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From: Selwyn Hollins 
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**REPORT BACK ON EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES (ITEM NO. 21, AGENDA OF OCTOBER 27, 2020)**

On October 27, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion by Supervisors Solis and Barger authorizing the Internal Services Department to establish a proposed program to empower youth and small businesses in underserved communities that are adversely impacted by the digital divide and connect them to technology, resources and opportunities. Additionally, the motion directed the Internal Services Department, in consultation with County Counsel, Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, the Office of Diversion and Re-entry's Youth Diversion and Development, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education, to report back in 90 days with a program implementation plan.

Attached is a copy of the program implementation plan, which was developed in consultation with the above-mentioned County departments as well as several public, private, academic, and community-based organizations.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (323) 267-2101 or shollins@isd.lacounty.gov.

SH:MC:sg

Attachment

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Consumer and Business Affairs
Development, Aging and Community Services
Health Services, Office of Diversion and Re-entry
Office of Education



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR

DELETE THE DIVIDE

*An Empowerment Initiative to Support Underserved Communities
Impacted by the Digital Divide in the County of Los Angeles*

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1. Overview

What is Delete The Divide?

Delete The Divide is the unification of public, private, academic, and community-based organizations to empower youth and small businesses in underserved communities that are adversely impacted by the digital divide. The digital divide refers to the growing gap that exist amongst the segments of society that have access to modern information and communication technologies (e.g., computers, internet and digital content) and the segments of society that do not. The mission of *Delete The Divide* is to leverage existing service offerings among various entities and deliver a coalition of resources directly into disadvantaged areas to connect youth and small businesses to opportunities in technology that will provide more direct pathways to personal development and economic growth.

The Need

According to 2019 United States Census data, the median annual household income in the State of California is \$80,440. The estimated annual household income in Los Angeles County is \$72,797, yet more than 1.1 million households have incomes totaling less than \$50,000. In some cities and communities within the County, more than 50% of all households have incomes below \$50,000 (see Appendix A – *2020 Median Household Income*). Additionally, the 2019 Census data estimates that 5.5% of households in Los Angeles County do not have a computer and 11.9% lack a broadband internet subscription (see Appendix B – *Percent of Households with No Internet Access*). These households are disproportionately located in low income areas and the populations are predominately Black and Latino (see Appendix C - *Predominant Race By Census Tract*).

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the severity of the digital divide within Los Angeles County. In an effort to reduce the spread of the virus, a number of health safety protocols related to physical distancing were implemented by State and County health officials. As a result, constituents encountered a greater dependency on technology to perform routine and daily activities such as working remotely, distance learning among schools, and the exchange of products and services. The sudden and large-scale transition to a virtual environment brought in clear view the vast disparities in access to information and communication technologies within underserved communities. Hundreds of thousands of people continue to experience hardships due to technological barriers.

Major initiatives are underway to provide computer devices and broadband connectivity to underserved communities. These are necessary and critical steps to bridging the digital divide. However, equally important is the knowledge and awareness of how to effectively utilize and navigate the resources available through technology. The combination of access and awareness can expand opportunities for growth, achievement and advancement among disadvantaged populations.

Delete The Divide will build partnerships and alliances with various entities that can support the digital empowerment agenda. These entities include government, private corporations, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, philanthropists, and the sports and entertainment industries. Collectively, they will contribute resources to underserved

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communities to connect youth and small businesses to opportunities in technology. The resources will be centrally available through the *Delete The Divide* program and provide more direct pathways to personal development and economic growth.

2. Objectives

On October 27, 2020, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion titled *Empowerment Program to Address the Digital Divide in Underserved Communities*. This motion establishes a program to empower youth and small businesses in underserved communities that are adversely impacted by the digital divide. Additionally, the Board has implemented several initiatives to address matters of equity and inclusion affecting communities of color. In July 2020, the Board adopted the motion “Establishing an Antiracist Los Angeles County Policy Agenda” (Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, July 21, 2020). The Board has also adopted motions and prioritized strategies to bridge the digital divide that exists between communities that have sufficient access to computer devices and broadband technologies and those that are disadvantaged (Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Hilda L. Solis, October 13, 2020).

In the above-mentioned motion approved in October 2020, the Board of Supervisors directed the County’s Internal Services Department (ISD) to establish the *Delete The Divide* program. ISD is the lead County agency for delivering information technology (IT) services and administering centralized business relations as the County’s Purchasing Agent. ISD is well positioned to help facilitate efforts to reduce the digital divide by utilizing its extensive knowledge and experience in the field of information technology and its professional relationships with various businesses, organizations and networks.

The primary objectives of *Delete The Divide* are as follows:

- Establish partnerships with government agencies, technology companies, business and non-profit organizations, local schools, and academic institutions that sponsor or support social responsibility programs benefitting disadvantaged and underserved communities that are adversely impacted by the digital divide.
- Facilitate continuous exposure of IT-related and economic social responsibility programs and opportunities to youth and small businesses in underserved communities.
- Assist in engaging youth to learn and develop IT-related skills that can lead to well-paying career paths and entrepreneurship in the field of information technology.
- Set up and maintenance of a limited number of computer workstations at designated County facilities in underserved communities where youth who lack a computer and broadband access can participate in program instruction.
- Identify local small businesses in underserved communities that lack an online presence and assess their interest in obtaining assistance to develop a website or social media profile to expand their business.
- Coordinate projects that allow youth to gain experience applying their IT-based skills by supporting diverse small businesses in their communities that lack an internet presence, such

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as designing websites, social media profiles, and geographical information system (GIS) mapping tools.

- Explore additional avenues to financially support the program, including corporate donors, philanthropists, grants, scholarships, internships, and employment resources.
- Measure progress and outcomes of youth and businesses participating in the program.

3. Youth Empowerment Track

The Youth Empowerment Track is a specialized program that will be offered to youth who reside in an underserved community with minimal or no internet access in Los Angeles County, and who are interested in an entry-level career, entrepreneurship or post-secondary education in information technology. The program will feature course curriculums, professional development opportunities, and support services designed to remove barriers and provide the foundational knowledge and experience needed to pursue a career in information technology.

Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria must be met in order to participate in this program:

- Must be age 12 to 24 years old.
- Live in the County of Los Angeles.
- Reside within an underserved community with minimal or no internet access.
- Successfully complete the *Delete The Divide* Orientation.
- Successfully complete any course prerequisites.
- Complete and return participation forms.

Course Curriculum

Delete The Divide will connect youth to a wide variety of online course curriculums provided by partnering technology corporations and support groups. The course offerings will feature current and relevant subject-matter on technology disciplines that are in high-demand. Participants can engage in self-paced programs, instructor-led coursework, pre-recorded video instruction, and group learning sessions. Verification of student progress and course completion will be tracked via the online platforms. In-person learning opportunities may be offered at school campuses or other classroom settings subject to compliance with COVID-19 health order restrictions.

Youth who have particular areas of interest will be offered several pathways that can lead to a career or entrepreneurship in the field of information technology. The pathways will provide opportunities to earn technical certifications, internships and academic scholarships. Below are a few sample offerings:

- **Web Design Pathway** – fundamentals to develop websites using HTML, CSS, JavaScript.

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- **GIS Pathway** – explore and use Geographical Information Systems to solve real-world business problems through collection and analysis of location-based data.
- **Pop Culture Pathway** – apply artistic talent to create audio/video multimedia production or product designs such as visual images, logos and fashion.

Pathways may also include community enrichment projects for youth to gain practical experience by applying newly learned skills, such as helping local businesses and neighborhood groups with website development and social media profiles.

Support Services

Delete the Divide will facilitate additional support services to remove barriers and encourage youth participation and completion of the training curriculum. Partner organizations may be enlisted to provide outreach and wraparound services. Computer workstations will be provided at designated County facilities within underserved communities as a resource for participants to use should they lack the necessary computer equipment and broadband access needed to participate in the program. Mentors will be available to inspire and motivate youth to enroll and remain diligent in their career pursuits.

Youth empowerment is a process where children, adolescents, and young adults are encouraged to take more charge of their lives and make better informed decisions to address life challenges. It includes transforming their mindsets through positive beliefs, values, and attitudes. Below are sample tools and techniques that will be embedded within the program to empower participants as they progress through the course curriculums and pathways:

Confidence Building: Youth from underserved communities must believe that they can be successful. *Delete The Divide* and its partners will offer practical and positive activities to instill confidence and resilience within its youth participants to increase their chances for success. Opportunities will be provided to expose participants to new things so that they can determine what their strengths are and what piques their interest in relation to technology (e.g., mobile labs, self-paced/monitored learning, contests, etc.). Positive feedback loops will be embedded within the program to provide encouragement and establish milestones to celebrate accomplishments and build the confidence needed to complete goals and cultivate a positive self-image. Encouragement from partner organizations, mentors and job shadowing will also be used to provide additional sources of motivation.

Counter Negative Racial and Gender Stereotypes: Seeing is believing! It is imperative that participants are exposed to more content about people of color who are from similar backgrounds and have achieved success in high-tech and related fields to counter negative stereotypes. In collaboration with partner organizations, *Delete The Divide* website will offer opportunities for participants to view and hear stories of success to expand their visions for the future related to future career goals.

Advanced Computer Education: In a 2016 nationwide study conducted through Arizona State University, The Center for Gender Equity in Science and Technology (CGEST) found that “*many African American youth have engaged in innovative and creative activities on computers*” however, “*Relatively few African American youth have engaged in more technical activities on computers.*” The study reported that among 1,041 pairs of African American parents and youth ages 11 to 17 years old, only 18% of the youth had created an app, 17% built a website, and 13% had written computer programming or “coded.” However, the report found that 51% wanted to

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learn how to create an app, 48% wanted to build a website, and 35% wanted to learn to code or start an online business. *Delete the Divide's* IT technical certification pathway curriculums will help in meeting this unmet interest among the youth.

Community Involvement and Engagement: Community organizations that are established and operating within the underserved communities are essential to *Delete the Divide's* success. Additionally, partner organizations will help to bring technology experiences to communities (e.g., special events, mobile labs, autonomous vehicles, etc.).

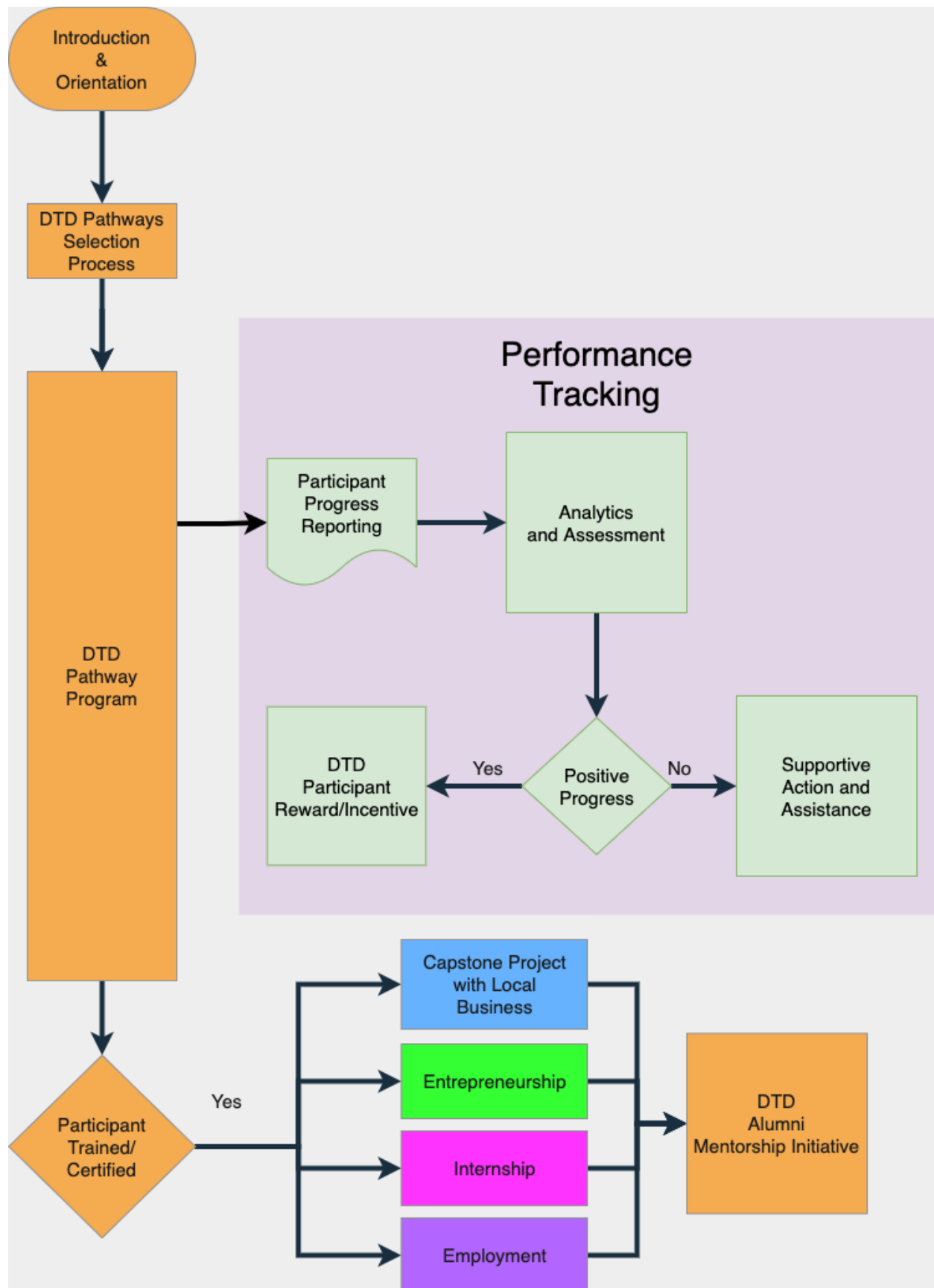
Layered Learning Techniques – Supplemental Instruction and Tools: *Delete The Divide* will facilitate access to supplemental educational resources and tutorials for a more “layered” learning experience that will introduce participants to multiple perspectives about a topic to supplement the course curriculums. Participants can also volunteer to create instructional videos to share with other participants as part of the layered learning model.

Cohorts – Creating a Culture of Peers and Accountability: Cohorts of like-minded participants will add additional levels of social support. *Delete The Divide* will establish cohorts to build a sense of community and accountability among peers that will create a “team” dynamic as an additional source of motivation and encouragement.

Tracking

Youth participants will be presented with achievement milestones to monitor their progress through the pathway curriculums. Reports will be generated to assist with tracking measures to assess a participant's progress and provide incentives and additional support services when needed.

The following flowchart is a depiction of the pathway curriculum process and workflows that *Delete the Divide* and its partners will utilize to monitor progress (performance tracking) and provide support services to participants to motivate and encourage them to stay on track and partake in additional professional development opportunities once training and certification is completed.



4. Small Business Empowerment Track

The Small Business Empowerment Track is designed to streamline access to current technology and support services for small businesses located in underserved communities. The program will provide connections to assist with online marketing, e-commerce, and business analytics. The goal is to enable businesses to be more competitive by expanding their access and knowledge of technologies that can enhance their business operations. Examples of featured content that will be available through the *Delete The Divide* online portal includes tutorials on how to enroll in online payment services and service delivery apps. Additional program offerings will include podcasts, workshops and seminars featuring experts from various industries and business sectors. Businesses enrolled in the program will also have access to courses offered by partnering technology corporations that can assist with improving technical skills and learning about available software that can be used to automate business processes and lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings.

Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria must be met in order to participate in this program:

- Be a small business enterprise located within Los Angeles County.
- Operate in an underserved community with minimal or no internet access.
- Does not engage in illegal activities.
- Complete and return participation forms.

5. Marketing/Outreach

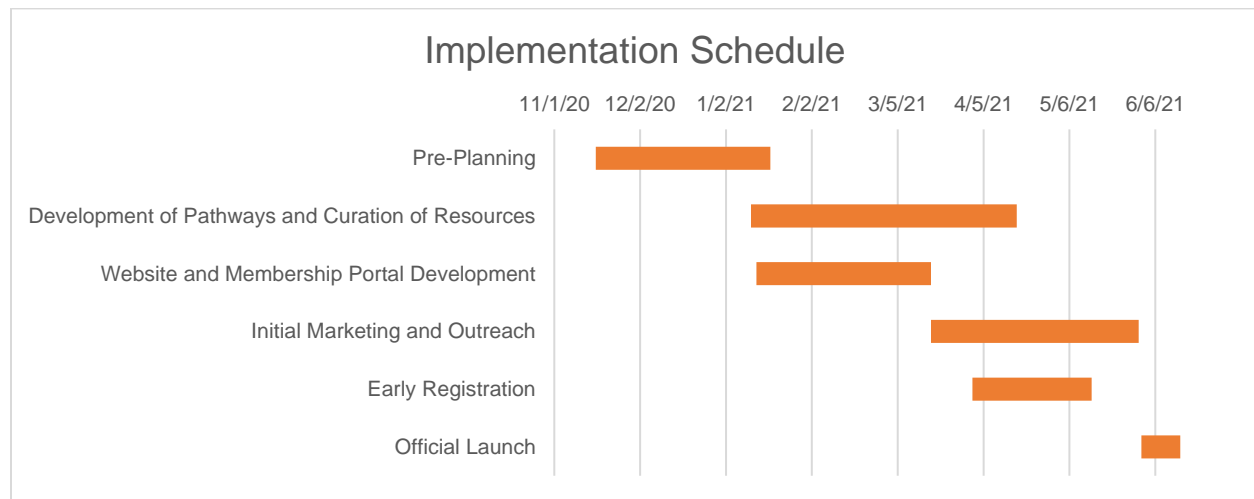
Delete The Divide will be promoted via mass communications and hyper-local media to inform youth and small businesses about its available resources, benefits and opportunities to participate. The communication strategy includes the involvement of elected officials, government agencies, sports and entertainment professionals, community based organizations, school administrators and teachers, and local neighborhood networks within the underserved communities.

Surveys, townhall meetings and panel discussions will be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that the resources and support provided by *Delete The Divide* are well aligned with the needs and interest of the underserved communities.

A public website will be created to present all of the resources available from partner organizations. Anyone who accesses the website will be able to explore links to partner organizations and will not be precluded from participating in programs offered by those entities. However, eligible youth and small businesses that register with *Delete The Divide* will be able to access a special online portal (referred to as *Delete The Divide* portal) that provides enhanced levels of resources and support with direct pathways to personal development and economic growth.

6. Implementation Schedule

Delete The Divide is scheduled to launch in the Summer of 2021:



7. Measures

Delete The Divide will work with partner organizations to establish short and long-term measures of success. Basic studies will measure the number of participants, course enrollments and completion rates, engagement in various program offerings, and achievements that indicate progress is narrowing the digital divide. The measures will be posted on the *Delete The Divide* website.

8. Funding

Costs related to staffing, logistics and support services incurred by the Internal Services Department and other County department partners are intended to be funded through existing operating budgets and funding streams specified for such purposes. Partnering technology corporations will provide all of their educational programs at no cost or substantially discounted rates to participants. Other costs will be borne specifically by partner organizations in accordance with their accounting procedures and through philanthropic donations.

Delete The Divide will continually pursue other opportunities to financially support the program including corporate donors, philanthropists, grants, scholarships, and internships.

9. Acknowledgements

Delete The Divide wishes to thank and acknowledge the following public and private entities that were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Amazon Web Services

Augustus Hawkins High School – Critical Gaming and Design School

Boys Academic Leadership Academy/George Washington Preparatory High School Campus

Cisco

Dorsey High School

Esri

Google

Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Jefferson High School

KJLH Radio

Local Initiative Support Corp (LISC)

Los Angeles County:

County Counsel

Department of Children and Family Services

Department of Consumers and Business Affairs

Internal Services Department

Natural History Museums

Office of Education

Probation Department

Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services

Los Angeles Police Department/South Traffic Division Cadets Program

Nevada Help Desk Organization

OneLA

OmniWorks

Resurrection Church of Los Angeles

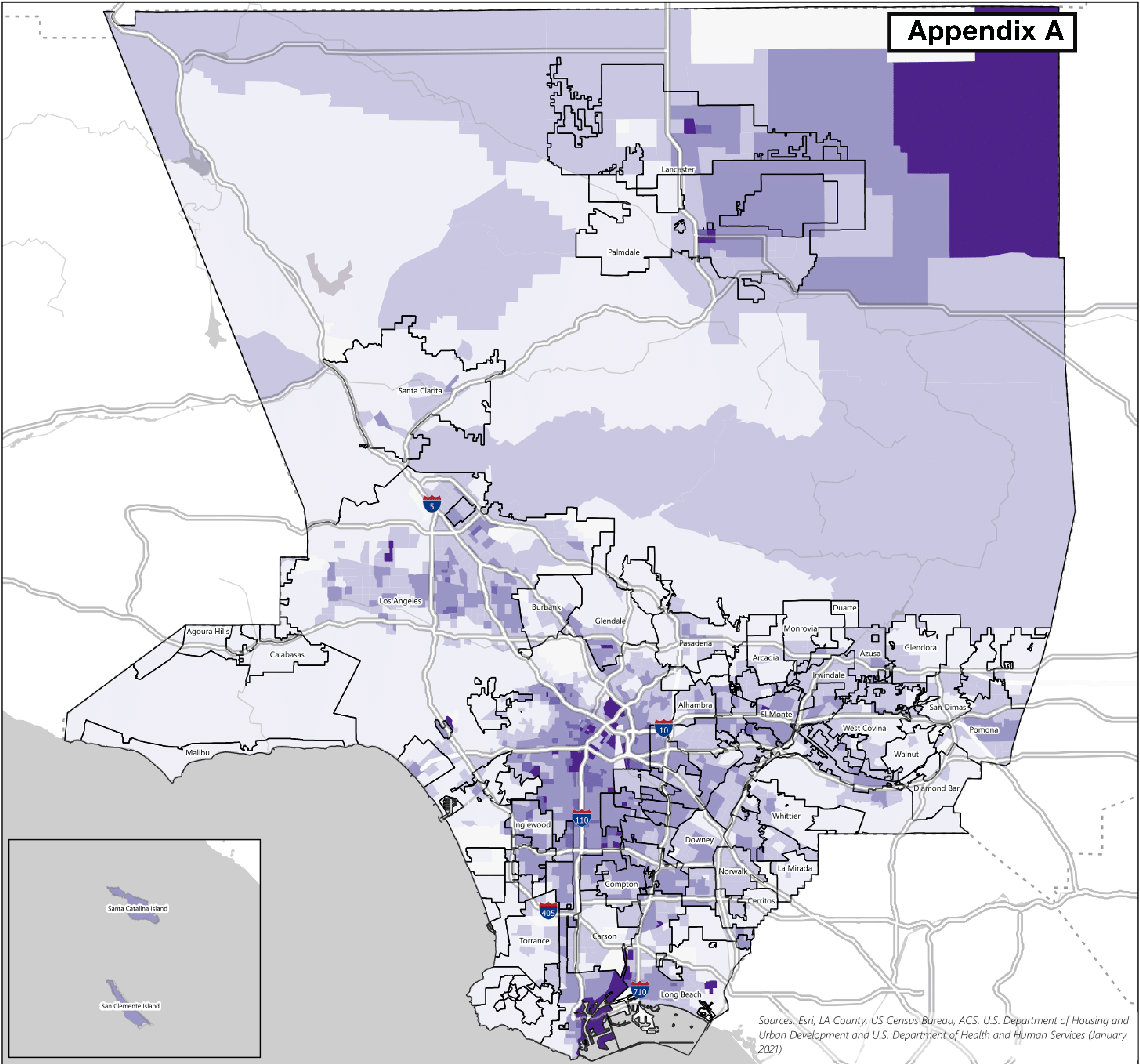
Russell Westbrook's Why Not? Foundation

Salesforce

Udemy

University of Southern California - Civic Engagement and Economic Partnerships Office

World Wide Technologies

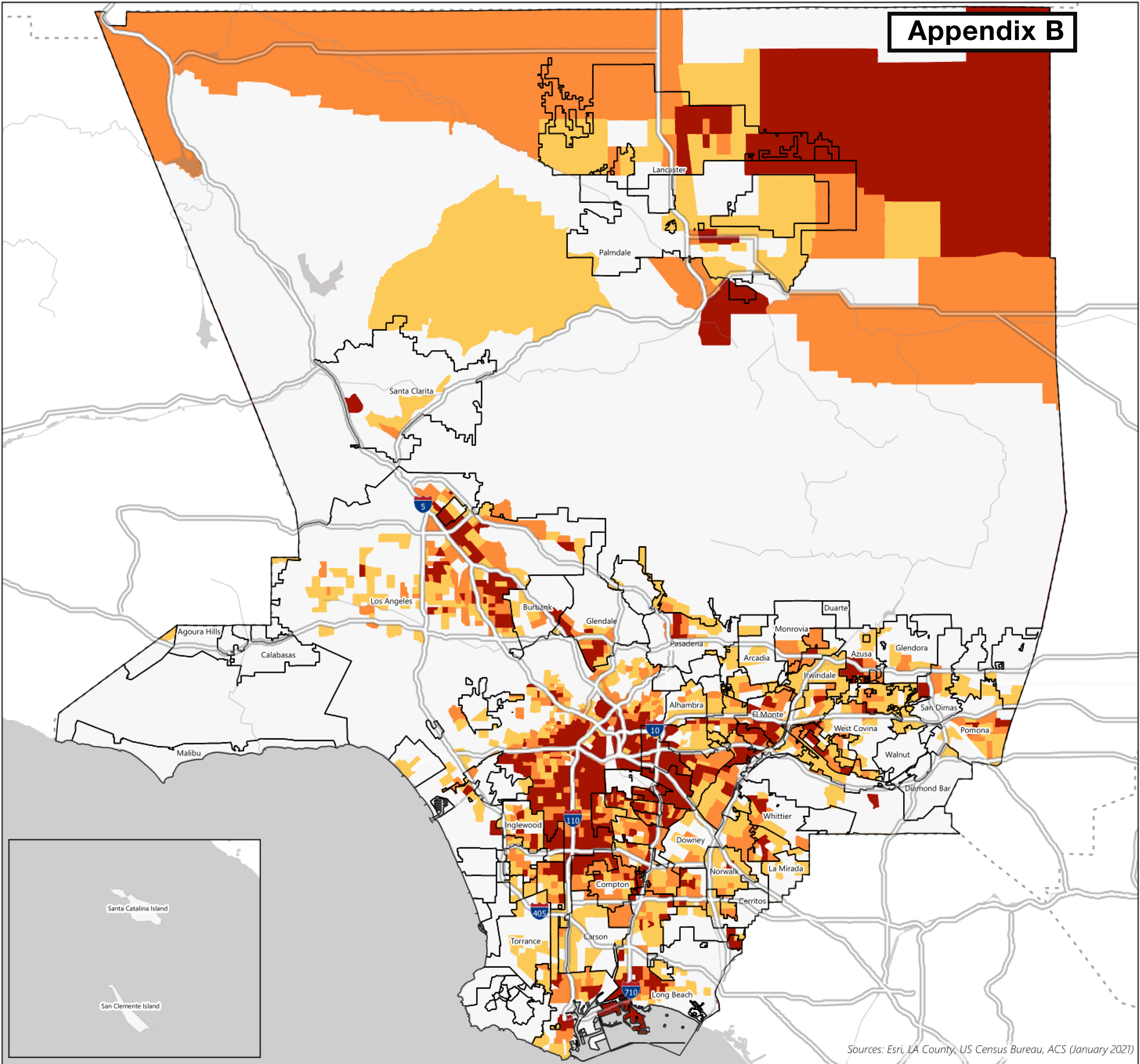


Sources: Esri, LA County, US Census Bureau, ACS, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (January 2021)

2020 Household Median Income

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is required by law to set income limits that determine the eligibility of applicants for HUD's assisted housing programs. **Average based on a family of four.

- Below Federal Poverty Level < \$26,200
- Below HUD Very Low Income Level < \$56,300
- Average Income Above HUD Income Level > \$90,101
- Below HUD Extremely Low Income Level < \$33,800
- Below HUD Low Income Level < \$90,100

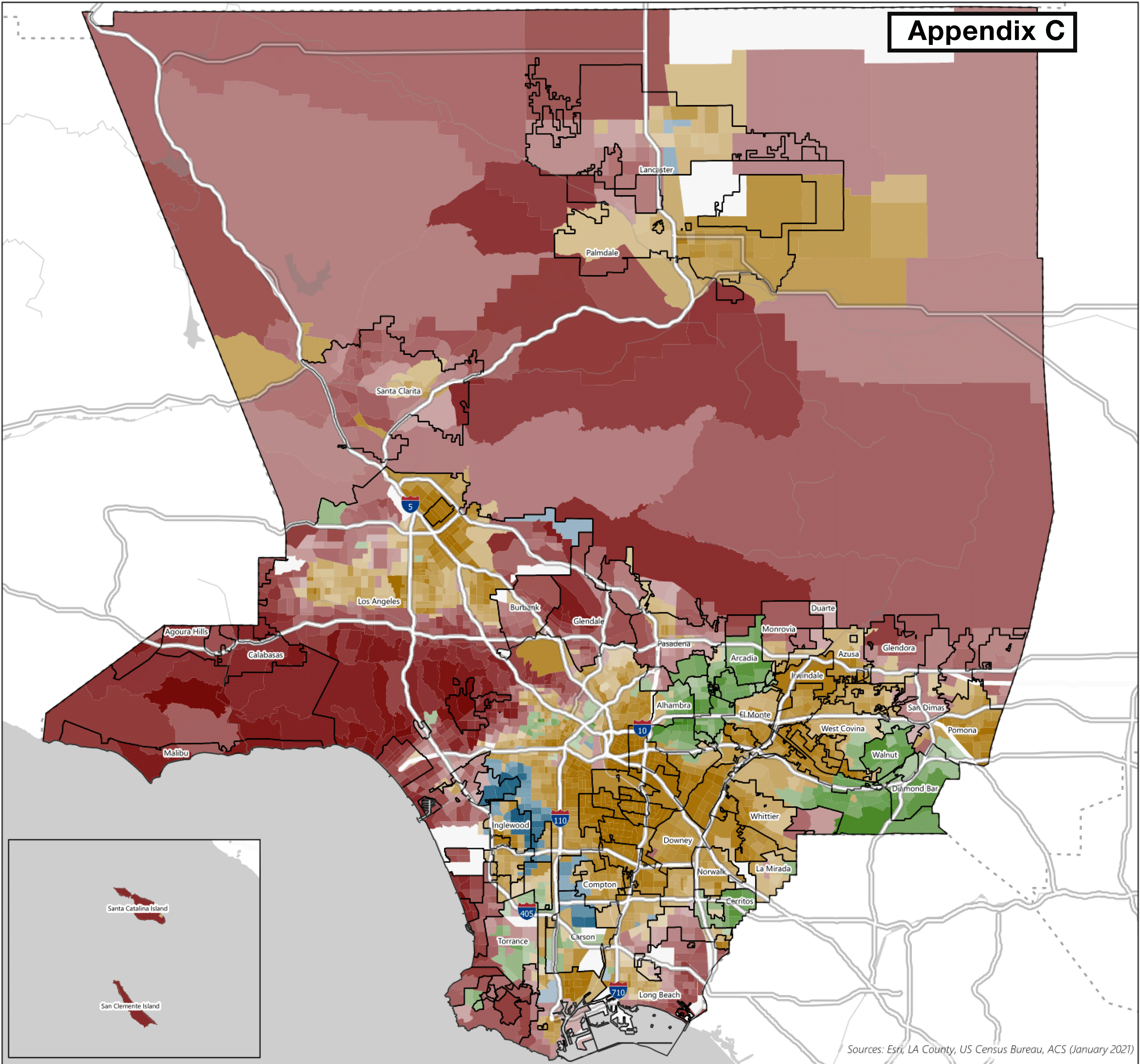


Sources: Esri, LA County, US Census Bureau, ACS (January 2021)

Percent of Households with No Internet Access

Includes housing units where no one can connect to or uses the internet using a paid service or any free service.

- 0% - 9.9%
- 10% - 14.9%
- 15% - 19.9%
- 20% - 100%



Sources: Esri, LA County, US Census Bureau, ACS (January 2021)

Predominant Race by Census Tract

Gradient based on predominance of race.

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White

Predominant race indicates the racial group that makes up the largest portion of the population in a census tract according to US Census Bureau American Community Survey Data (2015-2019). Census tracts with lighter colors are less dominated by the race indicated, meaning these areas have a higher level of diversity overall.