

Bay Trail Equity Strategy

Phase 1 · January 2023

History and Existing Conditions Study



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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PREPARED BY

Lily Brown, MTC Project Manager

Nicola Szibbo, MTC

Stefanie Brodie, Toole Design Group

Mia Candy, Toole Design Group

Chris Lepe, Mariposa Planning Solutions

Bob Allen, Bob Allen Consulting

Kate White, Arup

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Cover and Back Photo Credit: Karl Nielsen



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Photo Credit: Karin Betts

Glossary of Terms

This study uses the following terms. Details on what they mean, and why the project team uses them, are provided below:

Black and African-American: The US Census combines the racial categories “Black” and “African American,” but the two terms are not interchangeable. There are many Black residents in the United States that do not identify as African and/or American. “Black” refers to individuals of African descent, regardless of ethnicity or nationality. The Black population of the US includes people who identify as African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino, among others. “African-American” refers specifically to Black individuals born in the United States and of African descent.

Why do we capitalize “Black?” The word “black” with a lowercase “b” refers to a color. When we use “Black” in reference to people in a racial, ethnic, or cultural context¹, we capitalize the word to indicate an ethnicity equivalent to the way we use African-American or Hispanic.²

Latina/o/x: Latino and Latina describe people who trace their heritage to Latin America, and can include people of one or multiple racial identities (for example, Afro-Latina). Because these terms are gendered and binary, the terms “Latinx” and “Latine” emerged as gender-neutral, non-binary alternatives.³ Many consider Latinx and Latine to be more equitable and inclusive terms, but their use is not universally accepted. Only about a quarter of U.S. Latino/as are familiar with the terms, and even fewer actually use them.⁴ Some out-right reject the them.⁵ This study uses the term “Latina/o/x” to be inclusive of non-binary gender identities while also acknowledging the original Spanish language form.

People of Color and BIPOC: “People of Color” is an umbrella term that describes all racial groups who have experiences outside of Whiteness. This study uses People of Color only when referring to a broad cross-section of racial groups. It is preferable to use specific racial or ethnic descriptors when available or appropriate (for example, we do not use “People of Color” when we actually mean “Black”). People of Color are also not a monolith. Black Americans and Indigenous Americans have very specific and unique experiences of racial violence and oppression. To capture this, we use the term “Black, Indigenous, and People of Color” or “BIPOC.”

Racialized: This word acknowledges that “race” is a social construct rather than a biological fact, and that it creates the social, political, economic, and environmental conditions by which individuals and various racial groups are subject to harm, trauma, and oppression.⁶ “Racialized person/people” and “racialized groups” indicate that White people designed racial categories to classify, discriminate against, and oppress people who were not considered “White.” “Racialized” is an alternative – perhaps a more accurate and honest alternative – to the more common terms “People of Color” and “BIPOC.”

Whiteness: This word refers to how White people and their customs, culture, and beliefs have been normalized as the standard to which other racialized groups and cultures are compared and measured.⁷ We capitalize “White” because White people can move through the world in a way inaccessible to people who are not White and not capitalizing it may imply White is the norm.⁸ Some choose not to capitalize “White” since it is capitalized by white supremacists and thus risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs.⁹

1 The Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-us-news-business-ap-top-news-racial-injustice-71386b46dbff8190e71493a763e8f45a>

2 DCentric. <http://dcentric.wamu.org/2011/10/when-to-capitalize-black-and-white/>

3 El Centro, Colorado State University. <https://elcentro.colostate.edu/about/why-latinx/>

4 Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/>

5 USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2019/10/25/latinx-race-progressives-hispanic-latinos-column/4082760002/>

6 Ontario Human Rights Commission. <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racial-discrimination-race-and-racism-fact-sheet>

7 National Museum of African American History and Culture. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>

8 NY Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/black-african-american-style-debate.html>

9 AP. <https://blog.ap.org/announcements/why-we-will-lowercase-white>

Land Rematriation and Land Back: The most literal definition of “rematriation” is to “return the Sacred to the Mother.”¹⁰ The Sogorea Te’ Land Trust defines “rematriate” as “to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and their ancestral land. Honoring our matrilineal societies and lineages ways of tending to the land, in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics.”¹¹ Rematriation can take many forms, including transferring land management and oversight to Indigenous people, transferring government- or privately-owned land to Indigenous ownership, and paying reparations.¹²

Mobility Justice: Mobility justice acknowledges that street safety is related to more than just traffic crashes. Racialized people; immigrants and undocumented people; women, trans and non-binary people; queer people; and people experiencing houselessness face daily challenges when moving around their cities. For them, transportation options are riddled with harassment, surveillance, and criminalization. Mobility justice is a model to address these challenges as part of transportation planning and design.^{13 14}

People with Disabilities vs Disabled People: According to the Centers for Disease Control, “a disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).”¹⁵ While “people with disabilities” or the “disability community” is often spoken of as a singular cohort, it is, in reality, a diverse set of people with a diverse set of needs. This study uses person-first language (i.e., person with a disability) versus identity first language (i.e., disabled person).

White Supremacy: Most people understand “White supremacy” to be an ideology that regards White people as superior to Black and Indigenous people, and People of Color. But White supremacy is not reserved to hate groups and racist individuals – it permeates our institutions, cultural assumptions, and social norms. “White supremacy” refers to the ways in which our political and socio-economic systems privilege, and are advantageous to, White people. Those same systems neglect and discriminate Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, both at a collective and an individual level.¹⁶

Colonialism: “Colonialism” refers to the process via which Indigenous peoples across the globe were invaded, subjugated, and dispossessed of and/or expelled from their land. In the Bay Area, colonial expansion and aggression by Spain, Mexico, Britain, and the United States robbed the Miwok and Ohlone peoples of their land and lives. The challenges facing contemporary Indigenous communities can be traced directly to this history of colonialism in the United States. The legacy of colonialism is an ongoing and pernicious driver of modern-day inequity.¹⁷

Cultural Erasure: Cultural erasure is the socio-cultural phenomenon that is central to colonization. In addition to land dispossession, colonialists strip Indigenous communities of the non-material aspects of Indigenous life, including cultural practices, belief systems, customs, traditions, and language. Legal and institutional mechanisms are used to erode cultural identity. These mechanisms include forced or coerced religious conversion; separating families and sending children to boarding schools;¹⁸ and making specific cultural practices (such as language, attire, or ceremonies) illegal or punishable. Since the first colonial settlers arrived in the Bay Area, Indigenous communities have been resisting cultural erasure and fighting to retain their identity, history, and culture.

10 Rematriation. <https://rematriation.com/>

11 Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Rematriation-Resource-Guide.pdf>

12 YWCA. <https://www.ywcampis.org/all-our-voices-blog/awareness-and-recognition-of-Indigenous-land/>

13 StreetsBlog Chicago. <https://chi.streetsblog.org/2019/10/11/what-does-mobility-justice-mean-reflections-on-last-weekends-untokening-convening/>

14 People For Mobility Justice. <https://www.peopleformobilityjustice.org/mission>

15 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>

16 Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook. <https://www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html>

17 Racial Equity Tools, Glossary. <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

18 Ohio State University. https://origins.osu.edu/article/erasing-indigenous-history-then-and-now?language_content_entity=en



Figure 1: Existing and Planned Bay Trail Segments

Introduction

The Bay Trail is a joint project of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), referred to in this report as MTC/ABAG. In 2019, the MTC developed an Equity Platform to advance equity in all aspects of the agency's work. As a result, MTC/ABAG launched the Bay Trail Equity Strategy, a process in which equity will be infused into all Bay Trail planning work. This study represents Phase I of the Bay Trail Equity Strategy, which focuses on the history of, and existing conditions around, the Bay shoreline. It uses historical literature, oral history interviews, and contemporary data to identify how the Bay Trail is tied to colonialism, White supremacy, segregation, displacement, and cultural erasure.

What is the Bay Trail?

“The Association of Bay Area Governments shall develop and adopt a plan and implementation program, including a financing plan, for a continuous recreational corridor which will extend around the perimeter of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays.”

– SB 100, 1987

The Bay Trail is a 350-mile pedestrian and bicycle path that circles the San Francisco Bay. When completed, the Bay Trail will cover 500 miles, offering seamless connections to 47 cities, across seven bridges, and through over 130 parks. The Bay Trail is designed to be used by people of all ages and abilities whether they walk, bicycle, run, skate, scooter, or use a wheelchair. The vision for the Bay Trail is a multimodal facility that connects communities to parks, open spaces, schools, transit, jobs, services and to each other.



Bay Trail along the Albany mudflats next to I-580. Photo Credit Noah Berger

What is the MTC Equity Platform?

In 2019, under the leadership of MTC Executive Director Therese McMillan, MTC/ABAG launched the Equity Platform. The Equity Platform defines equity as inclusion into a Bay Area where everyone can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. The Equity Platform is a process and practice to address equity throughout all planning, investment, design, engagement, communications, marketing, evaluation, and project delivery efforts. The three core beliefs of the Equity Platform are as follows:

- Equity is intersectional
- Racism is real, and must be acknowledged and dismantled
- Designing for equity must start at the community level

In April 2022, MTC executive leadership laid out a new vision for the Bay trail with a commitment to operationalize the Equity Platform within the Bay Trail work program. The Bay Trail Equity Strategy emerged as a result of the Equity Platform and this commitment.

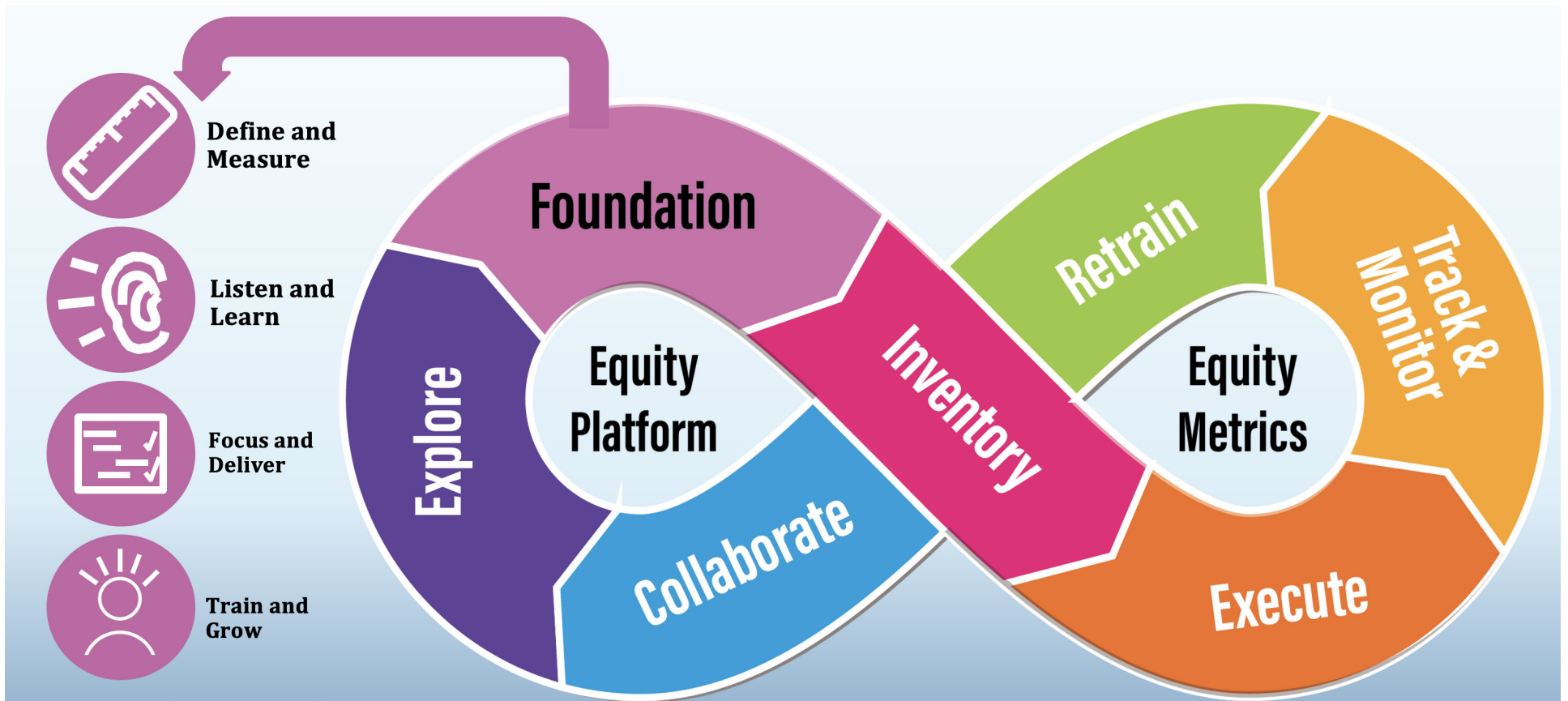


Figure 2: MTC's Equity Platform defines equity as "inclusion into a Bay Area where everyone can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential."

What is the Bay Trail Equity Strategy?

The Bay Trail Equity Strategy is a multi-phase effort to operationalize MTC's equity platform as it relates to the Bay Trail. This report is the first step of the Equity Strategy, and is a guiding document for agency staff and a resource for partners as they work to maintain and expand the 500-mile trail around the Bay. It can help Bay Trail decision-makers understand and address historic inequities, avoid repeating and reinforcing mistakes of the past, and develop an accessible and welcoming Bay Trail for all Bay Area residents and visitors.

Findings from this report will be integrated into the Bay Trail work program, and later phases of the Bay Trail Equity Strategy. As the regional planning, financing, and coordinating agency for the San Francisco Bay Area, MTC/ABAG does not own any of the land on which the Bay Trail sits. The agency works with local jurisdictions and right-of-way (ROW) owners to implement and construct the Bay Trail. Local agencies and ROW owners are also responsible for maintenance and operations of the Bay Trail.

Study Methodology

This report tells the story of the Bay Shoreline from pre-colonial times to the contemporary day. To do this, the study team conducted a review of historic literature, an analysis of socio-demographic data, and interviewed community leaders and organizers.

Data Analysis

The study team analyzed quantitative data related to population, race, displacement, segregation, and traffic safety. The study team used existing, publicly-available data from the United States Census, and MTC's Vision Zero BayViz Tool. This study draws heavily on reports and analyses prepared by the [Othering and Belonging Institute](#), [Urban Displacement Project](#), and the [Anti-Eviction Mapping Project](#).

19 The MTC's Equity Priority Communities are census tract-level geographies that meet or exceed various thresholds in 8 demographic categories: race and ethnicity (persons of color), income levels, English proficiency, vehicles per household, persons over 75 years old, persons with disabilities, single-parent families, and rent burden. The MTC uses this framework to "help ensure that historically underserved communities have equitable access to housing and transportation that is within reach of jobs, services and amenities." <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>

Historic Literature Review

The study team examined academic literature; historical documents and archives; videos and firsthand accounts; newspapers; maps; audio stories; and other documentation to summarize the ecological, anthropological, and development history of the Bay shoreline, and of the Bay Trail.

Oral History Interviews

To add depth to the assessment of the Bay Trail, the study team conducted twelve interviews with representatives from community organizations and racialized groups. Interviewees were selected from six case study communities that are emblematic of broader Bay Area trends. Each of the case study communities is classified as an [MTC Equity Priority Community](#),¹⁹ is representative of Bay Area demographics, and covers a different geographic part of the Bay Area:

- Vallejo: South and Central Vallejo
- San Leandro: Laqua Manor, Old San Leandro, Floresta Gardens-Bradrick
- Richmond: Iron Triangle
- San Jose: Alviso
- Redwood City: Palm Park Neighborhood
- East Palo Alto: Northeast Neighborhood

Interviewees included representatives from the disability community, and the Bay Area's Native American/Indigenous community. Interviewees shared their experiences, their perspective on the history of their communities, and their relationship with the Bay Trail. Interviewees also shared visions for the future of the Bay Trail and how MTC/ABAG may work towards creating a Bay Trail that is welcoming and accessible for all Bay Area residents. They also suggested strategies that could contribute to equitable trail planning and development. Interviewees were compensated \$200 for sharing their knowledge.

Bay Shoreline History

San Francisco Bay Area is located on the unceded Indigenous territory of the Ohlone and Miwok peoples.

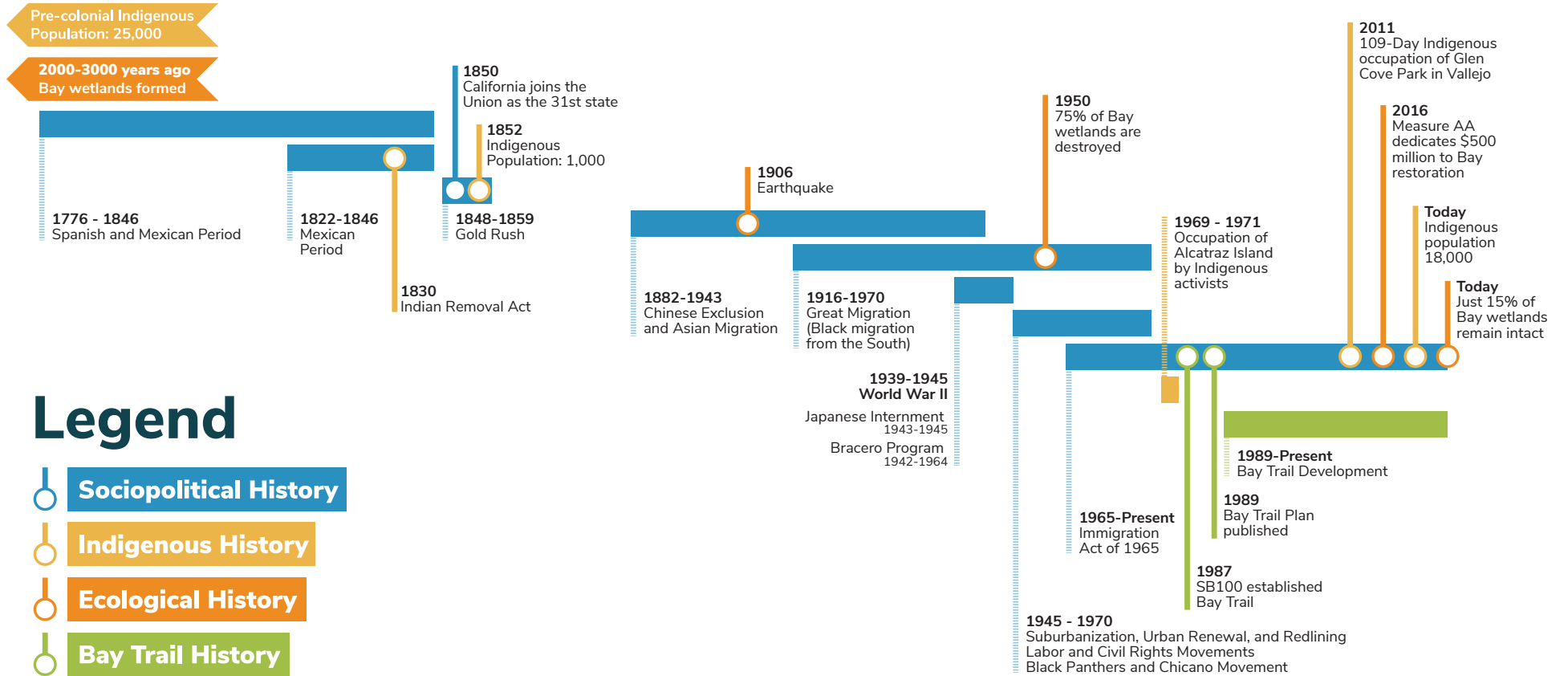


Figure 3: Bay Shoreline History

History of the Bay Shoreline: People, Place, Environment, and Economy

“We did not own the land, we belonged to it. Generation after generation, we cultivated reciprocal relationships with the plants and animals we shared this place with and developed beautiful and powerful cultural practices that kept us in balance.”

– SOGOREA TE' LAND TRUST²⁰

The Bay shoreline is a complex, ever-evolving ecological landscape. What is now the San Francisco Bay was once a series of valleys that filled due to rapid sea level rise sometime between 10,000-18,000 years ago. Roughly 2,000-3,000 years ago, rates of sea level rise slowed, creating wetlands at the edges of the Baylands. Wetlands, known as the “lungs of the bay,” are home to hundreds of native and endangered species, including the salt marsh harvest mouse, which exists nowhere on earth except the salt marshes of the San Francisco Bay.²¹

This landscape has been home to Native American peoples for thousands of years, and hundreds of generations, since time immemorial.²² Anthropologists estimate that prior to colonization, there were almost 25,000 Native Americans living in the Bay Area,²³ including the Ohlone people in the East and South Bay, and the Coast Miwok in (what is now known as) Marin. Native villages were concentrated near fresh water and food sources.²⁴ Wetlands provided a rich source for flora and fauna; Tribes harvested salt, fish, mussels, clams, oysters, fish, water birds, and mammals.

Contrary to later colonial practices under extractive capitalism, Indigenous people practiced sustainable land management, including cyclical burning of meadows to promote growth of desirable plants.²⁵ In this way, Indigenous peoples relied on, worked with, and transformed the land around the Bay for thousands of years before colonization.

Early Spanish and Mexican settlers introduced domesticated livestock and formal agriculture to the Bay between 1776 and 1846. In doing so, they cleared woodlands and converted native grasslands into pastures of foreign, invasive grasses which triggered widespread erosion.²⁶ The transformation of Indigenous land into missions and ranchos disrupted the lives of native plants, animals, and people; within one generation, Indigenous peoples saw their surrounding environment radically transformed, and with it, their autonomy and way of life.

By the mid-19th century, the Bay Area was a major economic and transportation hub. Under Spanish and Mexican rule, small-scale farming gave way to industrial agriculture and infrastructure. Both European and American colonialists constructed ports, railways, and roads on “reclaimed” land by filling, diking, or draining tidal marshes and mudflats.²⁷ The shoreline became dominated by industry and waste disposal. When California entered the United States in 1850, after 75 years of colonial expansion and genocide, only 1,000 Indigenous people remained in the Bay Area. Despite colonial efforts to eradicate native peoples, today the Bay Area is home to 18,500 Indigenous people and almost 200 tribes.²⁸

20 Sogorea Te' Land Trust. <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/lisjan-history-and-territory/>

21 Bay Nature. <https://baynature.org/article/a-mouse-surprise/>

22 Sogorea Te' Land Trust <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/lisjan-history-and-territory/#>

23 Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals. https://www.sfei.org/sites/default/files/biblio_files/sfbaygoals031799.pdf (Page 25).

24 Nick Tipon, Descendant of Coast Miwok speakers, A Map the Size of the Land. In Solnit, R. (Ed.), *Infinite City* (pp. 12–17). University of California Press.

25 Bay Nature. <https://baynature.org/article/grassland-heritage/>

26 Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals. https://www.sfei.org/sites/default/files/biblio_files/sfbaygoals031799.pdf

27 Found SF. https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=American_Business_Arrives_in_Mexican_California

28 Bay Area Equity Atlas. <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/about/Indigenous-populations-in-the-bay-area>

Shellmounds are one of the most important symbols of Indigenous history, relationship to land, exploitation, erasure, and resilience in the Bay Area. They are made up of remnants of every-day Indigenous life and trade, including meals, currency, tools, ornaments, fireplaces, ceremonies, and burials. Shellmounds are one of many important cultural sites that have been desecrated over the last two centuries. There were once over 400 shellmounds across the Bay Area, almost all of which have been demolished to make way for

industrial, commercial, and even recreational development. Contemporary Indigenous communities in the Bay Area are fighting to preserve what little is left of sacred shellmound sites, some of which are located directly along existing or planned sections of the Bay Trail.

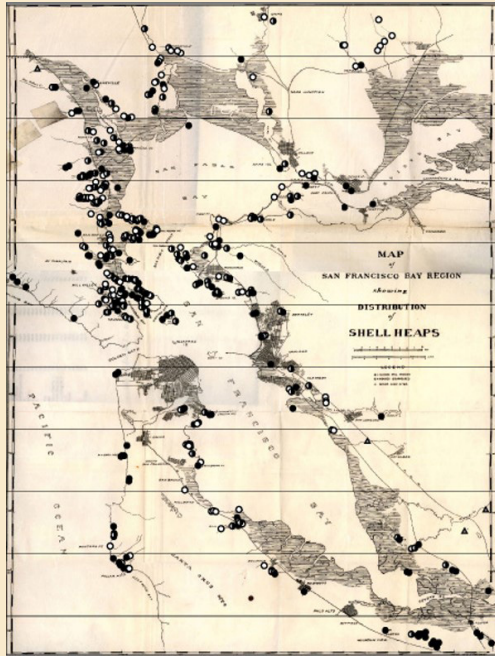


Figure 4: N.C. Nelson's map showing the approximate location of Bay Area shellmounds in 1909. This map represents the last comprehensive inventory of shellmound locations.

World War II brought a heavy naval presence and shipping industry to the Bay, as well as explosive population growth. Both had an indelible impact on the ecology and land use of the Bay; More than 30 shipyards replaced natural wetlands and the Bay became polluted with oil, gasoline, and sewage.²⁹ The second half of the 20th century saw a decline in naval activity and commercial shipping, but a rise in manufacturing and warehousing. Major shoreline industries included Standard Oil (Chevron) and auto manufacturing in Richmond, industrial food production sites in Vallejo, and the Cooley Landing brick factory in East Palo Alto. Industrial growth was accompanied by major expansions to the highway and rail systems. By 1950, approximately 75 percent of the San Francisco Bay wetlands had been destroyed to accommodate industrial expansion and population growth.³⁰ In the 1960s, roughly four-square miles of the Bay were being filled each year. Today, just 15 percent of wetlands remain intact.³¹

In response to this mass destruction, organizations such as the Save the Bay Campaign began fighting industrial development of the Bay. Throughout the past 60 years, Save the Bay has defeated proposed legislation, ballot measures, and development plans that would have further degraded the shoreline. Riding the momentum of renewed interest in the shoreline's cultural and environmental value, Senator Bill Lockyer authored Senate Bill 100 (SB 100) in 1987, which laid out a vision for a 500-mile recreational trail, often referred to as a "ring around the Bay." In 1989, the Bay Trail Plan was published, and in 1990 the San Francisco Bay Trail Project was established as a non-profit organization administered by ABAG.

Today, office, commercial, and recreational development dominates the Bay shoreline. The establishment of the Bay Trail coincides with the latest chapter in the Bay Area's development history. Contemporary development trends can be seen in places such as East Palo Alto where the shoreline is dominated by the Meta (formerly Facebook) campus. Similar tech-economy-funded commercial redevelopment is taking place in shoreline communities across the Bay Area.

29 Saving the Bay. <https://education.savingthebay.org/wp-content/guides/The-Greatest-Shipbuilding-Center-in-the-World.pdf>

30 San Francisco Baykeeper. <https://baykeeper.org/our-work/wetland-conservation-and-protection>

31 Bay Trail Project. <http://archive.baytrail.org/about-the-trail/wetland-restoration-efforts/>

SPOTLIGHT ON Sogorea Te' Shellmound- No Desecration for Recreation

In 1999, the City of Vallejo and the Greater Vallejo Recreation District (GVRD) proposed a controversial development plan for Glen Cove Waterfront Park. The development would pave over part of Sogorea Te', a 3,500 old Native burial site and shellmound. Indigenous activists, including the Committee to Protect Glen Cove, spent twelve years organizing to protect the sacred site.

In 2011, the City and GVRD announced plans to move forward with development. In response, Indigenous activists and protectors launched an occupation of the site³² of the site. After nearly 100 days, the City of Vallejo, the Greater Vallejo Recreation District, and two federally-recognized Patwin tribes came to a historic agreement. As part of the first ever cultural easement under California Senate Bill 18,³³ the tribes paid \$100,000³⁴ in exchange for "access to and authority over sensitive ancestral sites within the proposed Glen Cove recreation area".³⁵ The agreement also cancelled the construction of new bathrooms and reduced the size of the parking lot planned for the site.

Today, the Committee to Protect Glen Cove feels disillusioned about the initial agreement. Because the Ohlone are not a federally recognized tribe, they could not be a formal partner in the easement. Ohlone organizers feel that when construction moved forward, tribal representatives and government agencies did not adequately protect ancestral remains.³⁶

This story is a stark reminder that recreational development is not free from the harm and erasure of native histories that is prevalent in residential or commercial real estate development. Bay Trail development and expansion must confront the tension between Indigenous land rights and contemporary recreational aspirations.



Figure 5: Poster by Indigenous Protectors of the Sogorea Te' sacred site in Vallejo, CA.

32 In These Times. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/group-enters-day-92-of-land-occupation-at-glen-cove>

33 California Senate Bill 18: Traditional Tribal Cultural Places (2004) added the state's Native American tribes to the list of entities and organizations that may acquire and hold conservation easements. The bill also declares that local governments engage with tribal governments before, during, and after planning processes "to identify and preserve prehistoric, archaeological, cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial places that are essential elements in tribal cultural traditions, heritages, and identities." https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200320040SB18

34 Sacred Land Film Project. <https://sacredland.org/victory-at-sogorea-te-glen-cove/>

35 Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. <https://www.yochadehe.org/news/yocha-dehe-and-cortina-take-lead-protect-sensitive-sites-glen-cove>

36 Protect Sogorea Te. <https://protectsogoreate.org/2012/update-letter/>

Bay Shoreline Today

Who lives along the Bay Trail?

As the Bay shoreline has undergone radical ecological and economic evolution, so too have the communities that live along the shore. The residential makeup of shoreline communities is no longer the same as it was when the Bay Trail was conceived in 1989. Understanding who lives around the Bay Trail today is critical for meeting the needs of residents and ensuring equitable development.

Bay Trail communities are diversifying, but they are losing Black residents

According to the Census data, communities within two miles of the Bay Trail are more diverse than the Bay Area as a whole. “Diverse” is defined here as an area where Black, Indigenous and People of Color make up more than 50 percent of the population. The area around the Bay Trail is also *increasingly* diverse. In 1990, BIPOC represented less than 50 percent of residents near the Bay Trail (Figure 7). By 2020, that figure was almost 70 percent (Figure 8).³⁷

However, overall diversification does not tell the full story. Neighborhoods around the Bay Trail are increasingly Asian and Latina/o/x, but they are losing Black and White residents. In communities like Richmond and Oakland, diversification is directly linked to the displacement of Black residents. These demographic changes are reflective of broader Bay Area trends. The Bay Area is more diverse today than it was in 1990, but is as segregated as it was 30 years ago.³⁸ Cities along the Bay Trail—like Richmond and San Pablo—are more diverse than they were in 1990³⁹, but are still in the top 20 most segregated cities in the Bay Area (Figure 6).⁴⁰

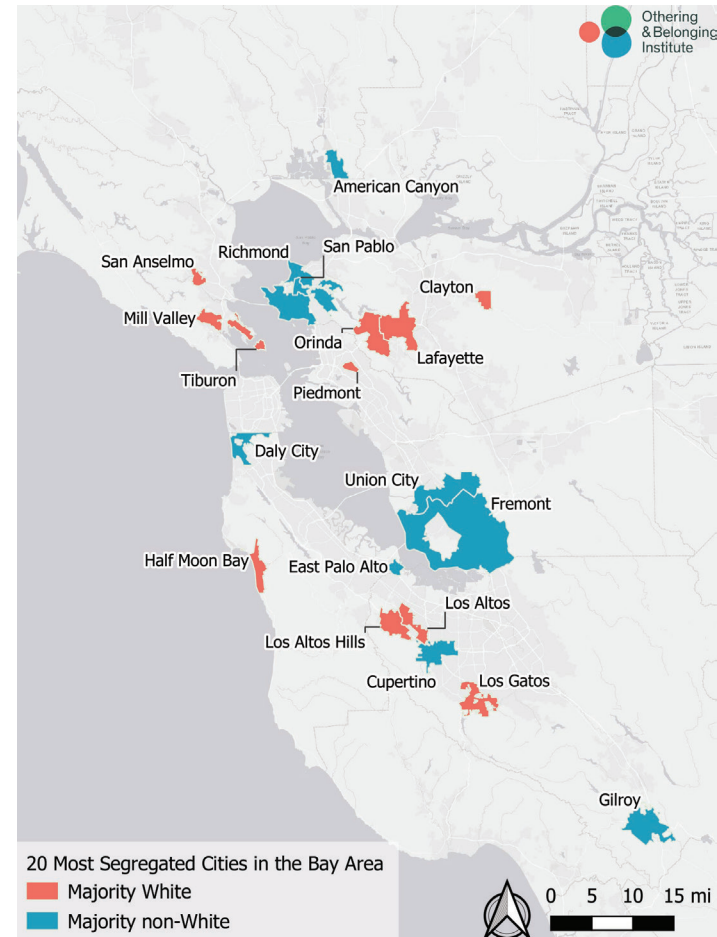


Figure 6: 20 Most Segregated Cities in the Bay Area, 2020.
Image Source: UC Berkeley Othring and Belonging Institute

37 U.S. Decennial Census 1980 – 2020

38 U.C Berkeley Othring and Belonging Institute, 2020. https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/DivIndex_1970-2020_0.jpg

39 U.S. Decennial Census 1980 - 2020

40 U.C Berkeley Othring and Belonging Institute, 2020. <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/most-segregated-cities-bay-area-2020>

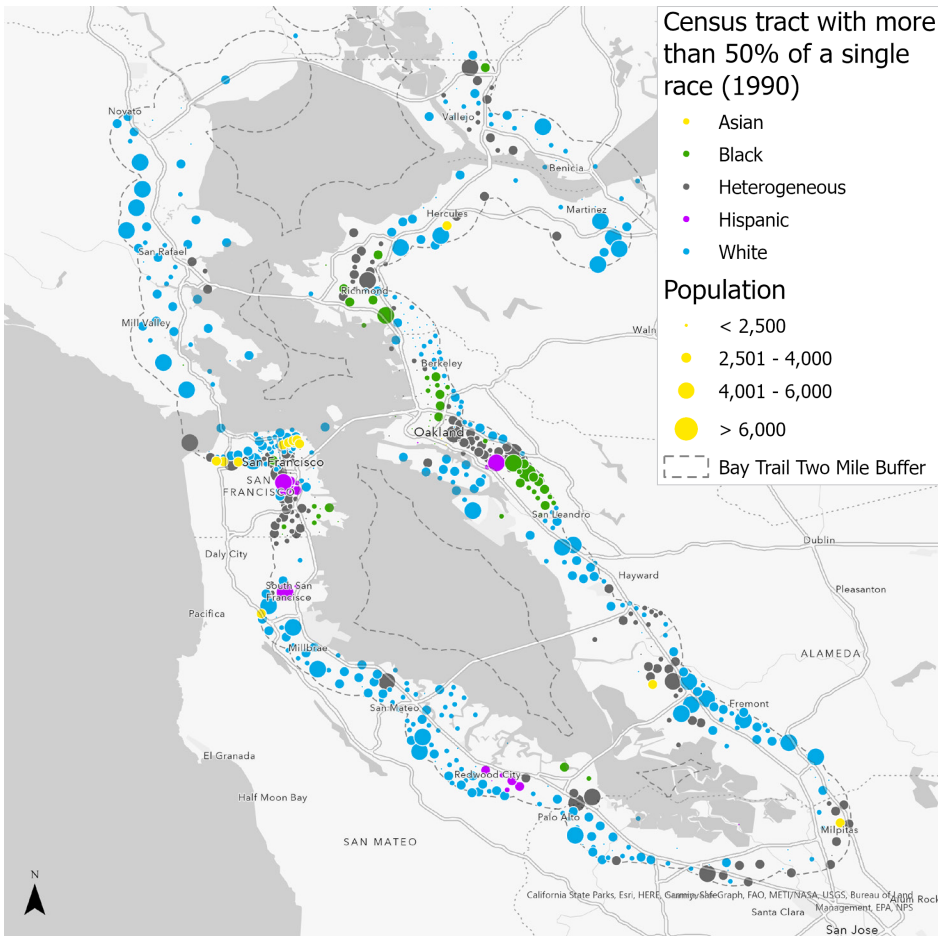


Figure 7: Racial Makeup of Census Tracts within Two Miles of the Bay Trail, 1990
Source: MTC Analysis of US Decennial Census Data

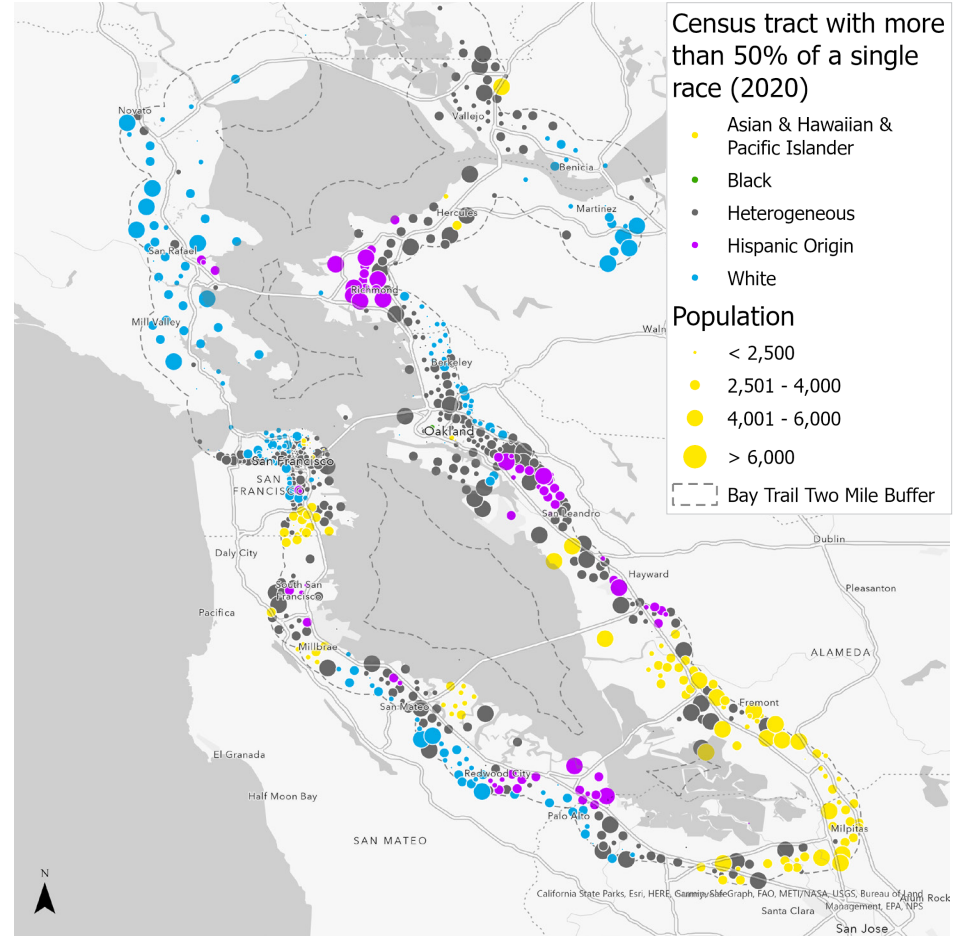


Figure 8: Racial Makeup of Census Tracts within Two Miles of the Bay Trail, 2020
Source: MTC Analysis of US Decennial Census Data

Racialized Bay Trail communities are at risk of gentrification and displacement

Recreational amenities like trails and parks can contribute to rising property values and displacement pressure.⁴¹ Management of the Bay Trail needs to acknowledge these trends and mitigate potential displacement impacts. Figure 9 shows the displacement typology of Census tracts in the Bay Area, as defined by the Urban Displacement Project. Of the 37 Equity Priority Communities (EPC) that abut the Bay shoreline, almost 40 percent are either susceptible to displacement or are already experiencing it. This trend is most severe in communities like East Palo Alto, San Leandro, and Hunters Point in San Francisco. Eviction data mirrors the displacement data – between 2005 and 2015, East Palo Alto had one of the highest numbers of eviction notices in all of San Mateo County.⁴² The data also show that Black and Latina/o/x people are vastly over-represented in the County’s evictions.⁴³

Why this matters

BIPOC communities are disproportionately affected by pollution, climate change, public health crises, poverty, housing insecurity, and traffic violence. These issues are particularly severe in segregated racialized neighborhoods. For many racialized communities along the Bay shoreline, the Bay Trail is one of the only nearby open spaces that provides safe recreation and mobility. Bay Trail planning and development needs to protect and enhance this critical community resource, and expand access to all racialized communities near the shoreline.

At the same time, Bay Trail development practices need to carefully consider the relationship between the trail, real estate development, and displacement pressures. It is important that current residents are the beneficiaries of Bay Trail improvements and investments. Bay Trail management practices should be thoughtfully implemented so as not to exacerbate the issues facing racialized communities, such as criminalization and over-policing of Black people in public and recreational spaces.

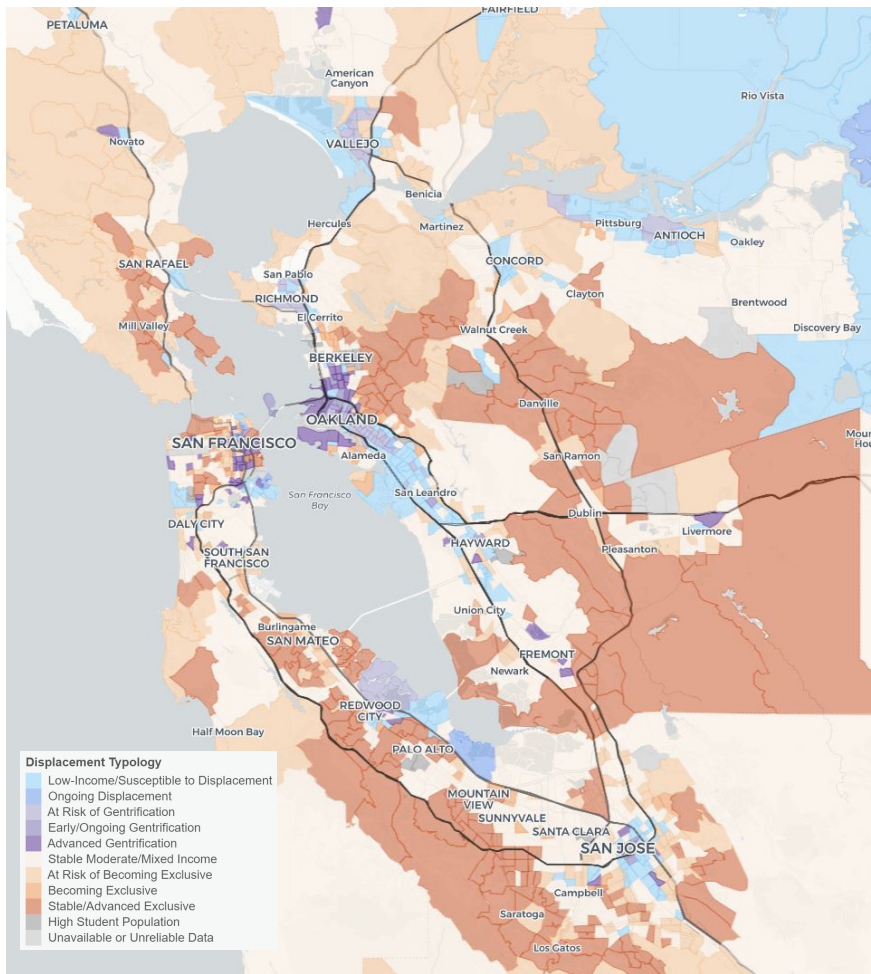


Figure 9: Urban Displacement Project's Displacement Typology for the Bay Area (Extract from [Interactive Web Map](#))

- 41 Mullenbach, K., Baker, B. (2018). Environmental Justice, Gentrification, and Leisure: A Systematic Review and Opportunities for the Future. Leisure Sciences. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01490400.2018.1458261>
- 42 Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement and Resistance, The Anti Eviction Mapping Project.
- 43 Latinx people comprise 25 percent of San Mateo County’s population and 49 percent of those evicted. Black people make up 2.5 percent of the population in the County, but 21.4 percent of those evicted.

Shoreline Access and Traffic Safety

People walking and biking to the Bay Trail are at risk of traffic deaths and injuries

Streets that pose a high risk of traffic crashes can discourage people from using them to access the Bay Trail. Crash data show that people walking and bicycling near the Bay Trail are more vulnerable to KSI (killed or seriously injured) crashes than in the Bay Area more broadly. Within two miles of the Bay Trail, bicyclists and pedestrians make up 40 percent of fatal and serious crashes compared to 34 percent in the Bay Area (Figure 10).⁴⁴ Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable near the Bay Trail – they make up 27 percent of KSI crashes, compared to 22 percent of KSI crashes in the broader Bay Area. The data also show that Black residents are disproportionately impacted by KSI crashes near the Bay Trail. Black residents make up only 8 percent of the population around the Bay Trail, but account for more than 14 percent of KSI crashes (Figure 11). This figure is likely even higher in reality; Racialized people and immigrants are under-represented in crash statistics due to fear of reporting.⁴⁵

Why this matters

The concentration of crashes around the Bay Trail may be related to land use, highway, and urban design patterns in Bay shoreline cities. Most of the Bay Area’s dense urban environments (and associated high speed roadways) are concentrated near the Bay. The Bay Trail traverses many of these urban areas and is one of very few recreational open spaces available to low-income and racialized communities living in the Bay Area’s urban environments. Bay Trail access points need to account for the level of stress and risk that a resident could experience on their way to the Trail. Access paths to the Bay Trail need to be designed to minimize collisions and avoid interacting with high-crash arterials wherever possible.

There are more fatal and serious bicycle and pedestrian crashes around the Bay Trail, than in the Bay Area as a whole.

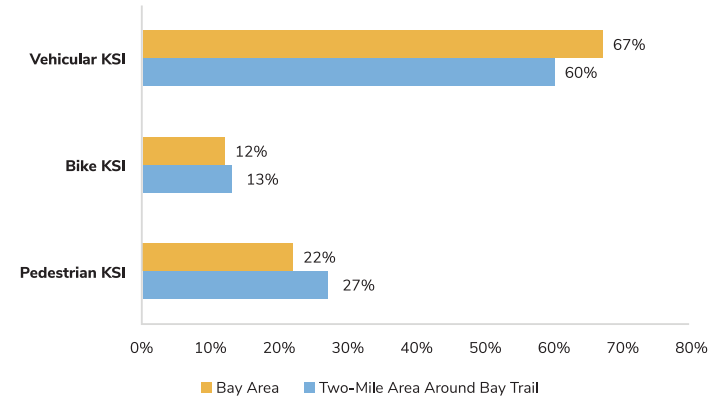


Figure 10: Extract from MTC’s BayViz tool showing all crashes in the 9-County Bay Area, and a two-mile buffer around the Bay Trail

Black residents around the Bay Trail are over-represented in the crash data.

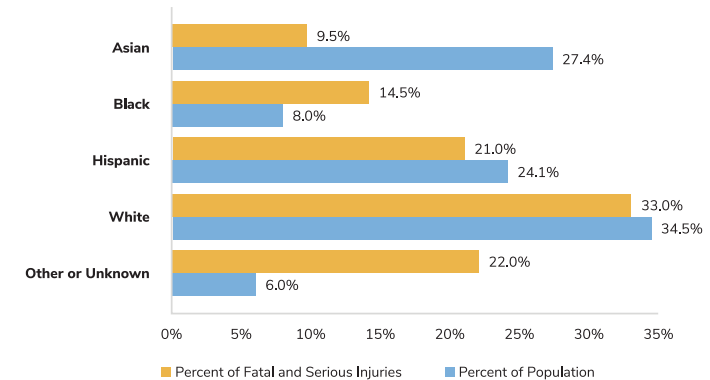


Figure 11: KSI Crash Victim Race/Ethnicity vs. Population Within 2 Miles of the Bay Trail

44 MTC BayViz Vision Zero Dashboard

45 Note that the race or ethnicity of a person involved in a crash is identified based on police officer observation/ assumption, and may be limited and/or bias as a result.

Community Interviews

Lived experience is a critical data source. In addition to the quantitative analysis and archival materials, the study team conducted twelve oral history interviews. Interviewees were paid \$200 each for their participation. Community leaders and organizers from each of the six case study communities shared their relationship to Bay Trail past and present. The interviews covered:

- Community or neighborhood history and current context
- Level of familiarity with the Bay Trail
- Level of familiarity with MTC/ABAG and/or the Bay Trail Project
- Mobility needs and barriers in the community or neighborhood
- Mobility justice in the community or neighborhood
- Ideas for how to improve Bay Trail access and use
- Opportunities for partnerships, education, outreach, and engagement

Each interviewee has a unique and personal relationship to the Bay Trail. Most interviewees were familiar with the Bay Trail as a recreational waterfront facility, and shared that they see the trail as an opportunity to get outdoors, be close to nature, and participate in physical activities. However, community leaders also reported that they experience physical, cultural, and social barriers to access.

Most interviewees indicated that MTC/ABAG's focus should be on improving access to the Bay Trail for Equity Priority Communities. They suggested that improving the quality of the Bay Trail in and near Equity Priority Communities may have a higher impact on equity outcomes than completing the 500-mile loop. Feedback from interviews also suggests that gap-closure efforts should focus on Equity Priority Communities.

Of course, not all interviewees felt the same about issues and priorities such as personal safety or priority locations. However, the study team did hear many common trends across interviews and neighborhoods. What follows is a high-level summary of those findings.

Interviewee Experiences and Suggestions

“Access and means to connect to nature is very necessary. People are suffering nature deficit disorder. It’s not fair for some areas that are nicer to have access versus lower socioeconomic areas.”

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH OHLONE COMMUNITY LEADER

Physical and Geographic Access

Interviewees shared that the primary physical barriers to accessing the Bay Trail are (1) inadequate parking and public transportation at Bay Trail access points and (2) traffic safety concerns when walking or biking to get to the Trail. This echoes the findings of the literature review and existing conditions analysis: too many Black, brown, and low-wealth neighborhoods are disconnected from waterfront amenities by highways and arterials, railroad tracks, and land use patterns. Streets that traverse these barriers are often dilapidated (worn paving, potholes, etc.), very wide with high vehicular speeds, difficult to cross on foot, and feel uncomfortable or unsafe to use on a bicycle. Underpasses and overpasses may also feel unsafe – both in terms of traffic safety and personal safety. For many residents, cars offer the only comfortable, convenient mode to reach the Bay Trail, which is a challenge for those who do not own cars, or cannot drive due to disability, age, or not having a driver's license.

Safe, comfortable, and convenient routes to the Bay Trail via walking, bicycle, micromobility, and transit modes must be the priority. This will require local investment in traffic calming strategies, sidewalks, off-street paths, signalization, and protected bike lanes and intersections. Free and low-cost transit service (either fixed route or on demand) will be important for those neighborhoods that are not walking or bicycling distance from the Bay Trail. Where transit is not available (for example, in Alviso) parking should be available with a focus on parking for people with disabilities, and families with seniors and young children.



Alviso: Due to flood risks, temporary barriers prevent access to a segment of the Bay Trail. Photo Credit: ARUP



Richmond: Richmond residents are disconnected from the Bay Trail by railroad trucks, industrial land uses, and high speed arterials. Photo Credit: Lily Brown

Sense of Belonging

We'd like to have space for public events where the public can convene - but also a space for natives to convene and not do it in front of the general public - have a space to practice our way of life/traditions/spirituality."

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH INDIGENOUS/SOUTH BAY RESIDENT

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the feeling that the Bay Trail is not a space for all races, classes, and abilities. Some interviewees questioned who the Bay Trail is designed and maintained for, noting that they perceived wealthy, White, able-bodied cyclists to be the primary users. This feeling is illustrated in neighborhoods like the Iron Triangle in Richmond, where proximity to the trail has not translated into community connections or identity. The study team heard a wide range of suggestions for how to build a sense of belonging between racialized and/or disabled communities and the Bay Trail. Highlights include:

- **Rematriation Efforts:** Re-connecting Indigenous communities to the Bay Trail should be a major focus of future planning and development. Rematriation efforts may include investing in Native land management practices, cultural easements where Indigenous communities manage and protect Bay Trail segments, or event reparations and ceding land back to contemporary Indigenous communities.
- **Community Safety Efforts:** Many of the interviewees shared the belief that their communities are over-policed,⁴⁶ and that police presence on the Bay Trail may deter Black residents from using the trail. Most interviewees agreed that more enforcement would not increase the sense of personal security. Agencies responsible for enforcement on the Bay Trail should also take the lead from the 2022 NACTO guide, "[Breaking the Cycle: Reevaluation the Laws that Prevent Safe & Inclusive Biking.](#)" The guide provides clear evidence that enforcing bicycle regulations does not create safer conditions, and disproportionately targets Black riders.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Not all interviewees shared the feeling over-policing; Alviso community leaders felt that the lack of police presence in their community is a signal of neglect and disinvestment.

⁴⁷ National Association of City Transportation Officials. <https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Bikeway-Design-Enforcement-Paper.pdf>



East Palo Alto: Locked gates prohibit residents from accessing the Bay Trail and the waterfront. Photo Credit: ARUP



Vallejo: Despite signage that indicates access to the Bay Trail, Vallejo residents are disconnected from the shoreline by the freeway. Photo Credit: ARUP

Existing Trail Segment Conditions

“[People with disabilities] want to be fully participating members of society and that means fighting for more than just survival. It means a real quality of life with things like recreation.”

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH SAN LEANDRO RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Most interviewees agreed that improvements to existing Bay Trail segments would have important impacts for Equity Priority Communities. Interviewees discussed the need for improvements including:

- Install lighting to make the trail feel safer and more welcoming
- Install multilingual wayfinding to make the trail more user-friendly, easy to navigate, and welcoming.
- Install safety features such as emergency push buttons or telephones, without more police.
- Conduct more regular maintenance and trash collection, and enhance efforts to prevent dumping.
- Provide more comfort amenities including restrooms, water fountains, seating, and shade.
- Provide more enjoyment amenities, including gathering spaces for large groups (gazebos, picnic tables, barbecues, games), sports facilities, kayaking, or exercise equipment.
- Protect and enhance historic and cultural landmarks that are important to racialized and Indigenous residents.
- Conduct accessibility upgrades to improve conditions for people with disabilities. Beyond basic ADA requirements, provide truly comfortable spaces for people of all ages and abilities.
- Where possible, pave unpaved trail section to improve comfort and accessibility for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, or other wheeled or mobility devices.

Community Education, Engagement, and Partnership

“I’ve noticed that since the pandemic there’s been high traffic. Different age groups of bicyclists, including experienced cyclists - they expect you know the etiquette, but some people don’t know, they’re kind of out there for the first time.”

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH LONG TIME ALVISO
COMMUNITY RESIDENT

Interviewees shared that people who live in Equity Priority Communities may have limited familiarity with the Bay Trail– what it is, where to access it, its history and benefits, its value to communities. Interviewees listed a number of ideas for engaging shoreline communities:

- Implement youth education and programming along Bay Trail that leverages existing educational resources, works with school districts and Safe Routes to Schools programs, and integrates Bay Trail education into existing curricula.
- Collaborate with existing groups that lead bike rides and walking tours, such as Rich City Rides in Richmond.
- Establish trail ambassador programs and/or fund community organizations to run education and outreach programming around the trail.
- Hold conversations with Native leaders and people to explore (and commit to) strategies to rectify past harms through the Bay Trail.
- Publicize the utility and convenience of the Bay Trail through wayfinding, marketing, and working with employers and schools.
- Return to the communities from this study to share the results and identify actions.
- Develop multilingual and ADA-accessible marketing materials.
- Fund programs to subsidize bikes and for group outings and events.



Richmond: Community ride across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Path led by Rich City Rides.
Photo Credit: Warren Wells

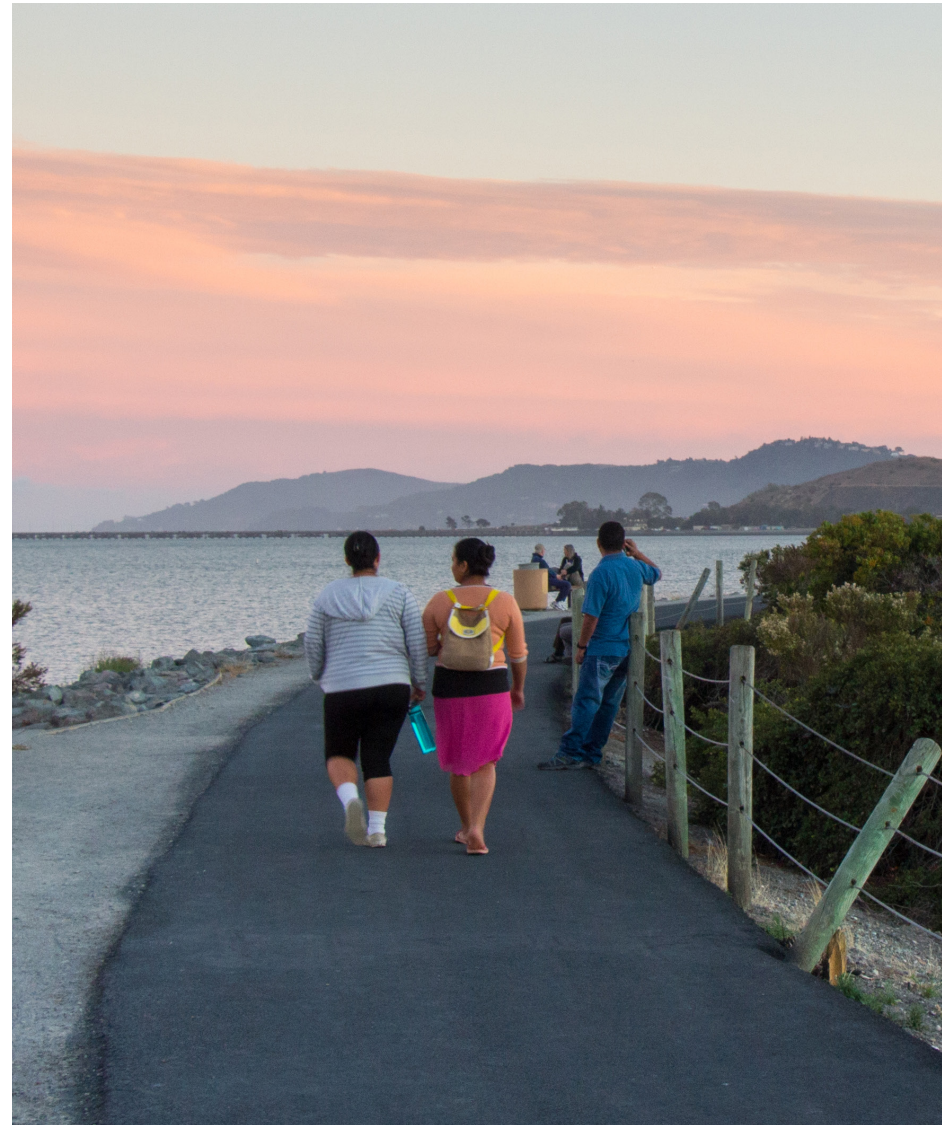
Decision-Making Power in Equity Priority Communities

“Recognize history that people have been taught is limited and crippling. [We’ve been] spoon-fed a whitewashed narrative that is not inclusive.”

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH OHLONE COMMUNITY LEADER

Amongst interviewees, knowledge of MTC/ABAG and the Bay Trail Project, as well as engagement with Bay Trail planning efforts, was relatively limited. This is likely even more true for the broader public in Equity Priority Communities (EPCs). Interviewees shared that EPCs could benefit from a closer relationship with the jurisdictions and agencies that manage the trail; this could offer EPCs more decision-making power related to Bay Trail planning and development.

However, interviewees expressed skepticism that EPC residents have the time and resources to attend Bay Trail planning meetings where key investment decisions are made. Instead, interviewees recommended that MTC/ABAG staff join existing meetings within communities, and establish relationships with local organizations. Specific organizations that could help connect MTC/ABAG to EPCs include Independent Living Centers, the Historic Society, and groups like Youth United for Community Action in East Palo Alto and Rich City Rides in Richmond. Other suggestions included industry, schools, and elected officials. Some interviewees recommended that local residents—especially marginalized communities—be part of the Bay Trail organization.



Residents walking, socializing and taking in the view along the Bay Trail in San Rafael's Canal Neighborhood. Photo Credit: Ben Botkin



Cyclists riding on the Bay Trail in their neighborhood along the Richmond Marina Bay. Photo Credit: Peter Beeler

Planning for the Existing and Long-Time Communities, Not Residents of the Future

“Show the community that you’re improving this trail for the current residents, not as some way to attract new residents.”

– ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH VALLEJO COMMUNITY LEADER

Beyond speaking directly about the Bay Trail, interviewees shared that many shoreline communities are facing a severe cost of living crisis (more specifically housing affordability) and all the associated challenges including homelessness, displacement, gentrification, unemployment, and disinvestment. This echoes trends seen in the historic literature and contemporary data analysis.

It is critical that the Bay Trail does not become yet another driver of displacement and alienation. Equitable Bay Trail development would prioritize existing and historic Black and Indigenous communities who live along the shoreline, as well as newer working class and racialized residents. In planning for the Bay Trail, the interests of the real estate industry, as well as affluent, White communities, need to be identified— and then challenged. MTC/ABAG has limited power to turn the tide on regional development, gentrification, and displacement trends, but to the extent possible, staff can work across agencies, jurisdictions, and sectors to mitigate the impact of these forces.

Conclusions

Key Themes

The Bay Trail Equity Strategy Phase I weaves together quantitative data analysis, archival research, and oral history interviews, to tell the story of the Bay shoreline past and present. The following six trends characterize the relationship between the Bay Trail and the communities that live along the shoreline.

Ecology and Environment

The ecological history of the shoreline provides clues about its future, including climate resiliency and the restoration of native wetland ecologies. The Bay shoreline was once a bastion of ecological diversity and symbiosis between humans and the natural world. Indigenous communities have always prioritized sustainable land stewardship. For the Bay Trail to contribute to environmental restoration, efforts to develop it must account for the relationship between environmental degradation and cultural erasure, ethnic genocide, and racial inequities.



Government Actions and Outcomes

Throughout history, government agencies and legislative bodies have played a central role in advancing White supremacy and maintaining racial inequality in the Bay Area. Official policies and programs have shaped the racial and ethnic makeup of the Bay Area, displaced people, racially segregated the region, and destroyed the shoreline ecologies. Future management and development of the Bay Trail must be ethical and equitable, address past and current injustices, and be intentional in not perpetuating harm.



Culture and Capital

Before colonial settlement, the Bay shoreline was a life source for Indigenous communities. After colonial settlement, White settlers exploited the shoreline as a source for capital accumulation through shipping, manufacturing, trade, and more recently, mixed-use development. To disrupt this trend, racialized and low-wealth communities, neighborhoods with histories of disinvestment, and residents who cannot (or do not want to) use the Bay Trail for recreation or mobility must actively be engaged and centered in its planning and development.



Development and Transformation

Renewed interest in the shoreline as a space for recreation and environmental restoration aligns with contemporary real estate interests. Communities that were once undervalued due to their proximity to shoreline industrial land uses are now at the center of real estate speculation, especially in places where the Bay Trail offers recreational opportunities. It is critical to recognize the role that the Bay Trail plays in broader trends of economic development, infrastructural investment, and neighborhood change.



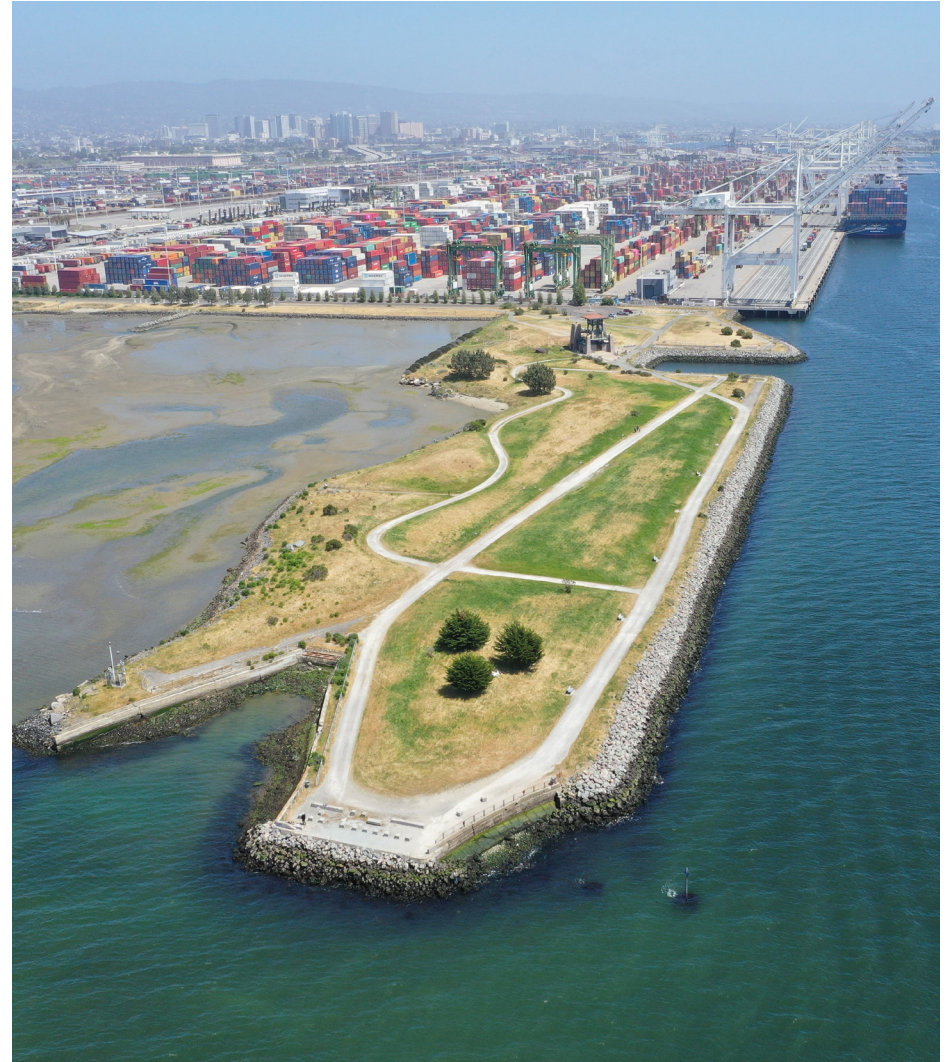
Dislocation and Displacement

Contemporary displacement trends in the Bay Area result from a complex relationship between the rise of the tech industry, real estate speculation, eviction law, construction costs, housing policy, and racial discrimination, as well as transportation, recreation, and environmental preservation.⁴⁸ Historic and future development of the Bay Trail is inextricably tied to Bay Area-wide trends of displacement, racial segregation, and cultural erasure.



Colonialism and Whiteness

At the root of this study is one underlying theme that connects all others: colonialism and Whiteness. These related concepts fueled the conquest, removal, and conversion of Indigenous peoples; the commodification of land; capitalist industrial development; and segregated residential patterns. Today they drive gentrification and displacement trends, and the disproportionate impact that poverty, housing insecurity, public health crises, and traffic violence have on Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. Recreational development in the Bay Area is tied up in these trends.



Bay Trail at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park next to the Port of Oakland in West Oakland.
Photo Credit: Noah Berger

48 Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (2021). Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance. PM Press.

Moving Forward

MTC's Equity Platform requires a renewed investment in equity as part of all regional planning initiatives. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, it is important that the role of government in segregation, income inequality, displacement, and cultural erasure is well understood. MTC does not own public right-of-way, but the agency can help push local jurisdictions towards equitable development practices. To center equity in Bay Trail development, and to serve Black and Indigenous communities, racialized people, low-wealth neighborhoods, and Equity Priority Communities, implementing agencies should:

Acknowledge the Limitations of the Bay Trail

The benefits of the Bay Trail are not shared equally across all shoreline communities. The vision of a “ring around the Bay” – 500 miles of seamless trail connection – may not be shared by all Bay Area residents. There are community members with mobility and infrastructure needs that are more urgent than trail development, including crumbling roadway conditions, traffic violence, limited transit access, transportation affordability, stormwater drainage issues, and dangerous railroad crossings. Communities also face pressing challenges related to poverty, unemployment, housing, displacement, Indigenous erasure, and police violence. The Bay Trail cannot address these challenges, and therefore may be a lower priority for some residents.

Take a Holistic Approach to Improving Bay Trail Access

A standout conclusion from both the historical research and oral history interviews is that Equity Priority Communities need better access to the Bay Trail. In its most literal sense, “access” means geographic access – providing safe and convenient connections from neighborhoods to the Bay Trail, while removing physical barriers. But improving “access” also means reducing all barriers to use including cultural, financial, and linguistic barriers. In neighborhoods like the Iron Triangle in Richmond, proximity to the trail has

not translated into community connections or identity. Increasing trail access will require investing in strategies that will build a sense of belonging for all. This study also suggests that improving physical and social access will require increased attention to existing trail segments - to ensure they are safe, comfortable, welcoming, and accessible for all ages and abilities.

Set Local Neighborhood-Based Mobility Goals

Bay Trail initiatives that treat all segments and communities the same may not be effective in increasing trail usage, building community buy-in, and encouraging Bay Trail commuting. One way to understand each shoreline community's unique challenges and opportunities is to develop segment profiles. For example, in communities where the Bay Trail runs through a neighborhood and is stitched closely to the road network, the trail might offer connections to work, school, or healthcare. The goal may be to increase usage for existing residents. Where the Bay Trail runs parallel to, but not through a neighborhood, residents may be disconnected from the trail by industrial land use or highways, and the goal should be to provide safe physical access to the trail.

Listen to Community Voices

Engaging the communities along the Bay Trail, especially communities that have been historically marginalized, will require acknowledgement of distrust in government institutions resulting from past government actions. Exhibiting long-term commitment through funding, listening to communities, and acting on their recommendations, building partnerships with trusted organizations and community institutions, and investing in existing needs like trail maintenance can foster a more trusting relationship.

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