



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: JUNE 12, 2024

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: JENNIFER PAIGE, AICP, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: INFORMATION SESSION ON PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GENERAL PLAN ELEMENT

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the staff report and provide feedback on preparing an Environmental Justice (EJ) Element as part of Pasadena's General Plan. This report and presentation serve as an introduction or "kick-off" to the topic; there is no action required at this time.

BACKGROUND:

Many local jurisdictions, including Pasadena, have long viewed EJ and social equity as important topics. However, State law has not previously required consideration of EJ challenges as part of community planning. In some cases, this has resulted in discriminatory land-use practices that create sources of pollution, such as industry or freeways adjacent to homes, schools, and in the backyards of the most vulnerable communities. As a result, low-income and communities of color suffer most from asthma, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and other health issues caused by exposure to toxic chemicals.

EJ is defined as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." This showcases the need to promote social equity (fair treatment) and the importance of involving affected communities in decision-making.

In 2016, Governor Brown signed the [Planning for Healthy Communities Act](#), Senate Bill 1000 (SB-1000), mandating cities and counties adopt an EJ element or integrate EJ policies into other elements of the General Plan. In 2018, SB-1000 went into effect, requiring local governments to identify disadvantaged communities (DACs) in their jurisdictions and address EJ in their general plans. Jurisdictions without DACs may voluntarily adopt an EJ Element or integrate policies.

To assist local jurisdictions, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) developed a screening tool to identify communities disproportionately impacted by or vulnerable

to environmental pollution and contaminants. The mapping tool contains 21 indicators related to pollution burden, population characteristics, and other vulnerabilities. The tool also maps areas with the highest pollution and most vulnerability, called DACs. These indicators are showcased through [CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Indicator Maps](#) created by CalEPA and the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

The CalEnviroScreen score consists of four components: exposures, environmental effects, sensitive populations, and socioeconomic data. Each component has several indicators, for a total of 21 (refer to Table 1). This includes 13 indicators related to pollution burden and eight related to population characteristics and other vulnerabilities.

A CalEnviroScreen score from zero to 100 is given for each census tract across California – for each indicator and an overall score. A score of 100 means the census tract is the most pollution burdened and vulnerable among all census tracts, a score of 50 means it is average; a score of zero means it is the least pollution burdened and least vulnerable. Census tracts with an overall score of 75 or greater (the top 25 percent statewide) are classified as DACs.

Table 1: CalEnviroScreen Indicator and Component Scoring*

Pollution Burdens	
Exposures 1. Air Quality: Ozone 2. Air Quality: PM2.5 3. Children’s Lead Risk from Housing 4. Diesel Particulate Matter 5. Drinking Water Contaminants 6. Pesticide Use 7. Toxic Releases from Facilities 8. Traffic Impacts	Environmental Effects 9. Cleanup Sites 10. Groundwater Threats 11. Hazardous Waste Generators & Facilities 12. Impaired Water Bodies 13. Solid Waste Sites and Facilities
Population Characteristics	
Sensitive Populations 1. Asthma 2. Cardiovascular Disease 3. Low Birth Weight Infants	Socio Economic Factors 4. Educational Attainment 5. Housing Burden 6. Linguistic Isolation 7. Poverty 8. Unemployment

*Pollution Burden x Population Characteristics = CalEnviroScreen Score

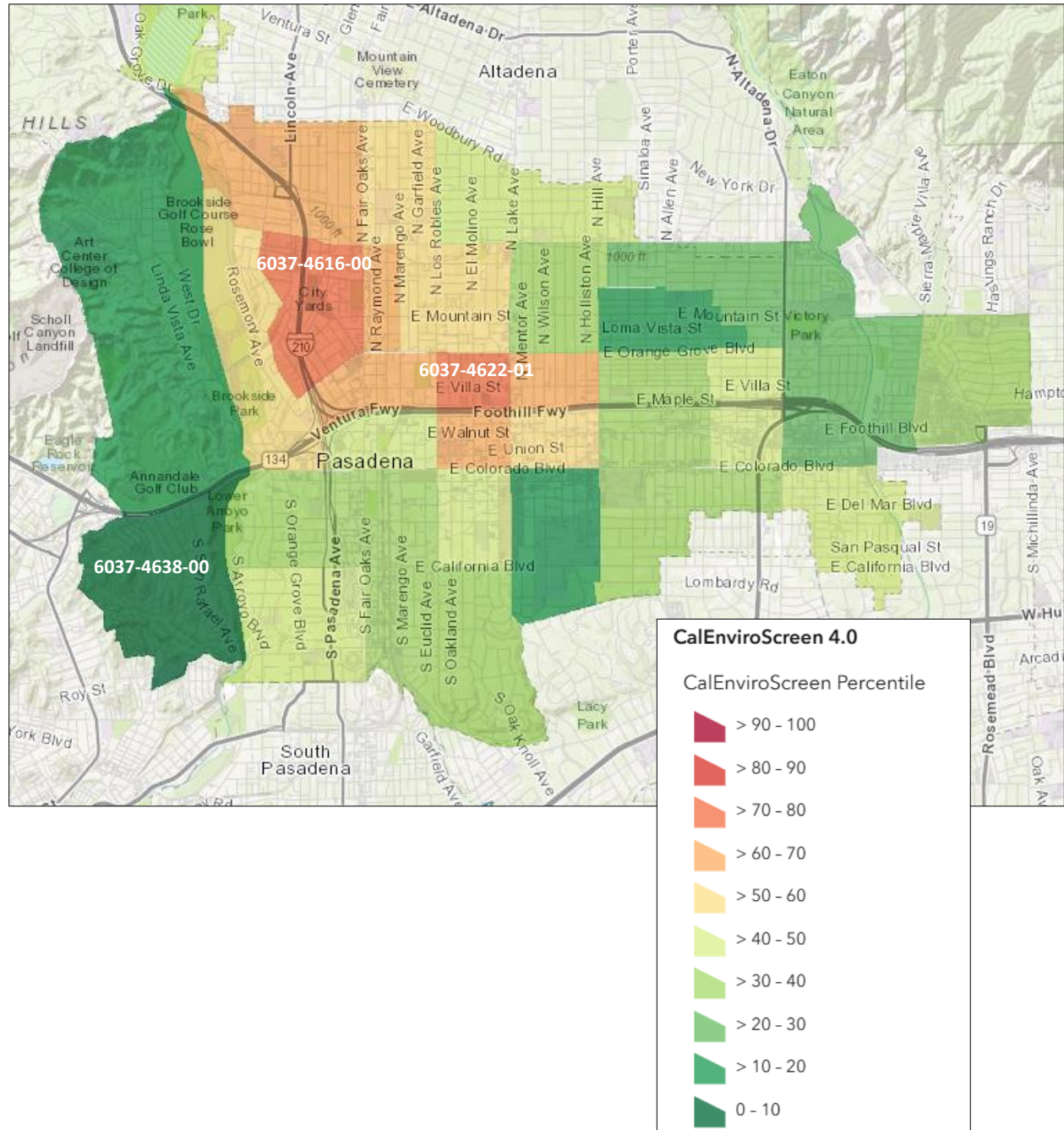
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES IN PASADENA:

Pasadena’s 33 census tracts (that are fully within the City) have an overall average score of 43.6, compared to other cities and census-designated places across California (using the same CalEnviroScreen score from zero to 100). Overall average scores for surrounding communities include the following: Glendale (68.8); San Gabriel (62.6); Altadena (38.8); Sierra Madre (9.8); South Pasadena (19.6); Arcadia (11); San Marino (9.3); and La Canada Flintridge (8).

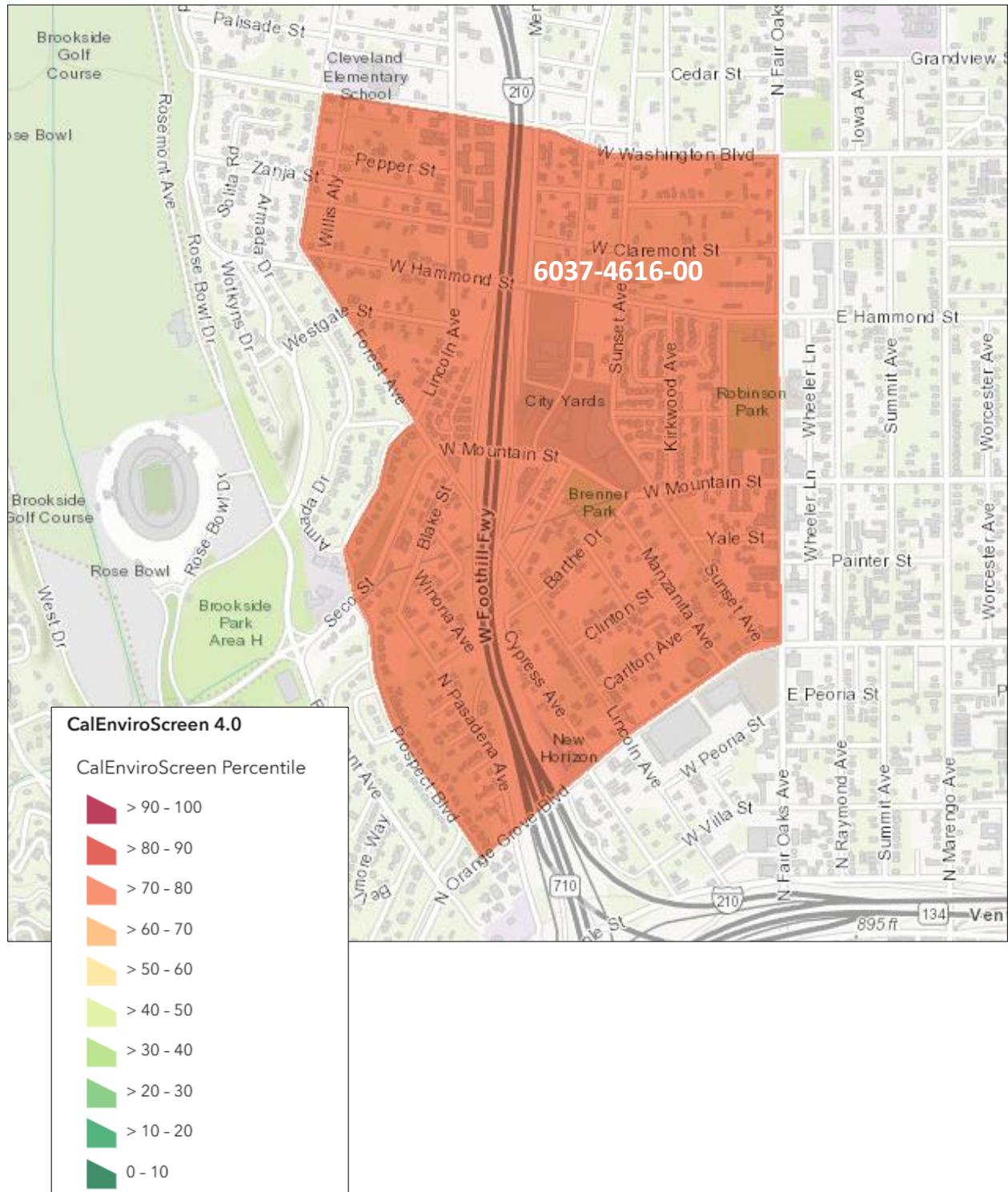
While Pasadena’s overall score falls within the middle range (between 40 and 60), the average score per tract varies considerably from one area of Pasadena to another. As shown in Map 1,

average scores range from a low of six for Census Tract 6037-4638-00 (very dark green) to a high of 71 and 74 for Census Tracts 6037-4622-01 and 6037-4616-00 respectively (dark orange). It is important to note that Census Tract 6037-4600-00 (Upper Hastings Ranch) also has a low score of 15, but a majority of the tract is outside Pasadena and is therefore counted as part of Unincorporated Los Angeles. Generally, census tracts with an average score above 60 include most of Northwest Pasadena and some segments along the 210 Freeway and those with an average score below 40 include West Pasadena and portions of Northeast and Southeast Pasadena.

Map 1: CalEnviroScreen Results for Pasadena (by Census Tract)



Map 2: Census Tract Identified as a DAC in Pasadena



Census Tract 6037-4616-00 is the only tract in Pasadena identified as a DAC by CalEnviroScreen, as shown in Map 2. While its average score is less than 75, it scored higher in previous modeling methodologies used by the State; therefore, the state still classifies it as a DAC (within the top 25 percent). The tract is bound by Washington Boulevard to the north, Fair Oaks Avenue to the east, Orange Grove Boulevard to the south, and Prospect Boulevard and Forest Avenue to the west. Table 2 shows the score for each indicator in this tract.

Table 2: CalEnviroScreen Score Indicators for Pasadena’s DAC (Census Tract 6037-4616-00)

Pollution Burdens			
Exposures		Environmental Effects	
1. Air Quality: Ozone	77	9. Cleanup Sites	0
2. Air Quality: PM2.5	60	10. Groundwater Threats	22
3. Children’s Lead Risk from Housing	79	11. Hazardous Waste Generators & Facilities	17
4. Diesel Particulate Matter	90	12. Impaired Water Bodies	24
5. Drinking Water Contaminants	71	13. Solid Waste Sites and Facilities	67
6. Pesticide Use	0		
7. Toxic Releases from Facilities	64		
8. Traffic Impacts	77		

Population Characteristics			
Sensitive Populations		Socio Economic Factors	
1. Asthma	64	4. Educational Attainment	78
2. Cardiovascular Disease	45	5. Housing Burden	35
3. Low Birth Weight Infants	98	6. Linguistic Isolation	53
		7. Poverty	70
		8. Unemployment	14

As previously stated, CalEnviroScreen is a statewide assessment that identifies communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and vulnerabilities, also known as environmental justice communities (EJCs). At minimum, census tracts with an overall score of 75 or greater (the top 25 percent statewide) must be evaluated as EJCs (e.g., all tracts classified as DACs). In addition to the minimum assessments, local jurisdictions can customize how they use CalEnviroScreen to better address local concerns.

Pasadena has several options available to utilize CalEnviroScreen, including customizing percentage thresholds, customizing indicators and combining CalEnviroScreen with other tools or indicators. For example, Pasadena could reduce the threshold to designate an EJC to census tracts with an overall score of 70 or greater (the top 30 percent statewide). In addition, Pasadena can analyze specific indicators (e.g., traffic, clean-up sites, lead risk from housing) that may have high CalEnviroScreen scores in some census tracts. The final determination on which census tracts and/or indicators are identified will be determined as part of the community engagement process.

ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN PASADENA:

Pasadena’s General Plan comprises seven elements: Land Use; Mobility; Housing; Green Space, Recreation and Parks; Open Space and Conservation; Noise; and Safety. Although

Pasadena's General Plan has policies on EJ-related topics, such as access to healthy foods, quality of rental housing, and a sustainable environment, it is not comprehensive enough to meet the objectives of SB-1000. [Chapter 4 of the 2020 General Plan Guidelines](#) from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research outlines what should be incorporated in an EJ Element. Specifically, General Plans must now reduce the unique and compounded health risks in DACs by addressing, at minimum, the following topics:

- Pollution exposure and air quality – policies to prevent and mitigate exposure, remove and restrict pollutants, and protect sensitive populations within and around EJ communities.
- Public facilities – policies to encourage the development of public facilities, such as parks and active transportation, and ensure EJ communities have equitable access to such facilities.
- Healthy foods – policies to address food insecurity and promote access to healthy foods.
- Safe and sanitary homes – policies to improve housing conditions for residents.
- Physical activity – policies to promote spaces for physical activity and ensure access, connectivity, and equitable distribution of these opportunities.
- Community engagement – policies and best practices for promoting equitable, inclusive, and meaningful community engagement in the public decision-making process.
- Improvements and programs – policies to identify and reverse systemic funding inequities and prioritize improvements and programs that benefit EJ communities.

SB-1000 emphasizes community engagement throughout the planning process. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to employ a community engagement strategy incorporating feedback from residents and stakeholders from the start of a planning process to ensure that the voices of affected communities are heard and considered in land use decisions.

For additional information on implementing SB-1000, refer to the [SB 1000 Implementation Toolkit](#) prepared by CEJA and PLACEWORKS.

EXAMPLES OF EJ ELEMENTS FROM OTHER CITIES:

Jurisdictions throughout California have started preparing their EJ Elements. The following are examples from other jurisdictions:

- [City of San Diego Draft Environmental Justice Element \(2024\)](#)
- [City of Huntington Park General Plan Environmental Justice Element \(2022\)](#)
- [City of Monrovia Environmental Justice Element \(2022\)](#)
- [County of San Diego Environmental Justice Element \(2021\)](#)

- [City of Placentia Health, Wellness, & Environmental Justice \(2019\)](#)
- [City of Berkley Environmental Justice Element, Safety Element Update, and Equitable Climate and Resilience Metrics \(RFP\)](#)

NEXT STEPS:

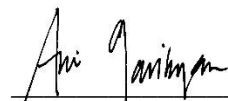
Staff will receive feedback from the Planning Commission and will also make informational presentations to the Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) and Northwest Commission. Staff will then draft a scope of work as part of a Request for Proposals (RFP), for consultant services to assist with the community engagement and preparation of an EJ Element. The RFP is anticipated to be released later this year. Updates will be provided to the Planning Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,



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