

INTRODUCTION

What is Environmental Justice?

Senate Bill (SB) 1000 requires local governments to address pollution and other hazards that disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color in their jurisdiction by identifying any “disadvantaged communities” within its planning area. State law defines “disadvantaged communities” as either:

1. An area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) using the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen), or
2. An area that is low-income and disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

If a local government identifies one or more disadvantaged communities within its planning area, its general plan must include environmental justice (EJ) goals, policies, and objectives that reduce the unique or compounded health risks in these disadvantaged communities by addressing eight different topics:

- Reducing pollution exposure;
- Promoting public facilities;
- Promoting food access;
- Promoting safe and sanitary homes;
- Promoting physical activity;
- Reducing unique or compounded health risks;
- Promoting civic engagement; and
- Prioritizing the needs of disadvantaged communities.

Related Efforts

In 2015, the City of San Diego’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) identified “disadvantaged communities”—what the City now refers to as Communities of Concern—as census tracts scoring in the top 30th percentile of the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 tool, census blocks eligible for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and areas within one half-mile radius of affordable housing. Additionally, the City considered presence of priority populations including the non-driving elderly, disabled, low-income, and other members of the population to allocate citywide resources and investments in a manner that advances climate equity.

The City has partnered with community-based organizations to define **climate equity**, comprised of environmental justice and social equity, as “efforts addressing historical inequities suffered by people of color, allowing everyone to fairly share the same benefits and burdens from climate solutions and attain full and equal access to opportunities regardless of one’s background and identity.”

Assessing Environmental Justice & Equity

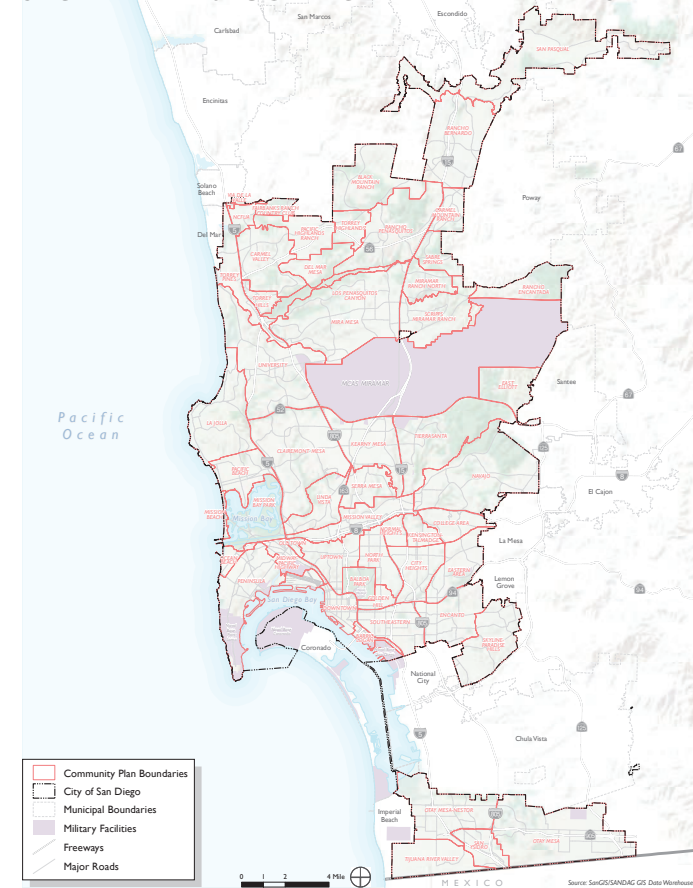
The Office of Planning and Research (OPR) General Plan Guidelines for EJ recommend a screening process for identifying disadvantaged communities that overlays census tracts with a combined CalEnviroScreen score of 75 or higher (i.e., top 25th percentile) with the two definitions of low-income areas (discussed on page 5), as well as community-specific data and additional pollution burdens that were not included in the statewide analysis.

This study builds on existing efforts by the City to continue to refine the identification of EJ communities within the city of San Diego. It assesses additional data from studies related to the topics covered by SB 1000, as well as considers new indicators analyzed using data provided by the City and other available sources. The findings will be used to inform conversations with the community and ultimately will be used in the City’s EJ Element in the General Plan.

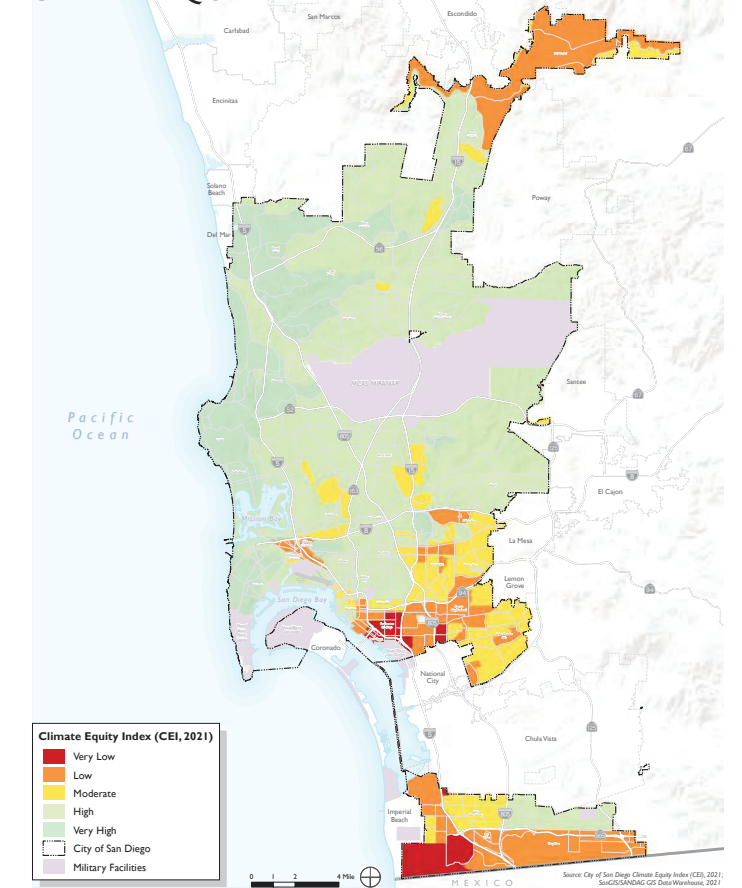
In this document, “disadvantaged communities,” or DACs, will refer to tracts officially designated by the State as such. Communities that will be the focus of the City’s EJ Element have not yet been defined, but potential areas highlighted by this study are referred to as “EJ focus areas.”

This study refers to neighborhoods by their Community Plan Areas (CPAs) defined by the City, as seen in the above left map.

STUDY AREA & COMMUNITY PLAN AREAS



CLIMATE EQUITY INDEX

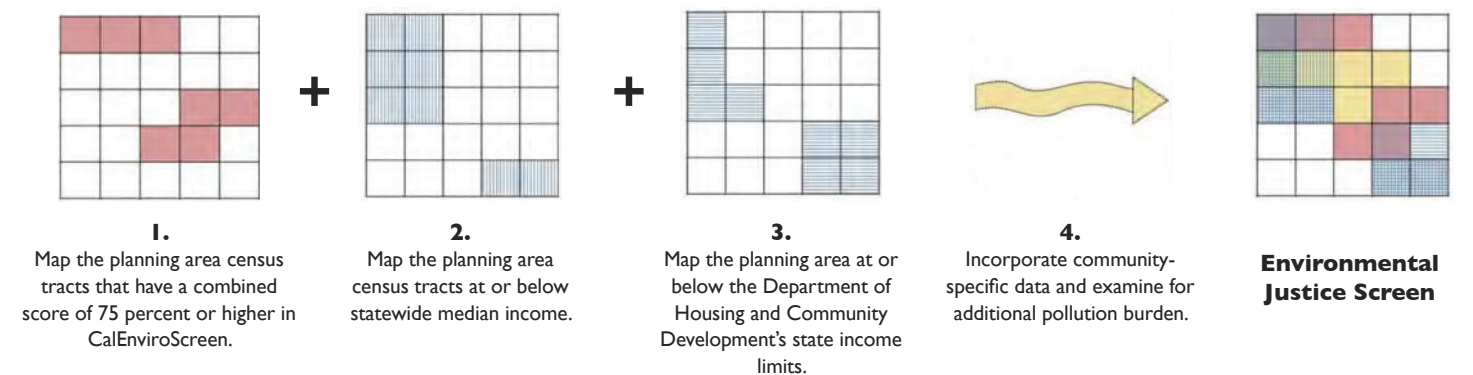


Climate Equity Index

In 2019, the City’s Sustainability Department and the University of San Diego Energy Policy Initiatives Center (EPIC) created the Climate Equity Index (CEI) to establish benchmarks and metrics to assess citywide climate equity and better understand Communities of Concern. The original methodology was revised in 2021 to further refine the indicators, resulting in a CEI score that averages across 41 total indicators. The study found that 119 of 297 census tracts (40 percent) that intersect with the City score below the citywide average

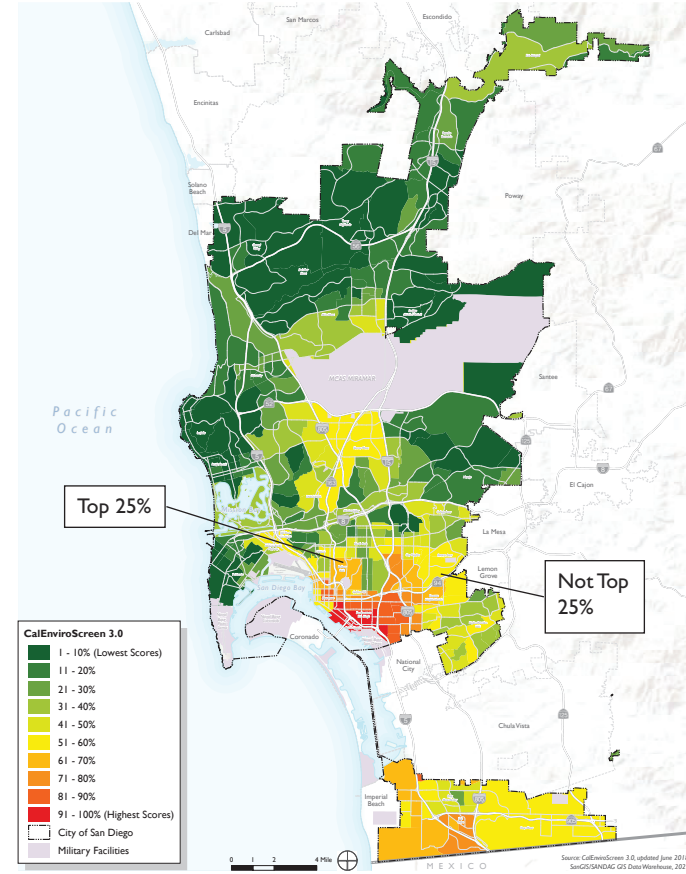
and are therefore classified as having Very Low, Low, or Moderate access to opportunity.

As seen in the above right map, these tracts are generally located in the southeastern and northeastern portions of the city, such as in the neighborhoods of Barrio Logan, Lincoln Park, Nestor, the Tijuana River Valley, Logan Heights, Palm City, Mountain View, Stockton, Grant Hill, Southcrest, Teralta East, and Shelltown. This study will examine some of the factors that contribute to the disparity in these areas.

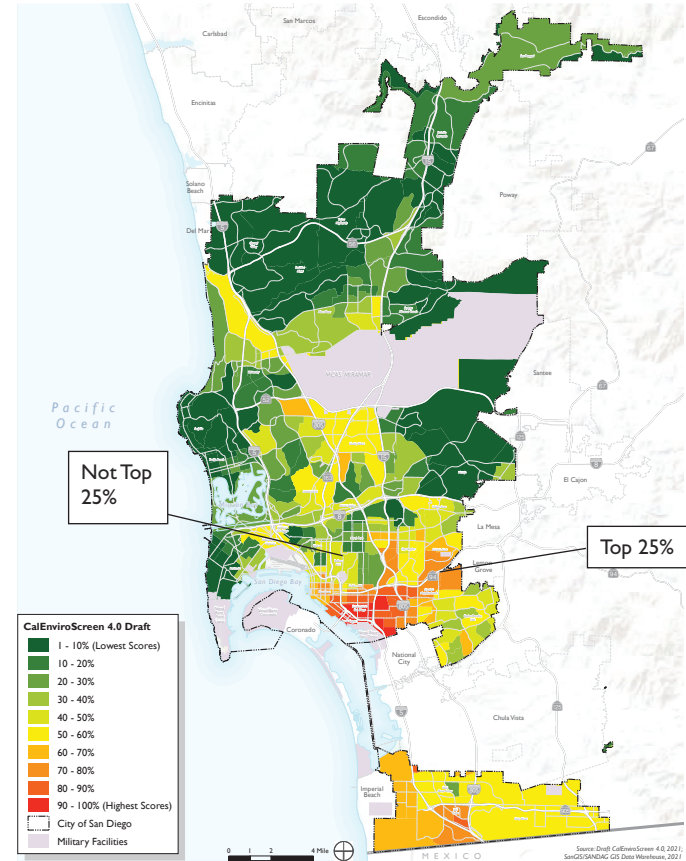


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CALENVIROSCREEN 3.0 (2018)



CALENVIROSCREEN 4.0 (2021)



CalEnviroScreen

CalEnviroScreen (CES) 3.0, adopted in 2018, assesses 20 indicators that measure the pollution burden and population characteristics of all census tracts in California to identify those that are most impacted and most vulnerable. CalEPA has recently updated this tool (referred to as version 4.0), which was adopted in October 2021 and includes an additional indicator for lead exposure.

The maps to the left show the CES scores of tracts in the city of San Diego. Both CES 3.0 and 4.0 generally indicate that the downtown, Barrio Logan, Southeastern San Diego, City Heights, and southern border areas are more impacted (shown in orange/red), while the least impacted areas (in green) are primarily located in the northern half of the city.

Comparing these maps, there is relatively less disparity in CES 4.0, indicated by the greater proportion of mid-range scores (in yellow), although scores have generally increased throughout the city.

Changes in some tracts near the 75th-percentile threshold also affected their designations as a DAC: Five tracts are no longer in the top 25th percentile, and three tracts are potential new DACs. These changing tracts are located in San Ysidro, Downtown, Golden Hill, Eastern Area, and City Heights neighborhoods and are all directly adjacent to communities that continue to score in the top 25th percentile by both CES 3.0 and 4.0.

The top issues contributing to high scores include Diesel, Poverty, Housing Burden, Hazardous Waste, Educational Attainment, Asthma, Unemployment, Groundwater Threats, and Impaired Water Bodies. In CES 4.0, Toxic Releases was also among top-contributing issues.

How to Read this Study

Maps throughout this study are generally symbolized by statewide quantiles, which show the percentile rank of the geographical unit (a census tract, census block, community, etc.) in relation to the rest of the state.

Darker colors and higher values generally correspond to more impacted areas such as those with higher pollution burden (with some exceptions, depending on the data).

For example, census tracts in the darkest color of the legend are in the top 20th percentile, meaning they score higher than 80 percent of tracts in the state.

The legend will also specify the range of raw data values included within each quantile grouping. For example, the legend below shows that tracts with a raw value between 9.5% to 11.4% are in the top 20th percentile, or the top “quintile” because there are 5 groupings.

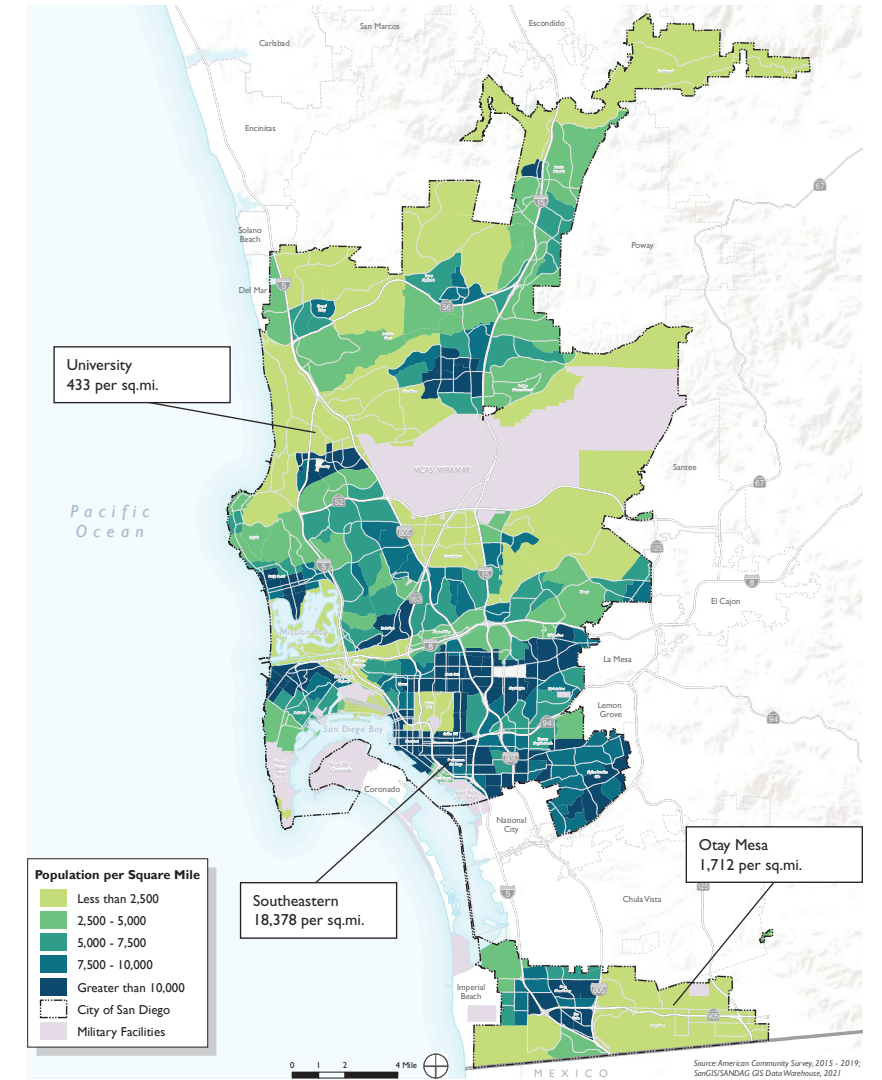
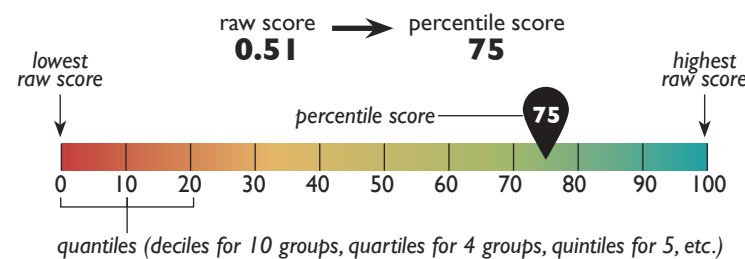
Asthma in Adults

Crude Prevalence

- 9.5% - 11.4%
- 8.8% - 9.4%
- 8.6% - 8.7%
- 8.1% - 8.5%
- 6.6% - 8.0%

Based on the topics covered by SB 1000, this study assesses differences in indicators to identify areas in the city that are disproportionately disadvantaged. By comparing these maps and noting the emerging trends, this study will highlight key communities and issues of concern.

CREATING PERCENTILE SCORES



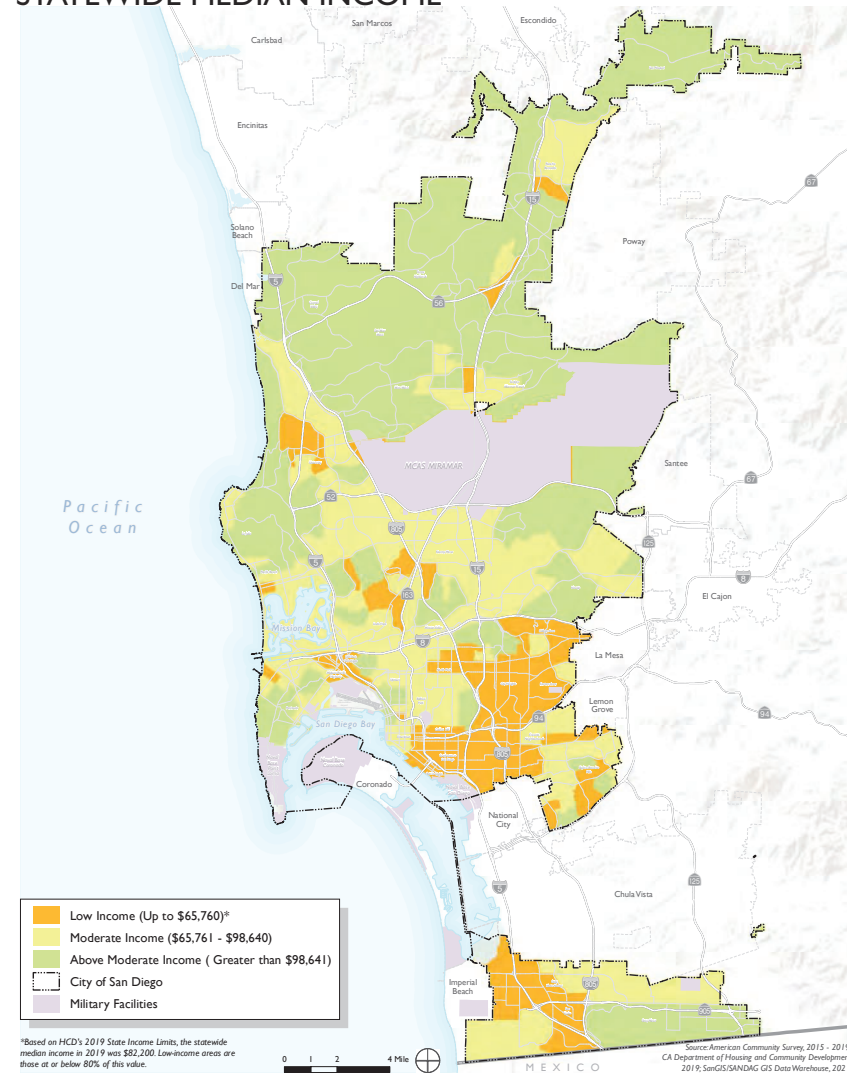
Population Density

The map above shows the population density in the city by census tract (population per square mile). Many south-central communities such as Southeastern San Diego and Encanto neighborhoods are densely populated, while other areas like northwestern University and Otay Mesa are much more sparsely populated.

Data and maps discussed throughout this study may show areas with large proportions (e.g., percentage or ratios) of population affected by certain conditions, but these areas may be geographies with low population densities.

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LOW TO MODERATE INCOME CENSUS TRACTS BY STATEWIDE MEDIAN INCOME



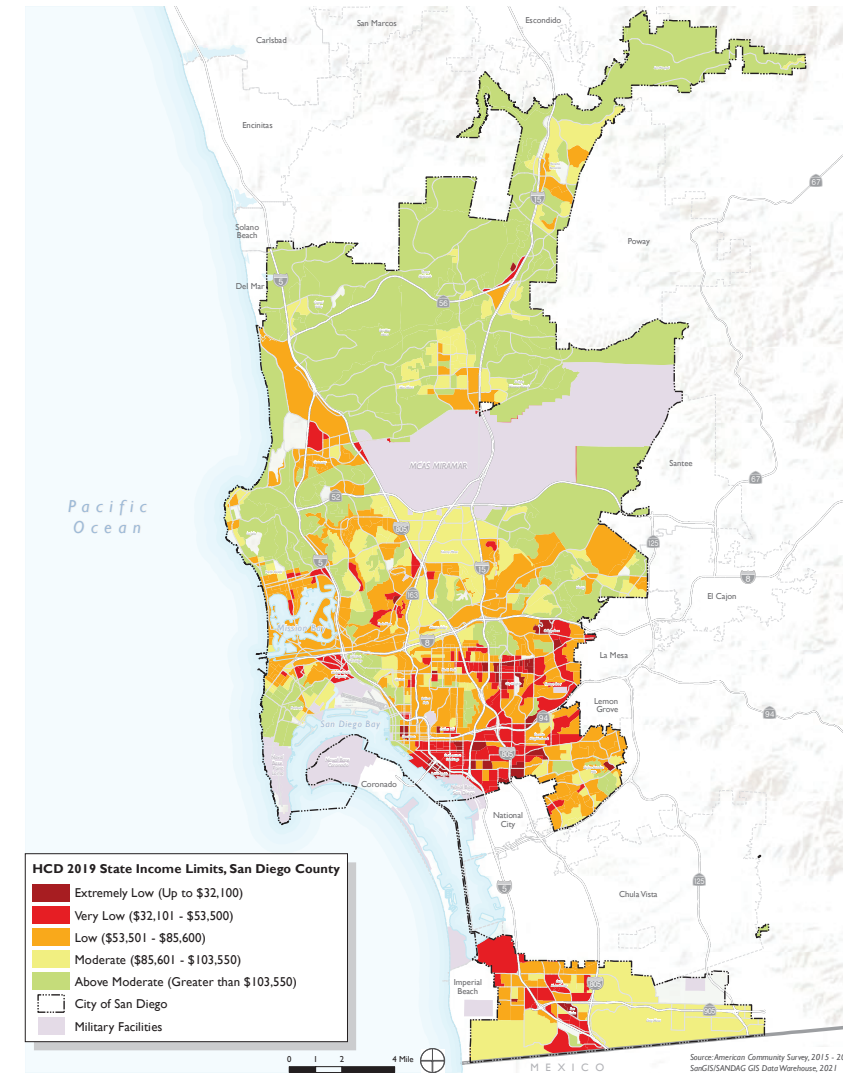
Low Income Areas

There are two definitions of “low-income areas” in SB 1000 that use different thresholds. OPR EJ guidelines recommend considering both definitions when screening for potential EJ communities.

The first is based on the statewide median income. Low-income areas are those “with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income.” Based on the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)’s 2019 State Income Limits, the statewide median income for 2019 was \$82,200, and 80 percent of this value is \$65,760.

The above-left map shows low-income tracts in orange, which are concentrated primarily in the southern half of the city. Moderate-income areas (light orange) tend to be adjacent to low-income areas and make up a substantial amount of the central portion of

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS



the city along SR-163 as well as University and communities west of I-805 near the Mexican border.

Alternatively, low-income areas are defined as those “below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits.”

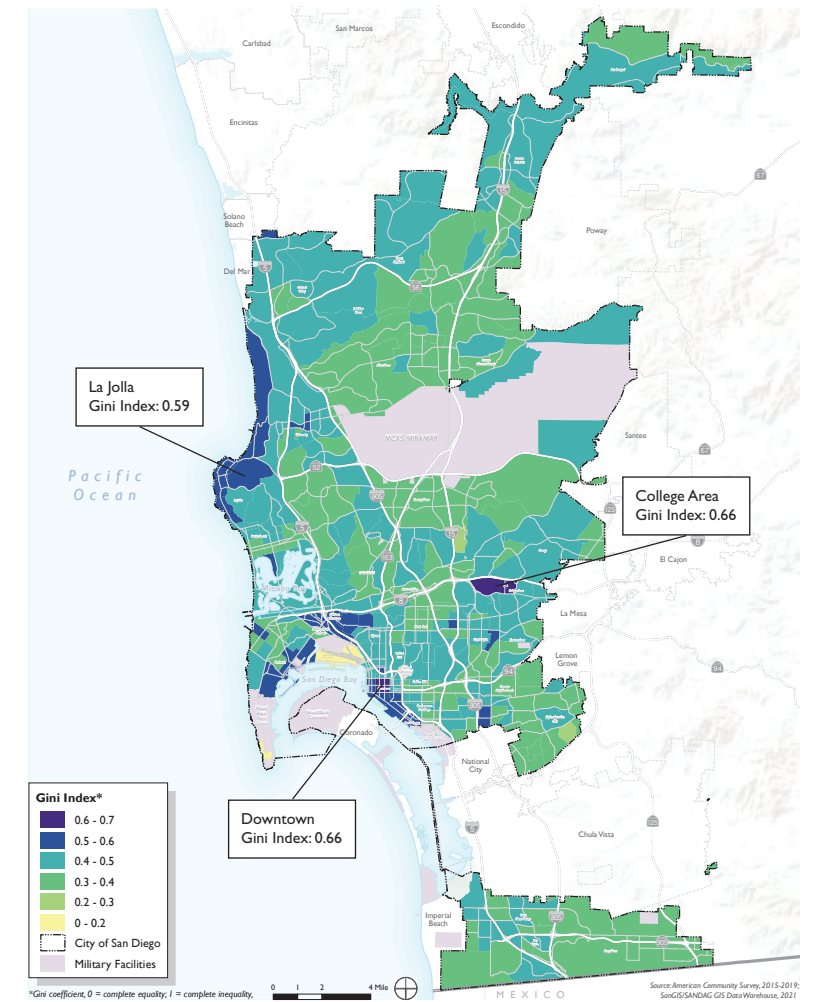
To correspond with 2019 ACS data, tracts were assessed using the 2019 State Income Limits. Based on this source, the low-income limit is \$85,600 for San Diego County. The map directly to the left shows census block groups by median household income levels; low-income areas are those shown in red and orange. Overall, block groups in the Extremely and Very Low ranges correspond with low-income areas based on the statewide median, and low-income areas based on HCD thresholds correlate with areas that are Moderate income by statewide median.

Income Inequality

The map below shows the Gini Index of Income Inequality, which is a summary measure of the dispersion of incomes within the census tract. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality (where everyone receives an equal share), to 1, perfect inequality (where only one recipient or group of recipients receives all the income).

Most of the city is between 0.3 to 0.5, but some areas are notably greater inequality (dark blue).

The chart below the map shows the citywide distribution of incomes and indicates that higher income ranges generally have a greater share than lower income ranges.



DISTRIBUTION OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, 2019

