

DATE: August 8, 2023

TO: Planning Commissioners

FROM: Veronica Morones, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: 2022 General Plan Amendment Update: Draft Environmental Justice Policies and Final Draft Environmental Justice Communities

REQUEST: Provide feedback on the final draft environmental justice communities and direction on environmental justice policy development.

BACKGROUND: The City of Escondido is updating the General Plan's Community Protection chapter and creating a new environmental justice chapter under the 2022 General Plan Amendment ("2022 GPA") work effort, which kicked off at the end of 2021. The Escondido General Plan's Community Protection chapter serves as the Safety Element for purposes of meeting statutory requirements contained in Government Code section 65302. The City's new environmental justice ("EJ") chapter would overhaul the existing Community Health and Services chapter of the City's General Plan, which is an optional element (i.e., it is not a required element pursuant to Government Code section 65302). The chapter would be supplemented to incorporate environmental justice policies, goals, and objectives, while retaining existing applicable provisions. The creation of an environmental justice element is required pursuant to Government Code section 65302(h) and will include the identification of disadvantaged communities (Government Code § 65302(h)(1)) within the City of Escondido, as well as topics including reduction in pollution exposure, the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, and civic engagement in the public decision-making process.

Community outreach and engagement is an integral part of the 2022 GPA work effort. Community outreach and engagement for the 2022 GPA is outlined, in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#), in the 2022 GPA outreach and engagement plan located on the 2022 GPA webpage: <https://www.escondido.org/2022-general-plan-amendment>.

As part of the 2022 GPA work effort, staff provide the planning commission with periodic reporting on the project's progress. Past planning commission meetings and their general content are provided below:

Prior Planning Commission Meetings:

- **December 14, 2021:** Kick-off of 2022 GPA
- **February 22, 2022:** Presented the draft outreach and engagement plan
- **July 26, 2022:** Presented outreach activities scheduled for the project in 2022
- **January 10, 2023:** Report out on outreach and engagement activities

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BACKGROUND REPORT: City staff prepared a background report outlining how staff identified environmental justice communities (“EJCs”) within the City. The background report also illustrates the methods staff will use to draft environmental justice policy.

Final Draft Environmental Justice Communities: Planning staff finalized draft environmental justice communities (“EJCs”) pursuant to Government Code section 65302(h), as outlined within the background report (Attachment 1). The environmental justice background report details the final draft EJCs and outlines the steps taken to determine these boundaries.

Environmental Justice Policy: The methods outlined in the draft background report identify general themes and direction for the environmental justice element’s forthcoming policies and goals. Based on these research methods, common themes identified include, but are not limited to: improving public facilities/amenities (including those to beat the heat), reducing air pollution, creating safe and affordable housing, providing adequate food access, and improving opportunities for civic engagement.

Staff requests direction from the Planning Commission regarding scope of environmental justice policy language. Under Government Code section 65302(h), environmental justice requirements include policies that specifically impact the environmental justice communities and aim to reduce unique or compounded health risks. Government Code section 65302(h)(1)(C) requires the City identify policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address the identified needs of the environmental justice communities. As noted in the background report, City staff reviewed other public draft and adopted environmental justice elements. Sample policy language from those jurisdictions is provided under Attachment 2 for reference.

NEXT STEPS

The environmental justice background report is currently available on the project webpage for public review and comment. Staff will consider and incorporate Planning Commission input and feedback on the draft policy direction. The City will kick off the environmental review phase of the 2022 GPA this month.

Attachments:

1. Environmental Justice Background Report
2. Sample Policy Language

Attachment 2: Example Environmental Justice Policy Language

<i>EJ Topic</i>	El Cajon	National City	Placentia	Perris
<i>Food Access</i>	Support the promotion of healthy food and food assistance programs.	Require new development to provide and maintain fresh drinking water fountains, where feasible and appropriate.	Encourage existing retailers to improve the quality and selection of healthy foods and nutritional information through incentives, technical assistance, and other services. Adopt a Healthy Food Store Incentive program, to encourage stores to stock fresh and healthy food at affordable prices.	Universal access to healthy food for food insecure populations.
<i>Pollution Reduction</i>	Prioritize tree planting in the EJs, to reduce residents' vulnerability to extreme heat. Focus efforts on shade trees along sidewalks, at transit stops, schools, bike lanes and within parks in the EJs.	Avoid siting new sensitive land uses within 500 feet from the centerline of a freeway, unless such development contributes to smart growth, open space, or transit-oriented goals, in which case the development shall include feasible measures such as separation/setbacks, landscaping, barriers, ventilation systems, air filters/cleaners, and/or other effective measures to minimize potential impacts from air pollution.	Improve the quality of built and natural environments to support a thriving community and to reduce disparate health and environmental impacts, especially to low-income and disadvantaged communities.	A community that reduces the negative impacts of land use changes, environmental hazards and climate change on disadvantaged communities.
<i>Civic Engagement</i>	Specifically invite residents from EJs to become commission, committee, and task force members as openings occur.	Hold meetings and workshops at times and locations that are convenient for community members to attend, especially those that may be directly affected by a particular decision.	Create and improve city systems whereby improvements and programs are prioritized for disadvantaged communities.	Provide the opportunity for multilingual interpretation and translation at all public meetings, including at least Spanish and additional languages, should a need be identified.
<i>Physical Activity</i>	Explore the expansion of facilities and amenities in existing parks, as well as an increase in the amount of parks, trails, open spaces and green spaces as they are important tools for increasing levels of physical activity and reducing the incidence of chronic illness.	Improve access to bicycles, helmets, and related equipment for lower income families.	Update Zoning Code to eliminate any barriers to facilitating the goal of creating complete neighborhoods with access to retail and recreation resources within walking distance of homes.	Implement the prioritization framework provided in the City's Active Transportation Plan to evaluate all proposed bicycle and pedestrian projects.

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 Attachment 2

<p>Public Facilities</p>	<p>Increase positive activity and neighborhood surveillance in parks to deter drinking and drug use in the parks and public open spaces.</p>	<p>Update the capital improvement program for the improvement of existing public facilities and the development of new facilities and plan for the equitable distribution of infrastructure improvements and public facilities and services considering both number/size and access/distance to facilities.</p>	<p>Provide a wider diversity of active and passive recreational facilities in all parks that respond to the needs of multicultural and DAC communities.</p>	<p>Quality community infrastructure and facilities that meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.</p>
<p>Safe & Sanitary Housing</p>	<p>Promote improvements and rehabilitation of unsafe housing in EJC's, while actively preventing displacement.</p>	<p>Prioritize lead education and remediation programs to benefit low-income families.</p>	<p>Create and actively enforce a City Lead Paint Program.</p>	<p>Neighborhoods that enhance the safety and welfare of people of all ages, income levels, and cultural backgrounds.</p>