

Environmental Justice Element

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the Environmental Justice Element is to strive for the fair and equitable treatment of all people with respect to community engagement, access to important resources and amenities, land use siting compatibility and a healthy environment. The intent of the element is to ensure that all people are able to live in a safe and healthy environment, and to minimize the effects of environmental hazards among all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level. The element analyzes issues associated with environmental justice in Cathedral City and addresses long-term community equity by establishing policies and programs that increase participation in the public decision-making process, reduce exposure to environmental hazards, and enhance access to healthy food, affordable housing, and fitness and recreational resources. The Environmental Justice Element will be used by the Cathedral City Council and Planning Commission, commissions and agencies, developers, and the general public to plan for the physical development of the City.

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

—John Muir

BACKGROUND

Issues of environmental justice can arise from geographic and procedural inequities. Geographic inequities occur when areas with high percentages of low-income residents, minority residents, and/or immigrant communities are exposed to poor environmental hazards and related health problems. Procedural inequities occur when the same communities are faced with obstacles to meaningful input during the decision-making process for projects that directly affect their neighborhoods. Geographic and procedural inequities can be caused by development patterns that concentrate undesirable or unhealthy land uses in proximity to low-income or minority neighborhoods, the placement of desirable public amenities outside of disadvantaged communities and limited or non-existent political influence among certain demographic groups.

The Environmental Justice movement existed for several decades at the local, state, and federal levels and gained additional recognition in 1994 with President Clinton’s Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations.” California Government Code Section 65040.12(e) defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.” The California Environmental Protection Agency has established State environmental justice policies and standards, and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) coordinates environmental justice programs statewide.



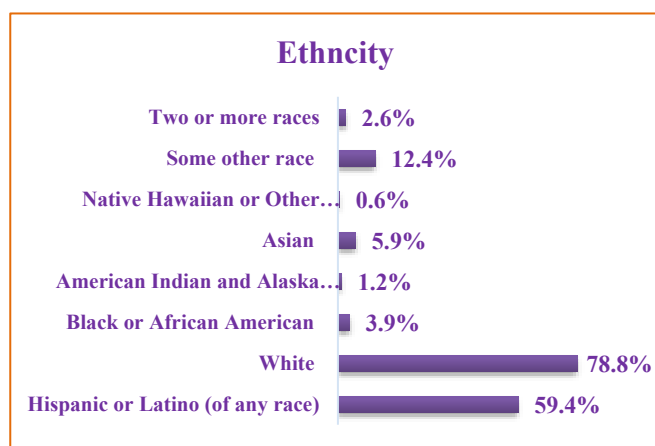
Government Code Section 65302(h) requires that General Plans include an environmental justice element, or related goals, policies, and objectives integrated in other elements, that identifies disadvantaged communities in the general plan area if the city has a disadvantaged community, as defined by the statute. Senate Bill 1000 (2016) also requires a General Plan Environmental Justice Element if the city has a disadvantaged community. Both require the Element to include policies and objectives that reduce the health risks of disadvantaged communities, promote civil engagement in the public decision-making process, and prioritize programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities.

The Environmental Justice Element is related to many other 2040 General Plan elements, particularly Land Use, Circulation and Mobility, Housing, Air Quality and Climate Stability, Public Services and Facilities, Parks and Recreation, Safety, and Healthy and Sustainable Community. Decisions made related to the types of land uses, location, density and intensity of land uses, transportation systems, and street designs all contribute to public health and environmental justice. The goals, policies, and programs identified in these and other related elements provide additional opportunities to further implement Environmental Justice principles. Environmental Justice can permeate many aspects of community life. Therefore, this element should be read and considered in the context of other 2040 General Plan elements. Although this element includes discussions pertaining to those elements, its themes are particularly focused on public health equity for disadvantaged communities.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population, Race and Ethnicity

The population of Cathedral City increased approximately 25% between 2000 and 2016.¹ Currently (2018), the city's population is approximately 53,733. The population consists of 52.4% males and 47.6% females, and the median age is 37.3 years.



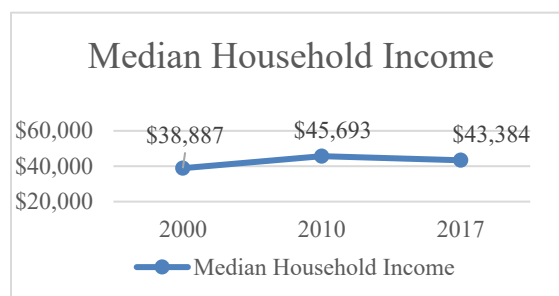
The majority of Cathedral City residents are white (78.8%), with Black or African Americans comprising 3.9%, American Indians and Alaska Natives 1.2%, Asians 4.8%, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders %, “some other race” 11.6%, and two or more races 2.6%. Hispanic or Latino (of any race) residents make up 59.4% of the City's population. Within the Hispanic or Latino race, approximately 54.8% identify as Mexican.

Language

As stated in the Healthy and Sustainable Community Element, more than half (54.1% or 26,920 residents) of the Cathedral City population speaks a language other than English at home, and one-fifth (21.9% or 10,870 residents) speak English “less than very well.” Given that 60.5% of the City population is Hispanic or Latino, it is reasonable to conclude that Spanish is the most common secondary language spoken. The City strives to assure that health and safety resources and services are accessible to all populations, including those challenged by language barriers. The City website and newsletters, PSUSD adult educational programs, business development programs tracked on the City Economic Development website, and other community resources are offered in both English and Spanish (see Education, below).

Household Income

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the 2018 federal poverty level is a household income of \$25,100 or less for a family of four. As stated in the Healthy and Sustainable Community Element, approximately 29.5% of children, 20.7% of adults ages 18 to 64, and 13% of adults over age 65 are living in poverty in Cathedral City.² The 2017 median household income in the City was \$43,384 as compared to the County's median household income (\$60,807) and state of California (\$67,169).³



¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - Demographics and Housing Estimates <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

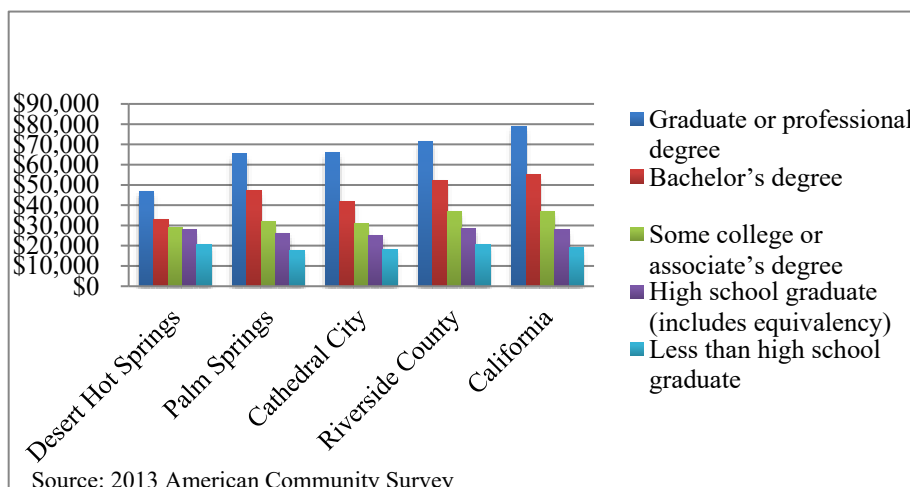
² U.S. Census – Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months - 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

³ Ibid.

Education

Education is an important indicator of equity and social and economic mobility. In 2015, the earnings potential for a person with no high school diploma in the western Coachella Valley ranges from approximately \$17,765 to \$20,596, which is comparable to the earnings potential for those without a high school diploma in Riverside County and the State.

Median earnings for a person with some college or an Associate's degree range from \$29,169 to \$32,112 in the west valley, compared to \$37,095 in the County and \$36,901 in California. Median earnings for a person with a Bachelor's degree in the west valley range from \$32,882 to \$47,126. This is more than double the earnings of the population without a high school diploma and demonstrates the significance effect of advanced education on earnings potential. The percentage of Cathedral City residents attaining higher educational levels increased between 2000 and 2017. In 2017, the greatest number of residents (29.0%) were high school (or equivalent) graduates, followed by those with some college but no degree (22.5%).



ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUITIES

Environmental injustice can be indicated by disproportionate levels of exposure to health hazards, such as air pollutants or toxins, affecting lower income, minority, or other vulnerable communities. Such populations may be less able to afford nutritious, pesticide-free food, or have limited access to it due to lack of transportation or limited availability in their neighborhoods. Children may be more susceptible to exposure to lead-based paint in older or lower quality housing.

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when, they are created by everybody.”

- Jane Jacobs

Community members may not participate in local decision-making processes, such as elections, community workshops, or council memberships due to language or cultural barriers or lack of outreach efforts on the part of community organizers. Historically, disadvantaged members of the community have not had a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their environment. The causes may be a combination of cultural and/or language barriers, lack of information, inadequate training, lack of exposure to the decision-making process, and officials who aren't informed about issues of concern for those members of the community.

VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN CATHEDRAL CITY

In order to ensure that all residents of Cathedral City receive fair and equitable treatment with regard to the provision of public services and amenities, community decision-making processes, and environmental health, it is necessary to identify areas of the city that qualify as “disadvantaged communities” or “low-income areas.” This ensures that city programs and measures can be targeted appropriately toward the most impacted communities.

Disadvantaged Communities

SB 1000 defines “disadvantaged communities” as areas identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code, or an area that is a “low-income area” (defined below) that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

SB 1000 further defines “low-income areas” as areas with household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development’s list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093.

CalEnviroScreen 3.0 is a science-based tool created by CalEPA and the Office of Environmental Health (OEHHA) to identify communities in California that are most affected by sources of pollution, and that are often especially vulnerable to pollution’s effects. It uses environmental, health, and socioeconomic data to generate a numerical score for each census tract in the state. Higher scores indicate higher pollution burden and population vulnerability. Census tracts with scores of 75% or higher are designated as disadvantaged communities by CalEPA.

The most recent CalEnviroScreen update (June 2018) shows that there are no disadvantaged communities within the City of Cathedral City. Nearly all of the City’s census tracts have scores ranging between 15% and 35%. The census tracts with the highest scores (45-50%) are located: 1) in the Cove, and 2) north of Ramon Road and west of the Whitewater River. These census tracts are also identified as areas of concern in the Public Health Alliance of Southern California’s (PHASoCal) Healthy Places Index (HPI) mapping database described in the Healthy and Sustainable Community Element. Still, none of the census tracts in Cathedral City are designated as disadvantaged communities by CalEPA.

COMMUNITY EQUITY IN CATHEDRAL CITY

State Government Code Section 65302 (h) requires the Environmental Justice Element to address, at a minimum, the following topics affecting disadvantaged communities: 1) promotion of physical activity, 2) promotion of sanitary housing, 3) promotion of food access, 4) reducing pollution exposure, 5) promotion of public facilities, and 6) promotion of civil engagement in the public decision-making process. Although no disadvantaged communities or low-income areas, as defined by SB 1000, are located in Cathedral City, it is important to evaluate the current local community health environment so that potential negative environmental health effects or exposures can be reduced or avoided in the future.



Physical Activity

Mobility is a critical issue in bringing vulnerable communities access to necessary resources, such as health care and healthy food outlets. More likely than other communities to rely on public transportation, they often live in areas with limited transit service. Increased mobility options provide critical links and opportunities. The design of physical environment can either facilitate or serve as a barrier to mobility. Physical inactivity is one of the key contributors to chronic disease. The built environment can promote physical activity by creating spaces and places that encourage walking, biking, and other forms of recreation.

In Cathedral City, there are currently (2018) nine public parks (Exhibit PR-1), as well as various bikeways (Exhibit PR-3), golf courses, sports facilities, and trails that offer residents opportunities to participate in walking, biking, and other outdoor activities.

Safe and Sanitary Housing

A key consideration of environmental justice is ensuring a healthy home. It is estimated that Americans spend approximately 70% of their time in their homes, according to the National Human Activity Pattern Survey. Low-income and minority populations can be disproportionately affected by home health hazards as their limited incomes reduce housing choices and opportunities for maintenance and repairs. Housing-related environmental hazards include exposure to indoor air pollution, lead-based paint, asbestos, mold, and mildew. These toxins can cause developmental delays, asthma and allergies, and other health risks. Ensuring that all residents have access to healthy homes is an important way to achieve environmental justice.

In Cathedral City, approximately 69% of residences are single-family homes, approximately 19% are multi-family homes, and approximately 12% are mobile homes (CA Department of Finance, 2018). The Housing Element provides additional details about local housing conditions, including availability, quality, and affordability. Most of the vacant residential lands in the city offer higher density residential opportunities, which may best serve lower income families. Urban development that is compact with more opportunity for greater residential density integrated with mixed-use, neighborhood-serving commercial, and other services can create a greater variety of attractive and affordable housing options within the City.

Food Access

Access to safe and nutritious food is considered a basic individual right by the World Health Organization and the United Nations. However, many residents in low-income neighborhoods have limited access to fresh produce and other healthful foods. Food deserts (geographic areas marked by limited healthy food options) and swamps (geographic areas marked by high densities of unhealthy food options) are indicators of failure in food access.

Non-governmental organizations work to alleviate food insecurity and provide healthful access to food. One of these organizations is FIND Food Bank, a food pantry with distribution sites throughout the area. FIND partners with local and regional growers, grocers, corporate entities, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to collect and distribute throughout the Coachella Valley.



Within the City of Cathedral City, distribution sites include the Cathedral City Senior Center, the Salvation Army, and Calvary Christian Center. Hidden Harvest is a local produce recovery program that employs local farm workers to gather produce that is left after harvest and distributes it to those in need in the Coachella Valley. Two of its distribution locations are in the city, the Senior Center and Mountain View Apartments. The Cathedral City Senior Center also operates a food pantry that partners with FIND Food Bank, local grocers, Hidden Harvest, the City and Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to provide food to low-income senior residents.

In addition, the CalFresh Program, also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), provides resources for families in need to buy more healthy, nutritious food. Food access is not simply a health issue but also a community and equity issue. As such, access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food is a key part of not only in a healthy, sustainable local food system but also a healthy sustainable community.

Pollution Exposure

Pollution exposure occurs when people come into contact with contaminants in air, food, water or soil. Disadvantaged communities are often disproportionately burdened by pollution exposure. Even though there are a relatively small number of Cathedral City businesses that emit hazardous materials, most city residents and businesses use gasoline and plastics. These typically used products are known to cause health consequences on the areas where are used and disposed of, resulting in the export of environmental hazards to other, often less affluent communities which tend to suffer disproportionately from toxic pollution.

Noise Pollution

An undesirable sound can be considered noise. Noise pollution is unpleasant noise created by people or machines that can be distracting, intrusive, and/or physically painful. Chronic noise pollution is accompanied by health side effects that result in annoyance, stress, cardiovascular disease, tinnitus, and sleep deprivation. These health hazards are prominent in residential locations that are dominated by vehicular traffic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classify noise pollution as increasing public health problem that can lead to adverse health effects. The World Health Organization and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognize the harmful impacts to health due to noise pollution.

Since 1981, when Congress stopped funding the Noise Control Act of 1972, the U.S. government has left the state and local governments to assume responsibility. The most successful U.S. noise reduction efforts have centered on aviation noise. This is due to the introduction of newer, more efficient and quieter engines and promoted by the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990. Nationally, the number of people affected by aviation noise declined by 95 percent between 1975 and 2000. The Palm Springs Airport is located on the western boundary of the City and approximately 300 feet to the nearest Cathedral City residence. Aviation noise can be felt most prominently by the nearby residential community which is largely composed of Hispanic residents. Moving forward the city can further the noise pollution by continuing to enforce policies and standards that works to lessen the impact felt by sensitive receptors.

Air Pollution

Numerous local and regional policies and programs are in place that reduce air pollutant emissions and restrict sources of pollution adjacent to sensitive receptors (also refer to the Air Quality and Climate Stability Element and the Safety Element). The 2040 General Plan also updates designations on several vacant residential lots that bordered a potential pollutant source or other hazard. The Land Use Element includes policies that support infill development and development of bike and pedestrian infrastructure as a means of reducing vehicle miles traveled and associated air pollutants.



Public Facilities



An adequate supply of public facilities is a critical component to the current and future prosperity of a community. Under SB 1000, “public facilities” is an umbrella term that includes but is not limited to “public improvements, public services, and community amenities.” This covers a wide spectrum of publicly provided uses and services, including infrastructure, school facilities, parks, and transportation and emergency services. These facilities and services improve the health, safety, and wellness of the community by either enhancing the public sphere or providing services that are available to residents.

Significant impacts to health and quality of life can result from insufficient public facilities. For instance, communities that lack basic infrastructure such as sidewalks and streetlights present safety hazards for people using public spaces. The Public Facilities Element includes in-depth discussion and specific goals and policies for a range of public facilities in the City.

Civic Engagement



Disadvantaged communities often do not have a meaningful voice or effective ways to engage with their community. The reasons behind this are multi-layered and may include cultural and language barriers, a lack of information, or lack of transportation or access to public meetings and workshops. Enhanced civic engagement is an important community goal; it ensures that a wide range of issues affecting various segments of the population are addressed. Cultivating effective civil engagement to all residents not only provides the city with an opportunity to strengthen the city's participation.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies community capacity building as a way to engage disadvantaged populations and help them better identify and meet their needs. This concept includes building on existing skills, providing education on issues and processes, and helping disadvantaged populations to communicate effectively in the public realm.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A key point of environmental justice is to address systemic discrimination and injustice in the risks and harms certain groups of people face related to the burdens of natural resource extraction, pollution, the siting of waste, transportation, workplace hazards, expropriation of land, etc. In addition, it is imperative to prevent future inequities by promoting the development and enforcement of appropriate laws and policies.

The Goals, Policies, and Programs below set forth guidelines for each of the four key areas of environmental justice and aid the City in addressing related issues. Although these policies and programs will help the City meet certain goals, effective environmental justice cannot be achieved by simply adopting a series of generalized policies and goals. The approach required is an ongoing commitment to identifying existing and potential issues, and then finding and enacting solutions to further lessen injustices to vulnerable communities. The City shall strive to achieve fairness and equity in all aspects of physical development and civic engagement.

"Full and effective participation by all citizens in state government requires, therefore, that each citizen have an equally effective voice in the election of members of his legislature."

-Chief Justice Earl Warren

From the time of its incorporation, the City has elected its Councilmembers "at-large"; that is, all candidates running city-wide. It has been argued by many that at-large elections have the potential to result in discriminatory dilution of minority voting power. This is particularly the case where communities include concentrations of socio-economic, ethnic or racial groups. In 2018, the City adopted and implemented district-based elections for City Council. It is hoped that this approach to electing official will more fairly empower all sectors of the community.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Goal 1: Community environmental justice that effectively addresses issues of health, land use economic opportunity and access to regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

Physical Activity

Goal 2: Effective individual and community health through prevention, screening, education, and treatment strategies regarding nutrition and physical activity related health issues.

Goal 3: Improved health, safety, and mental well-being of residents by creating convenient and safe opportunities for physical activity.

Policy 1: Pursue partnerships for the construction and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities, through joint use agreements, private corporations, outside funding, and community volunteers.

Program 1.A: Maintain a joint use agreement with Palm Springs Unified School District and look for additional opportunities to partner in expanding resident access to shared facilities.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Palm Springs Unified School District

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 1.B: Pursue support from federal, state, and private funding sources to assist with acquisition, design, and construction of parks and recreation facilities.

Responsible Parties: City Council, City Engineer/Public Works, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Safe and Sanitary Housing

Goal 4: A range of safe and sanitary housing opportunities for all segments of the community, including and especially the socio-economically disadvantaged.

Policy 1: Promote an equitable distribution of housing types for all income groups throughout the city and promote mixed-income neighborhoods.

Policy 2: Encourage new projects to include a range of housing types that serve a broad socio-economic spectrum, and include single-family residences, townhomes, condominiums and rental units.

Policy 3: Increase, preserve, and improve the community's affordable housing stock.

Program 3.A: Pursue and maximize the use of all appropriate state, federal, local, and private funding for development, preservation, and rehabilitation of housing affordable for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate-income households, while maintaining economic competitiveness in the region.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 3.B: Assist in and otherwise support the repair, rehabilitation, and improvement of residential structures; demolish and replace structures which are dilapidated and beyond repair.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 3.C: Allow and encourage non-traditional housing types that can provide affordable housing, such as accessory dwelling units.

Responsible Parties: City Council, City Engineer/Public Works, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 3.D: Encourage and facilitate the development of senior housing and assisted living facilities, especially near transit, recreational facilities, medical centers and hospitals, pedestrian facilities, and access to healthy foods.

Responsible Parties: City Council, City Engineer/Public Works, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Food Access

Goal 5: Access to a wide variety of healthy foods sources in all neighborhoods of the community.

Policy 1: Promote development of green grocers, organic markets and produce, and other sources of healthy foods.

Policy 2: Promote nutrition education and access to healthy foods.

Program 2.A: Increase access to healthy foods/beverages. Support neighborhood-oriented, specific sources of healthful foods, such as farmers' markets and local outlets.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Public Works, Community Development

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 2.B: Support food banks, pantries, and other sources that help provide federal food assistance to low-income resident so that all families, seniors, schools, and community-based organizations are able to access, purchase, and increase intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious foods.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Economic Development

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Pollution Reduction

Goal 6: Integrated air quality, land use, and transportation planning, policy and infrastructure that reduces emission of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases from mobile and stationary sources.

Policy 1: Improve or maintain air quality for the promotion of population and environmental health.

Program 1.A: To the greatest extent practicable, require that development be located and designed to reduce vehicular trips (and associated air pollution) by utilizing compact development patterns while maintaining community character.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 1.B: The city shall require new development with sensitive uses located adjacent to pollution sources be designed with consideration of site and building orientation, location of trees, and incorporation of ventilation and filtration to lessen and minimize any potential health risks.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning, Environmental Conservation Manager

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Civic Engagement

Goal 7: A fully engaged and involved cross section of residents, businesses, and organizations in all aspects of the community planning process.

Policy 1: Educate decision makers and the general public on the principles of environmental justice.

Program 1.A: Ensure that low-income and minority populations understand the potential for adverse pollution, noise, odor, vibrations, lighting and glare when new commercial and industrial developments are proposed.

Responsible Parties: City Council, City Engineer/Public Works, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 1.B: Ensure that affected residents have the opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their health.

Responsible Parties: City Council

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 1.C: Ensure that low-income and minority populations have equal access and influence in the land use decision-making process through such methods as bilingual notices, posting bilingual notices at development sites, conducting information meetings with interpreters, etc.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Planning

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing

Program 1.D: Provide staff and City officials training on the principles and methods of comprehensive public participation with an emphasis on empowering disadvantaged populations.

Responsible Parties: City Council, Administrative Services

Schedule: Immediate; Ongoing