Issue 1: Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection

All communities in Sonoma County are significantly exposed to poor air quality from wildfire smoke and more frequent and severe extreme heat events, especially populations rendered vulnerable by systems and EJ communities, which will experience disproportionate impacts because of the systemic inequities that they face. This exposure will compound health issues for these communities. Heat-related illnesses can become life-threatening, increasing the demand for cooling centers, hospitals, and emergency personnel. Emergency services will face challenges providing adequate services due to power interruptions, staffing shortages, and inequitable community access to emergency facilities.

Resources (Existing and Potential)¹

- **Partners:** Bay Area Air Quality District; Northern Sonoma County Air District; California Air Resources Board (CARB); CAL FIRE; Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E); Community Development Commission
- **Funding Sources:** California's Strategic Growth Council Community Resilience Centers Grant Program; CARB Community Air Grants; EPA Air Sensor Loan Program; CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Grants
- **Programs:** CARB Wildfire Smoke Clean Air Centers for Vulnerable Populations Incentive Pilot Program*; CalHHS Emergency Resource Guide; California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Program; PG&E Medical Baseline Program; PG&E Self-Generation Incentive Program; PG&E Automated System

¹ Resources specific to addressing the needs of populations rendered vulnerable by systems are denoted with an asterisk throughout this document



Goal 1

Community members and workers are protected from poor air quality and extreme heat conditions due to increased resources and investments.

Policy Concepts

- Create a County-wide programs that provides incentives to landlords to improve indoor air quality and indoor temperature control to protect residents from wildfire smoke and extreme weather conditions. Partner with Sonoma County Housing authority and community-based organizations to deploy programs in areas of highest need, including areas with high concentrations of populations made sensitive by systems and Environmental Justice Communities. Consider lending library models for folks to borrow air purifiers and cooling devices, recognizing cooling centers may not feel safe for everyone.
 - **Addition:** Promote “DIY energy efficiency toolkits.”
 - **Examples:** [Sonoma Clean Power](#); [Sonoma County Home Resilience Guide](#)
- Broaden the functionality and expand the locations of resilience centers, beginning in systemically impacted communities. Resilience centers should provide refuge from extreme heat, extreme cold, and wildfire smoke, while also offering multilingual support services, uninterrupted power supply, food and medical treatment, economic development resources, and other services identified by populations made sensitive by systems and EJ Communities. Identify and address gaps in public awareness of resilience centers and transportation opportunities to centers.
 - **Comment:** The County needs to establish criteria for when to open resiliency centers.
 - **Comment:** Program should include development of a public notification plan that provides timely and effective alerts when resiliency centers open.
 - **Comment:** High priority.
- To increase access to resilience centers, create a partnership with Sonoma County Transit identifying transportation options that have low- to no-cost fares, particularly during extreme weather events, bad air quality days, or hazardous events such as wildfires, floods, and landslides.
 - **Comment:** The County should look for other partners in addition to Sonoma County Transit to support transportation needs.
 - **Comment:** High priority.
- Increase green spaces, shading, and access to water in parks, near transit stops, and along active transportation routes in areas with populations made sensitive by systems and EJ Communities.
- Promote temporary clean air refuge centers during wildfire smoke events for outdoor workers by distributing technical and funding resources to major employers and streamlining permit processes and associated fees.
 - **Revision:** Provide and distribute technical and funding resources to major employers to promote the creation of temporary clean air refuge centers. Streamline permit processes and associated fees.



- To increase protections for workers' health and safety during extreme heat events and bad air quality days, coordinate with Cal/OSHA to increase enforcement and trainings for employers of outdoor workers and warehouse workers.
- Resource community-based organizations that advocate on behalf of workers to support increased employer compliance with Cal/OSHA standards and County programs.
- Explore funding streams to implement hazard pay during hazard events.
- Work with Cal/OSHA to establish thresholds for work stoppage orders during extreme heat events and bad air quality days.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Improve communication between public agencies across the County for better service provision.

Issue 2: Water Reliability and Consumption

Climate hazards can damage water supply infrastructure like pipelines and pump stations, impacting water reliability in the County. This has direct consequences for wildfire mitigation, communities, agriculture, and critical services. Extended drought conditions further exacerbate water supply problems, leading to increased water costs and diminished water quality, disproportionately affecting populations made sensitive by systems and EJ communities. Groundwater levels have also declined due to lower-than-average rainfall and overdraft, resulting in reduced availability, well issues, higher water pollutant concentrations, and potential seawater intrusion in the southern parts of the County.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Sonoma Water, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA), Petaluma Valley GSA, Sonoma Valley GSA
- **Funding Sources:** California Department of General Services Water Grants Program; California Water Recycling Funding Program; California Department of Water Resources Grants and Loans; Sonoma County Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program
- **Programs:** California Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program; Sonoma County Energy Independence Program; California Save Our Water Public Outreach Campaign

Goal 1

Water sources are safe, affordable and reliable for all community members, including populations rendered vulnerable by systems and EJ Communities. Emergency service providers have adequate and reliable water sources to fight increasingly severe wildfires.

Policy Concepts

- In partnership with water providers, provide resources to community members to incentivize water conservation and efficiency techniques without displacing renters or sensitive populations. Expand programs and associated educational outreach to include drought tolerant landscaping, low-flow appliances, greywater capture and reuse, leakage repairs, and financial and technical resources to subsidize costs to landlords and low-income households.

- **Comment:** The types of incentives are key to effectiveness of policy. Need to pair education with a benefit (i.e. carrot).
- **Comment:** Water providers should prioritize and actively create opportunities to assist low-income households through outreach, new programs, etc.
- Identify areas with inadequate water supply for fire emergency response needs to target improvements for supplementary water supplies.
 - **Revision:** Supplement water supplies and prioritize improvements for capacity in areas with inadequate water supply for fire emergency response needs and high fire hazard.
 - **Comment:** High priority. Urgent.
- To guarantee water across the community during drought years, implement drought contingency supplies for those dependent on well water.*
 - **Comment:** High priority. Urgent.
- To avoid inequitable outcomes in water rate structure changes, water supply deficiencies, and water distribution disruptions that may be induced by climate change, collaborate with water agencies to increase transparency in water agency decision-making.
 - **Revision:** To avoid inequitable outcomes in water rate structure changes, water supply deficiencies, and water distribution disruptions that may be induced by climate change, establish a foundation/plan to collaborate with water agencies to increase transparency in water agency decision-making.
 - **Comment:** Water rate fee are currently structured based on use vs. square footage – this impacts smaller houses, often with a greater number of people, disproportionately. Pricing should consider population density as a factor in a way that does not impact low-income, high density households.
 - **Comment:** High priority.
 - **Comment:** Consider fee structure based on zipcodes that reflect economic realities of populations.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Create a program to assist well owners with testing their wells for contamination.

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Issue 1: Alerts and Evacuation

Emergency communications and timely evacuations are crucial for community safety and emergency operation planning. Evacuation barriers can arise from deficiencies in the electrical grid, transportation, telecommunication systems, emergency facilities, and inequitable resource distribution. Failing to evacuate promptly during hazardous events directly impacts health and safety, especially for populations made sensitive by systems and EJ communities. Financial constraints were reported by over 40% of Safety Element Survey respondents as a major barrier to adequate wildfire preparation. Past climate hazard events, including recent fires like Walbridge, Glass, and Kincade, have historically prompted evacuations, mainly affecting the northeast and eastern portions of the County.



Resources

- **Partners:** Northern Sonoma County, Bodega Bay, and Russian River District Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT); Sonoma Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)*
- **Funding Sources:** CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grants; FEMA Grants
- **Programs:** County of Sonoma Emergency Readiness, Response, and Recovery Webpage, including emergency alert programs (e.g., nixle) and neighborhood programs.

Goal 1

Community members, especially those that face systemic inequities, can evacuate safely and timely due to resilient infrastructure, accessible and effective emergency alerts, and improved access to financial resources.

Policy Concepts

- Led by the Department of Emergency Management and in partnership with community-based organizations, facilitate culturally responsive **neighborhood evacuation capacity assessments**, evacuation preparedness drills, **community leader trainings**, and improved access to evacuation financial resources. Community leaders can help serve as a trusted conduit to County resources and support for members of their community.
 - **Comment:** Keep community leader trainings short, but frequent, during the day, in appropriate languages.
- Address language and ADA-related barriers to accessing emergency alert programs and emergency preparedness resources. Increase awareness of such resources in areas with populations made sensitive by systems and EJ Communities by coordinating with and providing resources to community-based organizations that serve those communities. Include multilingual promotion of emergency support resources as part of general County outreach efforts.
- Increase redundancy in emergency evacuation communication systems in the event of an electric outage through a variety of measures, including back-up power for telecommunication towers and other critical facilities, distributing information via radio channels, promoting ownership of hand cranked radios, and other means. Regularly test alert systems for potential evacuation scenarios.
- Enhance enforcement of the Ag Pass program that allows agricultural workers to report to work within mandatory evacuation zones to prioritize worker health and safety, including potential exposure to wildfire smoke and extreme heat. Identify and implement strategies that address disruption in pay and enhance evacuation protocols for workers inside evacuation zones.
 - **Revision:** Maintain and improve Ag Pass Program with minimum requirements, and create a working group to assess needs and implement additional requirements, with a focus on worker safety. Review the process on a regular basis to highlight/prioritize worker health and safety.
 - **Comment:** Worker safety does not seem like a priority in the Ag Pass Program.



- Conduct a transportation needs assessment to identify what areas and populations within the County need transportation assistance during evacuation.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Require mobile home parks to create evacuation plans.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Create a Farmworker Safety Commission (similar to County's Human Rights Commission).
- **New Policy Idea:** Perform regular alert system testing in various languages to ensure alerts go through in preferred languages.
- **New Policy Idea:** Develop a campaign on evacuation planning (not just Know Your Zone). Address "what to expect" during evacuation, difference between evacuation warning and order, how to prepare to evacuate, how to find resources to help you evacuate, etc. Train community members on this information to support intra-community preparation.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Create Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with transportation service providers for evacuation needs and make them publicly accessible.

All Hazards/General Public Safety

Issue 1: Equitable Community Safety

Climate change impacts will affect virtually all populations in a community, but systemically vulnerable communities will be disproportionately impacted due to inequitable systems and structures. The Cloverdale area, southwest of Santa Rosa, and around Fetters Hot Springs-Agua Caliente have the highest concentration of populations made sensitive by systems. EJ Communities throughout the County, with the highest concentrations in the west, south, and central regions, are also at risk of disproportionate impacts from climate change. Inequitable access and active barriers to resources, critical services, and resilient infrastructure hinders the ability of populations made sensitive by systems populations to prepare for, cope with, and recover from climate impacts. Barriers identified by Safety Element Survey respondents include financial constraints, fear of rent increases, physical limitations or disabilities, social isolation, and language barriers.

Resources

- **Partners:** Sonoma County California Free & Income Based Clinics*; Sonoma COAD*
 - **Additions:** Disability Services and Legal Center; the County's AFN Committee; Sonoma County Transit (paratransit for evacuation)
- **Funding Sources:** Urban Areas Security Initiative, Emergency Management Performance Grant Program*, State and Local Implementation Grant Program, California Health Center Security Grant Program, School Communications Interoperability Grant Program.
- **Programs:** Sonoma County Strategic Plan 2021-2026 Racial Equity and Social Justice Pillar, Goals 1-4*; FEMA Independent Study Program; Sonoma County CERT training programs.

Goal 1

County resources, funds, infrastructure investments, and services are equitably allocated based on greatest sensitivity and need.



Policy Concepts

- Engage with health care providers to develop a strategy to augment health care capacity in areas with populations rendered vulnerable by systems and EJ communities during emergencies.
 - **Revision:** Engage with health care providers to develop a strategy to augment physical and mental health care capacity in areas with populations rendered vulnerable by systems and EJ communities during emergencies.
 - **Addition:** Consider the use of mobile units (example program: Santa Rosa's In Response team/program).
- Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in emergency planning processes, including hiring practices, staff trainings, and community engagement and outreach protocols in alignment with the Sonoma County Strategic Plan Racial Equity and Social Justice Pillar so that emergency planning and response is culturally appropriate, encompassing of the needs of all community members, and reflective of the diversity of the communities they serve.
 - **Comment:** This policy should apply to the Department of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, and Fire Districts.
- Engage with and provide resources to collaborative networks and community-based organizations in emergency planning processes and during emergency response, particularly on communications with the community, to increase access to emergency resources for those who experience barriers, including financial, physical limitations or disabilities, social isolation, and language barriers.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles in EOC operations.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Coordinate with Fire Districts, the Department of Emergency Management, and the Sheriff's Office to identify priority neighborhoods that may need assistance with evacuating.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** When County job opportunities are created for new climate-focused programs, prioritize hiring using DEI principles.

Sonoma County

Safety Element Update & Environmental Justice Policies

Environmental Justice Policy Concept Paper

(Equity Working Committee
Draft Version 2)

Definitions

Issue: The topic of concern being addressed.

Goal: Recommended goal to strive toward.

Policy Concepts: Policy ideas for each goal that will guide the development of final policies and action items for the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements.

Resources: Existing or potential local, regional, State, or federal resources that could be leveraged to implement the policies and reach the desired goal.

Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

Issue 1: Pollution Exposure

Thirteen EJ Communities scored above the 75th percentile for pollution exposure. The areas most impacted by solid waste sites are in the central and southern portions of the county. The Taylor Mountain EJ Community has significant levels of Diesel Particulate Matter. The Russian River Valley, Shiloh South, and Sonoma City South/Vineburg have moderately elevated levels of pesticides. Lead exposure from housing also varies across EJ Communities with the East Cloverdale EJ Community scoring notably high.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures; Bay Area Air Quality District (BAAQMD); Northern Sonoma County Air District; SPI Integrated Waste Division; Zero Waste Sonoma; Sonoma County Fire Prevention & Hazardous Materials Unit; Sonoma County Environmental Health; CalRecycle; Permit Sonoma Code Enforcement
- **Funding Sources:** California Strategic Growth Council, CalEPA, California Air Resource Board (CARB)
- **Programs:** Ag, Weights, and Measures Pesticide Use Enforcement Program and Hazardous Materials Program; Zero Waste Sonoma Household Hazardous Waste Program; Bay Area Healthy Homes Initiative; Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

Goal 1

Reduce pollution, protect communities from pollution exposure, and mitigate health impacts.



Recommendations

- Protect residents from the health impacts of solid waste by establishing a minimum distance between new solid waste sites and residential and other sensitive uses within EJ Communities.
- In areas impacted by unauthorized trash sites, partner with CalRecycle and Recology to share educational information regarding free curbside Bulky Items Recycling collection and reduced waste services cost for low-income households by using in-person, virtual, and mailed communications.
- Pursue grants through the CalRecycle Solid Waste Disposal and Co-disposal Site Cleanup Program to assist in removal of existing solid waste sites and facilitating remediation projects.
- Reduce public pesticide exposure by developing a five-year plan to phase out non-organic pesticide use on County-owned spaces, such as public parks and along County-owned roadways.
- Develop and promote a County-led program to provide free lead tests to households using funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Grant Program (LBPHC) and provide resources to remove lead in homes when found.
 - **Comment:** Program should be designed with easy, incremental steps that households can take to evaluate lead exposure then remove lead, with incentives at each step to encourage follow through.
- Develop a targeted inter-departmental communications campaign that identifies Sonoma County housing at risk of lead paint presence and provides educational materials on do-it-yourself renovations and repairs, repainting, and lead paint removal resources.
- Reduce presence of lead in homes by pursuing grants such as the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Healthy Homes Production Grant to assist homeowners in funding the removal of lead paint and repainting of homes, as well as other health improvements such as air filters and mold removal.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Pursue grants and other funding to create free (to residents) programs to test water for contaminants and hold landlords responsible for providing clean and safe drinking water at no cost to the tenant.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Pursue grants and other funding to create a program to help landlords pay for water safety upgrades. Priority should be given to landlords that rent to low-income households.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Provide more education and engagement about how recycling works to make it more effective.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Policies addressing lead and pesticides are most important.

Issue 2: Clean Water and Environmental Stewardship

EJ Communities in Sonoma County have relatively moderate impacts from impaired water bodies, although drinking water contamination is not considered impacted. The Petaluma Airport/Arroyo



Park census tract has the highest score for groundwater threats heavily impacted by underground leaking storage tanks.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Sonoma County Environmental Health; Sonoma County Ag & Open Space; Sonoma County Ag, Weights, and Measures; Sonoma Water; Community Clean Water Institute; UCCE Sonoma County; Sonoma and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation Districts; Russian Riverkeeper; Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs); Permit Sonoma Code Enforcement

Goal 1

Water sources in Sonoma County EJ Communities are safe for household and business use.

Policy Concepts

- Reduce surface water pollution by partnering with the Russian Riverkeeper Clean Team and local schools to host bi-annual cleanup events at and around impacted creeks and waterways in EJ communities.
- Seek to reduce contaminated runoff by assisting agricultural providers near EJ Communities with organic farming transitions by connecting them to resources for technical assistance and grants, such as those offered through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Organic Transition Pilot Program.
- Minimize agricultural pollution intrusion by connecting agricultural operators to technical resources and trainings that promote minimization of agricultural pollution spray and runoff, including organic farming methods, bioswale and groundcover vegetation plans, and field location and orientation.
- Pursue grants from the Office of Sustainable Water Solutions grant programs to construct water infrastructure and filtration improvements in EJ Communities.
- Secure funding through State and Federal water grant programs to provide free well water testing through the County Department of Health Services, in coordination with local water providers. For communities with impaired well water, seek resources from organizations such as the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) to identify communities eligible for the RCACs Individual Well Program and Household Water Well Loans/Grants program to refurbish, replace or construct household water wells.
 - **Comment:** High priority!
- Promote local environmental stewardship programs or activities, like the [Community Clean Water Institute](#) citizen monitoring program, by distributing educational materials in schools, community centers, and online postings to the County website.

Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity

Issue 1: Parks and Open Space Access

The EJ Communities located at the West Cotati/Penngrove, Taylor Mountain, Downtown Cotati, and Feters Spring/Agua Caliente West census tracts are all considered deficient in open space.



Privately owned land restricts access to these surrounding open space areas and a lack of developed open space areas may create parking, trail access, and safety challenges. Barriers to accessing parks and open space include lack of transportation options, poor outdoor air quality, and limited time to access facilities.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Sonoma County Regional Parks; Sonoma County Ag & Open Space District; City agencies; Sonoma County Regional Parks foundation
 - **Additions:** Sonoma Ecology Center; Local businesses
- **Programs:** Regional Parks' Outreach Programs; RCPA's Vision Zero; RCPA's upcoming Active Transportation Plan

Goal 1

Park and open space access is equitable and plentiful in EJ Communities through improved transportation options, increased availability, and better ADA access.

Revision: Park and open space access is equitable, safe, and plentiful in EJ Communities through improved transportation options, increased availability, and better ADA access.

Policy Concepts

- Improve active transportation options by prioritizing resources toward closing gaps in EJ Communities' Complete Streets system through the County's Capital Improvement Plan and other active transportation planning activities.
 - **Revision:** Improve active transportation options by prioritizing resources toward closing gaps in EJ Communities' Complete Streets system through the County's Capital Improvement Plan and other active transportation planning activities, including Vision Zero.
- Identify State funding, such as the California Department of Parks and Recreation Outdoor Equity Grants Program and Statewide Parks Program, to improve parks and open space within EJ Communities. Create a prioritized list of parks and open space projects to direct funding and investment in EJ Communities, so that when such funding is secured improvements can be implemented quickly.
- Increase the availability of accessible open space by identifying underutilized rights-of-way within EJ Communities to be converted into parklets or natural open space, particularly in areas near existing or planned high density residential uses.
 - **Revision:** Increase the availability of accessible open space by identifying converting underutilized rights-of-way within EJ Communities to be converted into parklets or natural open space, particularly in areas near existing or planned high density residential uses.
- Promote low-cost and free open space recreation opportunities in the county, as well as the reduced cost application for Sonoma County Regional Parks Passes to low-income and food insecure households.
 - **Revision:** ~~Promote~~ Provide low-cost and free open space recreation opportunities, including parking, in the county, as well as the reduced cost application for



Sonoma County Regional Parks Passes to low-income and food insecure households. (perhaps 2 parks at a time or one park/district if not possible to provide free/reduced access to parks)

- **Comment:** High priority.
- Identify opportunities to improve transit access in EJ Communities and utilize Parks California's [Route to Parks](#) grants program to connect EJ Communities with parks and open space.
- Improve equitable access to County-managed parks by working with Sonoma County Regional Parks to improve ADA access barriers at Sonoma County Regional Parks.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Improve the bicycle and pedestrian facilities to accommodate those with disabilities. Explore funding sources.
 - **Comment:** High priority.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Direct staff to meet frequently and discuss policy and program success and potential updates.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Explore ways to incentivize businesses to host picnic days, team building events, etc. to promote parks.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Explain what equitable means for parks and open spaces.
- Explain how these spaces can be managed and maintained to be safe for everyone.
- As much as possible, make policies actionable.

Community Health

Issue 1: Physical Health

Areas with poor air quality due to the presence of Diesel Particulate Matter (DPM), toxic releases, pesticides, or wildfire smoke may increase the risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma. The Wright and Bellevue EJ Communities score above the 75th percentile for asthma and cardiovascular disease.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Sonoma County Department of Health Services; Sonoma County Health Action; school districts; Sonoma County Regional Parks
- **Programs:** Regional Parks' Outreach Programs.

Goal 1

Sonoma County EJ Communities have equitable health outcomes through improved environmental conditions, reduced hazards, and preventative health measures.

Policy Concepts

- Partner with schools, community organizations, and Sonoma County Department of Health Services to disseminate information on asthma triggers and early detection.
- Work with State and regional agencies to identify funding sources, such as those available through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and BAAQMD, to assist residents and landlords in securing funding for private building rehabilitation, including removal of lead paint, interior air quality improvements, and gas and wood burning appliance replacement.
- Identify internal Sonoma County department staff to engage in ongoing quarterly community health and equity program implementation discussions to ensure alignment across County efforts and resources.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Improve the bicycle and pedestrian facilities to accommodate those with disabilities.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Provide measures to reduce heat islands.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Increase green and natural vegetation in communities near highways, high traffic areas, and in areas with higher potential for pollution exposure.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Increase the amount of green and open spaces near higher density residential housing.

Civic Engagement

Issue 1: County Connections with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

Residents in EJ Communities face a variety of challenges when it comes to participating in civic engagement and the government decision-making process, including communities that have a higher proportion of residents who are elderly, non-English speakers, or lack sufficient broadband internet access. It is imperative to establish meaningful partnerships with CBOs to bridge the gaps in communication and build trust with residents to increase participation.

Resources (Existing and Potential)

- **Partners:** Office of Equity; community organizations; County Administrator's Office; All County Departments
- **Programs:** Office of Equity's upcoming Language Access Plan and Community Engagement Plan

Goal 1

Create meaningful and long-lasting relationships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to increase engagement of EJ communities in local government decision-making processes.

Policy Concepts

- Develop a CBO partnership program that includes criteria for partnership participation, funding for participant compensation, and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to facilitate CBO partnerships in County-led engagement and other mutually beneficial activities.



- Establish pathways of communication between CBOs, County leadership, and the Board of Supervisors by identifying a CBO liaison in each department.
 - **Addition:** Host regular listening sessions with members of the Board or department staff/leaders.
- Utilizing CBO and EJ Community input, develop outreach and communications strategies that leverage the strengths of individual unincorporated communities and integrate the strategies into County engagement campaigns.
 - **Addition:** Create a list of goals for CBO engagement that guide County work.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Connect with libraries and other safe/trusted community space to host meetings and pop in sessions.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Create funding pathways for engagement with equity priority communities.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Provide transportation vouchers to encourage people to attend County meetings in person.
- **New Policy Suggestion:** Address equity issues and discuss community feedback in staff reports.

Stakeholder Interviews

Meeting Summaries



Sonoma County

Safety Element Update & Environmental Justice Policies

Stakeholder Interview – Environmental Justice

Date: March 1, 2023
Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Location: Zoom

Invitee List

Name	Agency/Dept	Role	Present?
Katrina Braehmer	Permit Sonoma	Project Manager	X
Bradley Dunn	Permit Sonoma	Policy Manager	
Reema Shakra	Rincon Consultants	Project Manager	
Saara Chaudry	Rincon Consultants	Project Planner/EJ Technical Lead	X
Sarah Howland	Rincon Consultants	Project Planner/Assistant Project Manager	X
Antonia Davetas	Rincon Consultants	Project Planner	X
Diana Mariscal	Legal Aid of Sonoma County		X
Herman G. Hernandez	Los Cien	Executive Director	X
Ellen Velazquez Muralles	Los Cien	Event and Community Engagement Coordinator	X
Santino Garcia	California Human Development		
Lorena Sotelo	California Human Development	Sonoma Field Office Manager	X
Mimi Enright	UCCE Sonoma County	Program Manager	
Unkown	Sonoma County Black Forum		
Alma Bowen	Nuestra Comunidad	Executive Director	X
Suzi Grady	Petaluma Bounty		
Joy Ayodele		Community Organizer	X

Meeting Introduction

- Katrina Braehmer provided a brief description of the project background and purpose of the meeting.
- Each member introduced themselves and identified their agency, division, and role.
- Saara Chaudry presented the slide show which defined environmental justice, described the effected communities, and invited stakeholders to share their opinions on what issues are afflicting their communities.



Discussion Questions

What environmental burdens or hazards most heavily impact members of your community?

- Several participants stated that farmworkers are particularly impacted by the wildfire season and high housing costs in Sonoma.
- Participants generally felt that rising housing costs are a barrier to many community members. Some lower-income homes have unsafe conditions and are overcrowded.
- Participants shared general concerns regarding air quality and how pesticide pollution and wildfire degrade air quality in the area.
- Several participants noted that senior citizens are vulnerable to poor living conditions, extreme heat, and extreme cold.

What prevents your community from accessing public facilities, amenities, or resources?

- Several participants reported that undocumented community members are afraid of accessing public funds or support due to concerns about how it may impact their citizenship.
- Participants agreed that language barriers, educational disparities, and low access to Wi-Fi and online knowledge act as major barriers to resource access.
- Several participants stated that public transit is unreliable and does not offer proper connections to all communities.
- One participant noted that a lack of sidewalks in unincorporated areas makes accessing resources challenging for community members.
- One participant stated that, in some cases, public officers dissuade community members from accessing resources.
- Several participants stated that community members working multiple jobs or having multiple responsibilities, creates limits on free time and makes it challenging to use amenities such as parks, libraries, etc.

How has your community organization had to step up to fill gaps in County services that could benefit Environmental Justice Communities in Sonoma County?

- One participant noted that County translated documents aren't always accurate, and some community organizations retranslate documents.
- Several participants stated that their community organizations work to connect community members with financial resources and additional financial support.
- One participant noted that free legal council is provided to community members who need advocacy for safe, clean, and comfortable housing.
- One participant stated that their organization is collecting funding for public services and amenities such as a community library or cultural center.
- One participant stated that their organization is making efforts to install microgrids to reduce residents' reliance on PG&E and create easier access to the internet.

How can the County work alongside community organizations to better support local Environmental Justice Communities?

- Several participants encouraged the County to continue to ask for input from community groups and residents.



- Several participants advocated for maintaining an open line of communication where community organizations may voice the demands of community members, ask questions, and share concerns.
- One participant suggested creation of a grant program for community groups to use to support their staff and the communities each group is connected to.
- One participant noted it's important to reward people for their efforts and provide stipends to nonprofit organizations who are working directly with impacted communities.

What are the most effective ways the County could engage your constituents as part of this planning process?

- Several participants agreed that tapping into schools and educational programs are effective ways to reach parents and other community members.
- One participant encouraged the County to connect with colleges and research groups who would be willing to share their research.

Project Process and Next Steps

- Katrina Braehmer discussed Next Steps.
- Slides will be distributed.
- Please email/call Katrina Braehmer with any additional questions or comments.



Stakeholder Interview – Environmental Justice

Date: March 3, 2023
Time: 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Location: Zoom

Invitee List

	Agency/Dept	Role	Present?
Katrina Braehmer	Permit Sonoma	Project Manager	X
Bradley Dunn	Permit Sonoma	Policy Manager	
Ross Markey	Permit Sonoma	Comprehensive Planning Manager	
Scott Orr	Permit Sonoma	Deputy Director	
Reema Shakra	Rincon Consultants	Project Manager	
Saara Chaudry	Rincon Consultants	Project Planner/EJ Technical Lead	X
Sarah Howland		Project Planner/Assistant Project Manager	
Antonia Davetas	Rincon Consultants	Project Planner	X
Janice Thomson			X
BC Capps	Regional Climate Protection Authority	Climate Change Program Specialist	
Dana Turrey	Sonoma County Transportation Authority	Transportation Planner	X
Steve Ehret	Sonoma County Regional Parks	Park Planner	X
Nora Mallonee-Brand	Sonoma County Department of Health Services	Commissioner	X
Laurel Chambers	County of Sonoma	Health Information Specialist	X
Denia Candela	County of Sonoma	Health Equity Officer	
Laura Turner	County of Sonoma Department of Health	Public Health Nurse	X
Martha Cheever	Community Development Commission	Housing Authority Manager	X
Marc Chandler	Community Development Commission	Community Development Assistant Manager	
Christopher Godley		Director of Emergency Management	
Michael Gause	County of Sonoma	Ending Homelessness Team Community Development Manager	
Nasim Bahadorani	County of Sonoma	IMDT Health Program Manager	X



Meeting Introduction

- Katrina Braehmer provided a brief description of the project background and purpose of the meeting.
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Discussion Questions

What existing programs does your department/agency carry out to serve and empower low-income communities, communities of color, and other disadvantages groups in Sonoma County?

- Several participants noted that organizations offer rental assistance or other forms for financial assistance to community members.
- One participant shared that the Department of Health and Human Services offers a lead poisoning program, connects unsheltered individuals with a social case worker, assists with CalFresh applications, and offers physical and behavioral health services.
- One participant shared that Regional Parks offers low-income, ADA, veteran, and senior park entry passes which they make available in public libraries.
- Several respondents reported collecting funding to improve transportation systems (transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) in the County.

What types of resources do people typically seek out from the County? Which existing public programs are most utilized or least utilized? Why are some programs more successful or effective than others?

- Rental and other financial housing assistance is only successful when people are able to locate housing.
- Several respondents stated that housing for unsheltered individuals is most successful when pair with other supportive services.
- Several participants noted that barriers exist including language, documentation, lack of cultural responsiveness, and fear of ineligibility due to resident status.
- Participants agreed that the Covid Urgent Relief and Aide (CURA) program was utilized heavily in recent years due to the lasting impacts of the pandemic.
- One participant noted that environmental education and career pathways for park work are robust and well-used.
- Several participants agreed that nutritional education (i.e., SNAP-Ed) has been less effective.

What challenges does the County face in deploying existing programs?

- Several participants noted that a lack of funding and staffing shortages were general concerns.
- One participant stated that there is a lack of data on community needs and some workers do not have the background needed to serve communities most effectively (cultural competence).
- Several participants noted that language barriers can present challenges in reaching and communicating with all community members.
- Several respondents noted that community members are unable to participate fully and understand all services offered due to time constraints.



Where are there gaps in resources or programs to improve the following issues in Sonoma County communities?

- Participants noted a need to support community gardens and additional healthy markets in areas that currently lack them.
- Several participants noted that there is limited ability for homeowners to harden homes to fires or floods
- Several participants noted that there is additional relocation assistance needed
- Several participants noted that there is inadequate electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Several participants noted that there is inequitable distribution of parks; very few transportation options to reach parks; inadequate bike lanes; and unsafe bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- One participant noted a lack of representation in elected officials; poor treatment of BIPOC residents by elected officials and community leaders.
- One participant stated that transportation is limited.
- Several participants noted that there is a need to pair different supportive services together.

In past or current initiatives, has your department/agency had success partnering with local organizations? What were those initiatives and how was success measured?

- Several participants noted that there is general success partnering with community-based organizations.
- Several participants stated that having partners within the County and collaborating with community partners have been instrumental for success.

Project Process and Next Steps

- Katrina Braehmer discussed Next Steps.
- Slides were distributed.
- Mural board remained open for the attendees.
- Please email/call Katrina Braehmer with any additional questions or comments.

Pop-Up Events and Neighborhood/Interest Group

Meeting Summaries

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Sonoma Valley Preparedness Fair 2023
Hosted by Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management, the Springs Municipal Advisory Committee, Springs Map Your Neighborhood, and Sonoma Immigrant Services

DATE: May 9, 2023

LOCATION: Boyes Boulevard and Highway 12

Activity Overview

Using adhesive dots, participants were asked to rank a selection of 6 key resources by their level of access (Poor, Moderate, or Good). Participants were also asked to place an adhesive dot on the Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities Board to identify where in the County they reside.

The activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant's preference.

Activity Results

- 29 residents of the nearby Springs area, one Santa Rosa resident, and one Petaluma resident participated in the activity for a total of 31 participants.
- Although this data was not explicitly collected, the vast majority were Spanish-speaking.

	Poor	Percent of Participants	Moderate	Percent of Participants	Good	Percent of Participants
Access to Transportation Options	8	25.81%	4	12.90%	19	61.29%
Access to Parks and Open Space	2	6.45%	10	32.26%	19	61.29%
Access to Nutritious Food or Groceries with Fresh Fruit/Vegetables	5	16.13%	13	41.94%	13	41.94%
Access to Air Conditioning	11	35.48%	4	12.90%	16	51.61%
Access to Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Information	7	22.58%	14	45.16%	10	32.26%
Access to Reliable and Clean Water	3	9.68%	6	19.35%	22	70.97%

**GENERAL PLAN SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE UPDATES
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY SUMMARY**

EVENT: Sonoma COAD Food Access Committee Monthly Meeting
DATE: September 13, 2023
LOCATION: Virtual via Zoom

Overview

Sonoma County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) is a collaborative network that builds the capacity and coordination of local organizations to both prepare for and respond to disasters in Sonoma County. Sonoma COAD's Food Access Committee is composed of representatives from various community organizations that work on food access issues.

The County project team attended the Committee's monthly meeting to introduce the project and have a focused discussion on food access policy priorities.

Summary**1. What are some desired outcomes (or specific objectives) for healthy food access, particularly during and after disaster events?**

- Diversified local farming with an increase in local food production.
- More opportunities for community-level food production.
- An actionable model or framework to implement micro-level solutions to identify and fill gaps which the current food system is not able to address.
- A comprehensive commitment to measuring and sharing data around food insecurity.
- A clear understanding of the needs and gaps in service.
- An established protocol for emergency food provision during disaster events.
- Reduced regulatory burden on food production.
- Policy that prioritizes water use for food production.

2. What strategies would be most effective to address food access and achieve the desired outcomes?

- Leverage partnerships with health providers or community organizations to hold mobile food markets or banks.
- Funding streams for research on food insecurity and gaps in food system to support policy and action.
- Adopting a local preference policy to incentivize local food production.
- Identify gaps in food service and where people are food insecure.
- Update zoning and land use regulations to encourage community-level opportunities for food production (e.g. community or neighborhood gardens). Streamline permitting and build in consideration for scope, scale, and public benefit in review of projects.
- Ease regulations on farmworker housing.
- Partner with Sonoma County Regional Parks or the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to create programs for community gardens on park or open space land.
 - See [County Lands for Food Production](#) report.

- Require convenience stores, supermarkets, liquor stores, and neighborhood markets in food deserts to carry locally sourced fresh produce.
- The Department of Emergency Management should establish food procurement memorandums of understanding (MOUs) ahead of disaster events. Increase funding for shelf-stable food.
- Establish a public-private program for sharing data on food insecurity.

3. What programs or policies have you seen work well for under-resourced communities? Why did they work well?

- Mobile food markets
 - Examples: Food Link in New York; Mobile food bank held by Kaiser in Solano County

4. General Comments

- Local agricultural production is monoculture, focused on grapes and apples. If we grow more options for food locally, this protects us against supply and distribution issues during large-scale disaster events.
- Food waste is a huge issue.
- There are vulnerable senior populations living in the coast that struggle with daily healthy food access and even more so during disaster events.
- We need to address seasonal worker's compensation during the off-season. There is a large amount of food insecurity during the winter which undeniably is connected to income during those months.
- Seniors in the Sonoma Valley, particularly in the Springs, have high food insecurity.
- We need to look at food as medicine.
- Water access (including infrastructure) is a barrier to food production in remote areas.
- Even in ostensibly affluent areas, there is food insecurity.
- There needs to be a clear pipeline to get food to where it's needed during emergencies.
- The food system and climate resilience are inextricably related.
- Smaller, local markets need the infrastructure to hold fresh food, which requires funding.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Occidental Community Farmer’s Market
DATE: October 29, 2023
LOCATION: Downtown Occidental, on Main Street between 1st & 3rd streets

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff set up a table with information available about the project including fact sheets and a map of the draft Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in the unincorporated County. Staff engaged participants by inviting them to learn more about the General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, identify their community on the EJ Communities map, and participate in a strategy-vetting activity.

Participants were provided with four tokens to distribute among eight buckets labeled with different strategies that could be incorporated into the Safety or Environmental Justice Elements. Participants were asked to choose which four strategies of the eight they felt were most important for the County to implement. Participants were also able to fill out comment cards to share other strategies they felt were important for the County to implement or offer general feedback.

The strategy-vetting activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant’s preference. All informational materials were available in English and Spanish. Activity participants were asked, but not required, to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity.

Activity Results

- Total number of activity participants: 43
- Of the eight strategies, organic farming, free well water testing, and community gardens were most frequently identified as priorities.

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Clean Water and Homes		
Free lead testing	12	6.9%
Free well water testing	25	14.5%
Pollution Exposure		
Buffers between solid waste facilities and residential uses	17	9.8%
Organic farming to reduce pesticide use	42	24.4%

Healthy Food Access		
Community gardens	24	55.8%
Mobile food banks	18	41.8%
Emergency Preparedness		
Neighborhood evacuation drills	19	44.1%
Evacuation transportation assistance	15	34.8%

General Comments Received

- Several participants shared with staff that they felt all of the strategy options presented were important.

Participant Demographics

Activity participants were asked but not required to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity. Seventeen of the 43 participants completed an exit survey. The following summarizes the results of the exit surveys that were completed.

- **Owner or Renter**
 - 11 participants (64.7%) stated they own their home
 - 6 participants (35.2%) stated they rent their home
- **Annual Household Income**
 - 6 participants (35.2%) stated their household income was between \$150,000 and \$249,000
 - 2 participants (5.8%) stated their household income was between \$75,000 and \$149,000
 - 4 participants (23.5%) stated their household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000
 - 2 participants (11.7%) stated their household income was between \$35,000 and \$49,000
 - 2 participants (11.7%) stated their household income was less than \$20,000
 - 1 participant (5.8%) did not specify
- **Race/Ethnicity**
 - 12 participants (70.5%) identified as White/Caucasian
 - 2 participants (11.7%) identified as Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 1 participant (5.8%) did not specify
 - 1 participant (5.8%) self-described their race/ethnicity as European American





GENERAL PLAN 2020 SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE UPDATES ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY SUMMARY

EVENT: Sonoma County Food System Alliance Monthly Meeting
DATE: February 15, 2024
LOCATION: Advanced Energy Center – 741 4th St, Santa Rosa

Overview

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance (FSA) is a county-based coalition of diverse stakeholders working collaboratively to envision, advocate for and create a vibrant local food system that increases the viability of agriculture and access to healthy food in our community. The FSA developed the Sonoma County Food Action Plan that provides a shared community vision and goals for the local food system.

The County project team attended the Committee's regular meeting time to introduce the General Plan Environmental Justice and Safety Element Updates project and have a focused discussion on food access policy priorities.

Summary

- 1. What are some desired outcomes (or specific objectives) for healthy food access both on a regular basis and during/after disaster events?**
 - More focus on sustainable food options.
 - Culturally appropriate food should be considered, not just calories and health.
 - There are variations in food insecurity data that can tell different stories about the severity of the issue. Better data is needed.
 - There is often data on the number of people being served but not the actual need. Funds should be allocated to better measure the need vs. service.
 - When discussing food insecurity, we should consider not just those who are currently struggling with food access, but those at risk of food insecurity because of cost of living.
 - The County needs to consider the availability and affordability of food, and whether that food is culturally appropriate.
 - The County needs to consider how our local food supply is vulnerable to climate change, and its stability or reliability during times of emergency (i.e. its resiliency).
 - Farmers are leaving Sonoma County. Can the County lease land for agricultural purposes and encourage mentorship programs to get more people involved in food growing?
- 2. What strategies would be most effective to address food access and achieve the desired outcomes?**
 - Funding to measure food insecurity, need, and food access.
 - More healthy food access (retail) that supports for working people who don't have time (e.g. community gardens).
 - Multi-pronged approaches that have co-benefits.
 - Broad-based community involvement and decision making.
 - Tighten existing policies with more concrete direction.
 - Factor in access to email, tech, etc. when figuring out how to get community feedback.

3. What programs or policies have you seen work well for under-resourced communities? Why did they work well?

- Continuation of the Sonoma County, [County Land for Food Production](#) program.
- Urban Tilth programs in Richmond.
- Using more county land for growing food.
- Growing food in home neighborhoods at the urban fringe. Local access to food would be more stable in times of crisis.
- Identifying lands for food growing.
- Examples from SLO County that support food availability.
- Santa Clara General Plan Health Element (e.g. social determinants of health).
- San Diego Food Systems Alliance.

4. Which of the recommendations in the Food Action Plan would be strengthened or better implemented by including them in the County's General Plan?

- The County's General Plan should address the intersection of issues. For example, agricultural workers don't live near work and don't have access to transit options, and that impacts the air quality of the neighborhood they live in.

5. Other suggestions:

- "Nutrition security" is a better term than "food security" as it encompasses cultural relevance and quality of food that is nourishing to folks. It is recommended the County use that term instead.
- "Food apartheid" is a better term than "food deserts." Think of alternative terms to fit the law definition of food desert, but using that term is not recommended.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Fire and Earthquake Safety Expo
DATE: May 19, 2024
LOCATION: Cloverdale Citrus Fairgrounds, Cloverdale

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff set up a table with information available about the project including fact sheets and a map of the draft Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in the unincorporated County. Staff engaged participants by inviting them to learn more about the General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, identify their community on the EJ Communities map, and participate in a strategy-vetting activity.

Participants were provided with four tokens to distribute among eight buckets labeled with different strategies that could be incorporated into the Safety or Environmental Justice Elements. Participants were asked to choose which four strategies of the eight they felt were most important for the County to implement. Participants were also able to fill out comment cards to share other strategies they felt were important for the County to implement or offer general feedback.

The strategy-vetting activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant's preference. All informational materials were available in English and Spanish. Activity participants were asked, but not required, to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity.

Activity Results

- Total number of activity participants: 73
- Of the eight strategies, evacuation transportation assistance, organic farming, and free well testing were most frequently identified as priorities.

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Clean Water and Homes		
Free lead testing	33	11.3%
Free well water testing	42	14.4%
Pollution Exposure		
Buffers between solid waste facilities and residential uses	19	6.5%
Organic farming to reduce pesticide use	43	14.7%

Healthy Food Access		
Community gardens	31	10.6%
Mobile food banks	38	13%
Emergency Preparedness		
Neighborhood evacuation drills	40	13.7%
Evacuation transportation assistance	46	15.8%

General Comments Received

- Several participants shared with staff that they felt all of the strategy options presented were important.
- One participant shared that more emphasis should be placed on alert systems for people with disabilities, more public access to the river in Cloverdale, and shelter in place opportunities.
- One participant stated that drainage and ditch channels need to be cleaned out more frequently to reduce flooding.

Participant Demographics

Activity participants were asked but not required to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity. 44 of the 73 participants completed an exit survey. The following summarizes the results of the exit surveys that were completed.

- **Owner or Renter**
 - 25 participants (56.8%) stated they own their home
 - 17 participants (38.6%) stated they rent their home
 - 2 participants (4.5%) did not specify
- **Annual Household Income**
 - 4 participants (9.1%) stated their household income was between \$150,000 and \$249,000
 - 15 participants (34.1%) stated their household income was between \$75,000 and \$149,000
 - 7 participants (15.9%) stated their household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000
 - 4 participants (9.1%) stated their household income was between \$35,000 and \$49,000
 - 8 participants (18.2%) stated their household income was between \$20,001 and \$34,999
 - 4 participants (9.1%) stated their household income was less than \$20,000
 - 2 participant (4.5%) did not specify
- **Race/Ethnicity**
 - 22 participants (50.0) identified as White/Caucasian
 - 3 participant (6.8%) identified as Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 1 participant (2.3%) identified as Black or African American
 - 9 participants (20.5%) identified as Latinx
 - 5 participants (11.4%) identified as multiple ethnicities
 - 3 participants (6.8%) preferred to self-describe, 1 participant (4.5%) did not specify



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: West County Fire & Emergency / Public Safety Town Hall
DATE: May 29, 2024
LOCATION: Guerneville Elementary School, Guerneville

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff set up a table with information available about the project including fact sheets and a map of the draft Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in the unincorporated County. Staff engaged participants by inviting them to learn more about the General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, identify their community on the EJ Communities map, and participate in a strategy-vetting activity.

Participants were provided with four tokens to distribute among eight buckets labeled with different strategies that could be incorporated into the Safety or Environmental Justice Elements. Participants were asked to choose which four strategies of the eight they felt were most important for the County to implement. Participants were also able to fill out comment cards to share other strategies they felt were important for the County to implement or offer general feedback.

The strategy-vetting activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant's preference. All informational materials were available in English and Spanish. Activity participants were asked, but not required, to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity.

Activity Results

- Total number of activity participants: 18
- Of the eight strategies, evacuation transportation assistance, neighborhood evacuation drills, and organic farming were most frequently identified as priorities.

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Clean Water and Homes		
Free lead testing	6	8.3%
Free well water testing	5	6.9%
Pollution Exposure		
Buffers between solid waste facilities and residential uses	4	5.6%
Organic farming to reduce pesticide use	10	13.9%

Healthy Food Access		
Community gardens	6	8.3%
Mobile food banks	4	5.6%
Emergency Preparedness		
Neighborhood evacuation drills	18	25%
Evacuation transportation assistance	19	26.4%

General Comments Received

- Several participants shared with staff that they felt all of the strategy options presented were important.
- A participant provided a comment regarding the importance of educating the community on eradicating Scotch and French broom due to its invasive nature.
- A participant provided a comment requesting that there be more coordination with timing of construction and wildfire season.
- A participant provided concerns on the new tree ordinance inhibiting removing dead, dying, and leaning trees to reduce fuel hazards.

Participant Demographics

Activity participants were asked but not required to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity. Seven of the 18 participants completed an exit survey. The following summarizes the results of the exit surveys that were completed.

- **Owner or Renter**
 - 5 participants (71.4%) stated they own their home
 - 2 participants (28.6%) stated they rent their home
- **Annual Household Income**
 - 0 participants (0%) stated their household income was between \$150,000 and \$249,000
 - 4 participants (57.1%) stated their household income was between \$75,000 and \$149,000
 - 1 participants (14.3%) stated their household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000
 - 0 participants (0%) stated their household income was between \$35,000 and \$49,000
 - 1 participants (14.3%) stated their household income was between \$20,001 and \$34,999
 - 0 participants (0%) stated their household income was less than \$20,000
 - 1 participant (14.3%) did not specify (retired)
- **Race/Ethnicity**
 - 7 participants (100%) identified as White/Caucasian
 - 0 participants (0%) identified as Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 0 participants (0%) did not specify
 - 0 participants (0%) self-described their race/ethnicity as X



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Sonoma Valley Emergency Preparedness Fair 2024
DATE: June 1, 2024
LOCATION: Larson Park, Sonoma

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff set up a table with information available about the project including fact sheets and a map of the draft Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in the unincorporated County. Staff engaged participants by inviting them to learn more about the General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, identify their community on the EJ Communities map, and participate in a strategy-vetting activity.

Participants were provided with four tokens to distribute among eight buckets labeled with different strategies that could be incorporated into the Safety or Environmental Justice Elements. Participants were asked to choose which four strategies of the eight they felt were most important for the County to implement. Participants were also able to fill out comment cards to share other strategies they felt were important for the County to implement or offer general feedback.

The strategy-vetting activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant's preference. All informational materials were available in English and Spanish. Activity participants were asked, but not required, to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity.

Activity Results

- Total number of activity participants: 53
- Of the eight strategies, lead testing, evacuation transportation assistance, and neighborhood evacuation drills were most frequently identified as priorities.

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Clean Water and Homes		
Free lead testing	45	21.2%
Free well water testing	20	9.4%
Pollution Exposure		
Buffers between solid waste facilities and residential uses	12	5.7%
Organic farming to reduce pesticide use	21	10%

Healthy Food Access		
Community gardens	22	10.4%
Mobile food banks	28	13.2%
Emergency Preparedness		
Neighborhood evacuation drills	30	14.2%
Evacuation transportation assistance	34	16%

General Comments Received

- Several participants shared with staff that they felt all of the strategy options presented were important.
- A participant provided a comment with concerns on vineyard pollution and runoff into creek and well water.
- A participant requested that asbestos testing be provided.
- A participant provided comments on Sonoma Development Center (SDC) and requested that SDC be designated in scale with Glen Ellen and that evacuation routes be improved in this area.
- A participant provided comments on air quality control relating to commercial and industrial pollution and that there be more scrutiny when commercial and residential areas intersect.
- A participant provided a comment regarding burn bans.
- A participant provided a comment that the County create surveys that engage Community Based Organizations.

Participant Demographics

Activity participants were asked but not required to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity. 35 of the 53 participants completed an exit survey. The following summarizes the results of the exit surveys that were completed.

- **Owner or Renter**
 - 18 participants (51.4%) stated they own their home
 - 16 participants (45.7%) stated they rent their home
 - 1 participant (2.8%) did not specify
- **Annual Household Income**
 - 3 participants (8.6%) stated their household income was between \$150,000 and \$249,000
 - 6 participants (17.1%) stated their household income was between \$75,000 and \$149,000
 - 7 participants (20%) stated their household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000
 - 5 participants (14.3%) stated their household income was between \$35,000 and \$49,000
 - 3 participants (8.6%) stated their household income was between \$20,001 and \$34,999
 - 10 participants (28.6 %) stated their household income was less than \$20,000
 - 1 participant (2.9%) did not specify
- **Race/Ethnicity**



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General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates – Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Forestville Farmer’s Market
DATE: June 7, 2024
LOCATION: 6990 Front Street, Forestville

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff set up a table with information available about the project including fact sheets and a map of the draft Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities in the unincorporated County. Staff engaged participants by inviting them to learn more about the General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, identify their community on the EJ Communities map, and participate in a strategy-vetting activity.

Participants were provided with four tokens to distribute among eight buckets labeled with different strategies that could be incorporated into the Safety or Environmental Justice Elements. Participants were asked to choose which four strategies of the eight they felt were most important for the County to implement. Participants were also able to fill out comment cards to share other strategies they felt were important for the County to implement or offer general feedback.

The strategy-vetting activity was facilitated in English or Spanish depending on the participant’s preference. All informational materials were available in English and Spanish. Activity participants were asked, but not required, to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity.

Activity Results

- Total number of activity participants: 22
- Of the eight strategies, organic farming, neighborhood evacuation drills, mobile food banks, and free well testing were most frequently identified as priorities.

Strategy	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Clean Water and Homes		
Free lead testing	6	6.8%
Free well water testing	12	13.6%
Pollution Exposure		
Buffers between solid waste facilities and residential uses	7	8.0%
Organic farming to reduce pesticide use	20	22.7%

Healthy Food Access		
Community gardens	10	11.4%
Mobile food banks	12	13.6%
Emergency Preparedness		
Neighborhood evacuation drills	13	14.8%
Evacuation transportation assistance	8	9.1%

General Comments Received

- Several participants shared with staff that they felt all of the strategy options presented were important.
- A participant provided a comment regarding the lack of cell coverage and decent internet speeds, which makes it difficult to stay informed.
- A participant provided a comment on the importance of fire safety and funding required for thinning and burning wildfire fuels.

Participant Demographics

Activity participants were asked but not required to complete an anonymous exit survey for demographic information including whether they owned or rented their home, their household income, and their race/ethnicity. 18 of the 22 participants completed an exit survey. The following summarizes the results of the exit surveys that were completed.

- **Owner or Renter**
 - 14 participants (77.8%) stated they own their home
 - 4 participants (22.2%) stated they rent their home
- **Annual Household Income**
 - 4 participants (22.2%) stated their household income was between \$150,000 and \$249,000
 - 7 participants (38.9%) stated their household income was between \$75,000 and \$149,000
 - 2 participants (11.1%) stated their household income was between \$50,000 and \$74,000
 - 2 participants (11.1%) stated their household income was between \$35,000 and \$49,000
 - 1 participants (5.6%) stated their household income was between \$20,001 and \$34,999
 - 1 participants (5.6%) stated their household income was less than \$20,000
 - 1 participant (5.6%) did not specify
- **Race/Ethnicity**
 - 13 participants (72.2%) identified as White/Caucasian
 - 1 participant (5.6%) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - 3 participants (16.7%) identified as multiple ethnicities
 - 1 participant (5.6%) identified as Latinx/Hispanic



- 11 participants (3.1%) identified as White/Caucasian
- 1 participant (2.9%) identified as Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2 participants (5.7%) identified as Black or African American
- 17 participants (48.6%) identified as Latinx
- 1 participant (2.9%) identified as multiple ethnicities
- 3 participants (8.6%) preferred to self-describe



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General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Russian River Area Resources and Advocates Meeting
DATE: September 9 and November 5, 2024 at 9:00 am
LOCATION: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended virtual meetings of the Russian River Area Resources and Advocates (RRARA) group to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities. The RRARA members represent non-profits, government, business, and civic groups, as well as private individuals, who come together to address key local issues and support residents in the lower Russian River area.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, representatives from the RRARA selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- All Hazards General Public Safety
- Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity
- Healthy Food Access

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from community members in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

All Hazards General Public Safety

Issue: Equitable Community Safety

- Participants recommended the County provide more warming and cooling centers.
- Participants recommended the creation of housing options, including more co-op housing, where there's an interest in property maintenance.
- Participants stated that health services should be preventative.
- Participants noted that there should be more physical spaces to communities to come together for connection and recreation.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants recommended public transportation agencies provide support during evacuations and create organized meeting points.
- Participants recommended strategies to build connections with communities, such as the Meet Your Neighbor initiative run by the Sebastopol Fire Department.

Healthy Public Facilities and Physical Activity

Issue: Parks and Open Space

- Participants expressed the lack of access to existing local parks in the area due to the influx of tourists and costs.
- Participants stated their safety concerns with unmaintained parks, such as Riverfront Park.
- Participants expressed concerns with Regional Park Rangers being stripped of their peace officer status.
- Participants recommended a better active transportation network, including improved bike paths to parks and open spaces.

Healthy Food Access

Issue: Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

- Participants stated that there should be a focus on incentivizing local small produce markets.
- Participants noted that people need help navigating food resources (SNAP, WIC, food banks).
- Participants stated that a gap analysis for the Lower Russian River governance study found that people had to travel to Santa Rosa.
- Participants stated a lack of culturally appropriate food in the area.



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Moorland Neighborhood Action Team
DATE: October 9, 2024 at 6:00 pm
LOCATION: In person at the Amarosa Academy School

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the regular meeting of the Moorland Neighborhood Action team, a neighborhood group representing the Moorland area in southwest, unincorporated Santa Rosa, to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, representatives from the Moorland Neighborhood Action Team selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Healthy Environments (Pollution Exposure)
- Community Engagement and Language Access
- Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure
- Emergency Preparedness and Response

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from community members in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Healthy Environments (Pollution Exposure)

Issue: Pollution Exposure

- Participants noted that replacing or repairing wells is a heavy financial burden.
- Participants stated their concerns with the lack of water quality in the area, in both City water and groundwater.
- Participants stated that the County's Code Enforcement division should prioritize life, health, and safety issues by providing a quicker response time.
- Participants recommended that a water quality program be created to easily report and track water quality issues.
- Participants recommended that County staff address pollution issues from existing development, in addition to new development.
- Participants recommended that the County provide educational materials on waste disposal for special waste and bulk items.

Community Engagement and Language Access

Issue: Limited or Non-English Speakers

- Participants noted that there is a need for public transit information to be translated.
- Participants stated there should be a focus on translating data and information related to public health.
- Participants recommended that the County hire more bilingual and bicultural staff. Each department needs bilingual staff that understands technical terminology.
- Participants recommended that the County prioritize training existing multi-lingual staff, especially with technical terms.
- Participants stated that County presentations to the public should be more readable and digestible for diverse audiences.

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience

- Participants reported issues with flooding and drainage in the area. Most of these problems stem from a lack of maintenance and inadequate infrastructure, which is hindered by environmental impacts, such as those from the California Tiger Salamander.
- Participants stated that the County should pursue grant funding for infrastructure projects in the area to assist with the flooding and drainage concerns.
- Participants recommended that the City and County collaborate on infrastructure improvements.
- Participants stated concerns with excess speeding and lack of a safe walkable network, especially around parks

Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation



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Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants noted a need for community training and neighborhood drills to better prepare for emergencies.
- Participants stated that the emergency text alerts and sheriff's audio alerts are helpful during emergencies.
- Participants stated that there needs to be better logistics planning before emergencies, including identifying pick-up points, identifying those who are elderly or unable to drive, and establishing a plan for pets and larger animals.
- Participants noted that there should be very clear messaging regarding ICE's role during emergencies.
- Participants stated that there is a need for neighborhood watch programs.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Lower Russian River Promotoras Meeting
DATE: October 25, 2024 at 6:00 pm
LOCATION: In person at the District 5 Satellite Office, located at 16390 Main Street, Guerneville

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended a special in person meeting with the Lower Russian River Promotoras group to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities. The Lower Russian River Promotoras is a group made up of community health workers and Promotoras in the area, who provide outreach, education, and resource navigation to their community. The Promotoras understand their community, cultural values, historical challenges, and the landscape of inequities in the area. This meeting was provided in both Spanish and English.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, representatives from the Lower Russian River Promotoras selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- All Hazards General Public Safety
- Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure
- Healthy Food Access
- Safe and Sanitary Housing

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from community members in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

All Hazards General Public Safety

Issue: Equitable Community Safety

- Participants noted lack of resources, funding, and benefits for undocumented individuals during and post emergencies and disasters.
- Participants stated communication challenges due to dead zones and power outages.
- Participants stated that assistance is delayed when requested, and at times, may never receive a response.
- Participants expressed frustrations with inaccurate virtual translation and lack of in-person interpretation, which creates barriers to services.
- Participants expressed mistrust with the County services due to fear of ICE involvement.

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience

- Participants noted renters do not get as much assistance as property owners.
- Participants stated a need for a local resilience center in the area that provides power, water, and other essential resources during emergencies.
- Participants stated that infrastructure repair is delayed and during emergencies, it prevents people from being able to evacuate or access resources.
- Participants expressed a need for a better evacuation/alert system during emergencies. During emergencies, power may be out and there may not be phones or social media available during that time.
- Participants stated issues with a lack of alternative routes to schools in the area during floods.

Healthy Food Access

Issue: Food Insecurity and Food Deserts

- Participants stated the need for centralized community gardens that could better provide education and opportunities for people to pick their own food.
- Participants stated that there is a lack of culturally diverse foods in the area; Hispanic groceries are far away, and Safeway is too expensive.
- Participants stated that food banks do not offer culturally appropriate food, fresh produce or healthy food choices.
- Participants noted that food banks have limited availability, operating only at specific times that conflict with people's work schedules.



- Participants stated that it is difficult to apply to SNAP and Medicare due to income eligibility, being based on gross earnings, rather than net.
- Participants expressed frustrations with ongoing County projects and engagement, citing a lack of follow-up or execution, which leaves the community feeling hopeless when their feedback leads to no change.

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Issue: Household Toxins

- Participants expressed concerns that the fear of retaliation—such as eviction or rent increases—prevents tenants from reporting housing issues.
- Participants stated that there is a significant problem with mold in local homes, noting that there are no affordable options for remediation.
- Participants stated that residents are hesitant to contact Code Enforcement due to the fear that it may lead to requiring permits for unrelated issues.
- Participants stated that there is a lack of available housing stock, primarily because many homes are being used as short-term rentals.
- Participants recommended that the County provide financial assistance for window repairs to help regulate temperatures during extreme weather conditions.
- Participants stated that there is a need for more information on water quality and safety.

Issue: Overcrowding

- Participants noted that financial burdens force families to share small spaces.
- Participants stated that landlords raise rent for tenants with adult children, even if the children are still in school.
- Participants state that many residents live in overcrowded homes to save on rent, which leads to unhealthy living conditions.
- Participants noted a need for a local rental agency that helps people find suitable housing.
- Participants expressed frustrations with affordable housing waitlists. The waitlists are too long with no priority given to residents.

Municipal Advisory Councils, Citizen Advisory Council, and Community Advisory Commission

Meeting Summaries

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Mark West Area Municipal Advisory Council (MWAMAC)
DATE: September 11, 2024
LOCATION: In person at the Mark West School District Office, The Learning Center at 305 Mark West Springs Road Santa Rosa, CA 95403; and via Zoom

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the September regular meeting of the Mark West Area Municipal Advisory Council (MWAMAC) to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the MWAMAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the MWAMAC selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the MAC and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Wildfire Resilient Landscapes
- Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)
- Community Engagement and Language Access

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with MAC members on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants noted there are critical barriers to emergency preparedness and response including accessibility, community preparation, and transportation.
- Participants noted that the Mark West Area does not have many community-based organizations (CBOs), which are often useful for community advocacy and communication.
 - “Who is going to look out for this area?”
- Participants recommended that the County find ways to incentivize more of “neighbors helping neighbors,” which is particularly important for emergency preparedness and response.
- Participants recommended that the County partner with Homeowners’ Associations (HOAs) and neighborhood groups to help educate people on how to help their neighbors during an evacuation.
- Participants noted that there is a need for improved transparency about the best way to evacuate during an emergency scenario and established evacuation routes.
- Participants recommended the use of Nixle alerts to provide real time push notifications to direct people about how to evacuate and where to go during an emergency scenario.
- Participants recommended that the County’s emergency preparedness actions need to consider evacuation of schools for an emergency scenario that occurs during the day.
 - Participants noted that the Mark West area does not have school buses; all parents drive their students to school; and over 60% of students don't live in Mark West area.
- Participants stated that elderly communities need physical notification of when to evacuate (e.g. door to door notice).
 - Participants recommended facilitating a voluntary registration program to develop neighborhood rosters of who needs evacuation assistance.

Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Issue: Wildfire

- Participants stated that post-fire relocation efforts need improvement.
 - Participants recommended creating a registry of places available for wildfire survivors where people can list their property.
- Participants recommended that the County work with communities to identify community hubs where printed information on emergency information can be regularly posted (e.g. Mulberry Market in the Mark West area).
- One participant stated "community preparedness is the best place to leverage change."
- Participants recommended the County work with Homeowners’ Associations to develop more fire-safe design and development standards.
- Participants discussed the concept of a phone-tree as a helpful way to information circulated.

Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

Issue: Pollution Exposure

- Participants noted that pollution in the Mark West area mainly stems from traffic and trucks along Mark West Springs Road.



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- Participants noted they are concerned about poor air quality from wildfire smoke in the area or nearby but outside of the County, and from wood burning stoves or fireplaces.
- Participants cited concerns about impacted air quality from air traffic as the Sonoma County airport expands.
- Participants recommended finding funding for road diets and street trees.
- Participants cited concerns about noise pollution.

Issue: Clean Water and Water Stewardship

- Participants cited concerns about contamination of creeks from septic systems.
- Participants recommended the County explore how to expand access to public sewer.
- Participants recommended exploring ways to minimize runoff from roadways.
- Participants recommended that the County work with State agencies to support financing private well upgrades.
 - Model Program: The Sonoma County Energy Independence Program for solar improvements.

Community Engagement and Language Access

Issue: Systemically Marginalized Communities

- Participants noted that the MAC does not receive funds for translation of MAC meetings and meeting materials.
- Participants noted that childcare is often a barrier to engaging in the civic decision-making process.
- Participants stated that the County's outreach and engagement approaches should be varied and attempt to reach people through multiple channels/methods.

Issue: Varying Age Demographic

- Participants noted that electronic communication is not a strong engagement strategy with older individuals.
- Participants recommended a neighborhood-based voluntary registration system where people can find a neighborhood buddy.
- Participants recommended the County explore non-electronic strategies to engage seniors and consider more visual and auditory approaches to engagement on emergency preparedness.
- Participants recommended the County connect with Chambers of Commerce and attend chamber-hosted events to connect with the business community.



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council (LRRMAC)
DATE: September 12, 2024 at 5:30 pm
LOCATION: In person at Guerneville School Community Room, 14630 Armstrong Woods Road
Guerneville; and via Zoom

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the September regular meeting of the Lower Russian River Municipal Advisory Council (LRRMAC) to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the LRRMAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the LRRMAC selected the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the MAC and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Wildfire Resilient Landscapes
- Seismic and Flooding Hazards
- Healthy Environments (Pollution Burden)

(This topic was not able to be discussed substantively due to limited time.)

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants emphasized the importance of understanding evacuation transportation needs in advance of an emergency so the County can adequately plan for and support residents.
- Participants shared that there are deficiencies in the electrical grid regularly in Cazadero and an overall lack of telecommunications facilities.
- Participants emphasized that there are gaps in the local transportation system that do not support effective evacuation.
- Participants noted that the emergency radio network has been popular and that NOAA radios don't work because there is no reception.
- Participants shared that it is difficult for them to hear hi-lo sirens because of the density of trees in the area.
- Participants identified that when the temporary summer bridge is removed, it is a significant loss in evacuation routes of the area. A permanent bridge would improve emergency access.
- Participants recommended that the County mandate transient occupancy uses (e.g. hotels, vacation rentals) at the first evacuation warning since occupants are not familiar with the area.
- Participants stated that the County building relationships with community-based organizations is important to emergency response.
- Participants shared that a prior experience when the National Guard helped property owners clean out the lower levels of buildings was helpful for emergency preparation.
- Participants recommended that the County provide dumpsters post-disaster to help with removal of debris.
- Participants cited the need to identify potential evacuation locations in each community.
- Participants shared that the lower Russian River is a tourism area and that not every property owner is residing full time.
- Participants identified that telecommunication facilities and other “first lines of defense” should be top priorities.
- Participants cited the need for support with evacuation of large animals.

Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Issue: Wildfire

- Participants emphasized that landowners need help to maintain their land and remove hazardous fuels.
- Participants cited the need to plan for evacuation and shelter of animals during events.
- Participants shared that there does not need to be more education on home hardening; the barriers to home hardening is financial and physical.
- Participants stated that the County should not approve new development unless there is adequate infrastructure (i.e. roads, water). Infrastructure needs to be a priority before development.
- Participants stated strategies 6, 7 and 8 in this Policy Framework are most important. These strategies include alternative fire prevention measures, streamlining environmental review for fuel reduction projects, and targeting resilience programs for low-income and special needs populations.



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- Participants emphasized that healthy forests are critical to reducing the impacts of wildfire.
- Participants recommended knock boxes for keys for people to have access to pets, etc.
- Participants cited concerns about the cost and deficiency in fire insurance in California and how it will affect lower income households most.
- Participants recommended that the County work with Tax Assessor on tax credits for home hardening and hazardous fuels reduction projects.

Seismic and Flooding Hazards

Issue: Flooding Resilience

- Participants identified that the Guerneville wastewater treatment plant gets overwhelmed and then contaminates the Russian River.
 - Participants recommended that Sonoma Water consider alternative, decentralized systems.
- Participants shared that the draft desired outcome in this policy framework does not include prevention of the issue. The issue is that runoff goes into the wrong places.
- Participants emphasize that prevention is resilience.
- Participants recommended that critical facilities be mobile (i.e. medical services or battery backups in trailers). Cloverdale's CERT and COPE groups' mobile facilities were cited as an example.
- Participants emphasized the importance of creek restoration to help slow water to prevent localized flooding.
- Participants shared a project that the Russian Riverkeeper organization is working on to restore gravel pits as natural floodplains as a model project.
- Participants recommended looking into floodwater storage and pumping water back into the ground (e.g. pilot programs with State Water Board).
- Participants recommend more utilization of FEMA grants to elevate homes.
- Regarding rewilding opportunities, participants were interested in restoring the depth of the river through dredging.
- Participants emphasized the importance of institutional knowledge in County staff as critical to the County's effectiveness.
- Participants cited the Community Rating System (CRS) from FEMA as a way to support flood resilience.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Special Joint Meeting of the Springs Municipal Advisory Council and North Sonoma Valley Municipal Advisory Council
DATE: September 24, 2024 at 6:00 pm
LOCATION: In person at the SVUSD Boardroom at 17850 Railroad Avenue, Sonoma, CA 95476

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended a special joint meeting of the Springs and North Sonoma Valley MACs to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the MACs and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the MACs selected five of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the MACs and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Safe and Sanitary Housing
- Community Engagement and Language Access
- Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.



Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Issues: Housing Quality and Overcrowding

- Participants noted that renters are making repairs themselves, but landlords should be doing it.
- A participant noted that renter protection from retaliation is a tough issue to tackle but most important of the list of potential strategies.
- Participants noted that people often struggle to access legal aid due to language barriers, transportation, and other barriers.
- Participants stated that the County needs to prioritize resources that prevent renters from eviction including rental support.
- Participants noted that the County cannot assume literacy when considering how best to get information across to renters.
- Participants stated that the County should explore a program that notifies landlords of their obligations to maintain safe conditions that builds on existing requirements (e.g. completion of tax forms or business licenses).
 - One participant recommended the City of Berkeley's Rental Housing Safety Program as a model.
- Participants recommended that the County should require eviction notices to be translated in Spanish.
- Participants stated that the County needs to hold landlords accountable on household toxins such as mold and lead through Code Enforcement.
- Participants shared that landlords are often large corporations that do not listen to renter complaints on housing quality issues and needed improvements.
- Participants noted that the County is not equipped to take on the issue of housing quality without third party support on enforcement.

Community Engagement and Language Access

Issue: Limited or Non-English Speakers

- One participant noted that the Sonoma Registrar of Voters translates election materials in different languages and is a model for how other County departments should operate.
- Participants specified that translation of public meetings into Spanish is important.
- Participants shared that not assuming literacy of members of the public is part of language justice.
- Participants recommended that the County consider the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology to help members of the public access and understand information.
- Participants stated that language justice should extend beyond translation of written materials and apply to access to services.
 - Participants recommended that the County create a neighborhood services liaison program tied to County departments that can find the answer on a variety of issues and connect with local community leaders.
 - Participants shared that the Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition (AAPIC) of the North Bay is an example of a community organizations that connects AAPI communities.



- Participants noted that there is fear of government among Sonoma County communities so many folks don't know services exist to support them.
- Participants recommended that the County explore non-electronic means of engagement (e.g. flyers sent to community organizations or schools).
- Participants noted that County departments should have more bilingual people available to assist the public.
- Participants recommended that the County require landlords to give people hard copy, translated notices.
 - Participants shared that the City of Oakland and Berkeley require landlords to provide printed copies of renter rights.
- Participants commented that the County should continually evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and how to make them more cost-efficient. Cost savings could support improved outreach and engagement methods.

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience

- Participants commented that evacuation assessments should be used in decision making about infrastructure improvements.
- Participants shared that communities should be able to provide input on determining infrastructure improvement priorities in the Capital Improvement Planning process.
- One participant stated that the Springs area is not rural, but it is isolated.
- Participants noted that public safety power shutoffs are extremely impactful and can shut down half the Springs for more than a day.
- Participants stated that buildings and infrastructure (including bridges) need to be made more resilient against earthquakes.
- Participants noted the need to ensure the safety of water systems and the ability to provide potable water, particularly during shelter in place events.
- Participants shared that Sonoma Valley experiences sewer overflows.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants emphasized the importance of evacuation needs assessments.
- Participants shared that the County needs to prioritize areas that are not along Highway 101.
- Participants recommended that Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADS) be used to get information out during an emergency.
- Participants emphasized the importance of providing emergency information in multiple languages.
- Participants recommend community emergency drills that include all response agencies (i.e. fire districts, Department of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office, etc.).
- Participants noted that Sonoma County needs one umbrella program to support community organizing efforts on emergency preparedness (i.e. we have CERT and COPE programs).
- Participants stated that the current Agricultural Pass Program needs to be revisited to ensure life and safety is the top priority of the program, and to explore penalties for bad actors.
- Participants commented that it is more difficult to mobilize people for volunteer programs in low income areas because they don't have time.



- Community organizing at the neighborhood level is effective but needs a devoted leader/champion.
- The County should emulate successful local models of community emergency preparedness and facilitate similar local efforts across communities.
- Participants recommended that the County think about evacuation solutions for seniors, houseless folks, and those of low-income.
- Participants shared the need for the County to provide shelter locations that allow pets since many residents won't evacuate if they cannot bring their pets.
- Participants shared the need to notify folks ahead of time of ADA-compliant shelters.
- Participants recommended strategies to address post-evacuation (i.e. return and recovery).
- Participants recommended that County plan for incremental evacuation and look for ways to incentivize evacuating early.
- Participants recommended that the County consider security of property during evacuation.

Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

- Participants shared that regulations need to better balance tree protection and conservation with defensible space and vegetation management goals.
- Participants stated that financial assistance should be provided for landlords and homeowners for vegetation management. It's not that people don't want to maintain their properties – it's just expensive.
- Participants commented that there must be a balance between housing needs and the need to protect existing residents from wildfire.
- Participants emphasized the importance of minimum street widths.
- Participants emphasized the difficulties of getting fire insurance and how that issue affects other concerns.
- Participants shared the desired for the County General Plan to balance carbon sequestration goals and vegetation management goals.
- Participants stated that home hardening should be the top priority for County assistance, then first five feet next to structures.



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Geyserville Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Council
DATE: September 25, 2024 at 5:30 pm
LOCATION: In person at the Northern Sonoma County Fire Station at 20975 Geyserville Ave, Geyserville

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the September regular meeting of the Geyserville Alexander Valley Municipal Advisory Council (GAVMAC) to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the GAVMAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the GAVMAC selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the GAVMAC and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought
- Seismic and Flooding Hazards
- Wildfire Resilient Landscapes
- Community Engagement and Language Access

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.



Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought

Issue: Extreme Heat and Air Quality Protection

- Participants noted that there have been significant changes in the County's landscape since the last General Plan update that necessitate addressing extreme heat and air quality.
- Participants stated the County should be proactive in inspecting and enforcing landlords to improve indoor air quality and temperature control.
- Participants stated that safe, legal access to recreational places to cool off (such as the Russian River) are important to combatting the effects of extreme heat.
- Participants shared that it is often a financial burden for some businesses or community centers to be used as cooling centers even if the operator is interested in doing so. The County should provide financial compensation to incentivize private property owners to open public cooling centers.
- Participants noted that County mandates of businesses or property owners often get passed onto community members indirectly.
- Participants emphasized that land management is critical to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Issue: Water Reliability and Consumption

- Participants stated that the County needs to involve the public in the prioritization of infrastructure projects.
- Participants recommended that the County strategically address upstream diversions as one of the most significant threats to the local watershed in Geyserville and Alexander Valley.
- Participants comment that not having a local water district represent the area is huge barrier to water infrastructure improvements since there is no recognized entity that can be "at the table" for discussions.
- Participants shared that the Alexander Valley developed the first water sharing program in the State with support from the State Water Board.
- Participants felt that the draft strategies in the Policy Framework were more relevant for urban areas than their community.
- Participants recommended that Sonoma Water work more collaboratively across the County government and with other jurisdictions or special districts.

Seismic and Flooding Hazards

Issue: Geologic and Seismic Hazards

- Participants shared that the Oddfellows Hall building in Geyserville is substandard for earthquakes.
- Participants noted that any funding for retrofits should be prioritized for historic buildings or buildings that support local economies.
- Participants recommended that the County look for ways to provide tax relief for retrofit projects. The Mills Act was provided as an example program that could be modeled for earthquake retrofits.



Issue: Flooding Resilience

- Participants shared that flooding in the local area has worsened due to an accumulation of gravel bars and the channel not operating as it should, which affects bridge functioning.
 - Participants recommended that the County amend regulations (including the Aggregate Resources Management Plan) to allow gravel removal to better manage the channel for public safety purposes.
- Participants emphasized the County's need to consider upstream improvements along the Russian River.
- Participants identified that Alexander Valley could open up more floodplain, but the problem is that there is channelized flooding occurring.
- Participants recommended that the County resolve conflicts between competing goals in its regulations.

Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Issue: Wildfire

- Participants recommended that the County establish best management practices for vegetation management activities and that those activities should be exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Participants stated that roadway maintenance and land management needs to be a top priority to reduce the impacts of wildfire.
- Participants identified that open space easements don't allow vegetation management activities and large swaths of the County are subject to those easements.
- Participants shared that there are conflicting goals in County regulations (e.g. tree ordinance updates vs. fire safe standards in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13).
 - Participants recommended that the County be clearer about what is most important or top priority.
- Participants shared that it is difficult for landowners to meet vegetation management and defensible space regulations in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13a, and that property owners need more support.
 - Participants recommended expanding existing programs, like the chipping program, to support property owners.
- Participants cited the need for a higher level of coordination among agencies to maximize public safety.
- Participants shared that the County's efforts need to prioritize on the ground projects instead of planning activities.
- Participants stated that individual structure fires are not a huge issue.
- Participants recommended that funding decisions to prioritize certain geographic areas need to consider system-wide impacts (i.e. issues in one area affecting disadvantaged communities in another).
- Participants recommended that the County do more prescribed burning.
- Participants share that having two different air quality districts serving the County makes it difficult for air quality permitting.

Community Engagement and Language Access

Issue: Systemically Marginalized Communities

- Participants did not have substantive comments on the potential strategies in this Policy Framework.



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General Comments

- Participants emphasized the County's need to focus on implementation vs. planning (i.e. "doing the work").
- Participants noted that priorities in the General Plan should be established based on public health and safety first and foremost, the economy that supports public welfare, public infrastructure, and investments in environmental quality.
- Participants cited the importance of place-based policy.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Dry Creek Valley Citizen's Advisory Council (DCVCAC)
DATE: October 17, 2024 at 6:00 pm
LOCATION: In person at Healdsburg Fire Station Training Room at 601 Healdsburg Avenue
Healdsburg, CA 95448

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the October regular meeting of Dry Creek Valley Citizen's Advisory Council (DCVCAC) to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the DCVCAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the DCVCAC selected three of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the DCVCAC and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Extreme Heat, Air Quality, and Drought
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Extreme Heat, Air Quality Protection, and Drought

Issue: Extreme Heat and Air Quality

- Participants recommended offering financial incentives to business and landowners to improve air quality and reduce water usage.
- Participants expressed that they felt green spaces, shading and temperature control were important to them.
- Participants voiced concerns about the rising use of air conditioning and its potential subsequent impact on the energy grid.
- Participants noted that improving communication for service provisions is a top priority for the community.
- Participants stated that nighttime agricultural harvesting has become more common due to high daytime temperatures.
- Participants felt that proposed strategies seem to be tailored to urban settings.
 - Participants noted that they were uncertain whether people would use cooling centers located in the Sonoma Valley.

Issue: Water Reliability and Consumption

- Participants recommended that the County explore new ways to incentivize water use reduction.
- Participants stated that proposed strategy number five: “Creating a Well Testing and Remediation Assistance program” was critically important.
- Participants also highlighted that proposed strategy number six: “Considering the Expansion of Greywater and Recycled Water Systems” was of high importance.
- Participants suggested the County promote education on dry farming grapes and further incentivizing it through regulations.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants shared that the largest barrier to safe and timely evacuation is telecommunications access.
 - Participants felt that a siren alert option is needed in case telecommunications fail or are inadequate during an emergency.
- Participants stated that they found evacuation orders were confusing because they used road names with which they were unfamiliar.
- Participants found that emergency evacuations orders included conflicting road names and areas. They recommended using addresses and existing designated evacuation zones instead.
- Participants noted that there should be multiple alert sources provided by local fire departments.



- Participants shared that they are involved in COPE (Communities Organized to Prepare for Emergencies).
 - Participants recommended increasing education efforts to encourage more people to participate in COPE and to coordinate between COPE and other similar efforts.

Wildfire Resilient Landscapes

Issue: Wildfire

- Participants stated that proposed strategy number seven: “Streamlining the CEQA Review for Fuel Reduction” is critical for their community.
- Participants voiced the importance of post-fire relocation, noting that the return process after an evacuation order can be chaotic, especially following wildfire emergencies.
- Participants emphasized that safeguarding business continuity is important as well, such as the service and agricultural industries.
- Participants recommended providing financial assistance to agricultural producers who lose crops due to wildfires, particularly those with specific agricultural practices.
- Participants noted that the repopulation process following a wildfire evacuation is unclear and lacks transparency.
- Participants recommended that the County should be encouraging the sharing of technology related to smoke taint for grapes as well as a push for education on the topic.
- Participants proposed that SCT buses be made available to transport citizens out of evacuation zones.



General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Regular Meeting of the Sonoma Valley Community Advisory Commission (SVCAC)
DATE: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 at 6:30 pm
LOCATION: In person at the Sonoma City Council Chambers at 177 First Street West, Sonoma; and via Zoom

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff attended the October regular meeting of the Sonoma Valley Community Advisory Commission (SVCAC) to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the SVCAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the meeting, the SVCAC selected the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the SVCAC and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Safe and Sanitary Housing
- Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- All Hazards General Public Safety

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the discussion:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.



Feedback on Policy Frameworks

The following summarizes what the project team heard from participants in the meeting.

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Issue: Housing Quality

- Participants reported that fear of retaliation for requesting repairs is a significant issue faced by renters.
- Participants communicated that the County lacks a mechanism for selecting a trusted representative to address these issues.
- Participants recommended that the County partner with Community-Based Organizations to facilitate ambassador programs that help distribute information.
- Participants suggested a county rental inventory be created. This inventory could serve as a tool for conducting inspections for substandard housing conditions.
- Participants emphasized the need for stronger incentives to promote affordable housing development and reduce reliance on market-rate developers.
 - Participants proposed partnering with government institutions to eliminate taxes.
 - Participants also proposed a reduction in impact fees.
- Participants noted that increasing housing inventory would reduce reliance on substandard homes, which are often the only option available.
- Participants voiced a need for housing and rental navigators to help connect people with available homes.
 - Participants included that the East Sonoma community hub could serve as a location for these services.
- Participants expressed a desire to look at efforts put out by project 2025 and identify what can be done to mitigate risks of significant local impacts.
- Participants noted that Homeless Action Sonoma does an excellent job of supporting individuals throughout the housing process.
- Participants stated that they needed improved public transportation options between housing and employment centers.
- Participants shared that more education about trade school would be beneficial to the community.
 - Participants noted that the La Luz could be a potential provider of these services.
- Participants requested that there is a reduction in cost of repair fees imposed by landlords.
- Participants stated that the community needs more parks as lots of homes don't have yards in this area.
- Participants mentioned that there is Housing Court in other local jurisdictions.

Issue: Overcrowding

- Participants recommended ensuring that the Sonoma County Community Development Commission receives continued funding for the Housing Heroes Campaign.
- Participants urged the need for education and incentives to encourage landlords to accept Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs).
- Participants expressed a desire for implementation of AB 1033 (ADU condo).
- Participants shared that existing homebuyer programs are not very effective.
 - Participants recommended establishing and funding a program to address this issue.



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- Participants noted that there may be implementation issues with this process.
- Participants recommended that the County eliminate requirements for covered parking spaces that interfere with garage conversions.
- Participants included that new development pursuant to the Housing Element could be allocated in East and South Sonoma in areas with existing sewer.
 - Participants noted that this development would require additional transportation support, such as expanded bus service to those areas.
- Participants expressed that people with families cannot afford to live in the area.
 - Participants highlighted that building in the southern part of Sonoma offers the advantage of safer exits from the valley.

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience

- Participants noted that the County must ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate predicted changes over the next 10-20 years.
- Participants expressed the need for individualized community evacuation plans that are both reasonable and actionable.
- Participants emphasized the potential improvements to infrastructure through the undergrounding of utilities.
- Participants stated that their community has become a pass-through area for Napa, leading to significant traffic on the two-lane highway.
 - Participants said that the highway does not have ditches, is dangerous, and doesn't allow for biking.
- Participants noted that the proposed strategies were considered to be reasonable.
 - Participants highlighted that the County has staff resources to actively pursue funding opportunities.
 - Participants thought that all strategies are necessary.
- Participants highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships that extend beyond just bonds.
 - Participants recommended getting creative with energizing within the private sector.
 - Participants endorsed creating a grant story that integrates private partners.
 - An example of this idea is the Doyle Drive project in San Francisco.
 - Participants suggested that the County look to third parties for grant writing and securing financing.
- Participants noted that Sonoma Valley has only two-lane highway.
 - Participants mentioned that local toll roads don't support valley infrastructure development.
 - Participants commented that the community needs a SR 121 and SR 116 freeway connection to US 101 and US 80.
- Participants discussed that southern Sonoma Valley has dead end roads that could be connected through farmland.
- Participants said that potential strategy number seven: "Prioritize Equity in Capital Improvement Process" is the tie into the Environmental Justice aspect of the General Plan update.
 - Participants recommended that some effort be made within the implementation plan to assess certain time periods that identify the most critical infrastructure needs.



- Participants included that this critical infrastructure information could then be linked to Environmental Justice areas.
 - Participants agreed that this strategy should be a top priority.
- Participants specified that PG&E is absent from the proposed strategies and that the County should make efforts to work with Sonoma Clean Power to build that relationship.
- Participants questioned what the outcome would be if NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) goes away.
- Participants emphasized the importance of shelter in place infrastructure.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

- Participants stated that community-based organizations should be a County top priority.
- Participants emphasized proposed strategies five: “Evaluate and Improve Ag Pas Program”, six: “Advance Worker Evacuation Programs” and seven: “Build Relationships with CBOs to Assist with Evacuation Efforts” are all priorities.
- Participants agreed that fire watch duty is a helpful tool but emphasized the need for subsequent on-the-ground information.
- Participants mentioned an evacuation app which sends out automated notifications to cellular phones.
- Participants stated that code red is not effective.
- Participants stated that other apps such as Everbridge are not effective either.
- Participants recommended consolidating emergency alert technology within the County.
- Participants noted that the County could utilize school districts or youth programs to distribute emergency education.
- Participants said that regarding evacuation assessments, the County needs to consider personnel capacity.
- Participants asserted that evacuation plans should consider unhoused communities.
- Participants highlighted the significance of assessment, training, exercising, and partnerships.
 - Participants voiced that an agreement with FEMA and Caltrans could be made ahead of time (MOUs).
 - Participants suggested the use of AI driven evacuation modeling software.
 - Participants discussed the possibility of incentives for building and forming firewise neighborhoods.
- Participants articulated the limited cell reception within the area that impacts evacuation processes.
 - Participants proposed incentives for fiber-optic telecommunication instead of cell towers.
- Participants advocated for the evacuation for animals through the help of partnerships with other entities.
- Participants recommended the mapping of infrastructure to model effects of emergencies.

All Hazards General Public Safety

Issue: Equitable Community Safety

- Participants pointed out that the details of the County’s proposed strategies matter; they need to be integrated in local community safety plans.



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- Participants said that Community-Based Organizations and government partners should work together to identify needs in specific communities.
- Participants advised that all strategies are useless if they are not place based.

General Plan Safety and Environmental Justice Updates Engagement Activity Summary

EVENT: Presentation and survey sent out to recipients
DATE: November 5 - 11, 2024
LOCATION: Virtual via Video and Survey

Activity Overview

Permit Sonoma Planning staff gave a presentation to the Coastal Municipal Advisory Council to 1) present an overview of the General Plan Safety Element Update and new Environmental Justice Element, and 2) seek input from the Coast MAC and members of the community on policy priorities and ideas to protect the public from hazards and prioritize the needs of environmentally burdened and under-resourced communities. Permit Sonoma Planning staff recorded a video of the presentation, which was shared with the Coastal MAC along with a questionnaire for feedback on the policy frameworks.

To facilitate conversations about policy, the project team developed Policy Frameworks for various broad topic areas that will be addressed in the Safety and Environmental Justice Elements. The Policy Frameworks were developed based on key findings from the background reports for the project (available on the [project webpage](#)), State requirements and guidance, and community input. Each Framework discusses one or more subtopics and related issues, outlines desired outcomes of the planning effort, and includes a list of potential strategies to achieve those outcomes. The Frameworks were presented to the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on July 23, 2024. Agenda materials from the Board meeting can be found [online](#) at the Board of Supervisors website.

Prior to the presentation, the MAC group selected four of the Policy Frameworks that would be of most interest to the MAC group and local community to discuss at the meeting with Permit Sonoma:

- Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Resilient Landscapes
- Sea Level Rise

Permit Sonoma staff facilitated a discussion with participants on the potential policy strategies in the Policy Frameworks and listened to comments from members of the public in attendance. Participants were asked to consider the following questions in the survey:

- Which strategies are highest priority for your community?
- What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?
- What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

Staff also provided information on next steps and how to continue to be involved. Feedback from the meeting will inform the draft Safety and Environmental Justice Elements, which will be released for a public review period prior to adoption.

Feedback on Policy Frameworks

Below are the responses gathered from the survey completed by Coastal MAC participants.

Resilient and Equitable Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure and Utility Resilience

Question: Which strategies are highest priority for your community?

- “Prepare coastal infrastructure for resilience during physical isolation and long duration with minimal outside assistance. This means redundant systems and capacity for self-sufficiency with trained and equipped locals. Also needed is a fully functional emergency evacuation facility (meals, shelter, communication) in each population center on the coast.”
- “Prioritize Resilient Road Design Engage and Empower Rural Communities through Self Sufficiency Maintain Defensible Space Around Critical Infrastructure.”
- “Fire reduction help with hiring insured tree workers to cut out the deadwood on residential properties. Lot of us are too old to work the land and cannot afford to hire people.
- Communications, county road egress conditions, wildfire resilience, support micro grid development efforts, simply being included in the plan.”
- “Inclusion in the plan! The Timber Cove area has been excluded from the Safety Element Update.”
- “In our rural Cazadero hills area, engaging and empowering through self-sufficiency is a high priority, and we already to that to some extent. Resilient road design and defensible space around public infrastructure also high. Many of us are already off-grid so we are already on our own micro-grid, main concern with PG&E grid is fire safety rather than reliability of transmission.”
- “Emergency response to catastrophic flooding, increased intensity of winter storms creating multi-day outages of power, telephone and internet service.”
- “Underground utility wires.”

Question: What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?

- “Fragility of power infrastructure exposed to elements (e.g. deteriorated above ground power lines and transformers) dearth of fire hydrants. Resilient road design must include provisions for pedestrian and bike safety, within and between population centers on the coast.”
- “Roads in West Sonoma County have experienced years of neglect. Pavement preservation only provides a band-aid to this neglect. Continue to support and empower rural communities to build self-sufficiency as the community ages. Continue to support rural communities in establishing and maintaining defensible space, particularly along exit routes. County Public Works no longer maintains culverts or the sides of rural roads.”
- “Homeowners need oversight, they cut down redwoods which should not be allowed.”
- “...meet the needs of, and protect the wellbeing of, all community members and emergency personnel in the face of climate change... The coastal region from Meyers Grade to the Mendocino border has been omitted. Why? Safety risks from fire, earthquakes, windstorms do not discriminate. The quote from your presentation states all community members. Subsequent



isolation from events calls for preparation everywhere, regardless to average income demographics, including the north coast region.”

- “Virtually all of the topics (roads, sea level rise, economic dependence, microgrids, internet access etc.) apply to our community. Although there are some well-off families, many are at or near the poverty level, or just below the radar. These people use the roads for their work drive, they use the internet to work from home, engage in community and government affairs, and are just as susceptible to fire and earthquake (the San Andreas Fault runs directly through our community!). With over 60% of our district State and County parks, our small local volunteer fire department deals with tourist mishaps more than those generated by the locals.”
- “Lots of micro-zones within Jenner/Caz EJ community so some concerns will be higher in different areas. For ex. flooding is a concern along rivers and coastal areas but not so much in the hills other than keeping roads passable during mega-storms.”
- “Measure H unfortunately doesn't provide the funding to support emergency response to isolated communities. County OEM wasn't mobilized last year during a major 9-day outage and this year during a 5-day outage.”

Question: What's missing from the strategies that you think is important?

- “Ongoing maintenance of county and state infrastructure on the coast (e.g. Hwy. 1, county drainage and roadways) is an ongoing problem. Strategies to assure this must be included as part of the plan.”
- “I like the idea of "Engage and Empower Rural Communities through Self-Sufficiency," but what does this mean?”
- “Water tank storage to collect rainwater and have water onsite to fight fires.”
- “Us, coastal dwellers! Communications foremost. We need a comprehensive, underground fiber optic broadband infrastructure. We need cellular signal countywide. The county should build a network of communications towers that openly offers access to first responder frequencies, Ham and GMRS repeaters and space for commercial cellular providers. Cell firms will not invest in towers with low traffic, thus the problem. They will however invest in joining on an existing tower and pay rent. It's an inexpensive way to reach everyone, always. Repair and maintain Kruse Ranch Road, an important cross over between the first ridge and Coast Highway 1, one of four for the entire north coast. Encourage and support effort to build Timber Cove micro grid.”
- “A reassessment of the areas to be included, specifically Timber Cove.”
- “Strategies look good, observations accurate such as limited internet / public transportation access. Unclear how much the EJ element can affect tribal lands but there are lots of economic and environmental/trash concerns at Kashia Rancheria.”
- “Support of North Bay Communications Cooperative and its GMRS 2-way radio system, which has been proven to be successful when all else fails.”

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Issue: Alerts and Evacuation

Question: Which strategies are highest priority for your community?

- “Community engagement; county engagement.”
- “Prepare the Community for Evacuation.”



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- “First response, second response, final response. Of course preparation is paramount, individually and community wide. Preposition power poles, wire, fuel, even food. Egress should we need out, but perhaps more critically, so you can get in to help us clean up. Not all county roads are to county standards, ie Kruse Ranch Road, as stated before.”
- “Retrofit Critical Communications Services in Timber Cove Conduct an Evacuation Needs Assessment in Timber Cove.”
- “Evacuation preparedness / enabling emergency communications for more residents including GMRS radio access and training.”
- “Lack of cellular connectivity in Cazadero to make use of Nixle and other "push" notifications from the county during times of internet failure.”

Question: What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?

- “How to prepare and what to do in the event that evacuation is impossible or unnecessary. What to do until help arrives. (A more likely scenario on the coast.) Identify and evaluate the impact of specific resource limitations facing coastal communities (e.g. availability of fire and first responders, health and social services, CBOs, mutual aid, etc.)”
- “This includes workers who do not speak English and older adults who will need help during an evacuation. The priority would be to leave no one behind, and in a rural community of self-sufficient individuals, this could be a challenge.”
- “It leaves the north coast out. Wind storm events need to rise to equal status for planning. Get those hazardous trees down, clean up the fuels. It’s an individual, county AND state responsibility. Work together.”
- “Timber Cove is excluded. Our economy and government interaction depend on reliable broadband and cell service. Highway 1 is the lifeline (literal and economic) of the north Sonoma Coast. One of only two coastal evacuation routes--for thousands of visitors and locals--runs directly through our community. This is not included in the plan.”
- “They look quite comprehensive.”
- “Consider realigning evacuation zone boundaries. Cazadero Hwy is the dividing line between 1F1 and 1F2, residents along the hwy are torn whether to evacuate or remain in homes because of a 30' difference in zones.”

Question: What’s missing from the strategies that you think is important?

- “Enhance linkage of County services and CBO resources to coastal communities through official and unofficial liaisons, outreach, and regular community meetings. Work with government, CBOs, and community members to plan and strategize how to fill gaps in social services, food supply, sheltering, health care, transportation that arise in emergencies on the coast. Target low income, non-English speaking, and non-resident workers and families for involvement. Build relationships with property managers of the many vacation rentals on the coast so that they take measures to inform and prepare renters. Include disaster prep education and training in school curriculum.”
- “Resources for people who evacuated who did not prepare for the event.”
- “A windstorm category needs a separate status.”
- “Inclusion of the Timber Cove area.”



- “Not sure how possible this is but improving cell service in the upper Cazadero hills area.”
- “The county's effort to distribute NOAA radios to folks in West County is ineffective due to lack of reception issues. A focus needs to be considered with the use of 2-way radios or other emerging technologies.”

Resilient Landscapes

Issue: Wildfire Impacting Landscapes

Question: Which strategies are highest priority for your community?

- “Streamline CEQA Review for Fuel Reduction Explore Alternative Fire Prevention Measures Equitable Resilience Assistance.”
- “Fuels management, roads, fallen trees on roadways, State Parks lagging in fuels management. CEQA impact on fuel reduction efforts on non commercial property.”
- “Use Complete Data.”
- “Home hardening / buffer zones. Financial burdens of fires, improve post-fire services.”
- “Shaded fuel breaks, fire breaks, and including the entire Tier 3 HFT community within the boundaries of existing Wildfire Adapted Program Maps.”

Question: What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?

- “Insufficient fire hydrants in neighborhoods. Unique circumstances on the coast (vast area, dispersed population, heavily wooded landscape, long distances, few roads, few imbedded resources, distant mutual aid, long response times) all create the need for unique strategies.”
- “Strategies are comprehensive.”
- “Timber Cove is excluded”
- “A HUGE concern is that there are several non-conforming homesteads in our area, some of those land owners do not want to participate in any fire prep assistance that involves Permit Sonoma for fear of being red-tagged and/or coming into compliance, which is completely unaffordable and may lead to the owner having to sell the property. If there was more clarity about whether an un-permitted owner might be taking that risk or not by participating in these programs, it might lead to more participation and therefore a safer community.”
- “Existing Wildfire Adapted Program mapping appears to be a 'pick and choose" effort, protecting densely populate areas and ignoring those in surrounding areas.”

Question: What’s missing from the strategies that you think is important?

- “Explore use of beaches and coastal parks as evacuation zones, and boats as evacuation vehicles. Acknowledge that public perceives coast as "smoke-free" zone and will come here for relief, regardless. “
- “Streamlined the rebuilding process for homeowners who lose their homes in a fire. Since insurance companies insure few properties in many remote areas of West Sonoma County, homeowners should not suffer through unnecessary and costly hurdles imposed on them by Permit Sonoma to live on their land.”



- “This is an all hands on deck problem. Individuals, county and state entities must coordinate. Often we are advised that it is sometimes better to hunker down and shelter in place when fire is pressing down. Certainly, during other events we are best to do so. Stay put we are told. Trees down enforce this. The crews don’t need us on the roads. This is where the deaths occur. The programs as proposed only speak to get out. We need a conversation about when and how to stay put safely. Evacuation on the coast is risky at best, even if the very few roads are open and they never are.”
- “Wildfires in the Timber Cove area severely impact critical evacuation routes, and can compromise the only access to the north Sonoma coast. Hwy 1, as we saw during the Meyers Fire, has been under construction for over a year rebuilding the roadbed and reinstalling guard rails.”
- “Financial burdens was mentioned -- whether there might be some way of addressing the lack of affordable insurance coverage, possibly interfacing with the State Insurance Commissioner? At least more education about insurance options with landowners.”
- “Funding for the programs!”

Sea Level Rise

Issue: Sea Level Rise and Saltwater Intrusion

Question: Which strategies are highest priority for your community?

- “Highway 1 stability. Credible detour routes that can handle the heavy vehicle traffic safely, both volume and GVR.”
- “Implement Local Coastal Plan policies and programs.”
- “None of these concerns will have a direct effect on the Cazadero hills area, other than their effect on roads such as Highway 1 or Caz Highway.”
- “Homeowner's wells facing potential salt water intrusion in areas along Lower Cazadero Hwy and Austin Creek roads will be impacted with increased tidal action affecting the Lower Russian River, Development and launching of a water delivery agency for all homes south of Cazadero to Hwy 116 will provide clean drinking water for ag and personal use.”

Question: What concerns do you have with the proposed strategies?

- “Insufficient storm water drainage jeopardizing evacuation / transit and structures. Need resiliency assessment and flood / mud/ tsunami risk rating of inhabited and workplace structures on the coast including boats, houseboats, trailers, RVs, beach shacks, etc.”
- “On the north coast we do not reside in the intertidal zone. This is zone belongs to State Parks mostly. There are some bluff dwellers that will need to adjust. The most impact here will be highway 1. Every season we lose a bit of highway 1 and it takes a year and more to patch it back, each occurrence.”
- “Timber Cove is excluded.”
- “None I can think of.”



- “A new water agency will cost millions of dollars to build and undoubtedly will require federal funding grants to achieve.”

Question: What’s missing from the strategies that you think is important?

- “Need tsunami alert system for beachgoers, recreational boaters, visitors . Probably loud sirens. Public education and signage for residents and visitors. Water safety messaging and lessons targeting non-swimmers, low income, non-English speaking, and others at higher risk of drowning.”
- “As stated above, Highway 1 and eventual detour/replacement route capacity. We need to build the drive around so it can handle it. It will be used for years at a time while we continue to try to mend Coast Highway 1.”
- “A consideration that Sea Level Rise will affect the Timber Cove, as we are actually on the coast. This is not an economic issue driven by local income assumptions; it is a force of nature that will impact Timber Cove more than any of the other included areas in the Update.”
- “They look pretty comprehensive, and NOW is an excellent time to be making plans for SLR.”

Question: Additional Comments?

- “Why was the north coast left out of the EJ? Emergency events affect everyone that is the way. We share some of the same issues named for Cazadero. Everyone is needed to help in a recovery, the neighbor next door and those closer to town. It just feels wrong to treat us as different.”
- “I regret that I only saw this today; I mistakenly assumed that Timber Cove would not be excluded. I respectfully request that you find a way to make and include an assessment of Timber Cove.”
- “Again, the Kashia Pomo Rancheria at Tin Barn and Skaggs Springs Road an EJ area if anywhere was, not sure though with tribal sovereignty now much this project can interface with them.”

