

CHAPTER 9

**Environmental Justice Element**



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## Introduction

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### Statutory Requirements

With the adoption of Senate Bill 1000 (SB1000) in 2016, the California Government Code Section 65302(h) regarding general plans was amended to include requirements related to incorporating environmental justice into local land use planning processes. SB1000 requires local governments to address pollution and other hazards that disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color within their jurisdiction as a way to proactively plan for and address environmental concerns when developing and updating components of the General Plan. These requirements are organized into two subsections [Section 65302 (h)(1) through Section 65302 (h)(2)], which are summarized below:

- 65302 (h) (1) add to the required elements of the general plan an environmental justice element, or related goals, policies, and objectives integrated in other elements, that identifies “disadvantaged communities”
- 65302 (h) (1) (A) identify objectives and policies to promote:
  - Public facilities in disadvantaged communities
  - Food access in disadvantaged communities
  - Safe and sanitary homes in disadvantaged communities
  - Physical activity in disadvantaged communities
- 65302 (h) (1) (A) identify objectives and policies to reduce:
  - Exposure to pollution, including improving air quality in disadvantaged communities
  - Any unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities not otherwise addressed above
- 65302 (h) (1) (B) identify objectives and policies to promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process in disadvantaged communities
- 65302 (h) (1) (C) identify objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities
- 65302 (h) (2) adoption or revision of environmental justice element, or related goals, policies, and objectives, upon the revision of two or more elements concurrently on or after January 1, 2018.

*“Environmental Justice” seeks to minimize the effects of environmental hazards and is defined by California Government Code (Section 65040.12) as the “fair treatment and meaningful participation of people of all races, culture, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Environmental justice also aims to ensure the availability of a healthy environment for all people; reducing pollution burdens for populations and communities experiencing adverse effects; promote meaningful participation of populations and communities most impacted through accessible engagement and technical assistance; and consideration of recommendations from populations and communities most impacted by pollution into environmental and land use decisions (California Government Code Section 65040.12)*

*“Disadvantaged Communities” are defined by California State Law as (1) “an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety code;” or (2) “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” pursuant to California Government Code Section 650302(h)(4)(A).*



## Purpose and Scope

Low-income communities and communities of color often bear a disproportionate burden of pollution and associated health risks based on legacy decisions that place industrial or polluting uses next to these communities. Environmental Justice seeks to address these inequities by reducing the pollution experienced by these communities and ensuring their input is considered in land use and policy decisions that directly impact them.

The purpose of the Environmental Justice (EJ) Element is to include policies in the planning and decision-making process that will address the inequities resulting from environmental hazards and health impacts in the built environment to ensure that all people have the right to live, work, and play in a safe and healthy environment. The EJ Element identifies Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs) that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

The EJ Element contains goals and policies which will:

- Reduce unique or compounded health risks in “disadvantaged communities”
- Promote civic engagement in public decision making
- Prioritize improvements and programs to address needs and benefits for “disadvantaged communities”

The EJ Element incorporates Topic Areas to assess conditions in these communities and develop objectives to reduce negative health impacts through strategies that include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing pollution exposure and improving air quality
- Promoting public facilities, defined as public improvements, public services, and community amenities
- Promoting food access
- Promoting safe and sanitary homes

The EJ Element is the County of San Diego’s commitment to the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes concerning the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. The EJ Element provides policy direction that supports environmental laws and regulations as well as policies that support the guiding principles established in the General Plan.

## Guiding Principles for Environmental Justice

The EJ Element maps, goals, and policies support the Guiding Principles specified in Chapter 2 of the General Plan. Specifically, Guiding Principle 10 provides direction for the EJ Element to ensure the community and stakeholders have engagement opportunities to impact strategies to minimize environmental and public health risks of the built environment. Community input is integral to the development of the EJ Element because the communities identified should have access and opportunities for engagement in the planning and decision-making processes that will affect them. To foster this engagement, compensation for people with lived experience will be explored and may include childcare, food, and transportation to promote meaningful engagement. Further, seeking ways to include education and training opportunities, establishing an Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, or incorporating other community benefits as part of this civic engagement may be explored. The EJ Element is a formalization of this Guiding Principle and introduces new policies and actions that promote civic engagement and access to the public decision-making process.



## Relationship to Other General Plan Elements

The EJ Element is closely linked to all other elements of the General Plan. Several EJ Element policies are directly interrelated with mandated topics in the Land Use, Housing, Mobility, Conservation and Open Space, and Safety Elements. For example:

- **Land Use** establishes the framework for shaping the types and siting of new development along with strategies to maintain and enhance existing development and character within the unincorporated County. The Pollution Exposure, Food Access, Physical Activity, and Public Facilities objectives within the EJ Element are closely related to Land Use.
- **Mobility** supports the Land Use element by identifying the major roads and transportation systems necessary to support the development of the land uses and densities laid out in the element. The Mobility Element also includes goals and policies related to safe multi-modal transportation systems that provide for the safe, accessible, and efficient movement of people and goods within the unincorporated County. The Physical Activity, Food Access, and Public Facilities objectives within the EJ Element are closely related to Mobility.
- **Conservation and Open Space** addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources including water, forests, soils, rivers, mineral deposits, and open space and includes goals and policies related to environmental conservation and air quality. The Pollution Exposure, Food Access, Physical Activity, and Public Facilities objectives within the EJ Element are closely related to Conservation and Open Space.
- **Housing** ensures that there is sufficient residential capacity available to meet the minimum needs established by the state at various income levels. The Safe and Sanitary Homes objective within the EJ Element is closely related to Housing.
- **Safety** identifies hazards to people and infrastructure and includes safety considerations in the planning and decision-making process by establishing policies related to future development that will minimize the risk of personal injury, loss of life, property damage, and environmental damage associated with natural and human-caused hazards. The Pollution Exposure, Public Facilities, and Safe and Sanitary Homes objectives within the EJ Element are closely related to Safety.

Within the EJ Element, while references to related policies are provided where necessary and applicable, the policies in the EJ Element are tailored to address specific environmental justice and public health-related issues. The referenced policies in other elements should also be reviewed to determine environmental, health, social equity, and other similar policies associated with the identified EJ Communities. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and any other applicable unincorporated communities.

Furthermore, the implementation programs and actions of EJ Element are incorporated into the standalone Implementation Plan of the entire General Plan. EJ Element implementation includes developing programs to monitor progress, prioritizing funding for EJ Communities, establishing cross-sector and multi-jurisdictional partnerships to address EJ issues, and other actions as appropriate.



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# Goals and Policies for the Environmental Justice Element

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## Identify Communities and Assessing Needs

### CONTEXT

Throughout history, low-income residents, communities of color, indigenous peoples and tribal nations, and immigrant communities have experienced disproportionate impacts of environmental burdens and related health problems. Facing these conditions, communities have confronted legacies of environmental racism and injustice by building their political and decision-making power. Across the country, this fight for environmental justice has led to many victories and benefits related to removing pollution sources; creating restrictions on new polluting sources; investing in parks, accessible public transportation, education programs, and affordable housing; and identifying strategies to ensure equitable access to environmental benefits and investments for low-income communities and communities of color.<sup>1</sup>

The vision of the County of San Diego is a region that is building better health, living safely, and thriving. The County's mission is to effectively provide public services that build strong and sustainable communities. All County of San Diego programs, practices, policies, and interventions support the *Live Well San Diego* vision. The three components – Building Better Health, Living Safely, and Thriving -- embody the vision of *Live Well San Diego*, which includes specific strategies and indicators to track outcomes related to health, wellness, and equity. The strategic approaches include Building a Better Service Delivery System; Supporting Positive Choices; Pursuing Policy, System, and Environmental Change; and Improving the Culture from Within. Our collective impact approach seeks to better understand health and its many determinants. We recognize that health is a lot more than just individual choices and behaviors. We understand that to achieve Health Equity, there are many key factors that must be in place including safe and healthy environments.

The methodology utilized by the County of San Diego for identifying “disadvantaged communities” for the EJ Element utilizes the state-recommended screening tool CalEnviroScreen 3.0 combined with localized data available through the County’s *Live Well San Diego* data Indicators as measurements of pollution, health, and social equity. This section contains the goals and policies used in identifying the disadvantaged communities for this initial version of the EJ Element, as well as policy guidance for including additional criteria to expand the identified EJ Communities for future EJ Element updates.

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

To broaden the reach of the EJ Element and to align with current County programs directed at high-need areas, the County’s methodology will refer to “disadvantaged communities” as Environmental Justice Communities (EJ Communities) to differentiate them from the State’s designated “disadvantaged communities.” The methodology includes data indicators from the following tools:

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<sup>1</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB100 Implementation Toolkit,” 2018.



- **CalEnviroScreen 3.0:** Criteria for environmental conditions in the case of pollution burden indicators, as well as health and vulnerability factors for characteristic population indicators. Each census tract in the state gets a combined score indicating the cumulative impact of pollution burdens and population vulnerability.
- **Live Well San Diego:** Localized data measuring health, wellness, and equity in San Diego County to address long-standing inequities and disparities through key interventions, programs, services for collective impact in communities that face barriers to achieving outcomes for building better health, living safely, and fostering thriving communities.

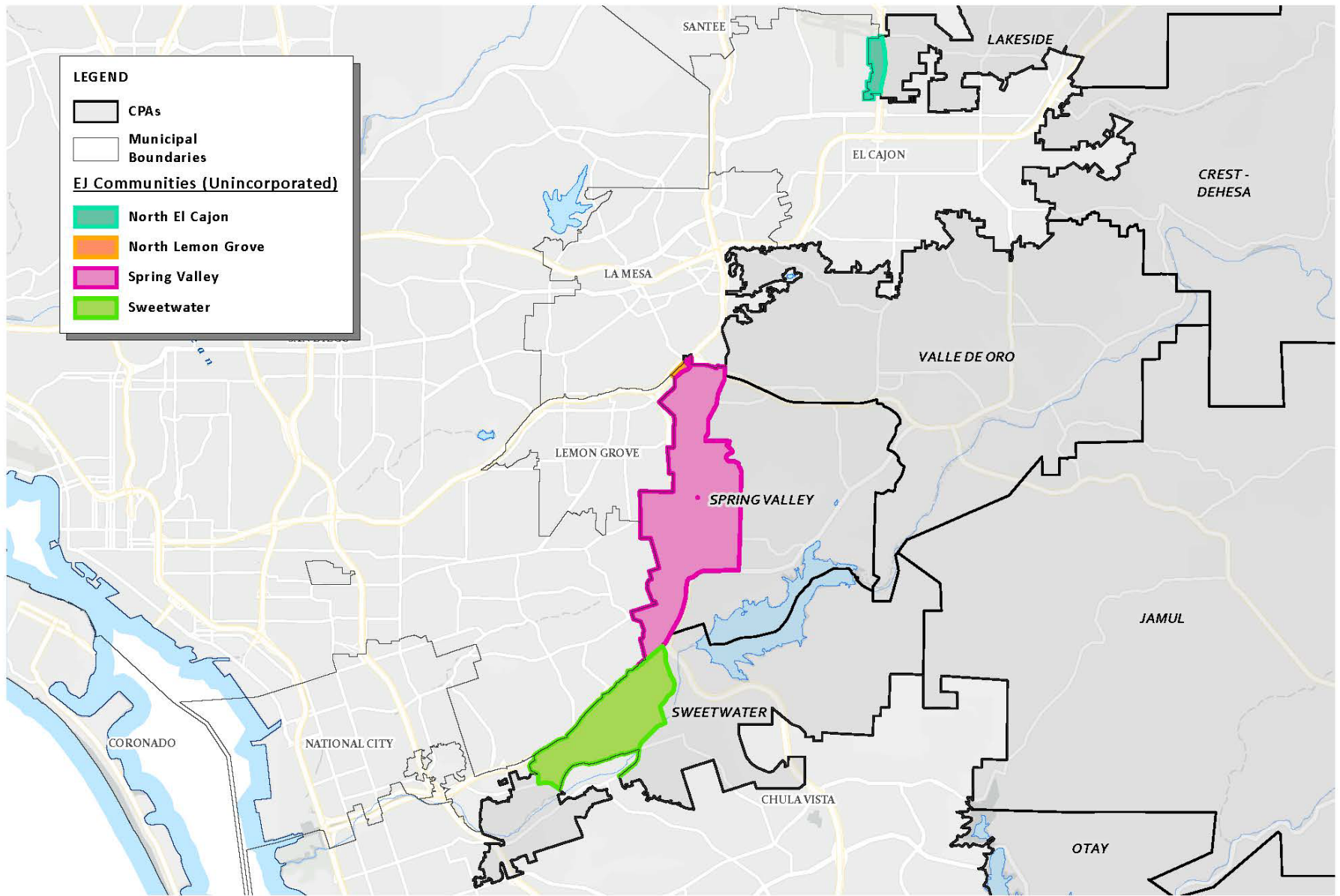
The customized methodology uses a layering system that identifies census tracts that share data outcomes and geographic boundaries from CalEnviroScreen and Live Well Communities that are located fully or partially within the County’s land use authority. The customized identification method includes, but is not limited to, the following indicators:

- **Pollution Exposure:** Air Quality Particulate Matter, Diesel Particulate Matter, Drinking Water Contaminants, Pesticide Use, Toxic Releases from Facilities, Traffic Density.
- **Environmental Effects:** Cleanup Sites, Groundwater Threats, Hazardous Waste Generators and Facilities, Impaired Waterbodies, and Solid Waste Sites and Facilities.
- **Sensitive Populations:** include but are not limited to people with asthma or other respiratory conditions, chronic illnesses, pregnant women, and low birth weight infants.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Educational Attainment, Housing Burden, Linguistic Isolation, Poverty, and Unemployment.

As the primary screening method for identifying “disadvantaged communities,” CalEnviroScreen has a publicly available interactive mapping tool to view how census tracts compare to one another across the state. The higher the CalEnviroScreen, the more a community is impacted. Census tracts that fall within the highest quartile of scores (between 75 to 100) are considered “disadvantaged communities” under SB1000. CalEnviroScreen 3.0 identified only two (2) census tracts that are considered DACs within the County’s jurisdiction within Northern El Cajon and Lemon Grove. Adding the fifteen (15) census tracts from *Live Well San Diego* data that are fully or partially within the County’s jurisdiction, the identification process resulted in seventeen (17) total census tracts with varying population sizes, demographics, socioeconomic characteristics, and environmental conditions that meet the intent for addressing environmental justice issues, concerns, and priorities as part of the EJ Element.

To better target engagement efforts and tailored goals, policies, and implementation measures in the EJ Element, the County grouped the 17 identified census tracts into four (4) distinct EJ Communities: North El Cajon, North Lemon Grove, Spring Valley, and Sweetwater (Figure 1). These communities span the unincorporated and incorporated (city) areas within the jurisdiction covered by the County’s General and share land use jurisdiction with the cities of Chula Vista, El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and San Diego.

The County’s General Plan only applies to the unincorporated area, therefore the goals, policies, and programs of the EJ Element likewise only apply to the unincorporated area. However, the County’s EJ Element was prepared in coordination with adjacent cities’ EJ policies and programs and the broader regionwide *Live Well San Diego* vision since environmental challenges and solutions are not constrained by jurisdictional boundaries. The EJ Element intends to address long-standing inequities, disparities, and disproportionality in the identified EJ Communities by focusing on key interventions that will engage the community, strengthen existing services, and improve outcomes.



# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

San Diego County General Plan

Figure EJ-1



## POPULATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Certain communities within the county experience historic discrimination, economic insecurity, and political disempowerment, which can lead to disproportionate pollution burdens, health impacts, and socioeconomic barriers. While the identified EJ Communities may experience similar environmental, socioeconomic, and geographic factors, each community encompasses distinctly different residential populations with their strengths, assets, and networks. This section will summarize existing conditions related to population characteristics, and socioeconomic factors within the four identified EJ Communities compared to the rest of the County.

### *Population and Density*

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (2014-2018), there are 3,343,364 people living within the county. Approximately 2.7% of the County’s population resides in the identified EJ Communities. Of the EJ Communities, Spring Valley is the most populous and most dense community, while North El Cajon is the least populous and least dense. However, compared to the County overall, each of the EJ Communities has a significantly higher population density measured by people per square mile.

**Table EJ-1. Population Density in EJ Communities**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
Population	3,657	4,153	46,202	27,600	3,343,364
Land Area (sq. mi.)	2.59	0.66	5.84	3.96	4,210.23
Population Density (people per sq. mi.)	1,414	6,328	7,915	6,977	794

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates (2014-2018); TIGERweb (2019)

### *Race and Ethnicity*

Examining the racial and ethnic makeup of communities is vital to identifying the strengths and assets of community networks, resources, and other indicators of social capital. It is also important in analyzing disparities related to pollution burdens, health impacts, quality of services, and level of community investments. Furthermore, race and ethnicity are one of the factors considered when measuring health equity and the social determinants of health, along with income, educational attainment, employment status, and access to healthcare. Achieving environmental justice goals requires that disparate conditions be understood and addressed so that resulting policies and implementation programs can prevent further inequities.

The population of EJ Communities is more racially and ethnically diverse than the county as a whole. According to 2015-2018 ACS Estimates, the county has 54.2 percent people of color overall (compared to California with 62.5 percent). Apart from North El Cajon, the only EJ Community with a majority White population (54.6%), the other EJs have a majority people of color population: North Lemon Grove (86.8%), Spring Valley (74.6%), Sweetwater (86.8%). The racial and ethnic breakdown within each EJ Community makes these areas unique and distinct. Black and African American residents make up a significantly larger share in each EJ Community compared to the county, led by Sweetwater (16%), and Spring Valley (15%). People who identify as Hispanic/Latino make up the second-largest ethnic population group within North Lemon Grove (48%) and Spring Valley (45%) exceeding the county as a whole (33.9%). Furthermore, Sweetwater has a significantly higher share of Asian residents (33%) compared to the other EJ Communities and the county as a whole (12.6%).



**Table EJ-2. Race and Ethnicity**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>White</b>	54.6%	13.2%	25.4%	13.2%	45.9%
<b>Black/ African American</b>	11.3%	28.2%	12.2%	12.5%	4.7%
<b>Asian</b>	7.3%	1.6%	11.9%	28.4%	11.6%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	18.9%	47.8%	45.0%	39.7%	33.5%
<b>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>	0.7%	0.0%	0.8%	1.2%	0.4%
<b>American Indian</b>	0.2%	1.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	6.9%	8.2%	4.0%	4.5%	3.4%
<b>Other</b>	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates (2014-2018)

**Age**

Youth and elderly populations experience the impacts of pollution burdens, health outcomes, and socioeconomic conditions differently from the average adult. The age ranges within EJ Communities are comparable to the county as a whole. According to the 2014-2018 ACS Estimates, North Lemon Grove has a larger percentage of residents under age 18 (34%) and over 65 (16%) compared to the other EJ Communities. North El Cajon has a significantly higher population of residents between the ages of 25-44 than the other EJ Communities (37%). A quarter of residents in Sweetwater are between 45-64. The prominent youth and older adult population will impact how goals and policies are implemented in these communities.

According to the Racial Equity Index and National Equity Atlas, the youth of color become disconnected – neither working nor in school – at higher rates than White youth due to inequities in concentrated poverty rates at the school and neighborhood-level. These disparities have been exacerbated throughout the history of racial segregation, exclusionary zoning laws, housing discrimination, and ongoing discriminatory hiring practices, and predatory lending schemes.<sup>2</sup> Within the county, 6 percent of youth aged 16 to 19 were not working or in school according to 2017 data, which is slightly lower than 7 percent of youth statewide. Within EJ Communities, there is a higher percentage of disconnected youth led by a portion of census tracts in Sweetwater (21% in Tract 32.07 and 13% in Tract 32.09); and Spring Valley (30% in Tract 138.01, 16% in 139.06, and 12% in Tract 140.02). Enacting policies that support sustained engagement with the youth population will help ensure that young people are empowered through decision-making processes and can better access educational and workforce opportunities.

**Languages Spoken and English Proficiency**

The development of the EJ Element intends to ensure that those most impacted by EJ issues are included in public decision-making processes. It is common that the people in these impacted communities may speak languages other than English which may create additional barriers to navigate traditional public

<sup>2</sup> National Equity Atlas, “Disconnected Youth,” 2017 retrieved from [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Disconnected\\_youth](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Disconnected_youth).



processes without additional resources and support.<sup>3</sup> According to 2014-2018 ACS Estimates, the three primary languages spoken in the County are English (58%), Spanish (23.3%), and Tagalog (2.85%). Of those who speak a language other than English, 30.4 percent reported to the U.S. Census that they speak English “well” or “very well.”<sup>4</sup> The primary language in each EJ Community has a relatively similar breakdown:

- **North El Cajon:** English (60%), Spanish (15%), Arabic (10%), Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Other Asian and Pacific Islander (8%)
- **North Lemon Grove:** English (58%), Spanish (34%), and Other/Unspecified (5%)
- **Spring Valley:** English (56%), Spanish (33%), and Tagalog (6%)
- **Sweetwater:** English (46%), Spanish (31%), and Tagalog (19%)

Within the EJ Communities, Spanish is the most common non-English primary language followed by Tagalog being the second most common. In Sweetwater, there is a significantly higher percentage of residents who speak Tagalog compared to the other EJ Communities. Further, approximately 10 percent of residents in North El Cajon speak Arabic, and 8 percent of residents speak either Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, or another Asian and Pacific Islander language.

**Educational Attainment**

Educational attainment is another factor used to measure the social determinants of health and can also indicate the level of accessibility and involvement in public decision-making processes. According to the California Healthy Places Index, everyone should be able to seek opportunities for higher education, access quality jobs and higher wages, gain knowledge to make healthy choices and build important social and cognitive skills.<sup>5</sup> Within the EJ Element, goals, policies, and implementation programs should consider all levels of education and not only benefit those who have completed a Bachelor’s Education or higher. Compared to the county as a whole (87.1%), North El Cajon (94%) is the only EJ Community with a higher percentage of residents over age 25 who have completed High School or higher. North Lemon Grove has the lowest level of educational attainment with 15.6 percent of residents over age 25 who have received a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to the other EJ Communities and County (38.1%).

**Table EJ-3. Level of Educational Attainment**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
High School or Higher	94.0%	72.7%	81.7%	84.0%	87.1%
Bachelor’s or Higher	23.4%	15.6%	18.5%	23.5%	38.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates, 2014-2018

**Household Income**

All households should be able to afford basic necessities, including medical care, food, quality housing, and education. As a measurement of community well-being, the ability to access economic opportunity and positive health impacts are closely linked. People experiencing poverty are most negatively impacted when forced to

<sup>3</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB100 Implementation Toolkit”, 2018

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, “Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Over,” Table C16001, 2018

<sup>5</sup> California Healthy Places Index, 2018



choose between affording basic human needs and quality of life.<sup>6</sup> According to the American Community Survey Estimates (2014-2018), the median household income for the County of San Diego is approximately \$74,855. Within the EJ Communities, there is a wide range of median household incomes among census tracts. Apart from two census tracts in Spring Valley and Sweetwater with median incomes above \$80,000, the rest of the EJ Communities are well below the level of the county ranging between \$33,824 in North Lemon Grove to \$56,477 in North El Cajon.

The U.S. Census Bureau also measures poverty status for individuals and families. In 2018, the federal poverty level (FPL) for individuals started at \$12,140 increasing by approximately \$4,320 for each additional person in a family. According to American Community Survey Estimates (2014-2018), 12.5 percent of the population in San Diego County live below the FPL. In the EJ Communities, North Lemon Grove has the highest poverty level (21%) followed by North El Cajon (18%) and Spring Valley (12.6%). In California, 200% of the federal poverty level is often used to measure poverty due to high costs of living with \$24,280 as the income threshold for an individual. In the county, nearly 1 out of 3 residents have incomes below that level. At this threshold, North Lemon Grove, North El Cajon, and Spring Valley all have higher poverty levels compared to the County.

**Table EJ-4. Poverty Status**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>Below Federal Poverty Level (% of Population)</b>	18.0%	21.0%	12.6%	9.9%	12.5%
<b>Income &lt; 200% of Poverty Level (% of Population)</b>	34.9%	58.0%	34.2%	24.5%	29.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates, 2014-2018

**Car Ownership**

Owning a car and having access to a vehicle brings certain benefits and opportunities to individuals and families including access to jobs, food, medical care, and leisure and recreation. For those that do not own or have access to a vehicle, everyone should still be able to rely on safe and convenient transportation options, such as taking public transit, walking, or biking.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, a person’s access to opportunities and basic necessities should not be limited or hindered by the lack of access to a car. In San Diego County, 5.5 percent of households do not have a vehicle while 30 percent of households have at least one vehicle available, according to 2014-2018 ACS Estimates. For EJ Communities, North Lemon Grove has a significantly higher percentage of households without a vehicle (20.6%), followed by North El Cajon (10.9%).

Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and any other applicable unincorporated communities.

<sup>6</sup> California Health Places Index, 2018

<sup>7</sup> California Healthy Places Index, 2018



## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-1

**EJ Community Programs and Services.** Support and expand programs and services in the Implementation Plan to prioritize those that identify EJ Communities, address EJ issues, and foster partnerships with countywide partnerships and programs.

### Policies

- EJ-1.1 Expansion of EJ Communities.** Provide on-going engagement with unincorporated residents and stakeholders to evaluate additional criteria for the inclusion of communities not currently identified as EJ Communities.
- EJ-1.2 Prioritize Funding.** County departments should prioritize fiscal decisions and general discretionary funds for recreation, air quality and other environmental improvements, public infrastructure investments, community programming, and engagement opportunities in EJ Communities.
- EJ-1.3 Explore Collaborative Partnerships (all unincorporated areas).** Continue to identify current and potential partners and programs to implement EJ-related activities across the county and in countywide plans and initiatives.

## Reduce Pollution Exposure and Improve Air Quality

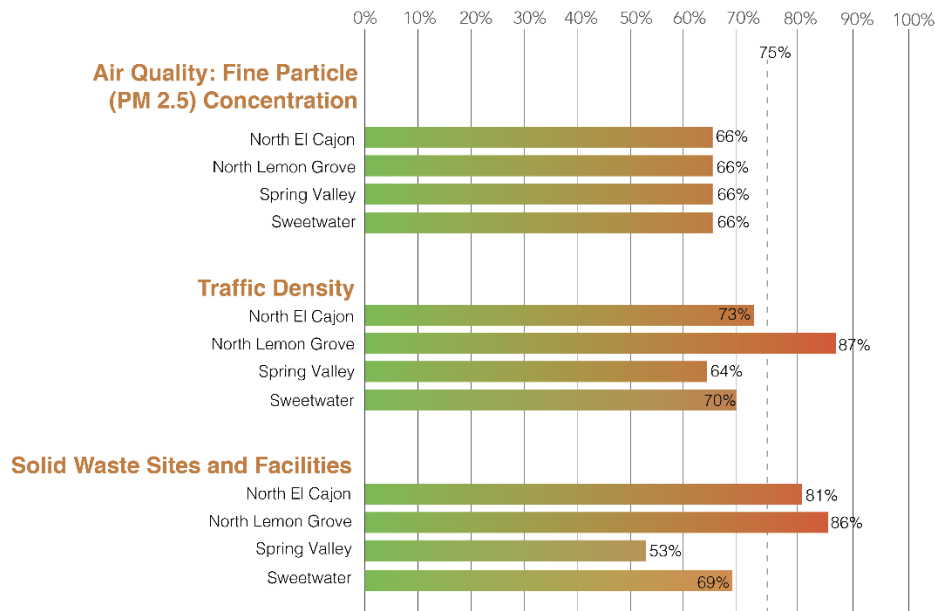
### CONTEXT

Pollution exposure occurs when people interact with contaminants in the air, food, water, and soil often due to conflicting land uses sited near one another. These contaminants and pollution sources do not impact everyone equally. Vulnerable populations (such as children, older adults, low-income families, people with chronic health conditions, etc.) and sensitive land uses (such as schools, housing, parks, medical facilities, senior living, childcare, etc.) are more susceptible to pollution exposure impacts. EJ Communities are disproportionately impacted by multiple pollution sources, including toxic gas emissions from solid waste facilities, mobile and stationary sources such as vehicle and diesel engine exhaust, hazardous chemicals contaminating groundwater and soil from leaking storage tanks.<sup>8</sup> California Government Code Section 65302(h) mandates that the EJ Element assess the “unique or compounded health risks” due to pollution exposure in EJ Communities and focuses on pollution sources related to air pollution, groundwater contamination, and toxic and hazardous materials. According to CalEnviroScreen 3.0, the top three pollution burdens for EJ Communities (compared to other census tracts across the state) are fine particle (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentration, traffic density, and solid waste sites and facilities. Percentages at or above 75 percent demonstrate an unhealthy level of pollution or a high level of vulnerability to environmental hazards.

<sup>8</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB1000 Implementation Toolkit,” 2018



Figure EJ-2. Top 3 Pollution Burdens for EJ Communities



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

While some EJ Communities may be below the 75 percent marker compared to the rest of the state, when compared to the rest of San Diego County as a whole, there are disproportionate impacts borne by these communities for these categories. The sections below will describe the pollution exposure and environmental effects that EJ Communities experience.

## AIR POLLUTION

Air quality is an important factor that affects community health and the environment. Research has consistently linked toxic air contaminants to incidences of respiratory diseases, including asthma and lung cancer.<sup>9</sup> Regulatory agencies assess air quality by measuring a combination of ozone, particulate matter, diesel exhaust, and traffic density. Air pollution emission sources in the San Diego Air Basin are typically grouped into two categories: stationary and mobile sources. Mobile source emissions can be attributed to vehicles and transportation-related activities. Stationary sources can be further divided into two major subcategories: point and area sources. Point source emissions originate from manufacturing and industrial processes. Area source emissions are generated from residential heaters, small engines, and other consumer products. EJ Communities in San Diego County are more susceptible to unhealthy air quality due to a combination of incompatible land uses proximity to transportation corridors and vulnerable population characteristics that experience negative health outcomes.

### Particulate Matter

Particulate matter (PM) refers to a broad class of aerosolized solid and liquid particles that come from a variety of mobile and stationary sources involving combustion. These particles include any combination of organic chemicals, dust, allergens, and metals. Exposure to PM is linked to adverse effects on the heart and lungs depending on the particulate size. The smaller the particle size, the higher likelihood the particles can penetrate

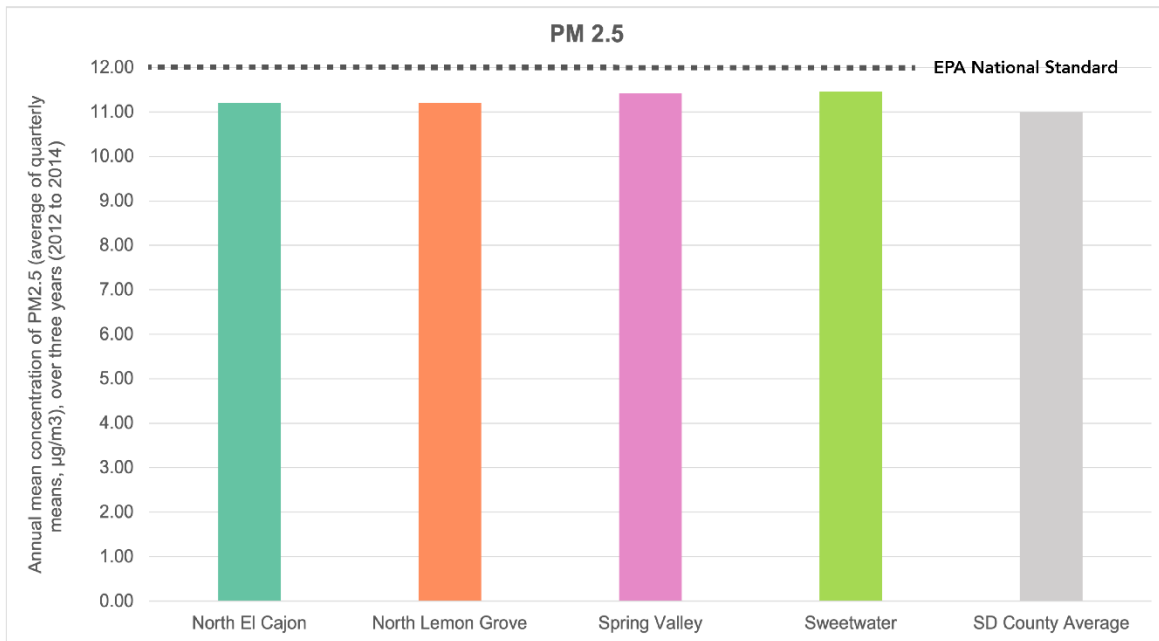
<sup>9</sup> Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2017



the lungs and, in some cases, the bloodstream.<sup>10</sup>

PM2.5 refers to particles that have a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less. Research indicates that short and long-term exposure to PM2.5 can cause lung injury and inflammation, blood clot formation, asthma attacks, and chronic bronchitis, to name a few. Children, the elderly, and persons suffering from cardiopulmonary disease, asthma, and chronic illness are the most vulnerable to the effects of PM exposure. According to CalEnviroScreen 3.0, all the County’s EJ Communities experience slightly higher PM2.5 concentration levels than the County’s average. Since the inception of the federal PM2.5 standard in 1997, the US Environmental Protection Agency has designated the San Diego County region as Unclassifiable/Attainment.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure EJ-3. Concentration of Particulate Matter 2.5 (2012-2014)**



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

**Asthma**

Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by episodic breathlessness, wheezing, coughing, and chest tightness. While the causes of asthma are poorly understood, it is well established that exposure to traffic and outdoor air pollutants, including PM, ozone, and diesel exhaust, can trigger asthma attacks.<sup>12</sup> People with asthma are also especially susceptible to pneumonia, flu, and other respiratory illnesses.

Based on CalEnviroScreen 3.0 data, the EJ Communities in San Diego County experience more asthma-induced emergency room (ER) visits than the County as a whole, led by North Lemon Grove. In comparison to the State, North Lemon Grove had a higher rate of ER visits for asthma (per 10,000 visits) than 76 percent of other census tracts, putting it within the top 25 percent in the state. Both North El Cajon and Spring Valley had higher rates of ER visits for asthma than 66 percent of census tracts across the state, putting those tracts among the highest third.

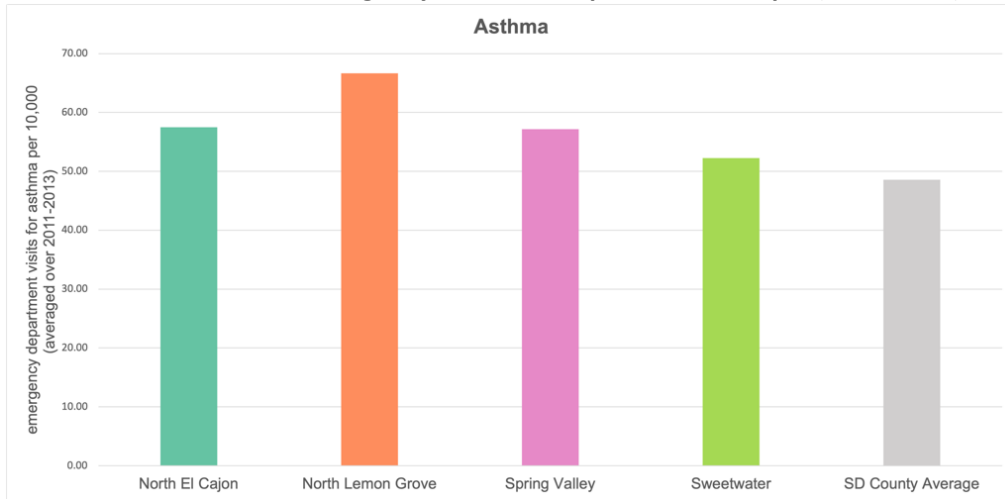
<sup>10</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Air Quality Designations for the 2012 Primary Annual Fine Particle (PM2.5) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)”, 40 CFR Part 81, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2017



**Figure EJ-4. Asthma-Related Emergency Room Visits per 10,000 People (2011-2013)**



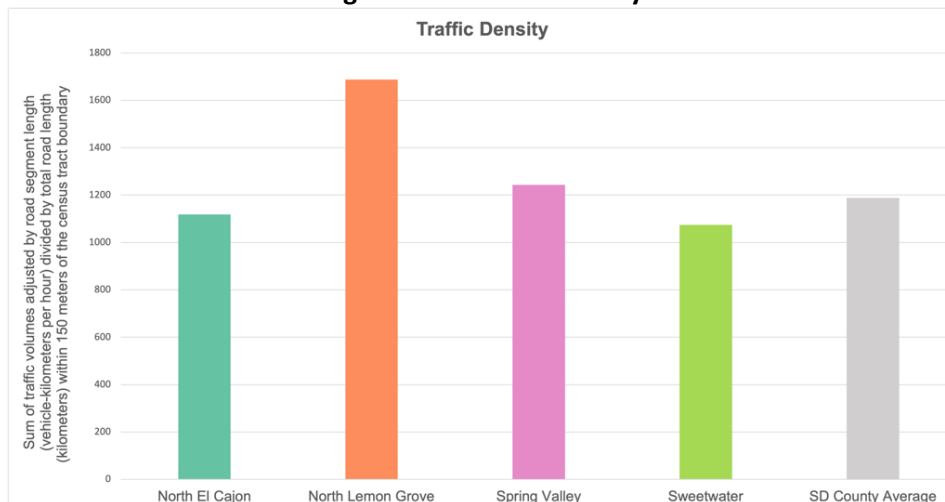
Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

The higher rate of asthma-related ER visits in EJ Communities is also closely linked to traffic density (measured by vehicle kilometers/hour divided by total road length) and proximity to freeways and other high-volume road networks. As such, many census tracts within EJ Communities score in the top quarter tier of state census tracts for traffic density.

**Traffic Density**

Within EJ Communities, several high-volume highways and road networks are nearby residential neighborhoods. State Route 54 connects El Cajon, Spring Valley, and Sweetwater to major junctions with Interstate 8 and 805. State Route 125 connects all four EJ Communities to Otay Mesa and the U.S.-Mexico Border. For traffic density, North Lemon Grove, and Spring Valley all exceeded the County’s average traffic volume, likely due to the high-volume of State Routes 94 and 125.

**Figure EJ-5. Traffic Density**



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018



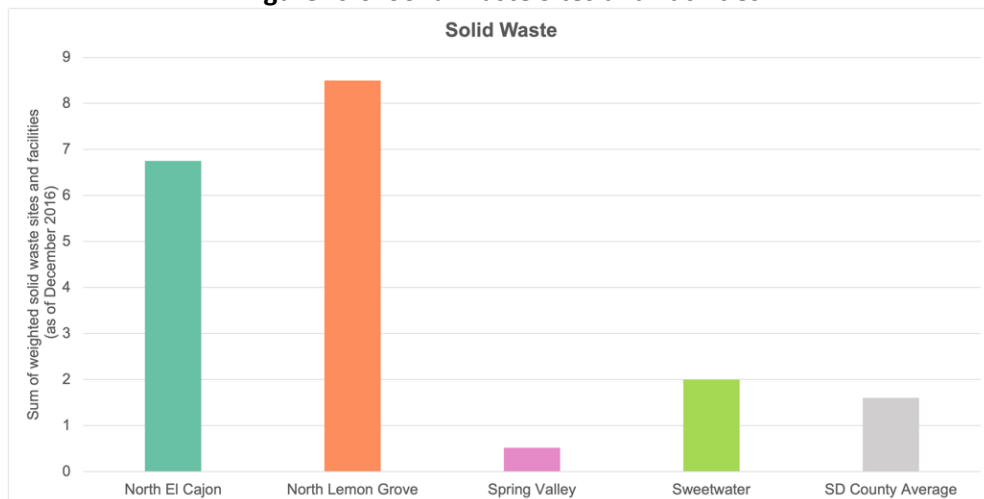
## HAZARDOUS AND TOXIC FACILITIES

Many EJ Communities have multiple sources of pollution and toxic and hazardous materials exposure from cleanup sites, hazardous waste facilities, and solid waste sites and facilities. This type of pollution exposure often results from historical incompatibility of land uses or a high concentration of industrial facilities sited near residential areas, schools, parks, and healthcare facilities.

### **Solid Waste Sites and Facilities**

Solid waste sites and facilities, such as landfills, composting sites, and recycling centers, are susceptible to contaminating air, water, and soil with hazardous materials. While many newer facilities are designed to meet environmental standards, solid waste facilities may still impact nearby communities via odors, vermin, and increased truck traffic.<sup>13</sup> The California Department of Resources, Recycling, and Recovery (CalRecycle) maintains a database of permitted, abandoned, closed, and illegal solid waste sites and facilities across the state. In San Diego County, North El Cajon and North Lemon Grove contain or are nearby more solid waste facilities compared to other EJ Communities and the County as a whole. Common facilities include waste management and recycling facilities.

**Figure EJ-6. Solid Waste Sites and Facilities**



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

### **Cleanup Sites**

Cleanup sites are places that suffered environmental degradation due to the presence of hazardous substances. Also known as “brownfields,” these sites pose potential health risks to nearby residents and workers and often remain underutilized due to remediation costs or concerns about liability. Studies have identified ways hazardous substances can move off-site and impact surrounding communities through “volatilization, groundwater plume migration, or windblown dust.”<sup>14</sup> The California Department of Toxic Substances Control maintains a public database, EnviroStor, with information on cleanup sites. Of San Diego’s EJ Communities, North El Cajon contains or is within a kilometer of 13 cleanup sites, more than any other census tract in the County’s jurisdiction. These sites include metal product producers, military facilities, and Magnolia Elementary School, which is undergoing remediation.

<sup>13</sup> Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHA), 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



Figure EJ-7. Cleanup Sites

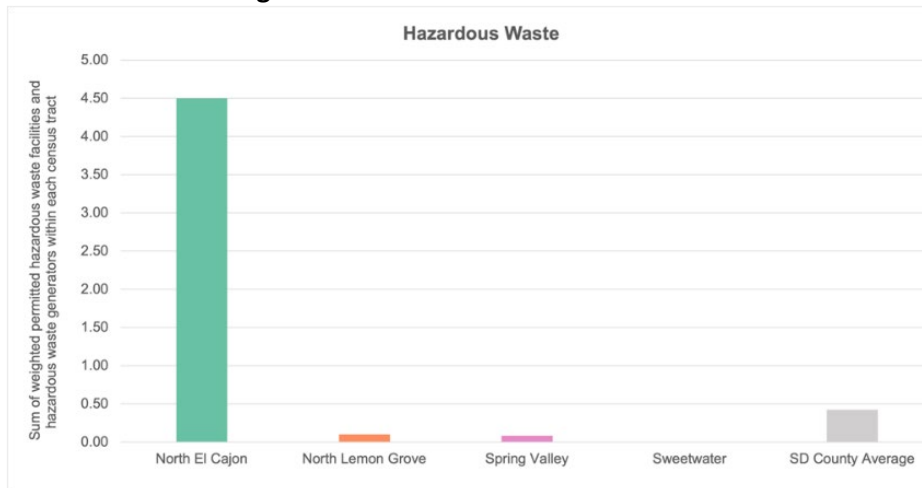


Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

**Hazardous Waste Generators and Facilities**

Hazardous waste refers to liquids, solids, or contained gases deemed potentially dangerous or harmful to human health or the environment by US EPA and DTSC. Both agencies have standards to determine when waste materials must be treated as hazardous waste. Most hazardous waste is transported from hazardous waste generators to permitted facilities, which include recycling, treatment, storage, or disposal sites.<sup>15</sup> DTSC maintains a public database, EnviroStor, on permitted facilities involved in the treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous waste. Of the County’s EJ Communities, North El Cajon contains or is nearby 19 hazardous waste generators and permitted treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. With a 96% percentile CalEnviroScreen score, this census tract holds a significantly disproportionate number of facilities compared to the rest of the county and state as a whole. Example facilities include metal processing facilities, aerospace product manufacturers, a Caltrans vehicle maintenance facility, to name a few.

Figure EJ-8. Hazardous Waste Facilities



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

<sup>15</sup> Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), CalEnviroScreen Indicators, <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicators>.



## WATER CONTAMINATION

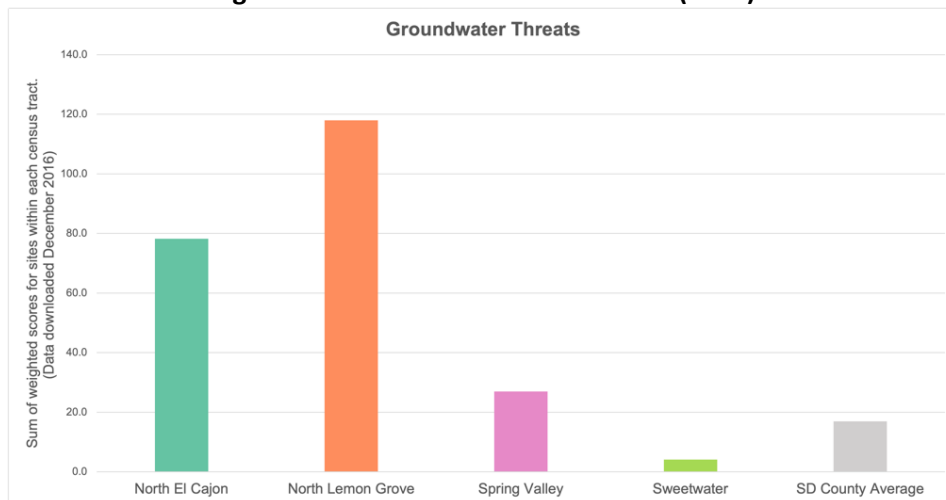
Water contamination can impact EJ Communities in many ways, including lack of access to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water due to unsanitary conditions of local drinking water sources; and polluted streams, rivers, and other bodies of water that make outdoor recreation and water access especially hazardous to humans. Since water quality is a regional issue, so goals and policies must apply countywide to protect, enhance, and restore water resources for EJ Communities.

The San Diego County Water Authority (Water Authority) is responsible for providing safe drinking water to its 24 retail member agencies and their customers. The member agencies are represented on a 36-member Board of Directors. A member of the Board of Supervisors also serves as a non-voting representative to the Water Authority Board. Approximately 80 percent of the county’s water is imported through the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, from the Colorado River and the State Water Project. The pipelines come under the Water Authority’s ownership just south of the Riverside-San Diego county line and carry either fully treated potable water or untreated water that is then treated within the county.<sup>16</sup>

### Groundwater Threats

Groundwater accounts for about 5 percent of the San Diego region’s water supply portfolio. While the Water Authority does not hold groundwater rights, it does provide financial and technical assistance to member agencies that are evaluating, planning, and implementing groundwater recovery projects.<sup>17</sup> Groundwater basins are susceptible to contamination from numerous sources, including leaking underground storage tanks, industrial operations, and agricultural activities. CalEnviroScreen uses data from GeoTracker to determine groundwater threat scores for each census tract. The State Water Resources Control Board uses GeoTracker to identify sites that impact or potentially impact water quality. The North Lemon Grove EJ Community received the highest groundwater threats score, followed by North El Cajon and Spring Valley. According to GeoTracker, the most common leaking underground storage tanks in these communities include gasoline stations and industrial sites, including the Gillespie Field Airport in North El Cajon.

Figure EJ-9. Groundwater Threat Sites (2016)



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

<sup>16</sup> San Diego County Water Authority

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

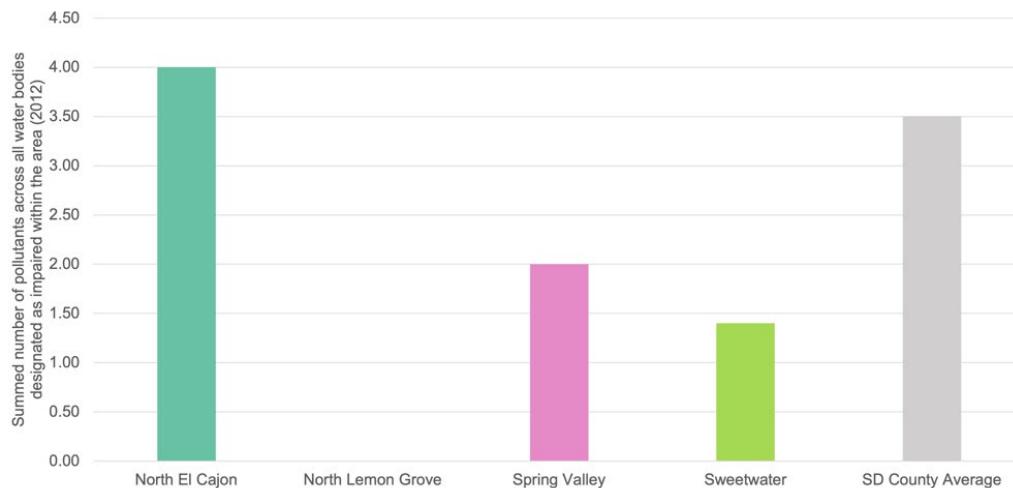


**Impaired Waterbodies**

Rivers, lakes, streams, and other bodies of water provide important uses to San Diego County residents. Water bodies provide recreational space for residents to swim and fish, as well as support biological diversity (OEHHA). Every two years, the State Water Resources Control Board evaluates surface water quality throughout California, designating lakes, streams, and rivers that do not meet water quality standards as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

Based on CalEnviroScreen 3.0, North El Cajon has the highest number of pollutants across impaired water bodies. Forrester Creek, for instance, is a designated impaired water body in North El Cajon that is contaminated in part due to stormwater runoff, industrial point sources, and other unknown sources in proximity to the Gillespie Field Airport.<sup>18</sup> In both Spring Valley and Sweetwater, the Sweetwater Reservoir and Lower Sweetwater River are both designated as impaired water bodies contaminated due in part to urban runoff and agriculture uses.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure EJ-10. Number of Pollutants for Impaired Water Bodies (2012)**



Source: CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018

**Drinking Water**

According to CalEnviroScreen 3.0, most drinking water in the state meets health and safety requirements since it is regulated by several local, state, and federal agencies. Contamination can occur when both natural and human sources of chemicals or bacteria impact the quality of water. Natural contaminants can be found in rock sediments, soil, or from wildfires. Human contaminants include factories, sewage, and runoff from farms.<sup>20</sup> Low-income communities and rural areas are often exposed to contaminants in their drinking water at higher rates compared to other parts of the state which can lead to significant health impacts.<sup>21</sup>

The indicator combines information about 13 contaminants and two types of water quality violations that are sometimes found when drinking water samples are tested. OEHHA calculated average concentrations for the contaminants in each water system across the state. The level of contaminants in drinking water within EJ Communities all fall below the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to other census tracts in the State, which is slightly higher

<sup>18</sup> California Environmental Protection Agency, State Water Resources Control Board, 2010

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), 2017.

<sup>21</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, "SB100 Implementation Toolkit," 2018.



then the San Diego County average (30.89 percentile). While unsafe drinking water does not seem to be a widespread issue within EJ Communities, the County of San Diego provides public information about updated water district contact information, resources, and educational materials about monitoring water quality and reporting unsanitary conditions. The State Water Resources Control Board manages water quality monitoring statewide and provides numerous data monitoring tools available to the public.

For more detail, the Conservation and Open Space Element (Chapter 5) examines the conditions and impacts of air quality, climate change, energy, and water resources. The Safety Element (Chapter 7) examines hazard mitigation, including the conditions of exposure to toxic materials. The EJ Element goals, policies, and implementation programs aim to clean up existing pollution sources, reduce specific pollution sources, separate sensitive land uses, mitigate existing impacts on sensitive land uses, and prevent new pollution sources from developing. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and any other applicable unincorporated communities.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-2

**Protect Sensitive Land Use Compatibility.** Support and expand land use development, transportation patterns, pollution mitigation, and other techniques to ensure compatibility that protects sensitive land uses (e.g. schools, housing, health facilities, childcare facilities, senior centers, parks, etc.) from increased pollution exposure in EJ Communities.

#### Policies

- EJ-2.1 Monitor Industrial Proximity.** Establish programs that monitor, evaluate, and report the immediate and long-term health and environmental impacts of the proximity of sensitive land uses to industrial areas in EJ Communities. *See Land Use Element Policies: LU-10.4, LU-11.1, LU-11.2, LU-11.9, LU-11.10, LU-11.11.*
- EJ-2.2 Limit New Toxic and Hazardous Waste Facilities.** Continue enforcement of policies and programs that disallow siting and construction of new large-scale hazardous waste facilities on or near sensitive land uses in and around EJ Communities.
- EJ-2.3 Renewable Energy Facilities.** Develop criteria to identify and evaluate potential environmental impacts of storage, operation, and maintenance of renewable energy facilities and products that affect EJ Communities.
- EJ-2.4 Designated Truck Routes.** Consistent with the Mobility Element, minimize heavy truck traffic and designate routes away from residential neighborhoods and other sensitive areas in EJ Communities.
- EJ-2.5 Conflicting Land Use Buffers (all unincorporated areas).** Consistent with the Land Use Element, avoid land use conflicts by ensuring sensitive land uses are adequately buffered from heavy industrial uses and other facilities that may pose a threat to human health. *See Land Use Element Policies: LU-2.8, LU-4.5, LU-6.10, LU-11.2, LU-11.10.*



- EJ-2.6 Pollution Reduction Incentives (all unincorporated areas).** Encourage existing stationary sources of emissions to use feasible measures to minimize emissions that could have potential impacts on air quality. Incentivize non-conforming uses to relocate to appropriate industrial zones if currently impacting sensitive land uses.
- EJ-2.7 New Sensitive Land Uses (all unincorporated areas).** Consistent with the Land Use Element, avoid locating new homes, schools, childcare and eldercare facilities, parks and recreation, and health care facilities within 500 feet of freeways, urban roads with 100,000 vehicles/day, or rural roads with 50,000 vehicles/day.
- EJ-2.8 Existing Sensitive Land Uses (all unincorporated areas).** Consistent with the Land Use Element, promote policies, programs, and incentives (such as buffers, monitoring requirements, permit inspection, etc.) to minimize health, noise, and environmental impacts on existing homes, schools, childcare, and eldercare facilities, parks, and recreation, and healthcare facilities located within 500 feet of freeways, urban roads with 100,000 vehicles/day, or rural roads with 50,000 vehicles/day.

### GOAL EJ-3

**Equitable and Healthy Air Quality.** Improve air quality conditions for communities so that all residents can live, work, and play in their community without disproportionate risk of air pollution and related negative health impacts.

#### Policies

- EJ-3.1 Point Source Emissions.** County will collaborate with San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) to continue to identify and reduce point source emissions (Ozone, Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, Diesel PM) in EJ Communities and monitor the environmental and health impacts on populations in EJ communities to track progress and outcomes.
- EJ-3.2 Smoke-Free Environments (all unincorporated areas).** Reduce current gaps in protections for smoke-free public spaces, including entryways, sidewalks, special events, worksites, and services areas. Monitor and reduce air quality and environmental impacts of secondhand and thirdhand smoke to protect County residents from negative health impacts.
- EJ-3.3 Air Quality Compliance (all unincorporated areas).** Review and update County regulations and/or requirements, based on improved technology, and new rules and regulations. Identify trends and patterns of non-compliance and make this information available to EJ communities if not already available.
- EJ-3.4 Industrial Business Operations and Practices (all unincorporated areas).** Collaborate with the industrial business community to improve outdoor air quality through enhanced operations and other pollution reduction practices, including permit inspection incentives and collaboration to obtain grants, where possible.
- EJ-3.5 Design Review Considerations (all unincorporated areas).** Explore the feasibility to include in the design review process, the use of measures to reduce indoor air quality impacts (i.e., air filtration systems sufficient to mitigate the effects of wildfire smoke, kitchen range top exhaust fans, and low-VOC paint and carpet for new developments).



- EJ-3.6 Community Engagement for Monitoring (all unincorporated areas).** Support and promote ongoing community engagement for participating in air quality monitoring programs and incentives.
- EJ-3.7 Carbon Sequestration Efforts (all unincorporated areas).** Consistent with the Land Use Element and Climate Action Plan, support and promote carbon sequestration and carbon farming efforts for agricultural lands in unincorporated areas to mitigate air, water, and soil pollution exposure and help build climate resilience. *See Land Use Element Policy LU-6.1 and Climate Action Plan Strategy A-6.*

## GOAL EJ-4

**Protect and Restore Surface Water.** Protect and restore surface water bodies in the unincorporated area, including those within EJ Communities, from future contamination.

### Policies

- EJ-4.1 Remediation (all unincorporated areas).** Support and expand policies and programs and coordinate with local and regional agencies to continue remediation and treatment efforts for contaminated surface water, groundwater, and soils in affected EJ Communities. *See Land Use Element Policies LU-8.1, LU-8.2*
- EJ-4.2 Water Restoration Funding Sources (all unincorporated areas).** Prioritize applying for state and federal funding sources to restore contaminated water bodies.
- EJ-4.3 Green Infrastructure Standards (all unincorporated areas).** Develop green infrastructure standards that rely on natural processes for stormwater drainage, groundwater recharge, and flood management. Explore feasibility of expanding green infrastructure projects on public, underutilized land. *See Land Use Element Policy LU-6.5.*
- EJ-4.4 Water Quality Incentives (all unincorporated areas).** Incentivize water quality improvement programs and green infrastructure implementation in EJ Communities and other unincorporated communities.



## Promotion of Public Facilities

### CONTEXT

EJ Communities may lack adequate access to public facilities necessary to promote a healthy quality of life. SB1000 refers to public facilities as “public improvements, public services, and community amenities” pursuant to California Government Code Section 66000. This includes a variety of public buildings and infrastructure, such as community centers, schools, parks, and open space, and emergency services. The prevalence of these public facilities plays an important role in providing residents amenities and services that enhance community resilience, health, and wellbeing.

#### ***Existing Facilities and Community Amenities***

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) maintains a geodatabase of the following public facilities and community amenities across San Diego County:

- Schools
- Libraries
- Childcare Centers
- Fire Stations
- Police Stations
- Medical Facilities (Clinics, Hospitals)
- Shopping Centers and Business Sites
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Bike Routes
- Transit Routes and Stops

Each of these public facilities or amenities provides an important function in a community. Schools, libraries, and childcare centers, for instance, are important for childhood development. Proximity to fire and police stations reduces arrival times for emergency situations. Lastly, parks, bike routes, and transit facilities promote active transportation and recreation, which are significant drivers in physical and mental health.<sup>22</sup>

While the County of San Diego does not have the purview over all these types of facilities, the County is committed to working with the appropriate entities to promote the equitable distribution and adequate maintenance of these facility types countywide, where appropriate. The County can also guide the siting of new facilities in areas of growth and work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that existing facilities are serving those with the highest need.

#### ***Crime Hot Spots***

Increased crime activity in neighborhoods, such as property theft and violent assaults, can have significant impacts on the health, well-being, and social cohesion of a community and contribute to premature death and disability, poor mental health, and increased prevalence of certain illnesses such as high blood pressure and asthma.<sup>23</sup> *Live Well San Diego* measures overall crime as an indicator of security for community health and wellness and employs several collective action strategies to influence healthy choices and behaviors, increase the perception of community safety, and reduce the total crime rate across the county. Example strategies include early youth intervention programs, park safety improvements, street lighting, and design improvements, and neighborhood

<sup>22</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB1000 Implementation Toolkit,” 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Live Well San Diego, 2017



outreach and engagement.<sup>24</sup>

SANDAG’s Criminal Justice Research Division aims to support local criminal justice planning and policy initiatives by providing data reporting and analyses of crime occurrence, trends, and response strategies. The County of San Diego reports crime data to SANDAG through the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS) Database and CrimeMapping. In 2017, there were approximately 2,032 violent and property crimes per 100,000 people. Of these, five out of six crimes are property crimes, and one out of six crimes is a violent crime.<sup>25</sup> Property crimes include burglary, theft, and motor vehicle thefts. Violent crimes include murder, rape, robberies, and aggravated assaults.<sup>26</sup>

Within the unincorporated county, the Sheriff’s Department provides crime data reporting based on “Sheriff Beat” areas that do not directly correlate to the census tract level for EJ Communities. Table EJ-X compares EJ Communities and the County overall and their incidents of violent crime and property crime rates per 1,000 residents for a six-month period between June through December 2020.

**Table EJ-5. Property Crime and Violent Crime Rates Per 1,000 People**

Crime (per 1,000 people)	Rate	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	Unincorporated Areas*	County of San Diego*
Population (2018)		3,657	4,153	46,202	27,600	492,491	3,343,364
Property Crime Rate		19.7	13.7	2.4	1.6	10.1	7.0
Violent Crime Rate		8.5	11.1	3.1	1.0	3.2	1.8
Total Crime Rate		28.2	24.8	5.5	2.6	13.4	8.9

Source: CrimeMapping and ARJIS, 2020

\*Crime data for San Diego County and Unincorporated Areas gathered from the ARJIS Database for the period of June 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020

Among the EJ Communities, North El Cajon and North Lemon Grove have the highest crime rates (per 1,000 people) compared to the rest of the unincorporated areas and the county. The crime rates for Spring Valley and Sweetwater are significantly lower than the rates for both the unincorporated areas and countywide.

Within the existing General Plan, the Land Use Element, Conservation, and Open Space Element, Mobility Element, and Safety Element all contain additional context and specific goals and policies related to many public facilities and improvements, including road networks, bike infrastructure, civic buildings, open space restoration, and emergency services. The Physical Activity Section within the EJ Element also covers parks, recreation centers, and bike and pedestrian facilities in more detail.

The EJ Element goals and policies are aimed at increasing access and ensuring equitable distribution and maintenance of public facilities, infrastructure, and community services in EJ Communities. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-5

<sup>24</sup> Live Well San Diego, 2017

<sup>25</sup> Live Well San Diego, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> SANDAG, Automated Regional Justice Information System, <http://crimestats.arjis.org>.



**Distribution and Quality of Public Facilities, Infrastructure, and Services.** Ensure public facilities are equitably located and services are distributed throughout EJ Communities at an operational level comparable to the rest of the unincorporated County.

## Policies

- EJ-5.1 Responsive to Community Needs.** Ensure public facilities, infrastructure, services, and crime prevention strategies are responsive to community needs and adaptive to shifting priorities for future demand in EJ Communities by proactively engaging residents through needs assessments and ongoing community outreach.
- EJ-5.2 Priority Siting and Improvements.** Prioritize siting for new civic buildings, provision of County services, infrastructure improvements, and community amenities based on community-identified locations and feedback from EJ Communities (e.g. community centers, schools, parks, and open space, and emergency services, and improvements for transportation infrastructure, such as road maintenance, bike, and pedestrian facilities, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility).
- EJ-5.3 Vacant Lot Transformations.** Explore feasibility of converting County-owned vacant lots or underutilized public right-of-way into small parks, community gardens, or open spaces throughout the County, focusing on EJ Communities, where there is a general lack of parks and green space.
- EJ-5.4 Funding and Financing Mechanisms.** Support funding and financing mechanisms to provide and enhance community-desired public facilities and services in EJ Communities.
- EJ-5.5 Service Response Delivery.** Coordinate with service providers (e.g. water, sewer, waste management, electricity) to ensure the continuation of efficient, equitable, and effective service delivery, operations, and maintenance in EJ Communities. Identify and prevent potential system vulnerabilities. Continue coordination with shared jurisdictions to establish response teams or contingency plans between jurisdictions when service issues arise.
- EJ-5.6 Opportunity Sites Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Engage community residents in the siting of potential future development of land for public facilities.
- EJ-5.7 Accessible Routes (all unincorporated areas).** Work with local transit and flexible transit providers (e.g. CalTans and microtransit options) to establish and maintain routes and service frequency that provide residents with access to schools, parks, healthcare facilities, shopping centers, employment, and other public facilities across the County.
- EJ-5.8 New Development and Aging Infrastructure (all unincorporated areas).** Consider the impacts of new developments on aging infrastructure and require infrastructure rehabilitation and improvements as a condition of approval, where feasible.
- EJ-5.9 Weatherization for Public Buildings (all unincorporated areas).** Examine public buildings and facilities in unincorporated areas, including EJ Communities, to eliminate current gaps in weatherization efforts to ensure the safety and resiliency of these facilities for a variety of climate scenarios including extreme heat, flooding, and wildfire smoke.
- EJ-5.10 Reduce Crime and Community Violence (all unincorporated areas).** Address safety concerns by reviewing and summarizing research on policies and programs known to improve safety, reduce crime,



and community violence without relying on policing. Convene a diverse group of stakeholders, including residents, across the fields of criminology, social and behavioral sciences, public health, epidemiology, law, and public policy to meet and produce an accessible synthesis of research evidence and recommendations for local EJ Communities. See *Safety Element Policies S-16.2 and S-16.3.*

## Promotion of Safe and Sanitary Homes

### CONTEXT

The condition, quality, and affordability of housing have significant impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of San Diego County residents in an environmental justice context. Numerous factors, such as hazardous building materials, exposure to excessive heat or cold, poor air quality and filtration, and moisture and mold from flooding or inadequate building maintenance can lead to severe and negative health outcomes.<sup>27</sup> Many EJ Community residents live in housing units that were built before established regulations about removing pollutants such as lead paint and asbestos. Unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions can also indicate inadequate or incomplete kitchen and plumbing facilities, overcrowding with more than one person per room, and cost-burdens leading to the inability to pay for other basic needs such as food and health care.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Household Characteristics**

Homeowners and renters both experience the negative impacts of pollution burdens and inequitable access to community resources and facilities, as well as positive impacts linked to economic opportunity, proximity to jobs, and access to social networks. Whether you own or rent your home, everyone should be able to afford quality housing without choosing between healthy food, medical care, and other basic necessities. The ability to own a home can create opportunities for wealth building and pathways for community stability over time.<sup>29</sup> In the County of San Diego, more than half of residents own their own homes while nearly 47 percent of residents are renters. Within the EJ Communities, there is a large majority of renters in North El Cajon (91.7%) and North Lemon Grove (90.8%). Both Spring Valley and Sweetwater have higher homeownership rates than the countywide rates with nearly 60 percent of residents. High costs related to owning or renting a home are linked to housing affordability and habitability which are further explored in the baseline conditions for Safe and Sanitary Housing within the EJ Element and within the Housing Element as a whole.

#### **Housing Quality**

While no agency formally surveys or monitors housing quality and maintenance, the age and quality of housing stock and the number of low-income residents can be used as a proxy for identifying neighborhoods with potentially high proportions of homes with inadequate or deferred maintenance. The following tables demonstrate the proportion of homes built before 1980 and the percentage of families considered low-income at 200 percent below the federal poverty line.

**Table EJ-6. Age of Housing Stock**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>Units Built before 1980</b>	61.8%	53.6%	74.3%	52.8%	53.3%
<b>Units Built after 1980</b>	38.2%	46.4%	25.7%	47.2%	46.7%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014 - 2018

<sup>27</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, "SB1000 Implementation Toolkit," 2018.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy," 2013-2017.

<sup>29</sup> California Healthy Places Index, 2018



All the EJ Communities have an older housing stock (units built before 1980) compared to the county, except for Sweetwater. Spring Valley has the oldest housing stock with nearly 3 out of every 4 homes built before 1980, followed by North El Cajon with nearly 2 out of 3 homes built before 1980.

Except for Sweetwater, all the EJ Communities have a higher percentage of families, including those that own and rent, that live below the poverty level compared to the county. North El Cajon has the highest percentage of families living below the poverty level (16.1%) followed by North Lemon Grove (11.8%) and Spring Valley (9.7%).

**Table EJ-7. Families Below Poverty Level**

Below Poverty Level	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>Total Families</b>	16.1%	11.8%	9.7%	6.9%	8.7%
<b>Owner</b>	0%	0%	3.4%	2.6%	3.4%
<b>Renter</b>	17.7%	13.1%	17.7%	9.7%	16.3%
<b>Income Below 200% FPL</b>	27%	52%	29.6%	20.1%	23%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014 - 2018

For families that own their homes, 3.4 percent of families in Spring Valley live below the poverty line which is comparable to the county. For families that rent, 17.7 percent of families in North El Cajon and Spring Valley live below the poverty line. Looking at indicators for the age of housing stock and families below the poverty level, there is a need to target goals, policies, and implementation programs and promote resources and assistance services in these communities that may experience inadequate or deferred housing maintenance.

**Housing Overcrowding**

Overcrowding occurs when there are more inhabitants in a housing unit than what it was originally designed for. While overcrowding is underreported, the U.S. Census Bureau collects occupancy data that can help determine whether overcrowding may be occurring. Overcrowding is often measured by determining the number of occupants per room in a dwelling unit. An occupancy-per-room score above 1 means that more than one person is occupying the number of dwelling rooms inside a home. According to the most recent available data, most of the EJ Communities may be experiencing higher overcrowding than the County as a whole and should be monitored more closely. Apart from Spring Valley, EJ Communities have a higher occupancy rate of 1.51 or more than the county as a whole.

**Table EJ-8. Number of Occupants Per Room**

Occupants per Room	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>1.00 or less</b>	87.9%	91.0%	93.5%	87.9%	93.3%
<b>1.01 to 1.50</b>	8.5%	5.1%	5.4%	9.9%	4.5%
<b>1.51 or more</b>	3.6%	3.9%	1.1%	2.3%	2.2%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014 - 2018

There may be larger families or multiple families living together in both owner- and renter-occupied households within EJ Communities indicating that goals, policies, and implementation programs should consider intergenerational and multi-family networks.

**Housing Affordability**

California is experiencing a housing affordability crisis and the County of San Diego is no exception. All residents should be able to afford adequate housing without giving up healthy food, medical care, or other necessities, or accepting unsafe housing conditions. High housing costs and housing instability are associated with increased



stress and depression, communicable diseases like tuberculosis, and decreased children’s wellbeing and educational outcomes.<sup>30</sup> Residents who pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing are considered cost-burdened by state and federal standards. Unaffordable housing has several direct and indirect impacts on residents’ health and wellbeing, including higher risks of overcrowding, deferred costs on healthcare, and longer commutes, to name a few.<sup>31</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau measures housing burden by calculating a household’s gross rent as a percentage of income. Recent data shows that over half (57%) of the county’s renters are housing-burdened, meaning that at least a third of their income is spent on rent. Of the EJ Communities, North Lemon Grove (65.1%) and Spring Valley (62.1%) exceed the county’s proportion of rent-burdened households. On the other, North El Cajon is home to a slightly lower proportion of rent-burdened households (45.6%) than the County as a whole.

**Table EJ-9. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income**

Percentage Spent on Rent	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
30.0 to 34.9 Percent	8.8%	15.8%	9.7%	17.3%	10.2%
35 Percent or More	36.8%	49.3%	52.9%	40.4%	46.8%
<b>Total Percentage of Rent-Burdened Households</b>	<b>45.6%</b>	<b>65.1%</b>	<b>62.6%</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>57.0%</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014 - 2018

Due to increased costs of living, the proportion of low-income households who are paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing is steadily increasing.<sup>32</sup> Severe cost burden is calculated as the ratio of housing costs to household income that is greater than 50 percent. For renters, housing cost is considered gross rent (contract rent plus utilities). For owners, housing cost is monthly costs, including mortgage, utilities, association fees, insurance, and real estate taxes.<sup>33</sup> CalEnviroScreen 3.0 uses housing burden as an indicator measuring the percent of households in a census tract that are both low-income (making less than 80%of the county’s median family income) and severely burdened by housing costs (paying greater than 50% of income on housing costs).<sup>34</sup> For the county as a whole, 10.9% of low-income homeowners and 25.8% of low-income renters are severely burdened.

**Table EJ-10. Severely Cost-Burdened Homeowners and Renters**

Severely Cost-Burdened	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
Low-Income Homeowners	27.8%	17.9%	0.4%	13.7%	10.9%
Low-Income Renters	27.0%	31.4%	30.1%	22.4%	25.8%
<b>Total Percentage</b>	<b>54.8%</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>36.1%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>

Source: California Healthy Places Index, 2015; HUD CHAS, 2013-2017

More than half of low-income homeowners and renters in North El Cajon (54.8%) are considered severely cost-burdened, followed by North Lemon Grove (49.3%). Spring Valley has less than 1 percent of low-income homeowners who are severely cost-burdened and the lowest percentage overall compared to the other EJ Communities and the county (36.7%).

<sup>30</sup> California Healthy Places Index, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> ChangeLab Solutions, “Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health,” 2015

<sup>32</sup> OEHHA, CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy,” 2013-2017.

<sup>34</sup> OEHHA, CalEnviroScreen 3.0, 2018.



The Housing Element is the primary location for countywide housing-related policies. The EJ Element's goals and policies focus specifically on improving affordability and living conditions in EJ Communities. Where "all unincorporated areas" is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-6

**Safe Living Conditions.** Ensure all residents have healthy and safe living conditions and both renters and owners can access and receive assistance for weatherization (e.g., heating, cooling, and air filtration, plus safeguards against extreme weather events such as flash floods), upkeep, and maintenance, particularly for households in EJ Communities.

#### Policies

- EJ-6.1 Rehabilitation and Preservation.** Support and promote programs that encourage the rehabilitation of substandard conditions and preservation of affordability for dwellings owned/occupied by lower-income households in EJ Communities, including weatherization, air filtration, mold and mildew prevention, and other improvements. *See Housing Element Policies H-4.1 and H-4.2.*
- EJ-6.2 Building Code Education and Regulation.** Promote awareness of codes and compliance measures in EJ Communities to improve unsafe and unsanitary conditions, focusing on trash and dumping, overcrowding, maintenance of older housing stock, unpermitted garage conversions, graffiti, unpermitted plumbing, and electrical, and lack of building and yard maintenance.
- EJ-6.3 Smoke-Free Living Environments.** Promote smoke-free multi-family policies and programs.
- EJ-6.4 Weatherization and Climate Change Adaptation.** Support increase of weatherization in EJ communities (e.g., heating and cooling, air filtration for wildfire smoke, ability to withstand flash floods, or other extreme weather). Build capacity by providing an outreach and convening function for professionals, the public, and relevant infrastructure and building stakeholders in EJ communities to increase knowledge and engage in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- EJ-6.5 Low-Income Homeowners (all unincorporated areas).** Provide assistance and program referrals for low-income homeowners to maintain and improve residential properties through rehabilitation and energy efficiency and weatherization assistance programs. *See Housing Element Policies H-3.7, H-3.8, and H-6.6.*
- EJ-6.6 Rehabilitation Assistance and Code Compliance (all unincorporated areas).** Focus efforts for rehabilitation assistance and code compliance in communities with a high concentration of older and substandard residential structures.
- EJ-6.7 Property Maintenance and Neighborhood Quality (all unincorporated areas).** Promote policies and programs to increase awareness among property owners and residents about property maintenance, upkeep, weatherization, neighborhood quality, and the link between maintenance and neighborhood safety.
- EJ-6.8 Crime Reduction Improvements including Street Lighting (all unincorporated areas).** Support increase of proven best practices in urban planning for crime reduction such as street lighting improvements,



especially in residential, industrial, and public areas where crime is more likely to occur. *See Safety Element Policies S-14.1, S-15.1, S-16.2, S-16.3.*

## GOAL EJ-7

**Affordability Measures.** Ensure all residents have access to affordable housing options to reduce the prevalence of cost-burdened households, particularly for owners and renters in EJ Communities.

### Policies

- EJ-7.1 Prioritize Affordable Development.** Support and prioritize the development of affordable housing in and around EJ Communities for different income levels and located in proximity to community amenities. Consider the development of nontraditional housing types.
- EJ-7.2 Prevent Loss of Affordable Housing and Displacement.** Ensure that future improvements in EJ Communities will not produce a net loss of affordable housing or the displacement of existing residents.
- EJ-7.3 Renter and Owner Resources (all unincorporated areas).** Promote affordable options, accessible resources, and supportive services for tenants and homeowners, including connections to landlord-tenant mediation services.
- EJ-7.4 Developer and Community Outreach (all unincorporated areas).** Support and promote guidelines and best practices for affordable housing developers to conduct meaningful engagement to identify community needs, develop partnerships, and gather support for affordable housing projects through public outreach.
- EJ-7.5 Regional Coordination (all unincorporated areas).** Coordinate with the San Diego Housing Commission, affordable housing developers, and other regional partners to identify vacant land in EJ Communities to explore the feasibility of developing affordable housing for all income levels.



## Promotion of Healthy Food

### CONTEXT

Food is essential to the health, economy, and culture of a sustainable and thriving community, making access to healthy and affordable food sources a necessary component for measuring the quality of life. Some EJ Communities in San Diego County face more difficulty with food access which plays a critical role in maintaining one's long-term health and well-being.<sup>35</sup> This disparity leads to economic and public health challenges, including food insecurity, malnutrition, obesity, and behavioral and mental health issues.<sup>36</sup> Food access is not only linked to the physical accessibility of affordable food but also the security and peace of mind that food is always readily available.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the risk of food insecurity and severe illnesses for vulnerable individuals and families across the county.<sup>38</sup>

The prevalence of food deserts (areas with a lack of grocery stores and healthy food options) and food swamps (areas with a high concentration of unhealthy food options) highlights the consequences of planning and land use decisions that do not prioritize the needs of those most impacted. Assessing the food system – an interlinked network of processes, resources, and policies required to produce, process, distribute, access, consume, and dispose of food – requires a deeper understanding of the intersection with land use, housing, transportation, parks, and recreation, and other systems.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Food Environment**

Food environment factors, including proximity to grocery stores and restaurants, food prices, food and nutrition assistance programs, and other community characteristics, influence food choices, nutrition, and quality. The County of San Diego has defined a “food system” as the path the food follows from farm to fork, including growth and production, consumption, recycling, and waste. A healthy and efficient food system helps to increase access to healthy and affordable food options, supports the local economy and food supply chain, and protects our natural resources and ecosystem by supporting small-scale farmers and sustainable agriculture. In 2016, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer to develop the Live Well San Diego Food System Initiative (Food System Initiative) that addresses inequities, barriers, and waste in the food system while working to increase agricultural sustainability and access to healthy foods, in alignment with the County's Live Well San Diego vision of a region that is building better health, living safely, and thriving. The Food System Initiative's interdepartmental County working group collaborates with stakeholders to work towards achieving a “more robust and resilient local food system that builds healthy communities, supports the economy, and enhances the environment.” The Food System Initiative maintains and updates a yearly the Action Plan, to communicate the efforts taken to support and strengthen the region's food system throughout the San Diego region. These efforts leverage resources, identifies and enhances existing efforts, and encourages continued coordination and collaboration to support a robust and resilient food system.

<sup>35</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB1000 Implementation Toolkit,” 2018

<sup>36</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, “SB1000 Implementation Toolkit,” 2018.

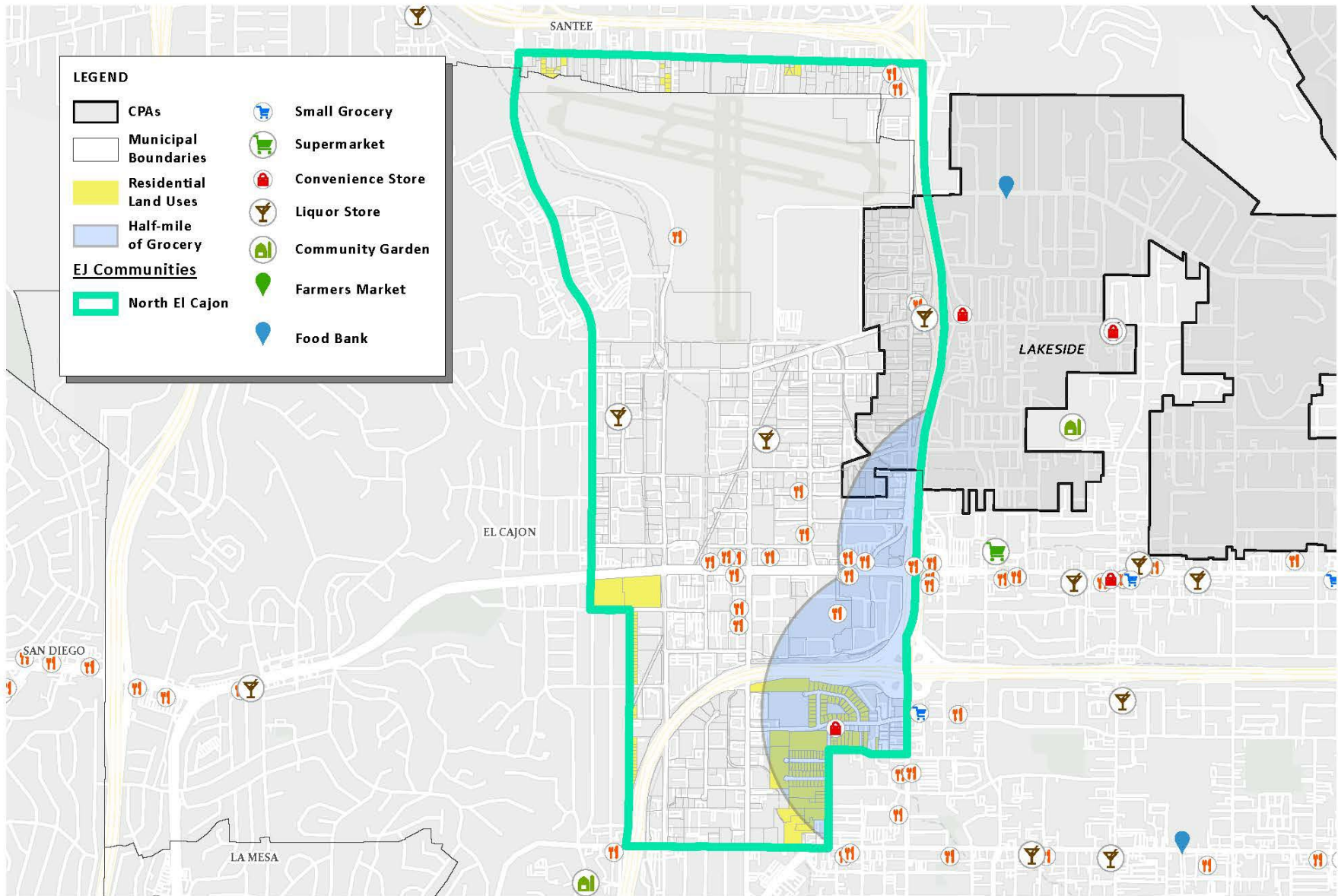
<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Feeding America, “The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity in 2020 and 2021,” March 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Hodgson, 2012



Figures EJ-11, EJ-12, EJ-13, and EJ-14 illustrate the food environment of each EJ Community, including small groceries and supermarkets, community gardens, farmers markets, food banks, convenience and liquor stores, and fast-food restaurants. The maps show the entire census tract the unincorporated EJ Community falls within to show the proximity of residential areas to a grocery or supermarket within a half-mile radius. This is because community members will travel across jurisdictional boundaries (unincorporated area to the incorporated city areas; and vice versa) to access necessities, such as food.



Map Date: May 2021  
 Source: SanGIS, County of San Diego (LUEG-GIS)

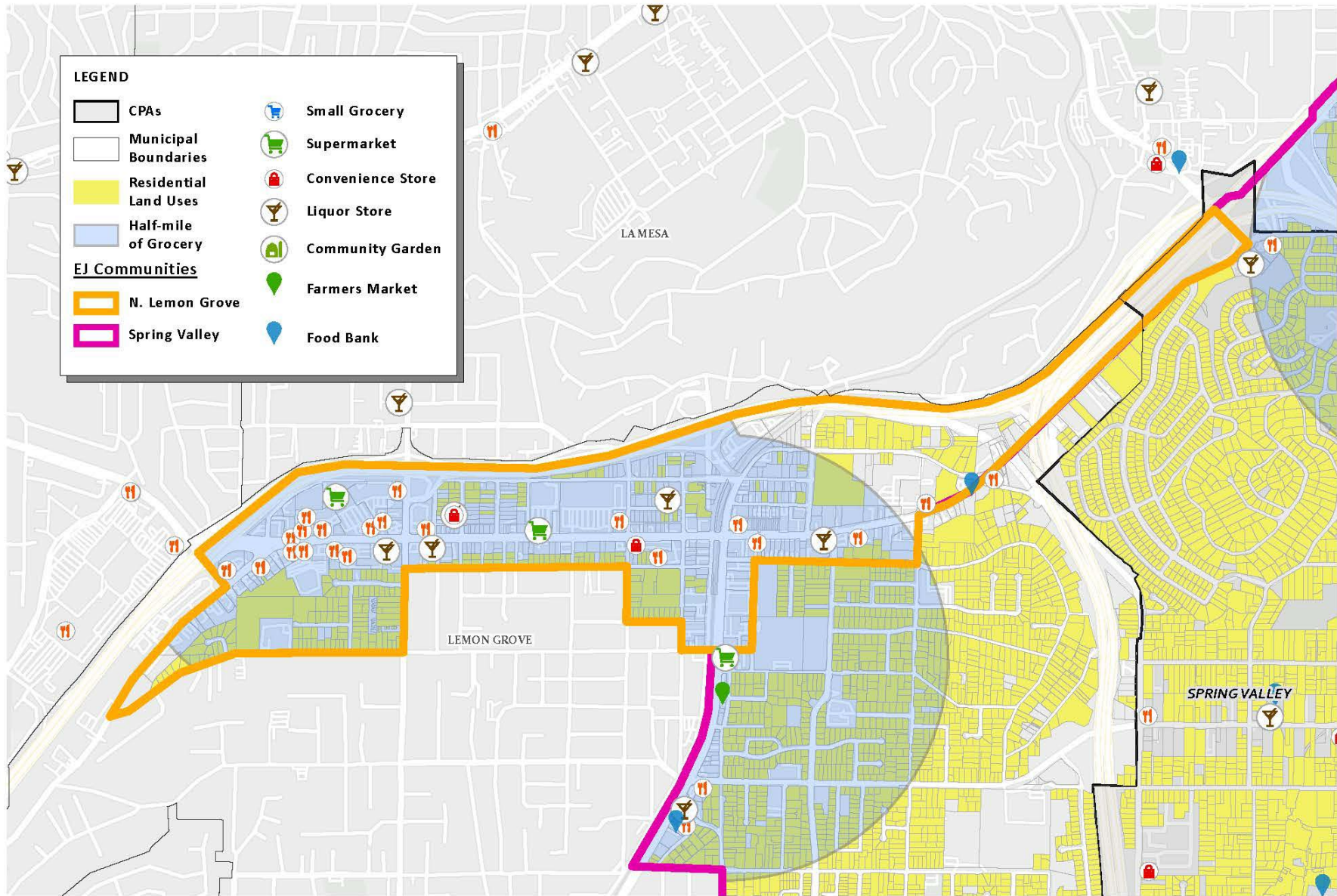
0.5 km 0.5 miles



# NORTH EL CAJON: FOOD ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES

San Diego County General Plan

Figure EJ-11



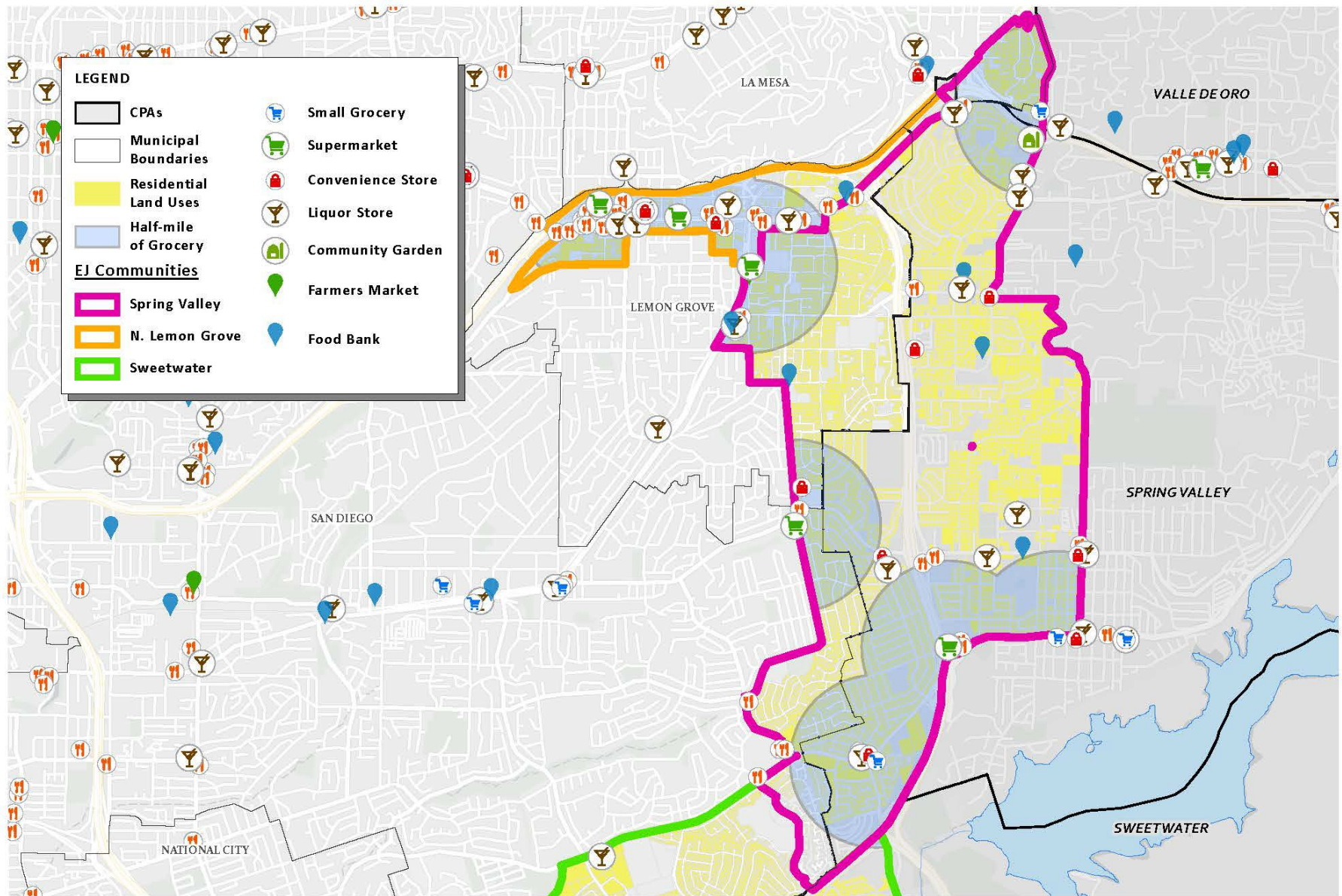
**LEGEND**

CPAs	Small Grocery
Municipal Boundaries	Supermarket
Residential Land Uses	Convenience Store
Half-mile of Grocery	Liquor Store
<b>EJ Communities</b>	
N. Lemon Grove	Community Garden
Spring Valley	Farmers Market
	Food Bank

Map Date: May 2021  
 Source: SanGIS, County of San Diego (LUEG-GIS)

0.5 km      0.5 miles

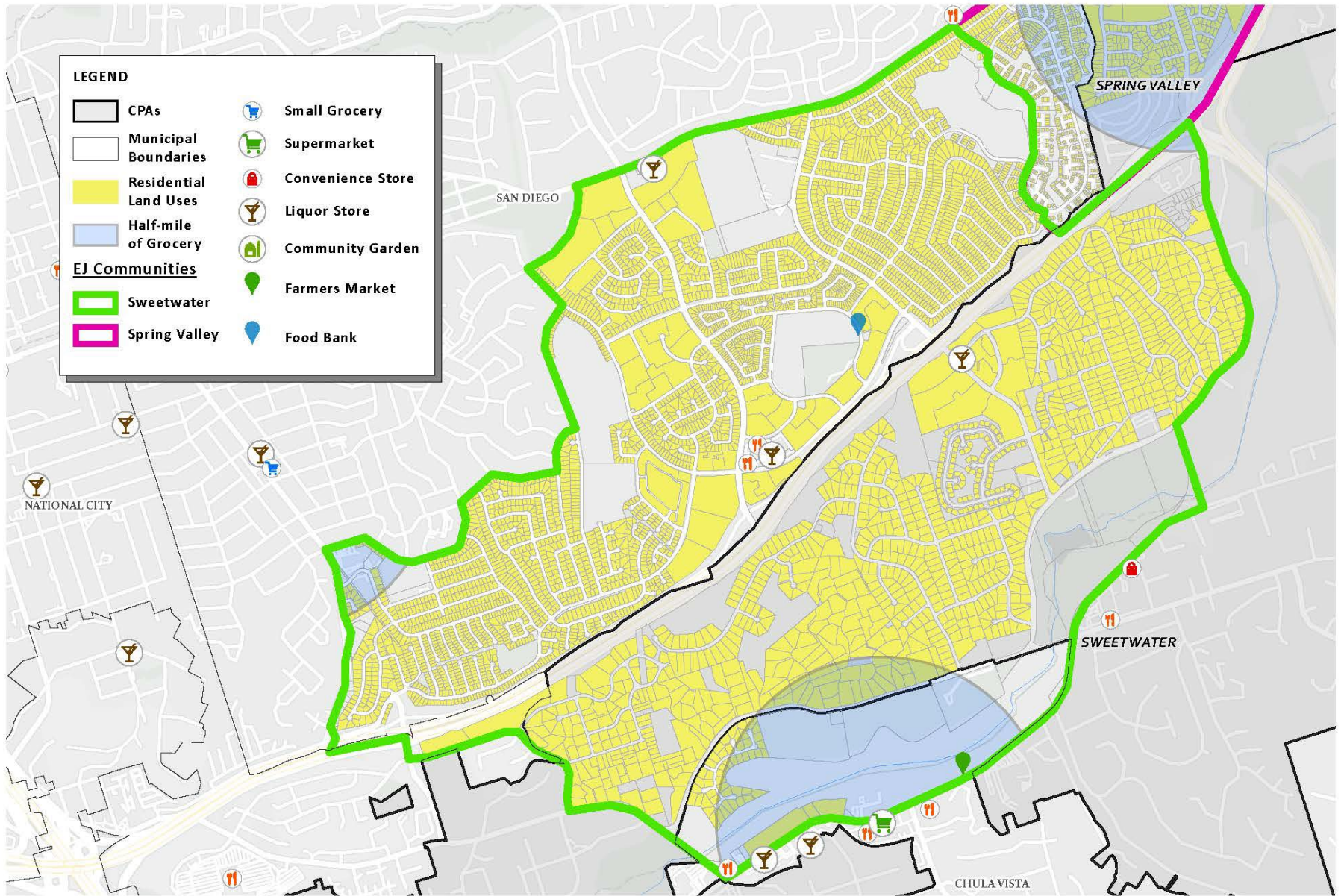
# NORTH LEMON GROVE: FOOD ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES



Map Date: May 2021  
 Source: SanGIS, County of San Diego (LUEG-GIS)  
 1 mile  
 1 km



# SPRING VALLEY: FOOD ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES



Map Date: May 2021  
 Source: SanGIS, County of San Diego (LUEG-GIS)  
 0.5 km 0.5 miles

# SWEETWATER: FOOD ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES

San Diego County General Plan

Figure EJ-14



**Access to Grocery Stores**

People who live in a healthy, thriving community should have access to nutritious and affordable food options. Living nearby a supermarket can encourage better nutrition, lower the costs of obtaining food, reduce chronic diseases, and lower the risk of food insecurity.<sup>40</sup> Access to supermarkets, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food contributes to a person’s ability to eat a healthy diet. Food access is not only linked to the physical ability to access affordable and culturally appropriate food, but also to food security, defined as the ability to access food at all times to maintain an active, healthy life.<sup>41</sup>

The California Healthy Places Index (HPI) uses data from the USDA Food Access Research Atlas (2015) to measure the percentage of people in urban areas who live less than a half-mile from a supermarket or large grocery store, or less than 1 mile in rural areas. In the County, nearly half (46.3%) of the population lives within walking distance to a supermarket. In EJ Communities, this percentage is significantly lower for Sweetwater (27.4%), North El Cajon (35.9%), and Spring Valley (40.4%). In contrast, North Lemon Grove has the highest percentage of the population living within proximity to a grocery store at 77 percent. This is likely due to the density and accessibility to retail options in the community. More coordinated research and data are needed to measure the availability of healthy, fresh, and affordable food options.

**Table EJ-11. Poverty Level, Median Income, Vehicle Access, and Supermarket Access**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<b>Poverty Level</b>	18.0%	21.0%	12.6%	9.9%	12.5%
<b>Median Household Income (2018)</b>	\$56,477	\$33,824	\$63,422	\$79,786	\$74,855
<b>No Vehicle Access</b>	10.9%	20.6%	5.1%	2.6%	5.5%
<b>Supermarket Access (less than ½ mile)</b>	35.9%	77.0%	40.4%	27.4%	46.3%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018; California Healthy Places Index (HPI), 2015; USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2015; USDA Food Environment Atlas, 2015

**Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity means that little to no food is available at home and those impacted do not know when or where they will get their next meal.<sup>42</sup> The San Diego Hunger Coalition analyzed 2015-2017 data from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Department of Public Health. Their analysis shows that at the countywide level in 2017, 1 in 7 people (13.9%) experienced food insecurity – 1 in 5 children (18.8%), 1 in 8 adults (12.4%), and 1 in 10 seniors (10%).<sup>43</sup> Additional residents self-reported as “food secure” but were relying on CalFresh or WIC to supplement their food budget. The total population at risk of food insecurity in the County (including both food insecure or food secure with CalFresh or WIC assistance) is 641,000 or 1 in 5 people.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> California Healthy Places Index, 2015

<sup>41</sup> USDA, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank, Hunger Fact Sheet, 2020

<sup>43</sup> San Diego Hunger Coalition, “Hunger Free San Diego Issue Brief: 2017 San Diego County Food Insecurity,” 2019

<sup>44</sup> Ibid



*Live Well San Diego* measures vulnerable populations experiencing food insecurity as an indicator for social well-being referencing survey response data from the latest California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) from 2019 and includes those who self-report experiencing food insecurity. Data reported at the HHS Service Region level shows that the adult population with an income of 200% of the federal poverty level or less who have experienced food insecurity is between 40.2 percent to 41.7 percent in the Central and East Regions (which include the identified EJ Communities) compared to the County overall (38.6%).

**Table EJ-12. Percent of Low-Income Adult Population Who Experience Food Insecurity**

<i>Percent of Population (18+) with Income &lt; 200% of Federal Poverty Line who have Experienced Food Insecurity (2018)</i>				
	Central Region <sup>45</sup>	East Region <sup>46</sup>	County of San Diego	California
<b>Not able to afford enough food</b>	41.7%	40.2%	38.6%	44.5%

Source: California Department of Public Health and UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 2018.

According to research and best practices from *Live Well San Diego*, previous studies suggest that children living in food-insecure households are at a higher risk of many negative health outcomes, including chronic conditions.<sup>47</sup> This is especially important for children because their nutrition affects current health conditions as well as physical, mental, and social development for future health and well-being. Due to many intersecting risk factors associated with poverty conditions, many food insecure and low-income people are especially vulnerable to obesity: limited resources and lack of access to healthy, affordable foods; fewer opportunities for physical activity; high-stress levels; limited access to health care.

**Obesity and Diabetes**

The California Department of Public Health reports that nutrition plays a significant role in causing or preventing multiple illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, obesity, type-2 diabetes, and anemia. Due to cost burdens and transportation availability related to food access and insecurity, lower income families are less likely to have a nutritious diet than those that can readily access and afford healthy and nutritious food. Food choices and the likelihood of being overweight or obese are also influenced by food environments and the type and quality of foods available in the community or neighborhood, including stores, restaurants, schools, and workplaces.

According to the California Health Interview Survey (2016), the County of San Diego (25.0%) has a lower percentage of people over 18 who are considered obese using self-reported weight and height (Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher) compared to the rest of the state (28.0%). In all EJ Communities, with the exception of North El Cajon (23.8%), there is a higher percentage of obesity compared to the County. People in the combined census tracts for Spring Valley reported the highest rates of obesity at 36.2 percent, followed by North Lemon Grove at 32.2 percent.

<sup>45</sup> In San Diego County, the HHS Central Service Region includes the Southeastern San Diego Live Well Community (three tracts for Spring Valley and all five tracts for Sweetwater EJ Communities).

<sup>46</sup> In San Diego County, the HHS East Service Region contains the Lemon Grove Live Well Community (one tract for North Lemon Grove EJ Community and two tracts for Spring Valley EJ Community), Spring Valley Live Well Community (five tracts for Spring Valley EJ Community), and El Cajon sub-regional area (SRA).

<sup>47</sup> Live Well San Diego, “Research, Best Practices, and Logic Model: Vulnerable Populations – Food Insecurity,” 2014.



**Table EJ-13. Prevalence of Obesity and Diabetes**

	North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego	California
<b>Obesity (BMI &gt;= 30) (18+)</b>	23.8%	32.2%	36.2%	27.5%	25.0%	28.0%
<b>Diabetes (18+)</b>	5.5%	11.9%	11.5%	11.9%	8.2%	9.7%

Source: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 2016

CHIS also collects data on diabetes for people over 18 who have ever been diagnosed. In California, 9.7 percent of respondents reported a diabetes diagnosis compared to 8.2 percent of respondents in the County of San Diego. In all EJ Communities, except for North El Cajon (5.5%), there is a higher percentage of people who have been diagnosed with diabetes. People in the census tracts that make up North Lemon Grove (11.9%), Spring Valley (11.5%), and Sweetwater (11.9%) reported the highest rates of diabetes between 11 and 12 percent compared to the County and California as a whole.

The goals and policies in this section are aimed at improving food systems and expanding access to healthy food options throughout the county. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-8

**Countywide Food System Improvements.** Improve the food system throughout the county, from supply and production to processing, distribution, access, and waste management through comprehensive and holistic approaches to advance an equitable and healthy food system for all residents.

#### Policies

**EJ-8.1 Transportation System Linkages (all unincorporated areas).** Ensure transportation systems serve local neighborhoods by linking residents to healthy food sources, such as grocery stores and farmers’ markets. Provide supportive services to residents such as subsidized transit passes.

**EJ-8.2 Multimodal Access to Food (all unincorporated areas).** Expand multimodal access to fresh food by encouraging grocery stores, healthy corner stores, and outdoor markets at transit centers and reducing transportation barriers to accessing existing healthy food assets (e.g., provide transportation support to grocery stores)

**EJ-8.3 Local Agriculture and Food Production (all unincorporated areas).** Support and incentivize local agriculture and food production by reducing permitting barriers to sustainable growing practices in EJ Communities and unincorporated areas. Explore feasibility of allocating suitable vacant or underutilized public and privately-owned land for edible landscaping and community gardens. Where appropriate, work with the local Water Authority to determine incentives for food production.

**EJ-8.4 Food Waste Reduction (all unincorporated areas).** Support and expand policies and programs to help reduce and mitigate the economic and environmental impacts of food waste. Amend the existing Organics



Ordinance to allow food to be taken from large food waste producers and private residences for composting to be used in food production.

## GOAL EJ-9

**Access to Healthy, Nutritional, and Affordable Food.** Expand access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food from grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, and community gardens to reduce food insecurity in EJ Communities.

### Policies

- EJ-9.1 Healthy Food Retailers and Community Markets.** Promote policies and programs that target and increase access to healthy food retailers in EJ Communities. Develop a permanent fund for the Live Well Community Market Program that could provide technical assistance and training to convenience or liquor stores that want to provide healthier options for customers.
- EJ-9.2 Farmers Markets.** Support and expand the accessibility of farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and other direct farm-to-consumer models in EJ Communities to increase access to fresh and affordable food, including fruits, vegetables, and other agricultural products.
- EJ-9.3 Food Assistance Usage.** Promote statewide efforts to expand usage of food assistance benefits (e.g. CalFresh, WIC, and Market Match) at farmers' markets, farm stands, and community-supported agriculture sources to help increase the purchasing power of low-income unincorporated residents.
- EJ-9.4 New Development and Redevelopment Incentives (all unincorporated areas).** Promote incentives for new development and redevelopment projects to include a healthy food supply, such as a community garden or food forest, or be located within a half-mile of a healthy food supply, where applicable and appropriate.
- EJ-9.5 Development of Food Access Programs Through Civic Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Continue civic engagement to explore the development of additional programs that promote food access and security across the and collaborate with existing partners in the community to leverage resources and work that is already being done in the county.
- EJ-9.6 County Emergency Food Response and Distribution (all unincorporated areas).** Design emergency response services to prioritize access to healthy foods through partnerships with food banks, pantries, and other mutual aid networks.



## GOAL EJ-10

**Increase Health and Nutrition.** Enhance access to health and nutrition resources to reduce rates of diabetes, obesity, and diet-related illnesses.

### Policies

**EJ-10.1 Diet-Related Illness Prevention and Education.** Expand partnerships with community-based organizations and EJ Community residents to amplify efforts of current programs as well as develop additional programs and resources for prevention and education about diet-related illnesses in EJ Communities.

**EJ-10.2 Limit Fast Food and Low Nutrient Options.** Explore the options to restrict permitting of and enacting land use controls for fast food establishments and other food retailers that promote low-nutrient dense foods, especially near sensitive land uses.

**EJ-10.3 Healthy Food Supplies (all unincorporated areas).** Continue to support the *Live Well San Diego Food System Initiative* and incorporate healthy food options into County-purchased and contracted food procurement. Promote healthy and locally grown food options at County-owned facilities, agency offices, parks and recreation centers, and sponsored events where food is made available to County residents.

**EJ-10.4 School Initiatives (all unincorporated areas).** Work with school districts to develop school-based programs that integrate educational components about locally grown fresh produce and nutrition.

**EJ-10.5 Health and Nutrition Education and Awareness (all unincorporated areas).** Support and expand countywide efforts to offer focused educational awareness campaigns to promote healthy eating habits and food choices and Countywide opportunities to increase access to health and nutrition resources.

**EJ-10.6 Development of Health and Nutrition Programs Through Civic Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Continue civic engagement to develop additional programs that promote health and nutrition resources and support community organizations already engaged in these efforts.

## Promotion of Physical Activity

### CONTEXT

Physical activity has a direct impact on the long-term health and wellbeing of San Diego County residents and their communities. People who are physically active tend to have a higher life expectancy and lower risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and other health-related illnesses.<sup>48</sup> People participate in physical activities in many different forms and for different purposes, including recreational, health, and active transportation and commuting. Engaging in regular physical activity can also bring social and emotional benefits, such as social interaction and building community with others which helps to reduce depression, isolation, stress, and anxiety.

<sup>48</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention



The built environment plays an integral role in determining how communities can access opportunities for physical activity by providing places and encouraging land uses that support active transportation and other forms of exercise. In EJ Communities, the built environment can be negatively impacted by discriminatory land use practices, historical disinvestment, and lack of long-term planning.<sup>49</sup> These harmful and neglectful practices create fewer opportunities for exercise and recreation, including parks, recreation facilities, open space, trails, bike, and pedestrian connectivity networks. Convenient and safe access to these places has a direct correlation to increased exercise and physical activity.

Promoting physical activity contribute to a wide range of health and wellness benefits, including reduction of mortality risk, chronic disease prevention, metabolic health, heart, and respiratory fitness, and cognitive function in children and adults of all genders, income groups, and racial/ethnic groups.<sup>50</sup> There are also measurable co-benefits among increased active transportation, built environment improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure, crime prevention through environmental design, and reducing the impacts of climate change.

**Chronic Diseases and Health-Related Illnesses**

According to the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), in 2016, fewer than half of adults in California (38.9%) engaged in physical activity (walking at least 150 minutes per week). In the County of San Diego, the participation rate was slightly higher at 41.2 percent. For children 17 and under who engaged in regular physical activity for at least 60 minutes daily per week, the statewide (16.5%) and countywide (19.3%) percentages were both under 20 percent. In EJ Communities, the percentage of children who engaged in regular physical activity was below both the County and state level. The percentage of adults who walked regularly for leisure or transportation was slightly below the Statewide and County percentage, while North Lemon Grove (40.5%) and Sweetwater (40.2%) exceeded the statewide percentage. The limitation of this data does not show the percentage of adults who may engage in more rigorous or frequent physical activity and exercise.

**Table EJ-14. Engagement in Physical Activity for Children and Adults**

North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego	California
<b>Children (5-17) who engaged in at least 60 min of physical activity daily in the past week</b>					
15.8%*		12.9%	15.9%	19.3%	16.5%
<b>Adults (18+) who walked for transportation or leisure for at least 150 minutes in the past week</b>					
38.0%	40.5%	37.4%	40.2%	41.2%	38.9%

Source: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey, 2016  
 \*There is insufficient data for individual census tracts with populations under 1,000. Percentage is for combined census tracts.

<sup>49</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, 2018  
<sup>50</sup> California Environmental Justice Alliance, 2018



Lack of regular physical activity is a primary risk factor for many chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, and stroke, type 2 diabetes, lung diseases, and asthma. In San Diego County, HHS provides an in-depth look into the chronic diseases that are now a major cause of death and disability in its “3-4-50: Chronic Disease in San Diego County Report”. The “3-4-50 Concept” states that the combination of three common behaviors (poor diet, tobacco use, and physical inactivity) contributes directly to four chronic diseases (cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease) which account for 50 percent of all deaths worldwide.<sup>51</sup>



These chronic diseases have surpassed infectious diseases and injuries as the leading cause of death and disability across the globe. The pervasive impact of these unhealthy behaviors can be seen in San Diego County, as these chronic diseases are also the most common causes of death in the region.<sup>52</sup> According to the County of San Diego Community Health Statistics Unit, in 2017, EJ Communities which are primarily located in the East and Central Regional Areas (RAs), experienced comparative rates of the 3-4-50 risk factors and the leading cause of death from the chronic diseases listed above.

**Table EJ-15. Prevalence of Risk Factors and Chronic Diseases**

	Central Region*	East Region**	County of San Diego
<b>Tobacco Use</b>	14.3% (1 out of 7)	12.5% (1 out of 8)	10% (1 out of 10)
<b>Physical Inactivity</b>	37.8%	17.0%	33.7%
<b>Poor Nutrition</b>	25.0% (1 out of 4)	20.0% (1 out of 5)	16.7% (1 out of 6)
<b>Heart Disease</b>	4.5%	6.6%	5.5%
<b>Diabetes</b>	8.3% (1 out of 12)	10.0% (1 out of 10)	9.1% (1 out of 11)
<b>Lung Disease</b>	14.3% (1 out of 7)	10.0% (1 out of 10)	14.3% (1 out of 7)
<b>Chronic Disease as Leading Cause of Death</b>	51%	52%	51%

Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, 2017

\*Central Region includes portions of Sweetwater and Spring Valley EJ Communities

\*\*East Region includes North El Cajon, North Lemon Grove, and a portion of Spring Valley EJ Communities

In the Central Region, which includes portions of Sweetwater and Spring Valley EJ Communities, residents experienced higher rates of tobacco use and poor nutrition compared to the East Region and the rest of the County. In the East Region, which includes North El Cajon, North Lemon Grove, and a portion of Spring Valley EJ Communities, residents experienced higher rates of tobacco use, poor nutrition, heart disease, and diabetes which account for 52% of all deaths.

**Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

The level of access and proximity to parks, recreation centers, open spaces, and other safe places for physical activity are important predictors for physical activity levels. Parks and facilities that are well-maintained, up-to-

<sup>51</sup> County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, 2017

<sup>52</sup> County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, 2017



date, safe, and inviting, and provide much-needed programs and services (e.g. education, childcare, and food resources) help to promote physical activity and contribute to other positive health benefits. However, since these spaces are not equitably distributed, many low-income communities, communities of color, and other vulnerable populations frequently have the fewest accessible, safe, and well-maintained facilities.

The California Healthy Places Index (HPI) ranks California census tracts on a composite score of measuring community conditions and disadvantage according to a combination of indicators: demographics, socioeconomic factors, and health equity. The HPI measures tree canopy coverage and park access as two indicators of healthy neighborhood conditions and opportunities to promote physical activity and improve overall health and wellbeing for community members. Accessible parks and open spaces help to reduce chronic diseases, improve mental health, foster community connections, and encourage physical activity. Trees and diverse plant life provide numerous benefits for mental and physical health, such as shade and heat relief, stress reduction, and overall wellness; these all help to promote physical activity. Furthermore, more parks, open spaces, and tree coverage are essential to a community’s resiliency efforts and mitigation against the effects of pollution and climate change.

**Table EJ-16. Healthy Neighborhood Conditions**

North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of San Diego
<i>Park Access (% of population who live within ½ mile of a park, beach, or open space greater than 1 acre)</i>				
23.8%	65.9%	90.7%	100%	80.1%
<i>Tree Canopy (% of land with tree canopy weighted by number of people per acre)</i>				
2.8%	2.9%	3.1%	3.8%	4.4%

Source: California Healthy Places Index, 2015

As shown in Table EJ-16, a large majority of County residents (80.1%) live within a half-mile of a park, beach, or open space greater than 1 acre. Comparatively, over 90 percent of residents in Sweetwater (100%) and Spring Valley (90.7%) have significantly higher access to parks, beaches, and open spaces. In contrast, less than two-thirds of residents who live in North Lemon Grove (65.9%) and less than a quarter of residents in North El Cajon (23.8%) lived within ½ mile to a park, beach, or open space. A limitation to this data is that it includes areas that may not be fully accessible to the public and to those without economic means, such as golf courses or country clubs, which tend to be greater than 1 acre in size. In addition, 4.4 percent of the land within the County has a tree canopy. For EJ Communities, this percentage is much lower ranging from 2.8 percent in North El Cajon to 3.8 percent in Sweetwater.

**Active Commuting**

Every County resident should have safe, accessible, and convenient transportation options to get to work, school, and other important destinations. Active commuting by walking, biking, and public transit not only creates opportunities for physical activity, but also provides more options for those without a vehicle, encourages social cohesion, and reduces the impacts of climate change and air pollution. The Healthy Places Index measures automobile access and active commuting as indicators of a community with healthier transportation options. According to the 2015 HPI, less than 6 percent of County residents did not have access to a car or vehicle. In EJ Communities, Spring Valley and Sweetwater had a comparable population. In North Lemon Grove, more than 18 percent of the population commute to work by transit, walking, or biking followed by North El Cajon at 12.5 percent and compared to the County (6.6%) and the other EJ Communities (between 3% to 5%).



**Table EJ-17. Automobile Access and Active Commuting**

North El Cajon	North Lemon Grove	Spring Valley	Sweetwater	County of SD
<b>Automobile Access (Percentage of households with access to an automobile)</b>				
89.7%	84.4%	93.9%	96.2%	94.1%
<b>Active Commuting (Percentage of workers 16+ who commute to work by transit, walking, biking)</b>				
12.5%	18.3%	5.0%	3.0%	6.6%

Source: California Healthy Places Index, 2015

*Live Well San Diego* also measures the use of public transportation and length of commute time as two indicators of social well-being for the San Diego Region. In 2017, only 3.3 percent of the County’s population used public transportation to commute to work. In EJ Communities, there were fewer residents in the East Region<sup>53</sup> who took public transit to work compared to the County, however in El Cajon (4.1%) and Lemon Grove (4.7%) SRAs (which includes two EJ Community census tracts), there was nearly 5 percent of residents who used public transit. The Central Region<sup>54</sup>, which includes Sweetwater and a portion of Spring Valley census tracts, had more than 5 percent of residents who used public transit.

In order to encourage more walking and biking, the quality and conditions of infrastructure, routes, and trails must be maintained to increase access to important destinations. Bike and pedestrian infrastructure must ensure safety especially when interacting with motorized vehicles and high injury networks. For the identified EJ Community census tracts, preliminary analysis shows that between January 2009 and December 2018, there were a total of 278 pedestrian collisions and 146 bicycle collisions.<sup>55</sup> The highest number of pedestrian and bicycle collisions occurred in Spring Valley and North El Cajon, nearly double the number of collisions compared to North Lemon Grove and Sweetwater. More in-depth analysis needs to be conducted for a comprehensive understanding of these collisions and the improvements needed.

The goals and policies in this section are aimed at: 1) reducing the risk of illnesses related to lack of physical activity; 2) expanding access to parks and recreation facilities and related programs and services, and 3) broadening the reach of active transportation networks, connections, and safety throughout the county. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.

<sup>53</sup> East Region includes North El Cajon, North Lemon Grove, and a portion of Spring Valley EJ Communities

<sup>54</sup> Central Region includes portions of Sweetwater and Spring Valley EJ Communities

<sup>55</sup> University of California Berkeley, Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), “Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System,” 2009-2018.



## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-11

**Physical Health and Wellness.** Increase physical activity resources and programs to reduce rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other health-related illnesses for residents of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and abilities, particularly in EJ Communities.

#### Policies

**EJ-11.1 Community-Based Interventions.** Partner with community-based organizations to provide educational materials and resources to increase the awareness of health-related illnesses and to determine solutions-based interventions impacting EJ Community residents.

**EJ-11.2 Physical Activity Education and Programs.** Promote culturally-competent education resources and affordable, low or no-cost programs that raise awareness about the importance of healthy lifestyle behaviors, healthy eating, and encourage residents to participate regularly in physical activity for the overall well-being of all ages, particularly in EJ Communities.

**EJ-11.3 Cultural Programming.** Increase opportunities for cultural arts programs and events that promote movement, dancing, music, theater, and other types of visual and performative arts that increase physical activity and social cohesion prioritizing EJ Communities.

**EJ-11.4 Youth-Based Programs and Resources (all unincorporated areas).** Work with school districts, afterschool programs, and youth organizations to promote educational resources and affordable, low or no-cost programs that encourage children and teens to increase physical activity.

**EJ-11.5 Community Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Partner with community-based organizations to seek community involvement and feedback to create appropriate and relevant programming and to support improvements to natural and built environment placemaking to promote physical activity and recreation.

### GOAL EJ-12

**Healthy Design and Multi-Modal Development.** Promote multi-modal land use design and development patterns that decrease vehicle miles traveled, and encourage increased physical activity, biking, and walking as a means to reduce health-related issues.

#### Policies

**EJ-12.1 Built Environment Barriers.** Identify and eliminate, where feasible, barriers to outdoor physical activity, such as damaged, incomplete, blocked, or littered sidewalks and bike paths, lack of safe street crossings and direct connections, unsuitable design for persons with disabilities, excessive speeding, insufficient lighting, incidence or perception of crime, and lack of landscaping, shade trees and shade structures along streets. *See Land Use Element Policy LU-5.5*



**EJ-12.2 Pedestrian Amenities Improvements.** Support collaboration with private and agency partners to enhance pedestrian amenities, such as lighting, shade, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bathrooms, hand sanitizing stations, water fountains, and prioritize investments in EJ Communities.

**EJ-12.3 Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities.** Prioritize the incorporation and installation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in EJ Communities based on community-identified mobility needs and feedback. Consistent with the Mobility Element, require that new developments, redevelopment projects, and any new and renovated transportation facilities built, managed, and/or operated by the County in EJ Communities include pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Support connections to programs providing pedestrian and bicycle safety training and resources. *See Mobility Element Policies M-11.2, M-11.4, M-11.5, and M-11.6.*

**EJ-12.4 Access to Bicycles, Helmets, and Related Equipment (all unincorporated areas).** Partner with school districts and community-based organizations to improve and promote access to affordable bicycles, helmets, and related safety equipment for lower-income families.

**EJ-12.5 Mixed-Use Development (all unincorporated areas).** Consistent with the Land Use Element, develop programs to incentivize mixed-use development and an appropriate balance of land uses, such as schools, parks, job centers, retail, and grocery, so that essential goods and services are within walking and biking distance of residential areas. *See Land Use Element Policies LU-5.1 and 11.3.*

**EJ-12.6 Community Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Partner with CBOs and with residents to support improvements to natural and built environments to promote land use design that increases physical activity, biking, and walking.

**EJ-12.7 ADA Accessibility (all unincorporated areas).** Prioritize compliance with American Disability Act (ADA) standards and accessibility for all pedestrian, transit, and bicycle improvements, through ongoing engagement and incorporation of feedback from disability community stakeholder groups.

**EJ-12.8 Transportation Action Plans (all unincorporated areas).** Support policies and programs through the “Safe Routes to Schools” and “Vision Zero” framework to reduce traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.

## GOAL EJ-13

**Parks and Recreation Access.** Expand access to parks, recreation facilities, and other safe places for community members to be active by leveraging resources through jurisdictional partnerships, joint use agreements, additional funding, and community volunteers.

### Policies

**EJ-13.1 Park Provision.** Achieve and maintain a minimum standard of 3 acres of local parks per 1,000 County residents, including, neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks that are over ½ acre in size, 10 acres of regional parks per 1,000 County residents, and both local and regional parks contain sufficient amenities prioritized in EJ Communities.

**EJ-13.2 Public-Private Partnerships.** Partner with schools, places of worship, and businesses to expand access to green spaces and recreation areas, especially in EJ Communities with less accessibility to green spaces and recreation areas.



**EJ-13.3 Urban Greening and Green Infrastructure.** Encourage planting of native plants, and other urban greening and green infrastructure projects with supporting maintenance agreements within EJ Communities. Coordinate efforts of Climate Action Plan Urban Greening and DPW Green Streets Program with green spaces and recreational areas.

**EJ-13.4 Park Maintenance.** Support and coordinate local community organizations, and volunteer groups in their efforts to improve or maintain local parks, trails, and other public spaces in EJ Communities.

**EJ-13.5 Safety Concerns (all unincorporated areas).** Continue addressing safety concerns that may create barriers to physical activity by assessing adequate lighting and street visibility in new and existing parks and recreation facilities. Research international best practices in urban planning to identify best design elements to ensure public safety and crime reduction.

**EJ-13.6 Vacant and Underutilized Land (all unincorporated areas).** Identify vacant and underutilized land and existing green spaces in the unincorporated County that can be revitalized into neighborhood parks or community gardens to provide more space for outdoor physical and recreational activity for all ages.

## Promotion of Civic Engagement

### CONTEXT

Equitable and effective regional planning and decision-making processes, especially for EJ issues, should meaningfully involve the most impacted community members. Promoting civic engagement is imperative for jurisdictions to prioritize improvements and programs in EJ Communities. This level of engagement can help strengthen community involvement and deepen the investment of stakeholders in identifying and realizing community improvements. EJ issues can be more organically identified and resolved if there are accessible and culturally relevant opportunities to engage in decision-making processes prioritizing low-income communities, communities of color, and linguistically isolated communities. Also, providing timely and updated information for how residents can reach relevant and appropriate County staff can be an important step towards transparency and accountability across countywide programs and services.

The EJ Element is primarily focused on addressing the unique or compounded health risks, promoting civic engagement, and prioritizing improvements and programs that address the specific needs of EJ Communities. The combined impacts of the pandemic, public health, racial and social justice, and environmental hazards emphasize the need for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable engagement processes. Important population characteristics in the EJ Communities include race/ethnicity, age, and language proficiency which deeply influence how outreach and engagement is carried out to reach individuals and families in a way that is intentional, respectful, and meaningful. These processes will help ensure that goals and policies within the EJ Element as part of the General Plan update genuinely reflect regional and community priorities, concerns, and disparities. The County will continue to collect and track feedback and concerns throughout the General Plan update process and ongoing implementation.

#### Language Isolation

Language isolation occurs when there are households with individuals over the age of 14 that have limited English proficiency. When public information and notifications are offered only in English, these households are at a



disadvantage when trying to attain important information or participate in public engagements that may impact their health, wellbeing, or economic opportunity. Communities with high levels of linguistically isolated households tend to have lower participation levels when only English is used. Live Well San Diego measures linguistic isolation as an indicator of social well-being. According to 2017 data, 7.2 percent of the County population experiences linguistic isolation compared to 9.2 percent statewide. Measured by subregional areas (SRAs), Southeastern San Diego has the highest rate of language isolation at 11.6 percent followed by El Cajon (9.8%), Lemon Grove (5.5%), and Spring Valley (4.3%).

### **Access to Internet**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has exposed many inequities, especially the “digital divide” in accessing affordable and reliable internet, broadband, and cellular data which have become the necessary norm for virtual community engagement, online learning, social communication, and real-time and important information and resources. In the County overall, 9.1 percent of households do not have internet access. This percentage is higher in all the EJ Communities, except for North El Cajon (6.1%). Over one-fifth of households in North Lemon Grove do not have internet access (21.5%), followed by Spring Valley (11.6%) and Sweetwater (10.2%). This lack of internet access has important implications for full engagement in political and stakeholder decision-making processes, especially when accommodations are only made for virtual and online access. While the County continues to follow statewide and regional public health protocols and determines how best to engage with diverse stakeholders across the region, policies, goals, and implementation programs are tailored to expand access to these services beyond future potential public health emergencies.

### **Community Involvement**

*Live Well San Diego* measures volunteerism and voting as indicators of community involvement, health, well-being, and opportunity. The California Healthy Places Index also measures voter turnout as an indicator of social power and cohesion, which are linked to a range of positive health outcomes at the individual and community levels. According to 2019 data for Live Well San Diego, nearly 18 percent of the County population volunteered for a charitable organization during the year compared to 16.3 percent statewide. There was a lower percentage in the SRAs in the Central and East Regions that contain EJ Community census tracts ranging between 12 to 17 percent. For voter turnout, 52.4 percent of the County population voted in federal, state, or local elections in 2019 compared to 49.3 percent of the statewide population. Except for Spring Valley (53.9%), the other SRAs had a lower percentage, between 40.2 to 48.8 percent, who voted in an election within the 2019 calendar year. Beyond volunteerism and voting, which may not be accessible to all people and can serve as barriers for disenfranchised populations, other indicators can be measured for community involvement, such as the impact and role of community leaders, advocacy groups, and youth organizations. Goals, policies, and implementation programs are aimed at reducing these barriers and promoting capacity building to increase civic engagement.

The goals and policies in this section are aimed at increasing inclusiveness, providing communication, empowering residents, building trust, and facilitating collaborative relationships. Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.



## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-14

**Accessible and Culturally Appropriate Civic Engagement.** Provide equitable and inclusive opportunities for all County residents, regardless of racial/ethnic background, national origin, age, education, income, or disability to meaningfully engage in the decision-making process, specifically focused on promoting positive health outcomes and wellbeing of residents within EJ Communities, including education and workforce opportunities.

#### Policies

**EJ-14.1 Culturally Relevant Engagement.** Partner with appropriate organizations (e.g., community-based, faith-based, advocacy, and service) that have built relationships, trust, and cultural competency within EJ Communities and with youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and refugees to conduct meaningful outreach for relevant planning initiatives and environmental justice issues.

**EJ-14.2 Community-Led Initiatives.** Support community-driven initiatives in EJ Communities to address priorities and needs through technical assistance, data sources, meeting spaces, support services, and other staff resources.

**EJ-14.3 Translation and Interpretation.** Require vital County documents and announcements to be translated, interpreted, and accessible in a variety of languages that reflect the linguistic needs of the communities being served. This includes printed and online materials, meetings and workshops, and other announcements and notices.

**EJ-14.4 Maximize Accessibility (all unincorporated areas).** Ensure that meetings and other public engagement events are held at accessible locations and times with considerations for childcare, food options, ADA accommodations, technology access, and language interpretation to support greater attendance.

**EJ-14.5 Multi-Platform Engagement (all unincorporated areas).** Require the use of multiple platforms for virtual, phone, or in-person engagement to support greater participation and attendance. Where possible and preferred by the community, collaborate with community partners to utilize existing meetings and venues in EJ Communities.

### GOAL EJ-15

**Capacity Building and Leadership Development.** Support equitable and inclusive opportunities to build capacity and leadership skills for residents and organizations in EJ Communities through continued civic engagement.

#### Policies

**EJ-15.1 Community Service.** Support and expand opportunities for all residents to engage in community service that integrates community health, environment, and civic engagement with a special emphasis on youth and older adults.

**EJ-15.2 Educational Outreach.** Partner with school districts, community colleges, and continuing education institutions to promote civic engagement opportunities.



**EJ-15.3 Capacity Building and Support.** Support and expand opportunities to build and sustain capacity among residents to advocate and engage for community and systems improvements, to develop their skill sets as community leaders, and to advance their roles as trusted messengers.

## GOAL EJ-16

**Transparent Governance.** Maintain transparent, fair, consistent, and sustained civic engagement to continue identifying and addressing needs and priorities by building trust, establishing relationships, and ensuring community outreach standards.

### Policies

**EJ-16.1 Environmental Justice and Health Profiles and Trends.** Support alignment and accessibility of data indicators within the EJ Element, *Live Well San Diego* Data Indicators, and California Healthy Places Index to provide countywide and census tract-level profiles and data to encourage community-level participation and understanding of environmental and health-related issues and trends.

**EJ-16.2 Universal Outreach Methods (all unincorporated areas).** Establish guidelines for diverse methods of outreach that promote civic engagement especially to households that are linguistically isolated and do not have internet access, as well as youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and refugees. Ensure that methods of communication are utilized that maximize outreach and consider methods needed for harder-to-reach communities, such as the use of ethnic-based newspapers, phone, text, and email listservs, and in-person social networks.

**EJ-16.3 Data Mapping and Visualization (all unincorporated areas).** Ensure data mapping, and visualization tools are easily accessible and comprehensible to the general public.

## Prioritization of Improvements and Programs

### CONTEXT

An essential component of the EJ Element is prioritizing projects, programs, and investments that directly serve and benefit residents within EJ Communities. Due to historical, geographic, and procedural inequities, EJ Communities have specialized needs and priorities that require intentional actions to improve existing conditions and to ensure negative impacts are not exacerbated. Effective prioritization requires coordination and alignment across County agencies, departments, and shared jurisdictional partners along with consistent and sustained engagement with EJ Community stakeholders.

The other topical sections within the EJ Element identify existing conditions and needs in the EJ Communities within unincorporated San Diego County that justify prioritizing programs, services, and investments for the identified communities. Under further direction from the Board of Supervisors, County staff are committed to refining the data indicators and methodology for identifying additional EJ Communities throughout the unincorporated county.

#### **Data Alignment**

There are several indicators and evaluation process the County refers to for better coordination of programs and services, and to monitor data related to racial and social equity, regional opportunity, and community health and well-being for continued community engagement. There are challenges, however, in aligning multiple platforms when data is collected and classified at different regional levels. Both U.S. Census and CalEnviroScreen data are collected at the census tract level. Live Well San Diego and other regional data sources are collected at the sub-regional area (SRA) or community planning area (CPA) level which are broader than census tracts.



The County is exploring options to align existing data sources so to better identify unincorporated community needs. One data source is the California Healthy Places Index (HPI) and would be used for monitoring additional indicators that correspond with both CalEnviroScreen and *Live Well San Diego*. The HPI is a statewide tool that identifies community conditions that predict health and social outcomes and contains mapping and data resources at the census tract level. This tool can help track and monitor community improvements and issue areas. Some other data and indicators are more challenging to collect at the census tract level, such as property and violent crime rates and pedestrian and bicycle collisions, that directly relate to specific EJ topic areas. The County desires to seek opportunities to use these and other data sources so to identify service gaps and community needs.

Where “all unincorporated areas” is noted next to the policy, the policy is intended to address both the needs of the EJ Communities and the other unincorporated communities.

## GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL EJ-17

**Implementation Progress Monitoring.** Facilitate effective implementation and monitoring of environmental justice programs in the unincorporated County.

#### Policies

**EJ-17.1 EJ Community Programs and Improvements.** Support for programs and improvements in EJ Communities that address each community’s unique or compounded needs.

**EJ-17.2 Annual Implementation Review.** Require annual review of the implementation of the EJ Element to monitor progress on goals, policies, and implementation of programs and actions and provide this information to the EJ Communities.

**EJ-17.3 Existing Processes and Practices (all unincorporated areas).** Examine existing countywide processes and practices for ways to embed environmental justice goals, policies, and actions throughout future updates to General Plan Elements, Climate Action Plans, and other County-initiated planning efforts.

### GOAL EJ-18

**Regional Data Clearinghouse.** Coordinate alignment among data reporting and monitoring at the regional and census tract level to match statewide data reporting for countywide policies, regulations, and progress reports.

#### Policies

**EJ-18.1 Community Progress Reports.** Continue to utilize data reporting from *Live Well San Diego* Data Indicators and California Healthy Places Index to measure progress and develop additional indicators through continued engagement with EJ Communities.

**EJ-18.2 Census Tract Data (all unincorporated areas).** Coordinate with public agencies to collect and report data at the census tract level to better align with statewide data reporting across the County.