Santa Maria General Plan

imagine

Appendix D: SB 1000 Disadvantaged Communities Methodology

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Santa Maria's Disadvantaged Communities

In 2021, several assessments (including a Population Demographics and Vulnerabilities Assessment, a Historical Context Discussion, a Health Assessment, and a Physical Environment Assessment) were completed to understand the makeup and conditions of Santa Maria's disadvantaged communities (DACs). These analyses informed the Health and Environmental Justice Existing Conditions Report. The HEJ Existing Conditions Report provided foundational data that informed the policy framework, with key findings summarized below. The report also identified DACs in Santa Maria.

In November 2024, the Physical Environment Assessment components of the Existing Conditions Report and the Santa Maria DAC designations were updated to reflect new physical environment data from CalEnviroScreen 4.0. These updates incorporate more current pollution burden data, integrate locally relevant information, and align DAC designations with state and federal funding requirements. Below is a description of the methodology used to identify and validate the updated DACs.

Methods of Analysis

An updated threefive-step process was applied to identify DACs, three of which corresponds corresponding with guidance the three criteria that can be used to identify DACs, as determined byfrom the State Governor's Office of Planning and Research Land Use and Climate Innovation (OPRLCI) and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG):

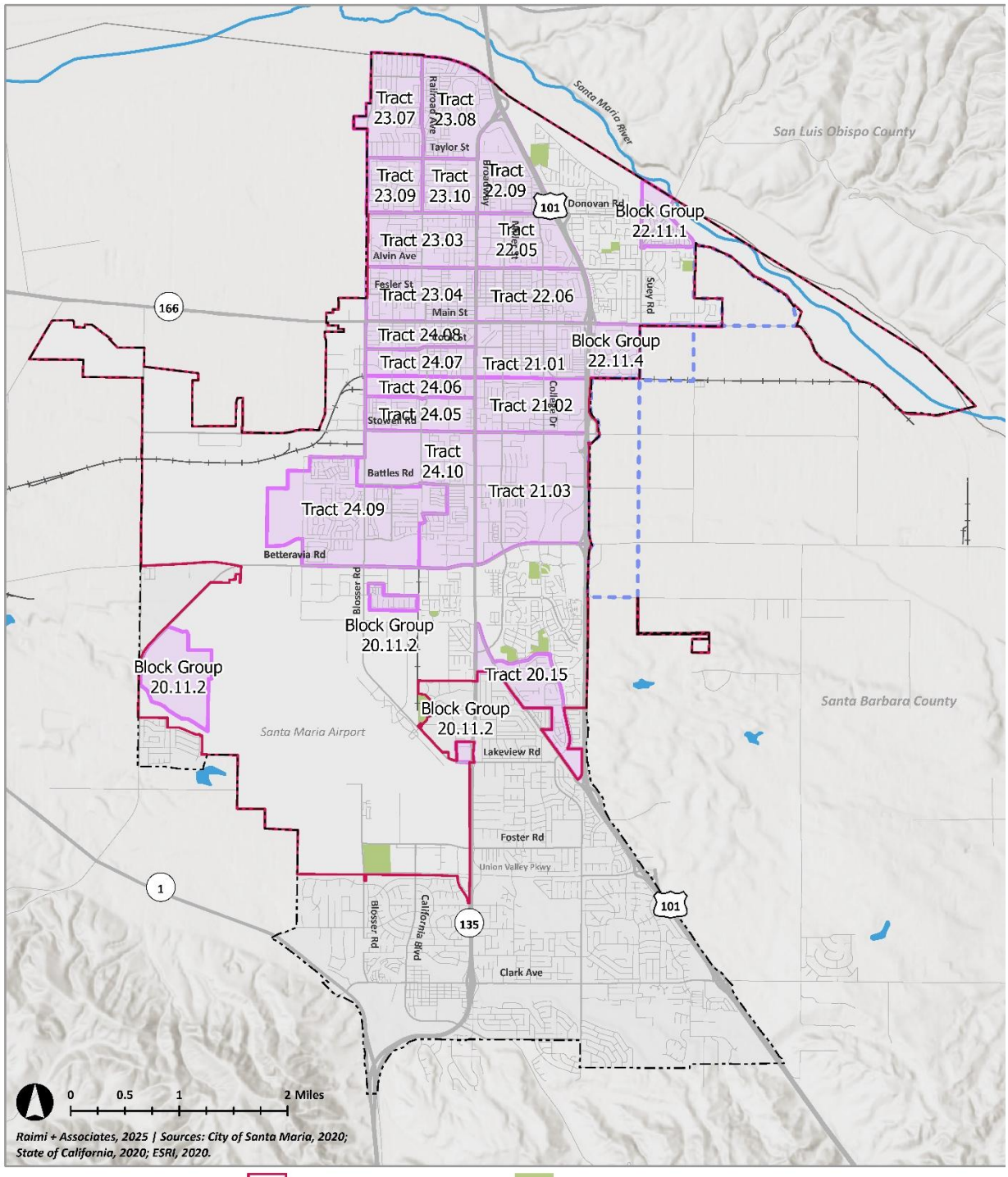
1. First, the State's SB 535 mapping tool was used to determine whether any census tracts in the city are recognized by the state as DACs. No tracts were identified as DACs through this process.
2. Second, low-income census tracts and census block groups in the city were identified. Each of those tracts and block groups was then analyzed to determine whether it contained individual "Pollution Exposures" and/or "Environmental Effects" indicators that are ranked in the 75th percentile or above when compared to all census tracts across the State of California using the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 cumulative impacts screening tool. This second method identified 13 census tracts and 8 block groups as DACs.
3. Third, any census tracts identified as DACs through the federal Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) were also classified as DACs for Santa Maria. Four additional census tracts were identified through this tool.
4. Fourth, a map of the DACs identified in steps 1-3map was reviewed by youth and CAUSE staff during a workshop in February 2025. CAUSE, the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, is a local community-based organization on contract to support community engagement for the General Plan Update. While some block groups in census tracts 23.07 and 23.08 were originally excluded because they did not meet low-income thresholds, the workshop attendees recommended including the entire tracts. These areas, located along the city's edge, face many of the same environmental and access challenges, such as pesticide exposure, groundwater threats, and impaired water bodies, as the census block groups already included.
4.5. Fifth, the DACs map was revised by City staff to remove industrial and agricultural areas from DACs in the southwestern portion of the city, namely census tracts 24.09 and 24.10, as well as block group 20.11.2. Consistent with the intent of SB 1000, the DACs for these census tracts and

block group were refined to include only residential areas and adjacent neighborhood-serving community facilities, commercial areas, parks, and open space.

Using this multi-step methodology, Santa Maria's map of disadvantaged communities includes 19 census tracts and an additional 3 block groups that are distributed across the city (see Figure HEJ-1).[1] Each census tract identified as disadvantaged is introduced below in the Sub-areas Analyses section with a summary of the relevant contributing factors.

[1] Note: Census tract 25.03 is not included in this analysis, as it primarily lies outside Santa Maria and overlaps with the City of Guadalupe; the area within Santa Maria is unpopulated and includes facilities such as a wastewater treatment plant, a compost facility, and a food warehouse.

Figure HEJ-1: Santa Maria's Disadvantaged Communities



Citywide Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

Research has found that the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of residents impact their potential health and life outcomes. This section summarizes the results of the Population Demographics and Vulnerabilities Assessment as well as the Health Assessment conducted as part of the HEJ Existing Conditions Report.

- **Low income.** Residents in low-income areas face higher rates of heart disease, cancer, lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, and obesity.
- **Youth and children.** Children and youth under 19 make up 35% of Santa Maria's population, with 25% living in poverty. Areas with the highest concentration of youth are also more likely to have high rates of single-parent and low-income households.
- **Older adults.** The area with the largest share of older adults (65 and older) living alone is in the northeastern corner of the city in census tract 22.11, which also experiences high pollution exposure.
- **Chronic ~~D~~disease.** Some specific population groups in Santa Maria are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease:
  - African Americans tend to have higher rates of heart, cancer, and lung diseases.
  - Men have higher rates of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes than women.
  - Women, Latinos, and African Americans are more impacted by Alzheimer's Disease.
- **High ~~D~~death ~~R~~rates.** Zip code 93454 in Santa Maria, which includes various low-income census tracts east of Broadway Avenue and north of Betteravia Road, has the highest age-adjusted death rate in the county.
- **Health ~~i~~insurance.** About 16% of adults aged 18-64 in Santa Maria are uninsured, higher than the county average of 12%.
- **Mental ~~H~~health.** Poor mental health is reported more frequently in areas where people have reported limited physical activity.

Citywide Pollution Concerns

The pollution analysis detailed below summarizes Santa Maria's elevated pollution indicators, based on data from CalEnviroScreen 4.0. The analysis highlights several specific pollution concerns affecting DACs in Santa Maria, where many areas score above the 75th percentile in multiple environmental hazards when compared to all census tracts across the State of California. These include high pesticide use, children's risk of lead exposure, groundwater threats, hazardous and solid waste sites, and impaired water bodies. Each section delves into the health risks and environmental impacts posed by these pollutants, emphasizing the particular challenges for vulnerable populations, including agricultural and farmworker communities.

Pesticide Use

Multiple census tracts across Santa Maria score in the 90th percentile or above when it comes to statewide CalEnviroScreen 4.0 rankings for pesticide exposure. Pesticide use during agricultural production poses significant health risks since both short-term and long-term exposure are linked to serious illnesses such as cancers, pregnancy complications, and developmental issues—especially for children, pregnant women,

and agricultural workers. DACs that are located near agricultural fields, including farmworker communities in and around Santa Maria, face heightened exposure risks.

Children's Lead Risk from Housing

Lead, a toxic metal that is found in nature and heightened through human activities, poses significant health risks, particularly in~~from~~ older housing where lead-based paint remains a primary exposure source for children. Despite a reduction in environmental lead over the past fifty years, exposure continues to be a concern in older homes, which are common in cities like Santa Maria, where two-thirds of housing was built before the 1980s. Lead exposure is particularly harmful to young children, affecting brain and nervous system development and potentially leading to lower IQ scores, attention disorders, and reduced educational performance. Multiple DACs in Santa Maria have a heightened risk of children being exposed to lead, with some of the highest rates in census tracts 21.01, 24.07, and 24.08 in particular.

Groundwater Threats

Although select census tracts received relatively high groundwater threat scores according to the state's CalEnviroScreen 4.0 tool, Santa Maria's recent water quality reports show that the City met both State and Federal drinking water quality standards in 2023. According to the 2023 Water Quality Report, the city's water resources are most vulnerable to impacts from fertilizer-related runoff and leaching, septic tanks, sewage, and natural deposits,[2] all of which could pose serious health risks even at low levels.[3,4,5] In addition, DAC neighborhoods may also be impacted by industrial sources that could compromise local groundwater, including leaking underground storage tanks, active or inactive oil and gas wells, and land disposal areas.

South of Stowell Road, abandoned oil and gas wells are concentrated within the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, impacting local farms and communities. Oil companies have engaged in some remediation efforts in southeast Santa Maria by using strategies such as soil replacement to manage contamination. The Department of Conservation and other State and regional agencies continue to make progress in plugging and permanently sealing the wells across the county.[6] The City may consider monitoring and addressing the potential impacts of the idle and plugged wells, such as proper clean up and threats to groundwater sources.

Hazardous Waste Sites

Hazardous waste generators produce various forms of waste that, if improperly managed, can contaminate air, water, and soil, especially in nearby communities. Santa Maria's hazardous waste facilities are concentrated in DACs, particularly around census tract 20.11 near the airport. If these facilities

[2] City of Santa Maria 2023 Water Quality Report. Retrieved from: www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showpublisheddocument/15039/638520810338830000
[3] California Water Resources Board. (2018). Groundwater Basics. Retrieved from: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/ programs/groundwater/gw_basics.html
[4] For additional information, see: https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/
[5] Ward, M., and et. al. (2018). "Drinking Water Nitrate and Human Health: An Updated Review." International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 15(7): 1557.
[6] California Department of Conservation. (2025). "Project Plug." Retrieved from: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/projectplug#cat-canyon

experience accidental releases, they could pose significant health risks to residents, ranging from irritation and headaches to serious health conditions like cancer, and may lead to severe environmental damage.[7]

Solid Waste Sites

Solid waste sites (such as landfills, recycling centers, and composting facilities) process household and industrial waste but can negatively impact nearby communities, especially those that are located near out-of-compliance sites. There are multiple landfills and compost facilities located in and around Santa Maria. These facilities can release toxic gases, produce unpleasant odors, attract pests, increase truck traffic, and, if improperly managed, can harm the surrounding ecosystems and community health through soil, water, and air contamination.[8]

Impaired Waterbodies

Contaminated water bodies in Santa Maria (including Blosser Channel, Bradley Channel, Main Street Canal, and the Santa Maria River) carry pollutants that pose health and environmental risks. While most of these waterways are stormwater channels, the naturally occurring Santa Maria River contains pollutants such as ammonia, nitrates, E. coli, and other harmful chemicals that can affect those who encounter these waters or breathe the air near them. These impaired water bodies, oftentimes situated near DACs, can pose serious health threats to people who come in contact with the water or breathe in the air close to these waterways. Additionally, the combination of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution can pose serious environmental risks and can threaten entire ecosystems as it produces nutrient pollution in water and airborne nitrogen.[9]

Sub-areas Analyses

Disadvantaged communities are located throughout the four quadrants of Santa Maria – Northwest (north of Main and west of Broadway), Northeast (north of Main and East of Broadway), Southwest (south of Main and west of Broadway), and Southeast (south of Main and east of Broadway). Each census tract that is a disadvantaged community in Santa Maria is briefly introduced below with a brief summary of factors that contributed to identifying it as a disadvantaged community.

Northwest (north of Main and west of Broadway)

Census Tract 23.03 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups and the highest rate of solo grandparents who are caring for grandchildren in the county; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults who keep up with

[7] United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2017). Health and Ecological Hazards Caused by Hazardous Substances. Retrieved from: https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response/health-and-ecological-hazards-causedhazardous-substances#:~:text=Health%20and%20Ecological%20Hazards%20Caused%20by%20Hazardous%20Substances,Emergency%20response%20efforts&text=In%20some%20cases%2C%20hazardous%20substances,in%20other%20types%20of%20illn ess

[8] Zeise, L. and J. Blumenfeld. (2021). CalEnviroScreen 4.0. California Environmental Protection Agency and OEHHA. Retrieved from: https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen40reportf2021.pdf#page=139

[9] United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). "The Facts about Nutrient Pollution." Retrieved from: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015- 03/documents/facts_about_nutrient_pollution_what_is_hypoxia.pdf

preventive care, and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; elevated children's lead risk from housing; and pollution exposure from impaired water bodies and high pesticide use.

Census Tract 23.04 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, linguistically isolated, population groups, and high concentration of H-2A housing units for agricultural workers; multiple poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, poor mental health, and lower rates of preventive care use in older adults (65+ years); federally recognized overburdened and underserved community and multiple heightened pollution exposures (e.g., diesel particulate matter, pesticide use, children's risk of lead exposure from housing, and impaired water bodies).

Census Tracts 23.07 & 23.08 – High levels of pesticide exposure, groundwater threats, impaired water bodies, and proximity to solid waste sites.

Census Tract 23.09 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults keeping up with preventive care and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; impaired water bodies; and pollution exposure from high pesticide use. Census Tract 23.10 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including low rates of older adults keeping up with preventive care and unhealthy rates of diabetes, asthma, and individuals reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposure from high pesticide use.

Northeast (north of Main and East of Broadway)

Census Tract 22.05 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of COPD, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposures from impaired water bodies and children's lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 22.06 – Socially vulnerable, including a high rate of people with disabilities; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of asthma, COPD, and individuals reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and pollution exposure from impaired water bodies and children's lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 22.09 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of linguistically isolated population groups; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and impaired water bodies.

Census Tract 22.11 – Socially vulnerable, including a high percentage of older adults and older adults who live alone, one of the highest percentages of people with disabilities in the county, and relatively high percentage of Black or African American residents; poor health outcomes, such as the highest rates in the city for cancer and coronary heart disease; and multiple, heightened pollution exposures due to elevated rates of pesticide use (one of the highest rates in the entire state), solid waste sites, and impaired

waterbodies; barriers in the built environment that can limit walkability and access to healthy food, and is an area with a shortage of health and mental health professionals.

Southwest (south of Main and west of Broadway)

Census Tracts 24.07 & 24.08 – Socially vulnerable, including the highest rates of single-parent households and youth percentage in the county, high percentage of foreign-born, Hispanic or Latino, and renter population groups, and a high share of households without access to a vehicle; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of obesity, diabetes, COPD, asthma, and people reporting poor mental health; physical environment that contributes to low walkability scores; federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities; and multiple heightened pollution exposures (e.g., children's lead risk from housing (one of the highest in the entire state), impaired water bodies, and solid waste sites and facilities).

Census Tracts 24.05 & 24.06 – Socially and economically very similar to census tract 24.07 and 24.08, additionally are also federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities. While this census tract has the lowest concentration of seniors in the City of Santa Maria, it also maintains the highest percentage of linguistically isolated people in the county. Heightened pollution exposure is due to children's lead risk from housing.

Census Tracts 24.09 & 24.10 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of linguistically isolated people; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of asthma and people reporting poor mental health; federally recognized overburdened and underserved communities; and heightened pollution exposures from multiple indicators in CalEnviroScreen 4.0, including impaired water bodies, solid waste sites and facilities, and some of the highest pollution scores in the state for pesticide use, groundwater threats, and hazardous waste generators and facilities—making these tracts the highest overall cumulative pollution burden percentile scores in the city. *Note: only portions of this census tract have been designated as a DAC (see Methods of Analysis and Figure HEJ-1).*

~~Census Tract~~ Block Group 20.11.2 – While this ~~census tract~~block group is considered socially vulnerable due to various reasons (such as its high percentage of older adults), the tract also has the highest percentage of White residents in the city. Additional impacts include poor health outcomes, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and COPD; and poor physical environment factors that inhibit access to healthy food. This ~~tract~~ block group also has the same heightened pollution exposures for the same indicators as tracts 24.09 and 24.10, resulting in this ~~census tract~~ block group maintaining the second-highest overall pollution burden percentile score in the city. *Note: only portions of this block group have been designated as a DAC (see Methods of Analysis and Figure HEJ-1).*

Southeast (south of Main and east of Broadway)

Census Tract 21.01 – Socially and economically vulnerable; experiences multiple poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of COPD and asthma; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; multiple heightened pollution exposures, including high levels of pesticide use, impaired water bodies, and solid waste facilities; and elevated children's lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 21.02 – Socially vulnerable, including the highest rates of linguistically isolated residents in the county; poor health outcomes, including high rates of cancer and heart disease; and heightened exposures to pesticides and impaired water bodies, as well as high levels of children's lead risk from housing.

Census Tract 21.03 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of Asian and linguistically isolated population groups; poor health outcomes, including unhealthy rates of diabetes, obesity, COPD, and asthma; federally recognized overburdened and underserved community; and heightened pollution exposures due to high levels of pesticide use, groundwater threats, and impaired water bodies.

Census Tract 20.15 – Socially vulnerable, including a high concentration of residents who are disabled; elevated pesticide use, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, and impaired waterbodies.