



Prepared, Safe and Healthy Berkeley Community Workshop #1: Summary Report

Saturday, February 1, 2025. 10am - 12:30pm.

Location: South Berkeley Senior Center, 2939 Ellis Street, Berkeley CA

Project & Workshop Background

The City of Berkeley Planning and Development Department is leading an effort to update the City's General Plan **Disaster Preparedness and Safety Element**, develop a new **Environmental Justice (EJ) Element**, and create equitable climate resilience metrics.

This project aims to ensure that all Berkeley residents—especially those most affected by environmental and climate-related challenges—live in a safe, healthy, and resilient community. The City is working in partnership with the Ecology Center to engage residents through workshops, focus groups, and surveys, ensuring that community voices shape the planning process. Supported by a grant from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, this initiative will guide Berkeley's approach to disaster preparedness, environmental justice, and climate resilience, with draft plans expected in 2026. *For more information about the project, visit: [Prepared, Safe, and Healthy Berkeley](#).*

Community Workshop #1, held on **Saturday, February 1, 2025** at the *South Berkeley Senior Center*, provided an opportunity for community members to learn about the project and share their experience of environmental justice and community environmental health and safety issues through mapping exercises and group discussions. See the full Agenda and Presentation in Appendix A.

The following is a **summary of community input** gathered from this workshop. In total, nineteen (19) community members attended this workshop.



Image 1: Project Overview Presentation

Key Takeaways

Activity #1: Part 1 - Mapping Assets and Challenges

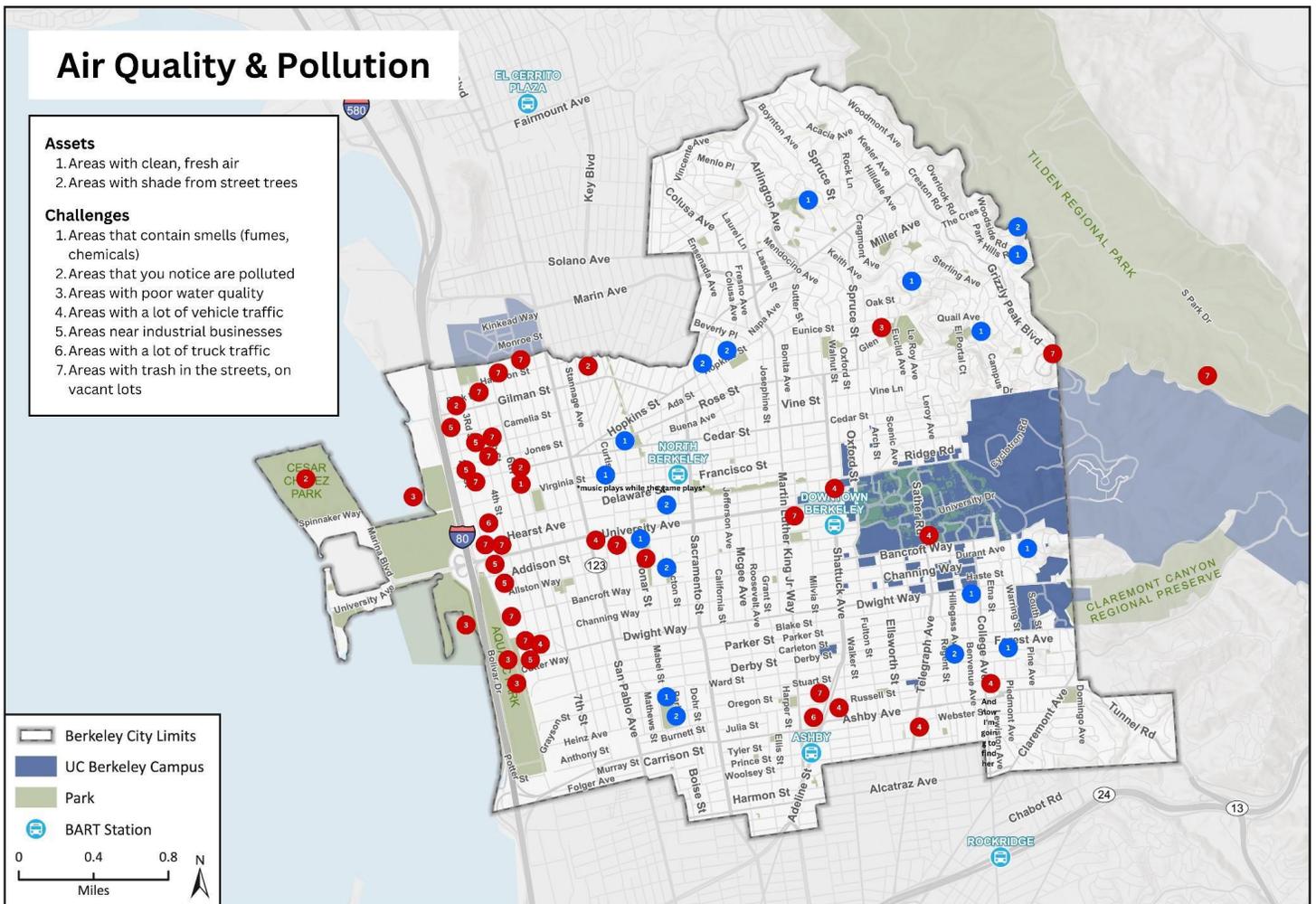
The first activity provided a way for participants to identify areas where they live, work and play where historical systems of injustice still affect health and quality of life as well as the assets to support resilience. Participants explored five stations with large maps focused on **air quality, housing, fresh food access, public facilities, and physical activity**. Each station included lists of pre-identified assets and challenges (see Definitions of Indicators in Appendix B). Participants mapped assets with **blue** dots and challenges with **red** dots, and also added comments on sticky notes. A summary of community mapping input is summarized in the sections below.



Image 2: Activity1, Part 1 – Mapping Assets & Challenge

Air Quality & Pollution

- **Green infrastructure improves air quality.** Ocean breezes, tree corridors, and parks like San Pablo Park, Acton Street, and Berkeley Hills help filter pollution and cool urban areas.
- **Traffic and industrial emissions are key pollution sources.** High-traffic corridors (San Pablo, University, Ashby, Telegraph) and truck routes along Ashby contribute to poor air quality, while industrial sites like Pacific Casting release harmful emissions.
- **Litter and water pollution affect environmental health.** Trash buildup along major streets and illegal dumping in vacant lots impact stormwater quality, while Codornices Creek faces significant contamination from industrial runoff.
- **Tree cover disparities contribute to urban heat.** Some neighborhoods lack shade and green space, leaving them hotter and more exposed to air pollution, emphasizing the need for expanded tree planting and urban greening efforts.

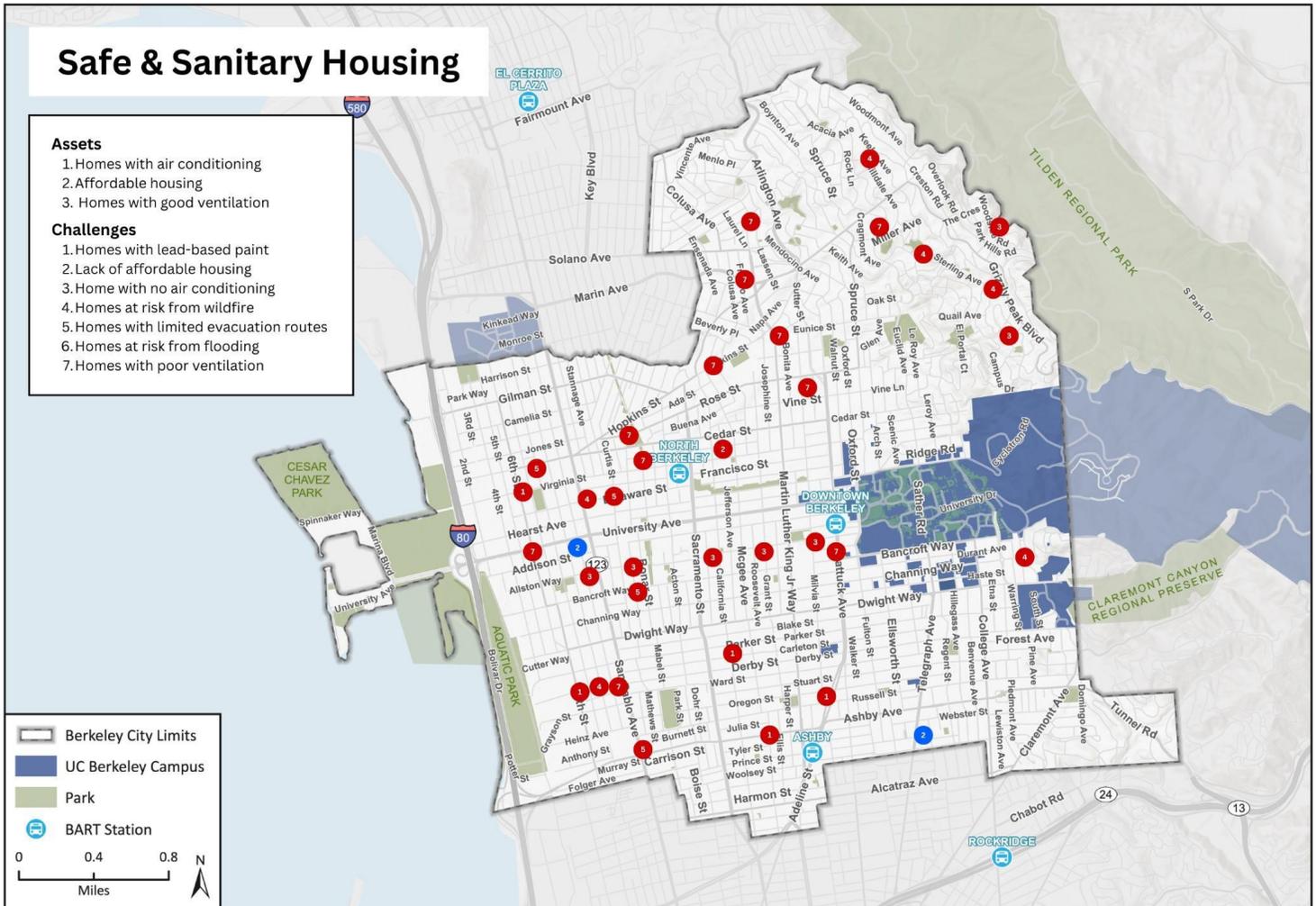


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23-15392 EPS EJ Basemap

Safe and Sanitary Housing

- **Affordable housing is a top priority.** Mixed-use developments with density bonuses and projects near transit and community hubs, like People’s Park, were highlighted as key assets.
- **Energy efficiency and ventilation improvements are needed.** Participants emphasized heat pumps, better insulation, and electrification as critical upgrades for healthier homes.
- **Flooding and wildfire risks threaten housing stability.** Basement flooding, groundwater rise, and wildfire-prone areas, especially near Tilden Park, require stronger mitigation efforts.
- **Evacuation routes and housing safety need attention.** Narrow streets, limited escape options, soft-story buildings, and unpermitted renovations pose safety risks for residents.

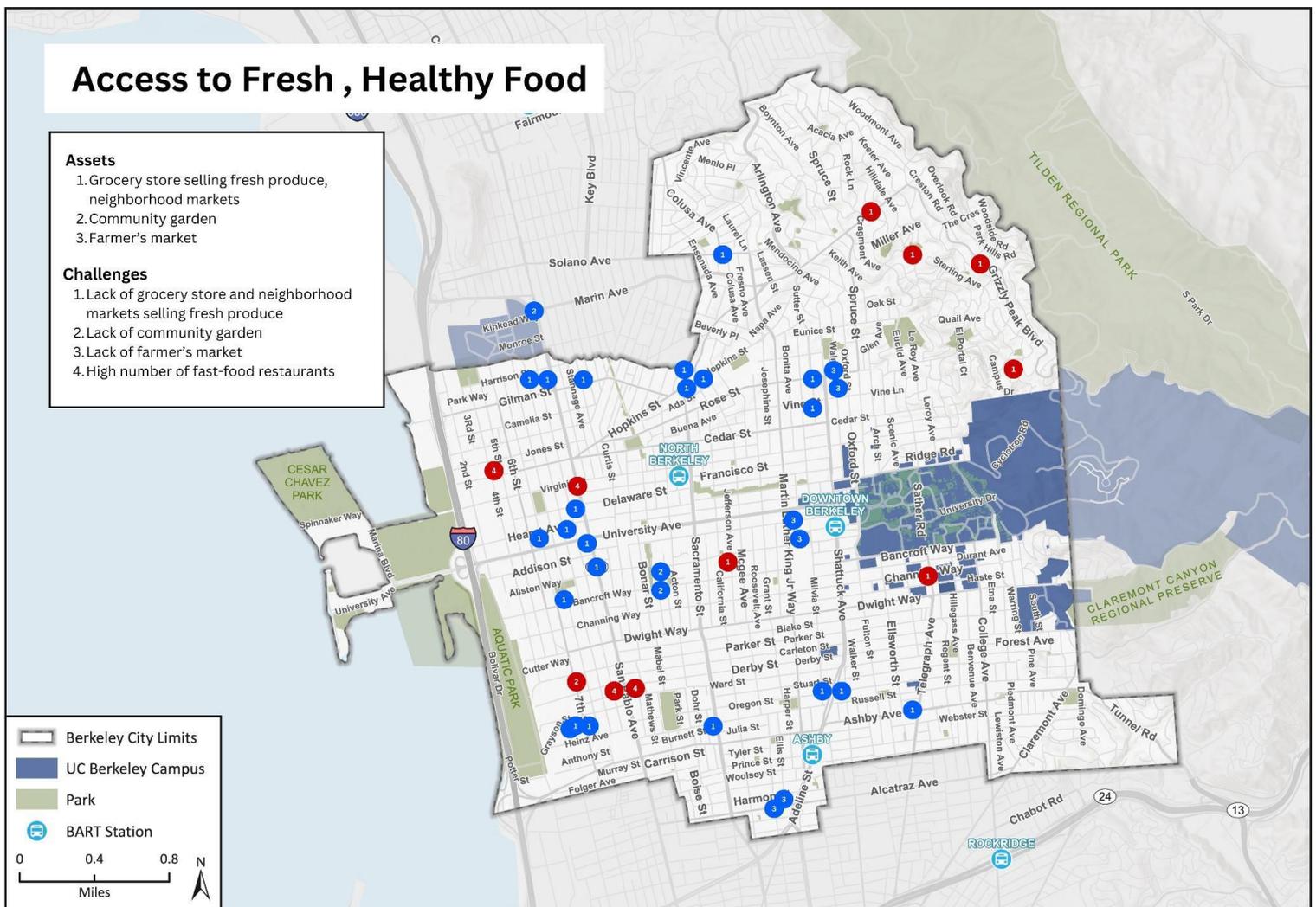


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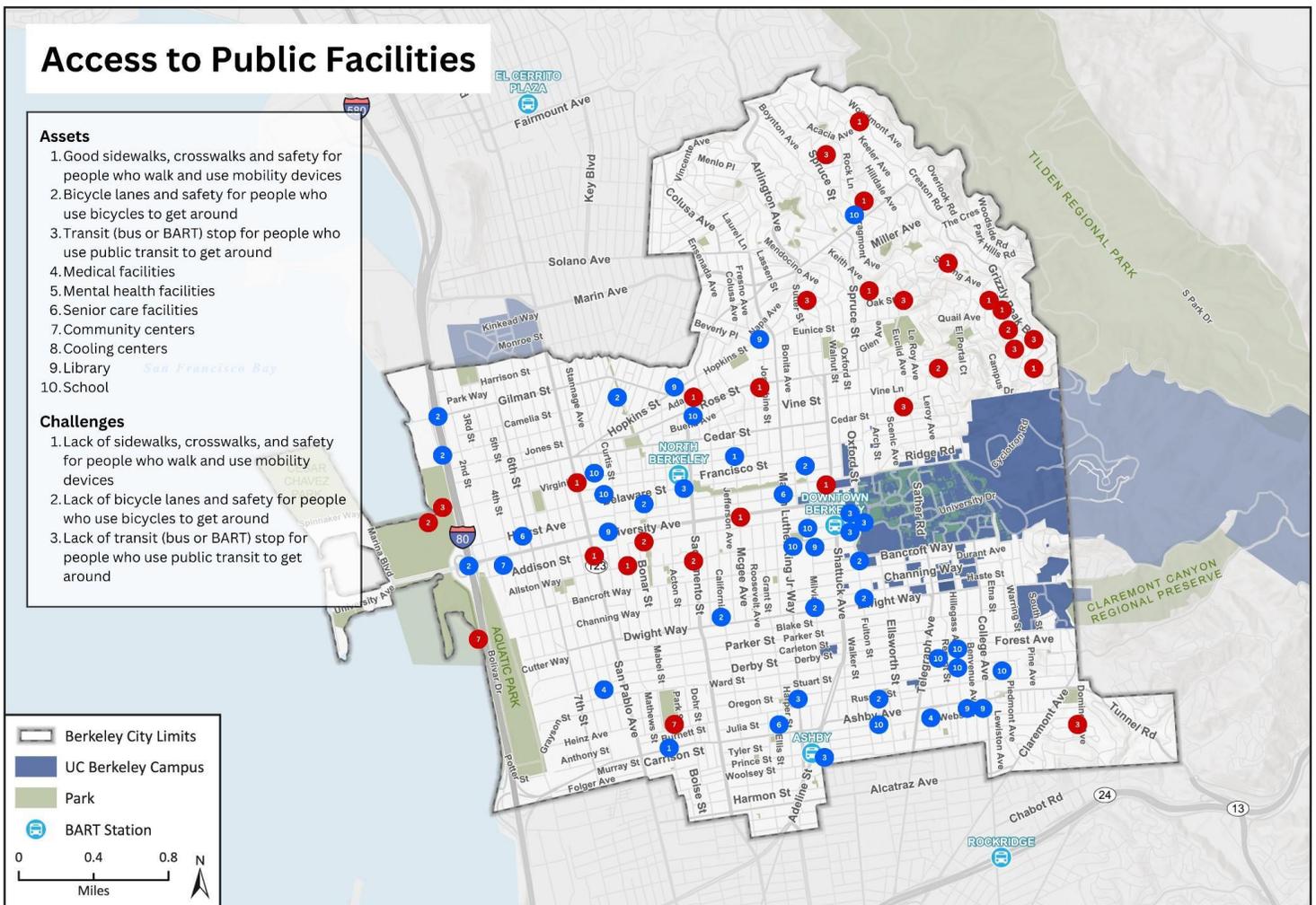
Access to Fresh, Healthy Food

- **West Berkeley and the Hills need more fresh food options.** There are fewer grocery stores, farmers' markets, and community gardens in these areas, making access difficult.
- **Affordability remains a challenge.** Farmers' market prices are high, and food assistance programs need better outreach.
- **More community-driven food spaces are needed.** Expanding community gardens, pop-up markets, and volunteering opportunities could improve food access.
- **Fast food outnumbers fresh food options in some neighborhoods.** Addressing this imbalance could help promote healthier eating choices.



Access to Public Facilities

- **Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure need improvement.** Uneven sidewalks, dangerous bike lanes, and lack of pedestrian safety measures were frequent concerns.
- **Transit access is uneven across the city.** Some areas, especially **North and Southwest Berkeley**, have limited bus and BART access.
- **More community facilities are needed.** **Cooling centers, resilient hubs, and public gathering spaces** are lacking in parts of **West Berkeley**.
- **Public services should be more accessible.** **Medical and mental health facilities, as well as senior services,** need better outreach and support.

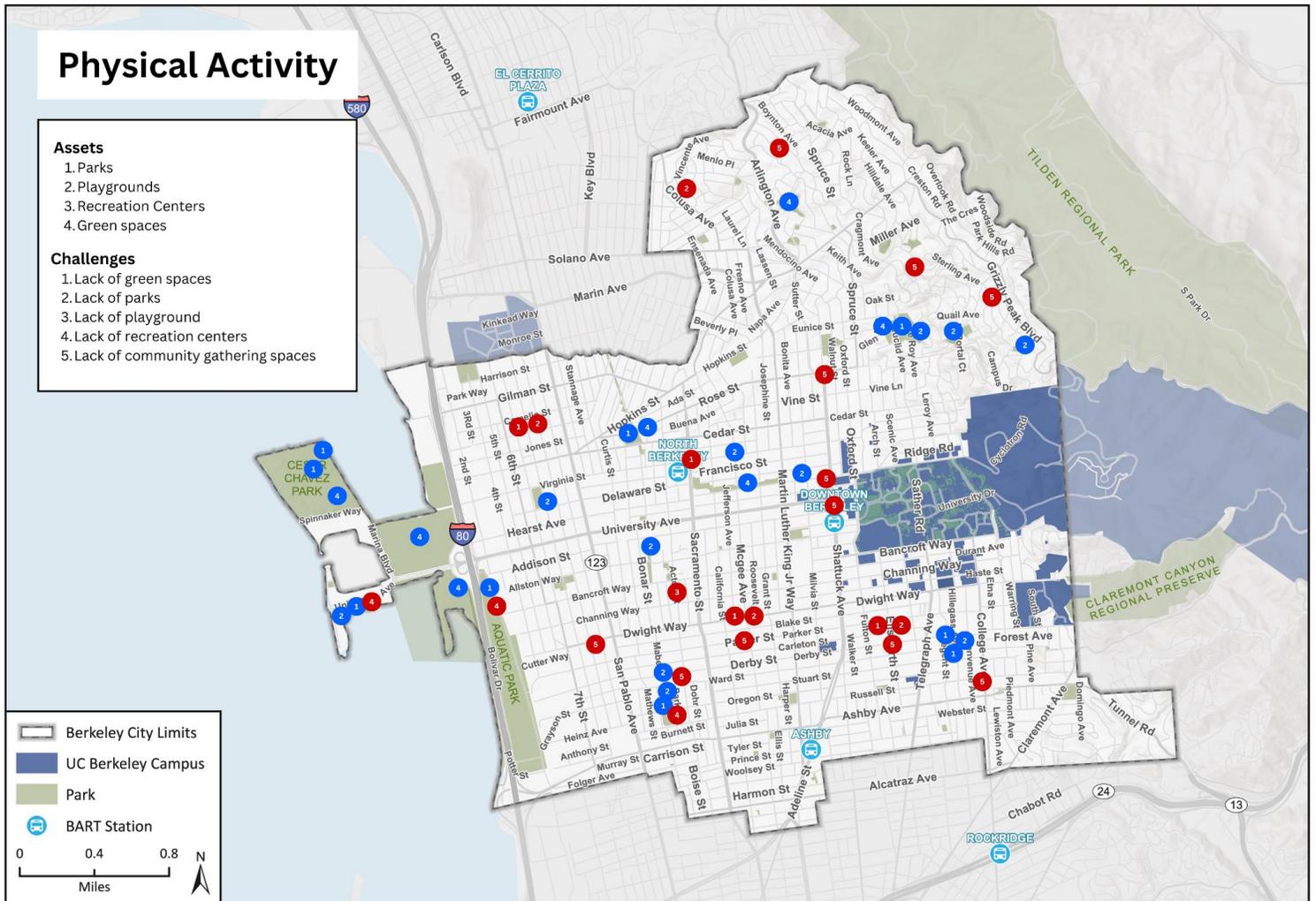


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Basemap

Physical Activity

- Parks and green spaces need improvements. **San Pablo Park, Cesar Chavez Park, and Aquatic Park** require upgrades to better serve the community.
- **More recreational spaces are needed for older youth.** High schoolers and teens lack dedicated playgrounds and facilities.
- **Downtown lacks welcoming public spaces.** Investing in outdoor gathering areas, placemaking, and event spaces would improve accessibility.
- **Underutilized spaces could be transformed.** Opportunities exist to revitalize **Cesar Chavez Park**, old train tracks at **San Pablo & Gilman**, and vacant lots for new parks and recreation areas.



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Activity #1: Part 2 - Small Group Discussions of Assets and Challenges

After the mapping activity, City staff from each mapping station summarized the key takeaways from each map. Participants were then invited to sit in small groups to reflect together on what they had learned from their fellow community members about environmental justice, climate vulnerability, and community environmental health. Facilitators at each table walked the group through the following prompts:

1. What does this data tell us about environmental justice?
2. What does this data tell us about community environmental health?
3. Is there anything missing?



Image 3: Activity 1, Part 2 – Discussing Assets & Challenges

1. **Strengthening Local Resilience & Community Networks:** Support neighborhood-based resilience hubs to provide cooling centers, food security, and disaster training. Expand mutual aid programs modeled after COVID-era community support networks.
2. **Improving Mapping & Data Transparency:** Develop real-time, GIS-based hazard mapping that integrates wildfire risk, flooding, and pollution exposure. Create a digital public platform to connect residents with emergency services, food assistance, and shelter locations.
3. **Advancing Equitable Urban Planning:** Expand tree cover, parks, and green spaces in under-resourced neighborhoods. Ensure planning decisions address both immediate and long-term resilience needs. Integrate affordable energy and housing solutions into climate action planning.
4. **Enhancing Emergency Preparedness & Outreach:** Strengthen CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) programs and increase multilingual outreach. Involve renters, youth, and historically marginalized communities in disaster planning.

Activity #2 - Draft Environmental Justice Map Discussion

After the City gave a presentation about the data inputs and process for creating the Draft Environmental Justice Map (see Appendix C), facilitators led small groups through a discussion. To get feedback on the preliminary draft and understand how the map reflects on-the-ground conditions, groups discussed the following prompts:

1. Are there areas that feel underrepresented in these maps?
2. Are there areas that feel overrepresented?
3. Do these maps represent your experience in Berkeley? Why or why not?



Image 4: Activity 2 – Discussing Draft Environmental Justice Map

1. **Turning Mapping Insights into Action** – Participants emphasized that environmental justice mapping should drive tangible community action. They called for investments in resilience hubs, youth engagement, and decentralized, community-led solutions rather than relying solely on city-led efforts.
2. **Balancing Top-Down and Neighborhood-Level Solutions** – There is a need for stronger collaboration between the city and communities. While long-term strategies are important, participants stressed the value of acting on immediate, lower-cost opportunities to build resilience.
3. **Expanding the Scope of Environmental Justice Mapping** – The current map does not fully capture the breadth of environmental and social vulnerabilities. Participants recommended integrating data on wildfire, flooding, landslides, and historical injustices such as redlining and industrial pollution.

4. **Addressing Geographic Discrepancies in Risk Designations** – Sharp contrasts in vulnerability ratings across short distances raised concerns about the accuracy and methodology of risk assessments. Participants particularly questioned inconsistencies in West Berkeley and other areas with known environmental hazards.
5. **Recognizing Broader Regional Impacts** – Beyond localized risks, participants highlighted the need for an approach that accounts for regional threats like wildfire smoke, traffic-related air pollution, and broader environmental stressors that extend beyond city boundaries.

Next Steps

The input gathered at the first community workshop will be used to refine the draft environmental justice map and help the City understand community challenges and assets related to environmental justice, climate vulnerability, and environmental health.

The City plans to hold the second workshop this fall, focused on developing policies and programs to address the challenges and assets we heard about today.

You can learn more about the project on our website, [Prepared, Safe, and Healthy Berkeley](#) and subscribe to our email list.

You can share additional comments with our project team by emailing preparedsafehealthy@Berkeleyca.gov.

Appendices

- A. Workshop Agenda & Presentation
- B. Definitions of Indicators for Mapping Assets & Challenges
- C. Draft Environmental Justice Map

General Plan Update Prepared, Safe, Healthy Berkeley

February 1, 2025

Community Workshop #1



Welcome!

Indigenous People, Place and Culture Acknowledgement

Acknowledging our Ancestors, the Cultures that preceded us that respected land and life, the Native and Indigenous Peoples who owned and stewarded this land that we currently live, work and play on, and those people and communities who continue to do so.

<https://native-land.ca/>

Meeting Objectives

Provide an overview of the project

Get community input about assets and challenges related to environmental justice, climate vulnerability, and environmental health



Today's Agenda

Shaping a safer, more just, and resilient Berkeley together. Thank you for being a part of this journey!

Welcome: 10:00 – 10:15

Project Overview: 10:15 - 10:30

Assets & Challenges Mapping Activity: 10:30 – 11:35

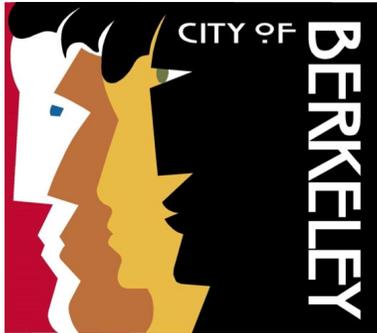
Break: 11:35 - 11:45

Draft Environmental Justice Mapping Activity: 11:45 – 12:25

Next Steps: 12:25 – 12:30



Project Team



- Planning and Development Department
 - Land Use Planning &
 - Office of Sustainable Development
- Ecology Center

- Civic Makers
- Equity First
- Fehr & Peers
- Safety Training Consultants

Funding Support –
Adaptation Planning
Grant Program

Project Overview

What are the goals of this project?

- 1 Update the General Plan**
 - Disaster Preparedness and Safety Element
 - Environmental Justice Element
- 2 Create Community-Driven Climate and Resilience Metrics**



Berkeley's General Plan

The Berkeley General Plan contains the following “Elements”:

1. Land Use
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Disaster Preparedness and Safety ← *Updating*
5. Open Space and Recreation
6. Environmental Management
7. Economic Development and Employment
8. Urban Design and Preservation
9. Citizen Participation
10. Environmental Justice ← *NEW*



Community-Driven Climate & Resilience Metrics



How could this project affect you?

September 9, 2020 – Berkeley Marina



Salgu Wissmath/San Francisco Chronicle via AP

Community Engagement

Project Timeline



Outreach & Engagement Strategy

Build Authentic Community Relationships
Increase Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusivity
Build Community Power



Community Advisory Committee



The challenge of being of service to the community.

The cross sector collaboration that will hopefully make changes in our city.



The ability to influence how equity is created in Berkeley for communities that have historically been marginalized.

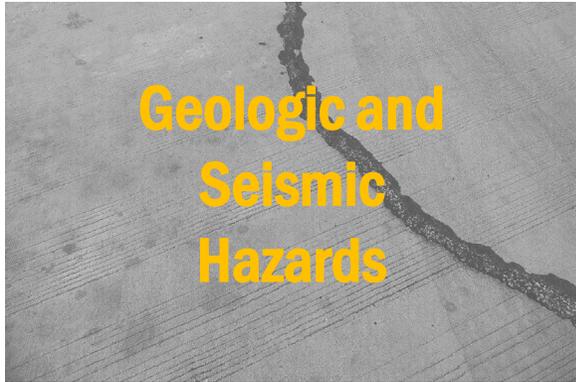
Safety Element

Safety Element Objectives

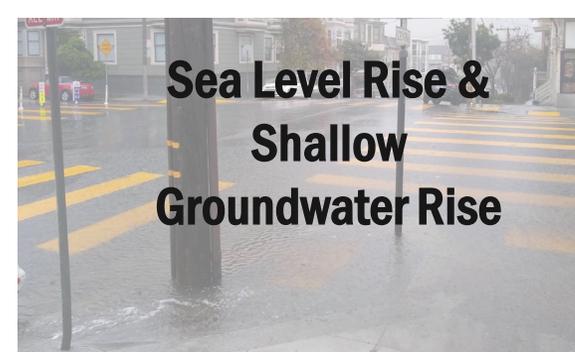
- Reduce risk from natural and human-made hazards
- Support mitigation, emergency preparedness, disaster response, and recovery efforts.
- Address climate change adaptation and resilience
- Prioritize vulnerable communities most impacted by climate change



Natural & Human-Caused Hazards



Climate Change Hazards



Environmental Justice Element

What is Environmental Justice?

- “Promote social equity, align with public health, and involve affected communities in the decisions that impact their lives.”
(Planning for Healthy Communities Act (SB 1000, 2016))
- “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.”
(Government Code § 65040.12(c)).



[Camila Leão for OBI x Fine Acts](#)

Environmental Justice Element Objectives



Reduce Pollution Exposure



Promote Transparency & Engagement in Public Decision-Making



Promote Physical Activity



Prioritize Improvements and Programs that Address the Needs of Disadvantaged Communities

Promote Equitable Access to:



Healthy Food



Safe & Sanitary Homes



Public Facilities

Environmental Justice Community Indicators

State Definition:

Areas that are lower income *and* disproportionately impacted by environmental pollution and hazards.

Race and Income

- People of Color
- Income

Pollution Burden

- Air Quality
- Water
- Hazardous Materials
- Climate Change

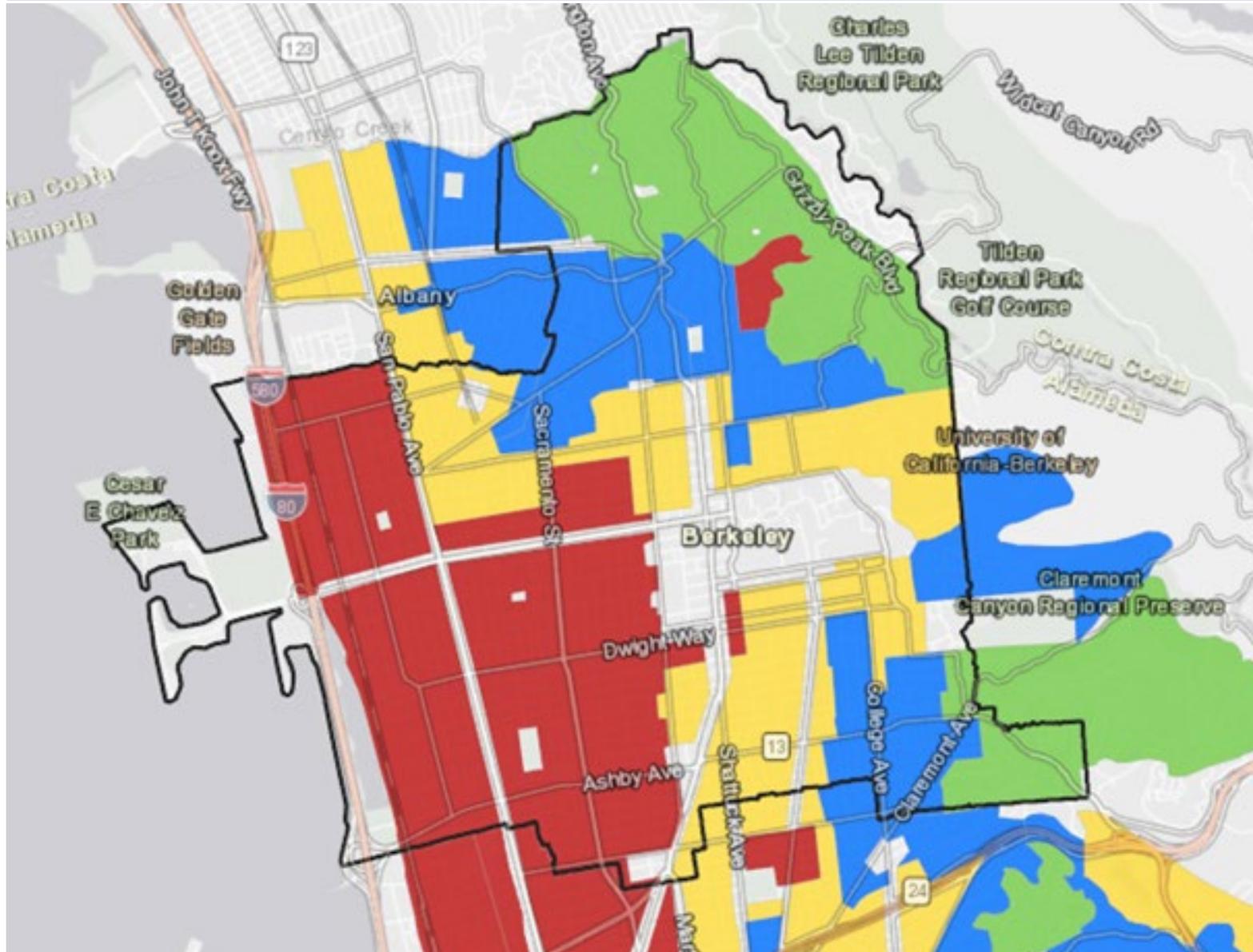
Social Vulnerability

- Health
- Socioeconomic

Built Environment

- Transportation
- Food
- Housing
- Neighborhood

Historical Context



Homeowner's Loan Corporation Redlining Grade (1937)

- A (Best)
- B (Still Desirable)
- C (Declining)
- D (Hazardous)

Ongoing Impacts

Racial and
Economic
Segregation

Inequality

Environment
and Health

Climate
Change

Engagement Activities

Community Agreements

- Share Honestly
- Respect Difference
- Listen Actively
- Help us Keep on Time



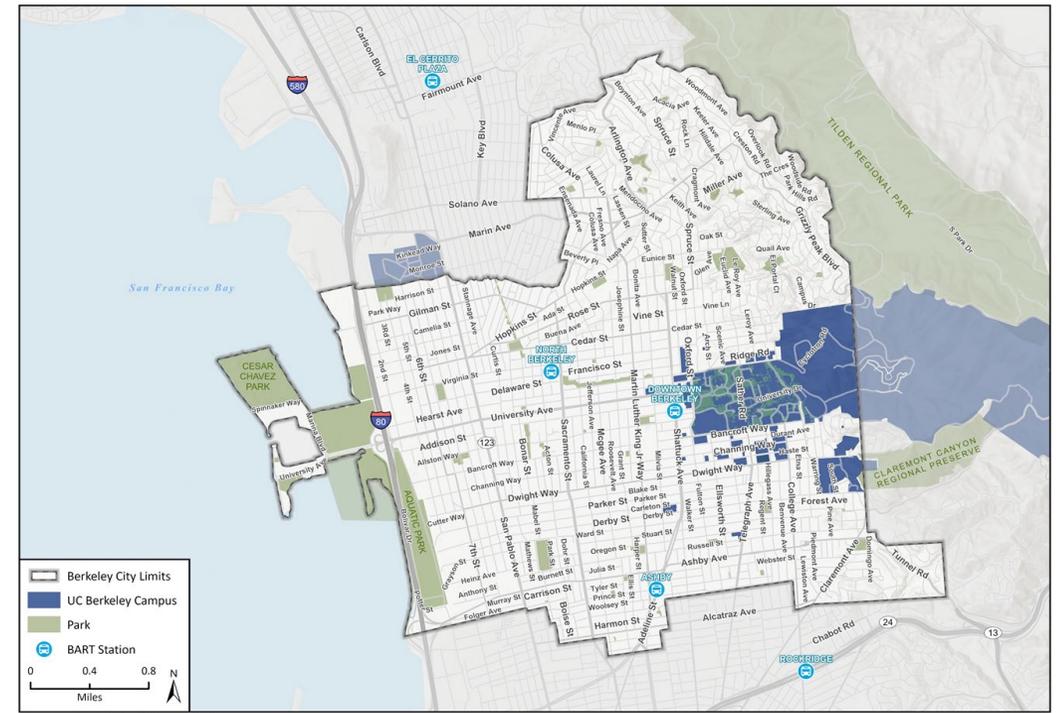
Activity 1, Part 1 Overview

Objective:

Participatory mapping to identify environmental challenges (**red dots**) and community assets (**blue dots**) in Berkeley neighborhoods.

There are 5 mapping stations.

- **Participatory Mapping (25 mins)**
 - Identify challenges and assets at map stations
- **Group Share Out (10 mins)**
 - Facilitators summarize and share key themes with the group



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Activity 1, Part 1 Mapping Instructions

Instructions

1. Visit as many **map stations** as you want (5 total)
2. Use **red dots** to mark challenges (**what's a problem?**)
3. Use **blue dots** to mark assets (**what's working?**)
4. **Add comments** on the space provided (be as specific as possible)

*** If you need help, a facilitator will be available to assist*

Station 1 – Air Quality and Pollution

Assets

1. Areas with clean, fresh air
2. Areas with shade from street trees

Challenges

1. Areas that contain smells (fumes, chemicals)
2. Areas that you notice are polluted
3. Areas with poor water quality
4. Areas with a lot of vehicle traffic
5. Areas near industrial businesses
6. Areas with a lot of truck traffic
7. Areas with trash in the streets, on vacant lots



Station 2 – Safe & Sanitary Housing

Assets

1. Homes with air conditioning
2. Affordable housing
3. Homes with good ventilation

Challenges

1. Homes with lead-based paint
2. Lack of affordable housing
3. Home with no air conditioning
4. Homes at risk from wildfire
5. Homes with limited evacuation routes
6. Homes at risk from flooding
7. Homes with poor ventilation



Station 3 – Access to Fresh, Healthy Food

Assets

1. Grocery store selling fresh produce, neighborhood markets
2. Community garden
3. Farmer's market

Challenges

1. Lack of grocery store and neighborhood markets selling fresh produce
2. Lack of community garden
3. Lack of farmer's market
4. High number of fast-food restaurants



Station 4 – Access to Public Facilities

Assets

1. Good sidewalks, crosswalks and safety for people who walk and use mobility devices
2. Bicycle lanes and safety for people who use bicycles to get around
3. Transit (bus or BART) stop for people who use public transit to get around
4. Medical facilities
5. Mental health facilities
6. Senior care facilities
7. Community centers
8. Cooling centers
9. Library
10. School

Challenges

1. Lack of sidewalks, crosswalks, and safety for people who walk and use mobility devices
2. Lack of bicycle lanes and safety for people who use bicycles to get around
3. Lack of transit (bus or BART) stop for people who use public transit to get around



Access to Public
Facilities

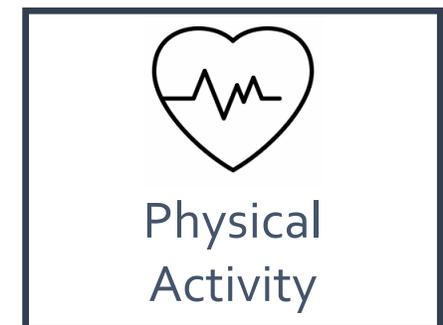
Station 5 – Physical Activity

Assets

1. Parks
2. Playgrounds
3. Recreation Centers
4. Green spaces

Challenges

1. Lack of green spaces
2. Lack of parks
3. Lack of playground
4. Lack of recreation centers
5. Lack of community gathering spaces



Activity 1, Part 2 Instructions

1. Please sit at the nearest round table.
2. Each map facilitator shares a few themes from their mapping station.
3. Small group reflection:
 - *What does this data tell us about environmental justice?*
 - *What does this data tell us about community environmental health?*
 - *Is there anything missing?*

10 Minute Break

Activity 2: Draft Environmental Justice Map

- **Objective:** Refine draft map and ensure it reflects the realities of environmental justice in Berkeley.
- **Presentation of Draft Map (10 mins)**
- **Small Group Discussion (20 mins)**
- **Group Share Out (10 mins)**

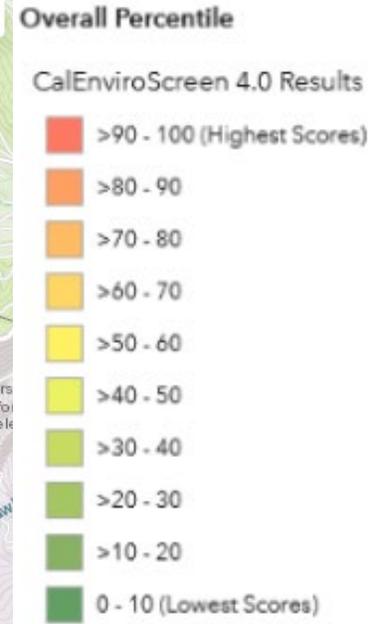
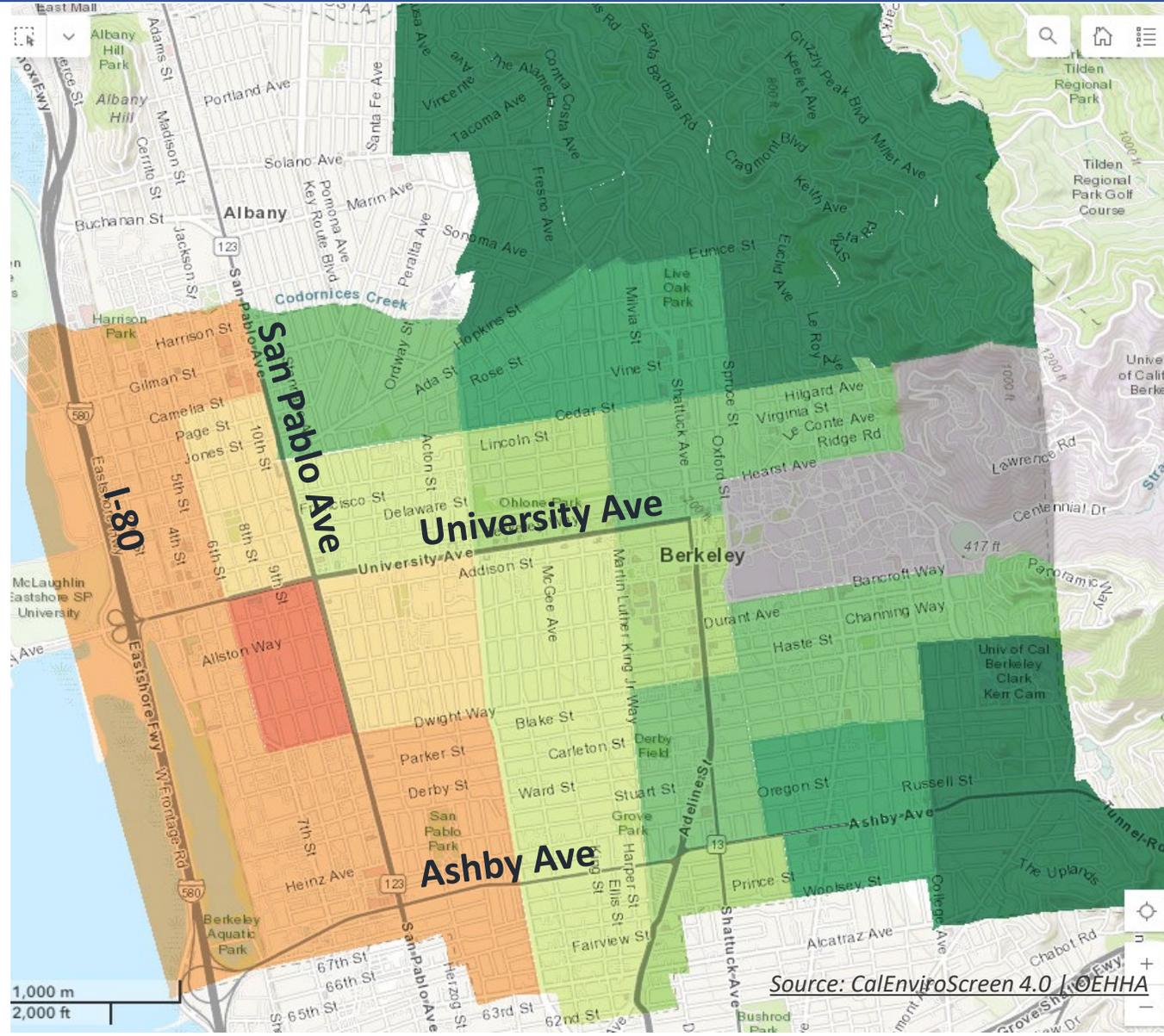
CalEnviroScreen Map

Pollution Exposure



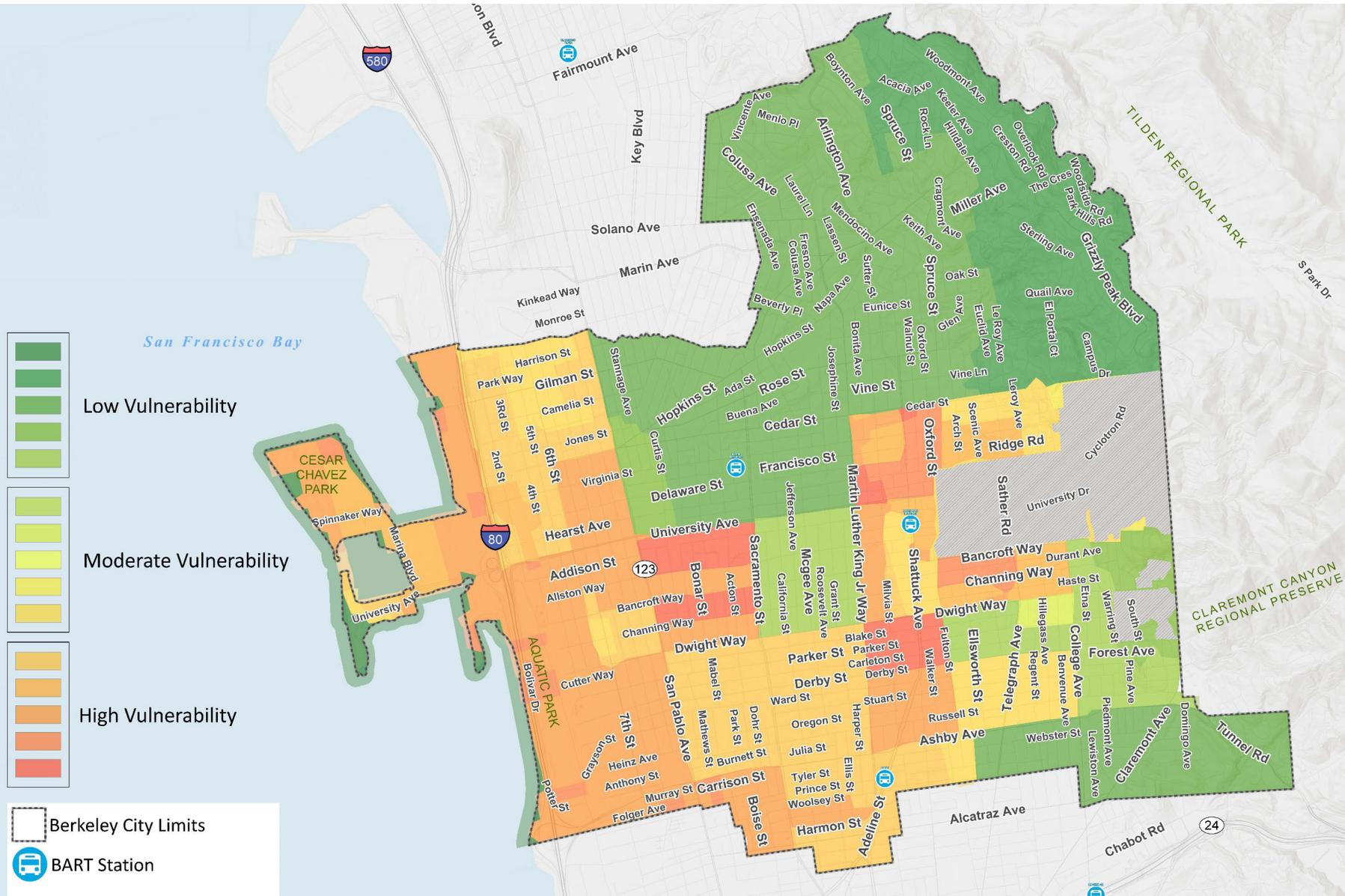
CalEnviro Screen Score

Population Characteristics



Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 | ©EHHA

Draft Environmental Justice Map



CalEnviroScreen + Local Data:

- Household income
- Areas of social vulnerability
- Air pollution exposure

Why is the Environmental Justice map important?

Prioritizing equitable outcomes

Prioritizing areas of change within the city



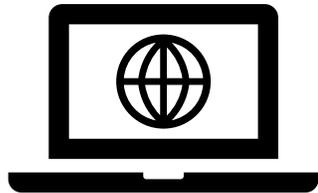
Activity 2: Draft Environmental Justice Maps

- **Small Group Discussion (20 mins)**
 - Are there areas that feel underrepresented in these maps?
 - Are there areas that feel overrepresented?
 - Do these maps represent your experience in Berkeley? Why or why not?
- **Group Share Out (10 mins)**

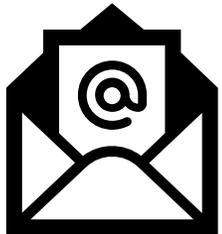
Next Steps

Stay involved!

- Tell us what you thought of this workshop: bit.ly/BEJSWS1
- Attend workshop #2, anticipated this fall



<https://berkeleyca.gov/prepared-safe-healthy>



PreparedSafeHealthy@berkeleyca.gov

Air Quality & Pollution

Instructions

Use **blue dots** to mark **ASSETS** on the map (*what's working?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Areas with **clean, fresh air**
- 2 Shade from street **trees**

Use **red dots** to mark **CHALLENGES** on the map (*what's a problem?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Contain **smells** (*fumes, chemicals*)
- 2 **Polluted**
- 3 Poor **water** quality
- 4 Vehicle **traffic**
- 5 **Industrial** businesses
- 6 **Truck** traffic
- 7 **Trash** on vacant lots

Add Your Comments!

Add comments on sticky notes to the **comment sheets** on either side of the map. **Include the corresponding category number.** Be as specific as possible (e.g. neighborhood, intersection, descriptions).

Access to Fresh, Healthy Food

Instructions

Use **blue dots** to mark **ASSETS** on the map (*what's working?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Grocery store selling **fresh produce**, neighborhood markets
- 2 **Community garden**
- 3 **Farmer's market**

Use **red dots** to mark **CHALLENGES** on the map (*what's a problem?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Lack of **grocery store** and neighborhood markets selling fresh produce
- 2 Lack of **community garden**
- 3 Lack of **farmer's market**
- 4 Lots of **fast-food restaurants**

Add Your Comments!

Add comments on sticky notes to the **comment sheets** on either side of the map. **Include the corresponding category number.** Be as specific as possible (e.g. neighborhood, intersection, descriptions).

Safe & Sanitary Housing

Instructions

Use **blue dots** to mark **ASSETS** on the map (*what's working?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Homes with **air conditioning**
- 2 **Affordable housing**
- 3 Homes with **good ventilation**

Use **red dots** to mark **CHALLENGES** on the map (*what's a problem?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Homes with **lead-based paint**
- 2 No **air conditioning**
- 3 Homes at risk from **wildfire**
- 4 Limited **evacuation** routes
- 5 Homes at risk from **flooding**
- 6 Homes with poor **ventilation**
- 7 Lack of **affordable housing**

Add Your Comments!

Add comments on sticky notes to the **comment sheets** on either side of the map. **Include the corresponding category number.** Be as specific as possible (e.g. neighborhood, intersection, descriptions).

Physical Activity

Instructions

Use **blue dots** to mark **ASSETS** on the map (*what's working?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Parks
- 2 Playground
- 3 Recreation centers
- 4 Green spaces

Use **red dots** to mark **CHALLENGES** on the map (*what's a problem?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Lack of **green spaces**
- 2 Lack of **parks**
- 3 Lack of **playground**
- 4 Lack of **recreation centers**
- 5 Lack of **gathering spaces**

Add Your Comments!

Add comments on sticky notes to the **comment sheets** on either side of the map. **Include the corresponding category number.** Be as specific as possible (e.g. neighborhood, intersection, descriptions).

Access to Public Facilities

Instructions

Use **blue dots** to mark **ASSETS** on the map (*what's working?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 **Good sidewalks**, crosswalks and safety for all people
- 2 **Bicycle lanes** and safety for bicyclists
- 3 **Transit stops** (bus or BART)
- 4 **Medical facilities**
- 5 **Mental health facilities**
- 6 **Senior care facilities**
- 7 **Community centers**
- 8 **Cooling centers**
- 9 **Library**
- 10 **School**

Use **red dots** to mark **CHALLENGES** on the map (*what's a problem?*). Select the numbered sticker to match the category:

- 1 Lack of **sidewalks**, crosswalks and safety for all people
- 2 Lack of **bicycle lanes** and safety for bicyclists
- 3 Lack of **transit stops** (bus or BART)

Add Your Comments!

Add comments on sticky notes to the **comment sheets** on either side of the map. **Include the corresponding category number.** Be as specific as possible (e.g. neighborhood, intersection, descriptions).

City of Berkeley Draft Environmental Justice Map

Low Vulnerability

Moderate Vulnerability

High Vulnerability

Berkeley City Limits

BART Station

0 0.5 1 Miles

N

