

Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative

Grant Writing Portfolio

Mission Statement

Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative (POTS) is a worker-owned cooperative for black women and mothers founded in 2016 in Oakland, CA. Their mission has been to create intentional, sustainable, and inclusive communities that foster connection, empowerment, and resilience. Their planned villages eventually will be centered on principles of justice, equity, and cooperation with one section for women and children, along with beloved partners or grandparents. Another will be for elderly and disabled individuals, giving members ways to meet their needs through support from the rest who will work 15 hours to 35 hours (as able) a week. A third part of the village will serve as a central retreat space with a farm that includes an organic vegetable garden, goats, chickens, and bees. Through sustainable practices and conscious living, POTS strives to create a model for ethical and regenerative living that promotes harmony with nature and enhances the well-being of all community members.

Organization Description

The Parable of the Sower Cooperative was born out of the [Free Marissa Now Movement](#) wherein 37,000 members worked to free Marissa Alexander from a 60 year Stand Your Ground imprisonment in Jacksonville, Florida. Using this momentum Aleta Alston-Touré and other members founded POTS to create a housing model for Black women organizers and their families, providing community organizing, housing, and health services. They follow the [Rochdale Madison Principles](#) as they build their first community for women and children. They plan to build three more communities by 2035, focusing on feminist and sustainable economics and political education. POTS shares its lessons with other intentional communities around the world, having presented at panels for the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC), and supports the Black Liberation Movement, Black Lives Matter, the Womanist movement, Operation Ghetto Storm, and Spirit of Mandela, focusing on collective, strategic solutions for social change.

Organization Achievements

Achievements	Description	Date
Completed and presented community risk assessment	In partnership with the Thriving Earth Exchange, Parable of the Sower completed a comprehensive community risk assessment of environmental justice and climate change challenges affecting Richmond's historic, but declining, Black population.	present
Climate Justice Alliance Black Caucus Member	Parable of the Sower is a Black Caucus member for the Climate Justice Alliance.	past
Selected for 2022 Biden Justice40 Accelerator cohort	Through their participation in the White House's Justice40 Initiative, Parable of the Sower was connected to technical	2023

	resources and educational resources, and participated in training workshops and peer to peer learning sessions.	
34th Annual N'COBRRA Reparations Convention	Parable of the Sower participated in this convention, hosted in Oakland which gathered a national coalition of over 400 people to learn about and discuss reparations.	April, 2023
Secured \$250,000 Solutions Project Grant	Parable of the Sower secured this capacity and general-purpose grant as part of their selection for membership in the Solution Project's Communicating Our Power two-year fellowship program.	2022-2023
Environmental Reparations Tour	Parable of the Sower hosted this tour of Richmond's Iron Triangle to educate residents about the history of displacement, environmental racism, and anti-blackness that made the area an environmental sacrifice zone.	Feb, 2021
Founding member for New Economy Coalition's (NEC) Black Solidarity Fund	Parable of the Sower is a founding governing member for the NEC's Black Solidarity Fund, which supports Black leadership and organizing in the solidarity economy, as well as the NEC Resource Library.	2020
Founded Federation of Intentional Community's (FIC) Black Inclusion Accountability Task Force	Founded this task force within FIC to support Black and Brown groups in the largely white space of intentional communities in the United States.	
Recipient from Highlander Institute's We Shall Overcome Fund	Parable of the Sower received project funding from the Highlander Institute to support art and activism in the African American community.	
Secured Alternate ROOTS Awards	Parable of the Sower has been a successful recipient of artistic awards from Alternate ROOTS.	
MIT Ford Fellowship, Department of Urban Studies and Planning	During the last year of the Fellowship Founder, MIT Emeritus Mel King, Boston Tent City. The Vision Crew Youth Program became a national model pilot for Pedagogy of the Oppressed Intergenerational Programming.	

Historical Connection to Underserved Communities

The Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative, one of the first black women-led intentional housing communities in modern history, is inextricably linked to historically underserved communities. Their cooperative is a feminist economy & mutual aid society started by organizers, activists, youth, and low income mothers working to create a sustainable, equitable, and regenerative community for historically underserved communities.

The PSIC envisions offering a variety of programs and services to its members, including:

- Developments for Affordable housing: The PSIC will be developing mixed-income housing communities that will provide affordable housing to timebanking low-income families and individuals in cooperation.
- Community gardens and food production: The PSIC is committed to providing farming access to healthy, locally-grown food for its coop and timebanking members. The cooperative plans to operate several community gardens and is developing a food production program that will provide fresh produce to cooperative members.
- Education and training: The PSIC offers a variety of educational and training programs to its co-op and non-coop timebanking members, including solidarity economy, democratic processes for governance, financial literacy workshops, job training, and skill-building classes.
- Economic development: The PSIC is committed to creating economic opportunities for its co-op and timebanking members. The cooperative is developing a variety of businesses and enterprises that will provide jobs and economic opportunities for members.
- Community organizing and advocacy: The PSIC is committed to empowering its members to advocate for themselves and their communities. The cooperative provides opportunities for co-op and timebanking members to participate in community organizing and advocacy efforts. The PSIC is a model for how historically underserved communities can come together to create a more just (Tu Mpito) and equitable world. The cooperative is based on the principles of cooperation, self-determination, and sustainability, and it is committed to creating a community that is welcoming and inclusive.

CBO's Programmatic Capacity

Location	Project Description	Outcome(s)
Vallejo/Richmond, Contra Costa County, CA	Door knocking and outreach campaign to learn about residents' experiences and challenges in order to inform California's forthcoming action on reparations. Reaching residents at barber shops, salons, soul food establishments, churches, and homeless encampments, and through door knocking at HUD properties and Unhoused encampments.	Nearly 300 residents have filled out Parable of the Sower's google form to contribute their experiences and to sign up to learn more about California's reparations campaign.
Contra Costa County, CA	Parable of the Sower hosts an annual August Land Corps (30-day Beloved Community) event series to equip participants with the tools to implement sustainable practices and political power in their communities.	Have hosted this month-long workshop with online and in-person training sessions since 2021.

Leadership Experience and Organizational Partnerships

- Aleta Toure (one of the Co-Founders) is a seasoned community organizer with over three decades of experience working in community development and juvenile justice campaigns. She is also a graduate of the MIT Community Fellows Program. Beginning in 2012, she was a co-Director of the Free Marissa Now Movement, which raised awareness and over \$100,000 in funds for Marissa Alexander's legal fees to fight Marissa's unjust conviction in a Florida stand your ground case, ultimately securing Marissa's freedom. She spoke at the Standing Our Ground UN hearing in Washington, DC. Before this work, Aleta was Lead Administrator for the National Institute of Health's (NIH) National Children's Study (NCS) in Macclenny, Florida, where she is a Battelle Memorial Science Administrator. The Children Study is one of 105 site for the 21 year research study under Obama. Aleta's experience in community engagement and outreach was a success to the project. Finally, she has worked on six WGBH-TV/PBS Blackside Films (makers of Eyes on the Prize documentaries).
- Parable of the Sower is a member of and Aleta is a board member for the BIPOC Intentional Community Council.
- Aleta was a Board member of the Southern Movement Assembly
- Founder of Western Movement Assembly
- National Planners for Peoples Movement Assemblies
- Members of National Black Liberation Movement Network
- Alternative Economies Lead for Black Sustainability Network
- Past site directors for Universidad Sin Fronteras/ University Without Walls
- Fellow for The Hood Incubator
- Fellow for Uptima Business Bootcamp
- Fellow for Cincy Co-op's Black Cooperative Start-up
- Fellow of the AGU Thriving Earth Community Science Project program
- Parable of the Sower is fiscally sponsored by the Open Collective Foundation.
- Parable of the Sower is a member organization of Anthropocene Alliance, a national network of climate and environmental justice community-based organizations.

Community Description & Environmental/Climate Impacts

The City of Richmond and its neighbors in Contra Costa County and across the Carquinez Strait in Vallejo, Concord, Martinez and Benicia are home to a stunning five oil refineries. These refineries did not end up in this small corner of the Bay Area by chance, but were the result of decades of environmental injustice and racism, with Richmond and nearby communities serving as environmental sacrifice zones for the comparably more powerful cities of San Francisco and Oakland. Partly as a result of the history of placing these refineries (namely Chevron in

Richmond itself) and other hazardous industrial sites in Richmond, nearly all of Richmond's census tracts are designated as "disadvantaged" by the White House's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, indicating a combination of severe social and environmental burdens on a given community.

The EPA's [EJScreen](#) tool provides further insight into these challenges. For example, the tool's environmental justice indicators demonstrate that the city's residents live in closer proximity to superfund sites and other hazardous waste than residents in 91% of the country's other census tracts. Residents experience more toxic releases to the air than 87% of other tracts, and have more exposure to diesel particulate matter than 84% of tracts. In Richmond's historically Black Iron Triangle (roughly census tract 006013376000), the situation is more severe: residents are among the worst-off 2% of the country with regard to superfund site and hazardous waste proximity, and exposure to diesel particulate matter. At the same time, Richmond's Black population is [declining](#) (down 41% between 1980 and 2020), possibly as the result of [encroaching gentrification](#) and historic racist housing practices that limited Black home ownership. Finally, Richmond is vulnerable to the increased natural disasters associated with climate change: [RiskFactor](#) places Richmond at a 'severe' risk for flooding and poor air quality over the next thirty years.

Maps

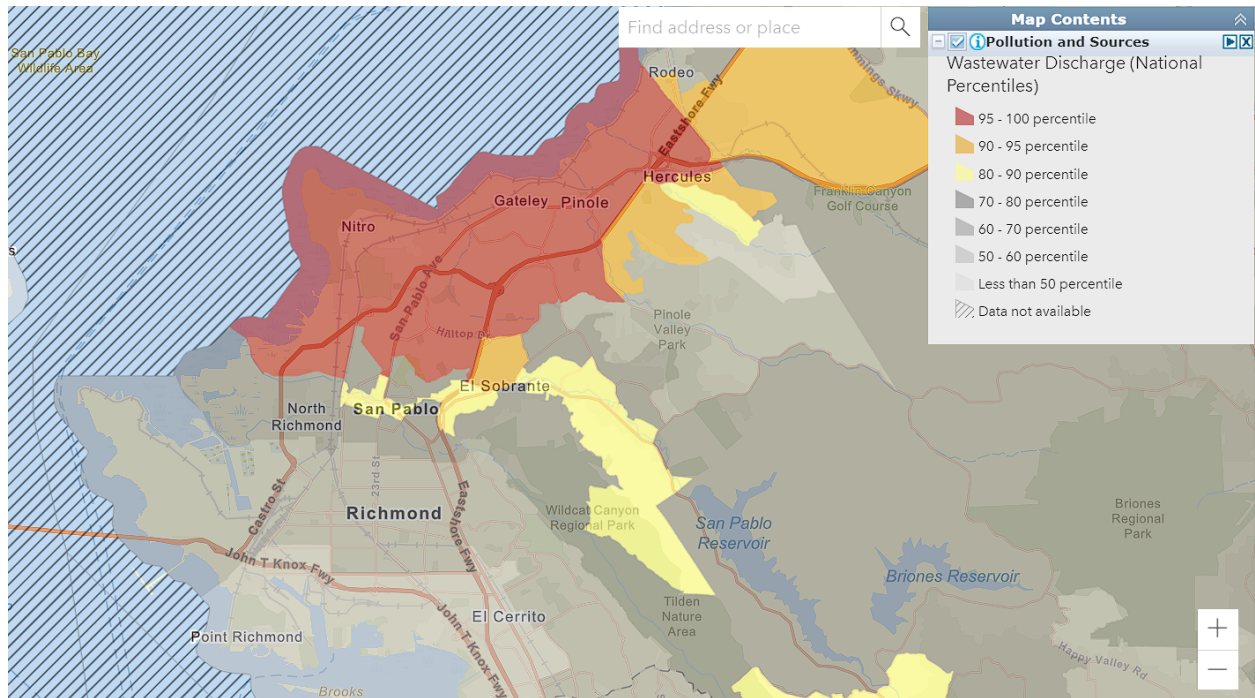


Figure 1: An EPA EJScreen map showing EPA's Wastewater Dischargers Indicator for Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo and Richmond.

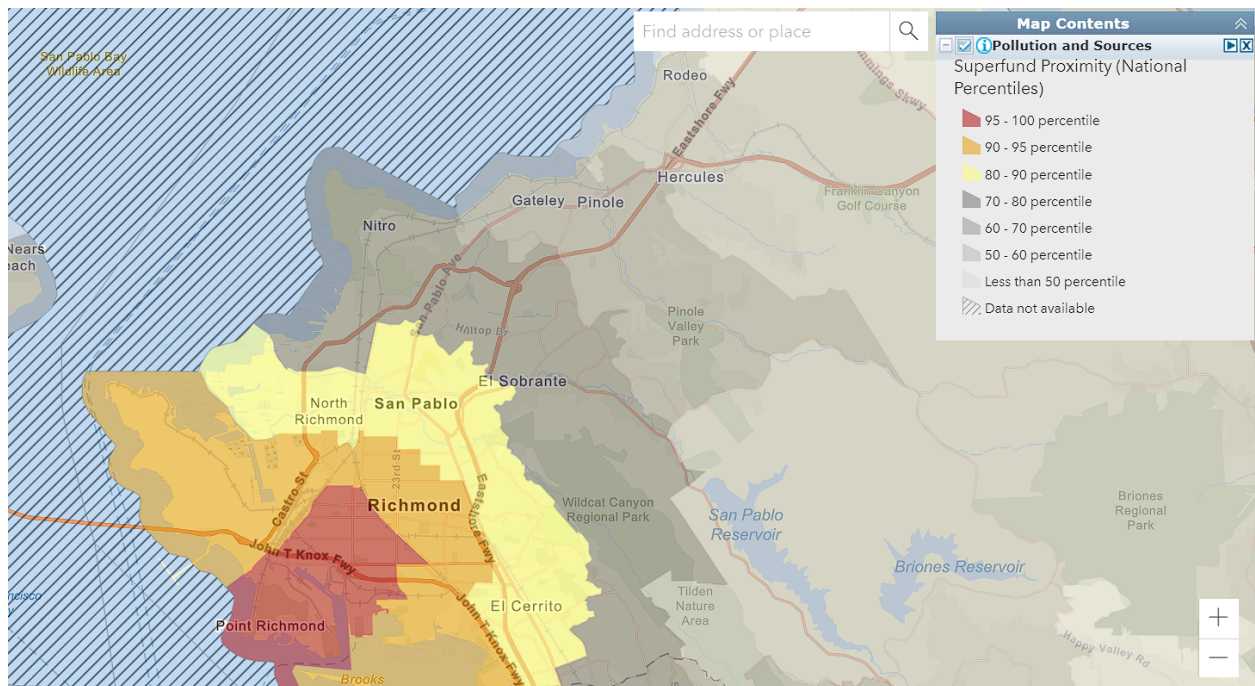


Figure 2: An EPA EJScreen map showing the number of proposed and listed National Priorities List Superfund sites within 5km, divided by distance in km, for Pinole, San Pablo, El Sobrante and Richmond.

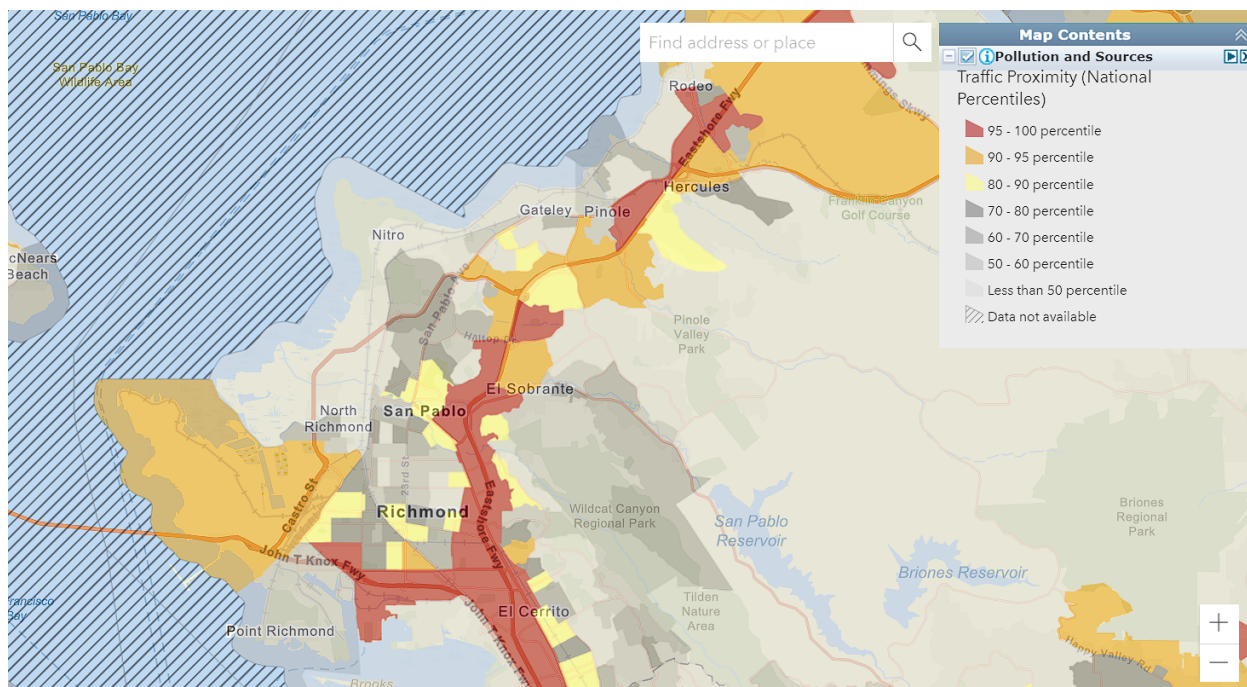


Figure 3: An EPA EJScreen map showing average annual daily traffic for Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo and Richmond.

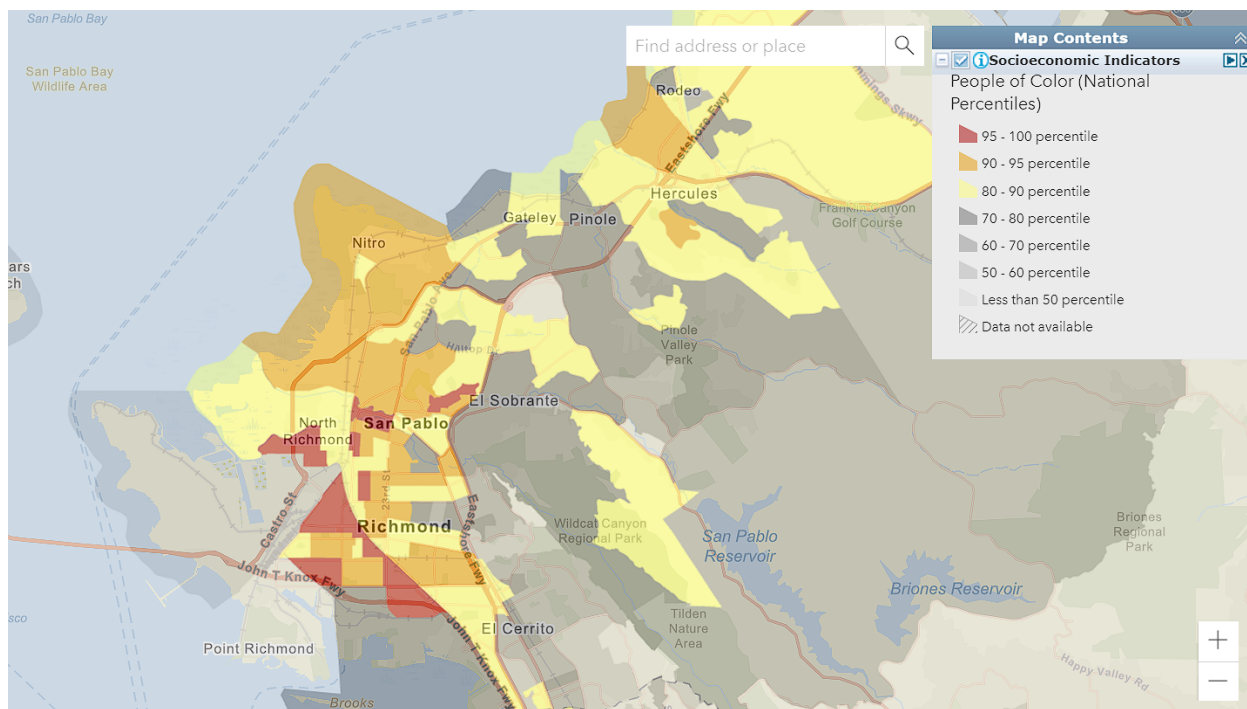


Figure 4: An EPA EJScreen map showing the percent of individuals in a block group who list their racial status as a race other than white alone and/or list their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, in Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo, and Richmond.

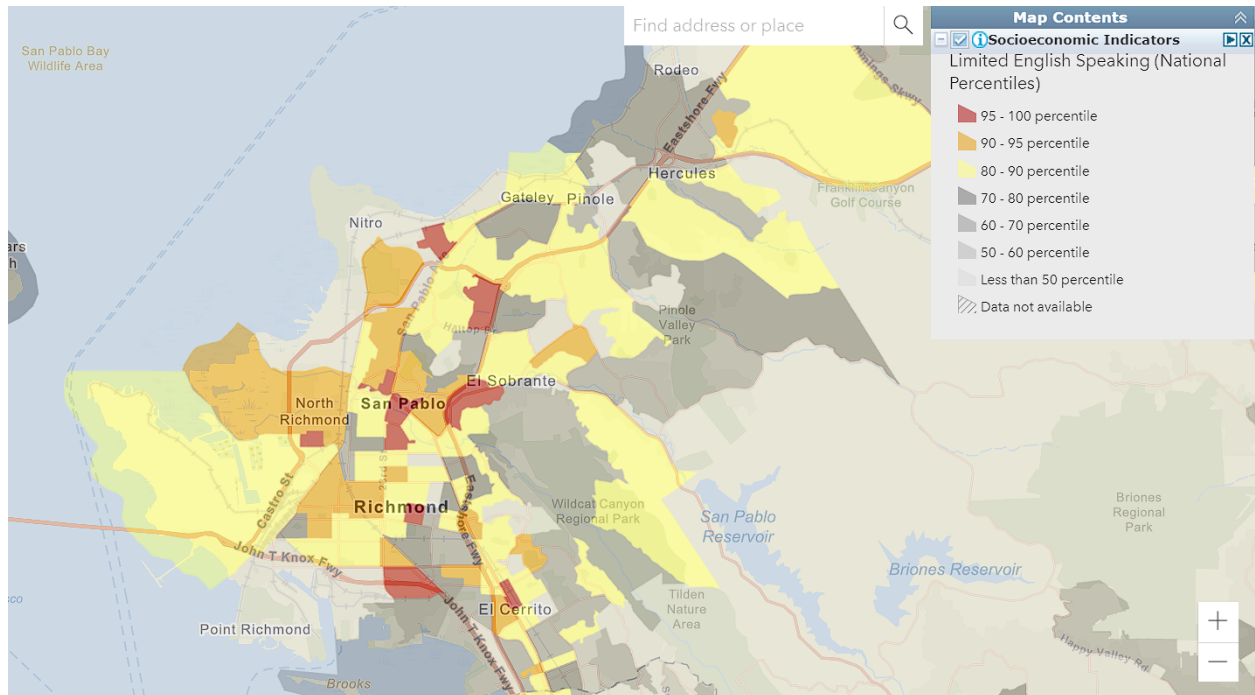


Figure 5: An EPA EJScreen map showing the percent of households in which no one aged 14 or over speaks English in Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo and Richmond.

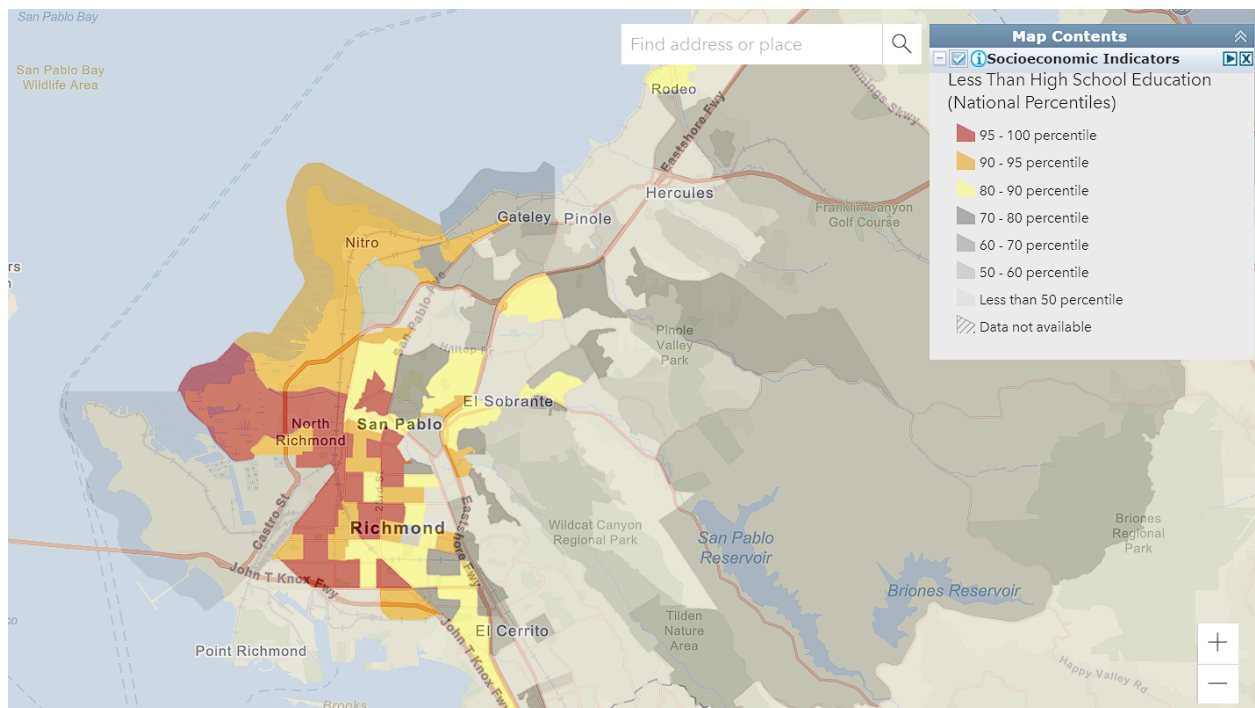


Figure 6: An EPA EJScreen map showing the percent of individuals aged 25 or over with less than a high school degree in Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo, and Richmond.

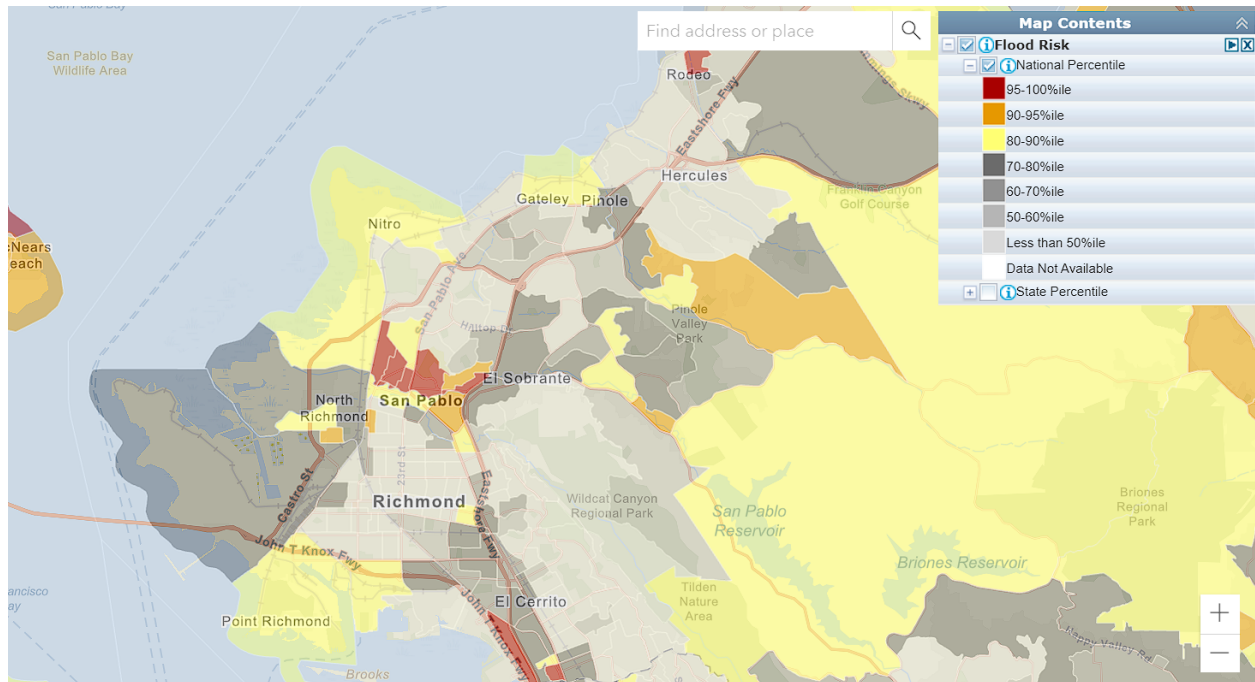


Figure 7: An EPA EJScreen showing the flood risk in Pinole, El Sobrante, San Pablo and Richmond.

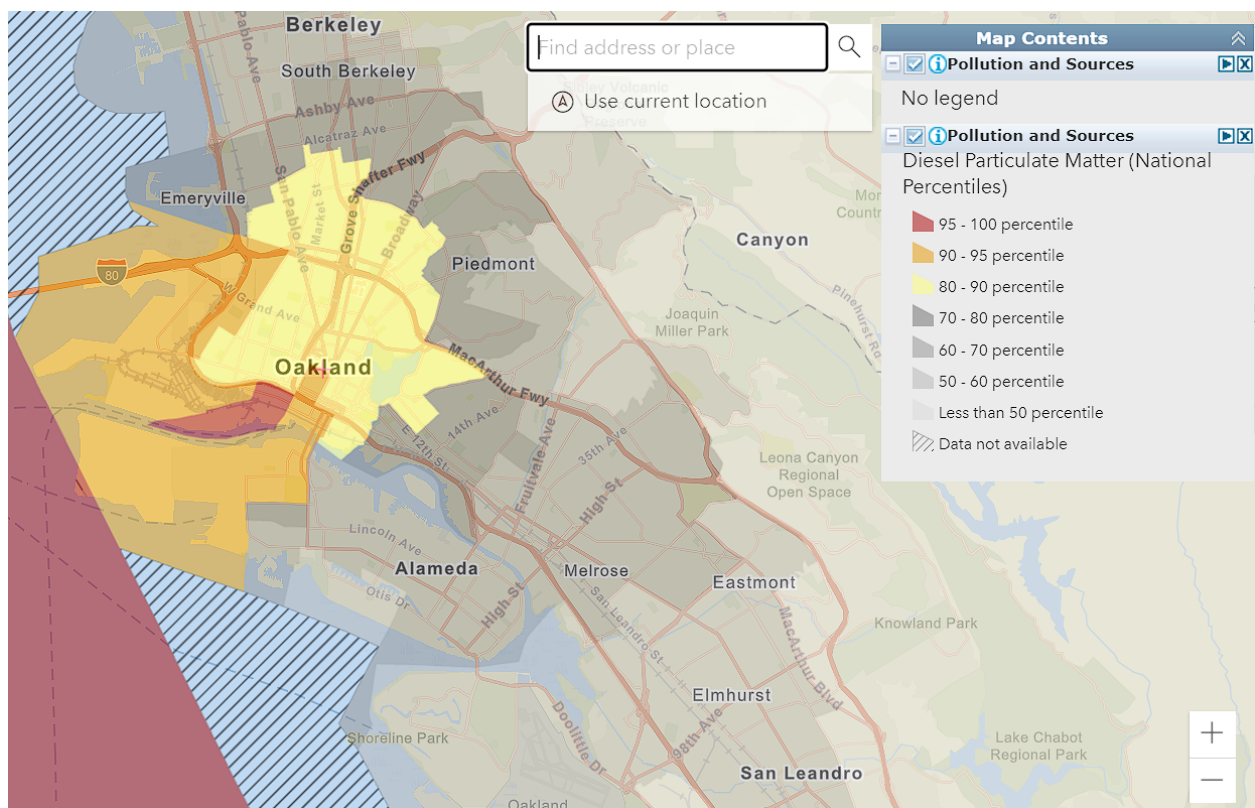


Figure 8: An EPA EJScreen map showing diesel particulate matter level in the air in micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) in Oakland, CA.

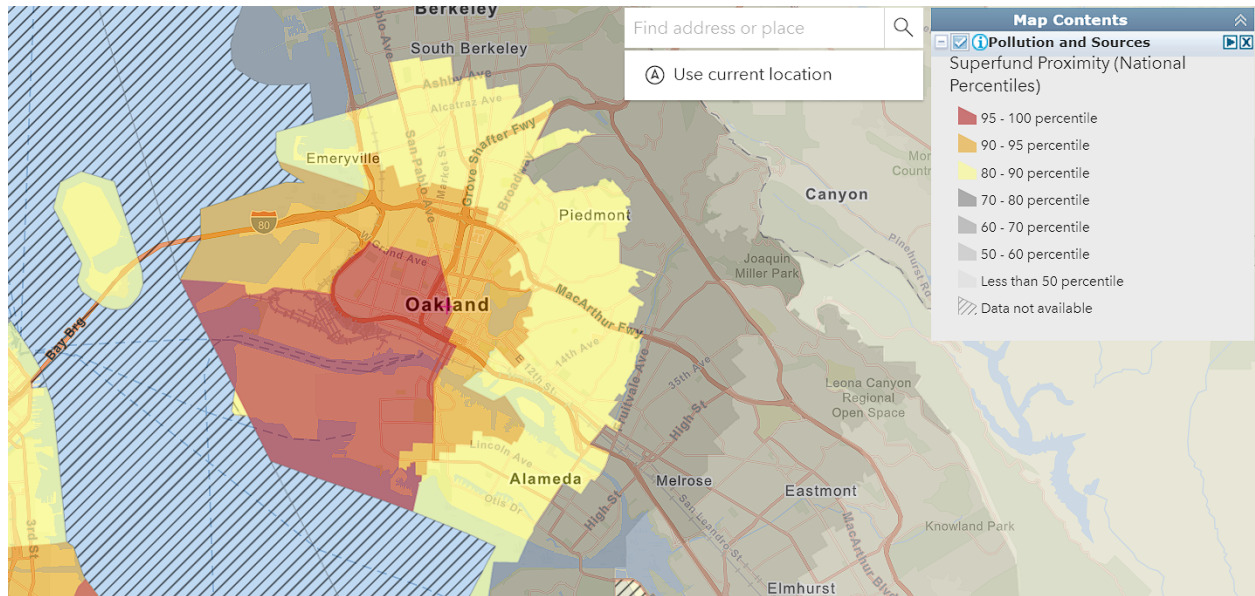


Figure 9: An EPA EJScreen map showing the number of proposed and listed National Priorities List Superfund sites within 5km, divided by distance in km, for Oakland, CA.

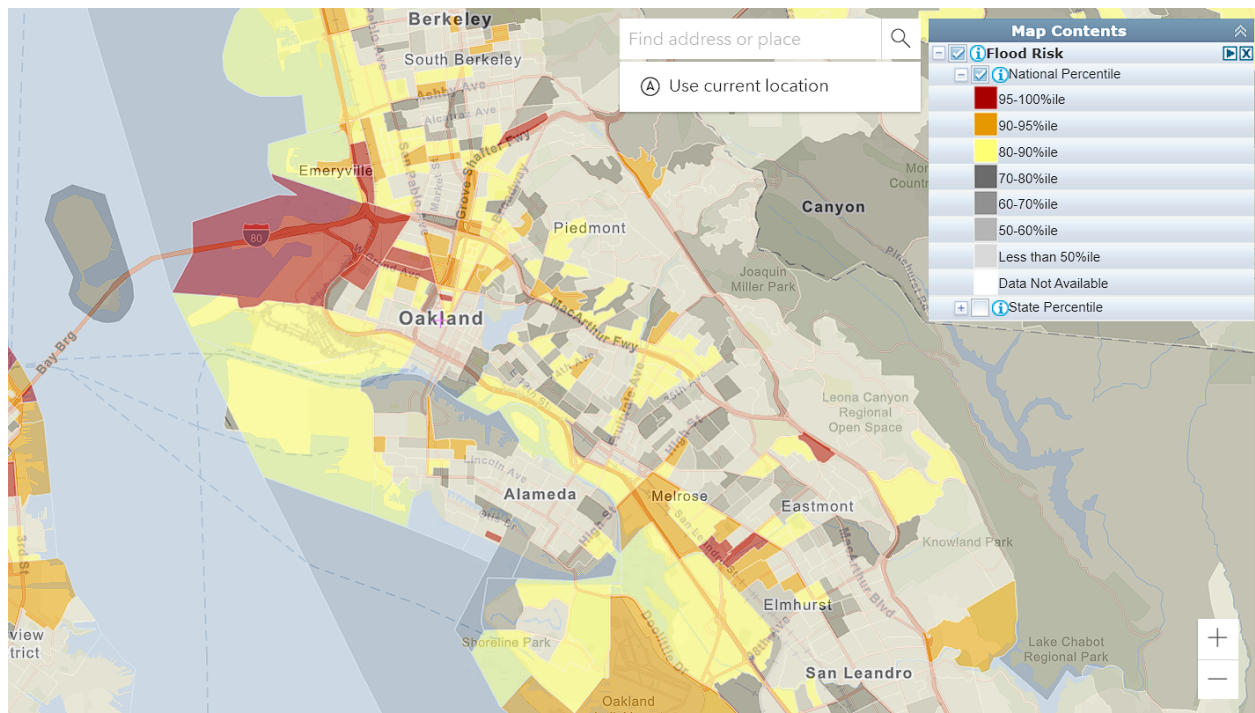


Figure 10: An EPA EJScreen map showing flood risk in Oakland, CA.

Media Links

Media Link	Description/Topic	Date
From Self-Defense to Self-Determination - TransitionNetwork	A conversation with Parable of the Sower's Cooperative member about her background in community organizing.	Nov 2, 2017
Moving in Story: 2021 CSS Fellowship Reflections - Center for Story-Based Strategy	Parable of the Sower presented alongside other members of CSS's 2021 fellowship cohort on how they have used narrative creation to further their vision for their intentional community.	Apr. 29, 2022
Landcorps Timebanking Strategy - Parable of the Sower	Announcement for POTS's 2023 Landcorps program.	Jul. 29, 2023
The Fannie & Ella Black Land Cooperative Hours - Parable of the Sower	Announcement of POTS's monthly, online political education meetings.	Oct. 27, 2022
2022 Landcorps - Parable of the Sower	Presentation on POTS's 2022 Landcorps initiatives and strategies.	Aug. 15, 2022
California Community Land Trust (CLT) Conference	POTS's cooperative member presentation to the CLT about their intentional community and why they are becoming a land trust.	Oct. 18, 2022

Glossary

- **Environmental Racism:**
- **Environmental Reparations:**
- **Anti-Blackness:**
- **Time Banking:**

Notes

Proposed Project Description & Activities **(THIS WILL BE COMPLETED BY CBO LEADER.**

TEMPLATE FOR PROPOSED PROJECT IDEAS [HERE](#)

Guidance:

Describe proposed project, including the community's risks, steps to create safer, more resilient community, stakeholders involved, and intended outcomes. This shows prospective funders that the org. has done extensive planning and is worthy of being funded.

Example:

This project brings those most vulnerable to the impacts of coastal flooding into the decision-making process on the mix of nature-based solutions needed to address them. Building off the efforts and plans of other organizations involved in restoration and flood resiliency in Louisiana, the final product is a plan for the communities that identifies and prioritizes up to ten nature-based resiliency projects ready for site assessment, design, and further funding. The Project Manager, a competitively contracted Technical Delivery Partner (TDP) and five community leaders will develop a program of community engagement and planning, including one site visit, one education event, one community visioning workshop, and two planning workshops.

Working with the TDP, SUN and partners will collect data on environmental and socioeconomic conditions; assess and map (if applicable) community needs and coastal hazards; consider potential coastal resilience projects; and identify those which are ready for site assessment and design. The work will be guided by a Technical Advisory Panel made up of regional experts, scientists, researchers, and policy makers. The

nature-based solutions identified by this project are likely to encompass restoration of beaches, dunes, and marshes; oyster reef restoration; and the planting of native tree species which enhance ecological systems. It will also include urban stormwater mitigation practices such as bioswales and retention ponds, and local food growing efforts such as food forests.

Through a series of outreach activities and planning workshops, this project will result in a community that is well-prepared to begin site assessment and design for specific nature-based resilience projects, in the Bayou Gentilly-Bayou Terre aux Boeufs watershed.

Activity	Methodology and links to program priorities
Identify community leaders to ensure that the work is steered by and informs residents	SUN will identify five community leaders - individuals interested in coastal resilience planning and have the trust and engagement of residents – across Plaquemines, Orleans, and St. Bernard parishes. These community leaders will sit on the Steering Group, and will receive support, training, and stipends in recognition of their time. Community impact, Transferability, Communication, Partnership
Convene a Steering Group	The Steering Group will consist of the community leaders and local community-based organization partners (Save Our St. Bernard, Louisiana Oystermen Association, Sankofa CDC, Justice and Beyond Coalition, and Interfaith Climate Coalition). They will meet quarterly, or as needed, without the Technical Advisory Panel (see below). Partnership
Competitively select a Technical Delivery Partner	Supported by A2, SUN will use a competitive procurement process to contract a TDP to lead on the technical aspects of the work, allowing SUN to focus on project management and community engagement. Technical Merit
Establish a Technical Advisory Panel	Officials from the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Audubon Delta, Louisiana Silver Jackets, NOAA, and EPA's Urban Waters Program have already been invited to join a Technical Advisory Panel. Additional organizations will be identified and invited as needed. This group will meet quarterly. Technical Merit, Partnership, Scale, Transferability and communication, Innovation
Gather data on coastal hazards, and environmental and socioeconomic conditions	The TDP will gather existing data on coastal hazards, and environmental and socioeconomic conditions to help aid project prioritization. Data and tools used to gather general baseline data include NFWF's Coastal Resilience Evaluation and Siting Tool, NOAA's Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper, EPA's EJSreen tool, FEMA's Flood Risk and Endangered Species Habitat Map, Model My Watershed, EPA's How's My Waterway, and the CPRA's Master Plan Data Viewer. Technical Merit, Community resilience, Nature-based solutions, Fish and wildlife benefits
Undertake a project synthesis	The TDP will review relevant plans to identify a list of ongoing or potential coastal resilience and flood mitigation projects within the project area. Technical Merit, Prioritized in existing plans
Develop a community outreach program	The outreach program, coordinated by the Project Manager, will include one site visit to local restoration and nature-based projects such as list them for the Steering Group and residents, and one community education event such as a bird walk, science lecture, native plant course, or youth education event, for approximately 50 residents. Community Engagement, Innovation, transferability, and sustainability
Host community visioning workshop to assess community needs and goals	Working with the TDP, SUN will host one community visioning workshop to identify resident needs and goals and identify gaps in the climate resiliency work that is being carried out locally. Approximately 25 residents will attend this event. Community Engagement and Resilience, Technical merit, Long-term sustainability
Host planning workshops to prioritize nature-based resilience strategies	Drawing on the collected data and results of the project synthesis, SUN and the TDP will convene residents in two planning workshops, prioritizing coastal resiliency projects for site assessment and design. Projects will be prioritized based on five criteria: social vulnerability, flood reduction benefits, wildlife habitat benefits, long-term sustainability/maintenance implications, and critical infrastructure benefits. Approximately 25 residents will attend each workshop. Community Impact and Engagement, Technical merit

Prepare a coastal resilience implementation plan	A coastal resilience action plan will be prepared based on the results of the planning workshops listing the ten coastal resiliency projects prioritized by the community. The plan will also outline how further funding support under the NFWF grant program or other Federal, state, or local programs, will be secured. Community resilience, Fish and wildlife benefits, Nature-based solutions
Present the plan to key stakeholders	To gather feedback, the action plan will be formally presented to the Steering Group, TAP, and city and county members. Relevant changes to the plan will be made based on feedback. Transferability and Communication
Preparatory work to submit applications to other funding sources.	A2 provides grant writing support for community-based organizations and their municipalities. A2 will work with SUN to draw on federal, state, and philanthropic funding opportunities to further this work, with a focus on NFWF, USDA, FEMA and EPA (Section 319 and CWSRF funds). Long-term Sustainability
Participate in peer-to-peer learning group organized by A2	Ensuring the project draws on best practices and innovative strategies, the project manager from SUN and community leaders will participate in the peer-to-peer learning group established by A2 to help share best practices on nature-based strategies and get advice from experts. Transferability and Communication, Innovation, Technical Merit
Present the work to expert panels and local and national media	CBO has presented to [list talks/forums, etc.] conducted many local presentations to community stakeholders, and has spoken to local media. A2 will help to continue this outreach throughout and beyond the duration of the project. Transferability and Communication