

# 3

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES ELEMENT

A county is only as strong and healthy as its people. We all want the future to be safe, healthy, equitable, and sustainable for everyone, but these ideals may look different to individual people and communities. Most of the people in Contra Costa County live and work in incorporated cities and towns, but there are also a multitude of vibrant unincorporated communities that each contribute to a rich history and ongoing culture and identity of the people in the county.

This Stronger Communities Element aims for all of us to feel safe in our homes and neighborhoods; have access to healthy food, the outdoors, living wage jobs, and healthcare; have opportunities for self-expression through art and cultural celebration; benefit from business innovation and investment; and strengthen bonds with other community members. The focus of this Element is on promoting community resiliency and fostering a spirit of collaboration and opportunities for positive collective impact.

This Element presents policy guidance that applies to unincorporated communities throughout the county, followed by Community Profiles that address issues unique to each community. It is organized into eight sections that highlight the priorities of the broad Contra Costa County community:

- The **Environmental Justice** section includes policy guidance that works to counteract a history of discrimination, neglect, and disempowerment and improve the quality of life and health outcomes in low-income communities and communities of color.
- The **Community Health** section includes policy guidance to support the physical and mental health of community members through improvements to the built environment and by providing services to bolster social support networks and promote physical wellbeing.
- The **Healthy Homes** section includes policy guidance aimed at providing safe and sanitary housing conditions for all residents.
- The **Arts and Culture** section includes policy guidance to promote civic art and cultural events that are accessible to every resident, celebrate the unique identity of individual communities, and strengthen the local economy.
- The **Economic Vitality and Empowerment** section includes policy guidance to develop and maintain a workforce that possesses the education and skills employers need, promote living wage job opportunities, and cultivate a thriving economy that contributes to the region's economic health.
- The **Community Engagement** section includes policy guidance to promote community involvement and ensure diverse viewpoints and values are represented in the decision-making process.
- The **Stronger Communities Element Performance Measures** describe how the County will track its progress in achieving some of the major objectives expressed in this Element.
- The **Community Profiles** provide community-specific contextual information and policy guidance for individual communities to address their unique needs.



This General Plan highlights policies and actions that address four major themes that serve as a framework for the Plan. For the reader's ease, policies and actions related to these themes are identified throughout the General Plan using the following icons. The policies and actions related to each theme are also compiled in Appendix A. See Chapter 1 for more information about each theme.



Community Health



Environmental Justice



Economic Development



Sustainability



*Community gardens provide access to fresh produce and can serve as focal points for communities.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Throughout California, low-income communities and communities of color have experienced a combination of historical discrimination, neglect, and political and economic disempowerment. The result is that today they are impacted with a disproportionate burden of pollution and associated health conditions, as well as disproportionate social and economic disadvantages such as poverty or housing instability. Many low-income households and communities of color in Contra Costa County are concentrated in neighborhoods where they continue to face significant threats to their overall health and livelihood. In 2022, in response to these and other related concerns, the County established the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice to address local racial inequality and social injustice issues. The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice is envisioned to enact and sustain principles, policies, practices, and investments that are racially just and equitable across all the County's departments and divisions.

California Senate Bill (SB) 1000, enacted in 2016, requires that general plans address environmental justice and respond to inequity by alleviating pollution and health impacts and compelling cities and counties to include the voices of previously marginalized residents in planning decisions. Community members across Contra Costa County have confirmed the need to prioritize these strategies.

### What is Environmental Justice?

“ 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. ”

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §65040.12(E)

Figure SC-1 shows unincorporated communities in Contra Costa County that are disproportionately burdened by pollution or face disproportionate social or health vulnerabilities. These are called “Impacted Communities” throughout this General Plan. These areas were mapped using the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen), a tool advocated by community groups and developed by the State Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment on behalf of the California Environmental Protection Agency. CalEnviroScreen measures pollution and population characteristics using 21 indicators, such as air quality, hazardous waste sites, asthma rates, and poverty. It applies a formula to each census tract in the state to generate a score that ranks the level of cumulative impacts relative to the rest of the census tracts in the state. A census tract with a higher score is one that experiences higher pollution burdens and social or health vulnerabilities than census tracts with lower scores. The Impacted Communities shown in Figure SC-1 include census tracts with a cumulative score of 72 percent or higher. The CalEnviroScreen data is updated about every five years, so the Impacted Communities mapped in this General Plan may change over time. Accordingly, this General Plan includes policy guidance (see SC-A1.7) to regularly update the map of Impacted Communities with updated CalEnviroScreen data.

Contra Costa County is home to a high concentration of refineries and other large industrial facilities. While these industries contribute to pollution and contamination in Impacted Communities, they also provide jobs, tax revenue, community investments, and local energy production. To mitigate the health and safety impacts of these industrial facilities, the County’s Industrial Safety Ordinance requires additional safety measures that go beyond State requirements to protect public health and safety. However, Impacted Communities still experience detrimental health outcomes due to their proximity to heavy industry and other sources of pollution like Interstate 80, State Route 4, and railroads.



*Railroads transport toxic substances through Impacted Communities such as North Richmond, presenting health and safety concerns for residents.*

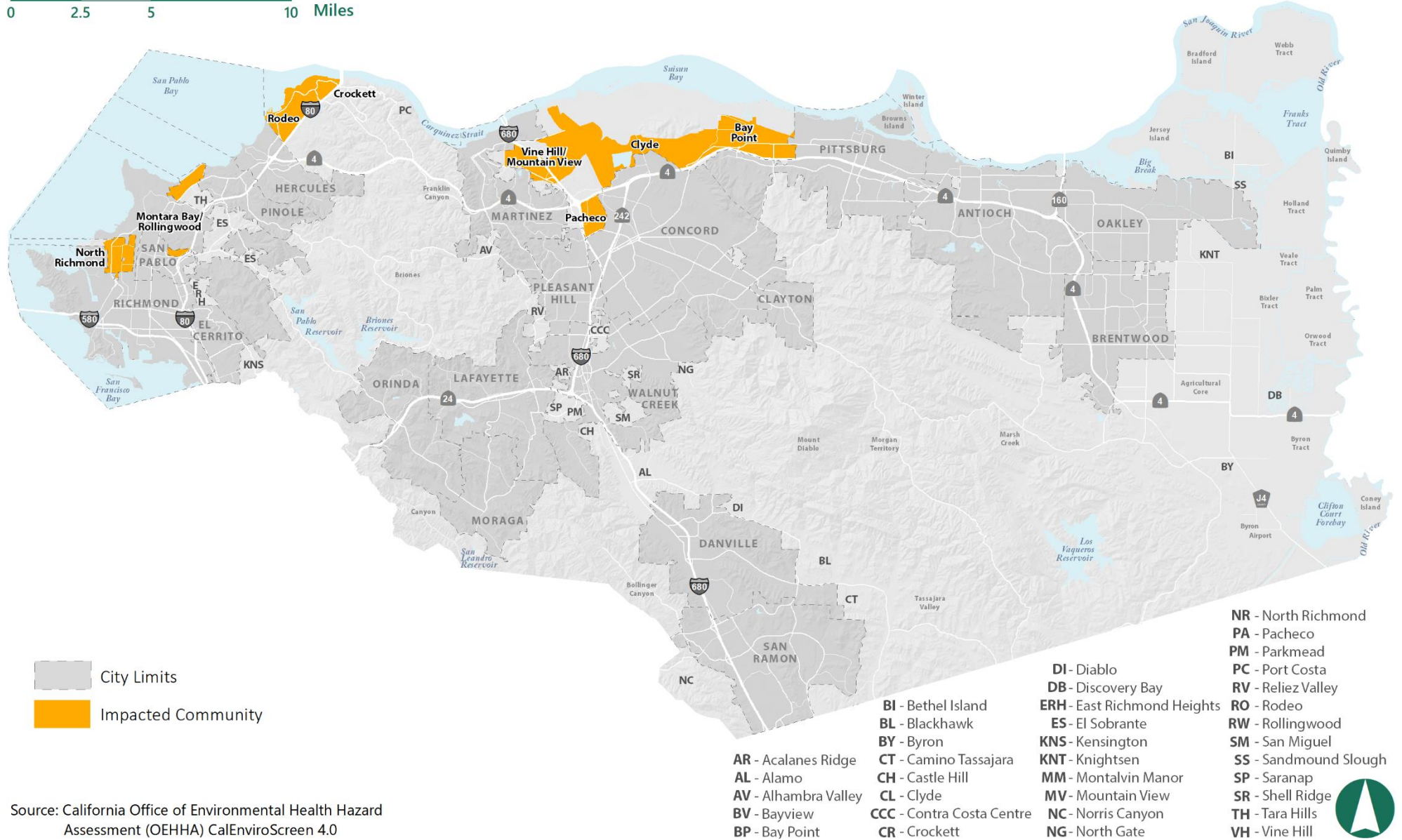
In addition to pollution burdens, Impacted Communities have suffered from a sustained lack of public and private investment that has generally resulted in inadequate infrastructure and services and unkempt vacant and underdeveloped areas, harming neighborhood vitality and limiting property values and wealth-building capacity.

The goals, policies, and actions in this section are intended to reduce these and other disadvantages and burdens experienced by Impacted Communities in Contra Costa County. It is a priority of the County to protect Impacted Communities from additional harm and progressively improve the quality of life and health outcomes of residents.



**FIGURE SC-1 IMPACTED COMMUNITIES**

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0



## Goal SC-1

Equitable distribution of social and economic resources among all communities in the county so that Impacted Communities are not disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution or other hazards.

## Policies

### SC-P1.1



In partnership with residents of Impacted Communities, affected workers, business/industry, environmental and environmental justice advocates, community colleges, workforce development and training entities, local government, and other involved agencies, support transition from highly polluting industries to a net-zero emission economy based on renewable and sustainable industries that provide living-wage jobs.

### SC-P1.2



Streamline permitting for new development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation projects that promote community objectives in Impacted Communities, especially as identified in the Community Profiles.

### SC-P1.3



Support creation of walkable districts by facilitating development of a range of neighborhood-serving retail and service uses, public amenities, and essential infrastructure (such as lighting) for residents of Impacted Communities within walking distance of their homes.

### SC-P1.4



Support cultural and community-driven events, such as art festivals, farmers' markets, and community service days, that support social connections, neighborhood identity, and environmental stewardship.

### SC-P1.5



Maintain a streamlined process to permit and facilitate partial and temporary street closures for community-sponsored amenities and activities, such as parklets, farmers' markets, arts and cultural events, and outdoor dining, and assist applicants through the permit process.

### SC-P1.6



For projects with potential to negatively affect an Impacted Community, support community benefits agreements (CBAs) negotiated with the project applicant to address the community's expressed needs. The primary objective of these CBAs is to mitigate project impacts to the greatest extent possible, which could include mitigations exceeding the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Secondly, to compensate for impacts that cannot be fully mitigated, these CBAs should secure community benefits that exceed inherent project benefits and support the community's objectives, especially as



identified in the Community Profile. Neighborhood-serving retail uses that fill critical needs are exempt from this policy.

**SC-P1.7** 

Should a community no longer meet the threshold for designation as an Impacted Community during the 5-year review called for in Action SC-A1.7, examine the factors that contributed to the redesignation and determine whether continued action is needed to support the community in retaining its non-Impacted Community status.

**Actions**

**SC-A1.1**    

Partner with the stakeholders identified in Policy SC-P1.1 to develop and implement a plan to transition from highly polluting industries to renewable, sustainable, and clean industries that provide living-wage jobs. The plan should address site remediation responsibilities along with timelines and strategies to improve health, safety, infrastructure, job opportunities, and revenue opportunities during the transition toward a net-zero-emission economy, paying special attention to developing new opportunities for Impacted Communities to realize economic, health, educational, and other benefits, without placing a disproportionate economic burden on those with the least means.

**SC-A1.2**  

Amend County Ordinance Code Chapter 84-63, Land Use Permits for Development Projects Involving Hazardous Waste or Hazardous Materials, to:

- (a) Increase the hazard scores for projects with potential to adversely affect Impacted Communities to ensure more projects are subject to discretionary review.
- (b) Address ambiguities and antiquated terminology that complicate administration of the ordinance.\*

**SC-A1.3**   

With input from residents of Impacted Communities, amend County Ordinance Code Title 8 – Zoning to create an Impacted Communities Overlay Zone that applies to areas within and adjacent to Impacted Communities. Heavy industrial projects and commercial and light industrial projects resulting in 25,000 square feet or more of gross habitable floor area within the overlay zone will be required to satisfy additional discretionary permit findings that promote environmental justice, health, safety, and economic prosperity. Projects able to satisfy the required findings will:

- (a) Provide benefits that support the community objectives, such as those identified in the Community Profile.
- (b) Provide economic benefits, including jobs, for residents of the community.
- (c) Avoid unwelcome permanent displacement of existing residents or businesses.
- (d) Support community resiliency, cohesion, and safety.
- (e) Positively impact health and quality of life within the community.

Create guidance for demonstrating consistency with these findings as part of the process to develop this ordinance.

#### SC-A1.4



Submit a report to the Board of Supervisors on the feasibility of creating or participating in a public bank, public-private partnerships, community land trusts, and other types of economic development and wealth-building tools to support local interests, community development, and long-term community ownership and housing affordability in Impacted Communities.

#### SC-A1.5



Establish a process for the County to assist community-based organizations and public-private partners with obtaining financing (e.g., grants) to implement physical improvements and beautification projects such as murals, vegetative buffers, and planting strips in Impacted Communities.

#### SC-A1.6



Dedicate staff in appropriate departments to assist applicants from Impacted Communities in navigating the project application and review process for projects in their communities.

#### SC-A1.7



Upon each 5-year review of the General Plan, review health outcomes data for Impacted Communities and assess any updated information related to the delineation of Impacted Communities in Contra Costa County. Update the map of Impacted Communities (Figure SC-1) and environmental justice-related goals, policies, and actions accordingly.

#### SC-A1.8



As part of the annual General Plan progress report to the Board of Supervisors, describe specific efforts to implement the General Plan policies and actions related to environmental justice, highlighting efforts in each Impacted Community. Post this report in a visible location on the County website.

*See the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies and actions related to infrastructure and service deficiencies in disadvantaged unincorporated communities pursuant to Senate Bill 244.*

## COMMUNITY HEALTH

### Healthy Neighborhoods

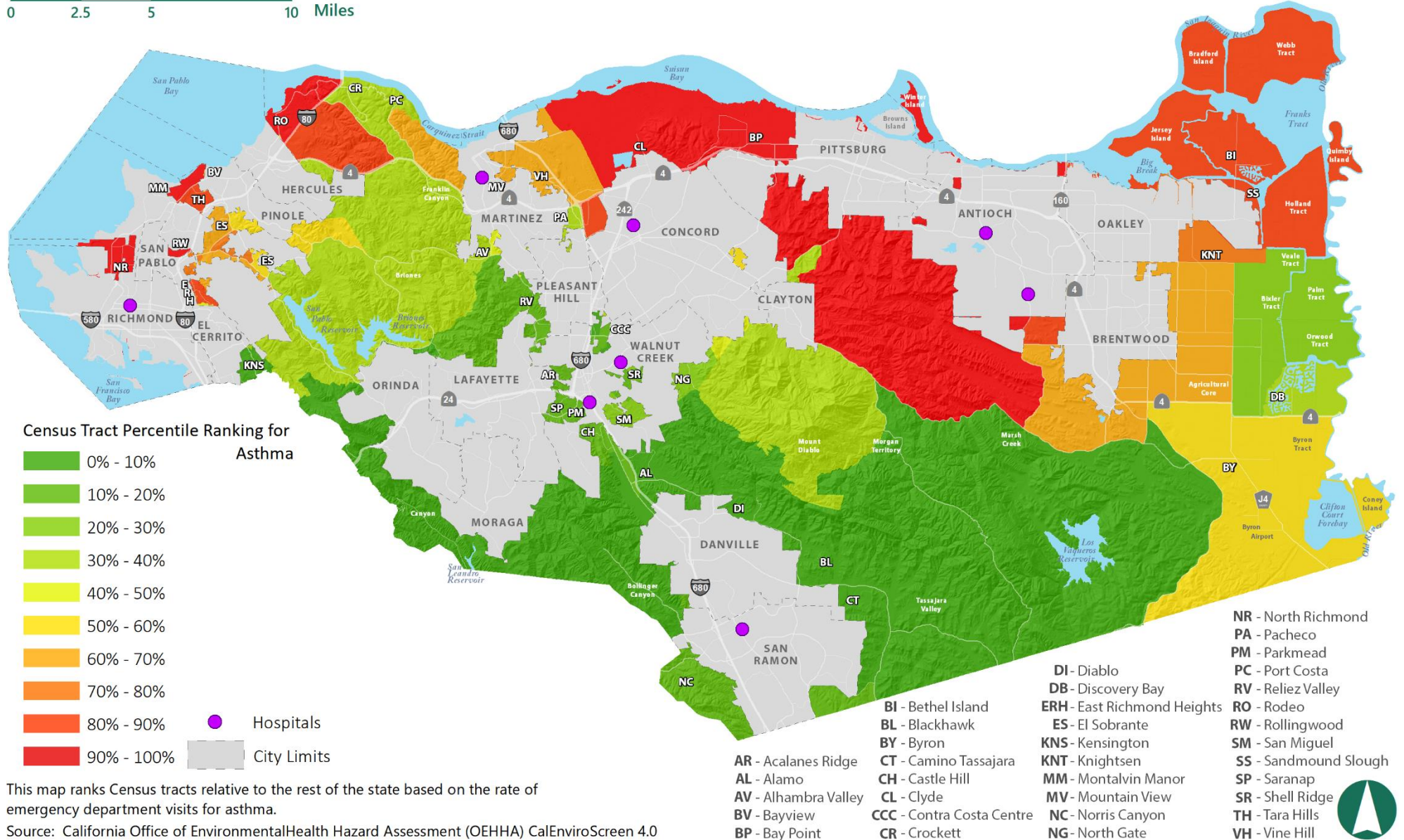
Promoting public health and achieving healthy communities through the built environment is a fundamental goal of this General Plan. We increasingly understand the connection between planning decisions and physical and mental health. The layout of our communities, the designs of buildings and public spaces, and the effectiveness of our transportation networks affect whether residents are able to make healthy food choices, walk or bike to a destination, play outside, and breathe clean air. The built environment also influences the level of community violence and overall social cohesion.

For many common health factors, residents in Contra Costa County generally fare better than others in California and the nation. However, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and low birth weight rates are higher in Contra Costa County than the rest of California (see Figures SC-2 through SC-4). There are many risk factors for these health conditions, including poor nutrition, lack of exercise, stress, smoking, and exposure to air pollution. Some of these factors are directly impacted by the built environment.



**FIGURE SC-2 ASTHMA RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE**

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



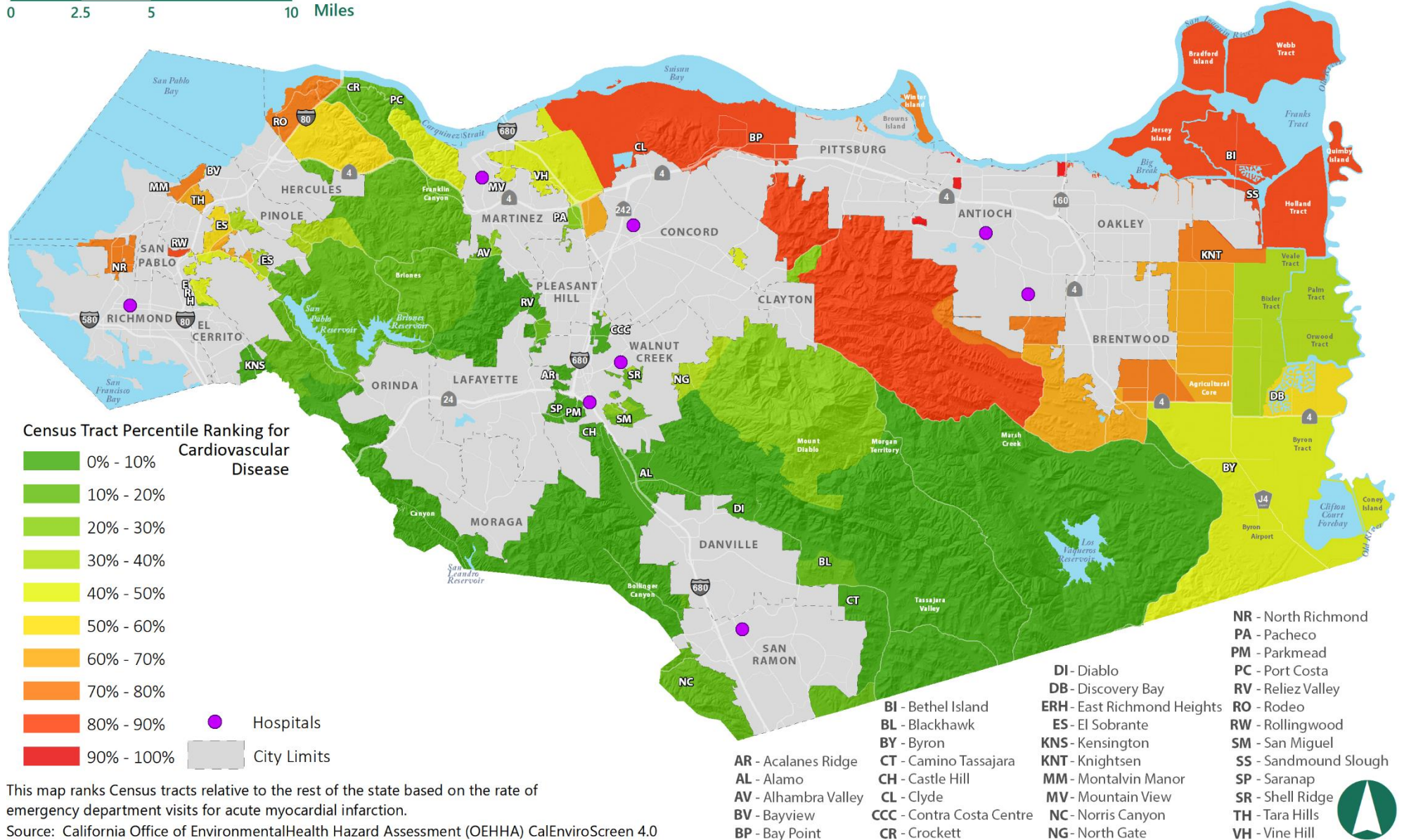
This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the rate of emergency department visits for asthma.

Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0



FIGURE SC-3 CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



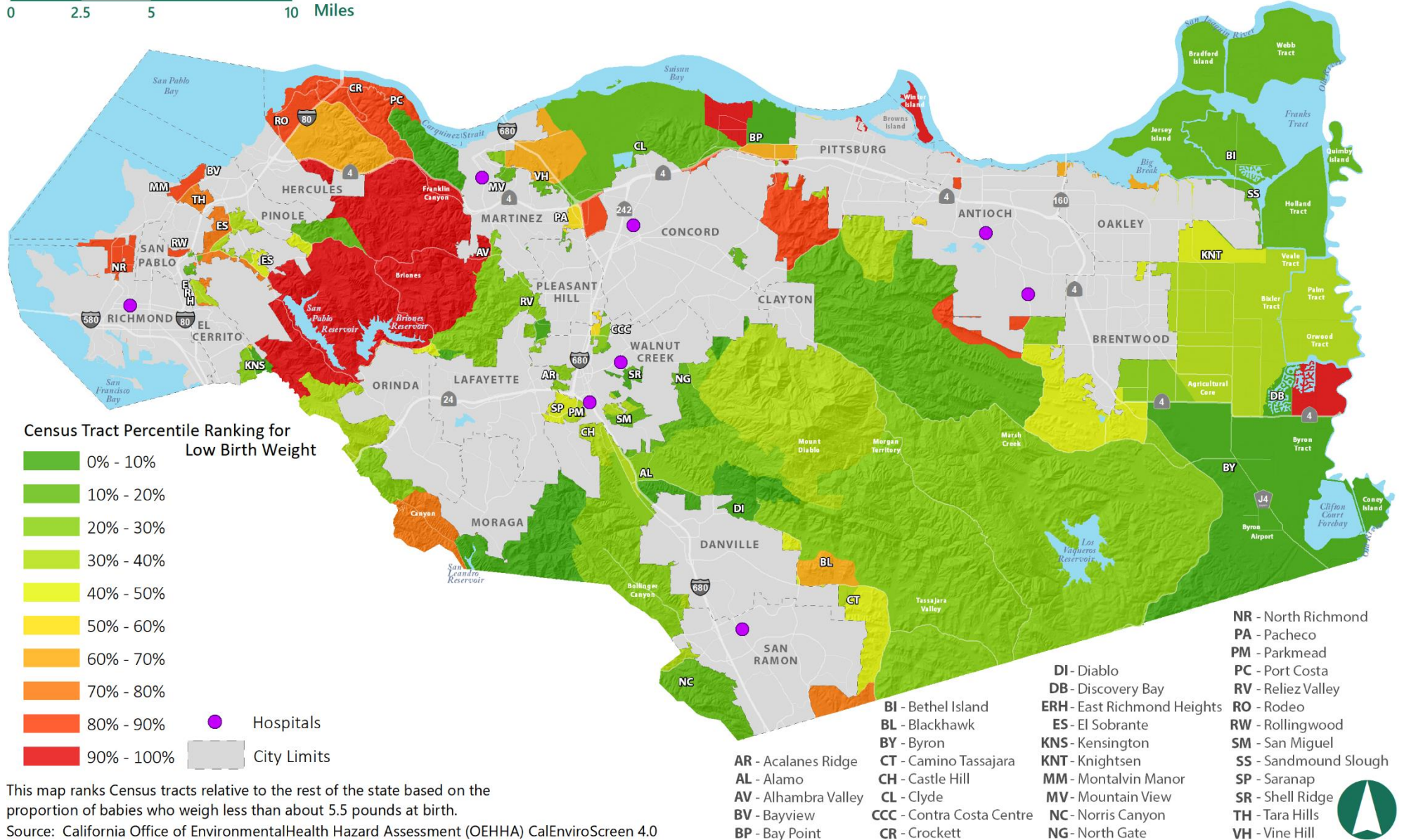
This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the rate of emergency department visits for acute myocardial infarction.

Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0



**FIGURE SC-4 LOW BIRTH WEIGHT RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE**

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the proportion of babies who weigh less than about 5.5 pounds at birth.  
 Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0

This section also emphasizes strong social networks, which improve health by offering emotional support through hardships, preventing isolation, and buffering stress. There is a recognized relationship between strong social networks, physical and mental health, and well-designed spaces. The most livable communities have high-quality public spaces that enhance community character, offer opportunities for formal and informal social interaction, and promote active recreation. Through the policy guidance in this section, the County commits to reversing community deterioration and improving other conditions detrimental to health, healing, and personal and property safety within neighborhoods.



Montalvin Park provides amenities for residents in West County.

### Goal SC-2

Safe, welcoming neighborhoods that support physical activity and a healthy environment for all residents.

### Policies

#### SC-P2.1



Welcome redevelopment and clean-up of undesirable uses and activities, such as highly polluting industries, and support uses that have a positive impact on community well-being.

#### SC-P2.2



Encourage development, preservation, and reinvestment that strengthen the unique character of each unincorporated community and advance community and neighborhood resilience. Ensure that future private and public projects provide infrastructure, parks and playgrounds, Complete Streets, trees and landscaping, streetscapes, signage, and sustainable building design that reflect and improve the character of the community, along with long-term maintenance mechanisms to ensure continued benefit from the improvements into the future.

#### SC-P2.3



Within established communities, complete construction of sidewalks and crosswalks and encourage neighborhood design and development that supports safe walking, biking, and other micro-mobility options, convenient access to services and transit, and opportunities for local shopping.



### SC-P2.4



Provide functional civic space and well-maintained public amenities near high-volume transit hubs. Each hub area should project a positive visual image, a strong and unique identity, and a safe, inviting environment for pedestrians and passengers.

### SC-P2.5



Promote creation of community focal points and gathering places.

### SC-P2.6



Leverage community-specific natural features, such as creeks, shorelines, and trails, to strengthen community identity and connect residents to nature.

### SC-P2.7



Encourage land uses and activities that reflect and enrich the history and cultural heritage of each unincorporated community.

### SC-P2.8



Stimulate investment in communities by using CEQA infill exemptions to expedite environmental review and reduce project costs.

### SC-P2.9



Implement principles of universal and barrier-free design so that people of all physical abilities can enjoy mobility and accessibility in their communities.

### SC-P2.10



Empower residents of all ages and abilities to volunteer toward improving conditions in Contra Costa County and maintain a culture within County government that supports and celebrates such volunteerism.

## Actions

### SC-A2.1



Study the feasibility of implementing an amortization process to relocate or eliminate non-conforming land uses, with a focus on public nuisances and uses that pose threats to public health and safety.

*See the Land Use Element for additional policies and actions on community design that supports active transportation. See the Transportation Element for policies and actions on pedestrian and bicycle safety, Safe Routes to Schools, and access to public transit. See the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies and actions on equitable access to parks and recreation areas.*


## Access to Health Services

While genetics and lifestyle choices affect health, so does access to quality, affordable medical care and health services. The county is served by nine hospitals: one in West County, six in Central County, and two in East County. This discrepancy is felt especially by West County residents, who throughout the General Plan update process expressed worry and frustration about long emergency response times and the lack of nearby medical facilities. Furthermore, even when these facilities are nearby, they can be especially difficult for seniors, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations to access due to gaps in the transit network. The policy guidance in this

section responds to community concerns by promoting access to comprehensive health services throughout the county.

**Goal SC-3**  
Convenient access to comprehensive, co-located health services so all residents can access the physical and behavioral healthcare they need.

**Policies**

**SC-P3.1**  Provide all communities with sufficient and equitable access to adequate healthcare and behavioral health facilities and services.

**SC-P3.2**  Pursue feasible opportunities to co-locate healthcare services with other County services within new or substantially renovated County facilities.

**SC-P3.3**  Support and encourage provision of paratransit, public transit, and other transportation services to neighborhood and regional healthcare facilities to meet identified gaps in service.

**SC-P3.4**   Welcome establishment of medical clinics, behavioral health facilities, and pharmacies in Impacted Communities.

**Actions**

**SC-A3.1**   Streamline permitting processes for healthcare facilities to reduce barriers to their establishment in Impacted Communities.

**SC-A3.2**  Continue collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions to assess and address issues related to capacity and access to emergency, acute, and preventative/primary healthcare services, especially in the West County region.

**Access to Healthy Food**

Healthy food is one of the best tools to combat obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes. Nutrition influences not only the incidence of these health conditions, but also school achievement, job attainment, and quality of life generally. When the only food options in a neighborhood are small convenience stores offering pre-packaged goods and restaurants sell fast food (i.e., what’s known as a “food desert”), it can be difficult to eat healthy. This becomes even more challenging when residents lack easy access to transportation, which can be common for vulnerable populations like children, seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Grocery stores and markets that carry fresh foods, farmers’ markets, farm stands, and community gardens are all outlets that can increase neighborhood access to healthy food options.



Urban agriculture (i.e., urban land used to grow crops or raise animals for food) can be another way to provide healthier food options. Reclaiming vacant land for urban agriculture can provide even more community benefits by bringing life and activity back to neglected areas. Locating urban farms in areas lacking access to fresh, healthy foods can expand opportunities for residents to eat healthy and improve overall community well-being.



*Farmers markets provide access to fresh, seasonal produce.*

## Goal SC-4

Support and expand small-scale food production and urban agriculture in urban areas, including growing, processing, and distributing fresh food.

## Policies

### SC-P4.1



Encourage planting of home gardens and food-producing plants and trees on private property in urban areas. Encourage partnerships between property owners and gleaning and stewardship programs to harvest and maintain edible plantings.

### SC-P4.2



Encourage all new residential development to incorporate community gardens into the project design and require incorporation of community gardens for projects that meet the criteria established through Action SC-A4.2.

### SC-P4.3



Encourage urban agriculture, including urban farms and community gardens with collectively shared and managed plots, and demonstration and educational gardens operated by community organizations and educational institutions. Allow associated, limited on-site sales, processing of value-added products, and complementary agricultural activities when compatible with adjacent uses.



### SC-P4.4



Support programs administered by water or wastewater service providers that increase the availability of recycled water for urban agriculture and landscaping through self-fill stations and similar facilities.

## Actions

### SC-A4.1



Amend the urban agriculture provisions in County Ordinance Code Title 8 – Zoning to address the following:

- (a) Zoning districts where urban agriculture is allowed.
- (b) Permitting requirements.
- (c) Development and performance standards.
- (d) Environmentally safe and sustainable practices.
- (e) Sale of crops and value-added products.
- (f) Animal husbandry.
- (g) Disposal of food waste and agricultural byproducts.

### SC-A4.2



Amend County Ordinance Code Title 8 – Zoning to add a requirement for certain projects to incorporate community gardens into the project design. As part of this process, identify a threshold for triggering this requirement, considering project type, size, and location, and establish standards for garden size and design. Consider the unique needs of Impacted Communities when developing these regulations.

### SC-A4.3



Amend County Ordinance Code Title 4 – Health and Safety to allow food trucks within certain designated areas and on private property with special permits under Title 8.

## Goal SC-5

Convenient access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food in Impacted Communities.

## Policies

### SC-P5.1



Increase access to fresh food in Impacted Communities by encouraging grocery stores, and urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and neighborhood kitchens on vacant or underutilized lands. Treat such uses as community benefits in and of themselves.

### SC-P5.2



Maximize multimodal access to fresh food in Impacted Communities, prioritizing micro-mobility and pedestrian access, by encouraging grocery stores, healthy corner stores, community gardens, and outdoor markets at key transit nodes and within transit-oriented developments.



**SC-P5.3**   

Provide temporary, and possibly permanent, access to County facilities and land for farmers' markets and community gardens, especially in Impacted Communities.

**Actions**

**SC-A5.1**  

Inventory and map food deserts in the county. As part of the inventory, account for walking, micro-mobility, and transit access.

**SC-A5.2**   

Amend the County Ordinance Code and/or procedures to streamline permitting processes for grocery stores and markets in Impacted Communities and food deserts.

**SC-A5.3**   

Develop incentives to attract grocery stores, markets, and establishments selling fresh produce, preferably locally grown, in areas with poor access to fresh food.

**SC-A5.4**  

Every five years beginning in 2025, review the Alcoholic Beverage Sales Commercial Activities Ordinance to ensure it protects Impacted Communities from experiencing disproportionate concentrations of, and impacts from, new bars and liquor stores. To support

implementation of this ordinance, set up and maintain a shared data system between the Health Services and Conservation and Development departments that identifies the location of current establishments, along with information about public safety and health.

**SC-A5.5**  

Study the feasibility of preventing fast-food restaurants from locating near schools, parks, and other places where children normally gather.

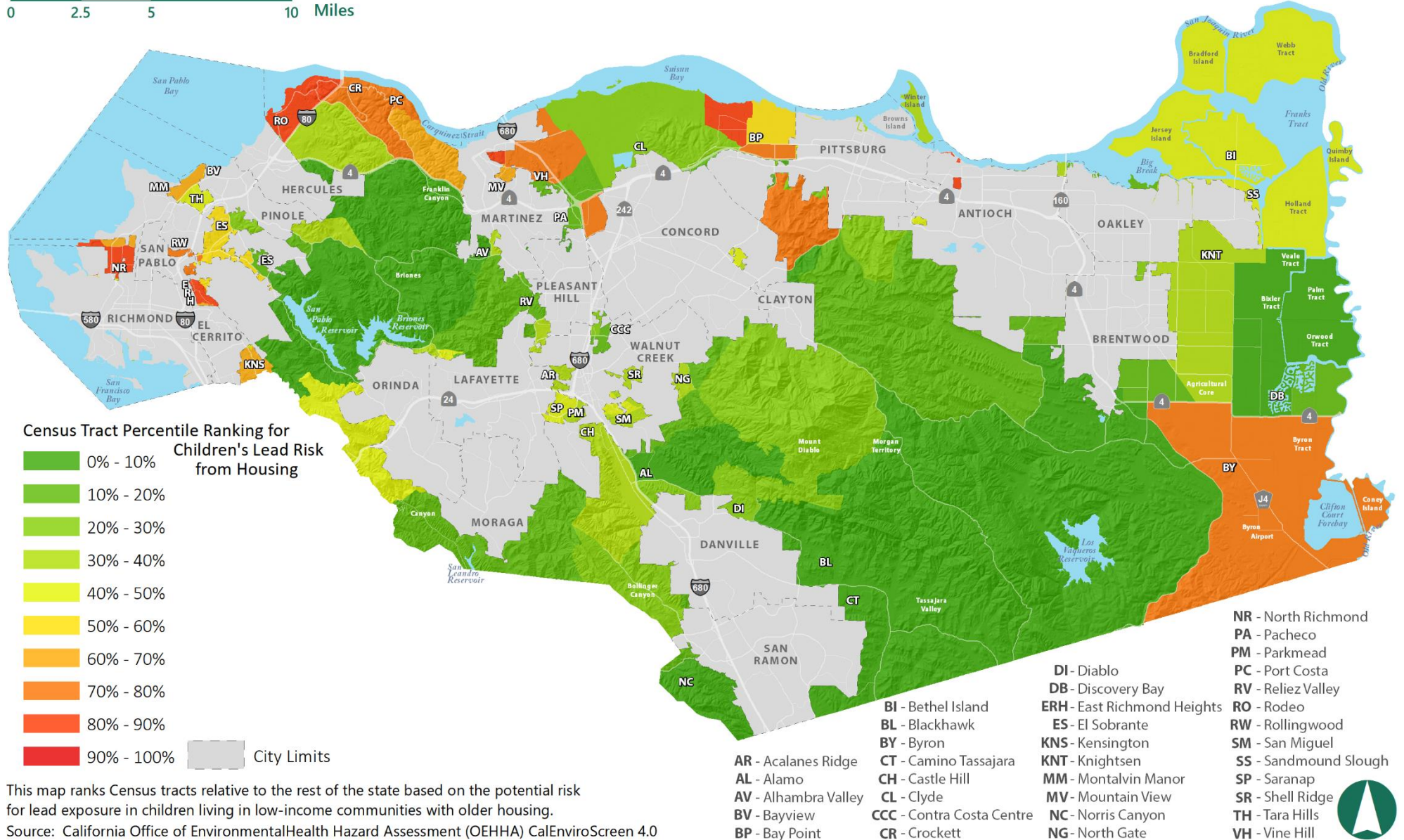
## HEALTHY HOMES

Access to safe, sanitary housing is a fundamental part of strong, healthy, and just communities. With many county residents struggling to afford housing, and often dependent on a landlord's willingness to make improvements, people end up living in unsanitary or substandard homes or not having a stable home at all. For example, while lead-based paint was banned federally in 1978, there are still older homes in Contra Costa County that pose lead risks to children, especially in Impacted Communities (see Figure SC-5). Poor home conditions can adversely impact a resident's health from things like toxic building materials, pests and vermin, water intrusion, mold, exposure to climate variations, and poor air quality. Homes that lack air conditioning and air filtration can expose residents to extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and other air pollution, especially if they need to keep windows open for temperature control. In addition, some households may be overcrowded as families double or triple up to minimize housing costs.



FIGURE SC-5 CHILDREN'S LEAD RISK FROM HOUSING RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the potential risk for lead exposure in children living in low-income communities with older housing.  
 Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0



*Aging houses may qualify for rehabilitation through the County's Neighborhood Preservation and Weatherization Programs.*

The County currently provides programs to support healthy homes, including the Weatherization Program, the Asthma Initiative, the Neighborhood Preservation Program, and the Mortgage Credit Certificate Program, and connects residents to other housing resources. In addition, the Contra Costa Housing Authority, a separate public agency in Contra Costa County, provides rental subsidies and manages and develops affordable housing for low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Contra Costa County's Housing Element, another Element of this General Plan, addresses a broader spectrum of housing issues and fulfills State housing law requirements for general plans.

## Goal SC-6

Universal access to safe and sanitary homes.

### Policies

#### SC-P6.1



Ensure that future improvements in Impacted Communities will not result in a net loss of affordable housing or significant preventable displacement of residents.

#### SC-P6.2



Prompt owners of substandard housing units in Impacted Communities to repair and rehabilitate their buildings.

#### SC-P6.3



Coordinate with residents of Impacted Communities, the Housing Authority of Contra Costa County, affordable housing developers, community land trusts, and housing advocates to transition vacant and underutilized land in Impacted Communities into affordable and transitional housing and shared equity models. This should include development of various types of innovative housing products and homeownership opportunities to help residents overcome past exclusionary practices and build intergenerational wealth.

### SC-P6.4



Support voluntary removal of natural gas infrastructure and appliances from homes and replacement with electric appliances.

## Actions

### SC-A6.1



Obtain additional funding for, and address barriers to participation in, the County's Weatherization Program and similar programs like the Contra Costa Asthma Initiative and Neighborhood Preservation Program for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income homeowners, seniors, landlords, and renters. Focus these efforts on homes in Impacted Communities, particularly rental and multiple-family housing.

### SC-A6.2



Create a bulk buying program or revolving loan fund that allows people to purchase energy-efficient electric appliances (air conditioners, fans, air purifiers, heaters, stoves, ovens, etc.) and other items that increase building efficiency at wholesale prices or minimal cost, possibly with zero-percent interest financing, to increase energy efficiency and replace hazardous appliances. Work with volunteer groups that help people install and dispose of air conditioners and other electrical appliances if they are unable to do so themselves, focusing on Impacted Communities and other areas with high concentrations of vulnerable people. Consider augmenting energy-efficiency programs to reduce electricity use and help offset the cost of operating electrical appliances.

### SC-A6.3



Partner with local solar energy providers to enact a solar group buy program to purchase solar panels and battery storage in bulk for installation in Impacted Communities, including establishment and subsidization of community solar programs that supply electricity to multiple consumers from a single photovoltaic solar location. The program should include an educational component to inform the community about the benefits and process of solar installation and give them the opportunity to enroll in the program at a discounted rate.

### SC-A6.4



Expand the County's first-time homebuyer program to provide more information and assistance, prioritizing outreach in Impacted Communities to spread awareness of the program.

*See the Housing Element for a more comprehensive discussion of housing needs, homelessness, renter protection measures, and programs to affirmatively further fair housing.*

## ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture play an integral role in Contra Costa County, as they enrich the lives of residents, visitors, and businesses alike. Artistic and cultural expression as present in historic buildings, residents' oral histories, and ongoing community traditions and celebrations contribute to an individual and collective sense of identity and pride. Every resident should have available easily accessible opportunities for cultural development, expression, and involvement. Art can be rooted in history and a catalyst for change in a culture. As a key driver of economic development and tourism,



arts and culture shape the community's creative workforce and future leaders by promoting skills such as creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. By working together to uphold and promote the value of engaging with arts and culture, we can strengthen local economies and create more vibrant, diverse, and resilient communities.

Contra Costa County supports art and culture through the Arts Council, a public-private partnership between the County and a nonprofit organization that also works in conjunction with the California Arts Council.



*A mural brings life and color to this North Richmond building.*

## Goal SC-7

Vibrant communities with strong identities reflected in public art and cultural events.

## Policies

### SC-P7.1



Support development of cultural facilities and programs that are physically and financially accessible to all, with emphasis on bringing these to Impacted Communities.

### SC-P7.2



Pursue arts and cultural investments as a tool for economic development, especially in Impacted Communities.

### SC-P7.3



Support artists, community groups, and volunteer organizations in implementing temporary and permanent public art programs, especially in Impacted Communities.

### SC-P7.4

Incorporate public art or artistic elements into County capital projects whenever feasible. Work with residents and the Arts Council to ensure works of public art are appropriate for the communities where they are installed.

## Actions

### SC-A7.1

Amend County Ordinance Code Title 8 – Zoning to establish a public art requirement for new development.

### SC-A7.2



Partner with recycling centers to establish artist-in-residence programs to support art education while encouraging residents to repurpose unwanted items and conserve natural resources.

## ECONOMIC VITALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

### Workforce Development

To attract new businesses and retain those already here, the county must offer a workforce that possesses the education and skills employers need. The County supports economic and workforce development through the Workforce Development Board (WDB) staffed by the Employment and Human Services Department. WDB members are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors and include local business owners, economic development leaders, education professionals, labor advocates, community-based organization staff, and public agency representatives. The County leverages the WDB and other economic development agencies and advocates to ensure that Contra Costa County remains economically competitive within the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

Workforce development is especially critical in Impacted Communities, which have higher rates of poverty and higher percentages of the adult population without a high school degree, as shown in Figures SC-6 and SC-7. By partnering with educational institutions and programs, employers, unions,

and trade associations to support job-skills training and recruitment from the local workforce, while also working to diversify the local economy, the County can help increase opportunities for residents in Impacted Communities to find local jobs that offer a living wage.

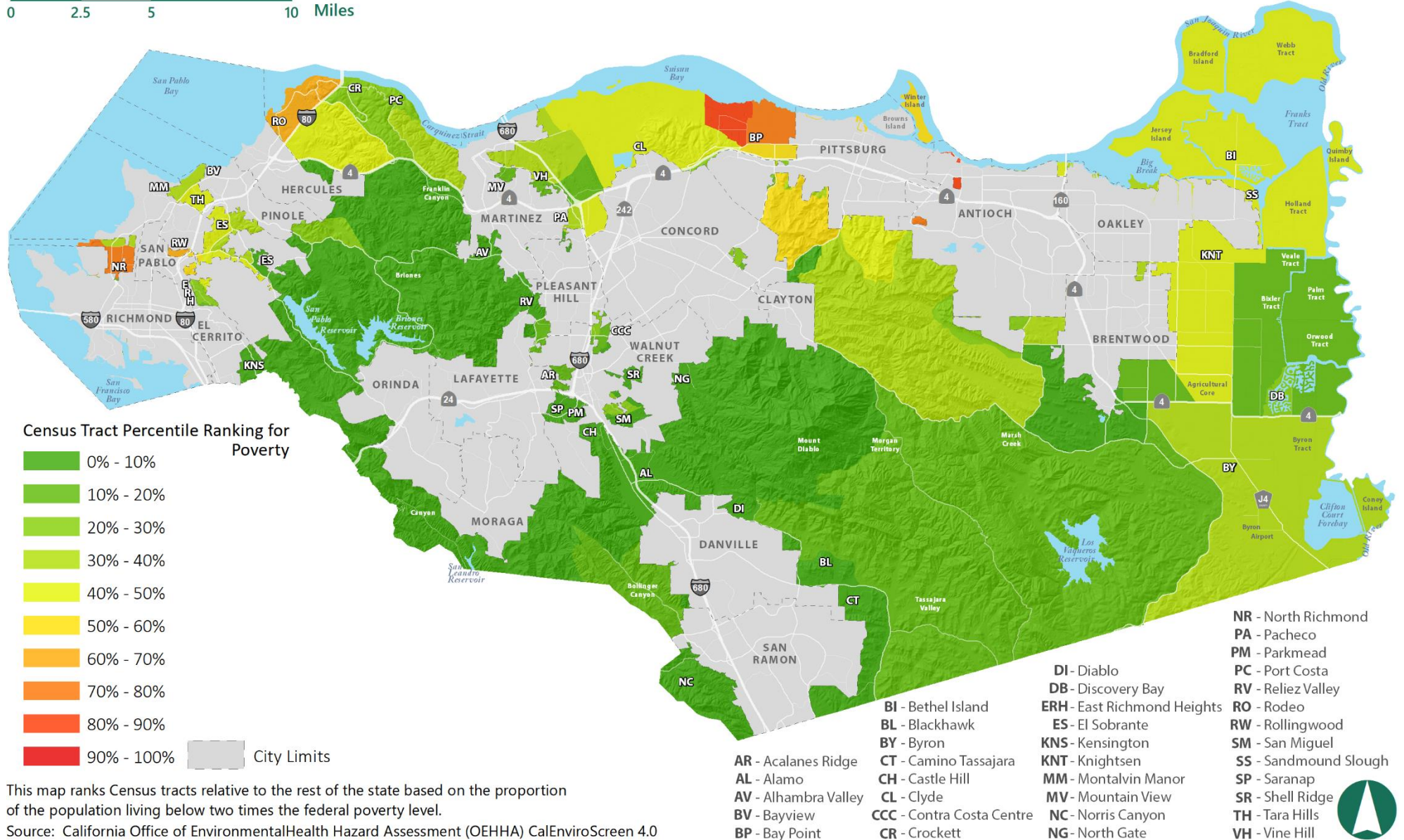


*The historic C&H Sugar Refinery provides local jobs and bolsters the Crockett economy. (Community-submitted photo)*



**FIGURE SC-6 POVERTY RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE**

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

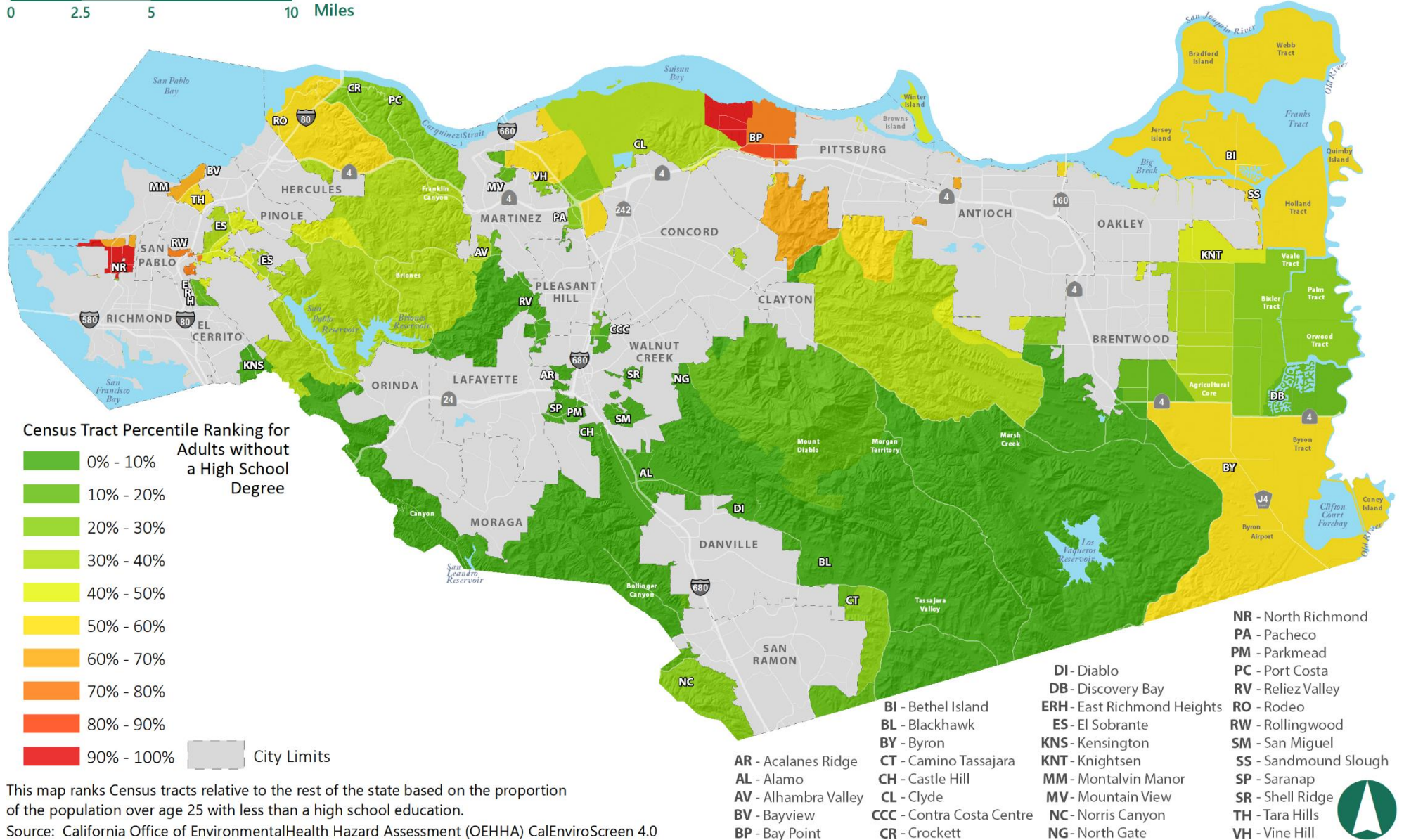


This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the proportion of the population living below two times the federal poverty level.

Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0

FIGURE SC-7 ADULTS WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE RANKINGS RELATIVE TO THE STATE

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



This map ranks Census tracts relative to the rest of the state based on the proportion of the population over age 25 with less than a high school education.  
 Source: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) CalEnviroScreen 4.0



## Goal SC-8

Access to and expansion of high-quality job training, job opportunities, and economic resources so that residents in Impacted Communities can acquire safe jobs, earn a living wage to support their families, and build shared prosperity.

## Policies

### SC-P8.1



Support schools, training programs, the WDB, and other institutions whose mission is to develop and enhance local workforce skills, including training and apprenticeship programs.

### SC-P8.2



Leverage opportunities to pursue workforce development, job training and re-training programs, and public-private partnerships that support economic growth. Support career pathway programs hosted by various County departments and encourage County staff to participate as mentors.

### SC-P8.3



Welcome businesses, especially family-sustaining, locally hiring, sustainable businesses, that provide essential goods and services in Impacted Communities, including food stores with fresh produce, healthcare, childcare, pharmacies, and other retailers, while discouraging predatory lenders, liquor stores, tobacco and cannabis retail stores, dollar stores, and

fast-food restaurants.

### SC-P8.4



Promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and locally owned businesses and enterprises, especially ethnic, immigrant, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) entrepreneurship, for the purpose of improving economic self-sufficiency and stability, including through outreach efforts to local small business owners while minimizing permitting barriers.

### SC-P8.5



Encourage more daycares, preschools, and early childhood development centers to make childcare more accessible and affordable for working families.

## Actions

### SC-A8.1



Establish a First Source Hiring Program encouraging developers, contractors, and employers to make good-faith efforts toward employing the local workforce to construct and operate their facilities, with emphasis on residents of Impacted Communities and those who are economically disadvantaged.

### SC-A8.2



Partner with school districts, community colleges, community organizations, large employers, trade associations, unions, and job training centers to support enhanced job-skills training, recruitment programs and services, and childcare services to support the county's workforce, especially workers in Impacted Communities. Work with experienced



groups to ensure that programs will be properly staffed and funded. Training and intervention strategies should reduce barriers to employment for youth, formerly incarcerated residents, and residents with limited English proficiency, and should support a just transition from a fossil-fuel reliant economy by re-training displaced workers with skills for living-wage jobs in new, environmentally sustainable industries.

### SC-A8.3



Explore the feasibility of establishing a revolving loan fund, grant program, or business incubator that supports small business formation and expansion in Impacted Communities. Connect to industries such as advanced manufacturing, biomedical/biotech, food, transportation technology, and clean technology that support an economic transition from fossil fuels.

### SC-A8.4



Develop and sufficiently fund a program to offer one-on-one support to small businesses in Impacted Communities. Through this program, provide guidance related to available grants and other forms of financing, access to innovation, access to emerging industries and markets, and mentorship.

### SC-A8.5



Explore use of existing federal and State government economic development programs, such as the “Opportunity Zone” program, “HUB Zone” program, and contracting designations, as a means to generate funding for transit, housing, and capital improvements, while attracting private investment.

## Business and Innovation

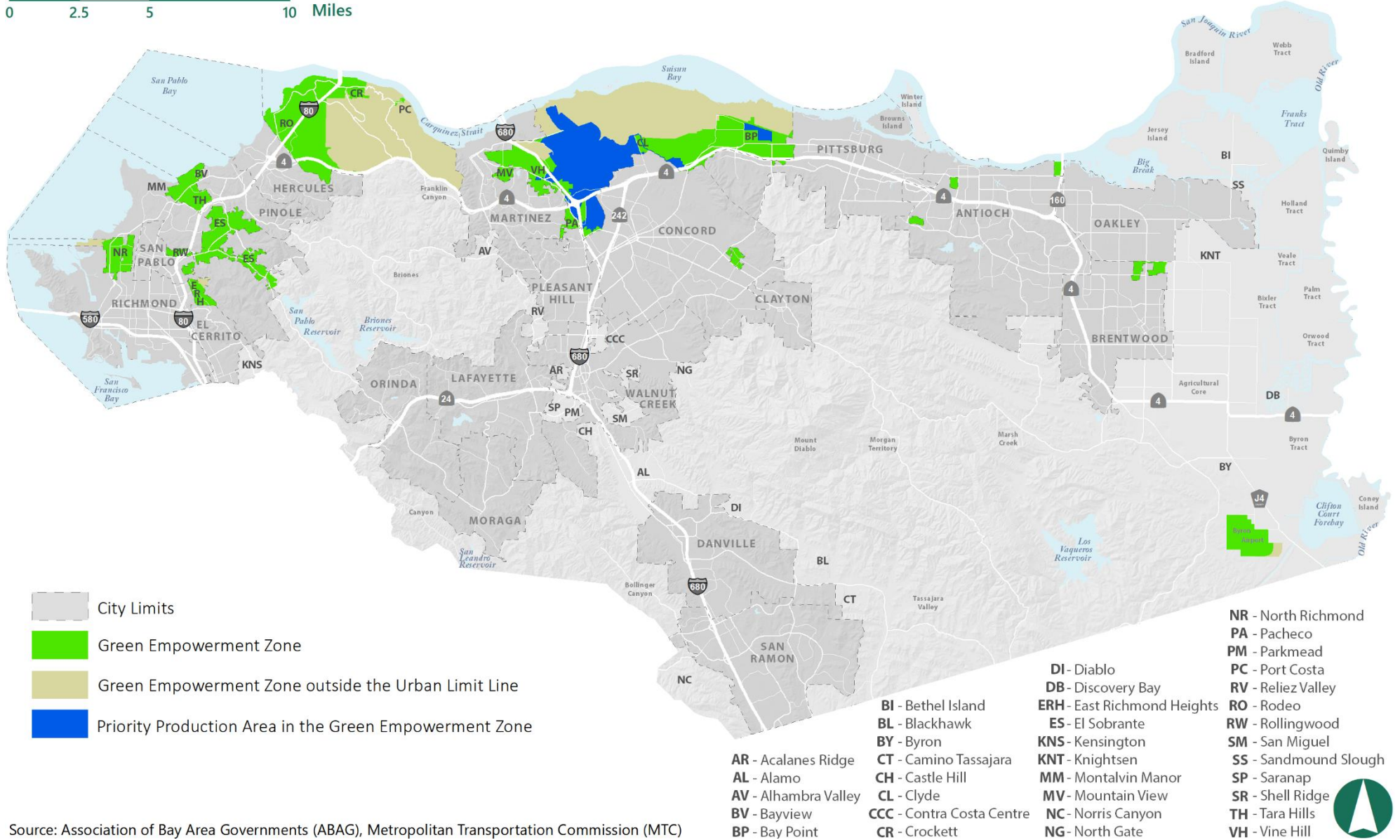
Enhancing Contra Costa County's success as an economic hub depends on retaining, supporting, and attracting a diverse range of businesses that will sustain the local economy despite changing market forces. Petroleum refineries have been some of the largest employers and strongest economic drivers in the county for over 100 years. While demand for refined products remains significant and will persist until alternative technologies are deployed at the requisite scale, the long-term future of these facilities is uncertain, and two of the four Contra Costa refineries have transitioned their operations as global and national energy trends shift toward carbon-free and renewable energy sources. Going forward, the county's economy should be centered on sustainable, clean, and green businesses and industries that provide living-wage jobs while protecting community health and the environment.

Less than 10 percent of the jobs in the county are in unincorporated areas, so coordination with incorporated cities is an important component of the County's economic development efforts. The Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative is a regional cluster-based economic development strategy, developed collaboratively between the County and seven partner cities. The Initiative intends to create 18,000 new jobs along Contra Costa County's Northern Waterfront, which extends along the shoreline from Hercules to Oakley and down to Brentwood, by 2035. The Initiative is focused on propelling the advanced manufacturing economic sector and investing in human capital to promote equitable economic growth. The State has designated the area as a Green Empowerment Zone, which will provide additional tools to implement the Initiative's goals. Additionally, the County worked with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)/Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to designate Priority Production Areas (PPAs) in Bay Point and the North Concord/Pacheco/Vine Hill area. PPAs identify clusters of industrial businesses and prioritize them for economic development investments and protection from competing land uses. The Green Empowerment Zone and PPAs are depicted in Figure SC-8.



**FIGURE SC-8 GREEN EMPOWERMENT ZONE AND PRIORITY PRODUCTION AREAS**

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Source: Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)





Shipping along the Northern Waterfront is an important part of the local economy. (Community-submitted photo)

### Goal SC-9

Sustain a resilient, diversified economy that supports existing businesses, attracts new businesses, and encourages investment and innovation while fostering economic opportunities for all residents.

### Policies

#### SC-P9.1



Work collaboratively with cities and other local agencies to leverage Contra Costa County's competitive assets and elevate the county's role in the economic and cultural growth of the Bay Area and California.

#### SC-P9.2



Position Contra Costa County to be a hub of production and employment for industries that spur economic growth and innovation in the transition toward a zero-emission economy.

#### SC-P9.3



Support business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts that diversify and strengthen the economy with special emphasis on businesses and industries that provide living-wage jobs, invest in the community, hire from the local workforce, and embrace sustainability.

#### SC-P9.4



Maintain a well-balanced regulatory environment that facilitates business investment and expansion while addressing community concerns about potential impacts.

#### SC-P9.5



Continue to support and expand local tourism. Emphasize memorable experiences available in Contra Costa County, such as agritourism, and recreational opportunities offered by unique natural features such as the Delta and Mount Diablo.

#### SC-P9.6



Recognize agriculture as an important part of the County's economy and maintain conditions that support its ongoing economic viability.



### SC-P9.7

Strengthen the viability of the Northern Waterfront as a dynamic economic asset and destination recreational area. Work with partner agencies to support beneficial, environmentally sustainable investment in this area.

### SC-P9.8

Support formation of the Green Empowerment Zone for the Northern Waterfront area and development of designated PPAs.

### SC-P9.9

Maximize Byron Airport's potential as a hub of aviation technology and innovation.

## Actions

### SC-A9.1

Adopt an Economic Development Strategy. The strategy should define a vision for the county's economy, identify and target suitable growth industries, and facilitate different types of economic development and employment growth in targeted areas.

### SC-A9.2

Implement the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative, including business attraction efforts aimed at biomedical and life science businesses, food and beverage processing, advanced materials and diversified manufacturing, advanced transportation technology, and clean technology.

### SC-A9.3

Nominate the Phillips 66 San Francisco (Rodeo) Refinery and surrounding industrial areas, including the site of the former Phillips 66 Carbon Plant in Franklin Canyon, as a Priority Production Area.

### SC-A9.4

Evaluate commercial and industrial regulations and permitting practices on an ongoing basis to ensure that they:

- (a) Address contemporary uses and activities.
- (b) Promote compatibility between new and existing uses.
- (c) Avoid creating unnecessary barriers that hinder economic prosperity, investment, and sustainable growth.

### SC-A9.5

Expand the Small Business Assistance Program, working collaboratively with technical assistance service providers.

### SC-A9.6

Explore the feasibility of establishing a small and micro-business fee-waiver program.

### SC-A9.7

Expand the County's participation in the State's Green Business Program.

*See the Open Space, Conservation, and Working Lands Element for policies about agritourism, solar and wind farms, and sustaining the agricultural economy.*

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community involvement is key to achieving the goals presented throughout this General Plan. Participation in County planning efforts brings diverse viewpoints and values into the decision-making process and helps ensure that County actions benefit the broadest range of people possible. Inclusive, participatory processes lead to better-informed solutions and build mutual understanding and trust between local government officials and the public they serve.

Equitable and effective community engagement is also foundational to environmental justice. By elevating the voices of people who have traditionally been left out of the planning process, we can learn from their wisdom and experience and begin correcting past wrongs. The County aims to create strong, collaborative partnerships between government and community members, proactively addressing challenges and promoting inclusion as a core value.



Residents in Bay Point share their vision for the future of their community.

**Goal SC-10**  
Effective decision making that seeks and incorporates the voices of county residents.

### Policies

#### SC-P10.1

Strengthen public trust through transparency, accessibility, and accountability in applying and implementing this General Plan and associated planning documents, such as the County Zoning Code.

#### SC-P10.2

Build positive relationships between residents, businesses, and County officials.

#### SC-P10.3

Expand opportunities to engage with County government. Provide residents with convenient access to information in the predominant languages spoken in their community.

#### SC-P10.4

Make appropriate County-owned facilities available to nonprofit civic organizations and neighborhood groups for meetings and events.



### SC-P10.5

Support community-driven/community-led initiatives that work toward achieving the community objectives identified in the Community Profiles.

## Actions

### SC-A10.1

Amend County Ordinance Code Title 8 – Zoning to improve accessibility by:

- (a) Using formatting tools and techniques, such as matrices and tables, that streamline the document.
- (b) Incorporating diagrams and other graphics to reduce reliance on text.
- (c) Using clear, unambiguous, and non-technical language whenever possible.

## Goal SC-11

Residents empowered with strong voices to communicate needs and solutions.

## Policies

### SC-P11.1



Engage with residents of Impacted Communities in a genuine, meaningful, and respectful manner.

### SC-P11.2



Notify and engage community members, organizations, and leaders when County planning decisions on major projects are being considered in or near Impacted Communities. Conduct meaningful outreach and engagement with Impacted Communities as follows:

- (a) Notify Impacted Communities of the existence of major projects early in the planning process.
- (b) Prepare public notices in the predominant language(s) spoken in the community and provide interpretation services at meetings as needed.
- (c) Make public notices and other important documents easy to understand and available in print at local libraries, community centers, or other gathering places.
- (d) Use a wide array of methods to inform community members of opportunities to participate, such as the County website, social media, texts, banners, mailers, and flyers.
- (e) Use supplemental outreach approaches that are appropriate for the participating community.
- (f) Schedule, format, and locate community workshops and meetings to be convenient for community members, both in person and online, whenever possible.
- (g) Use social media, virtual meeting platforms, recorded meetings, and other communication techniques to assist those without time or ability to attend public meetings.
- (h) Consider the economic, gender, age, and racial diversity of the affected population when developing outreach strategies.

- (i) Clearly explain potential adverse impacts of a proposed project in plain language that is easily understood by the participating community.

### SC-P11.3

Provide community engagement and information access options for people in Impacted Communities without access to computers or internet. Use facilities such as public libraries and community centers as a resource for making information and technology available.

### SC-P11.4

Strive for more diverse representation on County boards, commissions, committees, and similar bodies to better reflect the demographics and varying viewpoints of county residents, with greater efforts to engage under-represented populations.

### SC-P11.5

Overtly acknowledge public participation and input offered at hearings conducted by the County Zoning Administrator, County Planning Commission, and other bodies making land use decisions.

## Actions

### SC-A11.1

Designate staff in departments that routinely interact with residents of Impacted Communities, such as Conservation and Development, Public Works, and Health Services, as liaisons to each Impacted Community.

### SC-A11.2

Hold semi-annual public meetings in each Impacted Community, including the County Supervisor representing the community and representatives from the full spectrum of County departments, to hear from residents of these communities, and use that input to inform the County's annual budgeting process. Provide interpretation services at these meetings.

### SC-A11.3

Identify communities with a significant number of non-English-speaking households and develop resources and strategies for better engagement.

### SC-A11.4

Develop centralized outreach services to support all County departments with language interpretation, translation services for written documents, and sign language services for public meetings.

### SC-A11.5

Review procedures employed by the various County departments for collecting and disseminating data related to community health, safety, and economic vitality and study the feasibility of making additional data available to the public through accessible online tools.



### SC-A11.6



Amend County Ordinance Code Title 2 – Administration to increase the public notification distance for hearings concerning refineries and other large stationary sources (i.e., any stationary source that emits, or has the potential to emit, 40 tons per year or more of nitrous oxides or sulfur dioxide; 15 tons per year of coarse particulate matter; 10 tons per year of fine particulate matter; and/or 200 tons per year of carbon dioxide) from 300 to 3,000 feet.

*See the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies that prioritize public investment in capital improvements in Impacted Communities.*

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES ELEMENT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To track progress in achieving the major goals of this Element, every five years, the County will collect data to assess its performance against the following measures. Progress will be tracked relative to the prior performance review and the baseline year of 2024. Based on the findings from the five-year review, the County may adjust policies, actions, or the approach to implementing them to improve performance, as needed.

- Improved health outcomes of residents in Impacted Communities.
- Increased percentage of homes that are within a half-mile of a grocery store or other entity that offers fresh food.
- Reduced number of substandard homes that pose a health risk to residents in Impacted Communities.
- Increased amount of support provided to businesses in Impacted Communities through the County's small business assistance programs.

- Reduced rate of poverty in Impacted Communities.

## COMMUNITY PROFILES

Unincorporated communities in Contra Costa County are at different stages of development. For many, the residents' vision for the future looks much like the community is today, while residents in other communities are more interested in transformation and evolution. Given the diversity of people, built environments, social and economic conditions, and natural landscapes across the county, this General Plan includes community-scale policy guidance in individual Community Profiles.

The Community Profiles are intended to close gaps in countywide policies by addressing issues and opportunities that apply only to that specific community. Each Community Profile includes:

- Contextual information summarizing local character, setting, land use patterns, demographics, history, natural resources, natural hazards, community vulnerabilities, and other key data.
- A summary of the planned land uses in the community, as mapped in Figure LU-1, the General Plan Land Use Map.
- Guiding principles that formulate a vision for the future of the community, plus policies and actions to support that vision.

The Community Profiles for Impacted Communities have an additional section that highlights environmental justice issues through maps and charts. As explained in the section of this Element on environmental justice, the CalEnviroScreen data that identifies Impacted Communities will change over time, so the County will periodically update the map of Impacted Communities and associated community profiles and policy guidance, as called for in Action SC-A1.7.





There are 22 Community Profiles presented in this section. These communities were identified through public input and collaboration among County staff and include communities with an individual identity and local concerns that are unique to their residents and businesses. They include:

- Alamo/Castle Hill
- Alhambra Valley/Reliez Valley/Briones/Franklin Canyon
- Bay Point
- Bethel Island
- Byron
- Canyon
- Clyde
- Contra Costa Centre
- Crockett
- Diablo
- Discovery Bay
- East Richmond Heights
- El Sobrante
- Kensington
- Knightsen
- Montara Bay/Rollingwood (i.e., Montalvin Manor, Tara Hills, Bayview, and Rollingwood)
- North Richmond
- Pacheco
- Port Costa
- Rodeo
- Saranap/Parkmead
- Vine Hill/Mountain View

The County met with residents of each of these communities at least once during the General Plan update process to ensure each profile articulates the shared values, priorities, and aspirations for their future.



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