

## 7 Environmental Justice and Public Health

Under California law, specifically Senate Bill (SB) 1000, the Planning for Healthy Communities Act, cities must address environmental justice issues by developing policies for issues that affect disadvantaged communities within their jurisdiction. San Pablo's 2030 General Plan Health Element addresses the relationship between planning and public health, setting forth policies to improve the environmental, social, and public health conditions, many of which address the required topics under SB 1000. The 2030 Public Health Element acknowledges the intersection of environmental justice with public health, recognizing that the built environment contributes to health outcomes.

This chapter documents current conditions in San Pablo related to environmental justice and disadvantaged communities and will be used to inform new and updated policies to address the issues identified under SB 1000 that build on the existing General Plan Public Health Element.

### Background

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On September 24, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 1000 into law. SB 1000 amended Government Code Section 65302, requiring a local agency to address environmental justice issues when, on or after January 1, 2018, it concurrently adopts or revises two or more general plan elements. Environmental justice must be incorporated into the general plan in a way that:

- Reduces the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by means that include the reduction of pollution exposure, including the improvement of air quality, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity;
- Promotes civil engagement in the public decision-making process; and
- Prioritizes improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) defines environmental justice as:

*"The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies."<sup>1</sup>*

Thus, environmental justice provides a specific lens through which to advance equity and protect human health. As reflected through the implementation of SB 1000, the planning profession has the power to influence health and equity outcomes across communities. Policies in the General Plan can work to reduce

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<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, Learn about environmental justice, 2017.

and equalize the effects of environmental hazards among all people regardless of racial, ethnic, income, or other socioeconomic characteristics to promote health for all.

## Defining Disadvantaged Communities

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SB 1000 defined a disadvantaged community (DAC) as “an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.” Low-income areas are defined as locations where household incomes are at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income, or below the threshold designated as low-income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits.

SB 1000 and SB 535 specify the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) as the primary screening method for identifying DACs. Developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), CalEnviroScreen uses environmental, health, and socioeconomic information to produce scores for every Census tract in the state, thereby identifying communities that are most vulnerable to pollution’s effects. The score assigned to each Census tract is a product of exposure to pollution, adverse environmental effects caused by pollution, presence of sensitive populations (e.g., those with asthma or cardiovascular disease), and socioeconomic factors that increase vulnerability (e.g., low household income, low educational attainment, and unemployment). A DAC is defined as a Census tract that scores in the top 25th percentile of CalEnviroScreen’s cumulative score when compared to Census tracts statewide.

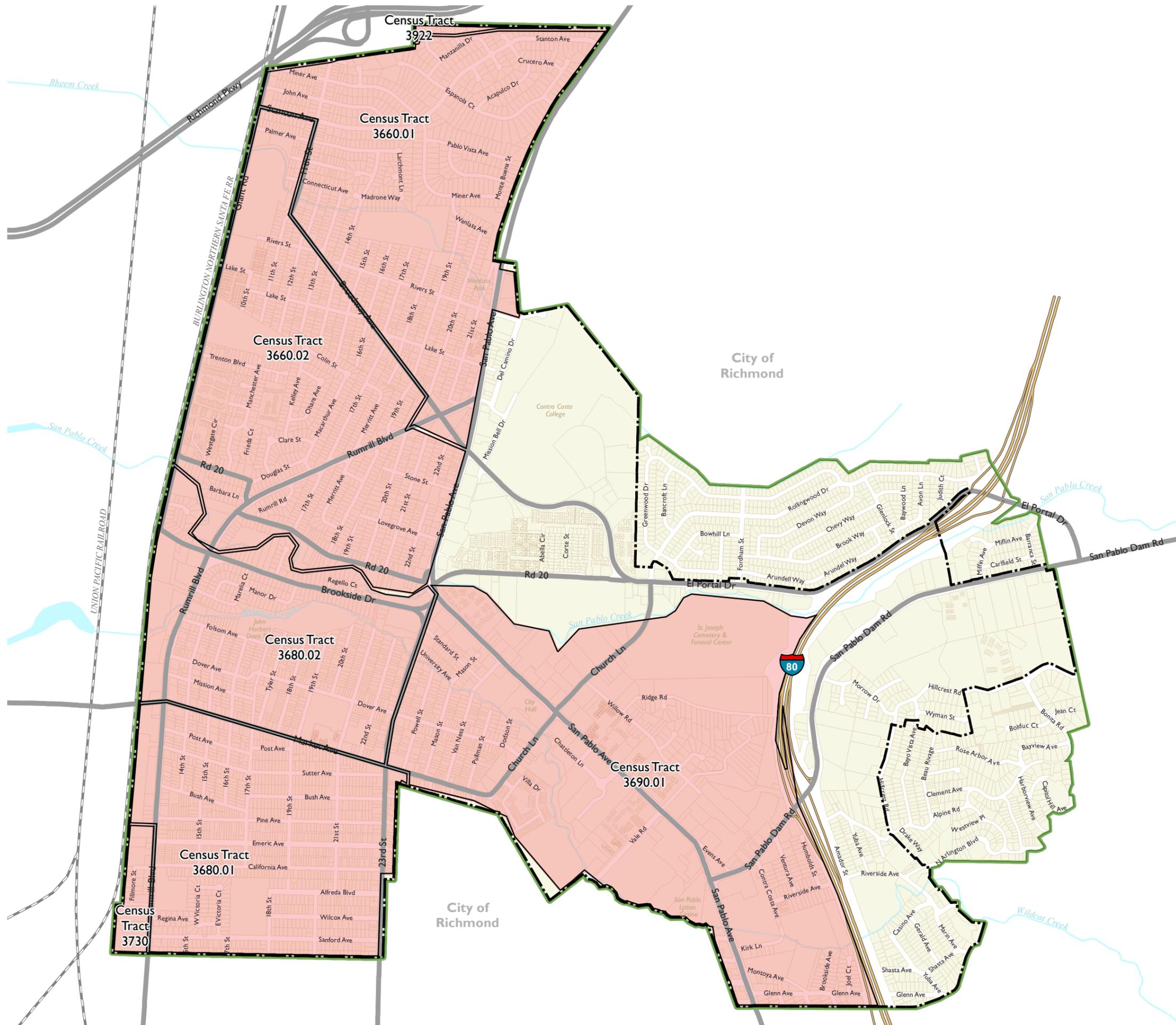
Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, authorized California’s cap-and-trade program as one of several strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Funds collected through cap-and-trade are mandated to be used for programs that further reduce GHG emissions. In 2012, SB 535 directed that 25 percent of the proceeds from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (i.e., cap-and-trade) go to projects that provide a benefit specifically to DACs. In 2016, AB 1550 provided additional funding to DACs, requiring a percent of proceeds to be spent on projects located specifically in these communities.

### DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES IN SAN PABLO

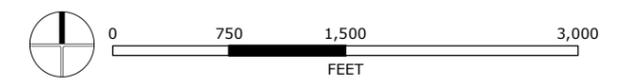
In October 2021, OEHHA finalized the CalEnviroScreen version 4.0 update. This version of CalEnviroScreen includes the most recent available data across all indicators and improvements in the way some indicators are calculated to better reflect environmental conditions or population vulnerability to pollution. Most notably, the update includes an additional environmental indicator measuring children’s risk of household lead exposure. This chapter uses data from CalEnviroScreen 4.0 to assess environmental justice and public health topics, and all references to “CalEnviroScreen” in the following sections refer to this version unless otherwise noted.

In May 2022, CalEPA updated the SB 535 DAC designations to reflect the updated version of CalEnviroScreen. Seven of the ten Census tracts that are either wholly or partially contained within the planning area are identified as DACs: 3660.01, 3660.02, 3690.01, 3730, 3922, 3680.01, and 3680.02. Figure 7-1 shows their location. It is noted that some of these Census tracts, including some DACs, intersect with only a small portion of the planning area, and as such, the information (i.e., environmental and/or socioeconomic data) may reflect conditions outside of the planning area.

Figure 7-1: SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities (2022)



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Disadvantaged Community



SOURCE: CalEPA, 2022; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022  
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Overall, CalEnviroScreen scores are calculated from the scores of two groups of indicators, pollution burden and population characteristics. According to CalEnviroScreen, seven tracts (all of which are DACs) rank above the 75th percentile, meaning that they score higher than 75 percent of Census tracts statewide. This is also sometimes referred to as the “top 25th percentile” because percentile rank is always expressed relative to the position out of 100, where 100 represents the highest score. However, only three tracts in the planning area (tracts 3672, 3680.02, and 3922) rank above the 75th percentile for overall pollution burden, with the remaining tracts ranging from the eighth to the 70th percentile. Figure 7-2 shows the pollution burden percentile scores for planning area Census tracts. In contrast, six Census tracts rank above the 75th percentile for overall population characteristics sensitivity score, with an additional two tracts ranking above the 70th percentile. Figure 7-3 shows the population characteristics sensitivity percentile scores for planning area Census tracts. This indicates that, while certain pollutants are still a concern in portions of the planning area, public health measures that address socioeconomic factors of residents’ lives may be a higher priority in San Pablo.

Table 7-1 lists the planning area Census tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen percentile scores for overall, pollution burden, and population characteristics data. Scores ranking in the top 25th percentile are shown in bold.

**Table 7-1: Planning Area Census Tract CalEnviroScreen Scores**

<i>Census Tract</i>	<i>Population<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Overall Percentile</i>	<i>Pollution Burden Percentile</i>	<i>Population Characteristics Percentile</i>
3660.02	6,627	<b>88.46</b>	<b>77.47</b>	<b>87.67</b>
3680.01	4,817	<b>85.35</b>	70.11	<b>87.78</b>
3922 <sup>2</sup>	11,304	<b>84.71</b>	<b>75.33</b>	<b>82.65</b>
3680.02	3,782	<b>81.38</b>	<b>80.04</b>	73.20
3690.01	7,254	<b>80.66</b>	54.97	<b>90.51</b>
3660.01	4,514	<b>75.96</b>	45.56	<b>90.61</b>
3730 <sup>2</sup>	4,468	<b>75.20</b>	66.31	73.73
3672	6,042	71.85	41.82	<b>87.17</b>
3690.02	3,045	51.15	45.20	51.16
3610 <sup>2</sup>	5,093	26.97	8.48	49.70

Notes:

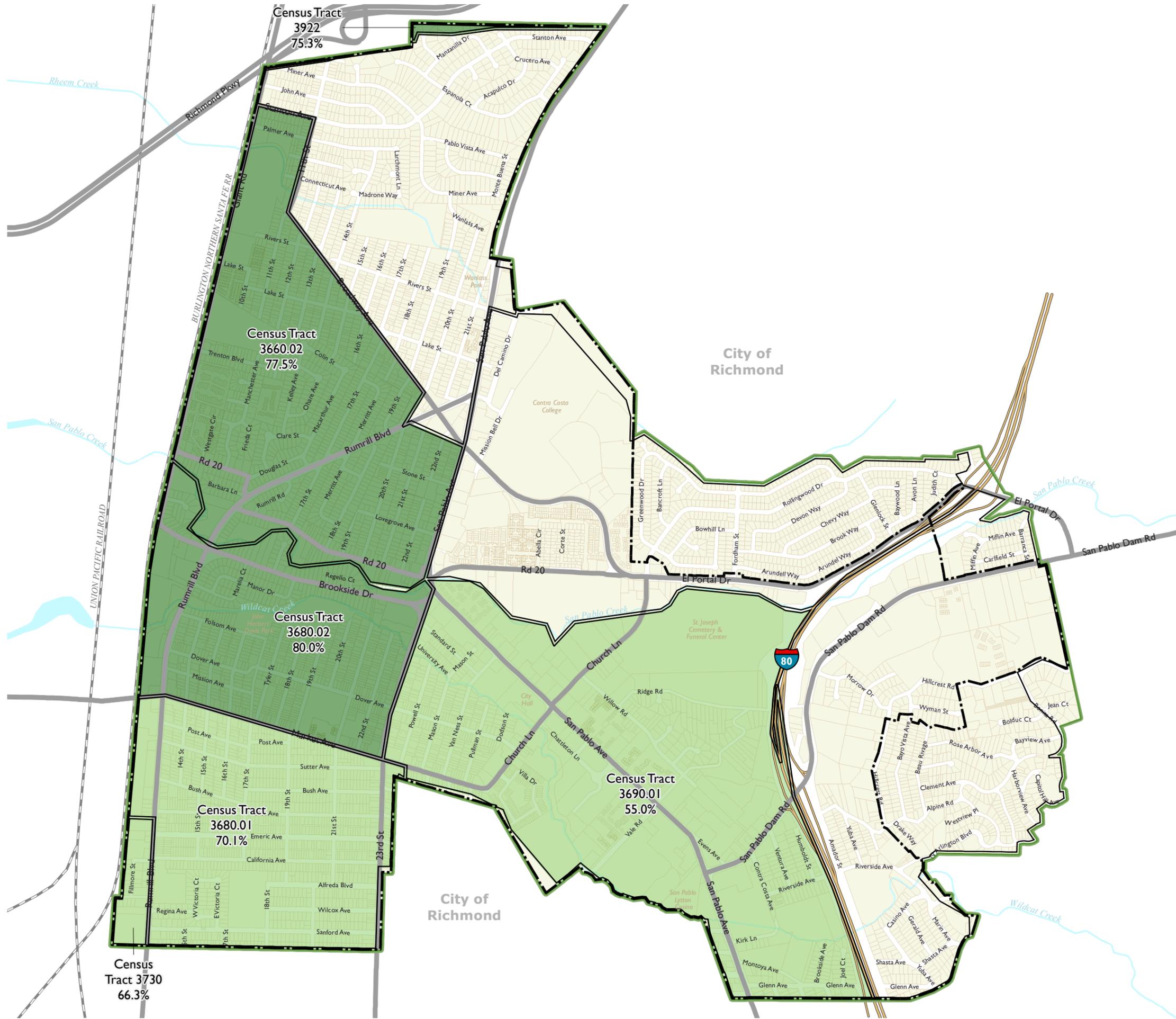
1. Population data is from 2013-2018 American Community Survey five-year estimates.
2. These Census tracts are only partially contained within the planning area; all other Census tracts are entirely or almost entirely within the planning area.

Source: California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) 4.0; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022.

## Contributing Factors

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Foundation, “public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people and their communities... achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to infectious diseases.” A healthy community is achieved through a myriad of approaches, including quality and affordable housing, decreased rates of disease, a healthy economy, a clean environment, access to recreation, proximity to healthy food and services, and many more.

Figure 7-2: Pollution Burden



**Legend**

- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Pollution Burden Percentile**

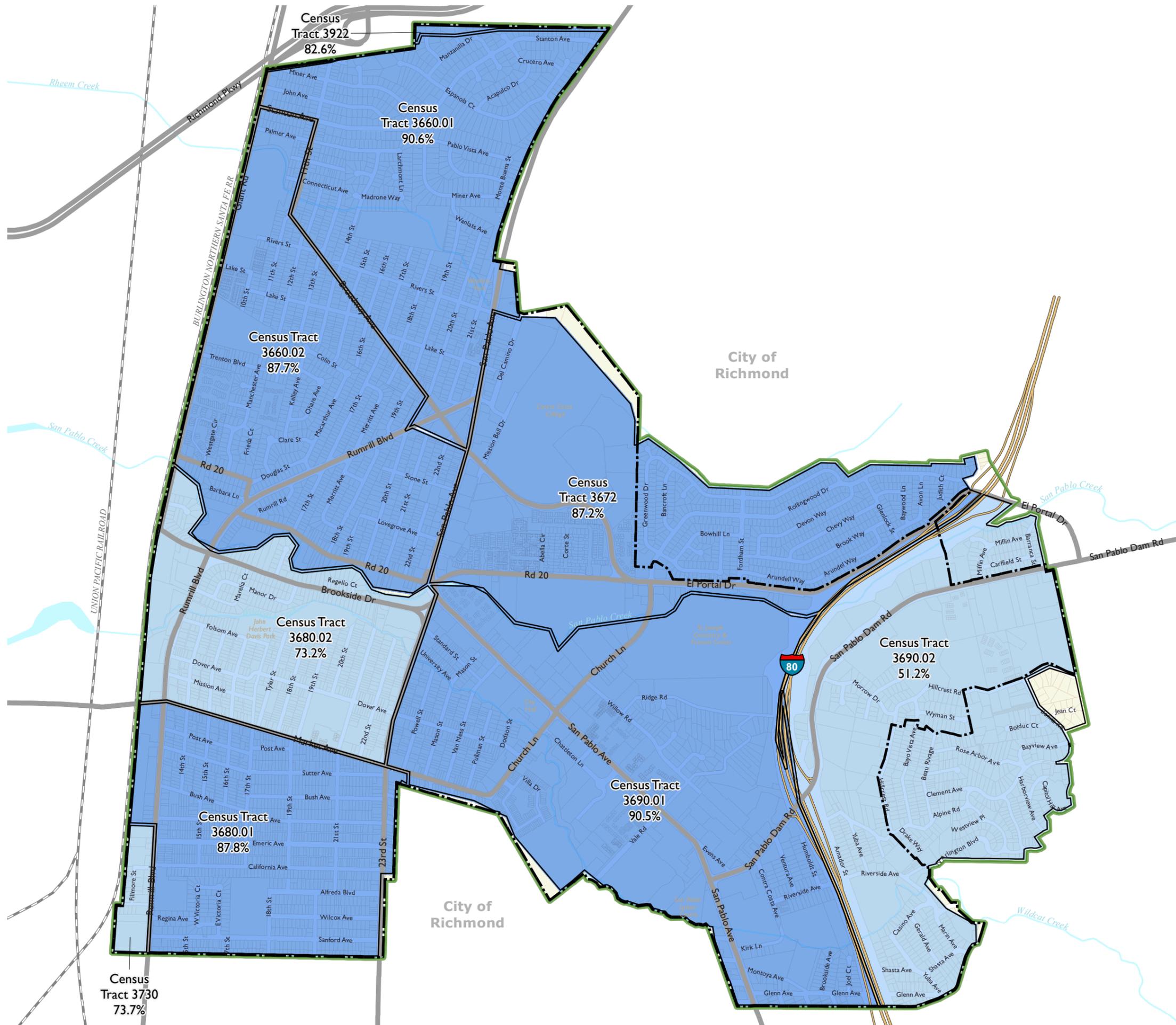
- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-3: Population Characteristics



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Population Characteristics Percentile**

- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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This section addresses contributing factors to environmental injustices in San Pablo according to the following categories that a General Plan Environmental Justice Element must address:

- Socioeconomic characteristics;
- Pollution exposure;
- Safe and sanitary homes;
- Healthy food access;
- Public facilities and physical activity; and
- Community or civic engagement.

## **SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Socioeconomic characteristics, also known as social determinants of health, can increase stress levels and/or make healthy living difficult, which can cause populations to be more sensitive to the effects of pollution. For example, residents of high poverty neighborhoods may be more likely to be exposed to toxic materials in homes, dangerous streets, and pervasive advertising promoting harmful substances than residents of higher-income neighborhoods. High-poverty neighborhoods also tend to have limited options for healthy food and safe leisure physical activity, and fewer opportunities for education and high-quality employment than higher-income neighborhoods. While the median CalEnviroScreen percentile score for pollution burden among San Pablo Census tracts is 50.6, the median percentile score for population characteristics sensitivity is 80.0, meaning that San Pablo census tracts are generally among the top 20th percentile statewide for adverse social and health factors. This section discusses several socioeconomic factors at play in San Pablo and their relationship to environmental justice.

### **Poverty, Unemployment, and Educational Attainment**

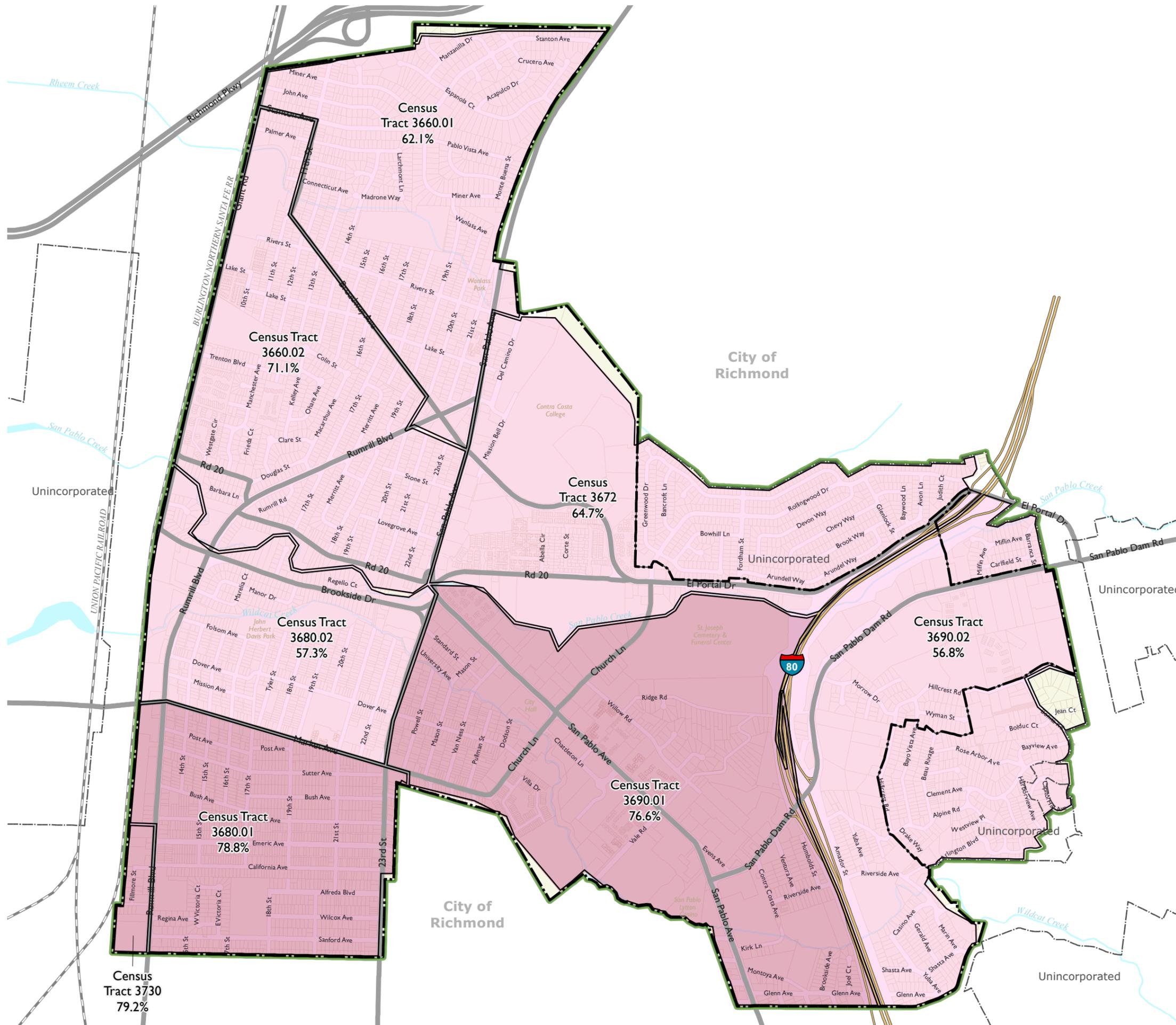
In 2019, approximately 16.3 percent of the City of San Pablo’s population was living below the federal poverty level (FPL), a decrease from 19.3 percent in 2012, per Census American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates data.<sup>2</sup> This rate is nearly double Contra Costa County’s 2019 poverty rate of 8.7 percent. Poverty in San Pablo is highest among children aged 18 and younger (21.5 percent below FPL), and among those who identify as Black or African American (22.0 percent below FPL). Figure 7-4 shows planning area Census tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen percentile ranking among statewide Census tracts for the percentage of the population living below two times the FPL. While eight out of ten tracts rank above the 50th percentile statewide, only three tracts in the planning area rank above the 75th percentile statewide. One of these three tracts, Tract 3690.01, is also qualified as an Opportunity Zone. This tract is located within the City limits, generally west of Interstate 80 (I-80), south of Road 20, and east of 23rd Street. Opportunity Zone is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designation for low-income Census tracts where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment, designed to spur economic development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the 2019 federal poverty level was \$12,490 for a single-person household and \$25,750 for a four-person household. Unlike the Decennial Census, which occurs once every 10 years and counts all persons living in the U.S. and its territories, the ACS is an annual survey sent to a sample of households that asks about topics not included in the Decennial Census such as education, employment, internet access, and transportation. ACS results are used to create statistical estimates for each year and are also averaged across five years (also referred to as the ACS five-year estimates) to ensure data stability.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Opportunity Zones,” [webpage], accessed January 24, 2023, <https://opportunityzones.hud.gov/>.

Figure 7-4: Poverty Burden



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Unincorporated
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Poverty Burden Percentile**

- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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As of 2019, the unemployment rate in the City of San Pablo was 4.4 percent, which is slightly higher than the Contra Costa County rate of 3.4 percent.<sup>4</sup> Unemployment in San Pablo saw a spike during the COVID-19 pandemic but decreased steadily through 2022 and has remained at approximately 4 percent in 2023-4. Figure 7-5 shows planning area Census tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen statewide percentile ranking for the percentage of the population over the age of 16 that is unemployed and eligible for the labor force. Only one Census tract, Tract 3660.02, ranks at just about the 75th percentile statewide (74.7), with the next highest score being 71.7 (Tract 3680.01). In addition to the immediate financial impacts, stress from long-term unemployment can lead to chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, and can shorten a person's life.<sup>5</sup>

Low educational attainment also impacts health. Educational attainment correlates most strongly with life expectancy and most health status measures.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, several studies have associated educational attainment with susceptibility to the health impacts of environmental pollutants.<sup>7</sup> According to American Community Survey 2019 five-year estimate data, 32.8 percent of San Pablo's population over the age of 25 has no high school diploma, much higher than the 10.5 percent of the population over age 25 in Contra Costa County overall. Figure 7-6 shows planning area Census tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen percentile ranking among Census tracts statewide for the percentage of the population age 25 and over that has less than a high school education. Many tracts in the planning area rank in the upper percentiles for low educational attainment. Six out of ten planning area Census tracts rank above the 80th percentile, with a seventh tract ranking at just below the 75th percentile, and the median percentile score at 81.0. This indicates that low educational attainment is likely a contributing factor to producing populations in San Pablo sensitive to pollution, environmental degradation, or lack of access to health resources.

## **POLLUTION EXPOSURE**

Pollution exposure occurs daily in virtually every community when people come into direct contact with air, food, water, and soil contaminants. These pollutants are often the result of incompatible land uses, polluting facilities, or other sources of exposure. Exposure to pollution can cause or worsen negative health outcomes and make people too sick to work or go to school, or even to go outside.

CalEnviroScreen includes 12 indicators related to pollution burden that measure exposures and environmental effects. This section summarizes the CalEnviroScreen results of these indicators in San Pablo by the type of pollution burden (i.e., air, water, and toxics/hazardous materials).

### **Air Quality**

Particulate matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) refers to very fine (smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, or less than the thickness of human hair) inhalable particles including hundreds of different chemicals emitted by sources such as power plants, automobiles, and other industrial sources. Out of all particulate matter, PM<sub>2.5</sub> pose the greatest risk to health according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

According to CalEnviroScreen, planning area Census tracts mostly rank between the 30th and 40th percentiles statewide for annual mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations, which are based on measurements from the PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitor located in San Pablo at 1865 Rumrill Boulevard and averaged about 9.32 micrograms per

<sup>4</sup> US Census American Community Survey, 2019 five-year estimates.

<sup>5</sup> Brand J. E. The Far-Reaching Impact of Job Loss and Unemployment. *Annual review of sociology*, 41, 359-375, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Winkleby, M. A., Jatulis, D. E., Frank, E., & Fortmann, S. P. Socioeconomic status and health: how education, income, and occupation contribute to risk factors for cardiovascular disease. *American Journal of Public Health*, 82(6), 816-20, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Issue Brief: Why does education matter so much to health? 2013.

cubic meter between 2015 and 2017. This value meets both the National and State Ambient Air Quality Standards established by EPA and the California Air Resources Board (CARB), respectively. Further, this monitor, in addition to other nearby monitors, is used to estimate the concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> across a one-square-kilometer-wide “grid,” which can lead to highly generalized results and may not accurately reflect on-the-ground conditions.

San Pablo is part of the Richmond-North Richmond-San Pablo community, selected by CARB to develop a Community Air Monitoring Plan (2018) and Community Emissions Reduction Program (2020) under the Community Air Protection Program (AB 617). This is a community-led partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and CARB that targets interventions to reduce impacts by a variety of sources including freight activity and port operations and various industry and on-road emissions in communities with high cumulative air pollution exposure burden, a significant number of sensitive receptor locations, and/or DACs. In July 2020, BAAQMD published the AB 617 Richmond-San Pablo Community Air Monitoring Plan, which seeks to supplement the existing air monitoring network with hyperlocal data through multiple projects that provide finer-scale measurements throughout the community. These additional measurements help to characterize the emissions sources in the community and ultimately inform development of the Path to Clean Air Community Emissions Reduction Plan, which began in early 2021.

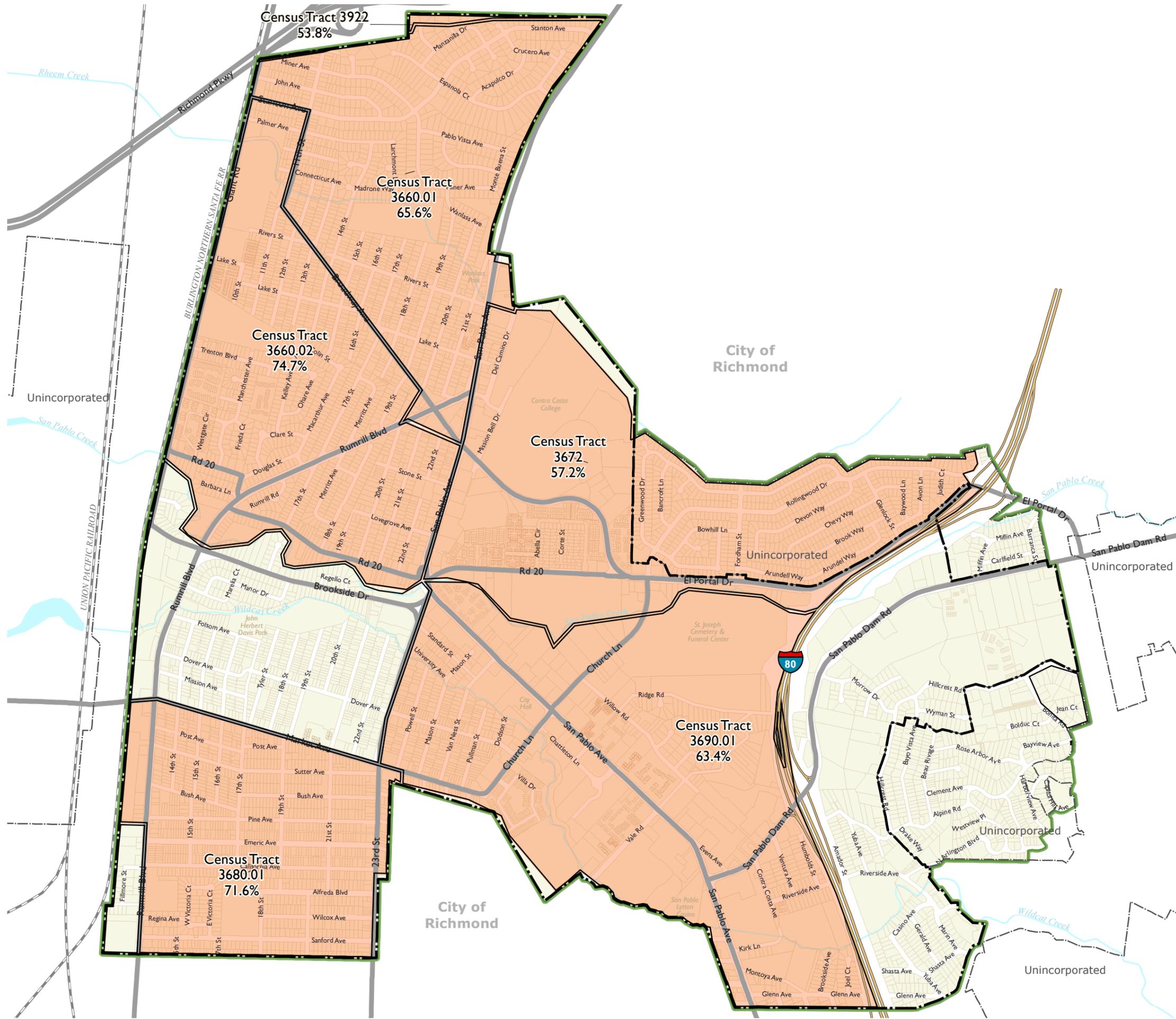
Ozone exposure in San Pablo is also relatively low. Ground-level ozone is a harmful air pollutant most likely to reach unhealthy levels on hot sunny days in urban environments, according to the EPA. People at greatest risk of harm from breathing ozone include people with asthma. However, all Census tracts in the planning area rank in the bottom 10th percentile statewide for the amount of daily maximum eight-hour Ozone concentration according to CalEnviroScreen data.

In contrast, San Pablo experiences high exposure to diesel particulate matter (DPM). DPM is produced by exhaust from cars, trucks, buses, trains, ships, and other equipment with diesel engines. Exposure to DPM can lead to serious health conditions like asthma and respiratory illnesses and can worsen existing heart and lung disease, according to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). Figure 7-7 shows CalEnviroScreen statewide percentile rankings by Census tract for the amount of DPM emissions from on-road and non-road sources. Seven out of ten tracts in the planning area rank above the 80th percentile statewide, with four of these ranking above the 90th percentile, indicating DPM exposure as a serious concern in most San Pablo neighborhoods.

DPM in San Pablo likely comes in large part from cars, trucks, and other traffic passing through or near the planning area. Figure 7-8 shows statewide percentile rankings by Census tract for traffic density, a measure of the number of vehicles on the roads. In addition to toxic chemicals and air pollutants contained in exhaust fumes, high traffic density also brings noise pollution into neighborhoods. One tract in the planning area ranks above the 75th percentile statewide, with the next highest-scoring tract ranked above the 73rd percentile, both adjacent to I-80. In addition to I-80, City truck routes running along San Pablo Avenue, San Pablo Dam Road, and Giant Road between Road 20 and Richmond Parkway likely contribute most to DPM exposure in San Pablo.

Exposure to DPM in San Pablo is of particular concern because the age-adjusted rates of emergency department visits for asthma and for heart attacks are relatively high in San Pablo. Figure 7-9 shows the CalEnviroScreen results for asthma in planning area Census tracts, and Figure 7-10 shows those for heart attacks. Eight Census tracts rank in the top 13th percentile statewide for emergency department visits for asthma, while five out of ten tracts rank in the top 25th percentile statewide for emergency department visits for heart attacks. Given that exposure to DPM can both produce and worsen respiratory and cardiac illnesses, health outcomes in San Pablo are likely related to residents’ exposure to the negative effects of this pollution burden.

Figure 7-5: Unemployment Percentile



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Unincorporated
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

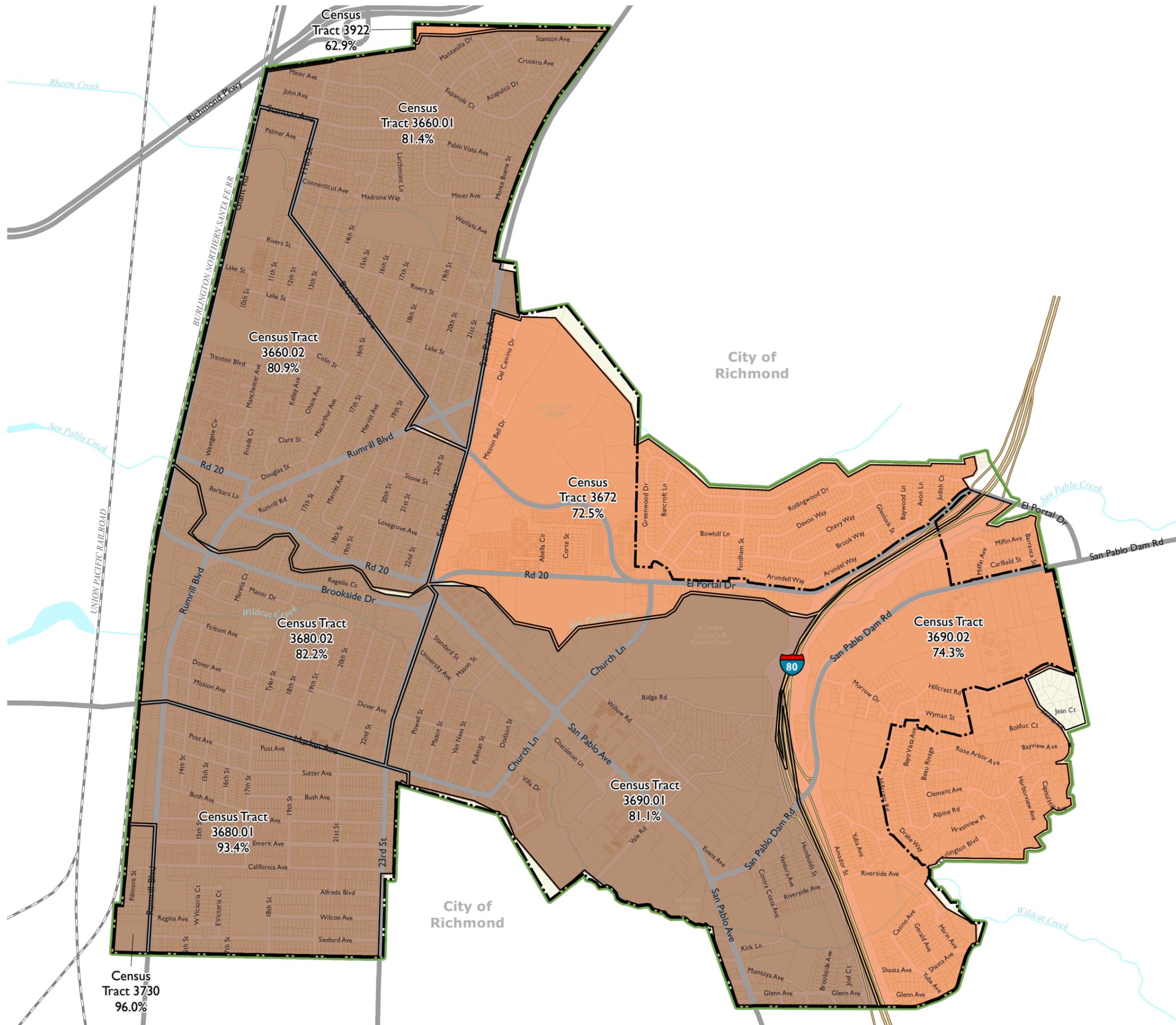
- Unemployment Percentile**
- Top 25% Statewide
  - 50% - 75% Statewide



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-6: Low Educational Attainment



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Low Educational Attainment Percentile**

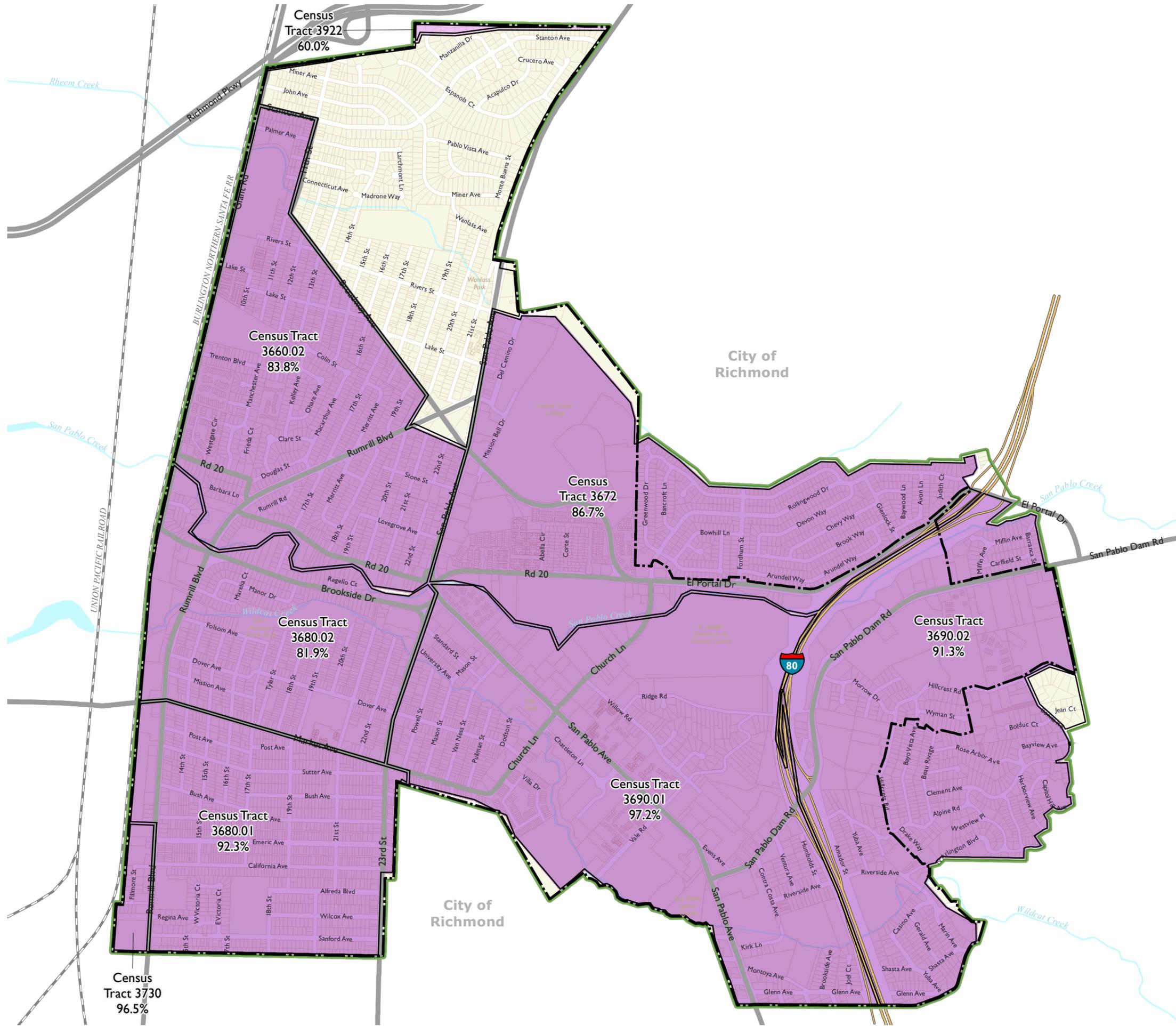
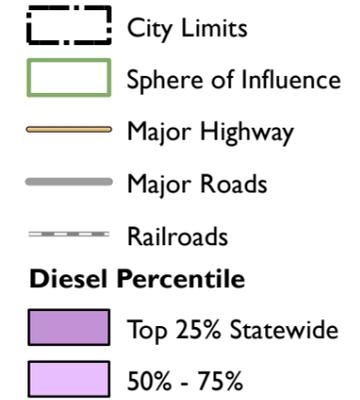
- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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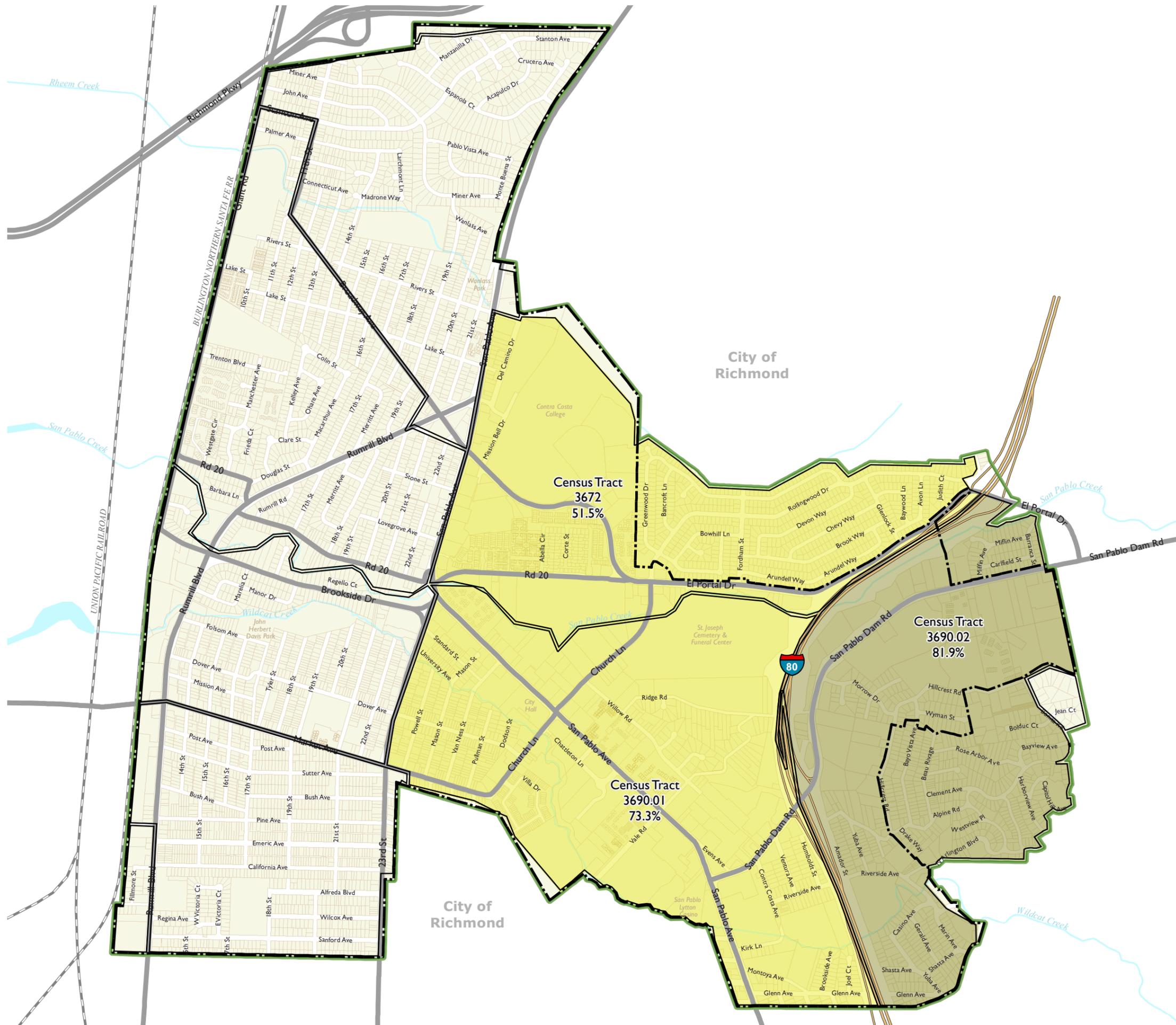
Figure 7-7: Diesel Particulate Matter Exposure



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-8: Traffic Density



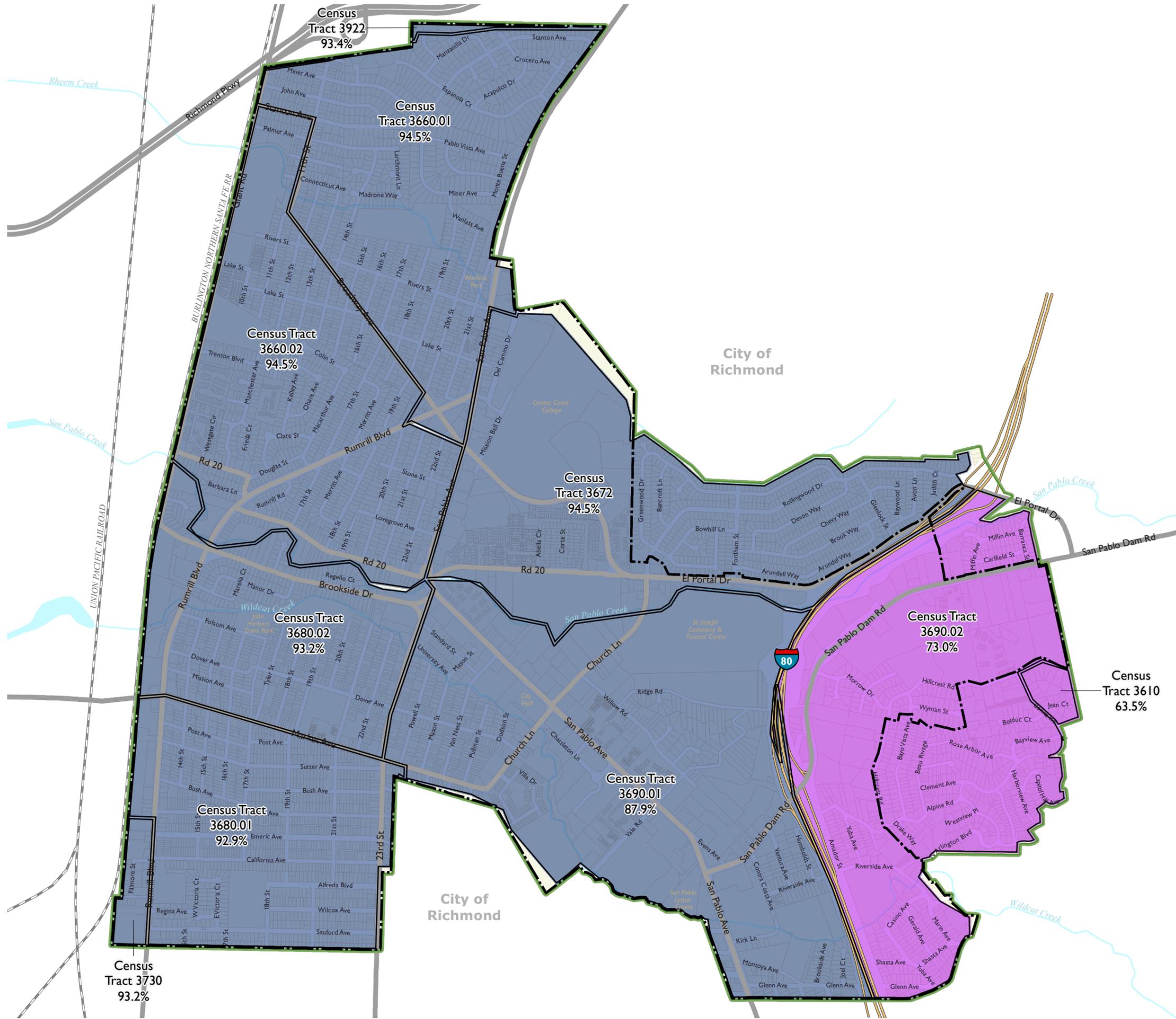
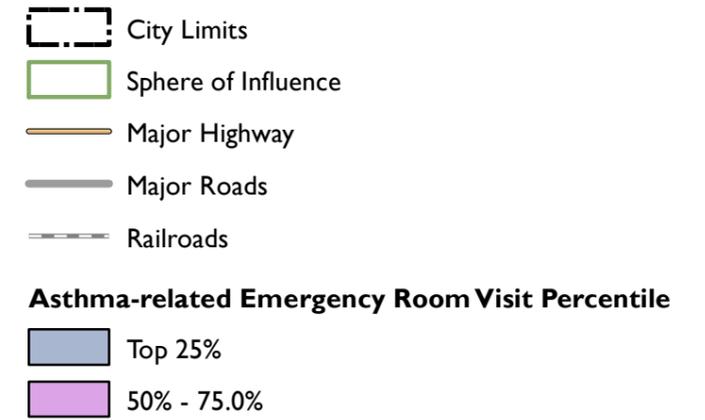
- City Limits
  - Sphere of Influence
  - Major Highway
  - Major Roads
  - Railroads
- Traffic Density Percentile**
- Top 25%
  - 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-9: Asthma-related Emergency Room Visits



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

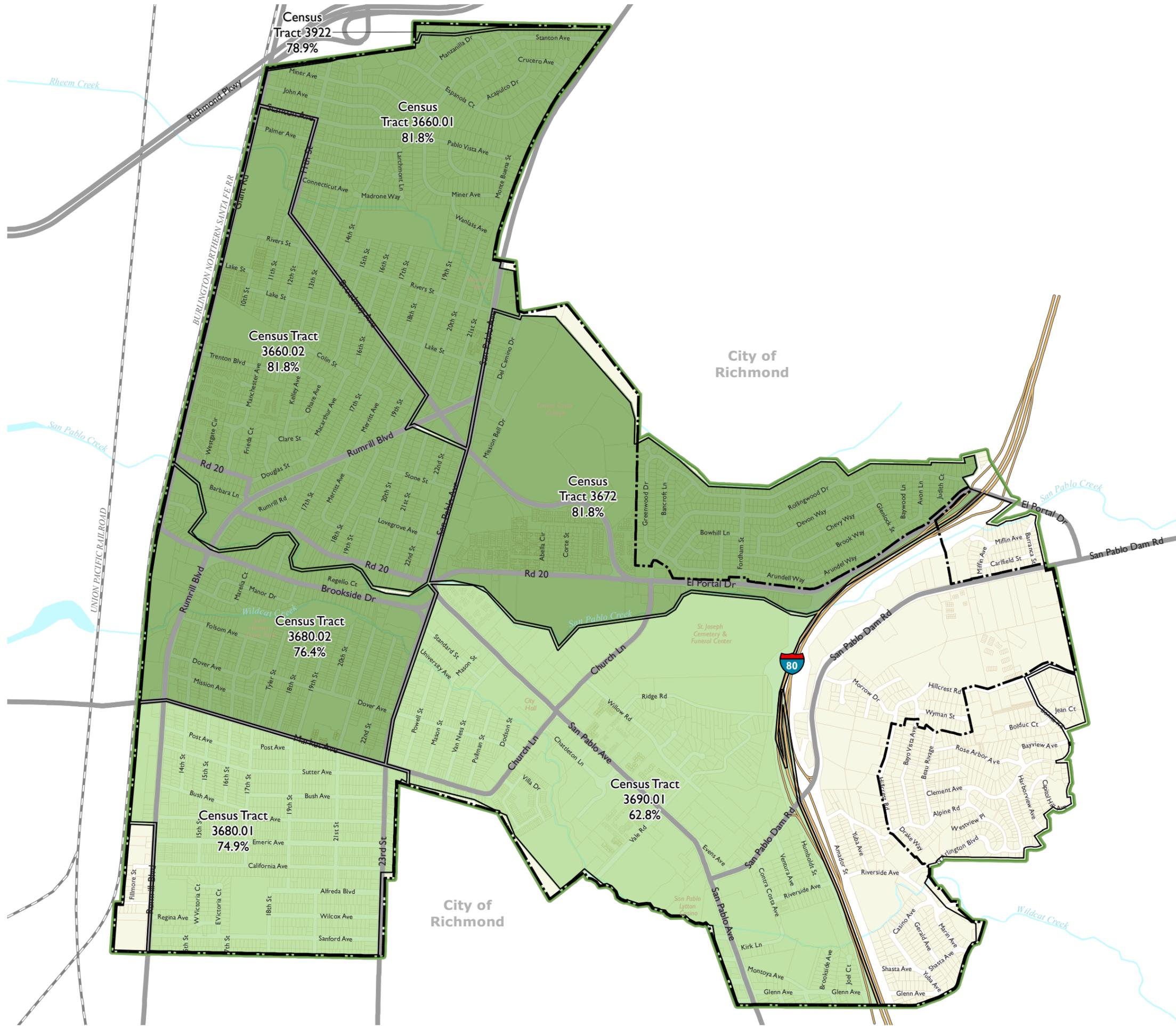
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Figure 7-10: Emergency Room Visits for Heart Attacks

-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Major Highway
-  Major Roads
-  Railroads

**Emergency Room Visits for Heart Attacks Percentile**

-  Top 25%
-  50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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## Drinking Water Threats, Pesticide Use, and Toxic Releases

According to OEHHA, numerous chemical and bacterial contaminants are routinely detected in the drinking water throughout California. However, San Pablo faces relatively little exposure to drinking water contaminants. This CalEnviroScreen indicator measures the concentration of 13 contaminants and two types of water quality violations that are sometimes found when drinking water samples are tested. All planning area Census tracts rank just below the fourth percentile statewide.

Pesticides are chemicals used to control insects, weeds, and plant or animal diseases. Over 1,000 pesticides are approved for use in California, and they are applied to agricultural fields from the air, by farm machinery, or by workers on the ground, according to OEHHA. Due to its urban setting, San Pablo experiences relatively low exposure to pesticide use. Typically, farmworkers and people who live near agricultural fields are most heavily affected by pesticide use. No tract in the planning area ranks above the 36th percentile statewide according to CalEnviroScreen.

Figure 7-11 shows planning area Census tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen percentile ranking among tracts statewide for exposure to toxic chemical releases to the air from facilities or from off-site incineration. People living near facilities that make or use toxic chemicals may breathe contaminated air regularly or if contaminants are released during an accident at the facility, according to OEHHA. Three planning area tracts rank above the 75th percentile for toxic release exposure, with an additional two tracts ranking above the 70th percentile and the remaining five tracts ranking above the 59th percentile. This indicates that exposure to toxic chemical releases may be an issue for neighborhoods across San Pablo. Census tracts located in the southern portion of the City, west of I-80, tend to have slightly elevated levels of toxic release exposure.

## Cleanup Sites and Groundwater Threats

Cleanup sites are places that are contaminated with harmful chemicals and need to be cleaned up by the property owners or by the government. People living near these sites are more likely to be exposed to chemicals from the sites than people living further away. Chemicals in the buildings, soil, or water at cleanup sites can move into nearby areas through the air or by movement of water. According to OEHHA, some studies have shown that neighborhoods with cleanup sites are generally poorer and have more people of color than other neighborhoods. As seen in Figure 7-12, according to CalEnviroScreen, four Census tracts in the planning area rank in the top 25th percentile statewide for the presence of cleanup sites close to residential areas, while another two rank above the 50th percentile. These six tracts cover the portion of San Pablo west of 23rd Street. While there are only nine cleanup sites located within the planning area according to the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's EnviroStor database of cleanup sites, tracts on the west side of San Pablo are within one quarter-mile of numerous cleanup sites located just west of San Pablo that are concentrated in the unincorporated area of North Richmond, as shown in Figure 7-12.

In addition to officially designated cleanup sites, hazardous chemicals are often stored in containers on land or in underground storage tanks. Leaks from these containers and tanks can contaminate soil and pollute groundwater. These pollutants commonly include gasoline and diesel fuel from gas stations, as well as solvents and heavy metals. Cleanup of such leaks may take many years, and intermediary land uses on the site are often restricted. People who live near contaminated groundwater may be exposed to chemicals moving from the soil into the air inside their homes or into drinking water, according to OEHHA. As seen in Figure 7-13, six Census tracts in the planning area rank above the 50th percentile statewide according to CalEnviroScreen data for proximity to cleanup sites listed in the State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker database that threaten groundwater safety threats close to residential areas. Three of these sites

have an open status, including a drycleaner, a self-storage site (formerly World Oil), and Vale Healthcare Center. No tracts rank in the top 25th percentile.

### **Hazardous and Solid Waste Sites and Facilities**

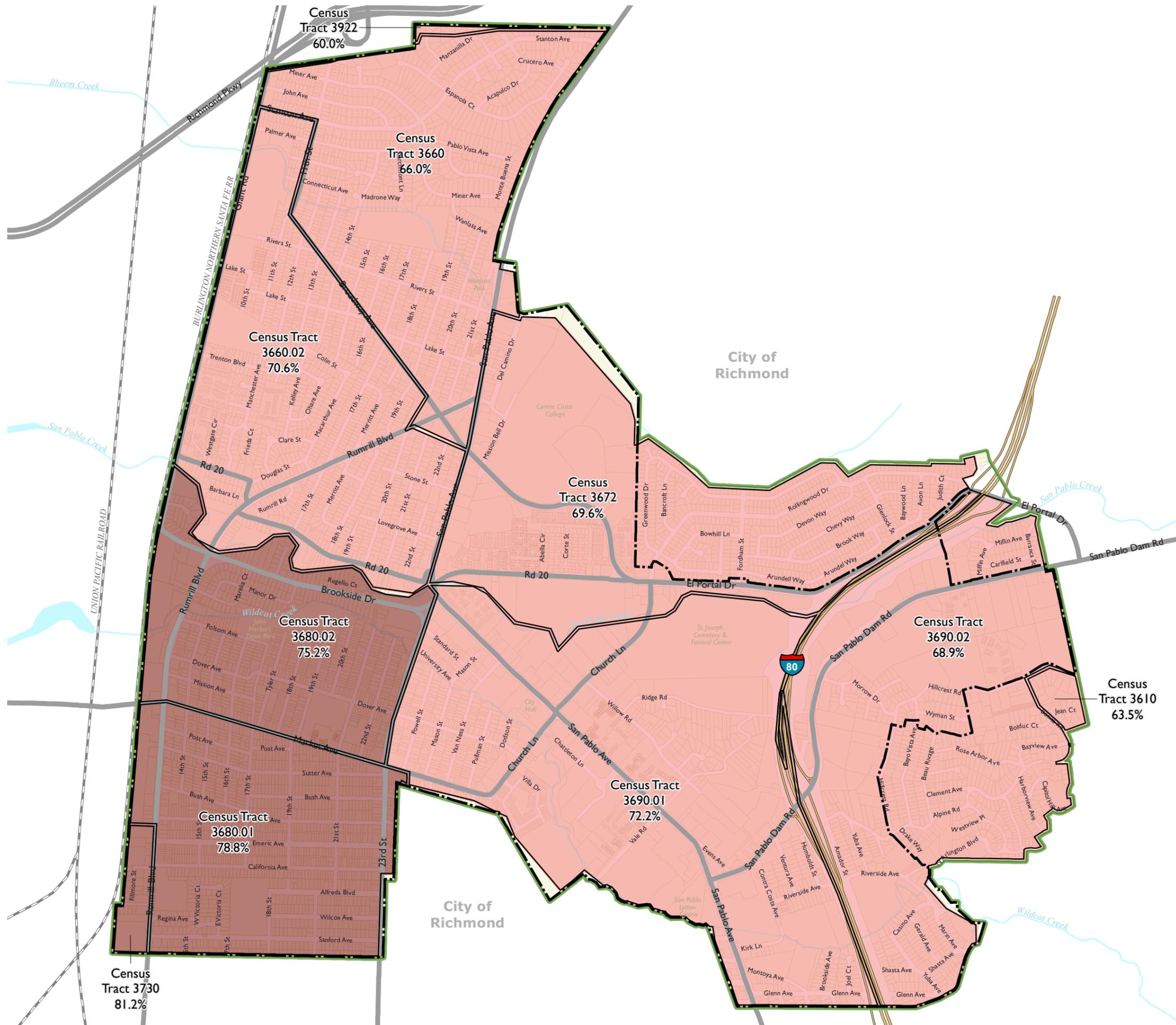
Hazardous waste is created by certain commercial or industrial activity that contains chemicals that may be dangerous or harmful to health. Examples include automotive oil and highly toxic waste materials produced by factories. Hazardous waste is transported from locations where it is generated to regulated facilities that are allowed to treat, store, or dispose of it. According to OEHHA, potential contamination of air, water, and soil near hazardous waste generator sites and treatment facilities can harm the environment as well as people in the area. This CalEnviroScreen indicator adds up the number of permitted hazardous waste facilities and hazardous waste generator sites in each Census tract, weighted by the potential health risk associated with each site. Based on a recent records search, there are two hazardous waste sites in the EnviroStor database approximately one-quarter mile west of San Pablo – both of which are no longer active but are historical operators that are logged for protective purposes. In addition, there are 51 active facilities in the Hazardous Waste Tracking System dispersed throughout San Pablo including a cemetery, medical facilities, drycleaners, automobile service shops, and other commercial or industrial uses that generate hazardous waste. As seen in Figure 7-14, six tracts in the planning area rank in the top 25th percentile statewide, and two of these (Census tracts 3680.01 and 3730) rank above the 90th percentile. An additional two tracts rank above the 50th percentile. These eight tracts cover the majority of San Pablo, and higher scores are primarily located south of San Pablo Creek.

CalEnviroScreen data also includes an indicator on the presence of solid waste facilities, which are places where household garbage and other types of waste are collected, processed, or stored. Examples include landfills, transfer stations, and composting facilities. According to OEHHA, both regulated facilities and illegal sites for solid waste can harm the environment and expose residents to hazardous chemicals by releasing toxic gases into the air and soil. Although there are no solid waste sites or facilities within San Pablo, there are eight such locations located in the City of Richmond, including chipping and grinding facilities, composting facilities, large volume transfer facilities, solid waste disposal sites, and a landfill. As seen in Figure 7-15, there is one Census tract at the northern border of San Pablo scoring in the top 25th percentile statewide, and two other Census tracts at the western edge that score in the top 50th percentile.

### **Impaired Water Bodies**

Impaired water bodies are streams, rivers, and lakes that are contaminated by pollutants. According to OEHHA, Tribal or low-income communities may depend on fish, aquatic plants, water, and wildlife in nearby water bodies more than the general population. Impairments can prevent recreational and other uses of water bodies, while also harming wildlife ecosystems and potentially exposing people who ingest wildlife from impaired bodies to toxic substances. Figure 7-16 shows the location of Census tracts across the planning area ranking above the 50th percentile statewide for the presence of pollutants in impaired water bodies close to residential areas. Four tracts on the west side of San Pablo rank in the top 25th percentile statewide, and a small portion of the eastern planning area is in the top 50th percentile. This is likely due to Rheem, San Pablo, and Wildcat Creeks that run through these tracts and their location closer to the San Pablo Bay, all of which are impaired water bodies. Due to presence of contaminants such as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which are highly carcinogenic chemical compounds, there are no fish in San Pablo's creeks, and fishing in San Pablo and San Francisco bays are not considered suitable for consumption. Use of waters from these creeks for non-potable uses such as irrigation is also illegal.

Figure 7-1 I: Toxic Release



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Toxic Release Percentile**

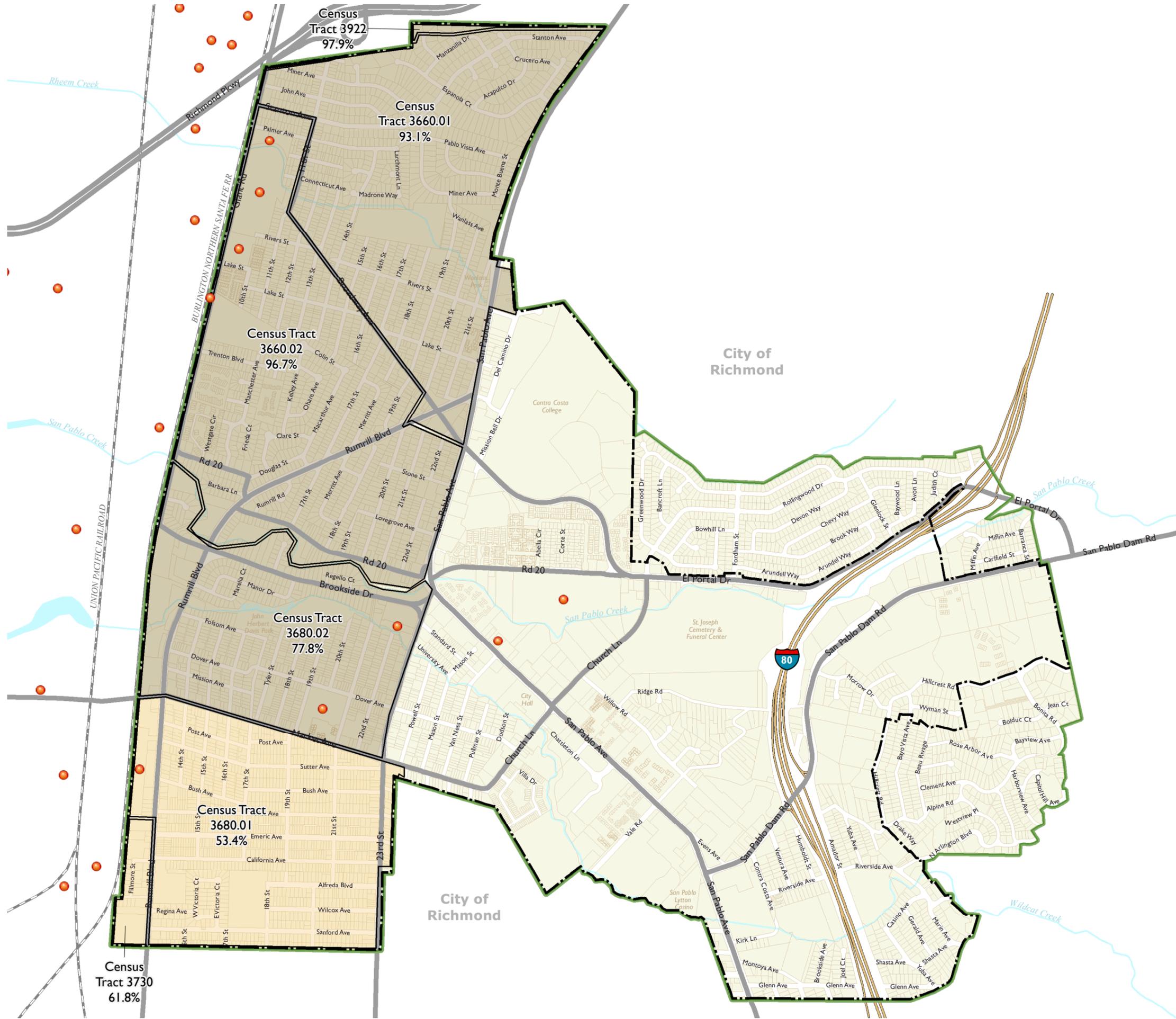
- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Urban and Regional Planners

Figure 7-12: Cleanup Sites



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads
- EnviroStor Cleanup Site

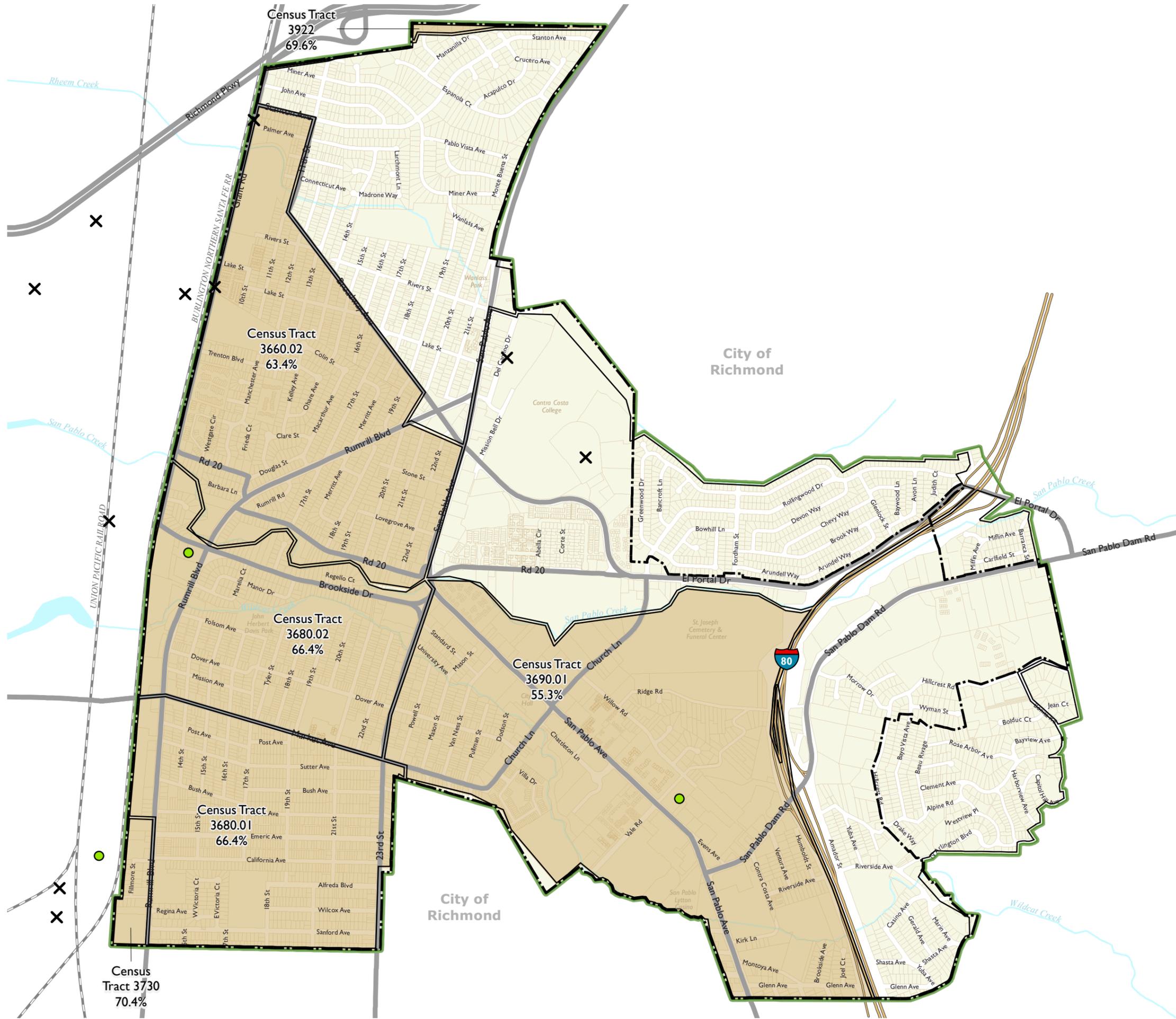
- Cleanup Sites Percentile**
- Top 25%
  - 50% - 75%



SOURCE: Department of Toxic Substance Control, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

**DYETT & BHATIA**  
Urban and Regional Planners

Figure 7-13: Groundwater Threats



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**GeoTracker Cleanup Program Sites**

- Open
- Closed

**Groundwater Threats Percentile**

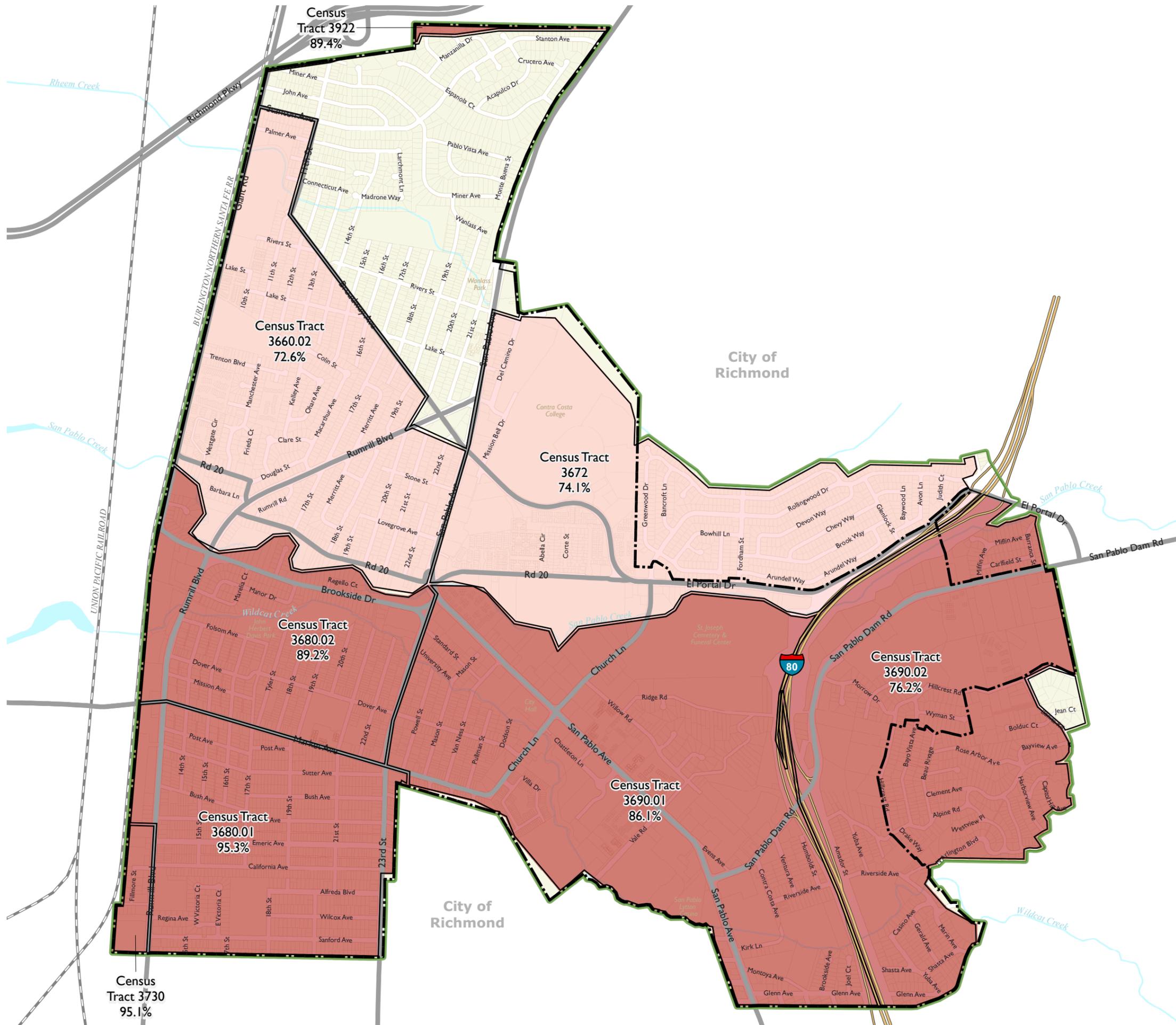
- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: State Water Resources Control Board, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-14: Hazardous Waste



**City Limits**  
 City Limits

**Sphere of Influence**  
 Sphere of Influence

**Major Highway**  
 Major Highway

**Major Roads**  
 Major Roads

**Railroads**  
 Railroads

**Hazardous Waste Percentile**

Top 25%

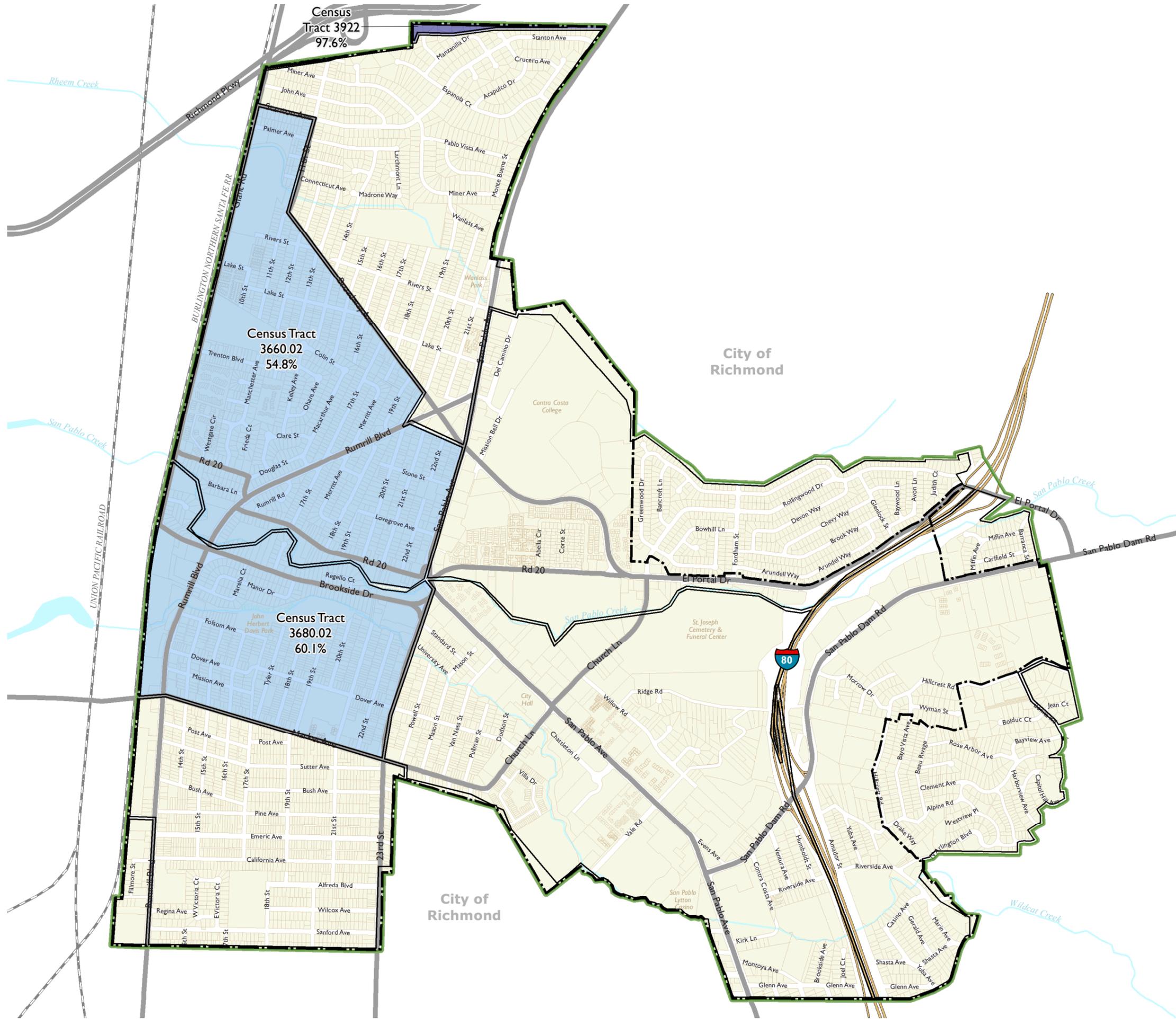
50% - 75%



SOURCE: Department of Toxic Substance Control, 2022; CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-15: Solid Waste Sites



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Solid Waste Percentile**

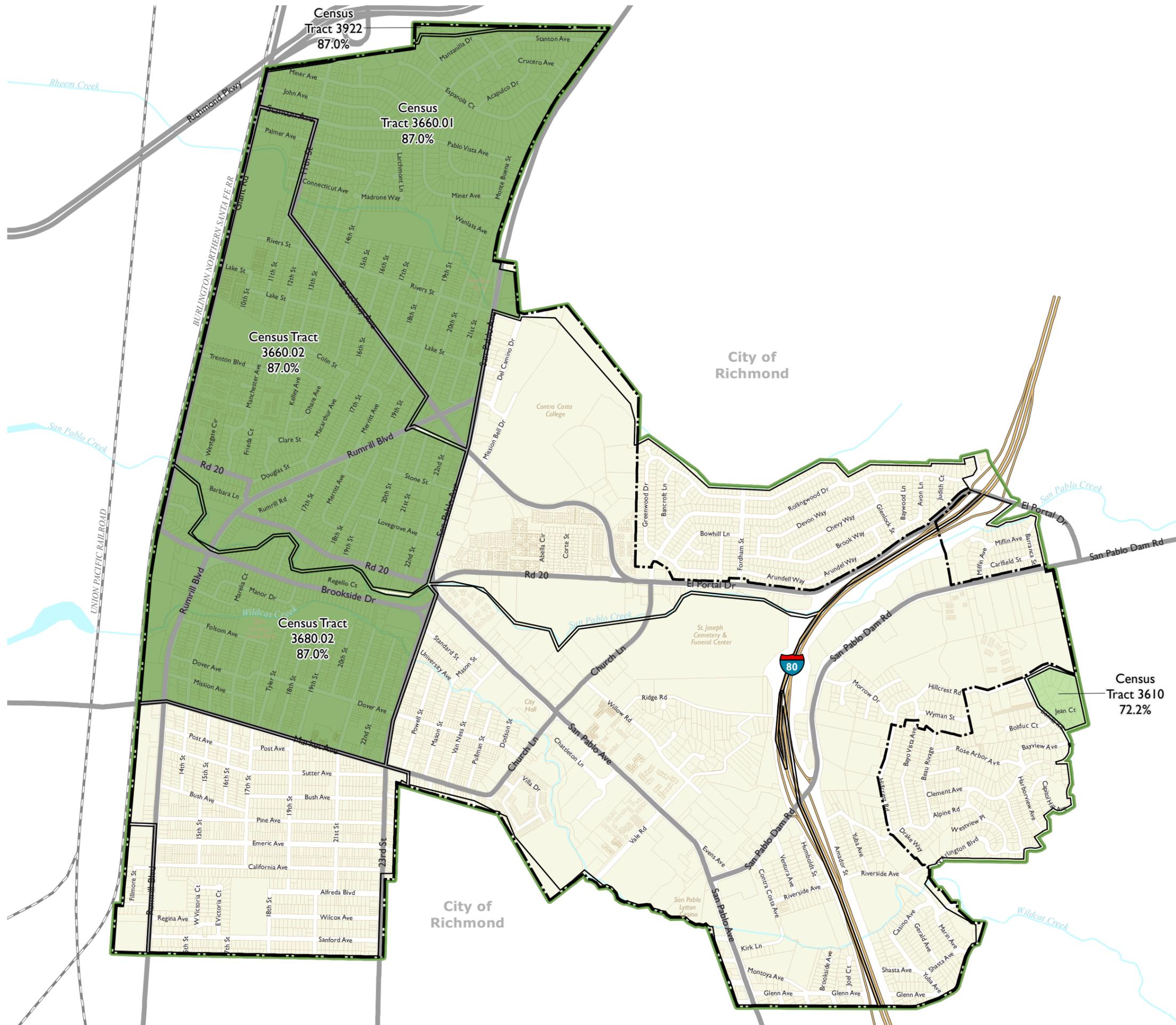
- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Urban and Regional Planners

Figure 7-16: Impaired Water Bodies



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Impaired Water Bodies Percentile**

- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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## SAFE AND SANITARY HOUSING

Access to safe, sanitary housing is important for everyone, from homeowners to renters to unhoused residents. Beyond being a source of shelter, a home gives families a sense of security, health, peace of mind, and center of life. The quality of housing (including the absence of health hazards); its proximity to daily services, schools, and jobs; and its affordability, relative to household income, are all factors that have a profound influence on a person's health and well-being and has been consistently shown to improve health outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

### Housing Security/Burden

Housing security is largely defined by a household's ability to pay their housing costs (i.e., rent, mortgage, utilities, etc.) and remain in the neighborhoods of their choosing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines individuals or households as being burdened by the cost of housing if they spend over 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Housing cost burden can also be specified by tenure; for example, rent-burdened households are those that spend more than 30 percent of their income on gross rent. As housing costs grow to take up a greater share of a household's total income, fewer funds remain available for schooling, childcare, groceries, transportation, and other expenses. According to this definition, more than 58.4 percent of San Pablo renters are burdened by the cost of rent as of 2019. As seen in Table 7-2, based on 2019 data, 31.7 percent of rental households were paying 50 percent or more of their income towards rent, which HUD considers to be "severely rent burdened."

Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have also significantly affected households' ability to pay for housing costs. The economic impacts of job loss, added healthcare costs, and other factors have exacerbated burdens on households that may have already been housing burdened. To help address this urgent need during the pandemic the City established a rent and mortgage assistance program that was heavily used. Other ongoing programs, such as the Senior Nutrition Program, which offers daily congregate meals sponsored by Contra Costa County also saw increased participation.

**Table 7-2: Rent Burden in the City of San Pablo**

<i>Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income</i>	<i>Number of Households</i>	<i>Percent of Renter Households</i>
Less than 15.0 percent	273	4.9%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	712	12.8%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	631	11.4%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	692	12.5%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	428	7.7%
35.0 to 39.9 percent	467	8.4%
40.0 to 49.9 percent	590	10.6%
50.0 percent or more	1,760	31.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,553</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2019 five-year estimates; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021.

The majority of households in the City of San Pablo are renters (61.9 percent). However, many homeowners in the City also pay a significant portion of their income towards housing costs. According to the 2019 ACS

<sup>8</sup> Lauren A. Taylor, "Housing And Health: An Overview Of The Literature," Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, June 7, 2018, doi: 10.1377/hpb20180313.396577.

five-year estimates, 32.4 percent of all San Pablo homeowners are paying 35 percent or more of their monthly income towards housing costs. And, among the 66.5 percent of homeowners in San Pablo who have a mortgage on their home, this number increases to 41.7 percent. Figure 7-17 compares Census tracts across the planning area to those across the state in their percentile rank in CalEnviroScreen for the percentage of low-income households that are burdened by the cost of housing. Even though a significant portion of households in San Pablo fall under the HUD definition of housing burdened, only tracts 3690.01 and 3680.01 rank above the 75th percentile statewide, with three additional planning area tracts ranking above the 60th percentile. Prevalence of housing cost burden in these Census tracts is among some of the highest rates in the state and may also, in part, be reflective of high housing costs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

### Housing Age and Quality

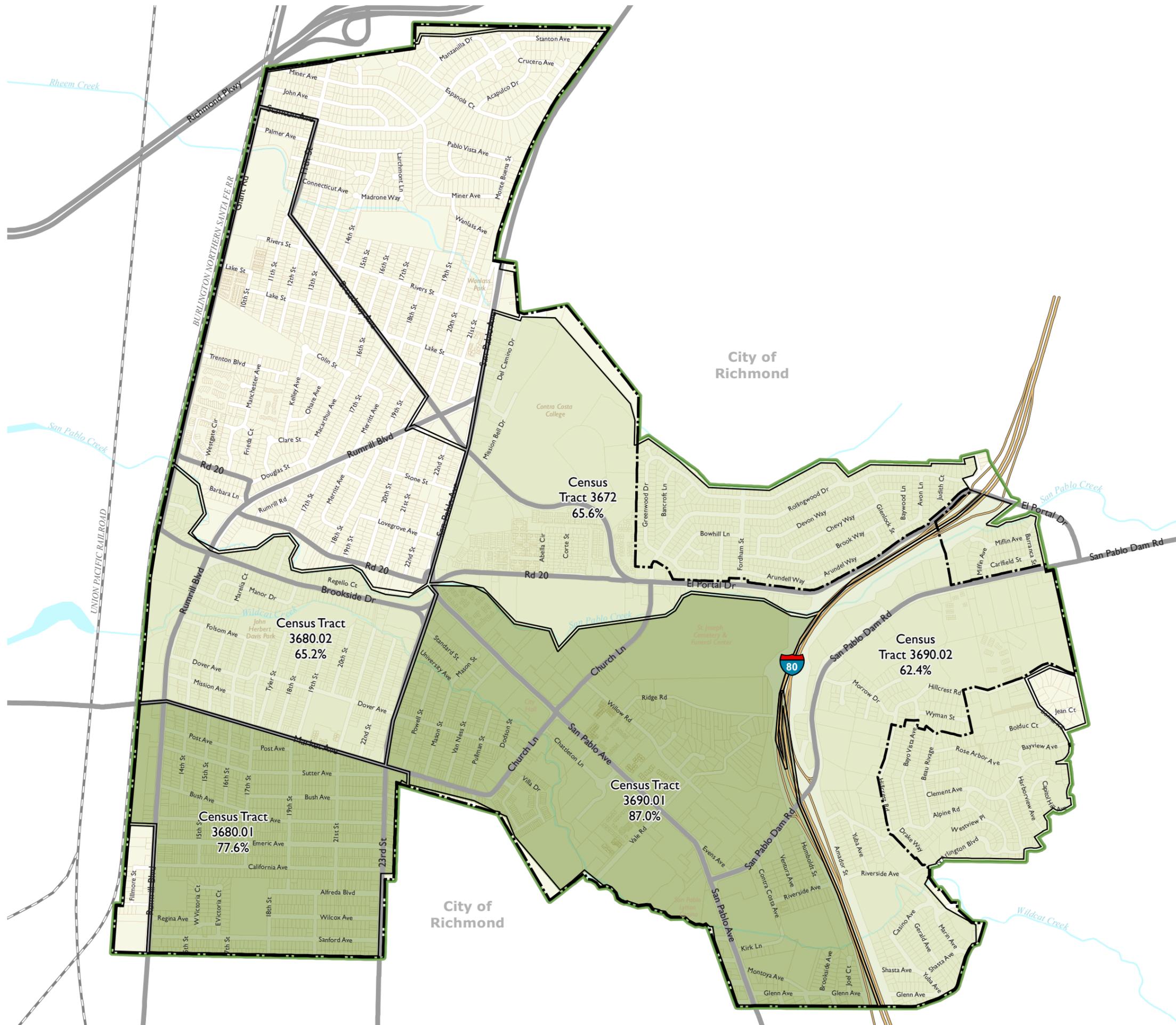
Access to safe, good quality, affordable housing is a critical component of environmental justice. It is common for disadvantaged populations to live in neighborhoods with a higher proportion of housing stock constructed before contemporary building codes. This can increase the likelihood of residents' exposure to lead or asbestos. As shown in Table 7-3, two-thirds (65.6 percent) of the City of San Pablo's housing stock were constructed before 1980. The City's oldest housing stock is located in Census tracts 3660.02, 3672, and 3680.01, where the median year built is 1960. Figure 7-18 shows planning area tracts and their associated CalEnviroScreen percentile ranking among tracts statewide for the potential risk for lead exposure for children living in low-income communities with older housing. According to OEHHA, childhood lead exposure can adversely affect brain development, and can result in blood, kidney, and endocrine toxicity. Past uses of lead persist in paint and old plumbing in older housing stock. All ten planning area tracts rank above the 50th percentile, with seven scoring above the 75th percentile. This indicates that potential lead exposure is a serious concern for low-income communities in San Pablo.

**Table 7-3: Year of Housing Structure Construction in the City of San Pablo**

<i>Year Built</i>	<i>Number of Structures</i>	<i>Percent</i>
2014 or later	10	0.1%
2010 to 2013	52	0.5%
2000 to 2009	825	8.4%
1990 to 1999	1177	12.0%
1980 to 1989	1308	13.4%
1970 to 1979	1594	16.3%
1960 to 1969	1491	15.2%
1950 to 1959	1816	18.5%
1940 to 1949	1035	10.6%
1939 or earlier	485	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,793</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2019 five-year estimates; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021.

Figure 7-17: Housing Burden



**City Limits**  
 City Limits

**Sphere of Influence**  
 Sphere of Influence

**Major Highway**  
 Major Highway

**Major Roads**  
 Major Roads

**Railroads**  
 Railroads

**Housing Burden Percentile**

Top 25%

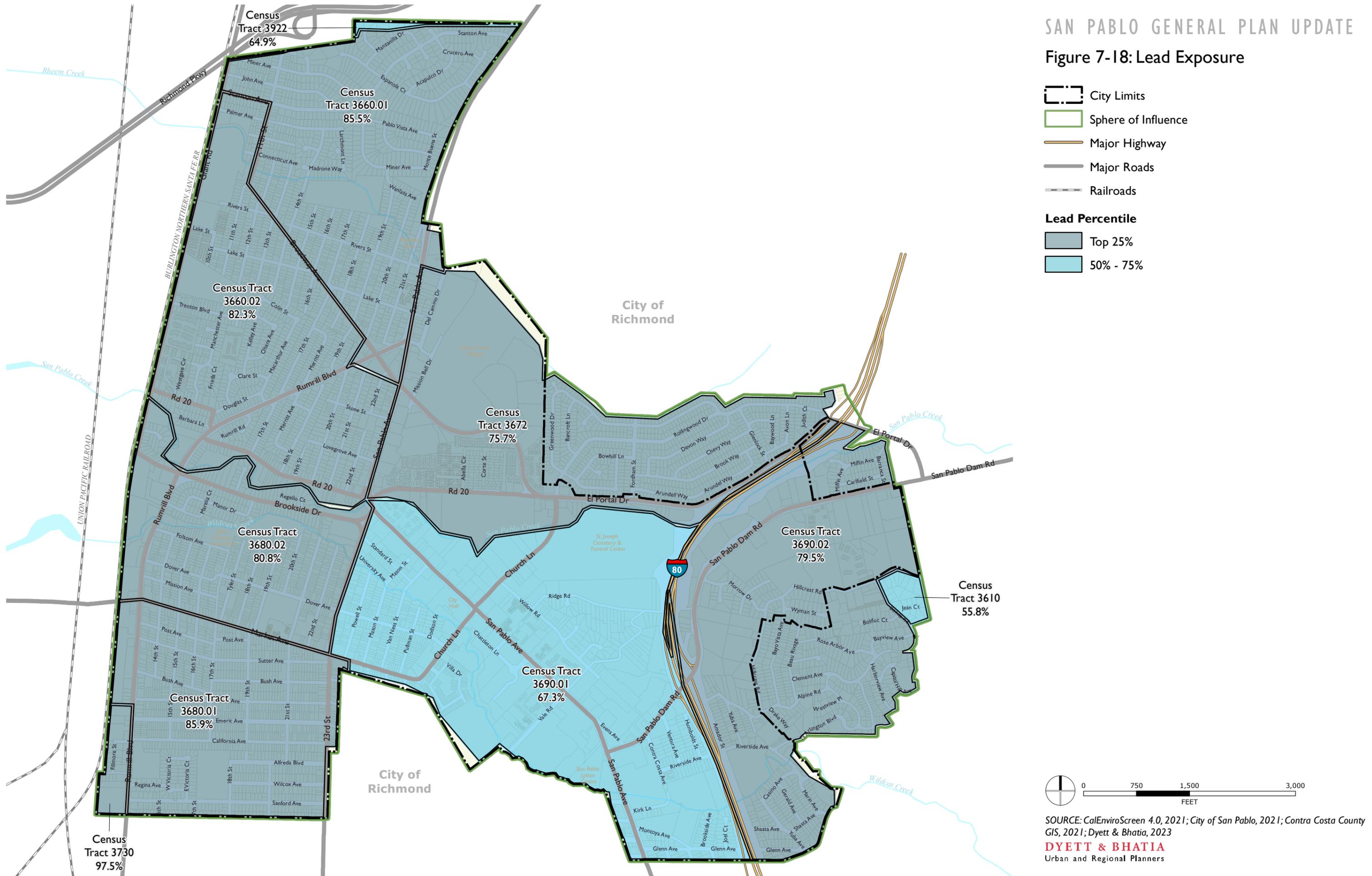
50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-18: Lead Exposure



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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The City has recognized this public health risk in the Residential Health and Safety Ordinance (Chapter 15.52 of the San Pablo Municipal Code), which establishes the Residential Health and Safety (RH&S) Program to ensure that the City's single and multiple-family residential rental units comply with existing state and local building, electrical, fire and plumbing code standards. The RH&S program is an integral and effective component of the City's strategy for ensuring that residential structures are safe for occupancy, and housing stock is maintained to acceptable standards.

## Homelessness

The most recent Contra Costa County Homelessness Point-in-Time (PIT) Count was conducted in January 2022 by Contra Costa's Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC), which receives federal funding to provide homeless housing and services. The count is conducted with the help of County agencies and community volunteers. The 2022 count found a total of 3,093 individuals experiencing homelessness in Contra Costa County, a 36-percent increase from 2,277 in 2020 and 35-percent increase from 2,295 in 2019. (PIT Counts for 2021 are not included due to significant data inconsistencies for that year.) In particular, the unsheltered population has grown by 43 percent since 2019, and the sheltered population has increased by 19 percent.<sup>9</sup> According to the 2021 CoC Annual Report, there were 235 households that lost their housing in San Pablo specifically, representing 13 percent of the West County subarea and four percent of the CoC overall.<sup>10</sup> It is noted that the PIT Count is an estimate of homeless populations based on the number of individuals counted on a single day that the survey is conducted. It can be difficult to fully assess the number of homeless individuals due to factors such as geographic mobility, and as such, PIT Counts are typically considered a conservative estimate of the actual number of people experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are unsheltered.

The CoC is also responsible for maintaining a housing inventory count that is annually reported to HUD along with the PIT Count. In 2022, there were only a total of 952 beds (including at emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens) available year-round to serve the 3,093 individuals experiencing homelessness within the Contra Costa CoC. Rapid re-housing and permanent housing represent another 1,655 beds, which is still insufficient compared to the total homeless population.<sup>11</sup> This limited availability of beds can also vary significantly throughout the CoC, depending on the location of shelters and housing, and higher unsheltered population in a particular city could be influenced by a lack of adequate shelters. In order to help meet this need, the City is partnering with the County's Coordinated Outreach Referral, Engagement (CORE) Program to engage and stabilize chronically homeless individuals and families living outside by helping them navigate the coordinated entry system and ultimately secure permanent housing.

As part of a survey accompanying the 2019 PIT Count, homeless individuals' top response when asked about the primary cause of homelessness was financial hardship (i.e., cost of living/loss of job) at 25 percent, followed by eviction (17 percent), substance abuse (14 percent), and a separation/divorce (11 percent). Nearly 83 percent of homeless individuals surveyed reported losing housing within Contra Costa County leading to homelessness. When asked about their preferences in housing options, every person interviewed

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "PIT and HIC Data Since 2007" [2007 - 2022 Point-in-Time Estimates by CoC], HUD Exchange, January 2023, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007/>.

<sup>10</sup> Contra Costa County Continuum of Care, "Calendar Year 2021 Annual Report," August 31, 2022, <https://cchealth.org/h3/coc/pdf/Annual-Report-2021.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "PIT and HIC Data Since 2007" [2007 - 2022 Housing Inventory Count by CoC], HUD Exchange, January 2023, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007/>.

<sup>11</sup> Contra Costa County Continuum of Care, "Calendar Year 2021 Annual Report," August 31, 2022, <https://cchealth.org/h3/coc/pdf/Annual-Report-2021.pdf>.

said they would accept at least one type of short or long-term shelter and housing opportunity if provided. The most common housing preferences indicated were to own an apartment/home (76 percent), followed by shared housing with their own bedroom (40 percent), emergency shelter (34 percent), and transitional housing (28 percent).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a notable negative impact on homelessness and the homeless population. Based on their 2021 Annual Report, the CoC estimated that there was an 11-percent decrease in adult-only households and a six-percent decrease in households with children that accessed CoC services between 2019 and 2021. Overall, the CoC saw a 38-percent decrease in the number of people served in shelters, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing (i.e., those served by the CoC) during this period, primarily due to reduced capacity in shelters and CARE Centers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The nature of homelessness also shifted, with a 24-percent increase in duration (number of days homeless) and a greater proportion of people who entered homelessness between 2019-2021 and have been homeless before.<sup>12</sup>

City services have correspondingly expanded to help meet this rising need. For example, the San Pablo Police Department has created a new Priority Oriented Policing (POP) Division with specially trained officers and professional staff focused on behavioral health, homelessness, and community outreach. The 2021-2022 San Pablo Police Department Annual Report cites homelessness as one of the community's top concerns that was identified as a priority by the fiscal year 2021-2023 City Council Priority Workplan.<sup>13</sup>

## **CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

The effects of climate change have become increasingly apparent throughout California, including extreme heat and heat waves, droughts, wildfires, and severe storms and flooding. While these issues themselves generally occur at a broader geographic scale, some of these risks are felt more acutely by certain populations. Frontline communities are those that are hit first and worst by climate hazards, and many are less equipped to respond to these risks. For example, 1.41 meters (about 4.6 feet) of sea level rise in the San Francisco Bay Area could result in approximately three inches of flooding during an extreme storm (e.g., a 100-year flood) for many areas along coast of the San Pablo and San Francisco bays.<sup>14</sup> Although this amount of sea level rise is not projected to reach the City of San Pablo, changes in precipitation patterns in combination with sea level rise could increase the potential for flood risk in the City. More information about hazards and emergency management is included in Chapter 8: Safety and Noise.

### **Urban Heat**

Properties of the built environment including building materials, lack of greenery, and limited shade can increase the temperature of cities relative to rural surroundings – a phenomena known as the urban heat island effect. This is because surfaces such as pavement absorb and retain heat, many urban land uses such as transportation and industrial activities generate heat, and urban environments may have limited tree canopy that provides shade to reduce heat. Based on a combination of these factors, certain parts of San Pablo may be prone to becoming localized urban heat islands where the temperature is substantially hotter than other areas of the City. Given that the average annual maximum temperature in San Pablo is projected

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<sup>12</sup> Contra Costa County Continuum of Care, "Calendar Year 2021 Annual Report."

<sup>13</sup> San Pablo Police Department, "2021-2022 Annual Report," 2022, [https://issuu.com/sanpablopd/docs/san\\_pablo\\_pd\\_annual\\_report\\_2022\\_for\\_issuu\\_-\\_englis](https://issuu.com/sanpablopd/docs/san_pablo_pd_annual_report_2022_for_issuu_-_englis).

<sup>14</sup> Cal-Adapt, Sea Level Rise (CalFloD-3D) for San Francisco Bay Area [1.41-meter scenario], 2018, accessed January 25, 2023, <https://cal-adapt.org/tools/slr-calflod-3d>.

to rise as much as 7.1 degrees Fahrenheit (°F)<sup>15</sup> with as many as 18 extreme heat days per year<sup>16</sup> by the end of the century (i.e., 2100),<sup>17</sup> the livability of outdoor environments within urban heat islands will be significantly impacted. This is especially true for populations vulnerable to heat-related illnesses such as older adults, young children, individuals with certain medical conditions, and outdoor workers. Households that lack air conditioning are also at risk, many of which may be low-income or renter households. Furthermore, increasing frequency and severity of high heat events could increase reliance on air conditioning, which can increase energy cost burdens on low-income households.

Figure 7-19 shows the five-year average (2018-2022) daytime land surface temperature of a day in August and highlights the areas where temperatures are hottest (in red) compared to those that are coolest (in blue) in the City. Figure 7-20 shows tree canopy coverage in San Pablo, which ranges between zero (no tree canopy) to 69 percent and is primarily located in the eastern portion of the City surrounding St. Joseph Cemetery and along San Pablo Creek. Tree canopy is also a climate equity issue because lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color that have experienced historical disinvestment tend to have less tree canopy and therefore less shade, making them more susceptible to the effects of extreme heat.

## HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

Being able to access food that is affordable and nutritious within a reasonable distance of one's home is another indicator of environmental justice. Not having access to healthy food can lead to higher risks of obesity and diabetes, make it difficult to focus at school or work, and create additional economic stresses on at-risk households.

### Food Access and Security

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) utilizes an online Food Access Research Atlas to map food access indicators by Census tract, tracking places where the provision of food sources, specifically of healthy food, is inadequate. These locations are known as food deserts. The Food Access Research Atlas maps food access indicators for Census tracts using half-mile and one-mile demarcations to the nearest supermarket for urban areas. It also includes analysis of vehicle availability. Not everyone has easy access to affordable, nutritious food, especially people who have lower incomes and who may rely on public transportation. According to the Food Access Research Atlas (2019), four Census tracts in the planning area are considered "low-income and low-access" at a half-mile range, meaning they are low-income neighborhoods where a significant share of residents is located more than a half-mile from the nearest supermarket. These are tracts 3660.02 and 3660.01 located north of San Pablo Creek and west of San Pablo Avenue, Tract 3680.01 located south of Market Avenue and west of 23rd Street, and Tract 3922, which includes a very small portion of the neighborhood north of Bayview Elementary School and mostly covers residents outside the planning area. All of these tracts are also officially designated DACs.

<sup>15</sup> Cal-Adapt, Annual Averages for Place (Incorporated and Census-designated, 2015) San Pablo, California [RCP 8.5, Global Climate Models HadGEM2-ES, CNRM-CM5, CanESM2, MIROC5], 2018, accessed January 24, 2023, <https://cal-adapt.org/tools/annual-averages/#lat=37.9653&lng=-122.3386&boundary=place&climvar=Temperature>. [Cal-Adapt website developed by University of California at Berkeley's Geospatial Innovation Facility under contract with the California Energy Commission.]

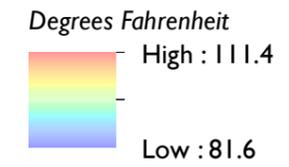
<sup>16</sup> Cal-Adapt defines extreme heat days as those with maximum daily temperatures that exceed 98 percent of historical (1961-1990) maximum daily temperatures. For San Pablo, this value is 89.9°F.

<sup>17</sup> Cal-Adapt, Extreme Heat Days & Warm Nights for Place (Incorporated and Census-designated, 2015) San Pablo, California [RCP 8.5, Global Climate Models HadGEM2-ES, CNRM-CM5, CanESM2, MIROC5], 2018, accessed January 24, 2023, <https://cal-adapt.org/tools/extreme-heat/#lat=37.9653&lng=-122.3386&boundary=place&climvar=Temperature>.

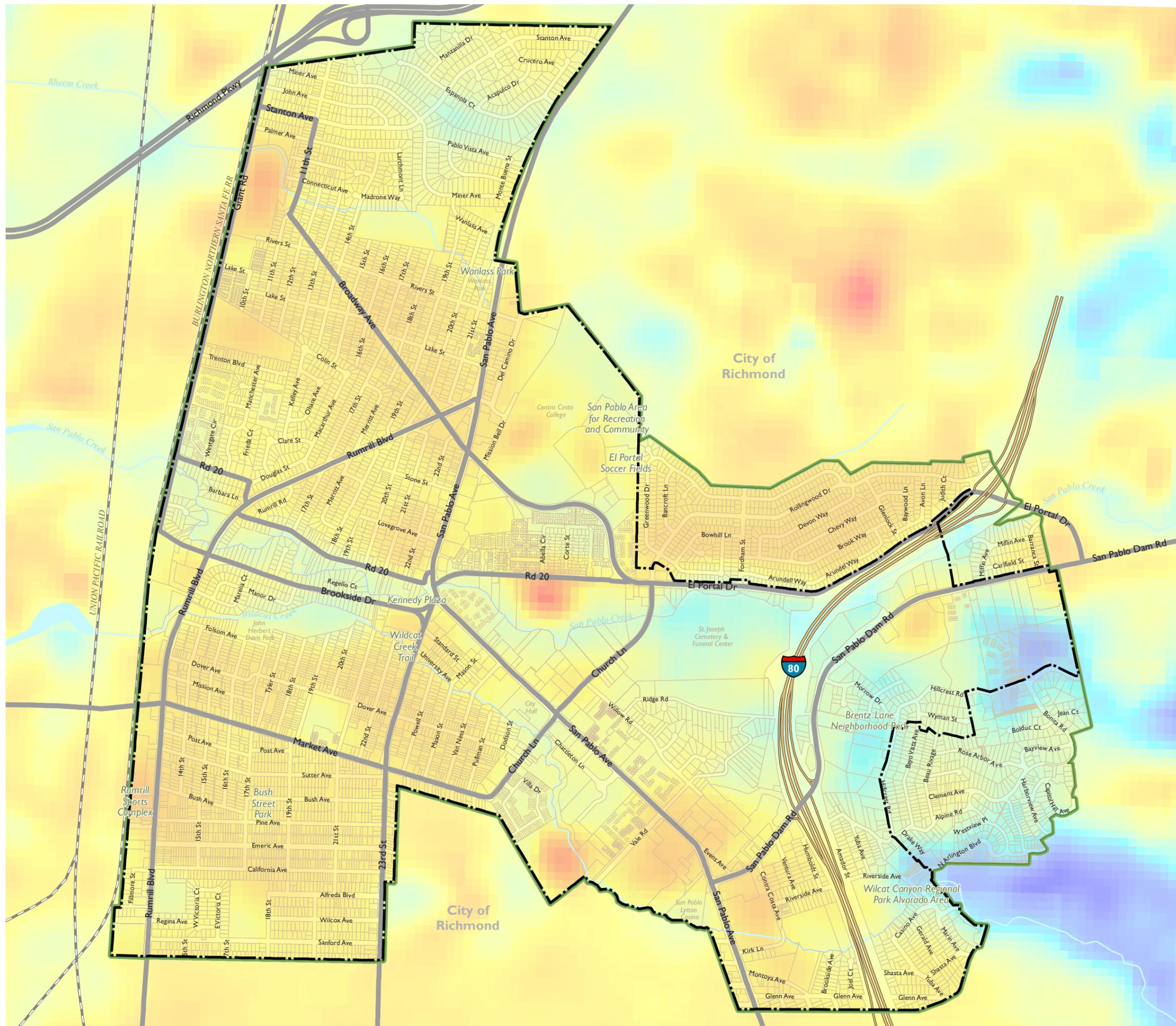
Figure 7-19: Urban Heat

-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Major Highway
-  Major Roads
-  Railroads

**Daytime Land Surface Temperature**



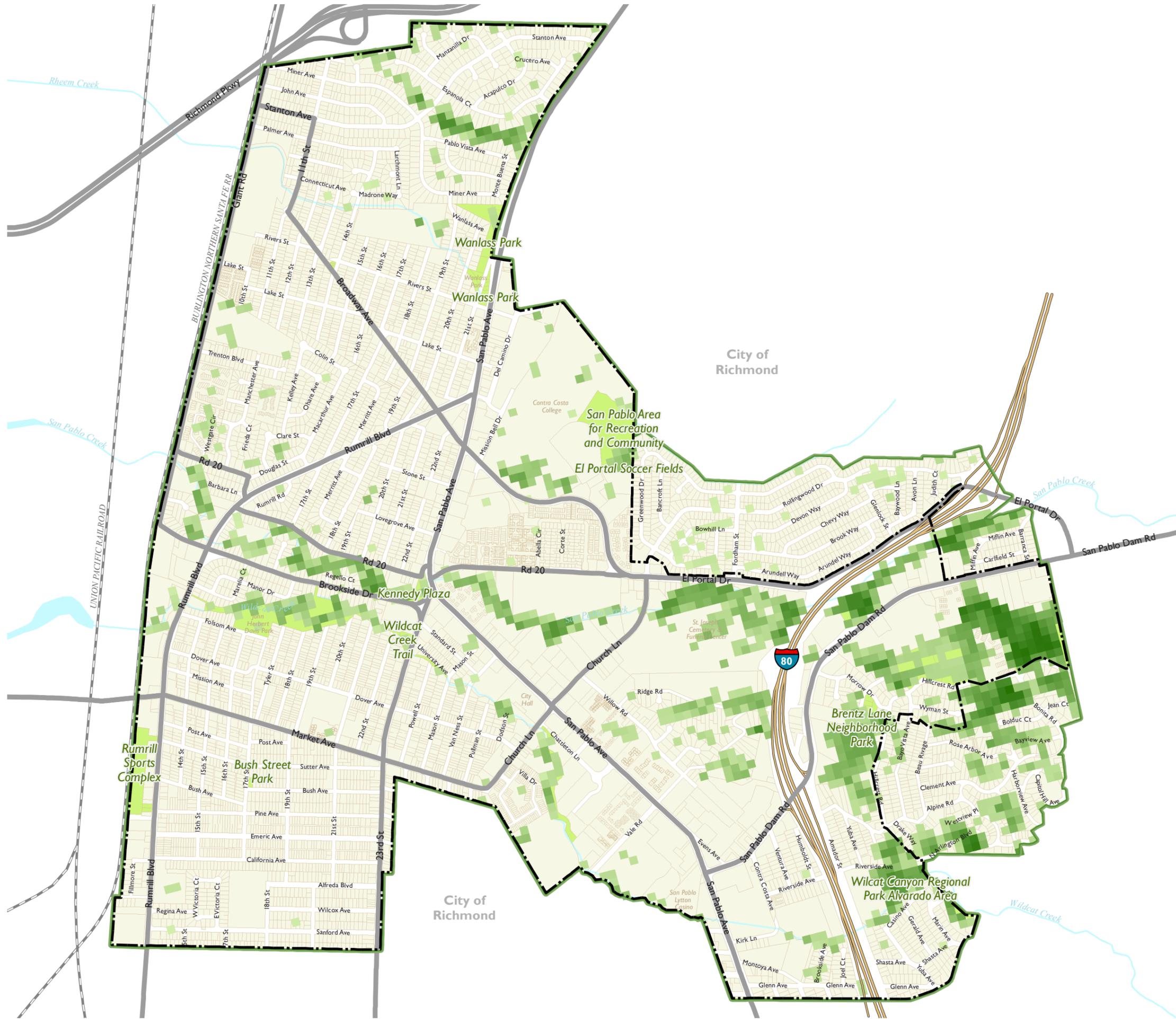
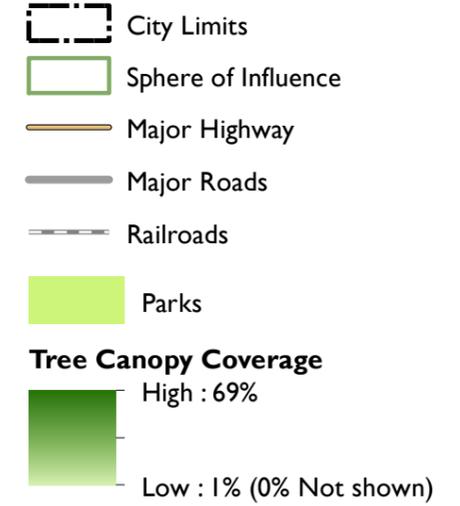
This map shows the average daytime land surface temperature based on satellite imagery (USGS Landsat 8, Collection 2 - Level 2 products) of a day in August 2018-2022, intended to represent a peak summer day in San Pablo.



SOURCE: CalEPA, 2022; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2022

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Figure 7-20: Tree Canopy



SOURCE: Multi-Resolution Land Consortium/National Land Cover Dataset (U.S. Forestry Service), 2019; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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Figure 7-21 shows the location of grocery stores and food markets in the planning area. As shown, San Pablo is well supplied with groceries and food markets along its corridors, but the fully developed single-family residential areas may be outside of the walking area of these markets, especially for the unincorporated and less urban residential areas in the San Pablo area. Within San Pablo, existing land use regulations for those single-family zoned tracts identified as low-income and low-access by the Food Access Research Atlas limit the development of non-residential uses in much of the area covered by these tracts. As a result, access to healthy food retailers in these areas may be limited by what can and cannot be built nearby to residents. This type of single-family land use pattern that separates residential and commercial uses can result in relatively long-distances between residents and food resources and lead to food deserts. Residents who live farther from commercial corridors like San Pablo Avenue, 23rd Street, and Rumrill Boulevard may have more difficulty accessing healthy foods, especially if they lack automobile access.

While food deserts indicate a lack of access to healthy food, food security indicates whether people have the economic means to purchase it on a regular basis. According to 2018 California Health Interview Survey data, 9.3 percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older are considered to be low-income food insecure. This is higher than in Contra Costa County (3.9 percent) and the State of California overall (6.4 percent). Food sources such as those provided under the CalFresh (previously Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) and Woman Infant and Children (WIC) Program are important resources for combatting food insecurity. In San Pablo, 15.5 percent of households receive CalFresh benefits according to 2019 ACS five-year estimates.

Healthy food access is a concern in San Pablo as obesity rates are significantly higher in the City of San Pablo than in Contra Costa County as a whole. According to 2018 California Health Interview Survey data, 40.8 percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older were classified as obese, compared to 29.4 percent in Contra Costa County. Additionally, 13.8 percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older had been diagnosed with diabetes compared to 10.0 percent of Contra Costa County residents aged 18 and older. These health issues also occur at a higher rate in San Pablo compared to the rest of the state where obesity affects 26.8 percent of those 18 and older and diabetes affects 10.6 percent of those 18 and older.

According to Feeding America, unemployment and food insecurity dramatically increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 53 million people across the U.S. who, in 2021, relied on food banks and community programs to put food on their tables.<sup>18</sup> The City of San Pablo has supported community members experiencing hunger, such as through a partnership with the West Contra Costa County Unified School District (WCCCUSD) that offered weekly pickups of five-day supply boxes of breakfast, lunch, snacks and supper at San Pablo Library throughout 2021 and 2022. This partnership also provides free after-school meals—such as a sandwich or wrap, vegetable, and milk—on weekdays at the San Pablo Public Library for kids and teens ages 18 and under.<sup>19</sup> Inexpensive food staples are also available at Joe’s Cafe, a grocery store and coffee shop with outdoor seating that opened in December 2018 at the San Pablo Public Library. The store aims to serve the community with fresh, affordable produce and coffee, including those participating in federal nutrition programs such as SNAP and WIC.<sup>20</sup>

The County of Contra Costa Health Services Department (CCHS) provides an integrated system of health care services, community health improvement, and environmental protection, anticipates and changes to

<sup>18</sup> Feeding America, “Hunger in America,” webpage, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>.

<sup>19</sup> Kathy Chouteau, “San Pablo Public Library to roll out ‘five-day-supply’ food boxes,” *The Richmond Standard*, October 6, 2021, <https://richmondstandard.com/richmond/2021/10/06/san-pablo-public-library-to-roll-out-five-day-supply-food-boxes/>.

<sup>20</sup> “Grocery store and cafe opens at San Pablo Library,” *The Richmond Standard*, January 3, 2019, <https://richmondstandard.com/beyond-richmond/2019/01/03/grocery-store-cafe-opens-at-san-pablo-library/>.

meet community health needs; and implements health policies and programs in partnership with patients, cities and diverse communities, and other health, education, and human service agencies. In October 2013, CCHS prepared a County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP)<sup>21</sup> to promote the federal 2010 Dietary Guidelines, U.S. Department of Agriculture Federal Nutrition Service’s food security programs (including SNAP and WIC), and physical activity. This overarching goal is supported by strategies and activities that increase participation in food assistance programs, nutrition education, countywide and local collaboration, and access to existing resources. Through these efforts, CCHS has implemented programs to improve access and consumption of healthy foods and water, reduce sweetened drinks, and increase physical activity among low-income residents throughout the county, with a special emphasis on reducing childhood obesity.

CCHS is rebuilding the County’s nutrition and health programs to reflect current, post-Covid-19 pandemic conditions. An update to the CNAP is anticipated and will be informed by related efforts by the Families Coalition for Activity and Nutrition (Families CAN), a 40-member collaborative that provides education and advocates for environmental changes in primarily underserved communities to improve health and empower families in the county. The Contra Costa County General Plan Update is also underway and will include a Health in All Policies approach to integrate health and environmental justice into all elements of the plan. CCHS is also partnering with the City of San Pablo to expand the Safe Routes to School program through development of complete streets that create more opportunities for physical activity in a pedestrian- and bike-friendly city.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Public facilities, such as parks, trails, community centers, and libraries, are essential community resources. Access and proximity to safe places for physical activity, including parks and recreational open space, can help improve physical activity levels and promote healthful lifestyles. There are approximately 26.7 acres of parkland in the City of San Pablo, and based on 2019 ACS five-year estimates, this translates to about 0.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. With the addition of the planned San Pablo Area for Recreation and Community (SPARC), this parkland ratio would increase to about 1.1 acres per 1,000 residents (using 2019 population estimates). Given that the City’s established parkland standard is 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents, the City would need to acquire more than 60 acres of parkland to meet this metric.

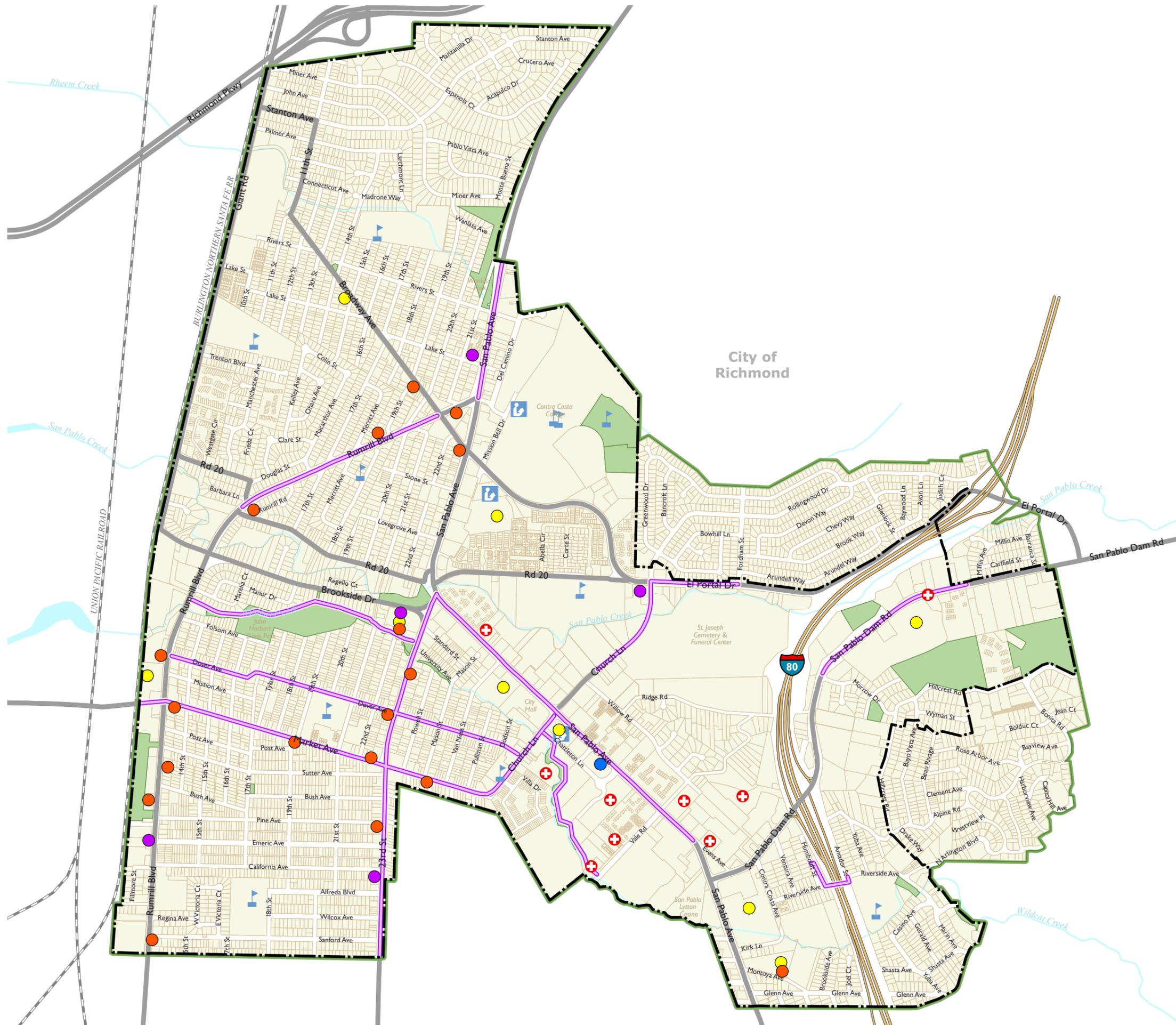
Allocation of future parks can also help expand access in underserved areas. While San Pablo has several large parks, they tend to be concentrated in the central part of the city and not distributed throughout the neighborhoods. The largest public park is Davis Park, and relatively large recreation areas can also be found within Contra Costa College and at the Rumrill Sports Park. Smaller neighborhood parks, such as the Bush Street Pocket Park that is currently being designed, can help to increase access to recreational space in areas that are already built out.

Many public facilities in San Pablo are concentrated along San Pablo Avenue, close to the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Church Lane, such as the San Pablo Library, San Pablo Senior Center, San Pablo City Hall, and West County Health Center and WIC facility. Many of the residential areas closer to the edges of the city, such as west of San Pablo Avenue and 23rd Street, lack easy walking access to nearby public facilities. See Chapter 5: Schools, Parks, and Public Facilities for more information.

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<sup>21</sup> County of Contra Costa Health Services Department, County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) – Contra Costa County, October 1, 2013–September 30, 2014, <https://cchealth.org/nutrition/pdf/nutrition-action-plan.pdf>, accessed April 3, 2023.

Figure 7-21: Health Factors



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Grocery Store
- Market
- Corner Store
- Drug Store
- School
- Library
- Healthcare Facility
- Existing Bike Route
- Park



SOURCE: USDHHS, 2021; ESRI, 2019; Supermarket/Internet search, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

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## Access to Healthcare

A healthy community should have convenient access to medical services. When healthcare facilities are accessible via walking and public transit, medical care is more readily accessible to those who do not drive or own cars. Since the closure of the Doctors Medical Center San Pablo campus on Vale Road, there are no longer any large hospitals or medical complexes in the planning area. The closest Emergency Room facility is at the Kaiser Permanente Richmond Medical Center, near the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Richmond Station, about one mile south of San Pablo. Within the planning area, there are multiple medium- to small-sized medical facilities, such as the County-operated West County Health Center and WIC facility, West County Adult Mental Health Services Center, and two Mariner Health Care facilities. The planning area includes three Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), including the West County Health Center and the Brookside Community Health Center operated by LifeLong Medical Care. FQHCs are community-based health care providers and critical community development facilities that provide primary care services in underserved areas. They receive funding from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. However, as seen in Figure 7-21, most medical facilities in San Pablo are not within walking distance for much of the City’s residents, as they are clustered near San Pablo City Hall. The City Hall area, however, is well accessed by transit (bus lines).

## Walkability and Bikeability

The City of San Pablo has a Walk Score of 73 (on a scale of 1 to 100), meaning that it is described as a “very-walkable” city where most errands can be accomplished on foot.<sup>22</sup> As seen in the Figure 7-22, the most walkable areas of San Pablo are those that are near to San Pablo Avenue and 23rd Street, as these corridors are where many amenities are concentrated.

Convenient access to public transit also helps community members increase physical activity and decrease vehicle miles traveled. Almost one-third of Americans who commute to work via public transit meet their daily requirements for physical activity (30 or more minutes a day) by walking as a part of their daily life, including to and from transit stops. However, despite San Pablo’s relatively high Walk Score, the majority of residents within the City (82.4 percent) still commute to work via car, truck, or van, either carpooling or driving alone. As seen in Table 7-4, 11.4 percent of residents commute via public transit, 2.6 percent commute via walking, and less than one percent commute via bicycle. At the County level, 10.9 percent of the population uses public transit to commute to work, compared to 5.1 percent across all of California, and 2.1 percent walks or bicycles to work, compared to 3.0 percent across the state.

San Pablo’s Bike Score is 50, which is the low end of the “bikeable” range, characterized by “some bike infrastructure.”<sup>23</sup> Adopted in 2017, the City of San Pablo Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP) was designed to identify existing routes and gaps in routes or sidewalks in the bicycle and pedestrian network to prioritize funds for investing in or enhancing additional infrastructure.<sup>24</sup> The plan also supports regional transportation efforts including the Plan Bay Area 2040 regional plan, the One Bay Area Grant program, and the Contra Costa County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. In 2022, the City completed the San Pablo Bicycle and Pedestrian Corridor Study to help streamline implementation of the 2017 BPMP by providing conceptual designs and cost estimates for installing Class II or IV bicycle lanes on eight on-street corridors

<sup>22</sup> Walk Score, “Living in San Pablo,” [webpage], accessed January 24, 2023, [https://www.walkscore.com/CA/San\\_Pablo](https://www.walkscore.com/CA/San_Pablo).

<sup>23</sup> Walk Score, “Living in San Pablo,” accessed January 24, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> City of San Pablo, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, adopted August 2017, [https://www.sanpabloca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8604/SanPabloBPP\\_FINAL\\_08\\_30\\_2017?bidId=](https://www.sanpabloca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8604/SanPabloBPP_FINAL_08_30_2017?bidId=).

and Class I shared-use paths on two off-street corridors, as identified in the BPMP.<sup>25</sup> These complete street improvements along major corridors, such as San Pablo Avenue, 23rd Street, and Rumrill Boulevard, will also improve pedestrian and transit access.

**Table 7-4: Means of Commuting Within San Pablo**

<i>Means of Commute</i>	<i>Workers 16 Years and Over</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Car, truck, or van – Drive alone	9,142	64.4%
Car, truck, or van – Carpool	2,552	18.0%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	1,618	11.4%
Walked	400	2.8%
Worked from home	375	2.6%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	112	0.8%
Bicycle	7	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,206</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Census American Community Survey 2019 five-year estimates; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021.

## COMMUNITY OR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring that a broad range of voices are engaged in civic life contributes to City actions that benefit everyone and helps to prioritize resources for where they are most needed. Additionally, social factors that affect one’s ability to be involved in civic life also have consequences for other components of an individual’s health, such as the ability to know about, understand, and access needed resources. Meaningful civic engagement can be successful through partnerships with community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and community leaders to help reach out to residents of DACs and co-create policies and actions to improve the physical environment so that it supports everyone’s good health and quality of life.

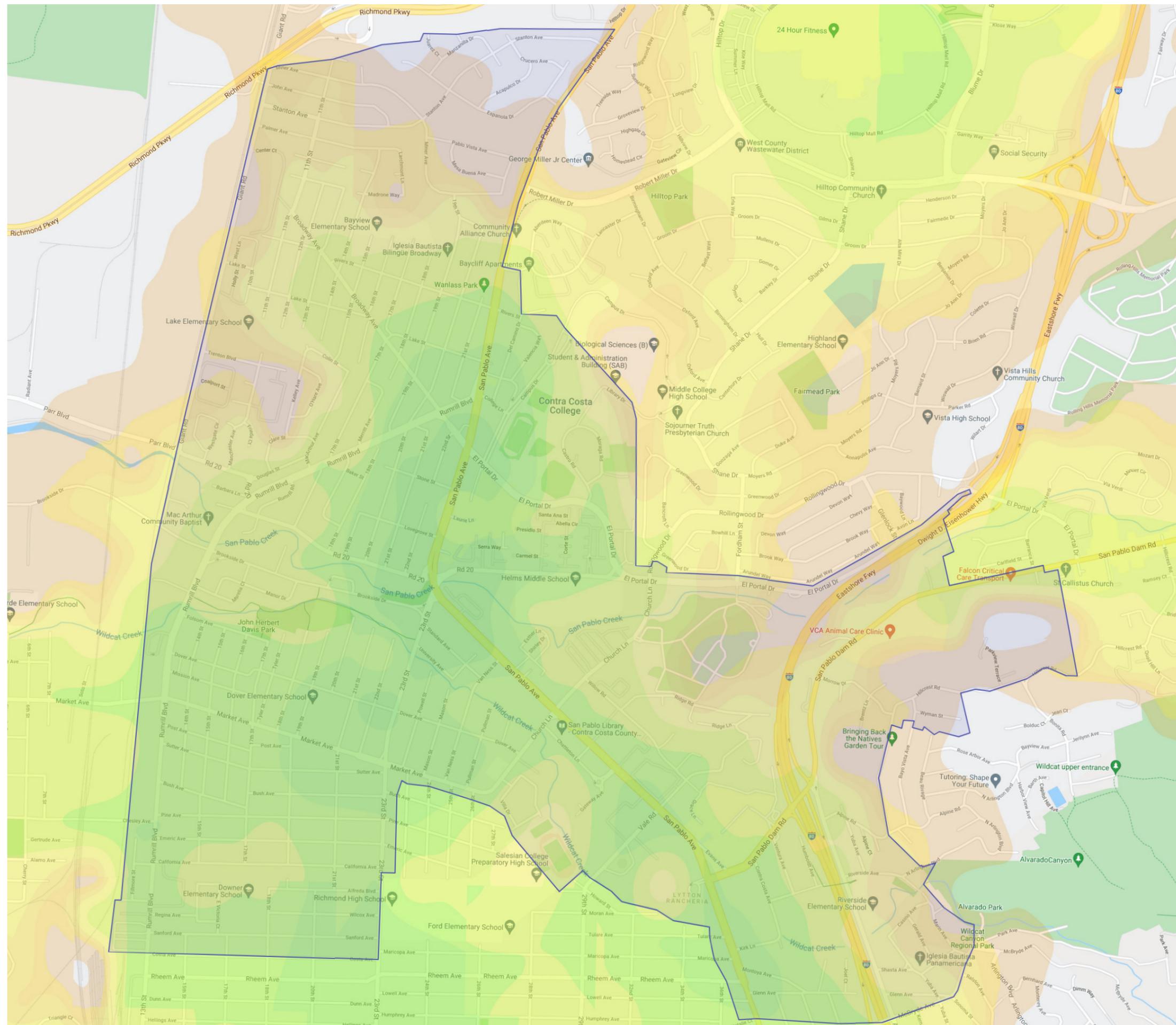
San Pablo has an active citizenry who are involved in the City’s boards and commissions and who participate in extensive community service programs and facilities. The City sponsors several community-wide events, including movies under the stars, Independence Day celebration, and Halloween events. See [the City Community Services Department’s webpage \(https://www.sanpabloca.gov/1307/Community-Services\)](https://www.sanpabloca.gov/1307/Community-Services) for the City’s Activity Guide. The City also publishes a quarterly newsletter called *El Portal* that is mailed to all residents and a weekly City Manager’s E-newsletter is posted on social media and online. All these materials are produced in both Spanish and English.

### Linguistic Isolation

In San Pablo, almost three out of four residents (72.2 percent) over the age of five speak a language other than English, according to 2019 ACS five-year estimates data. Notably, 54.6 percent of the population speaks Spanish. While speaking multiple languages is a strength, for those who are unable to communicate fluently in English, language can present barriers. When information is not presented in a language that a person is able to communicate in or understand, it can limit access to resources and the ability to be fully engaged in society. Adults who are not able to speak or read English well often have trouble talking to the people who provide social services and medical care. A limited English-speaking household, or linguistically-isolated

<sup>25</sup> City of San Pablo, San Pablo Bicycle and Pedestrian Corridor Study, adopted February 2022, <https://www.sanpabloca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15044/San-Pablo-Bicycle-and-Pedestrian-Corridor-Study>.

Figure 7-22: Walkscore



SOURCE: [walkscore.com/CA/San\\_Pablo, 2021](https://walkscore.com/CA/San_Pablo); City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

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household, is one in which no household member 14 years old and over speaks English “very well.” Linguistically-isolated households may not hear or understand important information when there is an emergency like a fire, earthquake, or extreme heat wave. Additionally, linguistic isolation is a challenge for increasing involvement of at-risk and vulnerable populations in communities throughout the U.S.

In San Pablo, 47.1 percent of the population age five years and over has limited English speaking abilities, meaning they speak English less than “very well.” Additionally, 19.6 percent of households in the City are considered linguistically-isolated households. This is higher than the 6.2 percent of households across Contra Costa County that are considered to be limited English-speaking. Figure 7-23 shows the location of Census tracts across San Pablo scoring above the 50th percentile among tracts statewide for linguistic isolation according to CalEnviroScreen data. Four tracts rank in the top 25th percentile statewide. Notably, tracts 3690.01 and 3660.02 have 24.3 and 24.2 percent linguistically isolated households, respectively, placing them above the 90th percentile.

As indicated above, regular City outreach publications are produced in both English and Spanish. In addition, all service-oriented City Departments have Spanish-speaking employees who are available to assist members of the public. Access to other language translation, such as Mandarin, is also provided as needed.

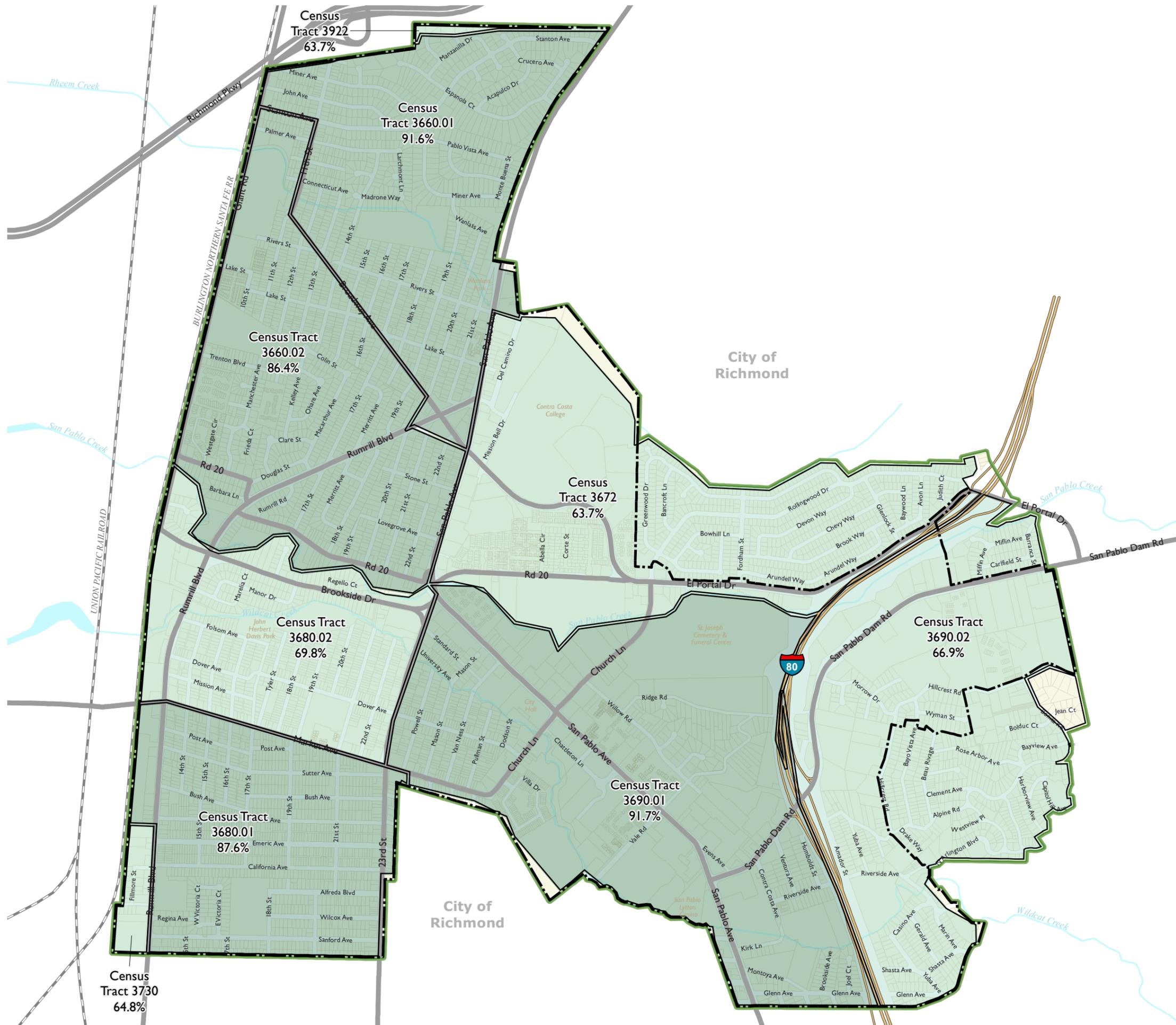
## **Internet Access**

Over the past few decades, reliable access to the internet has played an increasingly important part in daily and civic life, helping people to gather and share information, access services, or stay connected to friends and family – in many ways, internet access has become a necessity. The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the need for internet connectedness: School and work closures and social-distancing measures implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19 require individuals to rely even more heavily on internet access to connect to health services, learn virtually, or work from home.

However, not all homes have access to a computer or the internet – a gap known as the “digital divide.” According to 2019 ACS five-year estimates data, 7.6 percent of the population in San Pablo does not have access to a computer in their home, and a further 4.6 percent have access to a computer but lack an internet subscription or cellular data plan. Furthermore, certain segments of the population experience the digital divide disproportionately. Low-income households are much more likely to lack an internet subscription, as 31.7 percent of those households whose income is below \$20,000 per year lack home-based internet access. Among those age 65 and older, 13.4 percent do not have a computer and another 6.8 percent have a computer but lack an internet subscription.

The City of San Pablo, along with the San Pablo Library and WCCUSD, have aggressive connectivity goals for the community. The San Pablo City Council has adopted the San Pablo Environment for Everything Digital (SPEED) initiative as part of its work plan to improve access to high-speed broadband internet and data networks in the City. The San Pablo Library has an emphasis on providing connectivity services and offers free Wi-Fi systems for loan. Improved small-cell Wi-Fi access throughout the City is also a joint initiative of the City and WCCUSD.

Figure 7-23: Linguistic Isolation



- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Major Highway
- Major Roads
- Railroads

**Linguistic Isolation Percentile**

- Top 25%
- 50% - 75%



SOURCE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, 2021; City of San Pablo, 2021; Contra Costa County GIS, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2023

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## Key Findings and Policy Implications

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- 1. Seven Census tracts within the planning area are officially designated as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs).** As of May 2022, seven Census tracts in the City are designated as DACs by the State of California: 3660.01, 3660.02, 3690.01, 3730, 3922, 3680.01, and 3680.02. These tracts experience an elevated level of pollution exposure relative to the statewide median, and their socio-demographic profile means the residents are more susceptible to adverse health outcomes. As officially designated DACs, these Census tracts are eligible for State funding to improve community health and equity. Environmental justice goals, policies, and programs in the San Pablo General Plan must prioritize and benefit the people and places within these areas, and the City should seek to further reflect local issues and lived experiences of the community.
- 2. Socio-demographic factors contribute more toward the DAC designation than pollution exposure.** The DAC designation is based on a cumulative score that considers both pollution exposure and socio-demographic characteristics that make DAC residents more susceptible to adverse health outcomes. Notably, for San Pablo Census tracts designated as DACs, it is the socio-demographic factors that make a markedly greater contribution than the pollution burden. Among planning area Census tracts, the median CalEnviroScreen percentile rank for pollution burden is 60.6, while the median percentile rank for population characteristics sensitivity is 84.9. This indicates that, while certain pollution exposure factors are at play in some neighborhoods across the planning area, public health measures that specifically benefit sensitive populations may be the most impactful in contributing to positive environmental justice outcomes. In particular, factors at play in San Pablo include the prevalence of diseases such as asthma and cardiovascular disease, linguistic isolation, and socioeconomic characteristics such as poverty and low educational attainment.
- 3. Environmental justice issues are not limited solely to those Census tracts identified as DACs.** While DACs experience the highest cumulative burden from pollution and population sensitivity characteristics, other Census tracts in the planning area also experience relatively high levels of pollution exposure in comparison to the statewide median or have higher concentrations of vulnerable residents, even though they may not be classified as DACs. For instance, only certain Census tracts in the planning area rank among the top 25th percentile for air pollution indicators in CalEnviroScreen (i.e., ozone, PM2.5, DPM, and traffic density), but all of San Pablo is included in the AB 617 community selected by CARB as one of the most highly burdened and vulnerable communities in the state. Additionally, some issues, such as cleanup sites and hazardous waste facilities are more localized and should be addressed with targeted measures as needed, whether located in DACs or not.
- 4. In terms of their pollution burden, San Pablo Census tracts tend to be most heavily affected by diesel particulate matter (DPM).** DPM is produced by exhaust from cars, trucks, buses, trains, ships, and other equipment with diesel engines. Seven out of ten tracts in the planning area rank above the 80th percentile statewide, with four of these ranking above the 90th percentile. Additionally, seven out of ten Census tracts rank above the 90th percentile compared to Census tracts statewide for the age-adjusted rate of emergency department visits for asthma. People with asthma are particularly sensitive to air pollution and its negative effects. Policies to address DPM will be critical to addressing environmental justice in San Pablo. While air quality is a regional issue, and San Pablo is limited in its ability to address major traffic infrastructure and patterns, the City nevertheless has the ability to increase the availability and attractiveness of non-automobile transportation modes, helping to reduce DPM concentrations. San Pablo already has a relatively high Walk Score of 73, and capitalizing on this to promote active and shared

modes of transportation can improve environmental justice outcomes across the planning area, while also reducing vehicle miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, and traffic congestion.

5. **Housing affordability is a pervasive issue throughout the state and one felt acutely in the San Francisco Bay Area.** While five tracts in San Pablo score in the top 50th percentile statewide for housing burden, including one (3690.01) that scores in the top 20th percentile, more than 57 percent of households in the City are paying in excess of 30 percent of their income for housing, including nearly 32 percent who pay in excess of 50 percent. This high level of housing insecurity is felt among both renters and owners, placing many households at risk of displacement. Furthermore, San Pablo has among the lowest house sale and rental rates in the urbanized Bay Area. The relative affordability of housing stock in San Pablo places greater stress on housing demand, and these economic implications can affect the viability of residents to live or stay in the City. Strategies to address housing burden and housing supply are of paramount importance to the General Plan and Housing Element Update.
6. **There is an elevated risk of lead exposure for children in San Pablo due to the age and quality of the housing stock.** More than 65 percent of homes in the City were built before 1980, when lead-based paints and plumbing were still widely in use. This means that there is a higher potential risk for lead exposure among children in San Pablo living in older housing where lead may not have been removed. All ten planning area tracts rank above the 50th percentile, with seven scoring above the 75th percentile. Childhood lead exposure can adversely affect brain development, and can result in blood, kidney, and endocrine toxicity. In concert with the Housing Element update, environmental justice policies in the General Plan should also seek to improve existing housing quality, particularly in rental housing stock for which existing incentives for retrofits and refurbishment tend to be lower.
7. **Increasing frequency and severity of extreme heat days can exacerbate urban heat island effect and risk of heat-related illness for at-risk populations.** There is an approximately 30-degree difference between the hottest and coolest areas of the City, and localized urban heat islands include Helms Middle School, Lifelong Emergency Medical Clinic, and the industrial/commercial center between Giant Highway and Center Street. Except for the unincorporated neighborhood southeast of Hillcrest Road, residential areas also tend to be in the warmer range, and these areas generally lack tree canopy. Climate adaptation strategies, including investments in the City's tree canopy and establishment of cooling centers where residents can access air conditioning, should be prioritized in places that will most effectively reduce urban heat and its impact on vulnerable populations.
8. **Food insecurity and obesity rates are higher in San Pablo as compared to the countywide average.** About nine percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older are considered low-income food insecure, compared to 3.9 percent in Contra Costa County as a whole, and 15.5 percent of San Pablo households receive food assistance benefits. Additionally, 40.8 percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older were classified as obese, compared to 29.4 percent in Contra Costa County, and 13.8 percent of San Pablo residents aged 18 and older had been diagnosed with diabetes compared to 10.0 percent in the county. The 2030 General Plan Public Health Element has a policy focus on healthy food and lifestyles, which remains a priority for San Pablo.
9. **San Pablo is a diverse community where English is not uniformly spoken as a first language.** Nearly half (47 percent) of the population ages five years and older are limited-English speakers, meaning they speak English less than "very well." Additionally, 19.6 percent of households in the City are considered linguistically-isolated households in which no household member 14 years old and over speaks English "very well." Four of ten tracts in the City rank in the top 25th percentile statewide for linguistic isolation. This poses challenges for civic and labor force participation, as well as access to social services and medical care and communication in the event of an emergency like a fire, earthquake, or extreme heat wave. The City should continue its multi-lingual efforts to reach out to residents with critical information.

**10. Improving digital access will be important to ensuring environmental justice moving forward.**

Reliable, high-speed internet has become an increasingly vital part of civic life in recent years. Despite this, 12.2 percent of the population in San Pablo either has no computer in their home or has a computer but lacks an internet subscription. This digital divide disproportionately affects low-income households. The City should continue its efforts to improve and expand connectivity and should consider providing public Wi-Fi in certain parks or public areas, as well as continuing to provide mobile-friendly and non-digital communication to ensure information, resources, and services are available to all.