

# Considering Environmental Justice in Landfill Gas Energy Project Development

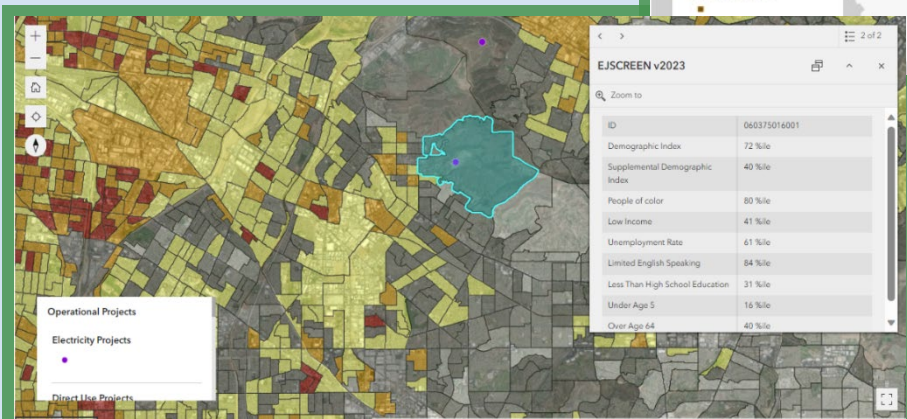
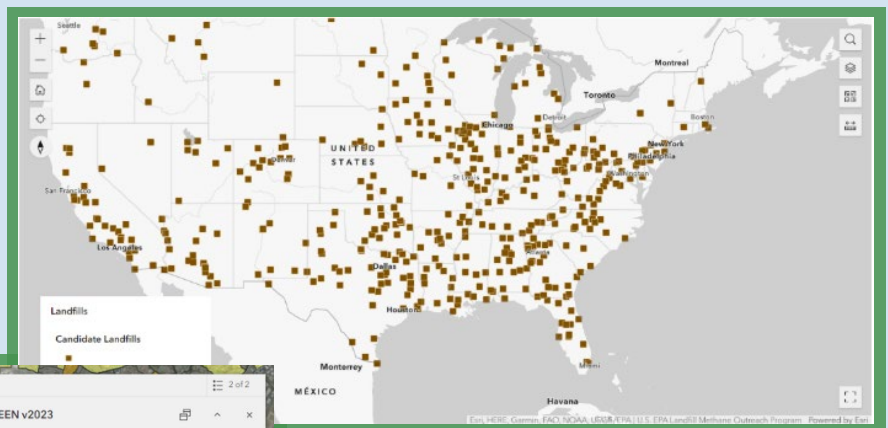
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## What Is Environmental Justice and Why Is It Important?

- **Environmental justice (EJ)** means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation or disability, in Agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:
  - Are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards; and
  - Have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable and resilient environment.
- **Why consider EJ?** Executive Orders 12898, 14096 and 14008 direct federal agencies to address EJ issues through programs, policies and activities. Most states also have laws and policies pertaining to EJ. Incorporating EJ considerations into landfill gas (LFG) energy project development will help build trust and result in better projects.
- **Meaningful involvement** means:
  - Providing timely opportunities for members of the public to share information or concerns and participate in decision-making processes;
  - Fully considering public input provided as part of decision-making processes;
  - Providing technical assistance, tools and resources to assist in facilitating meaningful and informed public participation; and
  - Seeking out and encouraging the involvement of persons and communities potentially affected.

## What Information Is Available in LMOP's National Map?

- Basic data from the LMOP database for:
  - **Active and closed municipal solid waste landfills**, color-coded by group: candidate landfills; landfills with an operational, under-construction or planned LFG energy project; and other landfills.
  - **Operating LFG energy projects**, color-coded by end-use category: electricity; direct-use; renewable natural gas (RNG) to pipeline; and RNG to local vehicle fuel use.
- Layers for national demographic indicators and indexes from **EPA's EJ Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen)**, based on nationally consistent data that can be used to highlight Census "block groups" that may have potentially vulnerable populations.
- Area layers and points that identify **Tribal lands**, from EPA's EnviroMapper for Envirofacts.



For instructions on how to use the LMOP national map when considering EJ in LFG energy project development, visit [epa.gov/lmop/lmop-national-map](https://epa.gov/lmop/lmop-national-map) and select the "instructions" link.

## If a Landfill Is Near a Community with Potential EJ Concerns – What Are the Next Steps?

### 1 Plan community outreach efforts

- Determine which **languages** are spoken by at least 5 percent of the community. Develop a plan to meet language needs for written and verbal communications.
- Consult the Spectrum of Public Participation<sup>1</sup> to determine the appropriate **level of involvement** based on the project's expected impact.
- Understand that the community most directly affected by a planned or proposed project is **inherently qualified to participate** in the decision-making process. Review the Compass to Meaningful Engagement in EPA's booklet on capacity building through community engagement.<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure that public engagement is **culturally appropriate and avoids cultural stereotypes**.<sup>3</sup> Use EJScreen and other sources of information on community characteristics to inform best practices. LFG energy projects affect a diverse range of communities, which requires **unique forms of outreach and cultural considerations**.

### 2 Listen to and document community concerns

- **Listen** more than you speak when engaging with community members to understand local concerns.
- Partner with community members and local community organizations to conduct a community assessment. A **community assessment** empowers community members to gather, analyze and report information to better understand the current conditions, needs and available resources in a community.<sup>4</sup>
- Determine if the **community's trust** in the facility has been broken. If so, what eroded their trust? Has anything been done to remediate outstanding issues? **Examples of potential issues experienced by those living or working near a landfill are listed below**.
- Once concerns have been identified, **work with the community** to address any outstanding concerns and develop plans to prevent new issues from arising.

### Potential Issues for Community Members Near a Landfill

- Unpleasant odors
- Dust and particulate matter
- Noise
- Increased vehicle traffic
- Birds
- Hazardous air pollution
- Groundwater contamination
- Respiratory problems
- Fire concerns
- Blowing trash

### 3 List community-specific risks and benefits

- Consider and communicate how an LFG energy project's **daily operations** could affect the local community's health and well-being, including unique impacts to vulnerable communities. Transparency can limit surprises, build trust and improve project design and implementation.
- Acknowledge and consider the **cumulative risks and impacts** facing the community of concern. The risks of your project may not be the only risks to the community.
- Engage community members to **understand the benefits they want** in their community because of this project. Not all communities will value the same benefits equally.
- Provide a **system** for community members to express concerns about risks initially and throughout the project.

### 4 Hold public meetings to listen and share

- Relay information in **plain language** that clearly conveys the relevant project information and avoids technical jargon and acronyms.
- Provide **notices about the meetings** in the primary languages spoken in that community and have translators present at all meetings.
- Hold meetings at a **time** that is best for most of the community and in a **space** that is comfortable for community members. This might require partnering with local organizations like community centers.
- Determine if any groups from the community are **underrepresented** at meetings and develop a plan to engage those community members. Take time to understand why those groups may be underrepresented and develop engagement strategies accordingly.

### Resources

- EPA's Environmental Justice website: [epa.gov/environmentaljustice](https://epa.gov/environmentaljustice)
- EPA's EJScreen tool: [epa.gov/ejscreen](https://epa.gov/ejscreen)
- EPA's Environmental Protection in Indian Country website: [epa.gov/tribal](https://epa.gov/tribal)

1. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, [cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum\\_8.5x11\\_Print.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf)

2. Capacity Building Through Effective Meaningful Engagement, [epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-09/epa-capacity-building-through-effective-meaningful-engagement-booklet\\_0.pdf](https://epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-09/epa-capacity-building-through-effective-meaningful-engagement-booklet_0.pdf)

3. How to Get to Know Communities and Cultures: Methods for Remediation, Removal, and Redevelopment Projects, [cfpub.epa.gov/si/si\\_public\\_record\\_Report.cfm?dirEntryId=353552&Lab=CESER](https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_Report.cfm?dirEntryId=353552&Lab=CESER)

4. Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities: Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development, [epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-01/documents/equitable-development-report-508-011713b.pdf](https://epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-01/documents/equitable-development-report-508-011713b.pdf)