

# 11. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT

# 11

*The Environmental Justice Element describes impacted communities and current environmental justice conditions in Hollister and sets policy direction to minimize effects of environmental hazards on impacted communities, with an emphasis on improving food and healthcare access, physical activity, and healthy neighborhoods. This section presents goals, policies, and actions for the following topics:*

- 11.2.1 Healthy Neighborhoods*
- 11.2.2 Healthy Homes*
- 11.2.3 Physical Activity*
- 11.2.4 Access to Healthy Food*
- 11.2.5 Safe and Sustainable Transportation System*
- 11.2.6 Just and Equitable Public Facilities*
- 11.2.7 Just and Equitable Parks and Recreation Access*
- 11.2.8 Air Quality in Impacted Communities*
- 11.2.9 Access to Healthcare*
- 11.2.10 Civic Engagement in Impacted Communities*

## 11.1 HOLLISTER TODAY

Throughout California and the United States, low-income communities and communities of color have experienced a combination of historic discrimination, negligence, and political and economic disempowerment. Today, these communities are struggling with both a disproportionate burden of pollution and health impacts as well as disproportionate social and economic disadvantages, such as poverty or housing instability. The City of Hollister seeks to minimize these effects in the entire community through the goals, policies, and actions called out in this Environmental Justice Element.



Photo by Jenny Knerr

### 11.1.1 OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental justice is defined in California law as the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The availability of a healthy environment for all people.
- The deterrence, reduction, and elimination of pollution burdens for populations and communities experiencing the adverse effects of that pollution, so that the effects of the pollution are not disproportionately borne by those populations and communities.
- Governmental entities engaging and providing technical assistance to populations and communities most impacted by pollution to promote their meaningful participation in all phases of the environmental and land use decision-making process.
- The meaningful consideration of recommendations from populations and communities most impacted by pollution in making environmental and land use decisions.

Environmental justice issues often emerge from structural or geographic inequities that negatively affect disadvantaged communities. “Impacted communities” are low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation. Structural inequity arises from a neighborhood’s ongoing lack of representation and participation in the City’s decision-making process, despite direct impacts on their neighborhood. This embeds bias in the decision-making process and marginalizes the neighborhoods that must overcome barriers to entry. Geographic inequities may arise in neighborhoods with higher percentages of racial or ethnic minority households and lower-income households when those residents bear a disproportionate burden of the region’s environmental hazards and corollary health conditions.

An Environmental Justice Element must address public health risks, focusing on minimizing the burdens disproportionately borne by impacted communities. Environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives must do the following:

- Reduce the unique or compounded health risks in impacted communities by reducing pollution exposure and promoting public improvements, public services, community amenities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.

- Promote civic engagement in the public decision-making process.
- Prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of impacted communities.

State law allows environmental justice issues to be incorporated in a stand-alone Environmental Justice Element, or in the various elements of a General Plan. The City of Hollister has elected to emphasize the importance of environmental justice by preparing a separate element rather than integrating environmental justice policies into existing General Plan elements. Other General Plan elements also contain policies and actions that support environmental justice, for example by supporting the creation of walkable communities to ensure that all needed services are in close proximity to residents in all neighborhoods and by minimizing exposure to hazardous materials.

#### 11.1.2 IMPACTED COMMUNITIES IN HOLLISTER

Senate Bill (SB) 1000 takes its definition of impacted communities from Health and Safety Code Section 39711 and allows the use of the State's CalEnviroScreen tool as the primary screening method for identifying impacted communities. CalEnviroScreen quantifies a range of factors related to the combination of pollution burden and population characteristics (such as poverty, educational attainment, or age) and arrives at a score for every census tract. In general, the higher the score, the more impacted a community is. Census tracts in the highest quartile of scores (75 to 100) are considered to be impacted communities under SB 1000. In Hollister, no Census tracts are categorized by CalEnviroScreen 4.0 as impacted communities based on their cumulative score as shown in Figure EJ-1.

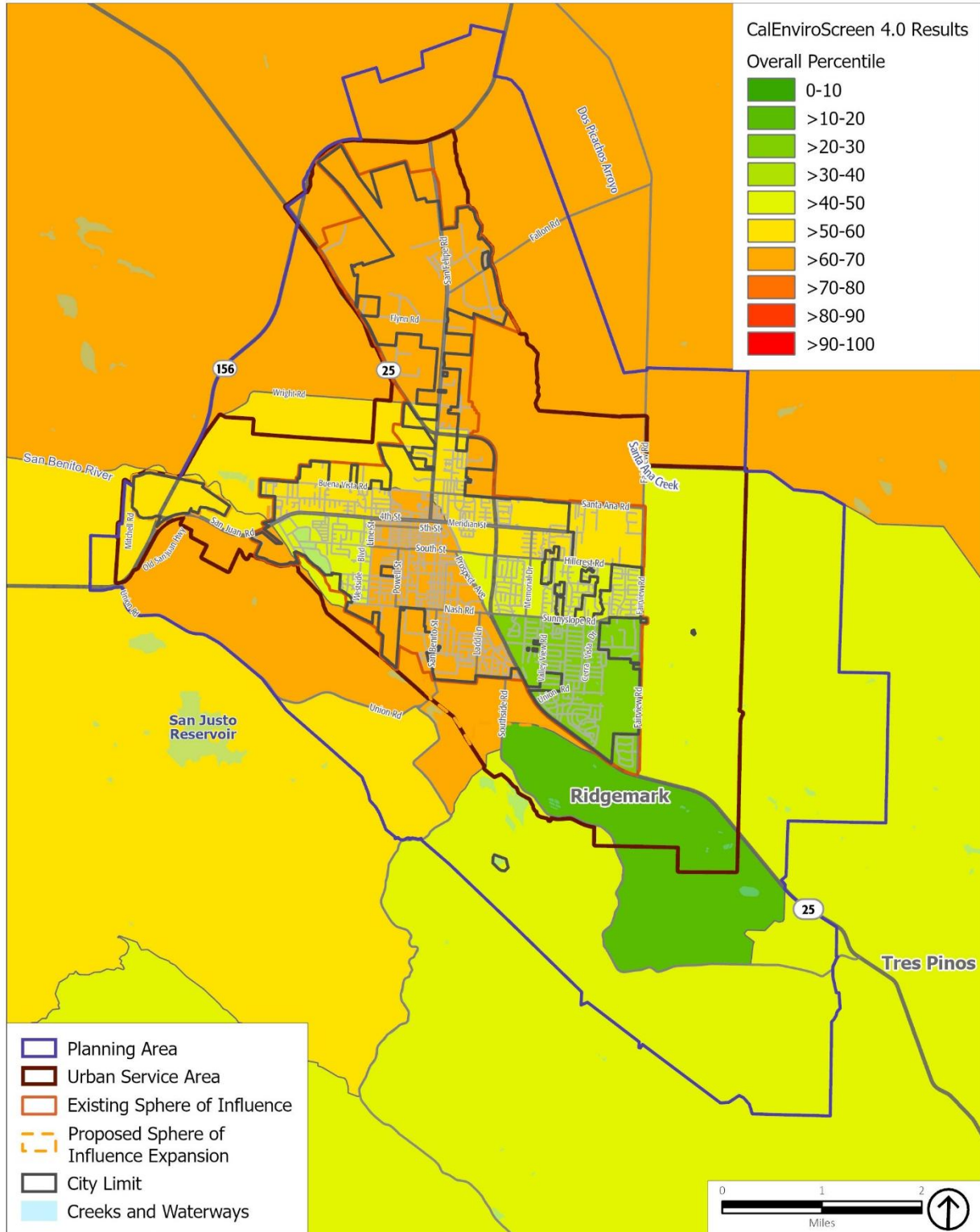
However, there are three census tracts in the city, mapped in Figure EJ-2, that have a CalEnviroScreen 4.0 "population characteristic score" over 75 percent. The population characteristic score is a relative percentile score of the eight health and socioeconomic indicator scores that appear in the CalEnviroScreen model: asthma, cardiovascular disease, low birth weight, poverty, housing burden, unemployment, educational attainment, and linguistic isolation. Thus, the population characteristic score omits the pollution exposure indicators (which is included in the overall CalEnviroScreen analysis) because there were no areas in the city that had a pollution burden score over 75 percent, but it considers all of the sensitive and socioeconomic population metrics that are included in CalEnviroScreen. The three census tracts in Hollister with a population characteristic score over 75 percent are:

- Buena Visa Road Corridor (Census Tract 6069000300) Score: 84 percent
- South of San Juan Hollister Road (Census Tract 6069000701) Score: 82 percent
- Old Town/Downtown Hollister (Census Tract 6069000400) Score: 79 percent



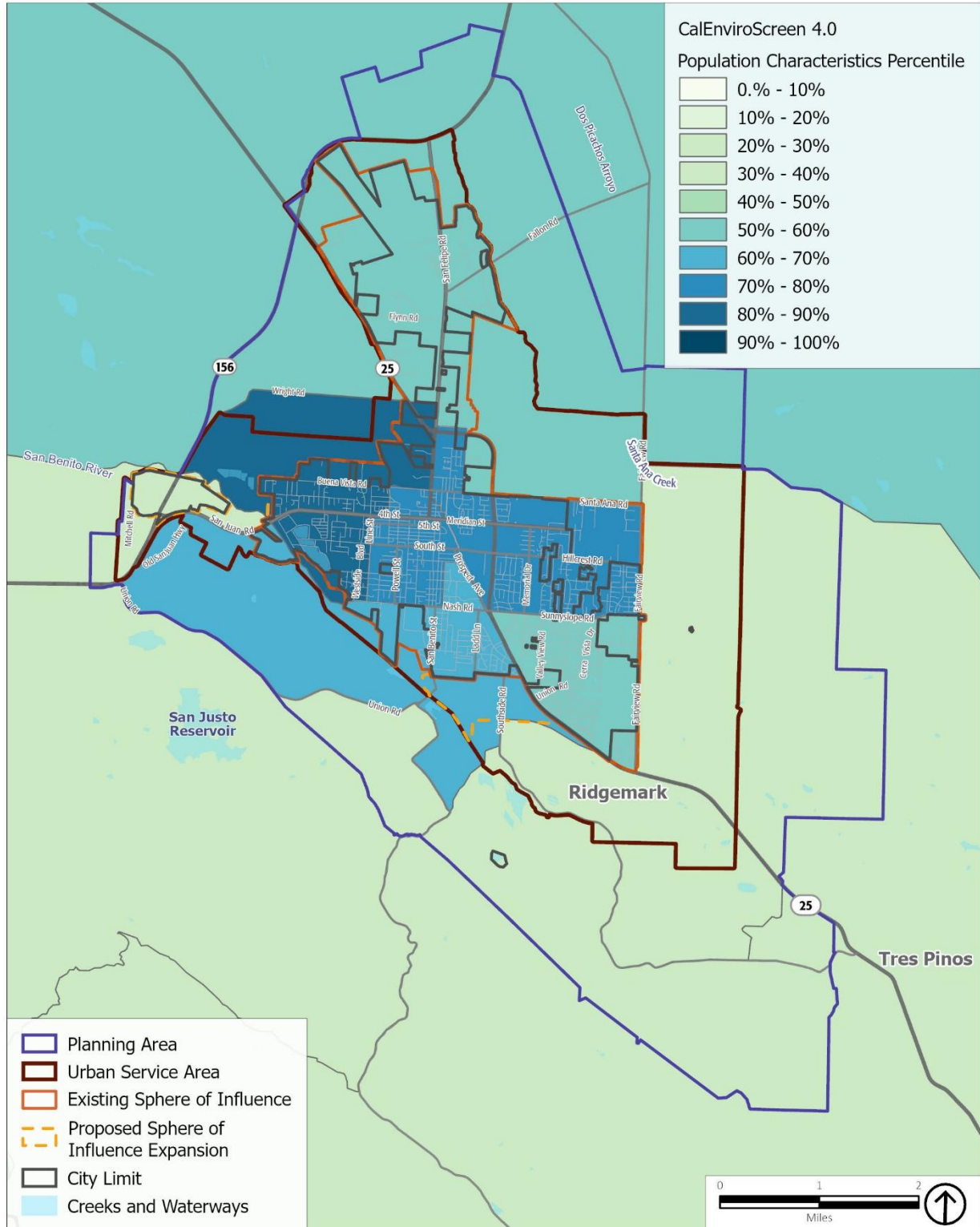
Photo by San Benito County Arts Council

Figure EJ-1 CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Overall Percentiles



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; OEHHA 2021

Figure EJ-2 CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Population Characteristics



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; OEHHA 2021

As shown in Table EJ-1, the Buena Vista Road Corridor has a high score for low birth weight, cardiovascular disease, education, and unemployment. The area south of San Juan Hollister Road has a high score for cardiovascular disease, unemployment, education, and linguistic isolation. The Old Town/Downtown Hollister area has a high score for cardiovascular disease and education. All census tracts in Hollister ranked at 94 percent or higher for cardiovascular disease, meaning that the entire city has a concentration of cardiovascular disease that is worse than at least 94 percent of the state.

**TABLE EJ-1 CALENVIROSCREEN POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS SCORES BY FACTOR**

CalEnviroScreen Factor	Corridor along Buena Vista Road	Area south of San Juan Hollister Road	Old Town/Downtown Hollister
Asthma	73	73	73
Low Birth Weight	90	31	37
Cardiovascular	98	98	98
Educational Attainment	90	86	76
Linguistic Isolation	49	80	73
Poverty	44	66	68
Unemployment	87	98	65
Housing Burden	22	51	64
<b>Percentile</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Population Characteristics Indicator Map, April 2022.



Photo by Hollister Parks and Recreation Staff

Although the City of Hollister is not required to prepare an Environmental Justice Element per SB 1000 (since there are no census tracts in the city that exceed the 75 percent cumulative CalEnviroScreen threshold), the City would like to ensure that this General Plan gives appropriate consideration to any impacted community in Hollister. This Environmental Justice Element has been prepared to help improve the socioeconomic and sensitive population indicators identified in the three census tracts with population characteristic scores of 75 or higher. Therefore, this element includes policy direction for:

- Healthy neighborhoods
- Healthy homes
- Physical activity
- Access to healthy food
- Safe and sustainable transportation system

- Just and equitable public facilities
- Just and equitable parks and recreation access
- Air quality in impacted communities
- Access to healthcare
- Civic engagement in impacted communities

## 11.2 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The following section provides goals, policies, and actions relating to environmental justice.

### 11.2.1 HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

**GOAL EJ-1** Ensure impacted communities are not disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution or other hazards.

#### POLICIES

**Policy EJ-1.1** **Exposure to Pollutants.** Reduce exposure to pollutants in impacted communities by prohibiting the co-location of incompatible land uses.

**Policy EJ-1.2** **Community Benefits Agreements.** Pursue community benefits agreements (CBAs) for projects negatively affecting an impacted community, negotiated with input from both the community and the project applicant. 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. Secondly, to compensate for impacts that cannot be fully mitigated, these CBAs should secure community benefits that exceed the value of the project impacts and support the community vision.

**Policy EJ-1.3** **New Developments.** To support the findings necessary to approve all residential developments greater than 40 units and nonresidential development greater than 10,000 square feet, require applicants to submit documentation demonstrating how the project will promote environmental justice and health, including how the project will ensure the following:

- It will not adversely impact the community or place undue burden of development impacts on the community;
- It will provide benefits that support the community goals, as expressed directly by the community;
- It will provide economic opportunities for the community, for example if the project requires prevailing wage, hires locally, creates high-quality jobs, adds tax revenue, etc.;
- It will provide infrastructure necessary to support the population increase;
- It will neither directly nor indirectly cause unwelcome, permanent displacement of existing residents or businesses in the community; and
- It will avoid direct and indirect negative impacts on health and the quality of life and health of residents in the community.

#### ACTIONS

**Action EJ-1.1** **Community Benefits Agreements Process.** Establish the process to implement a community benefits program.

**Action EJ-1.2** **Project Review Criteria.** With input from residents of impacted communities, develop criteria to be used in the project review process to evaluate how new development supports the City's environmental justice and health goals.

**Action EJ-1.3** **CalEnviroScreen Review.** Review CalEnviroScreen upon each update to determine if there are impacted communities in Hollister. If CalEnviroScreen identifies new impacted communities, this element shall be updated accordingly.

## 11.2.2 HEALTHY HOMES

**GOAL EJ-2** Provide universal access to safe and sanitary homes.

### POLICIES

**Policy EJ-2.1** **No Net Loss of Affordable Housing.** Ensure that future improvements in impacted communities will not result in a net loss of affordable housing or significant displacement of residents.

**Policy EJ-2.2** **Housing Repair and Rehabilitation.** Expand efforts to prompt repair and rehabilitation of all substandard housing in impacted communities.

**Policy EJ-2.3** **Affordable and Transitional Housing.** Coordinate with residents of impacted communities, Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz, affordable housing developers, and other organizations to transition vacant, unentitled land in impacted communities into affordable and transitional housing and shared equity models, which could include many types of innovative housing products. This should include homeownership opportunities to help residents build intergenerational wealth.



Photo by David Mirrione

### ACTION

**Action EJ-2.1** **First-Time Homebuyer Program.** Expand the City's first-time homebuyer program to provide more information and assistance, prioritizing outreach in impacted communities to spread awareness of the program.

## 11.2.3 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**GOAL EJ-3** Create safe, welcoming neighborhoods that support physical activity and a healthy environment for residents of all physical capabilities.

### POLICIES

**Policy EJ-3.1** **Physical Activity.** Support safe and well-maintained neighborhood fitness centers, open spaces, and parks to encourage residents to participate in fitness activities.

**Policy EJ-3.2** **Health Fairs.** Support health fairs and other events that promote active living, healthy habits, and physical activity.

ACTIONS

**Action EJ-3.1** **Accessible Design.** Update the project review process to require principles of universal and barrier-free design so that people of all physical abilities can enjoy mobility and accessibility in their communities.

**Action EJ-3.2** **City-Supported Fitness Programs.** Identify ways the City can support fitness programs, such as subsidized City recreation program fees, providing free childcare at City recreation programs, etc.

11.2.4 ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

**GOAL EJ-4** Expand convenient access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food and related resources to reduce food insecurity.

POLICIES

**Policy EJ-4.1** **Affordable and Nutritious Food.** Promote projects that would improve access to affordable and nutritious food by allowing and encouraging local food production, micro agriculture, edible landscapes in public and private areas, rooftop gardens, community gardens, urban farms, farmers' markets, food banks/pantries, and community kitchens on vacant or underutilized lands, including City-owned land.

**Policy EJ-4.2** **Food Access.** Maximize multimodal access to fresh food in Hollister, prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian access, by encouraging grocery stores, healthy corner stores, community gardens, and outdoor markets at locations throughout Hollister.

ACTIONS

**Action EJ-4.1** **Food Resources Inventory.** Inventory and map food resources in the city. As part of the inventory, account for walking, bicycling, and transit access.



Photo by PlaceWorks

- Action EJ-4.2** **Food Deserts.** Identify food deserts in Hollister and establish incentives to locate food markets and related uses in these areas.
- Action EJ-4.3** **Streamlined Permitting Process.** Update the Zoning Code to streamline permitting of grocery stores and markets.
- Action EJ-4.4** **Urban Gardening Ordinance.** Establish an urban gardening ordinance that identifies where commercial and private urban gardening are allowed in Hollister and the allowed agricultural uses permitted to occur in these areas.

#### 11.2.5 SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

**GOAL EJ-5** Create a transportation system that accommodates and encourages active, safe, reliable, comfortable, convenient, affordable, and resilient multi-modal travel options for all city residents, businesses, and visitors.

#### POLICIES

- Policy EJ-5.1** **Truck Routes.** Reduce exposure to pollutants in impacted communities by restricting truck routes in these communities where feasible.
- Policy EJ-5.2** **Transportation Improvements.** Prioritize transportation projects and programming, especially traffic-calming measures, in areas where they will be most impactful.
- Policy EJ-5.3** **Energy-Efficient Street Lighting.** Prioritize provision of energy-efficient street lighting for traveler safety and comfort in impacted communities, consistent with community desires.
- Policy EJ-5.4** **Safe Transportation to School.** Work with school districts, neighborhood groups, and the County's Safe Routes to School Program to prioritize safe and active modes of transportation to schools and related facilities in impacted communities.

## ACTIONS

- Action EJ-5.1** **Maintenance of Transit Facilities.** Develop a system to allow residents, particularly in impacted communities, to notify the City and other responsible agencies when transit shelters and amenities, other transportation infrastructure, and street furniture (i.e., benches, garbage cans, and water fountains) are in a state of disrepair. Encourage and promote use of this reporting program in impacted communities.
- Action EJ-5.2** **Citywide Transit Shelter Program.** Develop a uniform citywide transit shelter program in collaboration with transit providers, including maintenance and best practices in accessibility.
- Action EJ-5.3** **Accessible Transit.** Pursue funding and other resources to implement plans or initiatives that expand the hours of operation, operational boundaries, convenience, and quality of accessible transit to improve mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations.

## 11.2.6 JUST AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC FACILITIES

**GOAL EJ-6** Build and maintain public facilities, infrastructure, and services that meet the needs of, and are accessible to, residents of impacted communities.

## POLICIES

- Policy EJ-6.1** **Public Facilities for All Users.** Ensure facilities and services, including open space, meet the needs of all users.
- Policy EJ-6.2** **Prioritization of Infrastructure Improvements and Recreational Programs.** Systematically prioritize infrastructure improvements, including those increasing accessibility to open space, that serve impacted communities and respond to the needs identified by those communities.
- Policy EJ-6.3** **Code Enforcement and Building Maintenance.** Prioritize code enforcement resources to keep impacted communities safe and clean, emphasizing enforcement actions on issues identified by the community.



Photo by Hollister Parks and Recreation Staff

- Policy EJ-6.4** **Safe Neighborhoods.** Undertake community planning efforts that improve personal and property safety in impacted communities.
- Policy EJ-6.5** **Coordination with Service Providers.** Advocate for and coordinate with various service providers (e.g., water, sewer, transit, and recreation districts) for proper planning, maintenance, and implementation of services and infrastructure to ensure efficient and effective service delivery in impacted communities.
- Policy EJ-6.6** **Urban Greening in Public Projects.** Seek opportunities for urban greening and green infrastructure in public projects, including sustainable/green street projects in impacted communities that support the community's goals.
- Policy EJ-6.7** **Community Clean-Up.** Partner with community organizations and solid waste franchise collection haulers to maximize participation in community clean-up days and residential on-call garbage pick-ups in impacted communities. Encourage community participation by holding these events in conjunction with other community events.

#### ACTIONS

- Action EJ-6.1** **Community-Desired Public Facilities and Services.** Conduct a study to consider establishing funding and financing mechanisms in impacted communities to provide and maintain community-desired public facilities and services. These could be City- or community-initiated, and include business improvement districts, green benefit districts, and similar mechanisms.



Photo by Hollister Parks and Recreation Staff



Photo by David Mirrione

## 11.2.7 JUST AND EQUITABLE PARKS AND RECREATION ACCESS

**GOAL EJ-7** Provide convenient access to safe and well-maintained recreational activities, programs, parks, and open space in impacted communities.

### POLICIES

**Policy EJ-7.1** **Equitable Distribution of Parks.** Ensure that all areas of the city are within a half-mile radius of a City park.

**Policy EJ-7.2** **Outdoor Physical Activity Barriers.** Work to remove barriers to outdoor physical activity in impacted communities.

**Policy EJ-7.3** **Multi-Modal Connections to Parks and Recreational Facilities.** Provide multi-modal connections to parks, green space, recreational facilities, trails, and natural environments for residents of impacted communities.

**Policy EJ-7.4** **Maintenance of Local Parks.** Support local community groups and volunteer organizations in efforts to improve and maintain local parks, trails, and other public spaces in impacted communities, for example through an Adopt-A-Trail program.

**Policy EJ-7.5** **Access to Open Space.** Provide access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity.

### ACTIONS

**Action EJ-7.1** **Park and Recreational Facility Improvements.** Establish a program to improve parks and recreational facilities in impacted communities and seek funding to support this program.

### 11.2.8 AIR QUALITY IN IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

**GOAL EJ-8** Ensure access to healthy air quality for all communities so that no community bears the disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and health risks.

#### POLICIES

- Policy EJ-8.1** **Health Impact Assessment.** Require a Health Impact Assessment, including consideration of truck traffic impacts, for any project that could potentially affect health conditions for sensitive receptors and/or in impacted communities, and require appropriate mitigation based on the findings of the assessment.
- Policy EJ-8.2** **Natural Landscapes in Impacted Communities.** Support protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural landscapes in and near impacted communities.
- Policy EJ-8.3** **Offsetting Benefits.** Require that any mitigation of air quality impacts on an impacted community that relies on offsets obtains the offsets from sources as near to the project site as possible.

### 11.2.9 ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

**GOAL EJ-9** Provide access for all residents to healthcare facilities and other important community health amenities.

#### POLICIES

- Policy EJ-9.1** **Health Centers and Providers.** Support the development of healthcare centers and healthcare providers, including mental health specialists, and avoid the concentration of health centers in any one neighborhood.
- Policy EJ-9.2** **Health Service Access.** Work with San Benito County Public Health and local providers to enhance access to and information about all forms of health services for residents of impacted communities.
- Policy EJ-9.3** **Transit.** Work with healthcare providers and transit agencies to ensure that there are transit stops within a quarter-mile of all medical facilities.

**Policy EJ-9.4** **Preventative Healthcare.** Work with San Benito County Public Health on preventative healthcare initiatives, such as nutrition education, promoting fitness, and limiting the concentration of tobacco and liquor stores in any one neighborhood.

ACTIONS

**Action EJ-9.1** **Development Review Process for Healthcare Facilities.** Review the development review process for medical facilities and identify strategies to streamline the permitting process for healthcare facilities.

11.2.10 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

**GOAL EJ-10** Facilitate meaningful and respectful engagement with impacted communities so that residents have strong voices to communicate needs and solutions.



Photo by PlaceWorks

POLICIES

**Policy EJ-10.1** **Community Vision.** Support community-driven or community-led initiatives in impacted communities that work toward establishing and realizing the community's vision.

**Policy EJ-10.2** **Community Outreach.** Conduct meaningful outreach and engagement early in the planning process for projects that would affect impacted communities, as follows:

- Prepare public notices in the predominant language(s) spoken in the community and provide interpretation services at meetings as needed.
- Make public notices and other important documents easy to understand and available in print at local libraries, community centers, or other gathering places.
- Use a wide array of methods to inform community members of opportunities to participate, such as the City website, social media, texts, banners, mailers, and flyers.
- Use supplemental outreach approaches that are appropriate for the participating community.
- Schedule, format, and locate community workshops and meetings to be convenient for community members – both in-person and online.

- Use social media, virtual meeting platforms, recorded meetings, and other communication techniques for those without time or ability to attend public meetings.
- Consider data that reflects the economic, gender, age, and racial diversity of the affected population.
- Clearly explain potential adverse impacts of a proposed project in plain language that is easily understood by the participating community.

**Policy EJ-10.3** **Information Access Options.** Provide community engagement and information access options for those without access to computers or internet. Use public libraries and community centers as a resource for making information available.

**Policy EJ-10.4** **Community-Driven Events.** Support community-driven events, such as festivals, farmers' markets, block parties, the local artist community, and community service days, that support social connections, neighborhood identity, and environmental stewardship.

**Policy EJ-10.5** **Applicant-Led Public Meetings.** Require project applicants of projects with 40 units or more or larger than 10,000 square feet of nonresidential uses to hold a community meeting to seek input on the proposed project.



Photo by Hollister Parks and Recreation Staff

## ACTIONS

**Action EJ-10.1** **Public Participation.** Establish a public participation process in City planning projects that focuses on impacted communities.

**Action EJ-10.2** **Notification of Major Projects.** Establish a process to notify and engage community members, organizations, and leaders when City planning decisions on major projects are being considered in or adjacent to impacted communities.

**Action EJ-10.3** **Staff Liaison.** Designate a particular City staff person to serve as a City liaison to impacted communities.

**Action EJ-10.4 Outreach Services.** Develop a centralized outreach services department for the City to support all City departments with language interpretation, translation services for written documents, and sign language services for public meetings and interacting with the public.