

Chapter 3a: Community Profile

Introduction

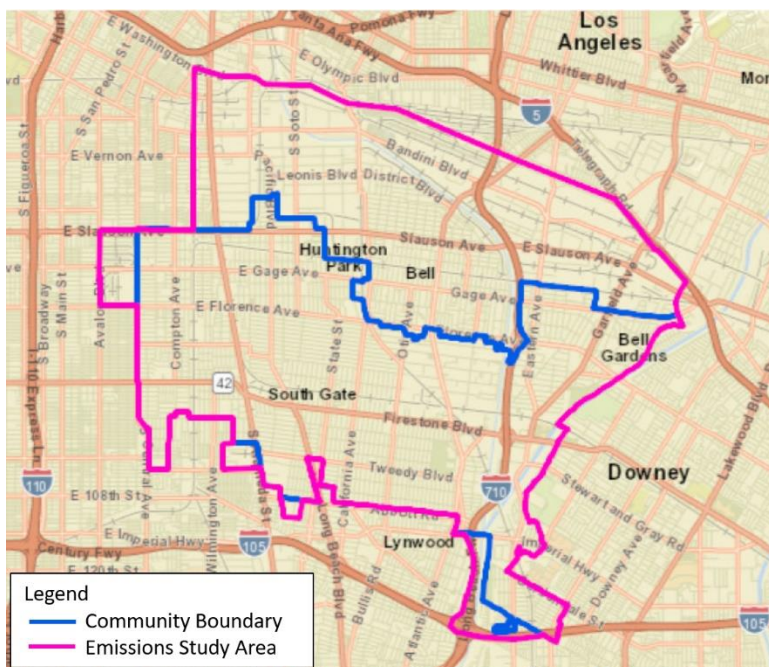
The community profile describes the characteristics of Southeast Los Angeles and the types of air pollution sources that impact the community. Understanding the characteristics of Southeast Los Angeles and the air pollution sources affecting the community is crucial to addressing the air quality priorities outlined in Chapter 5. Additional community details (e.g., types of stationary sources and socioeconomic information) is available in Appendix 3a – Community Profile.

Community Boundary and Air Quality Priorities

During monthly CSC meetings, committee members, members of the public, and South Coast AQMD staff worked together to shape the elements and actions of this Plan. Topics discussed with the CSC include:

- What should be the community **boundaries** for the AB 617 community plans?
- What **air quality concerns** does the community have?
- What are the top **air quality priorities** that the community would like to address through the AB 617 CERP?
- What **priority actions** should be included in the CERP?
- What should the **goals** for the priority actions include?
- Additional **feedback on the Draft CERP**

Figure 3a-1: Southeast Los Angeles Community Boundary and Emissions Study Area



CSC members discussed which geographic areas and neighborhoods to include in the community boundary as part of the AB 617 program. The Southeast Los Angeles CSC established two distinct geographic boundaries (i.e., community boundary and emissions study area) to represent this

community for the purpose of the plan (Figure 3a-1). The “community boundary” focuses on places in the community where residents live, work, attend school, and spend most of their time. The “emissions study area” encompasses the community boundary and nearby air pollution sources (e.g., facilities and major truck routes) that affect the community.

After finalizing the community boundary and emissions study area, the CSC discussed their air quality concerns and identified a set of air quality priorities. The CSC built consensus to determine the top air quality priorities and the actions necessary to address them. The top air quality priorities for the Southeast Los Angeles community are:

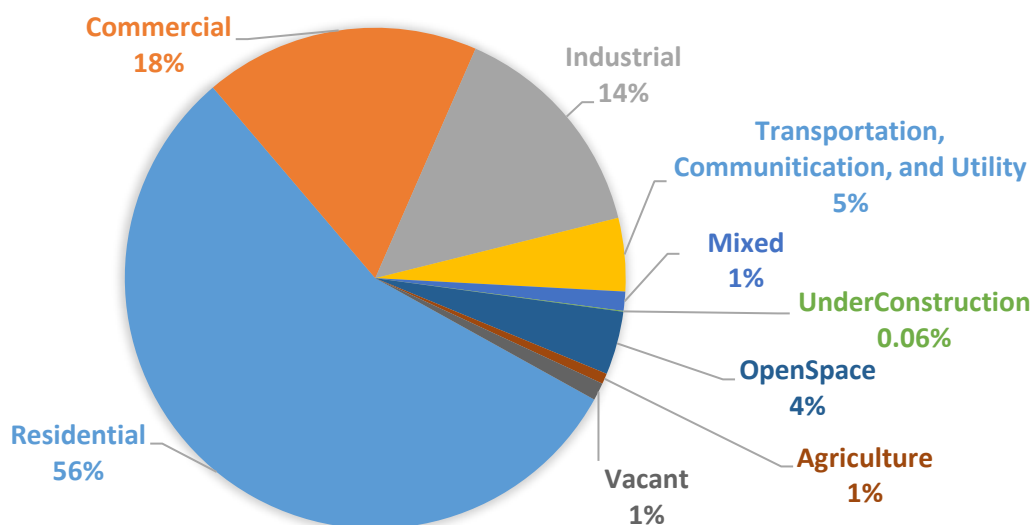
- Truck Traffic and Freeways,
- Railyards,
- Rendering Facilities,
- Metal Processing Facilities,
- Green Space, and
- General Industrial Facilities.

The actions to address each air quality priority are described in Chapter 5.

Community Land Use Profile and Related Data

The Southeast Los Angeles community is shown in Figure 3a-1. The community boundary includes a land area of 17.92 square miles, and the emissions study area includes an area of 32.12 square miles. About 56% of this land area is used for residential living, 18% is zoned for commercial uses, 15% is zoned for industrial uses, and 5% is used for freeways, roadways, and utilities and communications services (Figure 3a-2).ⁱ

Figure 3a-2: Land use profile in Southeast Los Angeles



ⁱ Land use refers to how certain areas of land are classified for development and use. Land use data is often used for city or county planning, such as the placement of housing developments and transportation hubs. Land use data is derived from the 2016 Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy, which is based on 2012 data.

Appendix 3a presents data based on previous cumulative impact studiesⁱⁱ to describe the impacts of toxic air pollutants in this community, as well as other environmental pollution, public health factors, and social and economic factors that make people more sensitive or vulnerable to the health effects of pollution.¹ The Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study IV (MATES IV) and CalEnviroScreen 3.0 are two tools used to evaluate the characteristics that describe this community. The South Coast AQMD conducts the MATES study, which used air toxics monitoring, emissions inventories, modeling, and health risk assessment techniques to calculate the cancer risk due to toxic air pollutants (“air toxics cancer risk”).ⁱⁱ CalEnviroScreen3.0 is a screening tool developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) that is used to identify communities that are most affected by various sources of pollution, and where people are especially vulnerable to the effects of pollution.

Other Community Environmental Issues

Delta Airlines Jet Fuel Release

On January 14, 2020, Delta Airlines Flight 89 was headed to Shanghai, China from LAX when an in-flight emergency was declared, causing the plane to return to the airport. As part of its emergency landing, 15,000 gallons of jet fuel in the form of mist was released into the atmosphere impacting multiple areas of Los Angeles, including parts of the Southeast Los Angeles community. South Coast AQMD issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) on January 17, 2020 to Delta Airlines for the jet fuel dump that impacted students, teachers and other members of the public in Los Angeles County.

The NOV alleges that Delta Airlines caused a public nuisance in violation of the agency’s Rule 402 and California Health and Safety Code Section 41700. South Coast AQMD’s investigation was prompted by community complaints which resulted in inspectors being dispatched to several locations. Complaints regarding the exposure to the jet fuel were reported at multiple schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Cudahy Public Library and two schools within the El Rancho Unified School District.

Once issued, NOVs can result in civil penalties. In some cases, the company can choose to implement voluntary measures to reduce emissions or otherwise prevent further violations. If no settlement is reached, a civil lawsuit may ultimately be filed in superior court. South Coast AQMD has coordinated with, among others, the Los Angeles County Fire Department, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the Los Angeles Unified School District and the El Rancho Unified School District.

Exide Holdings, Inc.

Exide Holdings, Inc. is a former lead acid battery recycling facility located in Vernon, California and is within the Southeast Los Angeles emissions study area. After learning that the facility was persistently emitting excessive amounts of lead and arsenic into the air, South Coast AQMD quickly developed new rules and took enforcement action that resulted in significantly reduced toxic emissions. However, historical emissions prior to these actions led to soil contamination in the surrounding communities.

ⁱⁱ More information regarding MATES IV and the final report can be found on South Coast AQMD’s website at, <http://www.aqmd.gov/home/air-quality/air-quality-studies/health-studies/matesiv>.

Exide has a history of willfully concealing its violations. Specifically, Exide went to great lengths to mislead the South Coast AQMD about the true scope and source of the lead and arsenic emanating from the Vernon facility.

Because of Exide's long history of contaminating the surrounding community, and willfully concealing those violations, South Coast AQMD opposed the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) decision to allow Exide to abrogate its responsibility to clean-up both the Vernon site and the surrounding community that was impacted by the facility's operations. Nor should the public bear the financial responsibility for the costs of remediation. South Coast AQMD requested that the U.S. DOJ hold a public hearing to provide the public with information on the proposed abandonment and orphaning of the Exide facility in Vernon and to allow for full community engagement.

U.S. DOJ and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) held a virtual public meeting on October 13, 2020 to listen to the community's concerns relating to the Exide Holdings, Inc. Consent Decree and Settlement Agreement Regarding the Non-Performing Properties. Unfortunately, the presiding judge sided with the DOJ and the clean-up is now being conducted by DTSC.

Community Impacts from the Community Perspective

While this section and Appendix 3a provide an overview of the Southeast Los Angeles community, the community members make each community unique and distinct. Community members bring intimate familiarity with their community and the air quality concerns that affect their neighborhood. Below are some community voices describing this community.

"For decades the Southeast Los Angeles region has faced various injustices and challenges, one of those major injustices being environmental justice. Many of the factors specifically contributing to air pollution are truck traffic, tree ways, railyards, locomotives, processing/rendering facilities, etc. Our communities have been at the forefront of these injustices, we have faced the consequences and have seen the detrimental health effects of such injustices. The time has come for our communities to stand up and voice our concerns, AB 617 helps aid the cause. It allows our forefront communities to propose solutions with the guidance of the SCAQMD. This is an important opportunity that our communities must take note of in order to seek justice.

Assembly Bill 617 is a prime example of democracy, the SCAQMD is co-existing with the communities they represent. This community-based initiative has the potential to give the SELA region a platform, a platform that would allow our communities to voice our concerns. Never before has an initiative like such been implemented or practiced, AB 617 and the SCAQMD are setting the blueprints for other communities."

- Jesus Ortiz, Resident of South Gate

"I hope AB 617 in Southeast LA will close gaps between agencies and cities through collaborative structures and pass meaningful policies to reduce pollution in our communities."

- Laura Cortez, Resident of Bell Gardens and East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice Co-Director

“Growing up in South Gate I never thought I would have the opportunity to improve environmental quality in my community, but I was motivated and driven to obtain the tools I needed to do so. I left southeast LA to pursue undergraduate and graduate studies. I started my career in San Diego working with municipalities to improve water quality and then worked for SDG&E managing environmental compliance for large electric infrastructure projects. When I moved back to Los Angeles to pursue a career at SoCalGas to work on air and climate issues, I learned about AB 617 and was beyond excited to know that there was a bill that prioritizes action in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by poor air quality. I am honored to be working alongside SCAQMD and the other CSC members to help reduce toxics and criteria air pollutants in the community I grew up in and the community I have family that I love and care for. Although it’s upsetting to think that very little progress has been made to address nuisance odors and toxic emissions from industry that were impacting my community and my health when I was younger, I find solace in the fact that there are other passionate community members working collaboratively to get things done not only in southeast LA but in other AB 617 communities across the state. And I hope that all of this collective effort and prioritization of actions in my community over the next several years results in quantifiable emissions reductions.”

- *Edith Moreno, Southern California Gas Company*

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1. Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. CalEnviroScreen 3.0. <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-30>, Accessed September 10, 2020.