

# What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice means that everyone—regardless of race, color, national origin, or income—has the right to the same environmental protections and benefits, as well as meaningful involvement in the policies that shape their communities. Environmental justice requires governments to correct laws, policies, and regulations that together have created systemic racism and oppression, placing low income communities and communities of color in more polluted environments. Achieving environmental justice requires robust and equitable engagement with the communities who have previously been excluded from the decision-making processes meant to address environmental issues, improve their health, and increase their economic prospects.

State law requires that counties and cities address environmental justice in low-income communities with high levels of pollution by:

- 1 Identifying the communities that suffer from environmental injustices.
- 2 Assessing specific conditions and challenges in these communities.
- 3 Adding policies to the General Plan to address the environmental injustices.

## Key Environmental Justice Issues



- 1 Pollution exposure and air quality



- 2 Access to healthy and affordable food and groceries



- 3 Access to safe, sanitary, and stable homes



- 4 Access to recreational opportunities and physical activity



- 5 Access to effective public services and facilities



- 6 Exposure to climate hazards, extreme weather, and other health risks



- 7 Ability to engage in government procedures



- 8 Other issues specific to a community

# What is the Environmental Justice Elements Planning Initiative project?

The Environmental Justice Elements Planning Initiative is a collaborative effort between San Mateo County and the cities of Burlingame and East Palo Alto to promote environmental justice within each jurisdiction. These jurisdictions are creating these plans for the first time and once formed will inform the next 8 years of government priorities. The project involves identifying communities that are most impacted by environmental and health hazards and creating policies and actions to address those issues.

## The steps of the project include the following:

- 1 Identify environmental justice issues and communities. (Completed)
- 2 **Engage communities. (Anticipated to be completed Summer 2024)**
- 3 Develop Draft Environmental Justice Elements. (Anticipated to be completed between Fall 2024 and Spring 2025)
- 4 Adopt the Environmental Justice Elements. (Anticipated to be completed in 2025)



## Community Engagement Opportunities

The City of East Palo Alto needs your input to shape its Environmental Justice Element! We will hold community events, public meetings, and other engagement opportunities throughout the process. Visit the project website [envirojusticeplanning.com](https://envirojusticeplanning.com) and join our mailing list to stay up to date.



## Questions or Comments? Contact us:

### East Palo Alto

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