

Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism in Los Angeles

By

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Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is 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. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys:

- The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and
- Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

- EPA's Office of Environmental Justice

Robert D. Bullard- “Father of Environmental Justice”



- Bullard is known as the 'father of environmental justice'. He has been a leading campaigner against environmental racism, as well as the foremost scholar of the problem, and of the Environmental Justice Movement which sprung up in the United States in the 1980s. He is currently a Distinguished Professor at Texas Southern University.

Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management, Inc.

- In 1979 Bullard's wife, attorney Linda McKeever Bullard, represented Margaret Bean and other Houston residents in their struggle against a plan that would locate a municipal landfill next to their homes. The lawsuit, *Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management, Inc.*, was the first of its kind in the United States that charged environmental discrimination in waste facility siting under the civil rights laws. Houston's middle-class, suburban Northwood Manor neighborhood was an unlikely location for a garbage dump except that it was over 82 percent black.

Robert D. Bullard- “Father of Environmental Justice”

- Bullard, having received his doctoral degree only a couple of years before, was drawn into the case as an expert witness. In this role Bullard conducted a study which documented the location of municipal waste disposal facilities in Houston. Entitled 'Solid Waste Sites and the Black Houston Community', the study was the first comprehensive account of **ecoracism** in the United States.
- Bullard and his researchers found that African American neighborhoods in Houston were often chosen for toxic waste sites:
 - All 5 city-owned garbage dumps (100%)
 - 6 of the 8 city-owned garbage incinerators (75%)
 - 3 of the 4 privately owned landfills (75%)

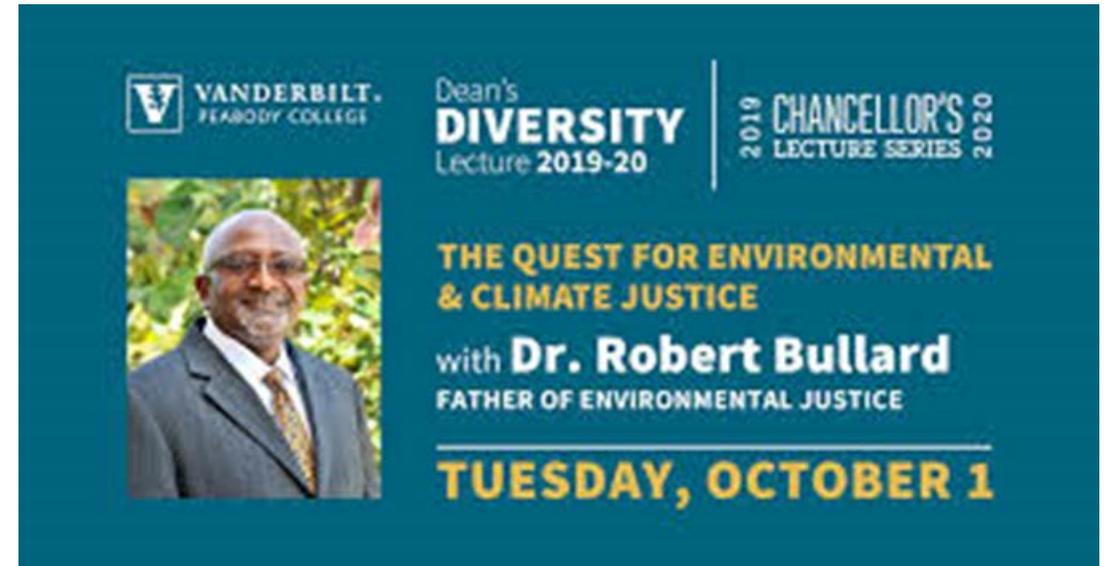
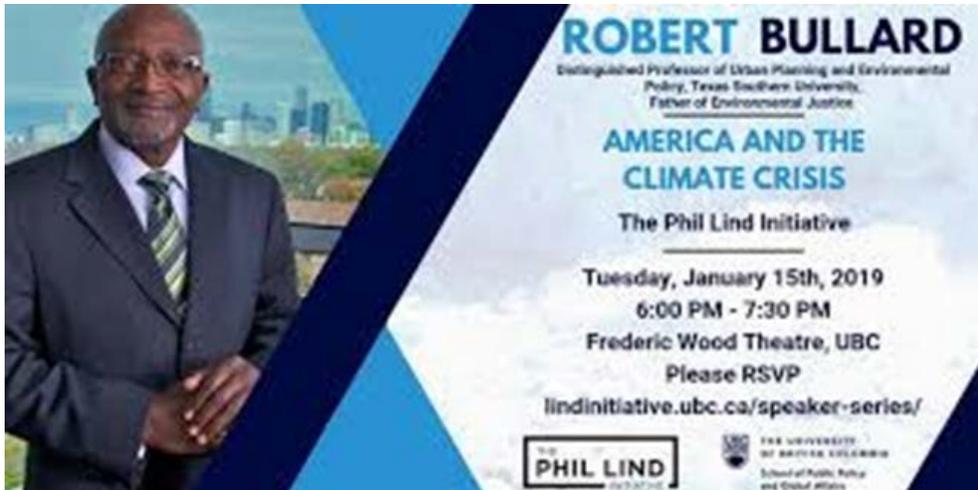
These were all sited in black neighborhoods, although blacks made up only 25 percent of the city's population.

Robert D. Bullard- “Father of Environmental Justice”

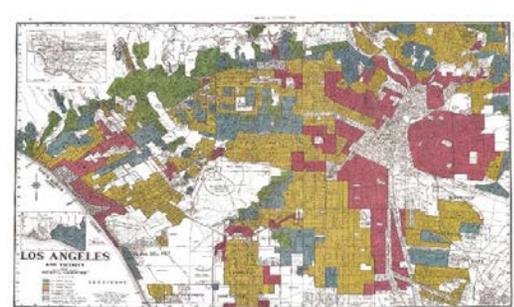
- This discovery prompted Bullard to begin a long academic and activist campaign against environmental racism.
- “Without a doubt”, Bullard has said of his experience, “it was a form of apartheid where whites were making decisions and black people and brown people and people of color, including Native Americans on reservations, had **no seat at the table.**”
- Over the 1980s Bullard widened his study of environmental racism to the whole American South, focusing on communities in Houston, & Dallas, Texas, Alsen, Louisiana, Institute, West Virginia, and Emelle, Alabama. Repeatedly he found a clear overrepresentation of environmental hazards in black areas as compared to white areas, causing increased health risks to black citizens.

Robert D. Bullard- “Father of Environmental Justice”

- In 1990 Bullard published his first book, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*. In the book, Bullard wrote that the Environmental Justice Movement, a grassroots movement by people of color then spreading across America to protest environmental racism, signified a new convergence of the civil rights movement and the environmental movement of the 1960s.
- He is currently a Distinguished Professor at Texas Southern University and is still working on Environmental Justice issues.



Redlining in Los Angeles



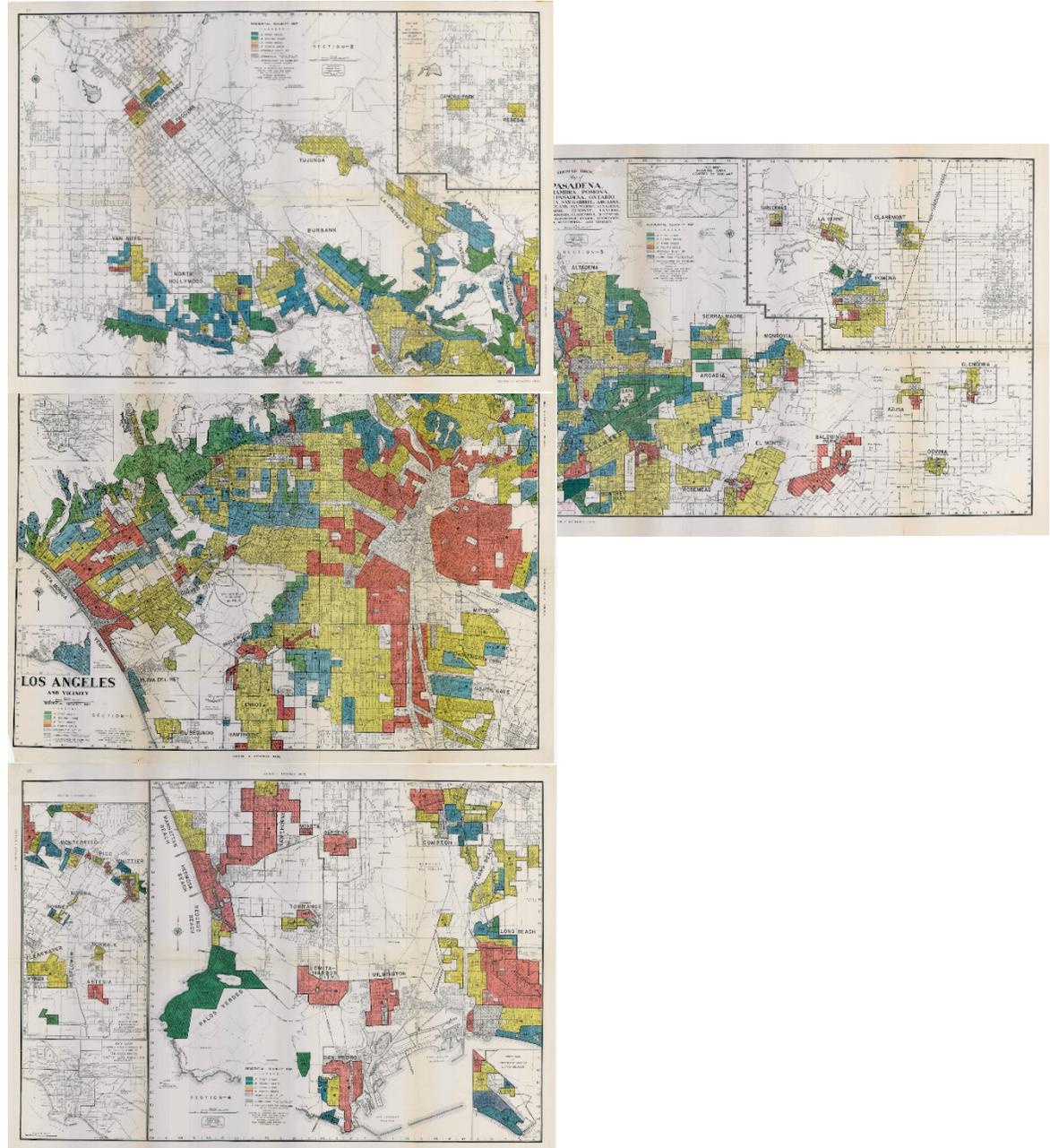
- Few facets of American citizenship embody the national ideal more than homeownership.
- Redlining was a systematic denial of economic investment, largely on the basis of race, that was codified into federal policy in the 1930s.
- In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt created “The New Deal” that provided assistance to many Americans in buying and keeping homes.
- Two agencies created during this time were the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and its parent agency, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. The HOLC relied on local real estate agents and lenders to figure out the investment risks in various cities so banks could determine where to give out loans. These agents and lenders judged neighborhoods based on racial and socioeconomic makeup and biases of the time.

*From Segregation in the City of Angels: A 1939 Map of Housing Inequality in L.A.,
By Ryan Reft in KCET's Lost LA: Coded Geographies*

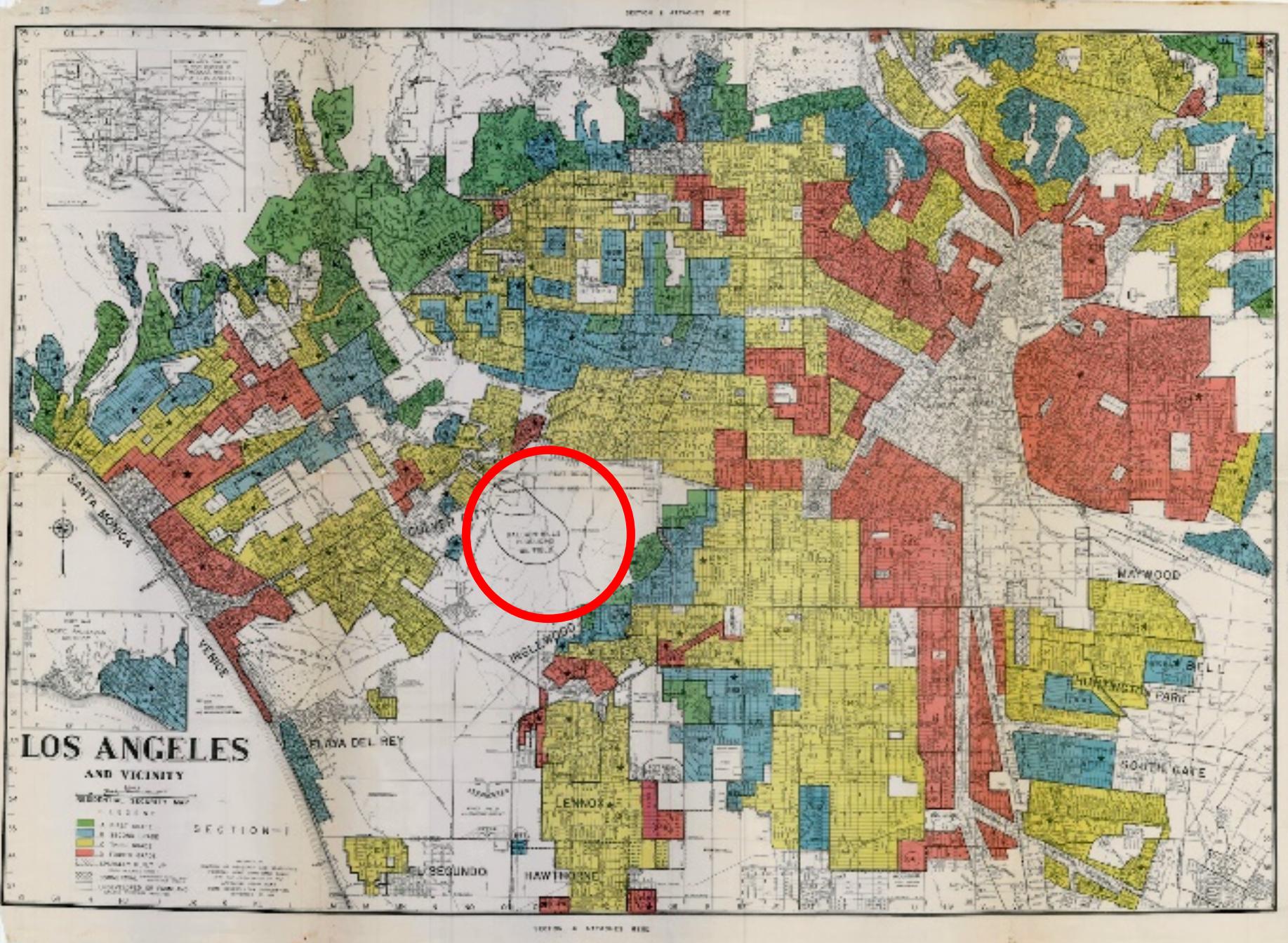
Redlining in Los Angeles

Regions were divided by color on maps:

- First Grade-“A” neighborhoods in green denoting “most desirable” or best investments
- Second Grade-“B” areas in blue, “still desirable”
- Third Grade-“C” areas in yellow “in decline”, and
- Fourth Grade- “D” neighborhoods in red “hazardous”. Thus the origin of the term redlining.



From *Segregation in the City of Angels: A 1939 Map of Housing Inequality in L.A.*,
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Redlining in Los Angeles

- The HOLC and FHA valued homogeneity over heterogeneity, particularly in regard to ethnicity and race.
- Those communities depicted in “red” usually contained minorities: African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Asian-Americans, and sometimes newly arrived immigrant groups like Slavs, Jews, and Italians. Such policies demonstrate that the FHA and HOLC established a **caste system** of race and ethnicity. Assessors in Los Angeles, saw Asians and Africans as the most “subversive.” Working class and white ethnic communities fared better, but were also penalized, often receiving C and sometimes D ratings.
- This system of redlining ultimately drew private investment away from heterogeneous communities like Boyle Heights and Watts.
- Central Los Angeles dismayed appraisers due to its “highly heterogeneous” population and “sprinkling of subversive racial elements,” the latter comment a reference to its “concentrations of Japanese and Negroes.”

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Redlining in Los Angeles

- Redlined communities struggled to receive federally backed home loans, making property ownership much more difficult for residents.
- Moreover, it made getting loans for home improvements- maintenance, upkeep and renovation- though not impossible, very unlikely.
- Neighborhoods fell into a vicious circle of decline: the inability to access capital led to disrepair and the physical decline of a communities' housing stock, which in turn reinforced the redline designation.
- C and D rated areas have some of the lowest rates of homeownership and are ground zero for gentrification. These communities have the least ability to **self-determine**.
- Redlined communities also sat closer to industrial areas, vice districts, and **environmentally compromised settings**, exposing residents to **health risks** and crime.

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Redlining in Los Angeles

- Racial discrimination in housing was legal until 1968 in the U.S.
- Redlining became equated with race and class and led to the naturalization of segregation; white, working-class homeowners often sought to exclude those populations seen as threatening to home values.
- Individuals and homeowner associations in white neighborhoods also manipulated property values by adding restrictive covenants to real estate contracts.
- For example, a covenant may stipulate that the buyer could not open a liquor store, build additional structures, or **sell** the property to **members of specific ethnic groups**.
- **Note:** The Baldwin Hills/Windsor Hills/The Dons areas were one of the few places upper middle class African-Americans could buy sizable homes earning the area the title “**Black Beverly Hills**”

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By Ryan Reft KCET's Lost LA Coded Geographies*

Redlining in Los Angeles

- According to the Digital Scholarship Lab at the University of Richmond, “scholars have characterized HOLC's property assessment and risk management practices, as well as those of the Federal Housing Administration, Veterans Administration, and US. Housing Authority, as some of the most important factors in preserving racial segregation, intergenerational poverty, and the continued wealth gap between white Americans and most other groups in the U.S.”
- These agencies simultaneously assured that growth would remain accompanied by real estate speculation and environmental degradation – meaning disinvestment, neglect, and **unjust placement of environmental hazards.**

From “*Mapping Inequality*,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers— The Mapping Inequality project is a collaboration of scholars at Virginia Tech, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Maryland and directed by Robert K. Nelson and Brent Cebul of the University of Richmond

Redlining in Los Angeles: The 10 Freeway

Historically, highway projects were weaponized to bulldoze through neighborhoods assigned ratings of D, in red, by HOLC.

- In August 1955 the entire route – known originally as the Olympic Freeway – would span 16.6 miles between the East L.A. Interchange in Boyle Heights and Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica, barreling through quiet bedroom communities on its path to the sea.
- Hundreds of churches, homeowners groups, and other community organizations rallied against the proposal, focusing their opposition on the 6.6-mile stretch west of La Cienega Boulevard.
- Channeling the ire of his West L.A. constituents, State Assembly Member Thomas Rees declared at a public hearing that the proposed freeway "would constitute a wall diagonally across this area," adding that it would pass menacingly close to several schoolyards. Others raised concerns about air pollution, while Superior Court Judge Stanley Mosk spoke on behalf of a local orphanage over which he presided, warning that the freeway would disrupt the lives of 200 orphans.
- Although planners rejected the Venice proposal, in April 1956 they did revise their original route in the face of community opposition. But while the new route saved 47 homes, it largely **shifted the freeway away from the domains of its most vocal opponents and into new neighborhoods**. Local opposition persisted, but the highway commission held firm.

Redlining in Los Angeles: Homelessness

- Black people make up 8 percent of Los Angeles County's population, but 42 percent of those who are homeless. More than 60,000 Black Angelenos experienced homelessness in 2019, county records show.
- In a crowd of 100 Black Angelenos 8 were homeless at some point this year. Among ALL Angelenos the rate was 1 in 100. (Rates of homelessness among white Angelenos are similar to those of Latinos, at about 1 in 100 residents. Asians and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles experience homelessness at even lower rates.)
- The problem is driven in part, officials say, by the city's history of **redlining**, in which majority-black neighborhoods were marked as undesirable for investment, preventing residents from obtaining home loans.

From Black, Homeless and Burdened by L.A.'s Legacy of Racism

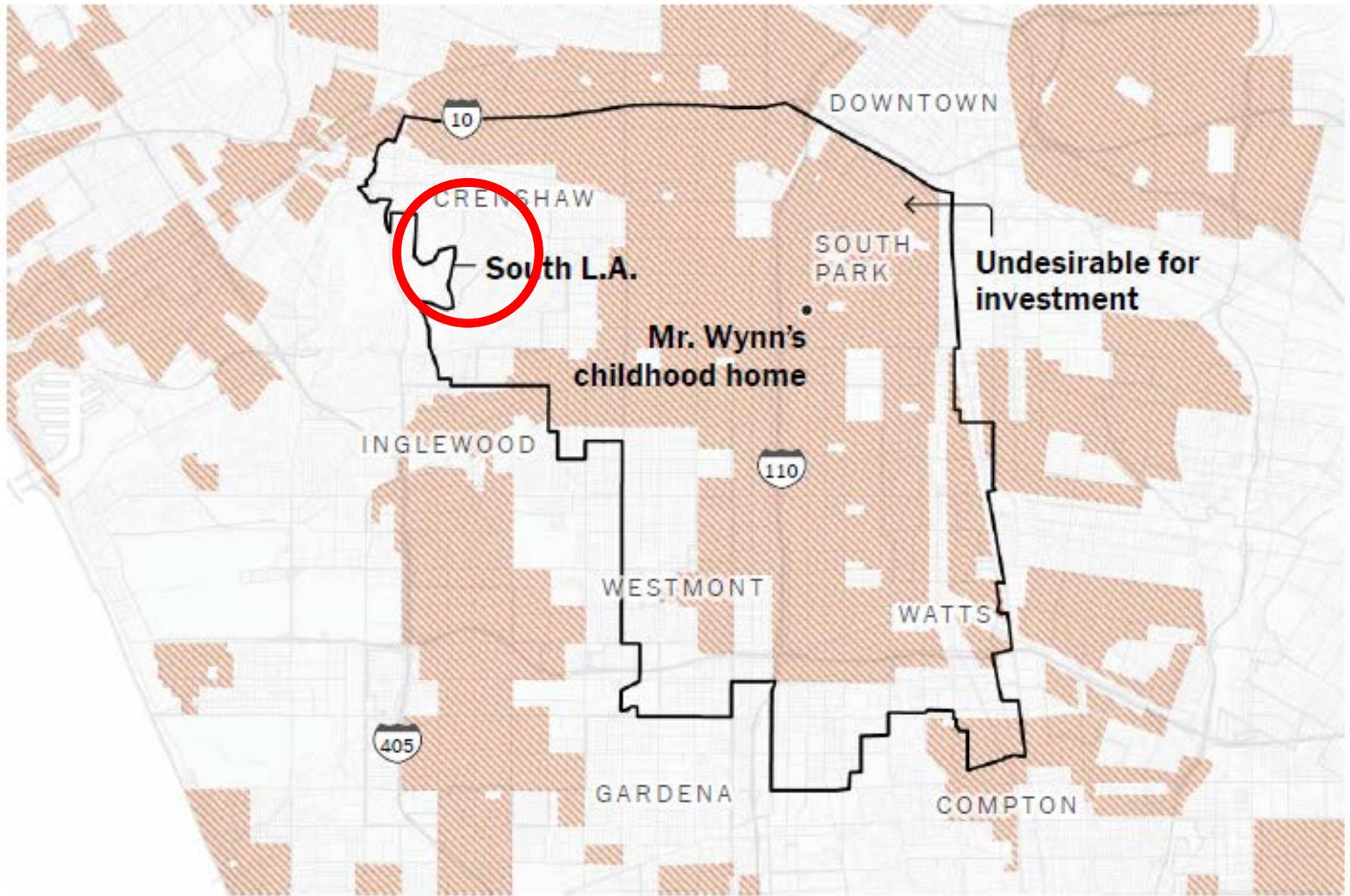
By Jugal K. Patel, Tim Arango, Anjali Singhvi and Jon Huang New York Times Dec. 22, 2019

These maps show the loss of majority-black neighborhoods in Los Angeles County over the last 50 years.

By The New York Times Source: Social Explorer analysis of census data.

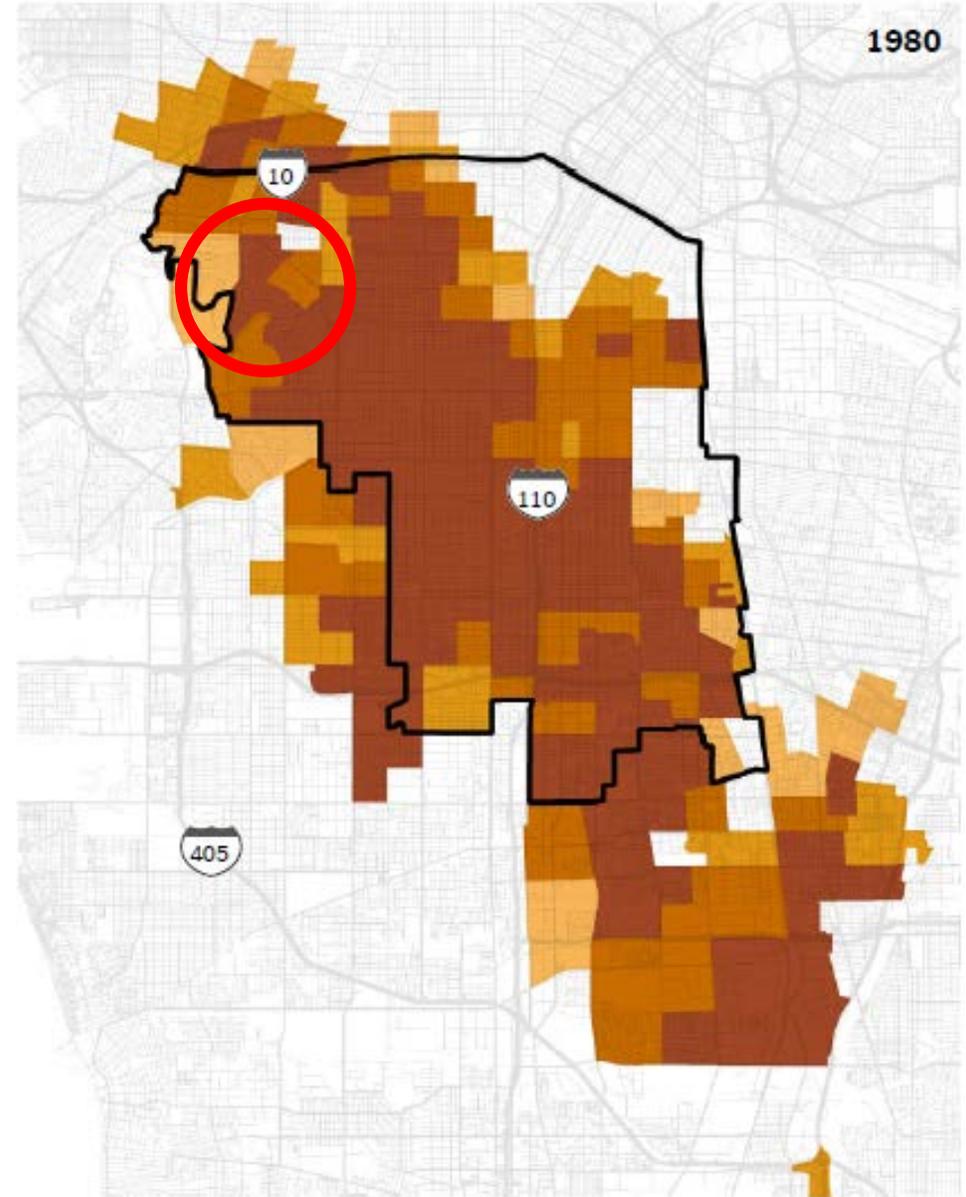
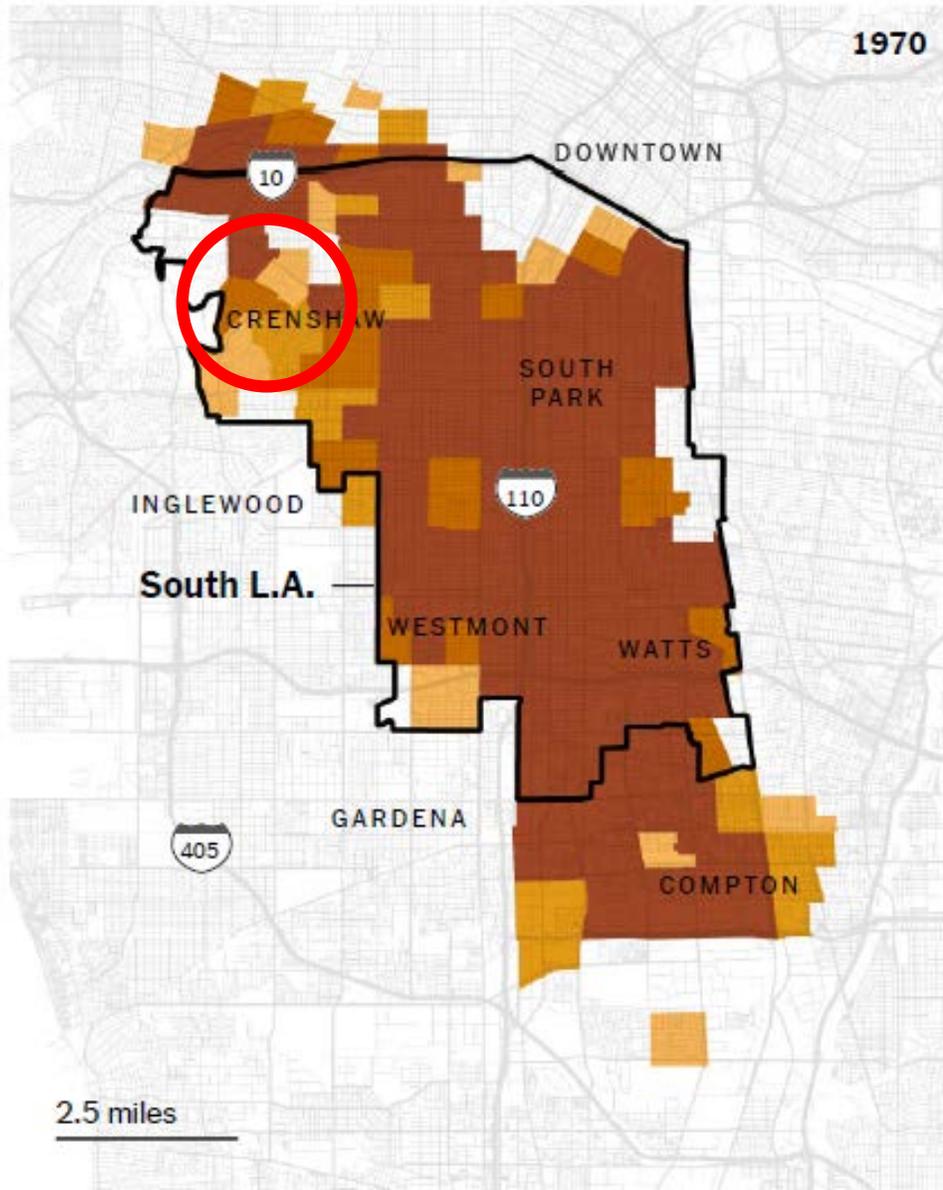
From *“Black, Homeless and Burdened by L.A.’s Legacy of Racism”*

By Jugal K. Patel, Tim Arango, Anjali Singhvi and Jon Huang Dec. 22, 2019

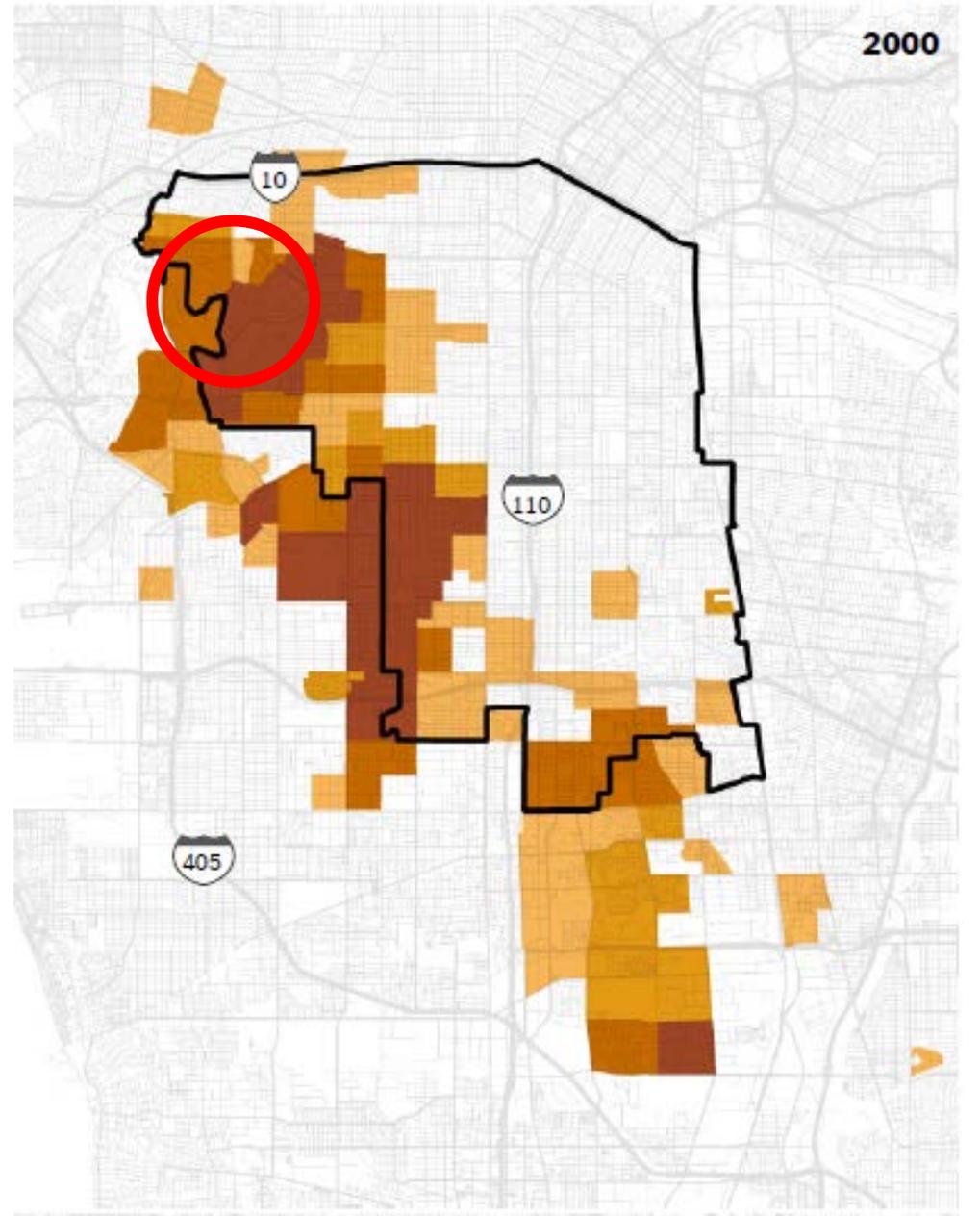
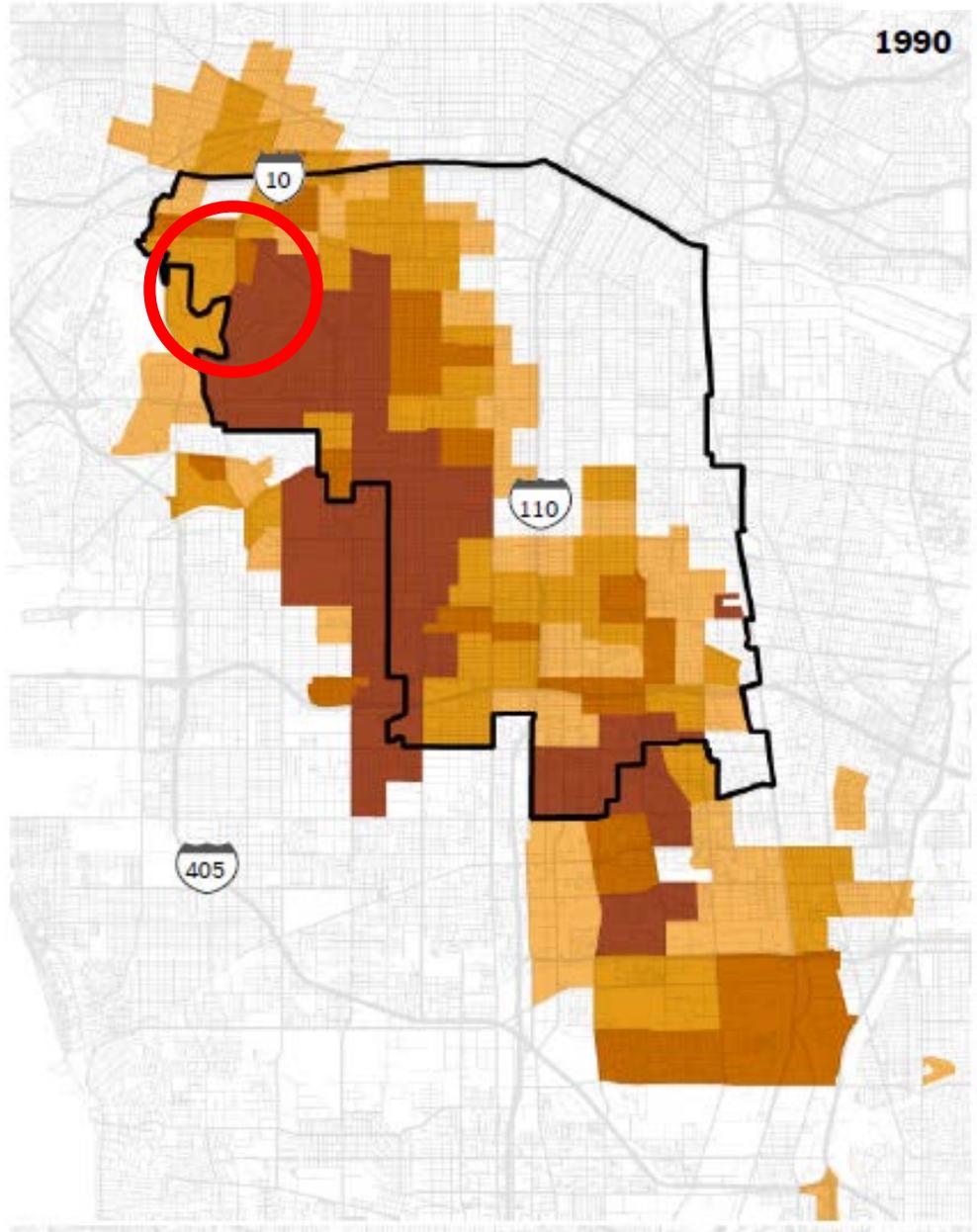


Source: Home Owners' Loan Corporation

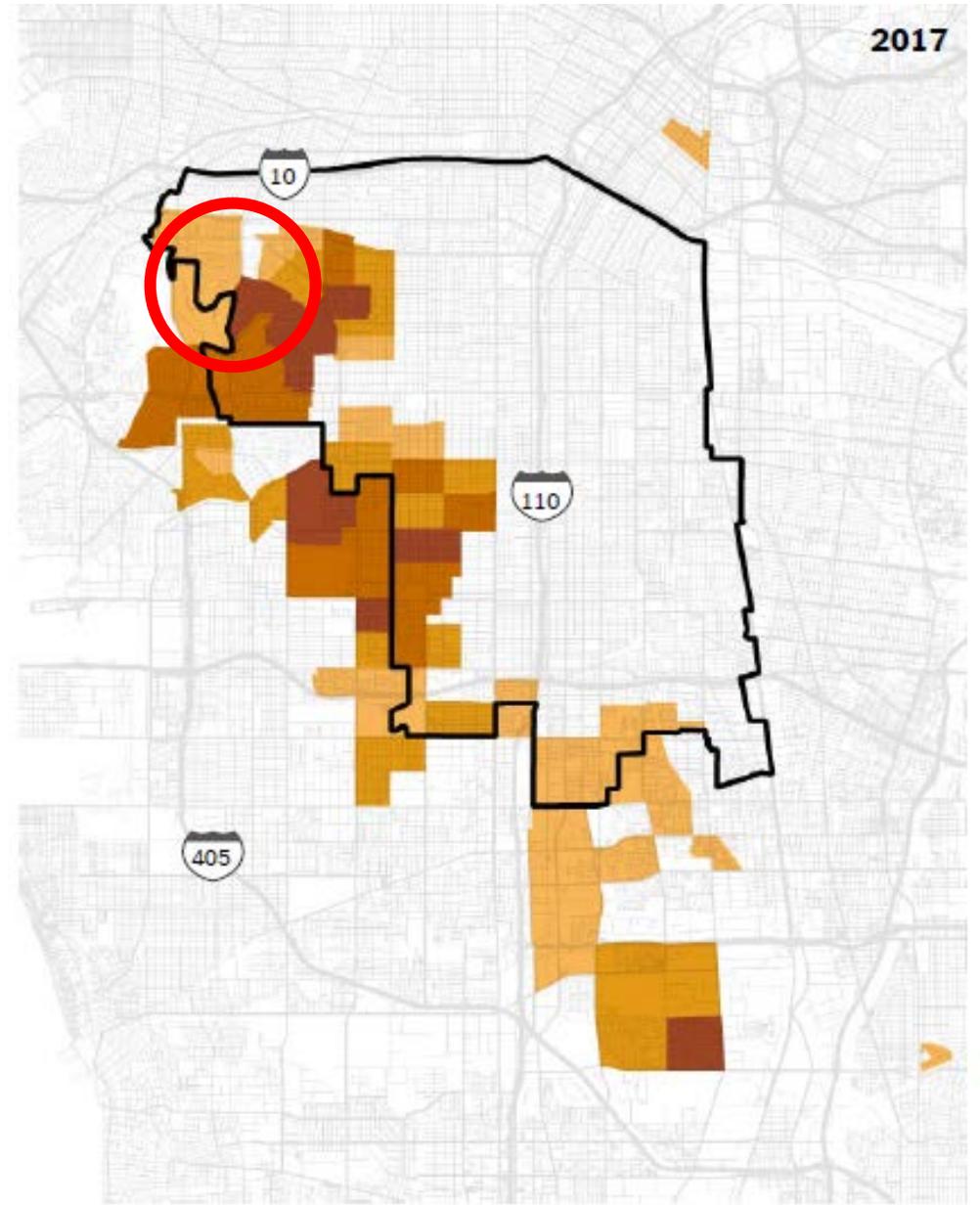
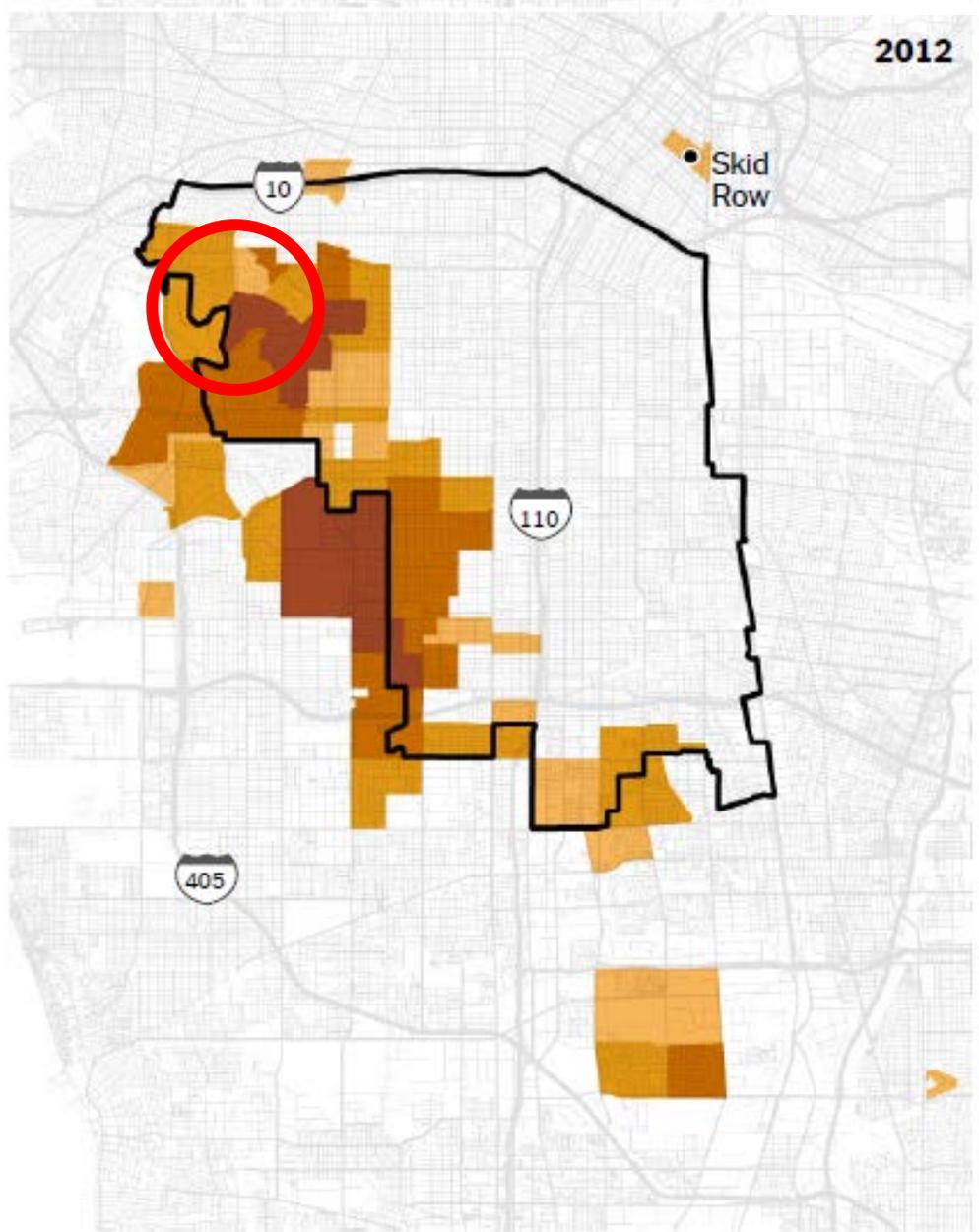
Black share of population 60 70 80%



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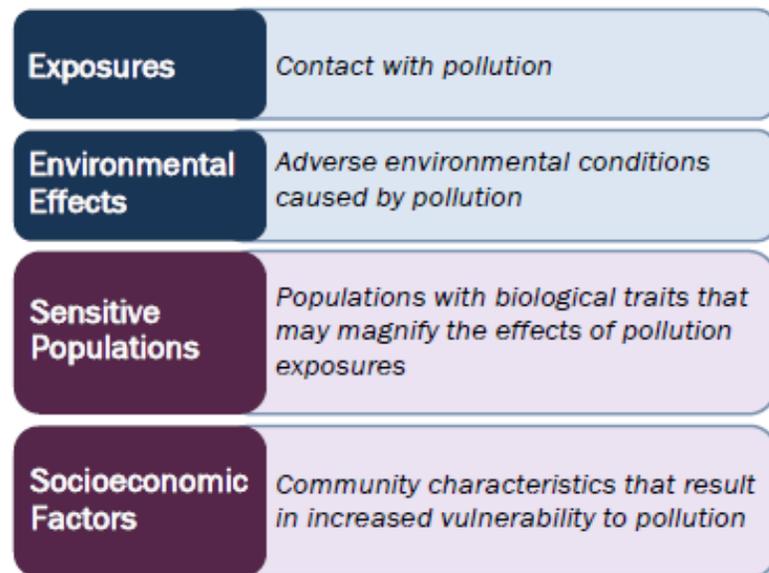
Redlining in Los Angeles

- HOLC Maps codify inequity that already existed in urban spaces and created numerous problems going forward.
- Residents frequently express amazement at how much the old HOLC view corresponds to the new view. As far as redlined communities go, other than the beach communities, there hasn't been a lot of variation in social or economic changes and who was advantaged or disadvantaged and it is all correlated to race and class.
- Too often Americans think of racial sorting as a “natural process” of the market, but HOLC maps force us to see how structured the processes are.
- Although the New Deal and resulting federal housing programs aided many people, the same policies disadvantaged people of color.

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CalEnviroScreen 3.0

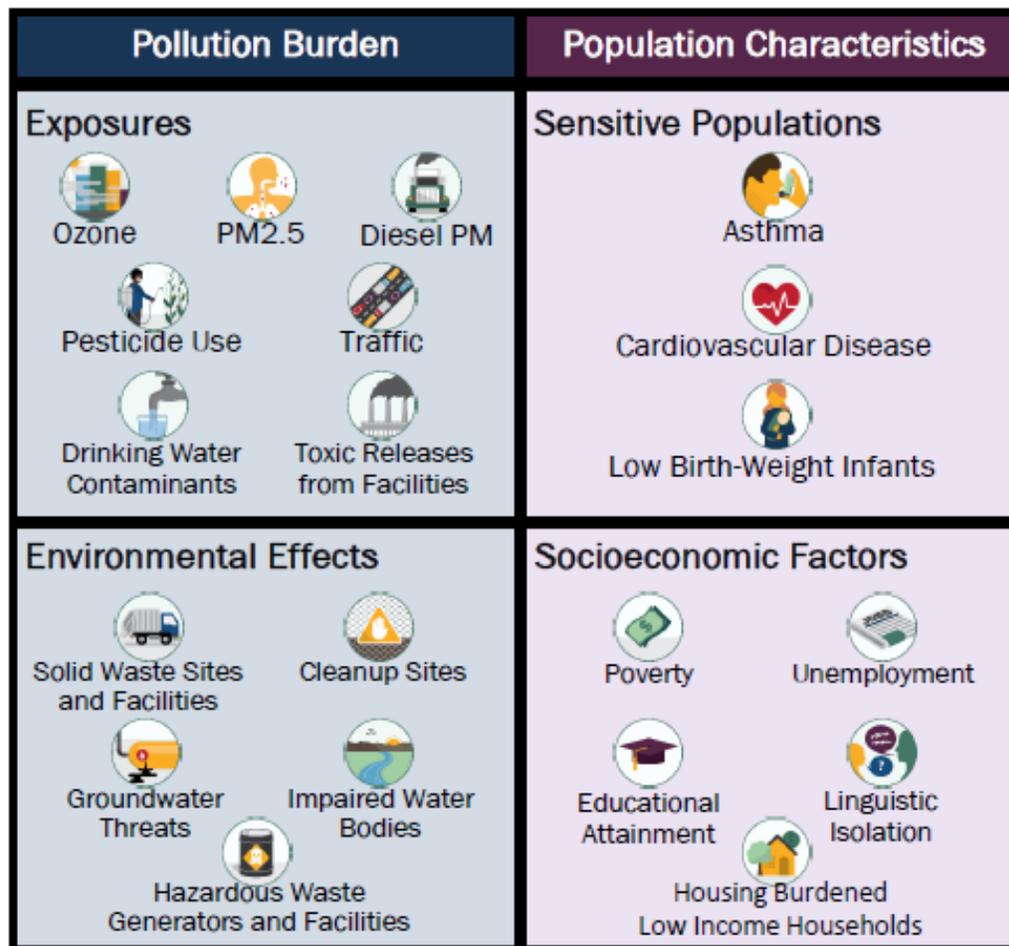
CalEnviroScreen indicators fall into four broad groups:



Geographic Scale

Census tracts from the US Census Bureau (2010 census) are used to represent the locations of communities across California. The average size of a census tract is around **4,000 people** and represents a relatively fine scale of analysis.

Indicators



CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Overall Results and Individual Indicator Maps

from OEHHA



Pollution Burden

Population Characteristics

Overall Results

Population Characteristics

Asthma

Cardiovascular Disease

Low Birth Weight

Education

Housing Burden

Linguistic Isolation

Poverty

Unemployment

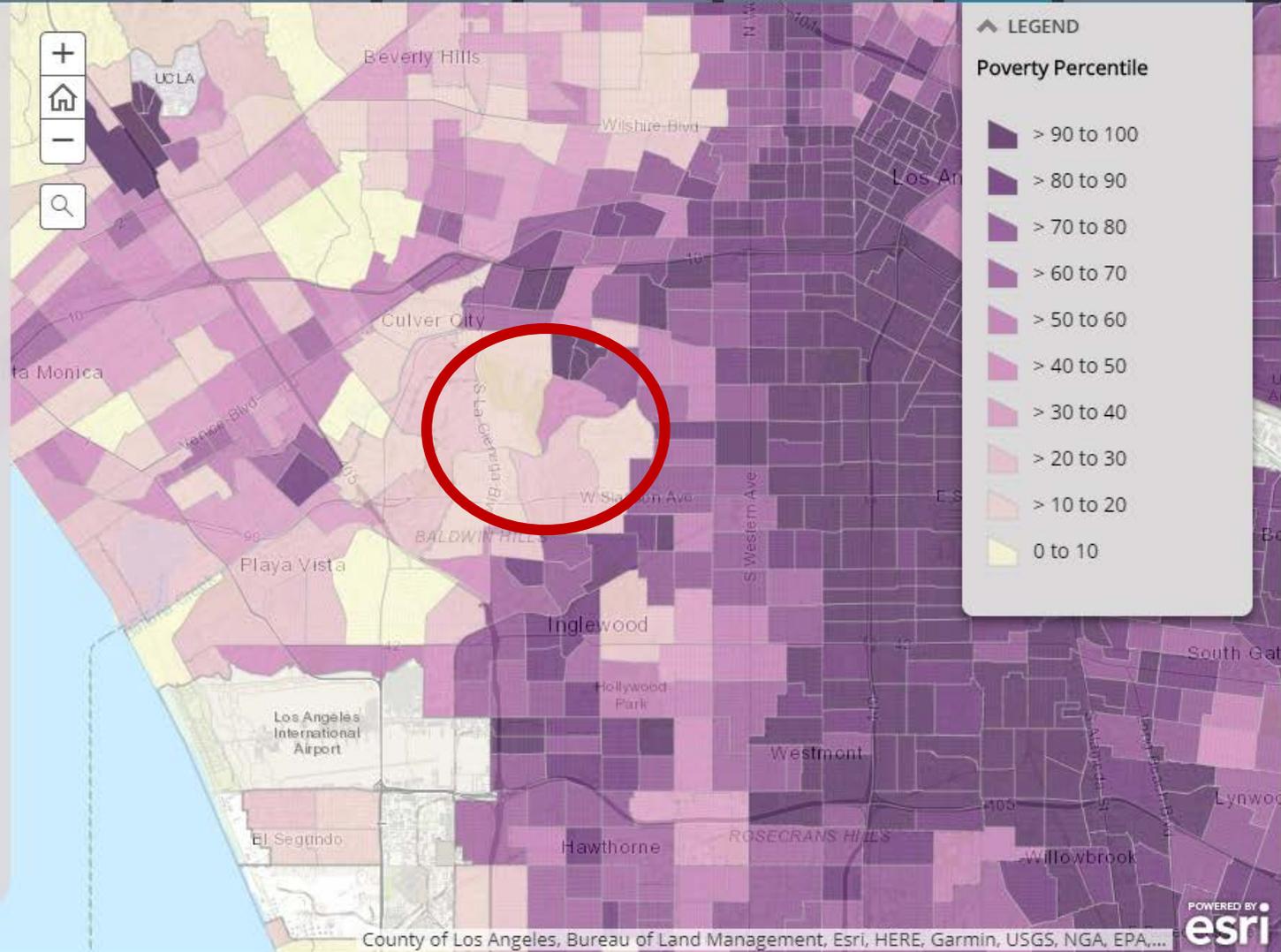


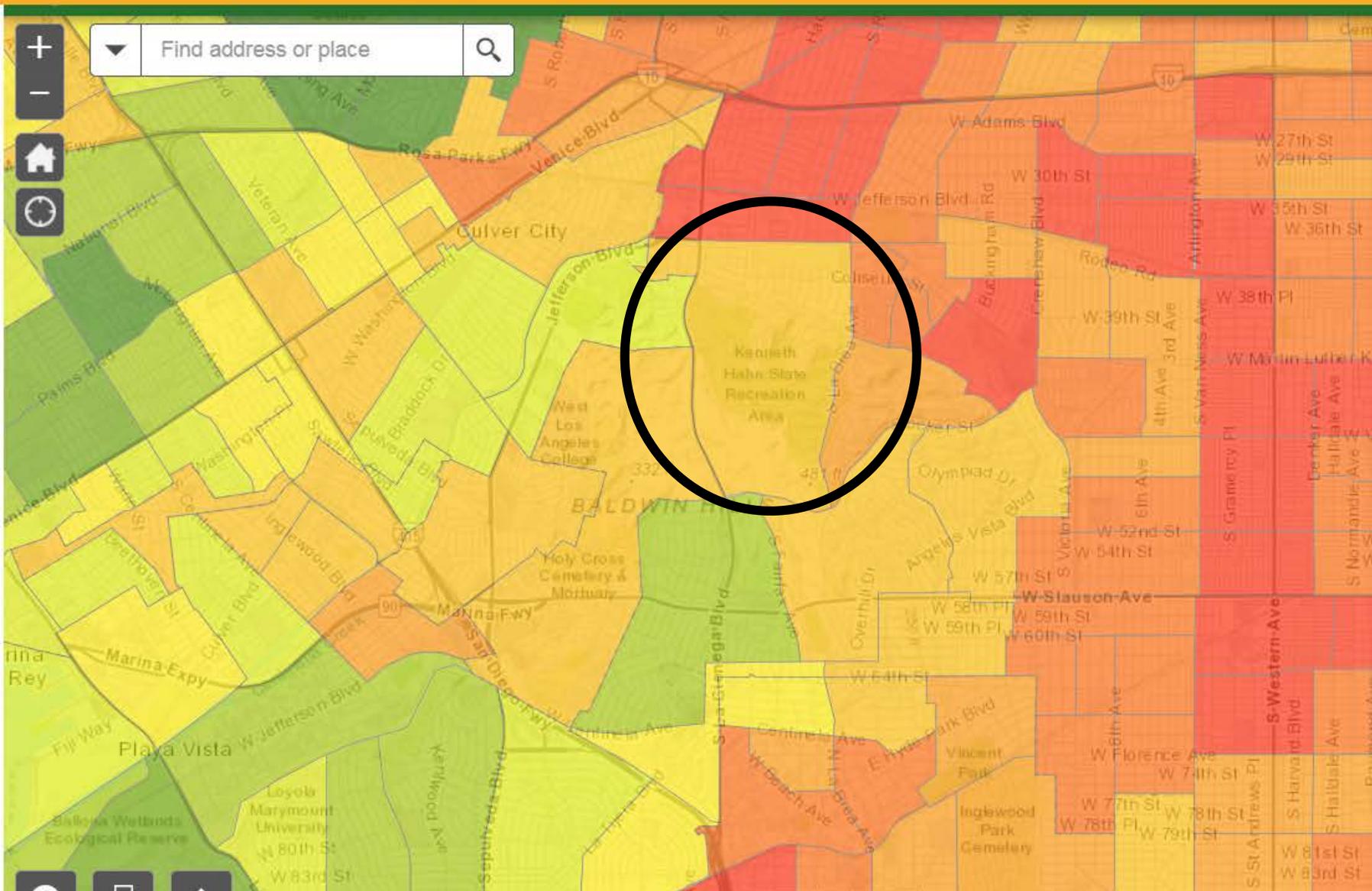
What is poverty?

The U.S. Census Bureau determines the federal poverty level each year. The poverty level is based on the size of the household and the age of family members. If a person or family's total income before taxes is less than the poverty level, the person or family are considered in poverty.

Many studies have found that people living in poverty are more likely than others to become ill from pollution.

More information can be found in the [Poverty chapter](#) in the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 report.





Legend

CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Results (June 2018 Update)

- 91 - 100% (Highest Scores)
- 81 - 90%
- 71 - 80%
- 61 - 70%
- 51 - 60%
- 41 - 50%
- 31 - 40%
- 21 - 30%
- 11 - 20%
- 1 - 10% (Lowest Scores)

High Pollution, Low Population



CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Overall Results and Individual Indicator Maps

from OEHHA [f](#) [t](#) [l](#)

Pollution Burden

Population Characteristics

Overall Results

Pollution Burden

Ozone

PM 2.5

Diesel PM

Drinking Water

Pesticides

Toxic Releases

Traffic

Cleanups

Groundwater



Overall CalEnviroScreen scores are calculated from the scores for two groups of indicators: **Pollution Burden** and **Population Characteristics**.

This map shows the combined Pollution Burden scores, which is made up of indicators from the Exposures and Environmental Effects components of the CalEnviroScreen model. Pollution burden represents the potential exposures to pollutants and the adverse environmental conditions caused by pollution.

To explore this map, zoom to a location or type an address in the search bar. Click on a census tract to learn more about the indicator data. The 12 Pollution Burden indicator maps can be viewed by clicking on the tabs across the top. Click on the Population Characteristics tab at the very top to access the 8 Population Characteristics maps.

A report with detailed description of indicators and methodology and downloadable results are available at the [CalEnviroScreen 3.0 website](#).

