



Environmental Justice

CITY OF LAWNDALÉ GENERAL PLAN

Introduction to Environmental Justice

The Environmental Justice Element seeks to reduce disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations in Lawndale and promote equal distribution of resources. Senate Bill 1000 (SB 1000), the Planning for Healthy Communities Act, was signed into law by then Governor Jerry Brown, on September 24, 2016. It mandates that cities and counties with Environmental Justice Communities (described below) adopt an Environmental Justice Element or integrate appropriate goals, objectives, and policies into other elements of their general plans, with the intent to create healthier places. The City of Lawndale has chosen to prepare a separate element so that all Environmental Justice-related goals, policies, and actions are conveniently located in one document for easy reference.

Environmental Justice Communities

Environmental Justice Communities are described by the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) as areas (i.e., census tracts) of a city or county that have higher environmental burdens and vulnerabilities than other areas. Based on data from CalEnviroScreen Version 4.0 and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) Priority Populations Mapping Tool, all seven census tracts in the Planning Area are considered to be Environmental Justice Communities (Figure EJ-1). The methodology is described in more detail in the Existing Conditions Report. This Environmental Justice Element supports continued improvements for areas identified as Environmental Justice Communities as well as neighborhoods throughout the City, as a whole.

Organization of Element

The Environmental Justice Element will address each of the topics below as they relate to Lawndale. The goals and policies of this element are organized around the following topics:

- Pollution Exposure and Air Quality
- Access to Public Facilities
- Healthy Food Access
- Safe and Sanitary Homes
- Physical Activity
- Civic Engagement
- Improvement and Programs



GOAL EJ-1 POLLUTION EXPOSURE AND AIR QUALITY

Pollution exposure is reduced and air quality is enhanced through land use and development patterns, especially in Environmental Justice Communities.

Pollution exposure occurs when people come into direct contact with air, food, water, and soil contaminants and is often the result of incompatible land uses sited adjacent to each other. Sensitive populations (such as children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems) and sensitive land uses (such as schools, day cares and hospitals) are the most susceptible to pollution exposure. Environmental Justice Communities are often disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution exposure. Pollution can come from many sources including storage tanks leaking hazardous chemicals into soil and groundwater, agricultural land uses applying pesticides, mobile sources such as vehicles emitting exhaust, and stationary sources such as diesel engines emitting exhaust.

EJ-1 Policies

- EJ-1.1 **Emission Sources.** Encourage existing sources of emissions to use feasible measures to minimize air quality impacts in Environmental Justice Communities and avoid new sources of significant emissions in these communities, as feasible.
- EJ-1.2 **Green Industry.** Attract non-polluting industry and green technology companies to the City.
- EJ-1.3 **Traffic-Related Emissions.** Support strategies to reduce traffic-related emissions such as timed-signals and vegetative barriers.
- EJ-1.4 **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities.** Encourage development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities to reduce dependency on transportation options that emit pollutants. (*See Mobility Element*)

EJ-1 Actions

- EJ-1a Coordinate with South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) to ensure enforcement of air quality permits.
- EJ-1b Collaborate with local and regional partners to identify strategies for reducing the asthma rate in the City.
- EJ-1c Create a plan to clean up identified contaminated groundwater sites (Leaking Underground Storage Tank Sites, Department of Defense Sites, Cleanup Program Sites) in the City.
- EJ-1d Work with the community to identify gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian network and research and apply for grants to help fill the identified gaps.



GOAL EJ-2 ACCESS TO PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public facilities and services are equitably distributed throughout the City of Lawndale and are easily available to residents of Environmental Justice Communities.

The adequate provision of public facilities is a critical component to the current and future prosperity of a community. Under State law (Senate Bill 1000), “public facilities” is an umbrella term that includes “public improvements, public services, and community amenities”. This covers a wide spectrum of publicly provided uses and services including infrastructure, school facilities, parks, and transportation and emergency services. These amenities and services act to improve the health, safety, and well-being of a community by either enhancing the public sphere or providing services that are available to every resident. Insufficient public facilities can have significant impacts to the health and quality of life of residents, and historically, Environmental Justice Communities have struggled with insufficient access to public facilities and substandard amenities more than other communities.

EJ-2 Policies

- EJ-2.1 **Convenient Access.** Consider the ease of accessibility of public facilities in relation to Environmental Justice Communities during the review and evaluation of public facility expansion, replacement, and construction.
- EJ-2.2 **Prioritize Resources.** Support opportunities to meet parks, recreation, and open space needs in underserved areas of the City that have a demonstrably greater need for these amenities.
- EJ-2.3 **Keep Pace with Development.** Ensure that the development of parks and recreation facilities and services keep pace with development and growth within the City. (*See Resource Management Element*)
- EJ-2.4 **Coordination.** Coordinate with partnering agencies that provide public facilities and services within the City to ensure effective, efficient, and equitable service delivery.
- EJ-2.5 **Local Transit.** Encourage local transit providers to establish and maintain routes and services that provide the community with convenient access to jobs, shopping, schools, parks, and healthcare facilities, where feasible.

EJ-2 Actions

- EJ-2a Explore areas to add enhanced safety features at crosswalks.
- EJ-2b Coordinate with the Police Department to address safety in parks and along walking/biking routes.
- EJ-2c Investigate the possibility of adding more recreation classes to meet the needs of the community.
- EJ-2d Consider distributing City events across multiple public spaces, as feasible.



GOAL EJ-3 HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

Healthy food and nutritional choices are accessible for all community members.

Food plays a critical role in the health of a community. Therefore, it is essential that all residents have access to food that is healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate. Environmental Justice Communities may face constraints related to accessibility to nutritional food, and this lack of accessibility has a direct impact on personal health and well-being. Food access is not only associated with the physical accessibility of affordable and culturally appropriate food, but also with food security, defined as access by all people at all times to *enough* food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods as well as the ability to acquire foods.

EJ-3 Policies

- EJ-3.1 **Incentivize Healthy Food Supply.** Encourage retailers to improve the quality and selection of healthy foods and nutritional information and to stock fresh and healthy food at affordable prices by providing incentive programs, technical assistance, or other services.
- EJ-3.2 **Access to Healthy Food.** Strive to locate healthy food establishments so that all residences are within walking distance (quarter to a half-mile) of a store with healthy options, where feasible and appropriate.
- EJ-3.3 **Options for Healthy Food.** Prioritize healthy food supplies in economic development efforts and encourage the establishment and operation of farmers' markets, farm stands, ethnic markets, mobile health food markets, and convenience/corner stores that sell healthy foods, including fresh produce.
- EJ-3.4 **Community Gardens.** Support opportunities for neighborhood-run community gardens including coordination with local school districts and non-profits.
- EJ-3.5 **Organic Waste Diversion.** Support policies and programs to divert organic waste from landfills into recycling activities and food recovery organizations that help provide healthy food to the local community.

EJ-3 Actions

- EJ-3a Set an example in City facilities and at City-sponsored events by providing healthy food and beverage options.
- EJ-3b Encourage local markets, restaurants, and food recovery organizations to donate surplus food to residents in need.
- EJ-3c Prepare and distribute information on the benefits of healthy eating and on the availability of food assistance programs.
- EJ-3d Encourage local organizations and community groups to provide free or reduced cost lunches after the school year ends.
- EJ-3e Encourage and support the establishment of a regular farmer's market in the City.



GOAL EJ-4 SAFE AND SANITARY HOMES

A community with healthy living conditions for all residents, particularly those in Environmental Justice Communities.

The housing conditions of homes in a community have direct health implications for those who live in the homes. Many residents in Environmental Justice Communities live in dwellings that were built before standards and regulations were established to ensure that new homes are free from pollutants such as lead and asbestos. The proportion of older homes in Environmental Justice Communities are usually higher than in non-environmental justice areas and thus residents in Environmental Justice Communities are disproportionately exposed to these health threats. Older housing often has other problems such as poor ventilation, which leads to uncomfortable indoor temperatures and mold-producing moisture, and pest and vermin infestation.

Overcrowded housing is another issue that affects the safety and cleanliness of homes. Overcrowding is typically measured by determining the persons-per-room in a dwelling unit, with more than one person per room considered overcrowded. Housing affordability also influences whether homes in a community are safe and sanitary. When a tenant or homeowner spends more than 30 percent of their income toward housing (including utilities), they are generally considered to be cost-burdened. When a household is cost-burdened, there is less money for housing maintenance or other needs such as healthcare and healthy food. These issues are further discussed and addressed in the Housing Element of this General Plan.

EJ-4 Policies

- EJ-4.1 **Code Enforcement.** Focus code enforcement efforts in Environmental Justice Communities to improve unsafe and unsanitary conditions, focusing on overcrowding; parking on lawns; unpermitted garage conversions, additions, and accessory-dwelling units; unpermitted plumbing and electrical; deferred property maintenance, and trash and dumping.
- EJ-4.2 **Lead-Based Paint.** Raise awareness about the risks associated with lead-based paint and other housing hazards, including by distributing information about remediation of lead and best practices to reduce and eliminate other housing hazards.
- EJ-4.3 **Indoor Air Quality.** Encourage measures to reduce indoor air quality impacts (e.g., air filtration systems, kitchen range hood exhaust fans, low-VOC paint and carpet) for new developments.
- EJ-4.4 **Absentee Owner Outreach.** Support the upkeep and maintenance of rental properties throughout the City, including in Environmental Justice Communities.
- EJ-4.5 **Tenant Rights.** Distribute information with City newsletters and/or other periodical publications about protecting tenant rights, so they are not penalized for reporting or living in a dwelling unit that does not meet health and safety standards.
- EJ-4.6 **Capital Improvements.** Support capital improvements such as sewer, water, street, and electrical improvements that facilitate the provision of safe, decent, and sanitary housing.



EJ-4 Actions

- EJ-4a Distribute information about remediation of lead and best practices to reduce and eliminate other housing hazards.
- EJ-4b Conduct periodic absentee owner outreach in Environmental Justice Communities to inform owners of their legal requirements to maintain and upkeep their rental properties.
- EJ-4c Distribute information with City newsletters and/or other periodical publications about protecting tenant rights, so they are not penalized for reporting or living in a dwelling unit that does not meet health and safety standards.
- EJ-4d Apply for funds for housing rehabilitation resources as feasible.



GOAL EJ-5 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Land use and development patterns encourage physical activity and improve multimodal access and connectivity to employment, shopping, services, schools, parks, and other destinations.

Physical activity is a large contributor to the physical and mental health of Lawndale residents. Research by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that physically active people tend to live longer and have lower risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Physical activity is promoted by the built environment by providing places that encourage walking, biking, and other forms of exercise. These places include parks, open space, trails, urban green spaces, areas with robust tree canopies, and active transportation networks. An important component of environmental justice is distributing facilities that promote physical activity equitably throughout the community so there are equal opportunities for all residents to be physically active.

EJ-5 Policies

- EJ-5.1 **Physical Activity Opportunities.** Prioritize increasing opportunities for physical activity within Environmental Justice Communities.
- EJ-5.2 **Eliminate Barriers.** Update the Zoning Code and Hawthorne Boulevard Specific Plan to eliminate any barriers to facilitating the development of complete neighborhoods with access to retail and recreation resources within walking distance of homes.
- EJ-5.3 **Accessibility.** Endeavour to provide parks that are easily accessible to the surrounding neighborhood and beyond, and are as barrier-free as possible, particularly for those with limited mobility.
- EJ-5.4 **Physical Activity.** Promote physical activity programs and education offered by the City and community partners and encourage residents to regularly participate in physical activity and active lifestyles.
- EJ-5.5 **Partnerships.** Form partnerships with non-profit organizations, healthcare organizations, and regional governmental agencies to foster and participate in efforts promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activity, and positive health outcomes.

EJ-5 Actions

- EJ-5a Promote programs that encourage walking and/or biking to work and school such as walk-a-thons, marathons, and bike-a-thons.
- EJ-5b Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to explore options for creating cross-jurisdictional bike lanes.



GOAL EJ-6 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Accessible and culturally appropriate opportunities for all people to engage in the decision-making process.

Civic, or community, engagement is an important goal across all local planning and decision-making processes. It can help foster a strong sense of place within a neighborhood and can deepen the investment of stakeholders in working toward neighborhood improvements. Environmental Justice issues will be more effectively identified and resolved if accessible and culturally appropriate opportunities to engage in local decisions are created for low-income, minority, and linguistically isolated stakeholders. Effective civic engagement not only provides the City with an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the community but provides for sound investment in better decision-making by ensuring decisions are informed by community needs and aspirations.

EJ-6 Policies

- EJ-6.1 **Equitable Civic Engagement.** Support an equitable and comprehensive approach to civic engagement and public outreach on all aspects of City governance and delivery of services.
- EJ-6.2 **Community Events.** Promote, sponsor, and support a variety of community events to strengthen social cohesion and the overall identity of the City.
- EJ-6.3 **City Information.** Distribute City information in Environmental Justice Communities, such as numbers to call for code enforcement, programs offered through the City, housing needs, and general City information.
- EJ-6.4 **Partnerships.** Partner with and support the efforts of any community-based organizations or non-profits that focus on programs and activities for the Environmental Justice Communities.
- EJ-6.5 **Representation.** Specifically invite residents from traditionally underrepresented demographic groups to become board, commission, and committee members as openings occur.



EJ-6 Actions

- EJ-6a Survey community values periodically to encourage more involvement from residents and to determine if the General Plan and other City documents are fulfilling the residents' goals for a desirable and attractive community. The survey should occur every five years.
- EJ-6b Promote meaningful cross-cultural participation in local planning and decision-making processes by:
- a. Continuing to provide City-sponsored material in multiple languages.
 - b. Organizing outreach events and conducting surveys directly to specific demographic groups.
 - c. Partnering with community-based organizations that have relationships, trust, and cultural competency with target communities to conduct outreach for local initiatives and issues.
 - d. Tailoring activities and the venues where they take place to accommodate the cultural preferences of different racial/ethnic groups.
- EJ-6c Make meetings and other public engagement forums accessible to a wide range of residents and encourage greater attendance by:
- a. Ensuring any materials are distributed far enough in advance of meetings to allow sufficient time for review and comment.
 - b. Using communication methods that convey complex or technical information in an easily understandable manner.
 - c. Facilitating meetings using diverse methods that can engage all participants and can appeal to multiple styles of learning.
 - d. Focusing on methods to effectively engage younger residents.



GOAL EJ-7 IMPROVEMENTS AND PROGRAMS

Public improvements and programs address the needs of Environmental Justice Communities.

An important component of Environmental Justice is prioritizing projects, programs, and investments that directly serve and benefit residents within areas experiencing higher levels of environmental burdens. Effective prioritization requires coordination and alignment across departments, agencies, and shared jurisdictional partners along with consistent and sustained engagement with community stakeholders. Environmental Justice Communities typically have specific needs that arise from past geographic and procedural inequities. This requires taking targeted actions that will improve existing conditions in these communities. Many of these actions will not be applicable across the entire City but will be applicable only to Environmental Justice Communities due to their special circumstances.

EJ-7 Policies

- EJ-7.1 **Prioritize Spending.** Where possible, prioritize spending of funds for air quality and other environmental improvements, public infrastructure improvements, recreation, and community programming in Environmental Justice Communities, and make fiscal decisions based on this priority.
- EJ-7.2 **Public Amenities.** Promote the equitable provision of public amenities such as sidewalks, street trees, crosswalks, paving, streetlights, bike lanes, and other amenities as specified in other sections of this Environmental Justice Element.
- EJ-7.3 **Coordination.** Coordinate with relevant utility providers to provide adequate and appropriate levels of service and promote the maintenance of water, sewer, stormwater, and electrical facilities serving Environmental Justice Communities.

EJ-7 Actions

- EJ-7a Seek grants that will specifically help with the issues in Environmental Justice Communities such as safe housing, air quality and environmental concerns, increased tree coverage, recreational resources, and other issues.
- EJ-7b Engage with the community to identify desired programs that would benefit targeted segments of the population such as youth, women, and small business owners.