

A collage of hands of various skin tones holding small green seedlings in dark brown soil. The hands are arranged in a circular pattern, with some holding the soil and others holding the seedlings. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# 8

## Environmental Justice

For a community to thrive, its residents need to be healthy, safe, and engaged with one another. The focus of this element is on actions the City can take to promote public health, provide protection from environmental hazards, and enrich the quality of life for all residents of Moreno Valley. It is organized around four key goals: reduced exposure to pollution; safe and sanitary housing; access to healthy food; and active engagement in civic life.

This chapter satisfies the requirements for the Environmental Justice Element of the General Plan; however, community well-being is also addressed in other chapters of the plan. Factors affecting well-being such as access to natural open space and opportunities for physical activity are addressed in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element and in the Parks and Public Services Element. Quality of the built environment and land use compatibility are addressed in the Land Use and Community Character Element. Active transportation and roadway safety are addressed in the Circulation Element and the Healthy Community Element, while education, training, and employment are addressed in the Economic Development Element.

## Background

### WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

At its core, environmental justice is a concept that all people are entitled to live, work, and play in a clean and healthy environment regardless of race, culture, or income. Throughout California and beyond, low-income communities and communities of color have historically experienced discrimination, negligence, and political and economic disempowerment, with the result that today, these groups struggle with both a disproportionate burden of pollution and health impacts as well as disproportionate social and economic disadvantages such as poverty or housing instability. This undesirable reality is considered environmental injustice, and it contributes to disparities in health (e.g., asthma, lead poisoning, and obesity) among populations of different race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Conversely, environmental justice is a concept that aims to reduce and equalize the effects of environmental hazards among all people. Environmental justice provides a specific lens through which to advance equity and protect human health.

### DEFINING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

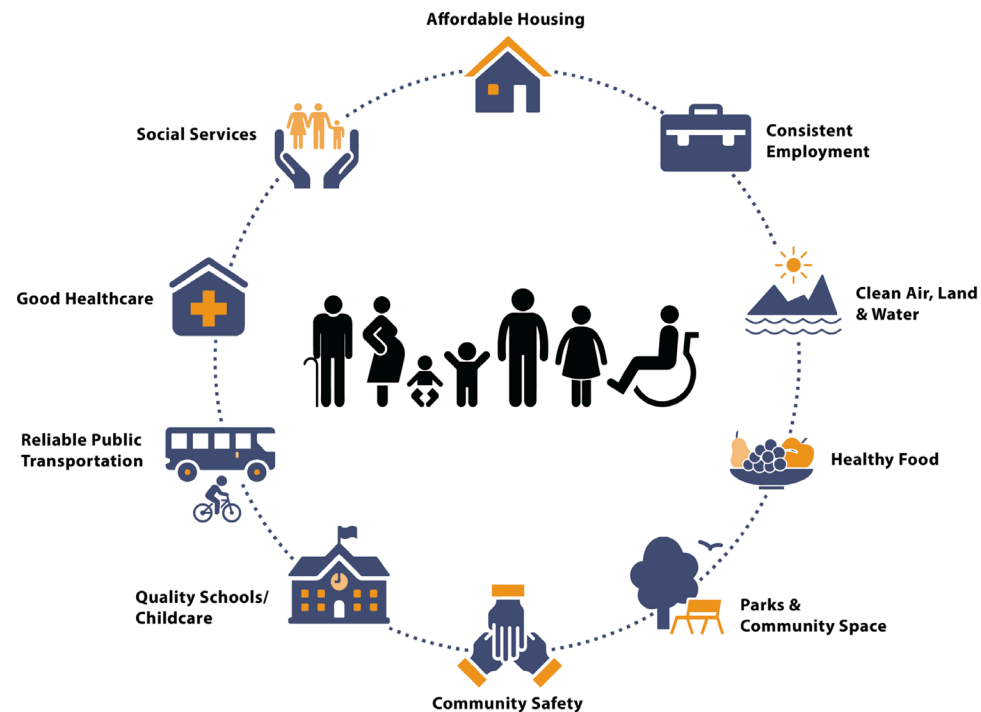
The California Government Code defines disadvantaged communities (DACs) as “...an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency... or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.”<sup>1</sup> Identified DACs are eligible for Cap-and-Trade funding that can improve community conditions and quality of life.

<sup>1</sup> Low-income areas are defined as locations where household incomes are at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income, or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's list of state income limits.

### Disadvantaged Communities In Moreno Valley

Enacted in 2012, Senate Bill 535 designates the responsibility for identifying DACs to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). In response, CalEPA has developed CalEnviroScreen, a mapping tool that helps identify California communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects. CalEnviroScreen uses 20 indicators to calculate scores for every census tract in California. A census tract is a geographic boundary that is often either the smallest or most complete geographic scale for which data is available. CalEnviroScreen ranks communities based on data

that is available from federal, State, regional, and local public agency sources. The scores are mapped so that different communities can be compared; an area with a high score is one that experiences a much higher burden than areas with low scores. A DAC is defined as an area scoring in the top 25 percent (75-100 percent) through this methodology.



**A Healthy and Equitable Environment**—Environmental Justice is the right to live, work and play, in a clean and healthy environment regardless of race, culture, or income.

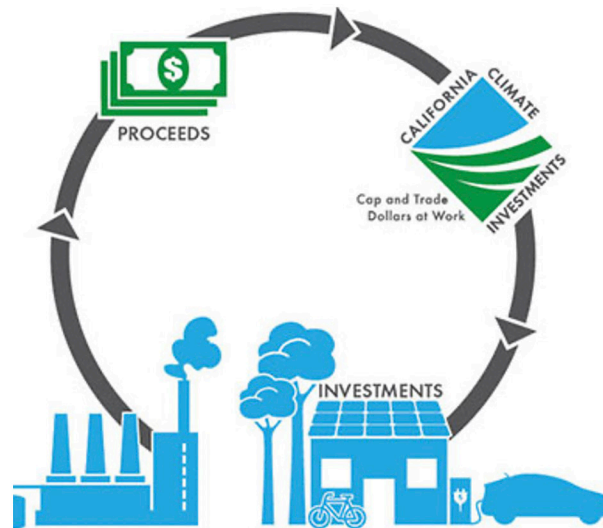


**The Cap-and-Trade Program** is a key element of California's strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by setting an overall cap on emissions each year but offering flexibility in how companies achieve it by allowing them to buy/sell pollution credits in auctions. According to a 2017 report by the independent Legislative Analyst's Office, the Program could generate as much as \$8 billion over the next 10 years. Senate Bill 535 requires 25 percent of the Program proceeds go to projects that benefit disadvantaged communities and Assembly Bill 1550 further requires 25 percent of the proceeds be spent on projects located in disadvantaged communities. Sample Cap-and-Trade funding projects include efforts to reduce truck pollution near disadvantaged communities, planting trees in cities, providing affordable housing near transit lines, improving energy efficiency in homes, and funding outreach/engagement tools to empower communities.

In 2018, the City of Moreno Valley partnered with the Moreno Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Family Service Association, and the Riverside University Health System to develop the Engage MoVal Outreach Toolbox, a user-friendly and flexible guide for planning and delivering community engagement processes. This work was funded through a Transformative Climate Communities grant which is funded by California's Cap-and-Trade Program. The disadvantaged community designation can potentially be an important source of funding for general plan programs and subsequent projects that seek to reduce pollution that causes climate change while also improving public health, quality of life, and economic opportunity in California's most burdened communities.

## Overview

Out of a total of 46 census tracts in the Planning Area, 24 are designated as DACs under SB 535 and all are located within the City limit. Designated DACs, shown in Map EJ-1 and Table EJ-1, are generally concentrated in the more densely populated areas in the west of the City, close to the freeways



Identified "Disadvantaged Communities" are eligible for Cap-and-Trade funding that can benefit residents.

and major transportation corridors. The residents of these areas tend to be younger and have lower levels of educational attainment than residents of other areas of the City. The median age of DAC residents is 29.5 years, as compared to 32.3 in other areas of the City, and nearly 60 percent of DAC residents did not go to college. DACs also have a higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino residents (65 percent) than other areas of Moreno Valley (50 percent).

While Map EJ-1 and Table EJ-1 display the composite scoring results used by the State to identify DACs, they do not present a full picture of the environmental justice issues at play in the community. Individual indicators/topic areas are subsequently discussed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of environmental justice priorities in Moreno Valley.

The four broad groups CalEnviroScreen Indicators used for scoring/identifying DACs are listed below.

- ◆ **Exposure Indicators** are based on measurements of different types of pollution that people may come into contact with (e.g., smog, drinking water contaminants, toxic releases from facilities).
- ◆ **Environmental Effect Indicators** are based on the locations of toxic chemicals in or near communities (e.g., cleanup sites, groundwater threats, solid waste sites and facilities)
- ◆ **Sensitive Population Indicators** measure the number of people in a community who may be more severely affected by pollution burden because of their age or health (e.g., those with asthma or cardiovascular disease).
- ◆ **Socioeconomic Factor Indicators** are conditions that may increase people's stress or make healthy living difficult and cause them to be more sensitive to pollution's effects (e.g. low household income, low educational attainment, and unemployment).

## Community Health Profile

In 2019, Kaiser Permanente released a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Report for its Moreno Valley Service Area intended to help characterize the community's unique needs and resources, inform community investments, and help develop strategies aimed at making long-term, sustainable change. Of the 12 health outcomes studied, the Moreno Valley Service Area performs better than the State average in eight out of 12; however, it does not perform as well as the State average in four areas: asthma, obesity, poor mental health, and poor oral health. The top five causes of death in Riverside County are asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and violence/injury; the Moreno Valley Service Area performs better than the State average in four out of five areas (cancer excluded).

Socio-demographic factors also contribute to the overall health profile of a community, particularly the characteristics that make some residents more vulnerable to poor health outcomes. In Moreno Valley, about 12 percent of residents do not have health insurance and while not universally true, the most vulnerable segments of the population typically have lower levels of educational attainment. In Moreno Valley, about 23 percent of the population 25 years and older have less than a high school education, which is comparably greater than the County (about 18 percent). The average age in the City is older than in the County as a whole, with about 27 percent of the population under 18 years old as compared to about 22 percent in the County. Further, about six percent of the population is under age five, and about 9.6 percent is 65 years or older. These demographic characteristics are relevant to environmental justice as young children and the elderly are also typically more sensitive to illness or adverse effects from pollution exposure.<sup>2</sup>

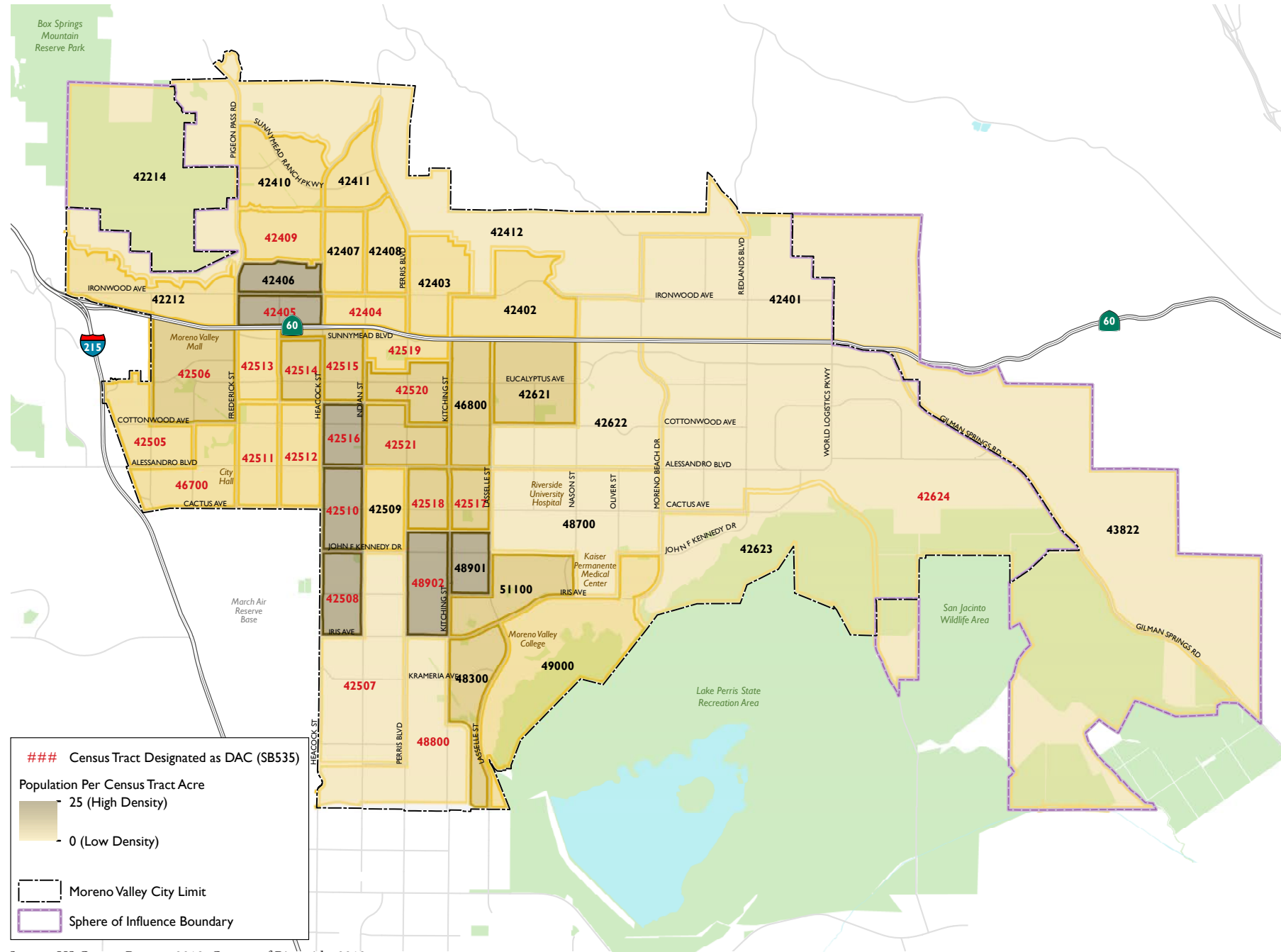
2. 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

**Table EJ-1: CalEnviroScreen Scores of DACs in the Planning Area**

CENSUS TRACT	CALENVIROSCREEN SCORE	CALENVIROSCREEN PERCENTILE RANGE	POLLUTION BURDEN PERCENTILE	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION DENSITY (RESIDENTS PER ACRE)
6065046700	69.15	95-100%	98	4,442	8.13
6065042505	65.65	95-100%	95	3,639	8.02
6065042508	59.68	95-100%	89	4,888	15.42
6065042507	54.89	90-95%	88	5,011	3.88
6065042620	52.05	90-95%	90	10,463	176.40
6065048800	51.24	90-95%	79	4,512	4.12
6065042510	50.56	85-90%	70	5,048	15.90
6065042511	50.03	85-90%	62	3,308	8.33
6065042512	49.74	85-90%	70	3,200	8.04
6065042506	49.65	85-90%	75	9,483	12.53
6065042515	49.27	85-90%	59	3,803	11.44
6065042513	47.62	85-90%	74	3,379	11.84
6065042405	46.69	85-90%	74	4,997	19.92
6065042516	46.65	85-90%	55	4,177	17.45
6065042514	46.62	80-85%	58	3,165	13.07
6065042519	43.85	80-85%	52	1,706	7.23
6065042404	43.18	80-85%	51	2,038	8.07
6065042520	41.57	75-80%	44	4,669	12.71
6065042624	41.48	75-80%	65	3,784	0.45
6065042518	41.24	75-80%	46	3,670	14.87
6065048902	40.74	75-80%	49	5,957	14.54
6065042521	39.92	75-80%	46	4,922	12.30
6065042517	39.60	75-80%	43	3,278	14.08
6065042409	39.38	75-80%	53	3,299	8.58

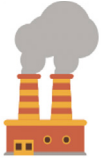
Note: Total population by census tract from 2010. Source: CalEnviroScreen, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019

# Map EJ-1: Disadvantaged Communities (Senate Bill 535) and Population Density



Source: US Census Bureau, 2019; County of Riverside, 2019

## Environmental Justice Topic Areas



Air Quality & Pollution



Safe & Sanitary Homes



Healthy Food Access



Public Facilities & Physical Activity



Civic Engagement & Investment Prioritization



## Air Quality and Pollution Exposure

Pollution exposure occurs when people are exposed to air, food, water, and soil pollutants in the course of daily life. In an urban environment, pollution can come from a variety of different sources, including solid waste facilities that emit toxic gases, storage tanks that leak hazardous chemicals into groundwater and soil, agricultural operations using pesticides, cars and trucks emitting exhaust, or stationary sources such as diesel generators emitting exhaust. Ongoing exposure to pollution can worsen existing health conditions and lead to absences from work or school. Long-term pollution exposure can even result in reduced life expectancy. Based on an analysis of CalEnviroScreen data, Moreno Valley is most affected by issues related to air quality, water quality, and hazardous materials, particularly in some of the most densely populated areas in the western portion of the city.

### AIR QUALITY

Air quality in the Inland Empire is influenced by both topographical and meteorological conditions. The dominant meteorological feature affecting the region is the Pacific High Pressure Zone, which produces the prevailing westerly to northwesterly winds. These winds tend to blow pollutants away from the coast toward the inland areas. As such, air pollution is an ongoing concern in Riverside County and Moreno Valley, where levels of ozone and particulate matter exceed federal and State standards. The prevailing westerly wind pattern is sometimes interrupted by regional “Santa Ana” conditions, when a strong high pressure develops over the Nevada–Utah area and overcomes the prevailing westerly coastal winds, sending steady, hot, dry northeasterly winds over the mountains and out to sea.

Moreno Valley may also face air quality threats from wildfire smoke. More frequent and intense wildfires are a growing public health problem in California, contributing to reduced air quality for people living near or downwind of fire. Health problems related to wildfire smoke exposure can be as mild as eye and respiratory tract irritation and as serious as worsening of heart and lung disease, including asthma, and even premature death. One of the main components of smoke is particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), which is a regulated air pollutant, the association between PM<sub>2.5</sub> and heart and lung health effects is well documented.

### Toxic Air Contaminants

Toxic air contaminants (TACs) are air pollutants that may cause or increase mortality or serious illness or that may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. Diesel exhaust (DPM) from trucks and cars is the predominant TAC in urban air. In winter, smoke from residential wood combustion can be a source of TACs when cold stagnant air traps smoke near the ground. Emissions of TACs in and around the Planning Area are also generated from mobile sources, including vehicle travel along SR 60 and I-215. Sensitive populations and land uses, such as residential uses, hospitals, senior living facilities, and schools, are better located at a distance from TAC sources. Air filtration systems can help to mitigate the impacts of TACs.

### Pollution Control

Statewide, 35 local air pollution control districts regulate emissions from businesses and stationary facilities, ranging from oil refineries to auto body shops and dry cleaners. Moreno Valley is located within the South Coast Air Basin, which is under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The Basin is designated as in “non-attainment” for select State and federal air quality standards, which means that air pollutant emissions exceed acceptable levels for the region, indicating



poor air quality. These air quality standards are commonly related to fine particles of pollution from diesel-powered trucks, buses, cars, ships, and locomotive engines, typically concentrated near ports, railyards, and freeways. The SCAQMD maintains 41 active air quality monitoring sites located throughout the Basin, including eight active sites in Riverside County. Air pollutant concentrations and meteorological information are continuously recorded at these stations and data is then used by scientists to help forecast daily air pollution levels. There are exceedances of ozone, PM10, and PM2.5 standards that occur throughout the Basin, further demonstrating that air pollution/air quality is not a Moreno Valley-centric issue and requires coordinated efforts for improvement at all levels of government.

SCAQMD periodically prepares an Air Quality Management Plan outlining measures to reduce pollutants that serve as a blueprint to bring the area into compliance with federal and State clean air standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB). The Plan enables the SCAQMD to adopt rules to reduce emissions from various sources, including industrial processes and equipment, and issue permits to ensure compliance. The Plan recognizes the importance of working with other agencies to develop new regulations and secure funding and other incentives to encourage the accelerated transition of vehicles, buildings, and industrial facilities to cleaner technologies. The Plan also concludes that the most effective way to reduce air pollution impacts on the health of residents, including those in disproportionately impacted and environmental justice communities concentrated along transportation corridors and goods movement facilities, is to reduce emissions from mobile sources. The Plan's efforts to reduce mobile emissions are complemented by CARB's adoption of the Advanced Clean Truck Regulation, which requires all new trucks sold in California to be

zero emissions by 2045 and offers incentive programs such as the Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP) to encourage the transition. HVIP is a CARB-administered program that provides point-of-sale vouchers to incentivize the purchase of zero-emission trucks and buses by making these vehicles more affordable. On January 13, 2025, CARB withdrew its requests for Clean Air Act waivers from the U.S. EPA needed to support four recently adopted vehicle emissions regulations: (1) the Advanced Clean Fleets Regulations; 2) the In-Use Locomotive Regulations; 3) part of the Commercial Harbor Craft and Ocean-Going Vessels At-Berth Regulations; and 4) part of the Transport Refrigeration Unit Engine Standards Regulations. In May of 2025, the United States Senate, in a 51-44 vote, overturned President Biden's waiver enabling California to enforce zero-emission requirements for the sale of new passenger vehicles. Despite the federal response, CARB continues to administer the HVIP policy to incentivize the transition to zero-emissions trucks. HVIP funding opportunities allow for "stacking" with other public funding sources, including the Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust, the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program, and the CARB Truck Loan Assistance Program. Additionally, the State's cap-and-trade program provides HVIP funding. Thus, HVIP is primarily a State-funded program, and its



immediate continuity is not directly impacted by the Senate's ruling, but this federal decision may impact future regulations.

In addition to the Air Quality Management Plan, SCAQMD is leading a coordinated regional effort focused on community-based solutions for improving air quality and public health in environmental justice communities, pursuant to Assembly Bill (AB) 617 (2017). That law requires local air districts and the CARB to reduce air pollution in these most impacted communities, and the SCAQMD effort is part of a wide-reaching program that includes:

- ◆ Development of Community Emissions Reduction Plans in collaboration with community members;
- ◆ Adoption of Air District rules that ensure Best Available Retrofit Control Technology (BARCT) is required for industrial and commercial facilities participating in the state greenhouse gas cap and trade program;
- ◆ Enhancement of emissions inventories to ensure uniform statewide reporting; and
- ◆ Incentive programs to replace older polluting equipment with cleaner technologies, and increases in penalties for air pollution violations.

CARB also offers Community Air Grants to community groups for enhancing education and outreach regarding AB 617, monitoring, and improving their air quality.

## Climate Action Planning

While reducing air pollution and improving air quality is an issue extending beyond the City limits, there are actions that can be considered locally to improve the health and wellness of Moreno Valley's current and future residents, balancing priorities for economic development, housing construction, and job creation that are also vital for a high quality of life in the community. The City's Climate Action Plan (CAP), prepared at the same

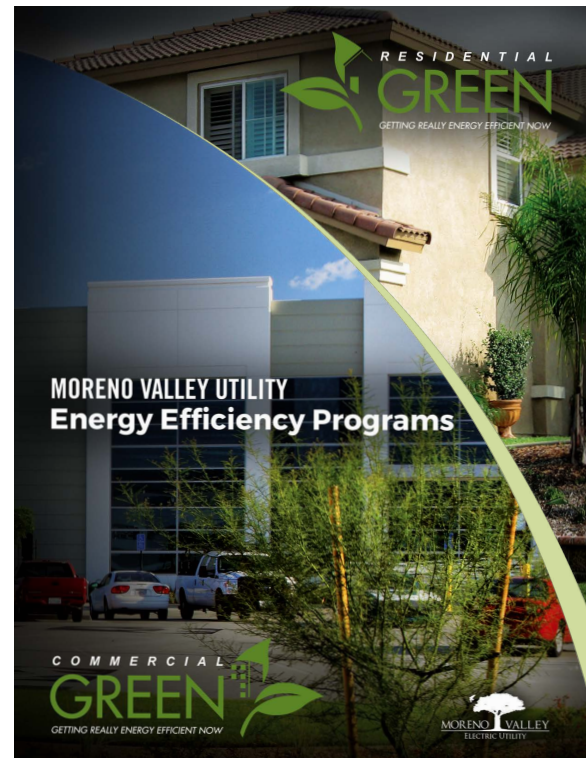
time as this General Plan is a community-wide strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that includes 6 strategies and 16 measures targeting greenhouse gas emissions generated by buildings, transportation, solid waste, water and wastewater, and carbon sequestration. CAP strategies promote transportation demand management programs, enhance transit services, incentivize energy efficient upgrades and construction, streamline installation of solar panels, subsidize energy-efficient retrofits for low-income homeowners, support urban greening, and more. The 2022 California Green Building Code also includes multiple complementary measures, requiring new multi-family residences to dedicate 10 percent of parking spaces as electric vehicle charging stations, implement water conservation measures, and install air filters. These strategies, will further support efforts to reduce air pollution and associated impacts on public health, particularly from mobile sources. The 2022 California Green Building Code also includes multiple complementary measures, requiring new multi-family residences to dedicate 10 percent of parking spaces as electric vehicle charging stations, implement water conservation measures, and install air filters. These strategies, will further support efforts to reduce air pollution and associated impacts on public health, particularly from mobile sources.

## WATER AND SOIL QUALITY

### Drinking Water Quality

Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) supplies potable water to most of Moreno Valley. EMWD purchases water sourced from the Colorado River and Northern California via the State Water project conveyance system, treating it at one of two treatment plants prior to delivery. Tap water provided by EMWD is in compliance with federal health-based drinking water standards; however, CalEnviroScreen data indicates that levels of naturally occurring contaminants are higher than Statewide averages. Filtration systems can reduce the levels of many common contaminants,

such as lead and disinfection byproducts. These range from relatively inexpensive carbon filters, such as countertop pitcher filters to faucet-mounted filters, to more expensive – and more effective – reverse osmosis or ion



Moreno Valley Utility provides safe, reliable, and economical public electric service. Moreno Valley Utility supports environmentally responsible resource management and offers rebates to help residents and commercial clients save money on efficient devices that lessen environmental impacts.

exchange filters that effectively remove many contaminants, such as arsenic, fluoride, hexavalent chromium, nitrates and perchlorate.

### Groundwater Quality

Box Springs Mutual Water Company (BSMWC) provides water service to a 430-acre area in the western part of the City that includes the Edgemont neighborhood. BSMWC water is sourced primarily from a groundwater wells located in the area. The well water is high in nitrates and to meet safe drinking water standards, BSMWC must blend its supply with imported water. Additionally, the BSMWC conveyance system is aging and deteriorated, which increases the risk of contamination, although tap water provided by BSMWC is in compliance with federal health-based drinking water standards. Water system improvements are being made incrementally, but funding remains a significant challenge given that as a private company, BSMWC is not eligible to receive State grants. Near term solutions to improve water quality may include low-cost filtration systems, public education, and the use of innovative potable water and wastewater systems in areas with water quality challenges such as Edgemont.

### Hazardous Materials

There are six recorded hazardous materials sites within the City, the majority of which involve dry cleaners and gas stations and pose low risk. One site outside of the City limit on the March Air Reserve Base has been the subject of remediation activities focused on removal benzene, chlorinated hydrocarbons, tetrachloroethylene (PCE), and trichloroethylene (TCE) within the aquifer used for drinking water. There are currently no remediation activities underway and monitoring is ongoing.



**Goal EJ-1: Reduce pollution exposure and improve community health.**

*Air Quality*

**POLICIES**

**EJ.1-1:** Coordinate air quality planning efforts with other local, regional, and State agencies.

**EJ.1-2:** Cooperate with SCAQMD and Western Riverside Council of Governments in efforts to promote public awareness about air pollution and control measures.

**EJ.1-3:** Require new development that would locate sensitive uses adjacent to sources of toxic air contaminants (TAC) to be designed to minimize any potential health risks, consistent with State law.



**EJ.1-4:** Collaborate with SCAQMD and other regional partners in the development and implementation of Community Emissions Reduction Plans, consistent with State mandates.

**EJ.1-5:** Continue the purchase or lease of fuel-efficient and low emissions vehicles for City fleet vehicles.

**EJ.1-6:** Ensure that construction and grading activities minimize short-term impacts to air quality by employing appropriate mitigation measures and best practices.

**EJ.1-7:** Require new large commercial or light industrial projects to develop and implement a plan to minimize truck idling in order to reduce diesel particulate emissions.

**EJ.1-8:** Support the incorporation of new technologies and design and construction techniques in new development that minimize pollution and its impacts.

**EJ.1-9:** Designate truck routes that avoid sensitive land uses, where feasible.

**ACTIONS**

**EJ.1-A:** Use the Climate Action Plan to guide City actions and investments aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions community-wide.

**EJ.1-B:** Work with SCAQMD, property owners, and community members to identify and implement actions that foster healthy air

quality in identified SB617 communities, leveraging State funding.

**EJ.1-C:** Consider establishing a fee to be paid by new development to assist in the funding of local projects that contribute to the enhancement of air quality, particularly in DACs.

**EJ.1-D:** Work with the distribution and warehousing business community to improve outdoor air quality through improved operations and practices, such as planning for zero emissions trucks and vans.

**EJ.1-E:** Study the feasibility of measures to promote the use of electric vehicles, including the feasibility of offering incentives such as priority parking for EVs at public facilities and the feasibility of requiring a minimum number of EV-ready parking spaces in new commercial, industrial, and multi-unit residential projects.



**EJ.1-F:** Distribute information about best practices to reduce and/or eliminate sources of indoor air pollution.

#### *Water and Soil Quality*

#### **POLICIES**

**EJ.1-10:** Coordinate with water service providers to ensure that sources of potable water are protected from contamination.

**EJ.1-11:** Support Box Springs Mutual Water Company in pursuit of funding for water conveyance and treatment infrastructure improvements. Funding sources may include the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund or California Climate Investment programs.

**EJ.1-12:** Encourage use of cost-effective residential water filtration systems, providing information on product options and effectiveness on the City website.

**EJ.1-13:** Through the development review process, ensure that hazardous material-affected soil, groundwater, or buildings will not have the potential to adversely affect the environment or the health and safety of site occupants.



## **Safe and Sanitary Homes**

Access to safe, sanitary housing is important for everyone. Beyond being a source of shelter, a home gives families a sense of security, health, peace of mind, and center of life. Whether or not housing is located in a resource-rich, complete neighborhood; is of high quality and free from health hazards; is affordable and not a financial burden; and is a place where people can remain if they so choose are all factors that have a profound influence on a person's health and well-being.

### **CHALLENGES TO SAFE AND SANITARY HOMES**

Over 80 percent of the housing in Moreno Valley consists of single-family homes and about 61 percent of all homes are owner-occupied. The majority (52 percent) of DAC residents live in renter-occupied housing, whereas the majority of other residents (73 percent) live in owner-occupied housing.

#### **Housing Quality**

Quality housing means housing that is decent, safe, sanitary, and in good repair. Data collected by the California Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) identifies four kinds of housing problems for households: 1) housing unit lacks complete kitchen facilities; 2) housing unit lacks complete plumbing facilities; 3) household is overcrowded; and 4) household is cost burdened. A household is said to have a housing problem if it has one or more of these four problems. Within Moreno Valley, about 21 percent of owner-occupied units experience at least one of the four HUD-measured housing problems compared to about 23 percent in Riverside County. In Moreno Valley, nearly double the number of DAC renter-occupied housing units experience one of the four housing problems compared to renter-occupied housing units in other

areas of the City (28.8 percent versus 14.5 percent).

#### **Housing Security/Burden**

Housing security is largely defined by people's ability to pay the rent or mortgage and remain in their neighborhoods if they choose. When people have to devote a high percentage of their incomes to housing costs, this can leave little left over for food, medications, school supplies or other necessities. In the case of low-income households (those making less than 80 percent of the County's median income), this may also lead to housing-induced poverty. Households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing are said to be "burdened." About 47.5 percent of City renters and homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened (spending more than 30 percent of income on housing). This value is slightly less than the County (48.2 percent) and comparable to the State (47.6 percent). Housing burden trends in the City have generally decreased over the past decade, though the percentage of cost burdened renters remains high (59.8 percent). Although a majority of residents in Moreno Valley are owners, renters constitute 39.0 percent of households, making the high level of housing burden a challenge, especially for DACs.

### **IMPROVING ACCESS TO SAFE AND SANITARY HOMES**

The overarching objective of the City's housing strategy is to provide safe and decent housing opportunities for all residents, offering a range of housing options to accommodate the diverse needs of the community. The Housing Element identifies specific strategies to implement this vision that focus on: Matching housing supply with need;

- ◆ Matching housing supply with need;
- ◆ Maximizing housing choice throughout the community;

- ◆ Assisting in the provision of affordable housing choice;
- ◆ Removing government and other constraints to housing investment; and
- ◆ Promoting fair and equal housing opportunities.

In addition, offering housing that is affordable to local workers is crucial, as a mix of housing that meets a diversity of needs and incomes allows diverse professionals to live in the community in which they work. There are ample benefits to having housing that can accommodate local workers, including increased social cohesiveness and a decrease in the amount of driving necessary to support a community.<sup>3</sup>

An online webinar-style listening session in Spanish and English languages was conducted as part of efforts for the 2021 General Plan Update and the topic of safe and sanitary homes, including the quality and affordability of homes and if they are in good repair, was highlighted. The goal of the listening session was to receive input from residents, particularly from Moreno Valley's western neighborhoods which may be more impacted, and from everyone that wanted to provide feedback for important policies and top priorities for community development. Targeted outreach was conducted to Senate Bill 535-identified disadvantaged groups and their representatives and community partners. Within the focused community

<sup>3</sup> Riverside University Health System – Public Health. *Healthy Development Checklist*, 2017.

listening session, a wider range of housing options—multi-family homes were specifically mentioned—at varying price points was prioritized.

**Goal EJ-2: Provide safe and sanitary housing for Moreno Valley residents of all ages, abilities, and income levels.**

**POLICIES**

**EJ.2-1:** Continue to work with developers to expand Moreno Valley's affordable housing stock, including a range of housing types that meets the needs of seniors, large and small families, low- and middle-income households, and people with disabilities.

**EJ.2-2:** Promote mixed-income development and the inclusion of affordable housing units throughout the City.

**EJ.2-3:** Actively promote efforts to repair, improve, and rehabilitate substandard housing conditions in collaboration with the Fair Housing Council of Riverside.

**ACTIONS**

**EJ.2-A:** Provide housing developers and home buyers with information on how to expand homeownership opportunities, including limited-equity components and Location-Efficient Mortgages.

**EJ.2-B:** Utilize federal, State, local, and private funding programs offering low interest loans or grants, and private equity for the rehabilitation of rental properties for lower income households.

**EJ.2-C:** Continue to implement recommendations made in the City of Moreno Valley's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and Fair Housing Action Plan.

**EJ.2-D:** Explore development and monitoring of indicators of displacement and use of this data to identify at-risk neighborhoods and target programs and resources to prevent homelessness.





## Healthy Food Access

Better access to healthy food can help directly address the leading cause of death in Riverside County: heart disease. Nutrition also influences success at school or work, as well as overall quality of life, and healthy eating leads to important co-benefits, such as more active lifestyles and participation in family and community events. An adequate, nutritious diet is a necessity at all stages of life, as nutrition plays a significant role in preventing a number of illnesses. While Moreno Valley adults experience obesity and diabetes at a rate less than the overall County, these health issues still occur at a higher rate when compared to the rest of the State.

### BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Residents of communities with access to healthy foods typically have healthier diets; people's food choices and their likelihood of being overweight, diabetic, or obese are influenced by their food environment. Not everybody has easy access to affordable, nutritious food, especially people who have low incomes and who may rely on public transportation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture utilizes an online Food Access Research Atlas to map food access indicators by census tract, tracking places where the provision

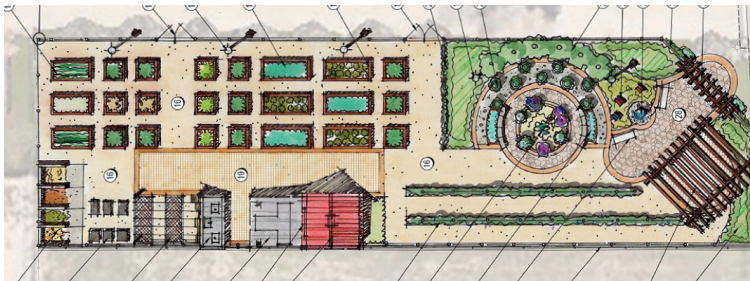
of food sources is inadequate. The Food Access Research Atlas maps food access indicators for census tracts using 1/2-mile and 1-mile demarcations to the nearest supermarket for urban areas and vehicle availability for all tracts, as shown in Map EJ-2. Some areas of Moreno Valley have less access to grocery stores and fewer healthy dining options. Generally, residents of the area west of Kitching Street between SR 60 and Cactus Avenue have less access, and 17 out of the 21 census tracts with low income and low access to food are DACs. Food access challenges are also experienced in other portions of the County, including areas immediately adjacent to City limits.

### PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING

"Healthy MoVal" is an important City initiative aimed at promoting physical activity, healthy eating, and active living for Moreno Valley residents of all ages. The Parks and Community Services Department also offers many programs to promote health and wellness, including the Community Demonstration Garden at Civic Center Park. Located on a 9,000+ square-foot area adjacent to the Moreno Valley Civic Amphitheater, the Community Demonstration Garden is highly visible and accessible by foot, bike, car, and public transit, with the nearest bus stop located within one block. The Community Demonstration Garden, which opened in February

2022, contains a variety of elements that residents can replicate in their own homes; these elements demonstrate sustainable approaches to residential food production with healthy, seasonally appropriate vegetables and fruit as well as horticultural best practices for home gardens. The City also runs a food recovery program and maintains a map of local food pantries on its website to promote donations of food that might otherwise go to waste. A robust network of local food banks and food rescue organizations serve community centers, soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, senior programs, and childcare centers.

Additionally, a major objective of this General Plan is to focus new development into centers and corridors, including the Alessandro, Perris, and Sunnymead Boulevard corridors and the Moreno Valley Mall and the District. These areas are currently underserved by healthy food retail options and new residential development will increase population density and help support efforts to attract grocery stores, farmers' markets and restaurants.

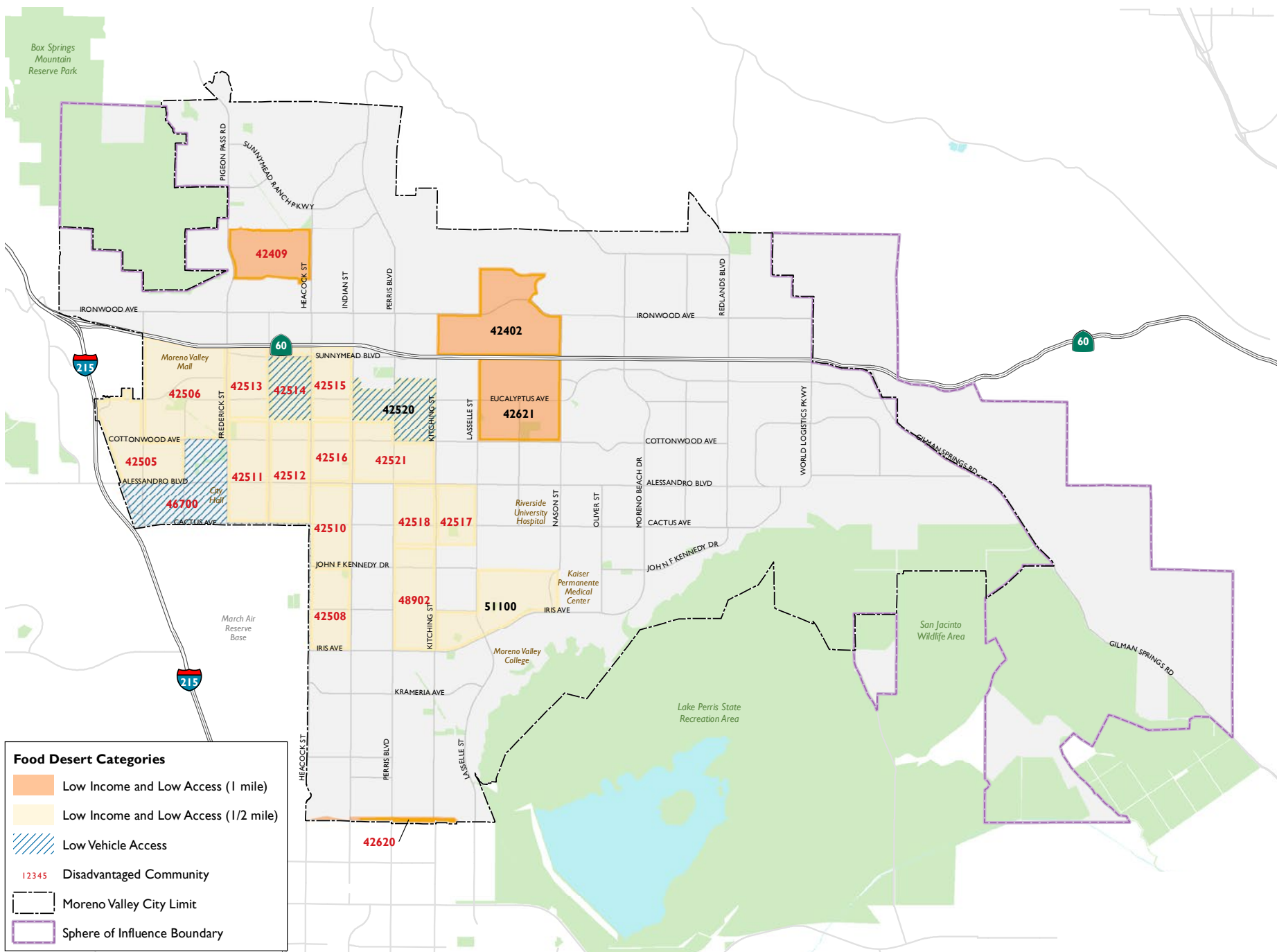


Moreno Valley Community Demonstration Garden is a showcase of sustainable, healthful gardening and landscaping applications for homes in the city.



Mixed use land use designations in this General Plan support healthy food access and economic development by bringing potential customers and businesses closer together.

## Map EJ-2: Access to Food



Source: USDA, 2018; County of Riverside 2019

**Goal EJ-3: Expand access to high-quality, fresh and healthy food.**

**POLICIES**

- EJ.3-1:** Promote the equitable distribution of healthy food retail and dining options throughout the City.
- EJ.3-2:** Encourage the development of healthy food outlets, small neighborhood markets, farmers' markets, and food cooperatives in/near homes by adopting flexible zoning standards to allow such uses where appropriate. Consider creation of a Healthy Food Zoning Overlay and allowing small-scale urban agriculture in specified areas of the City and as accessory uses, such as temporary on-site urban agriculture stands.



An adequate, nutritious diet is a necessity at all stages of life as nutrition plays a significant role in causing or preventing a number of illnesses.

**EJ.3-3:** Collaborate with the Riverside County Health Department, Moreno Valley College, Riverside University Medical Center, Kaiser Medical Center, and other community organizations to encourage and facilitate local urban agriculture, farmers' markets, mobile health food markets, food trucks, food stands, and healthy food in convenience markets.

**EJ.3-4:** Promote healthier eating through collaborations with the Riverside County Department of Public Health and other community partners, expansion of hours and locations of City-sponsored food distribution programs, or programs such as free and culturally relevant nutrition and cooking classes at Moreno Valley community centers.

**ACTIONS**

- EJ.3-A:** Explore opportunities to incentivize grocery stores and healthy food retailers.
- EJ.3-B:** Identify and inventory potential community garden/urban farm sites on existing parks, utility easements and rights of way, and prioritize site use as community gardens in appropriate locations.
- EJ.3-C:** Prioritize policies, projects and programs that demonstrate best practices related to promoting wellness in City facilities and at City-sponsored events, such as serving healthy foods at community events.
- EJ.3-D:** Continue to allow small-scale urban farming consistent with local health/safety regulations.

**EJ.3-E:** Continue to focus business attraction efforts on grocery stores, food co-ops, and other healthy food retailers for underserved areas of the city.

## Civic Engagement and Investment Prioritization

As the second largest city in Riverside County and the fourth largest in the Inland Empire, Moreno Valley continues to grow and change and the importance of community engagement remains essential and a top priority for the City. Engaging the public early and inclusively in planning processes builds consensus, informs decision-making, and improves project outcomes. Meaningful community involvement helps engender support for programs, plans, and projects, which in turn leads to higher levels of public acceptance for planning decisions that affect where we live, how we live, and the ways we aspire to live.

## BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

When designing community engagement, it is crucial to identify potential barriers and address them in implementation. There are a variety of reasons that influence why people do not participate in planning processes, including, but not limited to, those described below. Specific considerations that may require extra attention when engaging the Moreno Valley community are noted.<sup>4</sup> By being aware of potential barriers to community engagement, the City can think strategically and creatively about how to address those issues and create truly inclusive planning processes.

<sup>4</sup> Data is from the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; the August 2020 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Pre-Certified Local Housing Data for the City of Moreno Valley; the Public Health Alliance, 2019; and CalEnviroScreen, 2019.



- ◆ Transportation barriers
- ◆ Childcare needs
  - About 30 percent of Moreno Valley households are married couples with minor children at home. Single parents or working parents are historically under-represented populations.
- ◆ Inaccessible meeting locations and venues
  - Most Moreno Valley residents live in the west/southwest portions of the City, generally south of State Route 60 and west of Moreno Beach Drive. These census tracts have the City's highest population density and the majority of DACs. Meeting locations and venues in other portions of the City may result in accessibility challenges. In addition, about 7.8 percent of Moreno Valley's seniors (age 65 and older) live with an ambulatory disability (i.e., have difficulty walking). Seniors and people with disabilities are historically under-represented populations.
- ◆ Scheduling and timing of meetings/events that do not consider work schedules, religious holidays, mealtimes, or other family needs
- ◆ Limited knowledge of City operations and the political system



Providing childcare at civic meetings makes it easier for working parents to participate.

- About 60 percent of Moreno Valley DAC resident have an educational attainment of high school graduate or less. People with low levels of literacy are historically under-represented populations.
- Low voter participation is experienced in nearly all of Moreno Valley with the majority of the City ranking in the lowest quartile of voter participation in comparison to the rest of the State. The median voting percentile for Moreno Valley is about nine percent, significantly lower than the overall County at about 37 percent.
- ◆ Language barriers
  - About 44 percent of Moreno Valley households speak a language other than English at home and about 17 percent speak English less than “very well” (i.e., have difficulty with English). Limited-English proficient individuals are historically under-represented populations.
- ◆ Not seeing one's own culture or identity reflected in meeting format or content
  - Hispanic/Latino (of any race) residents represent 58 percent of Moreno Valley's population and about 52 percent of this group identify as Mexican. People of color are historically under-represented populations.
- ◆ Fear of being judged, unsafe, or unwelcome
  - About 27 percent of the Moreno Valley population is under 18 years old. Youth are historically under-represented populations.
- ◆ A sense of distrust in government and institutions
- ◆ Economic barriers; needing to focus on work and providing basic needs for one's self and family.

## ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While there is no single engagement method or “one size fits all” strategy that ensures effective community engagement, there are a variety of complementary methods that can enhance equitable community engagement. Equitable community engagement is the “practice of using multiple strategies to provide opportunities for all residents—particularly those historically excluded, under-represented, or under-resourced—to be informed and to participate in public planning and decision-making to achieve an equitable outcome.” A range of strategies that can be employed to increase community engagement includes, but is not limited to, those described on the following page.

- ◆ *Strengthen Partnerships.* Partnering with community organizations, non-profits, and service providers is an effective way to engage community members from under-represented groups. These organizations often have established relationships with under-represented groups, in-depth knowledge of their particular interests and needs and ideas on how to best engage these communities (e.g., membership email lists, social media, and special events).
- ◆ *Meet People Where They Are.* A good engagement approach provides multiple ways for people to participate and offers opportunities for the public to get involved. Many people respond well to face-to-face communication and pop-up events, workshops, and focus groups can allow the project team to go out into the community and reach people in a comfortable setting where they would already congregate (e.g., parks, libraries, farmers' markets, schools, retail centers, transit hubs,

and special events/holiday celebrations). On the other hand, considering the increasingly digitally connected world and the preferences of some community members to engage online, it is necessary to implement online tools and methods to attract/gather public input (e.g., online webinars/listening sessions, interactive surveys, photo contests, social media, email, and paid/non-paid advertisement).

- ◆ **Language.** Words matter and it is crucial that all individuals who want to participate can understand the information provided to them and conversely, the feedback received from the community can be interpreted and acted upon by the project team. Providing translation and interpretation services is an important part of meaningful community engagement, particularly for communities that have members who speak different languages. In addition, using easy-to-understand language and messaging (e.g., avoiding technical jargon or acronyms) that will resonate with key audiences can help support a welcoming atmosphere for community participation.
- ◆ **Childcare.** Providing childcare allows parents to participate in outreach events more comfortably. For example, childcare can be addressed by co-hosting a community event with an

after-school program to allow parents to attend while their children are engaged with supervised after-school activities.

- ◆ **Incentives.** Offering incentives to participate such as featuring elected officials as speakers, providing food/drink refreshments, offering raffle prizes, transportation subsidies/vouchers, or stipends (e.g., local retailer gift certificate) can foster excitement and attraction for an engagement effort.
- ◆ **Follow Through.** To sustain engagement and promote a culture of civic participation, it is important to share with the community the results of the engagement process, including how the community's input directly influenced the process. Without such follow through action, participants may feel that their contribution was ignored or pointless. Follow through action does not necessarily mean all feedback is automatically implemented, but clearly communicating why public input is or is not acted upon is crucial.

Through employing a range of community engagement strategies tailored to specific projects, input can be collected from a broad cross-section of the general public to ultimately improve project outcomes.

### Engage MoVal Outreach Toolbox

In 2018, the City of Moreno Valley partnered with the Moreno Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Family Service Association, and the Riverside University Health System to develop the Engage MoVal Outreach Toolbox, a user-friendly and flexible guide for planning and delivering community engagement processes. To develop the outreach toolbox, the City implemented a multi-faceted community outreach and engagement process designed to collect input from a diverse range of community members (e.g., dedicated website, online survey, door-to-door

neighborhood canvassing, pop-up events, community workshops, and focus groups). In addition, the outreach program sought to engage individuals who do not traditionally participate due to time or resource constraints, including young adults, communities of color, and low-income community members.

The outreach toolbox establishes strategies and best practices for meaningful and effective engagement of all residents, with emphasis on those within the city's disadvantaged communities. The best practices lay the foundation for promoting and implementing effective community engagement that is rooted in the values of inclusivity and diversity with the aim of reaching participants that are reflective of Moreno Valley's demographics. Inclusive outreach and engagement to all segments of the population is essential to ensure that planning efforts are informed by a full range of perspectives and priorities. The Engage MoVal Outreach Toolbox includes seven public engagement principles that the City identifies as part of best practices for civic engagement, listed on the next page.

- ◆ **Careful Planning and Preparation.** Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.
- ◆ **Inclusion and Demographic Diversity.** Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
- ◆ **Collaboration and Shared Purpose.** Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.



A bilingual presentation explains environmental justice to a broader audience

The purpose of the **Engage MoVal Outreach Toolbox** is to:

- ◆ **Offer an adaptable approach** to designing community engagement processes tailored to specific issues and/or developments in Moreno Valley.
- ◆ **Highlight effective methods, tools and techniques** to engage residents and collect community input.
- ◆ **Leverage best practices** for the City's upcoming General Plan Update process (i.e., 2040 General Plan—this document) and other planning processes.



- ◆ **Openness and Learning.** Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.
- ◆ **Transparency and Trust.** Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.
- ◆ **Impact and Action.** Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.
- ◆ **Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture.**

Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

The public engagement principles noted are not an exhaustive list and every community outreach effort is unique in its objectives as well as time/resource challenges and opportunities. The important perspective that the City will maintain in conducting good community engagement is rooted in the “democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision making around it. It, moreover, holds the promise that public participation can influence decisions that affect the provision of services, future visions and sustainability of our communities.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Goal EJ-4: Encourage the active participation of local residents and businesses in civic life.

##### POLICIES

- EJ.4-1:** Encourage inclusive, participatory City processes that emphasize the collaborative exchange of ideas by all segments of the community. Possible strategies may include:
- ◆ Holding public meetings and outreach activities at culturally appropriate neighborhood gathering places or community events when feasible.

<sup>5</sup> Sally Hussey, “What is Community Engagement,” <https://www.bangthetable.com/what-is-community-en>

- ◆ Employing a wide-range of outreach methods and activities, including pop-up events, focus groups, community workshops and online surveys, in various languages.
- ◆ Encouraging the participation of DAC residents in civic processes by providing transportation vouchers, translation services, childcare, food, or monetary compensation.

**EJ.4-2:** Support efforts that strengthen the ability of community members to participate in local decision-making and engage meaningfully in planning efforts, including increased representation in employment and civic life.

**EJ.4-3:** Where possible, target investments in public infrastructure, recreational facilities and programming, and air pollution control so as to benefit disadvantaged communities in Moreno Valley.

##### ACTIONS

**EJ.4-A:** Build strong, collaborative partnerships with existing community organizations to reach and engage underserved populations.



**Participatory budgeting** is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. It gives people real power over real money. The New York Times calls participatory budgeting “revolutionary civics in action”—it deepens democracy, builds stronger communities, and creates a more equitable distribution of public resources. In 2013, the City of Vallejo in northern California had Vallejo residents cast their votes on how to spend over \$3 million to improve their city. The top voted items included street repairs, lighting upgrades, park improvements, community gardens, small business grants, and college scholarships.<sup>6</sup>

6 Participatory Budgeting Project, <https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/what-is-pb/>

**EJ.4-B:** Work with community advocacy groups to encourage individuals from underrepresented populations, including communities of color, youth, and low-income populations, to represent their communities on City boards and commissions and at City-sponsored activities and events.

**EJ.4-C:** Consider creating a Citizen Academy which provides opportunities to learn how the City is managed and operated, discuss challenges facing the City, and learn about strategies used to address challenges.

**EJ.4-D:** Explore innovative options for increasing citizen involvement, such as participatory budgeting.

**EJ.4-E:** Periodically audit City hiring practices with the goal of identifying areas of improvement for workforce diversity beyond federally required Equal Employment Opportunity reports.





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