



Healthy Community and Environmental Justice Case Study

City of Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element

Key themes | Environmental Exposures, Health & Climate Change, Food Access & Healthy Food Systems, Healthy Homes, Active Transportation, Social Connection & Safety, Health & Human Services

SUMMARY

The Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element was only the second General Plan Environmental Justice Element in the state when it was adopted in 2014 for the brand new City of Jurupa Valley. The years prior to incorporation (in July 2011) there was a large expansion of the logistics industry under the County of Riverside which located industrial uses and truck traffic in close proximity to a number of neighborhoods. This affected the overall quality of life of these neighborhoods and resulted in many residents being exposed to unhealthful levels of noise, congestion, and air pollution. In adopting an Environmental Justice Element, this new city acknowledged the prior lack of community involvement by the county and charted a path to engage disadvantaged neighborhoods in land use decisions through this General Plan Amendment. The Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element was prepared by City consulting staff and adopted within 10 months at a cost of \$20,000.

Click here for a link to the 2017 Jurupa Valley General Plan including the Environmental Justice Element:

<https://www.jurupavalley.org/DocumentCenter/View/217/2017-Master-General-Plan-PDF>

LEAD AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Jurupa Valley was the lead agency on the Environmental Justice Element working in close cooperation with the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ). The Element was prepared by Civic Solutions staff who serve as the City's Planning Department. The Element was unanimously adopted by the City Council on November 6, 2014.



DRIVERS

In June of 2011, Riverside County approved several large warehouse projects in Jurupa Valley located in close proximity to an existing Hispanic neighborhood. CCAEJ sued the County and developers on behalf of the residents, and included the City of Jurupa Valley in the lawsuit upon incorporation a month later. The lawsuit alleged that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the projects failed to address impacts to the neighborhood. Ultimately, a settlement was reached by all parties with a provision that the city and applicant prepare and/or implement a variety of measures, including city consideration of an Environmental Justice Element of the General Plan.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The City of Jurupa Valley relied heavily on the extensive outreach conducted by CCAEJ on environmental justice. CCAEJ worked with the community to identify their concerns about the environment, their lack of involvement in the public decision-making process, and other issues concerning environmental equity. Their input was reflected in the Element and specific policies were crafted to address those issues. Examples of policies directly resulting from public input included those related to facilitating broader public involvement in municipal decision-making, the need to provide translation services at key meetings, as well as the need for buffers between industrial facilities and sensitive land uses.

Other engagement included meetings with a commercial real estate development organizations, to address their concerns that the element would limit commercial development, as well as input received during two public hearings on the Element.



HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND/OR CLIMATE IMPACT AREA

Jurupa Valley is blessed with abundant natural beauty ranging from the lush Santa Ana River to the beautiful Jurupa Mountains. Still, it is burdened with environmental justice issues including the toxic Stringfellow Acid Pits. With a large amount of industrial and warehousing, there are also compatibility issues between residential and industrial areas – and truck routes. Jurupa Valley residents, including its low-income residents, are also experiencing obesity, lack of access to healthy foods, and inactive lifestyles. The Environmental Justice Element, and the Healthy Communities Element, which followed, are helping to remedy some of these issues at a policy level.

FUNDING SOURCE

As outlined above, the project was a collaboration between the City of Jurupa Valley and CCAEJ with \$20,000 in funding provided by the applicant of the proposed warehouse project involved in the lawsuit.

RESEARCH AND DATA

Staff conducted extensive research in preparing the Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element. Key resources included the National City Health and Environmental Justice Element, the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) Environmental Justice Element template, and environmental justice information on the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) website. Staff also used **CalEnviro-Screen** to map areas with a high pollution burden in the city.

The city is not numerically tracking statistics regarding implementation of the Environmental Justice Element. However, there are indications it is having a positive effect. The city has conducted additional outreach on several proposed projects to involve the community and help them understand how new development will affect or change their environment. Several outreach meetings have been held in the community with meetings conducted in both English and Spanish. This has resulted in many Hispanic residents becoming more familiar and comfortable with involvement in the public process, including many who have begun attending and speaking at City Council meetings.

CHALLENGES

When CCAEJ and the State Attorney's Office initially proposed the preparation of an Environmental Justice Element as part of the lawsuit settlement, the idea was new to city leaders. However, upon realizing that the primary purpose of Element was to reach out to and involve its citizens, city leaders readily agreed as this is consistent with their philosophy of local government. In addition, a handful of commercial development interests were also concerned the Element would overly limit development opportunities, however, these concerns were assuaged by discussing the intent of the Element to protect the quality of life for all of the city's residents and a few very minor wording changes.

OUTCOME

Adoption of the Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element has already had positive implications for the City. Since late 2014, all new development in the city has been reviewed for conformance with the policies of the Element. Project sites are also mapped using **CalEnviroScreen** to determine those areas most affected by pollution and other environmental burdens. The Element also helped inform the 2017 General Plan which expands on the environmental justice policies and pays particular attention to avoiding land use incompatibility issues. In addition, a Healthy Communities Element was added to the General Plan which provides additional policies to improve the health and quality of life of the city, such as measures to promote physical activity, social interaction, and access to healthy food and medical care. City leaders have embraced the goals and objectives of these efforts and made an increased effort to eliminate cultural and language barriers to citizen participation in the process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mary Wright
Vice President
Civic Solutions
949-489-1442
wright@civicsolutions.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WRITTEN BY
Mary P. Wright
Vice President
Civic Solutions

EDITED BY

Sefanit Mekuria
Policy Fellow
Elizabeth Baca
Deputy Director
Governor's Office of Planning and
Research