

# CalEnviroScreen 5.0 Update Implications for the Bay Area



**METROPOLITAN  
TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION**

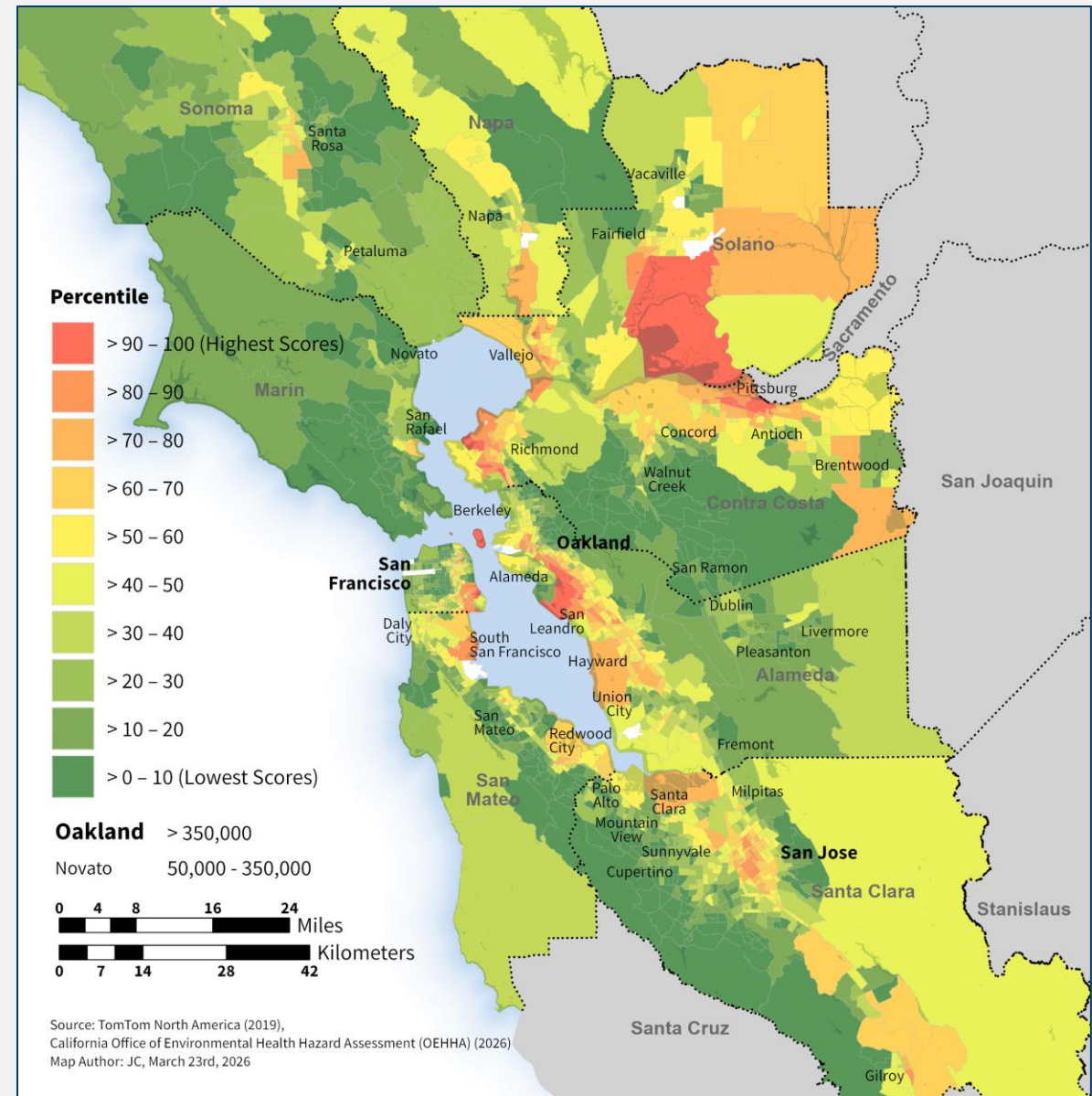


Joint MTC Planning Committee with the  
ABAG Administrative Committee

April 10, 2026

# What is CalEnviroScreen & Why it Matters to MTC

- CalEnviroScreen is a statewide environmental screening tool that designates **disadvantaged communities (DACs)** based on pollution & population characteristics.
- It factors into project selection for numerous state funding programs including the Active Transportation Program (ATP), the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP), and the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program.
- CES undercounts Bay Area disadvantage by missing high-cost-driven pressures like rent burden, housing instability, and displacement risk.



<https://mtcdrive.box.com/v/draftCES5map>

# How CalEnviroScreen Works



## Pollution burden

The tool measures **15** pollution factors that impact human health, like PM 2.5, traffic impacts, waste sites and drinking water contaminants.



## Population characteristics

The tool measures **9** population factors that can make people more susceptible to pollution, like poverty, asthma and diabetes.



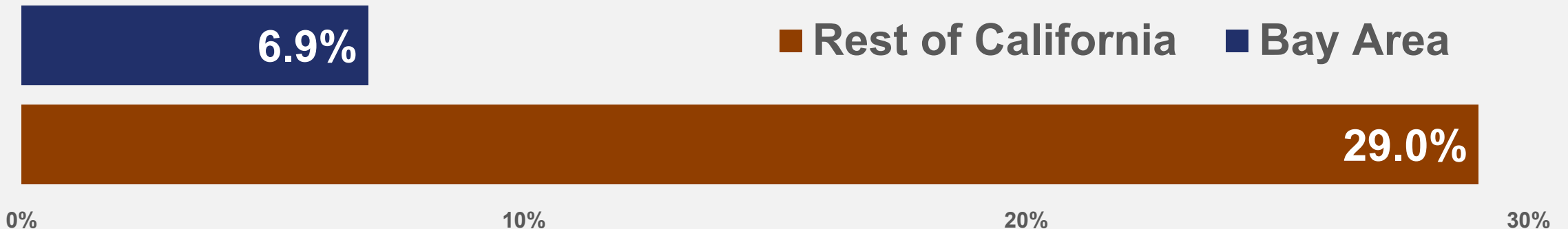
## Percentile scores

The combined scores for all indicators are compiled into one index and ranked among all census tracts in California.

**CES heavily weights pollution burden relative to population characteristics, which depresses scores in high-cost regions where socioeconomic drivers dominate vulnerability**

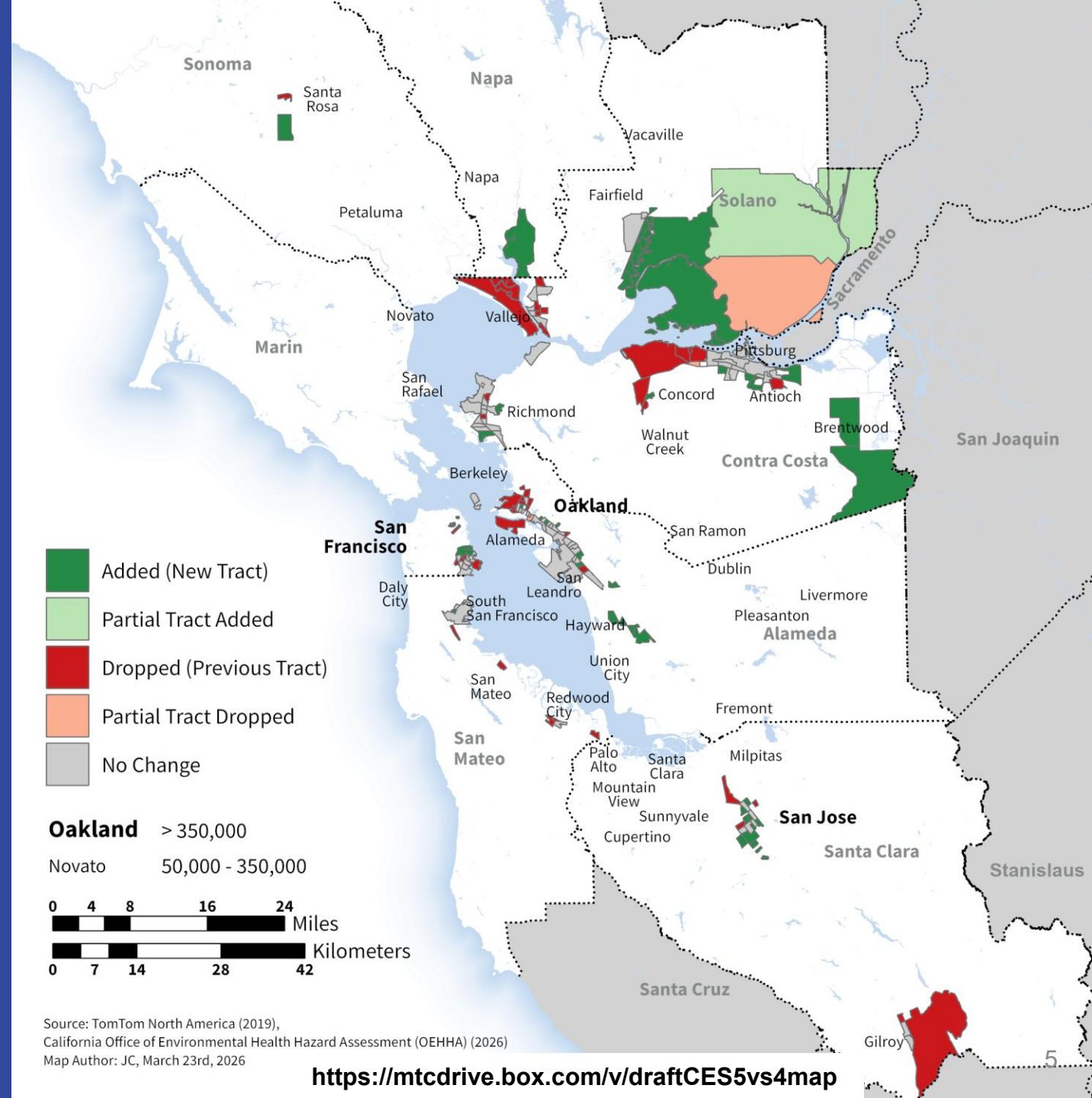
# Disadvantaged Communities in the Bay Area and Statewide

- Just **5.4%** of the state's DAC tracts are in the Bay Area's nine counties (122 of 2,258 tracts).
- Only **6.9%** of the Bay Area's census tracts are designated as DACs, compared to **29%** in the rest of the state, meaning Bay Area tracts are 4× less likely to be designated as DACs compared to tracts outside the region.



# Comparing CalEnviroScreen 5.0 vs 4.0

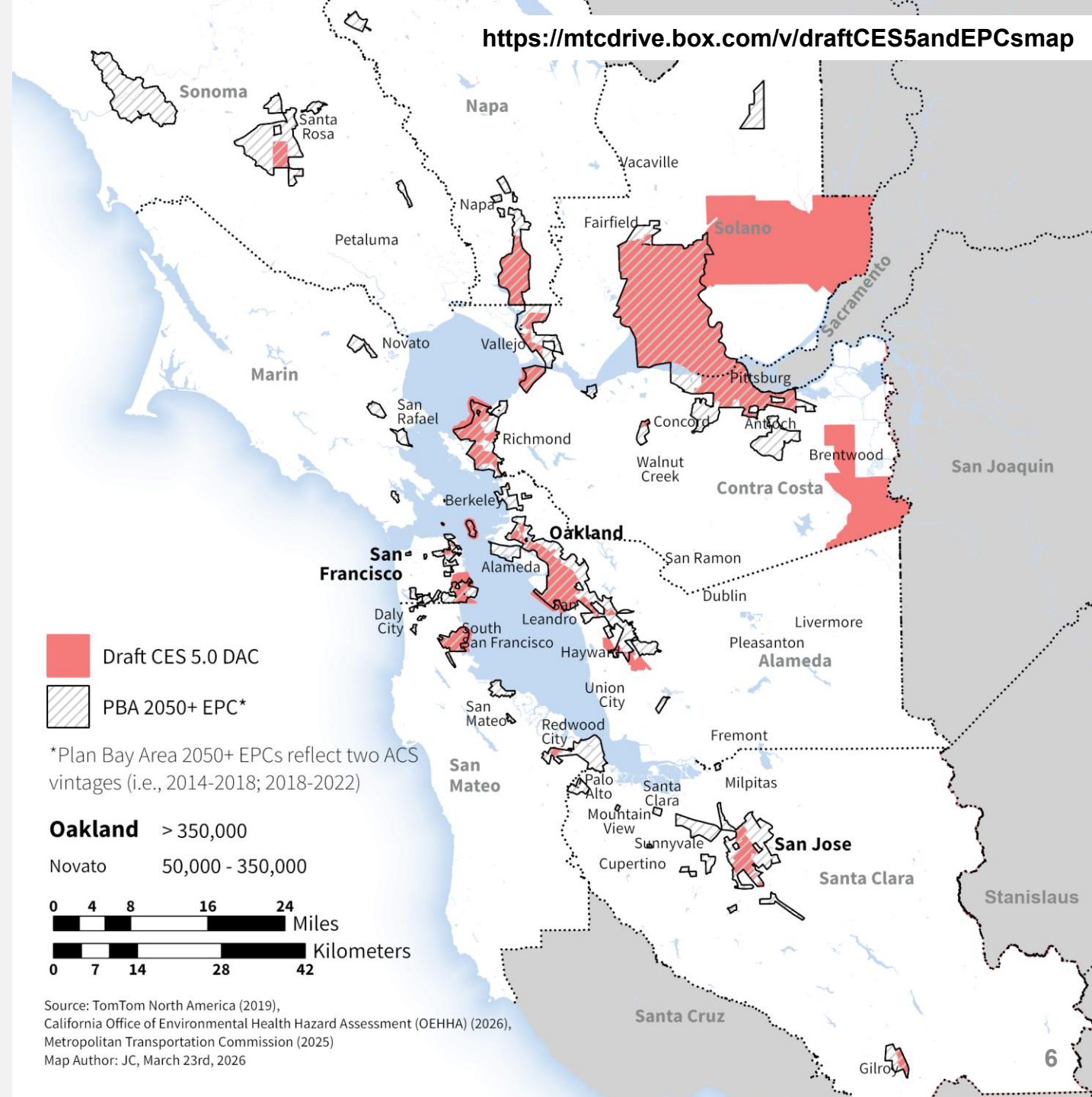
- The Bay Area has **122 DAC tracts** in CalEnviroScreen 5.0, up from 113 tracts in version 4.0.
- However, several long-recognized Bay Area DAC Communities lost their designation
- These include communities in East Palo Alto, West Oakland, Richmond, San Pablo, Pittsburg and San Francisco



# CalEnviroScreen & Equity Priority Communities

Most CalEnviroScreen DAC tracts are also Equity Priority Communities. Just **seven** out of 122 are not.

There are **441** total EPC tracts, meaning CalEnviroScreen leaves out many local disadvantaged areas from the state's definition.

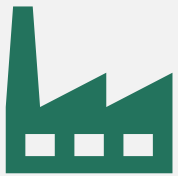


# Challenges for the Bay Area



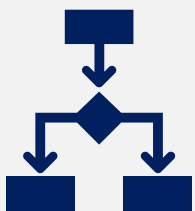
## **High cost of living unaccounted for**

Housing cost burden, displacement risk, linguistic isolation, and poverty are high—but not fully captured by the CES Methodology



## **Pollution burdens are less concentrated in the Bay Area**

CES percentile scores dropped ~20 points in many Bay Area tracts due to statewide normalization and weighting—not because conditions improved.

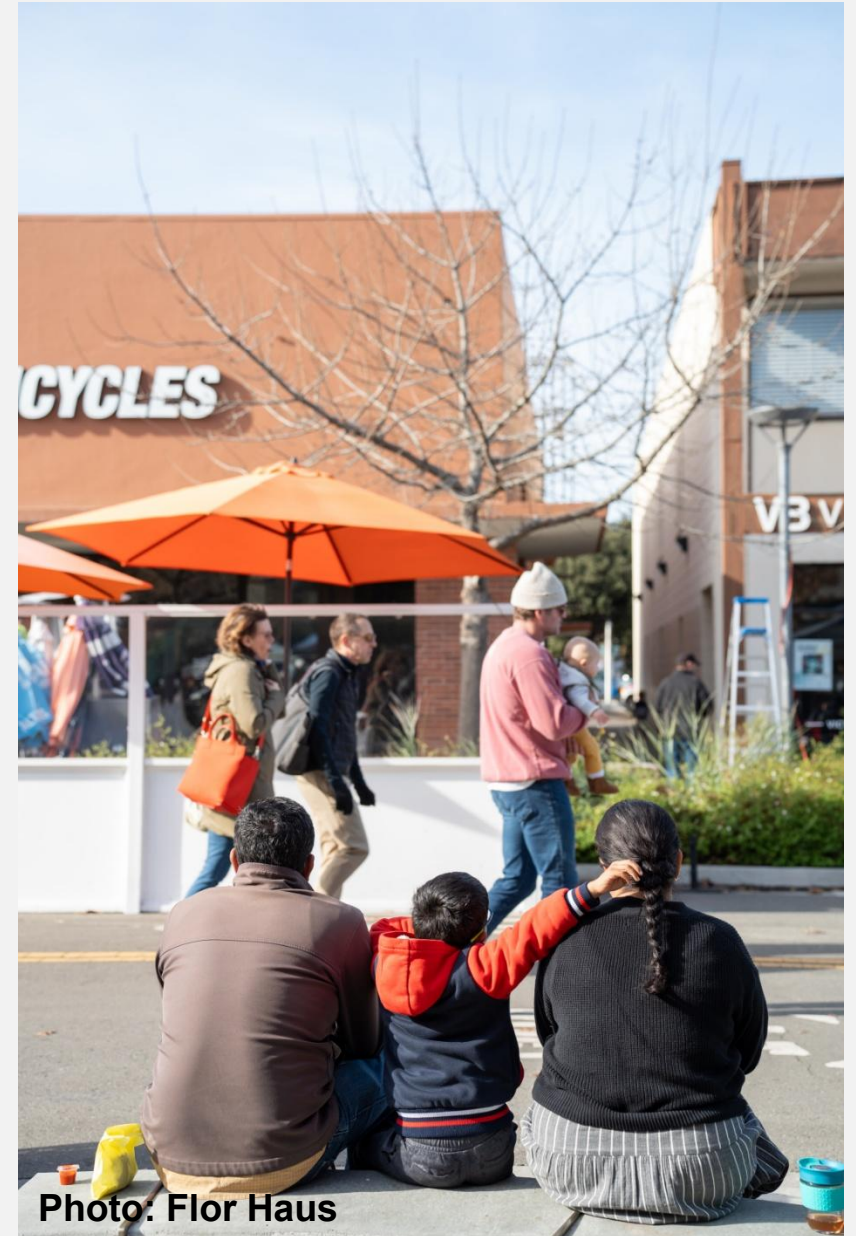


## **Loss of DAC designation threatens Climate & Housing Investments**

Multiple Bay Area jurisdictions that historically qualified as DACs lose their status under CES 5.0—not because community conditions improved, but due to changed scoring methods

# Overall Takeaways

- In CalEnviroScreen 5.0 the Bay Area remains significantly underrepresented.
- Loss of DAC designation is driven by methodological choices rather than changes in actual community need.
- MTC recommends CalEPA use its statutory discretion (HSC §39711) to include tracts ranking above the 75th percentile in **either** pollution burden **or** population characteristics.



# Next Steps

- Continue advocating for CalEPA to adopt a more inclusive definition of disadvantaged communities consistent with statutory flexibility.
- Strengthen our regional equity analysis with **Equity Priority Communities Refresh** over the next two years.

## Contact

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Photo: Noah Berger