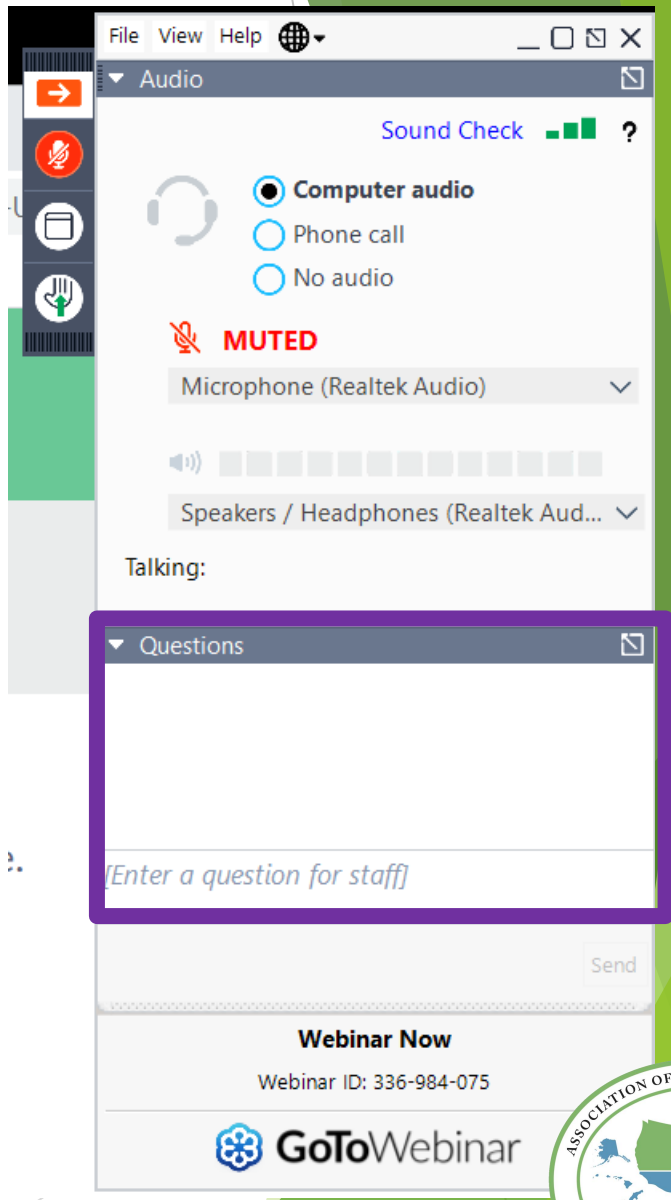
2021 ASTSWMO Annual Meeting

ASTSWMO CERCLA and Brownfields Subcommittee:

Environmental Justice in CERCLA and Brownfields

Before We Start

- All attendees will be muted throughout the webinar.
- If you cannot hear us speaking right now or hear an echo, make sure your audio settings are configured correctly
- **Questions:** Use the **Questions Panel** in the dashboard to send questions to the speakers during the webinar.
- **Note who the question is directed to in your submittal.**
- You can also "Raise Your Hand" so that we can unmute your microphone to ask any questions as well.
- Questions will be answered once presentations have concluded.
- The webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the ASTSWMO website.

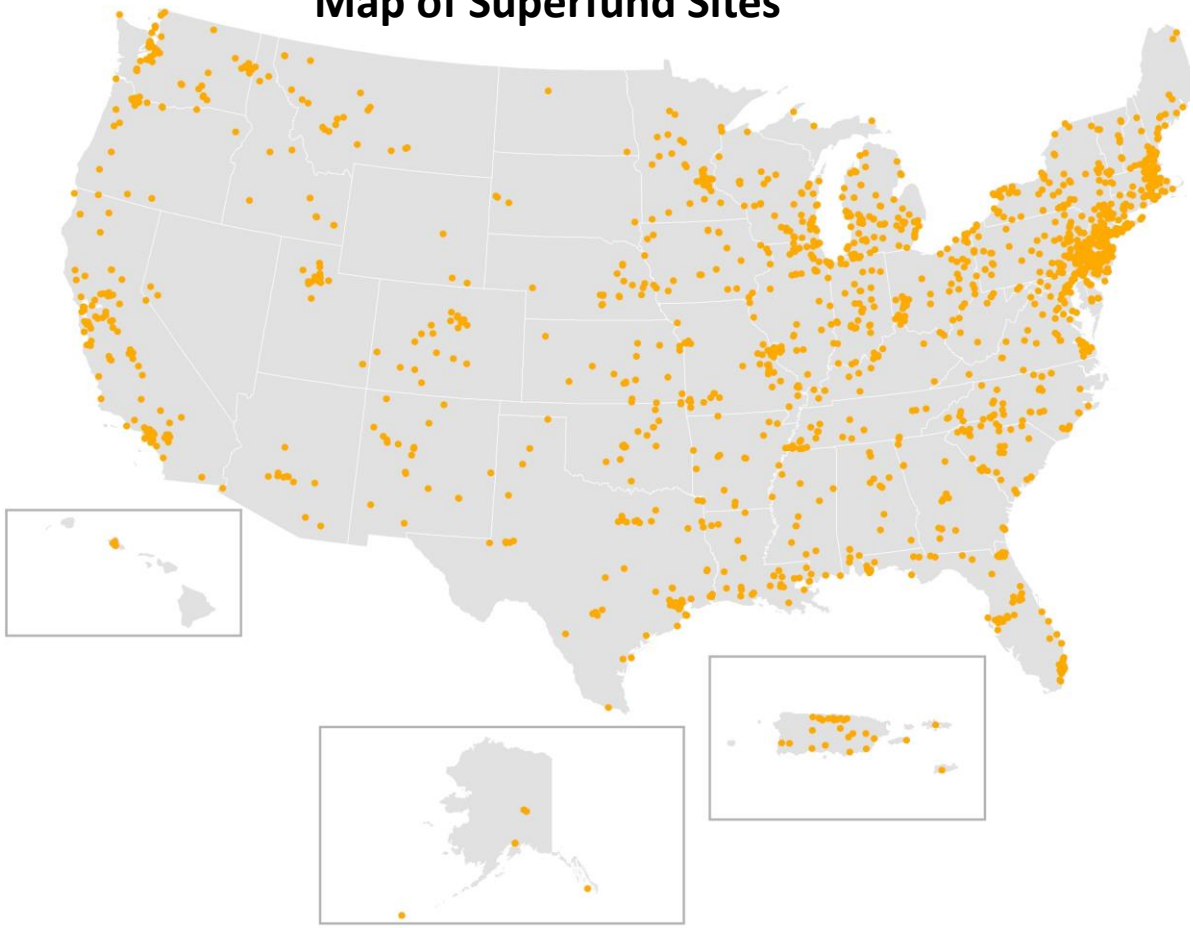


Superfund and Environmental Justice

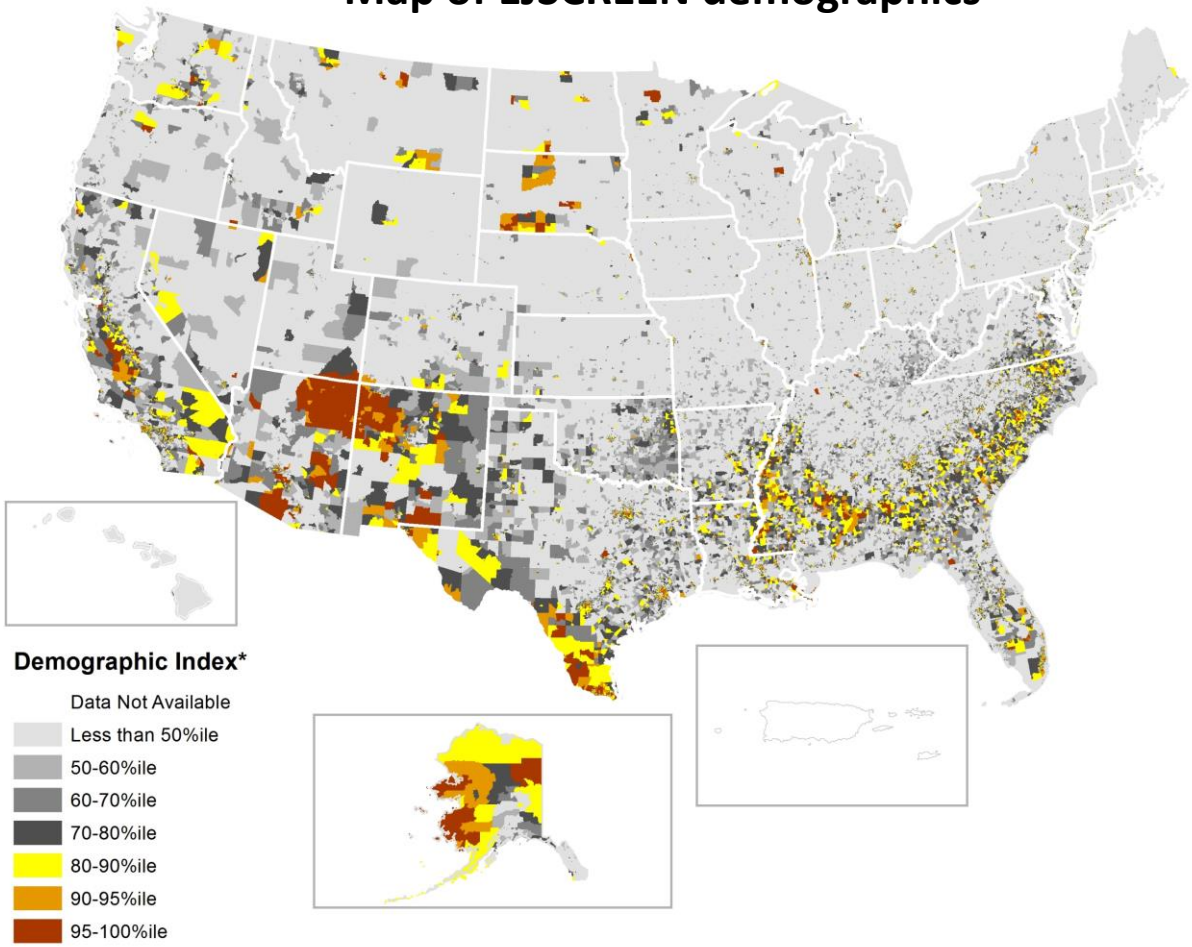
- Approximately 73 million people live within 3 miles of a Superfund site
- Many are lower income, higher minority or indigenous, and more burdened by other environmental stressors when compared to the general population
- EPA considers environmental burdens and other socio-economic challenges when developing community involvement and cleanup plans for Superfund sites
- Assessing environmental justice concerns in the communities we serve provides important information that influences how EPA communicates, makes cleanup decisions, and plans for future reuse of Superfund sites

Superfund and Environmental Justice

Map of Superfund Sites



Map of EJSCREEN demographics



**The EJSCREEN Demographic Index is based on the average of two demographic indicators: Percent Low-Income and Percent Minority.*

Superfund's Approach to Environmental Justice

3 Key Take-Aways

Build Community Capacity

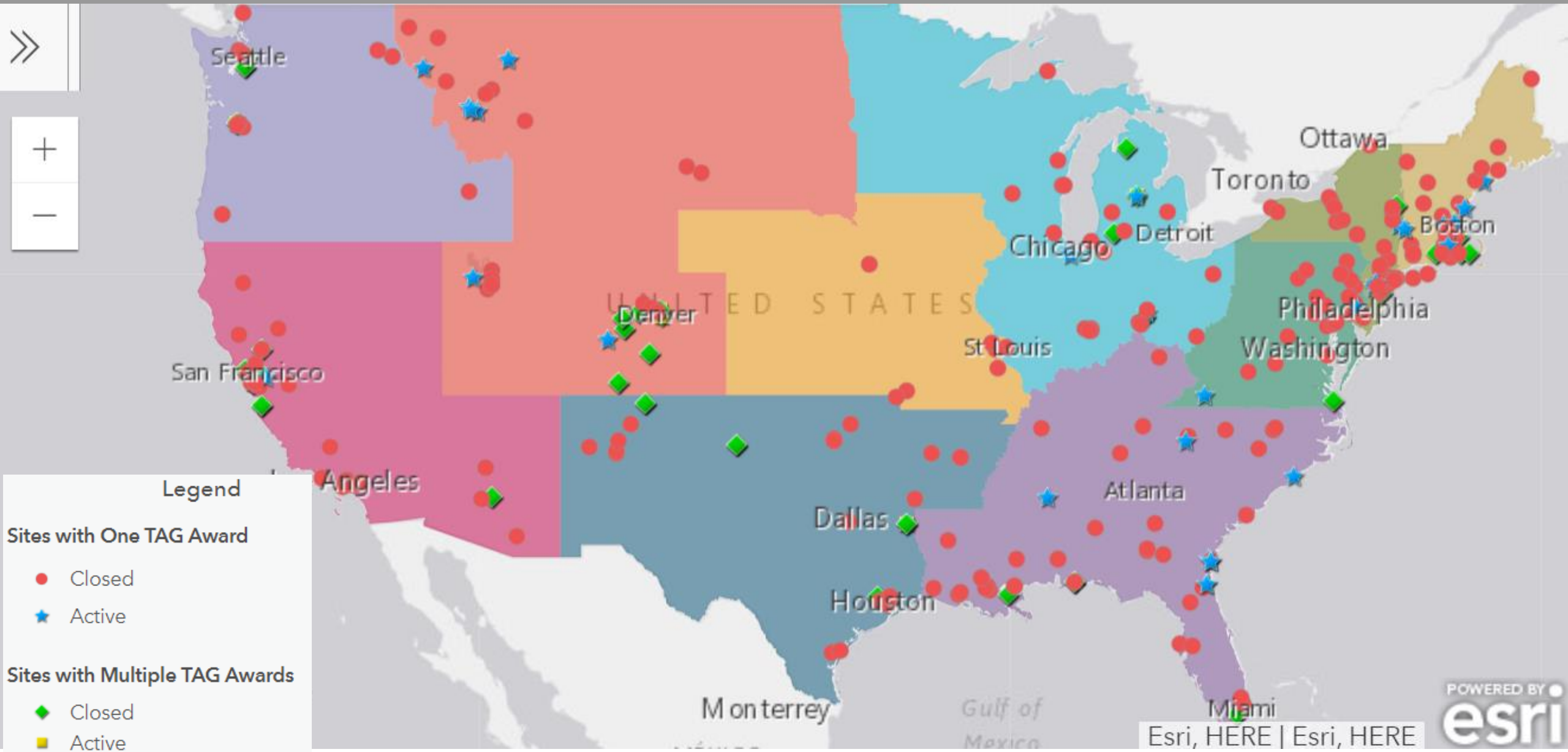
Build Staff Capacity

Build on Success

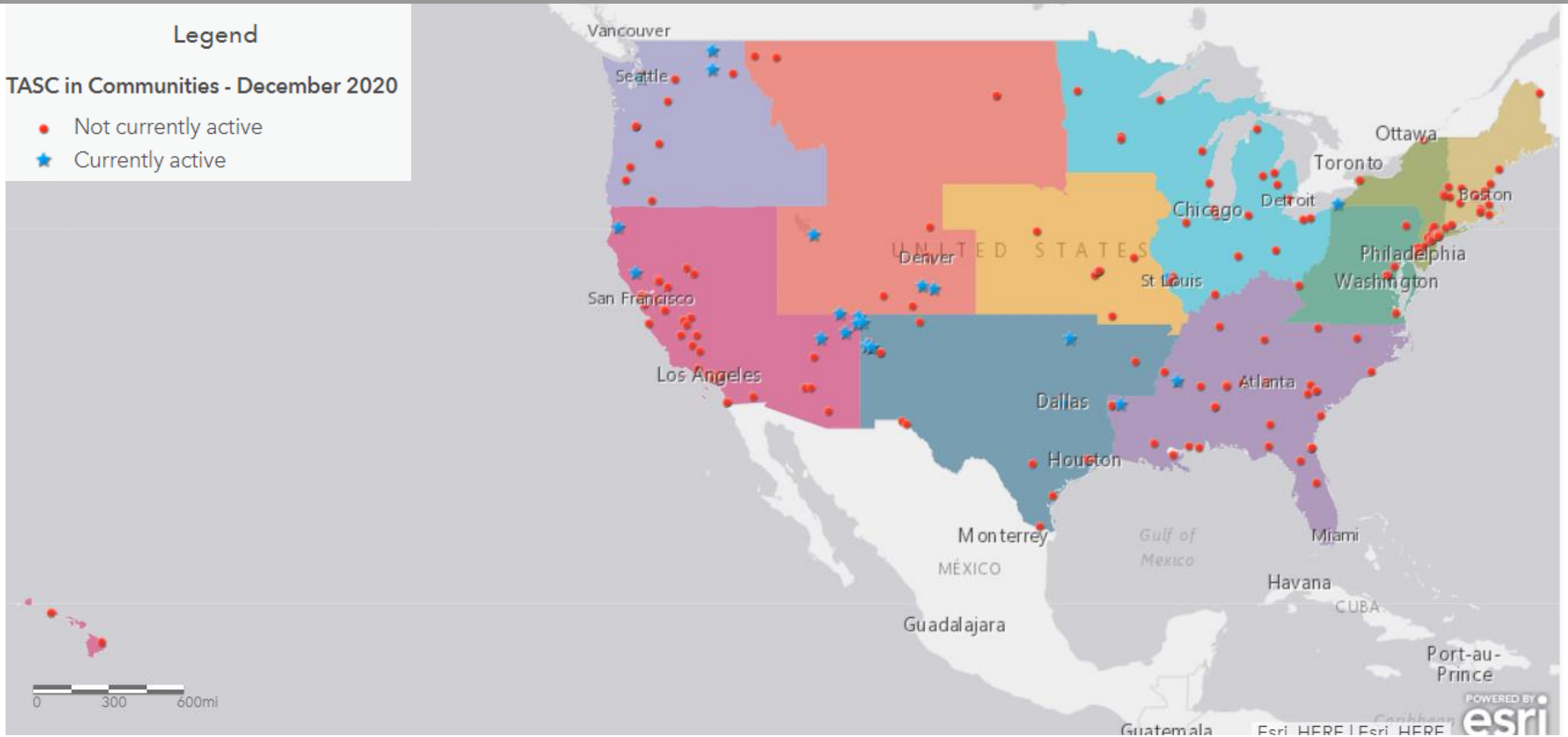
Building Community Capacity

- Community Involvement Coordinators
- Technical Assistance Grants
- Community Involvement Plans
- Technical Assistance Services for Communities
- Community Advisory Groups
- Superfund Job Training Initiative
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC)

TAG Locations



TASC Project Locations



Building Staff Capacity

- ✓ Environmental Justice Training
- ✓ Cultural Competency Training
- ✓ Risk Communication Training

Build on Success

- HUD/EPA MOU - Enhanced Partnership
- OLEM EJ Action Plan - Community Superfund Workshop Pilot
- Justice40 Pilot – Superfund Remedial Program

Build on Success – Redeveloping Superfund Sites

- More than 700 Superfund sites are in new or continued use following cleanup
- Today these sites are parks, shopping centers, athletic fields, wildlife sanctuaries, manufacturing facilities, residences and more
- 2020 data shows 632 Superfund sites in reuse supported ~ 9,902 businesses generating annual sales of $63.3 billion.
- They also employ more than 227,769 people who earned a combined income of $16.3 billion.

Enhancing EPA/State Partnership

How can EPA help states engage with communities on EJ issues?

What can states do to support EJ issues?

What can we both do to maximize our partnership in communities?

Environmental Justice at MPCA

- **MPCA Policy on EJ since 1994 (Similar to EPA)**
- **Long-term goal:**
  - disproportionate negative impacts are reduced/prevented
- **Current strategic plan goal:**
  - Incorporate strategies to address EJ in all programs
- **2015 EJ Framework:**
  - Our plan for integrating EJ into MPCA work
- **21 environmental program plans include EJ strategies**
- **Commissioner's Environmental Justice Advisory Group**
- **https://www.pca.state.mn.us/about-mpca/mpca-and-environmental-justice**

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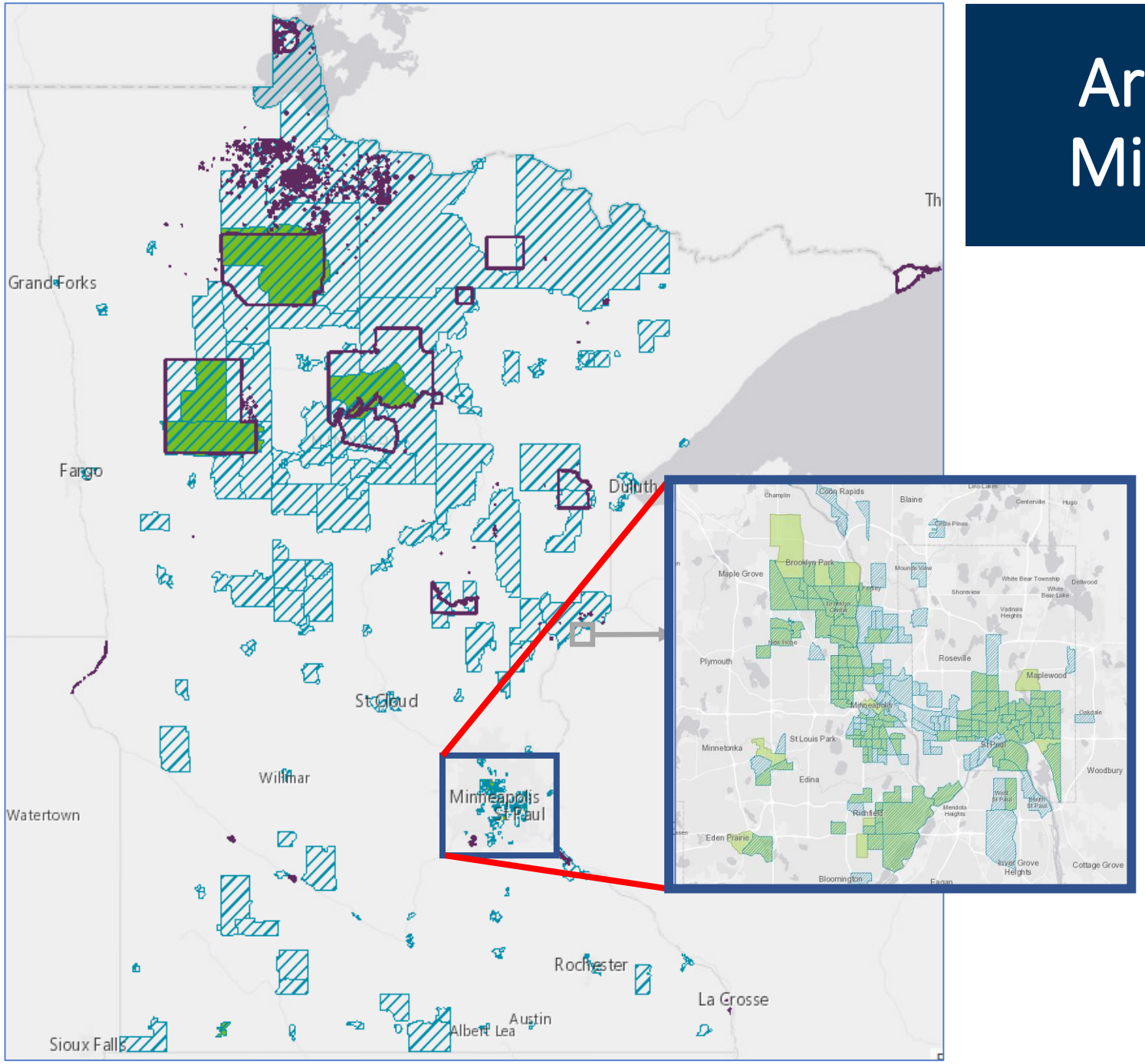
MPCA Environmental Justice Approach

- **Identify areas where lower-income Minnesotans, people of color and tribal communities may be experiencing pollution.**
- **Change our approach and increase our work in these areas:**
  - Better understand sources of pollution and risks
  - Reduce pollution, improve livability
  - Communicate and engage earlier, more often and more effectively

Areas of Concern for EJ in Minnesota and Twin Cities



At least 40% of people reported income less than 185% of the Federal poverty level

50% or more people of color

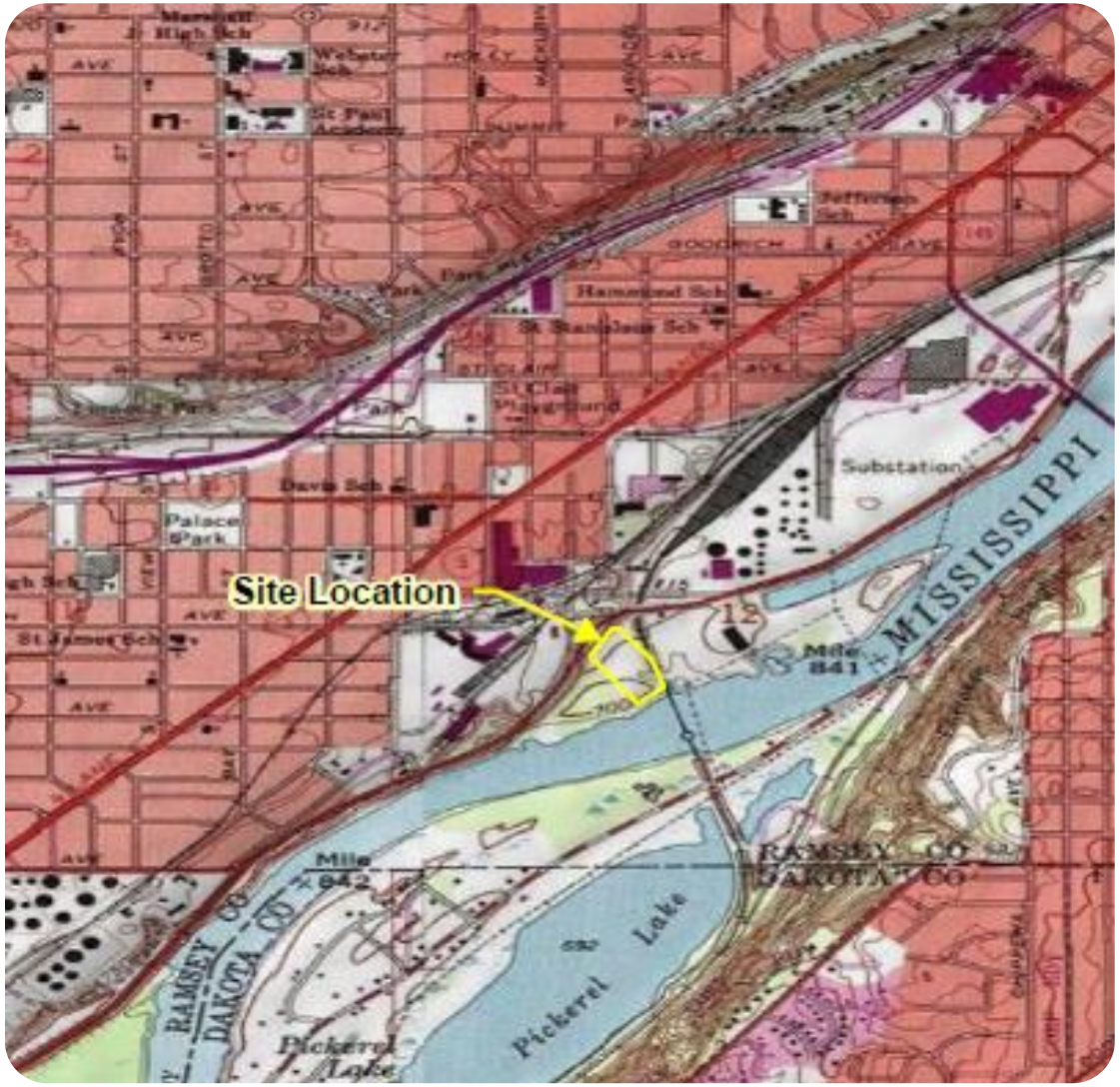
Federally recognized Tribal areas

[On-line screening tool: www.pca.state.mn.us/ej](www.pca.state.mn.us/ej)

MPCA EJ Strategies

- **Increase engagement, public participation, and outreach tools for community groups and residents**
- **Continue to seek additional grant funds to expand brownfield investigations in EJ areas**
  - Seek additional funds at State and Federal levels to support our work in EJ areas
  - Some of those funds would be used for projects in EJ areas damaged by civil unrest
- **Prioritize work to enhance benefits in areas of concern for EJ**
  - Site Assessment Screening Tool (SAST) – 5 criteria, including EJ
  - Closed Sites Reassessment Project – TCE, PCE and VOCs in soil vapor in EJ areas; TCE in groundwater as drinking water in EJ areas > revised HRL.
  - Prioritize use of BF grant funds for sites in EJ areas that will benefit the community (affordable housing, green spaces, non-profits, etc.)

EJ Success Story: St. Paul Levee Site



Site = Vacant lot on Mississippi R. with soil contamination

Northern Lights Elementary School – classroom inquiry from What's in My Neighborhood search

- MPCA presentation on site contamination and status (funding priority vs. exposure risk)

MPCA EJ Consultation and Outreach – additional inquiries from community

- Identified the area and EJ populations within it
- Other vulnerable population on-Site (transients) – homeless organizations
- Neighborhood associations
- Public meeting – MPCA, MDH, City of St. Paul
  - 20+ community members attended
  - Spurred additional conversations with local legislators and community members about the need to fund the cleanup of this site

EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant (2017-2020)

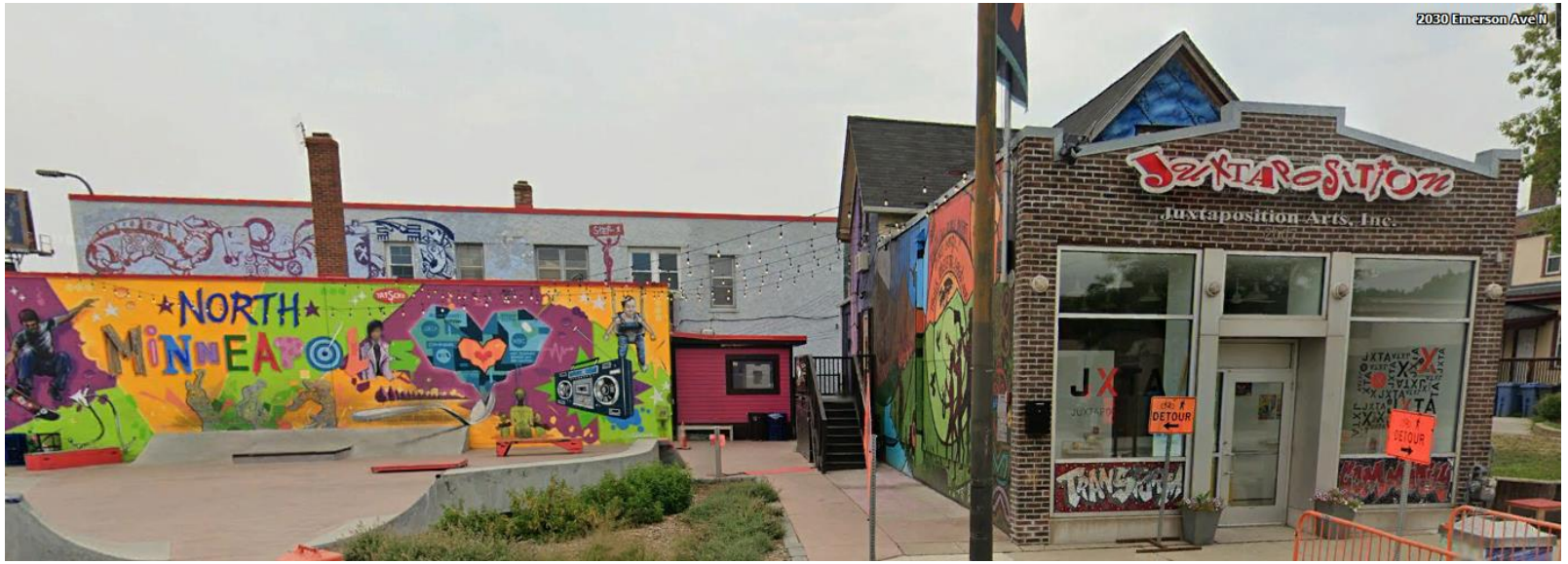
- **Used to assess brownfield sites in EJ areas in Twin Cities metro area**
- **$300,000 for three-year grant**
- **Completed Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments and cleanup planning to support redevelopment at eight EJ sites:**
  - 3 affordable housing apartment buildings
  - 3 neighborhood businesses
  - Emergency shelter
  - Community garden

Homeward Bound emergency shelter
American Indian Community Development Corporation

Minnesota's Targeted Brownfield Assessment Program (TBAP)

- **Funded annually by EPA 128a grant**
- **Used for Phase I and Phase II ESAs and cleanup planning**
- **Priority given to sites in EJ areas that have community support**

55% of MPCA grant sites are in EJ areas



<u>Project Highlight:</u>

Juxtaposition Arts - *Community art space for teens*

Discovered high PCE in soil vapor during investigation for planned expansion of arts center. Former dry-cleaner on planned acquisition property.

Questions and Further Discussion

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