

A photograph of a sunny street scene. The street is lined with tall palm trees on both sides. Several cars are visible on the road, including a white sedan and a white SUV. On the right side of the road, there is a red octagonal stop sign with the word "STOP" in white, and below it, a smaller rectangular sign that says "ALL WAY". The sky is clear and blue. The image is partially obscured by a large white diagonal shape on the left side.

APPENDIX

A

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT



CVAG CV LINK COMMUNITY CONNECTORS (CVLCC)

FINAL
Existing Conditions Report

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Prepared For



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This Project is funded and managed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) with Regional Early Action Program 2021 grant funding from the State of California Department of Housing and Community Development.



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1.0 Introduction

Coachella Valley Association of Government's (CVAG's) dedication to improving multimodal connectivity is demonstrated by the successful pursuit of Regional Early Action Planning Grants (REAP) grant funding from the State of California to develop the CV Link Community Connectors (CVLCC) Conceptual Plan (Plan). This Plan will serve as a framework to guide infrastructure recommendations that provide safe, efficient, and enjoyable bicycle facilities that connect the CV Link to major community resources while achieving the goals of the REAP grant. The grant aims to reduce and remove barriers to opportunity with specific goals to accelerate infill development, Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH, per AB 686), and reduce VMT. The Plan reduces barriers by enhancing regional connectivity to CV Link, an in-process, regional active transportation corridor that, when completed, will traverse the Coachella Valley from Palm Springs through Coachella and eventually extend to Desert Hot Springs and the Salton Sea.

1.1 Existing Conditions Report Overview

This Existing Conditions Report (ECR) is one of the initial steps in the planning process. This document examines the physical setting, community profile, and transportation networks, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, transit services, and safety conditions. The literature and document review provides context for the CVLCC by documenting planned improvements and potential affordable housing sites consistent with REAP goals along with planned improvements identified in prior studies.

This document will be supplemented with a series of public outreach activities that seek to learn about community-identified issues and opportunities relating to Community Connectors. The information and findings from this initial stage will inform the development of CVLCC recommendations.

1.1.1 Document Organization

This report is organized into four sections.

- This first section provides an overview of the CVLCC in relation to other projects and documents.
- The second section explores the profile of the community including existing land uses, job distribution, demographics, and equity considerations.
- The third section explores the existing safety and quality of bicycle and pedestrian networks within the Plan area, as well as supplementary transit networks.
- Lastly, the fourth section of the ECR – informed by the former three sections – shows the potential opportunities for the development of the CVLCC Analysis Plan.

1.2 Project Purpose & Background

The CV Link (more details provided below) serves as a regional spine for the community; however, there has yet to be a comprehensive planning effort to establish arterial connections linking this new

facility to key community destinations that residents rely on daily, including schools, libraries, shopping centers, parks, and transit hubs. Connecting the CV Link to these resources will amplify the reach of the CV Link, reducing vehicle reliance for short trips.

The CVLCC aims to identify priority areas for expanding access to the CV Link, with the goal of creating a comprehensive, Valley-wide multimodal network that reaches the greatest number of people, with an emphasis on serving disadvantaged communities.

1.2.1 Relationship to Other CVAG Projects

The CVLCC is related to a series of other existing and in-progress projects led by CVAG.

CV Link

The CV Link is a 40-mile, alternative transportation corridor for bicycles, pedestrians, and low-speed (up to 25 mph) electric vehicles along the Whitewater River and Tahquitz Creek. CV Link will initially connect seven of the nine cities in the Coachella Valley and three tribal land reservations, including Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Palm Desert, La Quinta, Indio, and Coachella. Future extensions will extend east into Thermal, Mecca, Oasis, the North Shore, and north into Desert Hot Springs. This regional multimodal transportation corridor will provide safe, on-and off-street facilities for bicycles, pedestrians, and low-speed electric vehicles across the Coachella Valley. Construction on the CV Link began in 2017, and three initial segments have been completed in Palm Desert, Palm Springs, and Cathedral City, with segments in La Quinta, Indio, and Coachella under construction as of this writing.

Arts & Music Line

The Arts & Music Line is a 9-mile bike route designed to enhance cycling safety and experience along Avenue 48, stretching from Washington Street to Dillon Road, extending to the Whitewater River. This route will feature local art installations and connect key community assets, including schools, housing, retail centers, festivals, and employment hubs in Coachella, Indio, and La Quinta. Notably, it will intersect with the CV Link at two points, providing seamless integration into the broader multimodal pathway network. This project is in the final stages of planning and design and is anticipated to begin construction in 2026.

CVAG is supporting this investment by hosting community events on bike safety, repair, and general education – in addition to social event – for families and children so that residents feel more comfortable using Arts & Music Line to lead a more active, healthier lifestyle that decreases traffic congestion and reduces carbon emissions.

DHS CV Link Extension

The DHS CV Link Extension aims to expand the existing CV Link pathway into Desert Hot Springs. This extension will provide residents with safe and efficient routes for walking, biking, and low-speed electric vehicles, promoting alternative transportation options and enhancing connectivity to the broader Coachella Valley network. Planning and design for this project is nearly complete; a construction start date has not yet been identified.

Mecca/Thermal CV Link Extension

This project aims to extend the existing CV Link pathway through the agricultural communities of Mecca and Thermal, ultimately reaching the North Shore area near the Salton Sea. The extension is designed to provide residents with safe and efficient routes for walking, biking, and low-speed electric vehicles, thereby enhancing connectivity to essential destinations such as parks, medical centers, job hubs, and other vital services. This initiative aligns with broader regional efforts to improve transportation infrastructure and quality of life in the Eastern Coachella Valley. This project is in the initial stages of planning and development; a construction start date has not yet been identified.

ACCESS Indian Canyon Drive

The Addressing Climate Change, Emergencies, and Sandstorms (ACCESS) Indian Canyon Drive project, led by CVAG, aims to enhance safety and mobility along Indian Canyon Drive, a key arterial road frequently closed due to flooding and sand accumulation. The project includes constructing two all-weather bridges, a two-mile solar-shaded active transportation pathway connecting CV Link to the regional Amtrak station, and sand fencing to reduce sand deposition within the right-of-way. Wildlife undercrossings will also be added to support ecosystem connectivity. The \$108 million project, supported by a \$50 million grant from the California Transportation Commission, will improve access for residents, particularly from disadvantaged communities, while promoting sustainable infrastructure.

1.3 Literature/Document Review

The document review process is a critical step in the development of the ECR and sets the stage for recommendations, providing a foundation of knowledge from previously completed plans, studies, and reports. The review helps ensure consistency with regional goals, avoids duplication of past efforts, and highlights facilities currently planned by the respective agencies. This process will ultimately help inform data-driven recommendations that reflect both the current conditions and the broader vision for enhanced multimodal connectivity across the Coachella Valley.

Documents were examined for the nine jurisdictions within and around the study area. In addition, documents produced by Riverside County, CVAG, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) were also reviewed.

The reviewed documents are summarized in **Table 1.1** and additional details can be found in **Appendix A**.

Table 1.1 - Documents Reviewed by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Safety Studies ¹	Housing Element	Circulation / Mobility Element	Active Transportation Plan ²	Capital Improvement Plan	Other
Desert Hot Springs	•	•	•	•	•	
Palm Springs		•	•	•	•	
Cathedral City	•	•	•	•	•	
Rancho Mirage		•	•	•	•	
Palm Desert	•	•	•		•	▪ Vision Zero Strategy (In Process)
Indian Wells	•	•	•		•	
La Quinta	•	•	•		•	▪
Indio	•	•	•		•	▪ Complete Streets and Drainage Master Plan, 2020
Coachella		•	•	•		
Riverside County		•	•		•	▪ Regional Trails Corridor Study, 2009
CVAG			•	•	•	▪ CV Link Master Plan, 2016 ▪ Transportation Project Prioritization Study, 2017
RCTC			•		•	▪ Traffic Relief Plan, 2024 ▪ Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) Strategic Plan, 2024
SCAG		•	•		•	▪ Connect SoCal, 2024SCAG Transportation Safety Regional Existing Conditions, 2021
Note: 1. Safety Studies may include Systemic Safety Analysis Report Program (SSARP), Local Roadway Safety Plan (LRSP), and Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP) documents						

2. Active Transportation Plans may include Bicycle Master Plans (BMP) and Pedestrian Master Plans (PMP)

2.0 Community Profile

This chapter provides an overview of the CVLCC study area, including the affected jurisdictions, existing land uses, commuter profile, demographics, and commuter information. The chapter concludes by identifying concentrations of disadvantaged populations within the City and community resources.

2.1 Overview

Study Area

CV Link spans the Coachella Valley within Riverside County, in Southern California. The study area traverses the Valley from northwest – including the cities of Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs – to southeast towards the North Shore of the Salton Sea – including the cities of Coachella and La Quinta and the unincorporated communities of Thermal and Mecca. The existing and in-construction CV Link can be seen in context within the jurisdictions and unincorporated communities of the Valley in **Figure 2.1**.

Existing Land Uses

Land use describes the intended function or purpose of a land parcel. Understanding land uses helps identify where people live, work, and access services and other destinations. This section presents the distribution of residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational areas across the study area.

Existing land uses are shown in **Figure 2.2**. As shown in this figure, many of the commercial, services, and institutional land uses are concentrated along Highway 111. Additional commercial and multifamily nodes can be seen in Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, and Indio, primarily focused along the arterials that provide access to I-10.

Tribal Lands

CVAG member agencies include representatives from four Native American tribes: Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Cabazon Band of Cahuilla Indians, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, and Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians. Identifying tribal lands ensures respect for tribal sovereignty and helps facilitate necessary collaboration. Tribal lands are indicated in **Figure 2.3**.

Figure 2.1 - CV Link + Jurisdictions

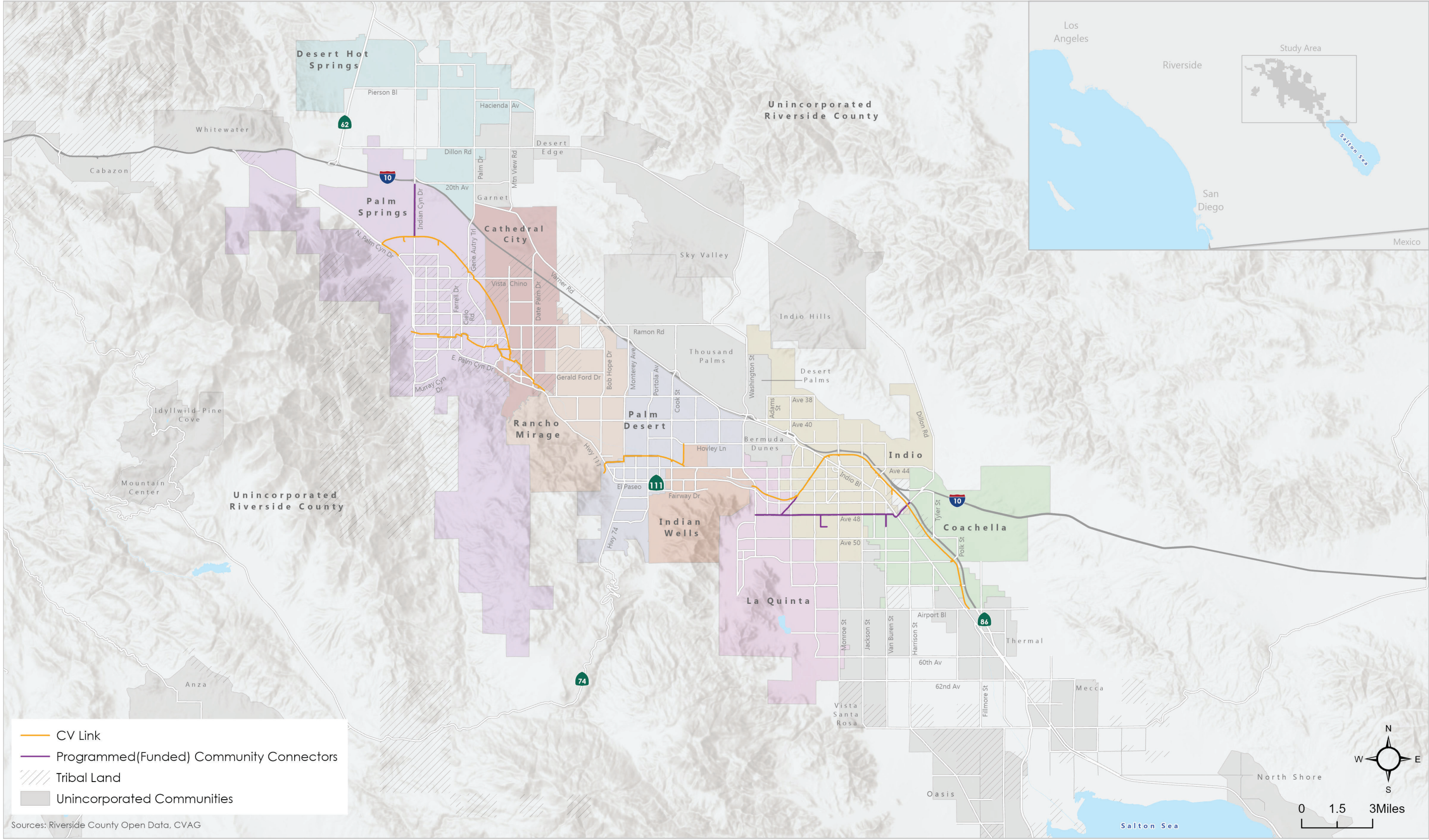


Figure 2.2 - Existing Land Uses

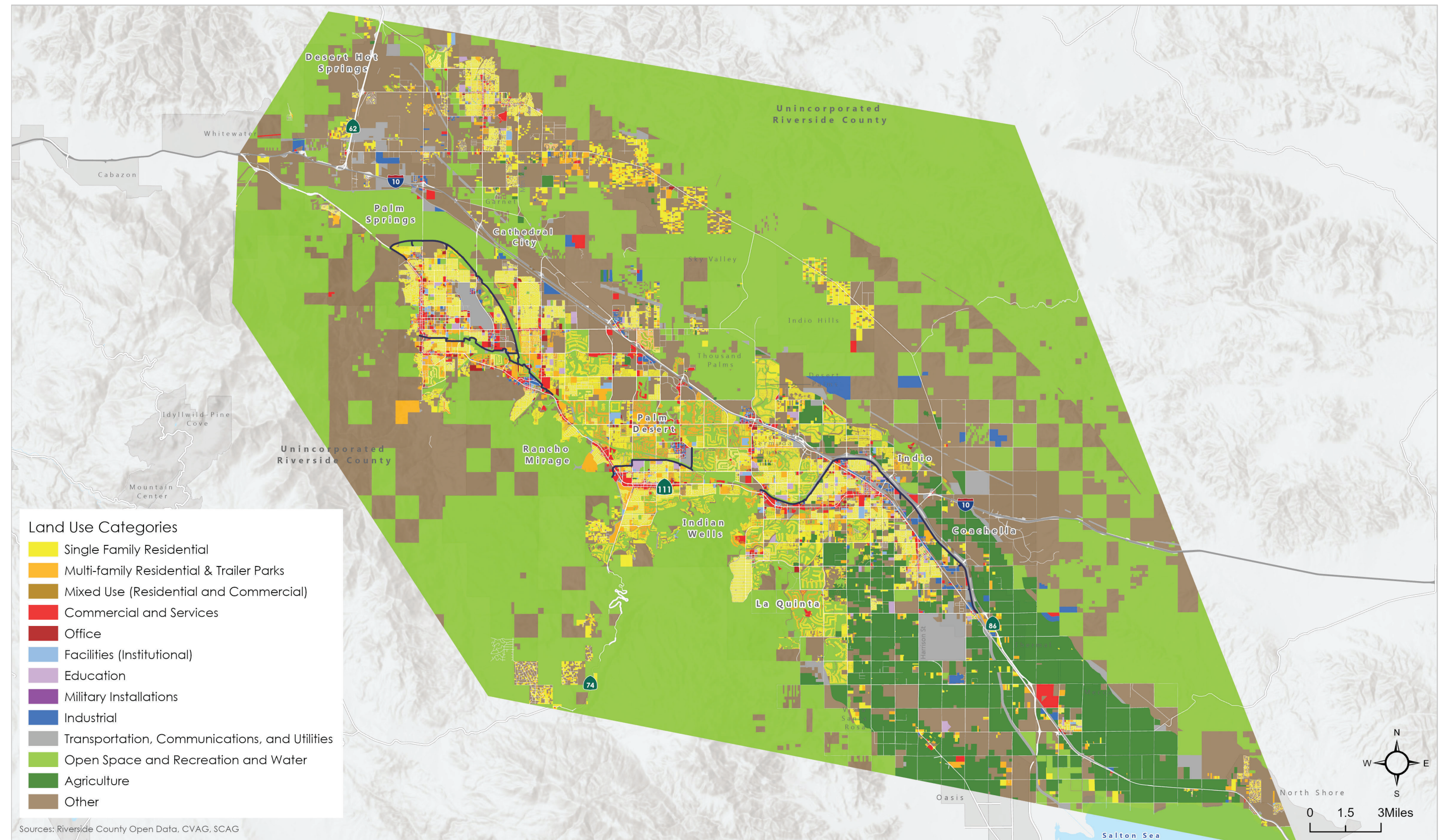
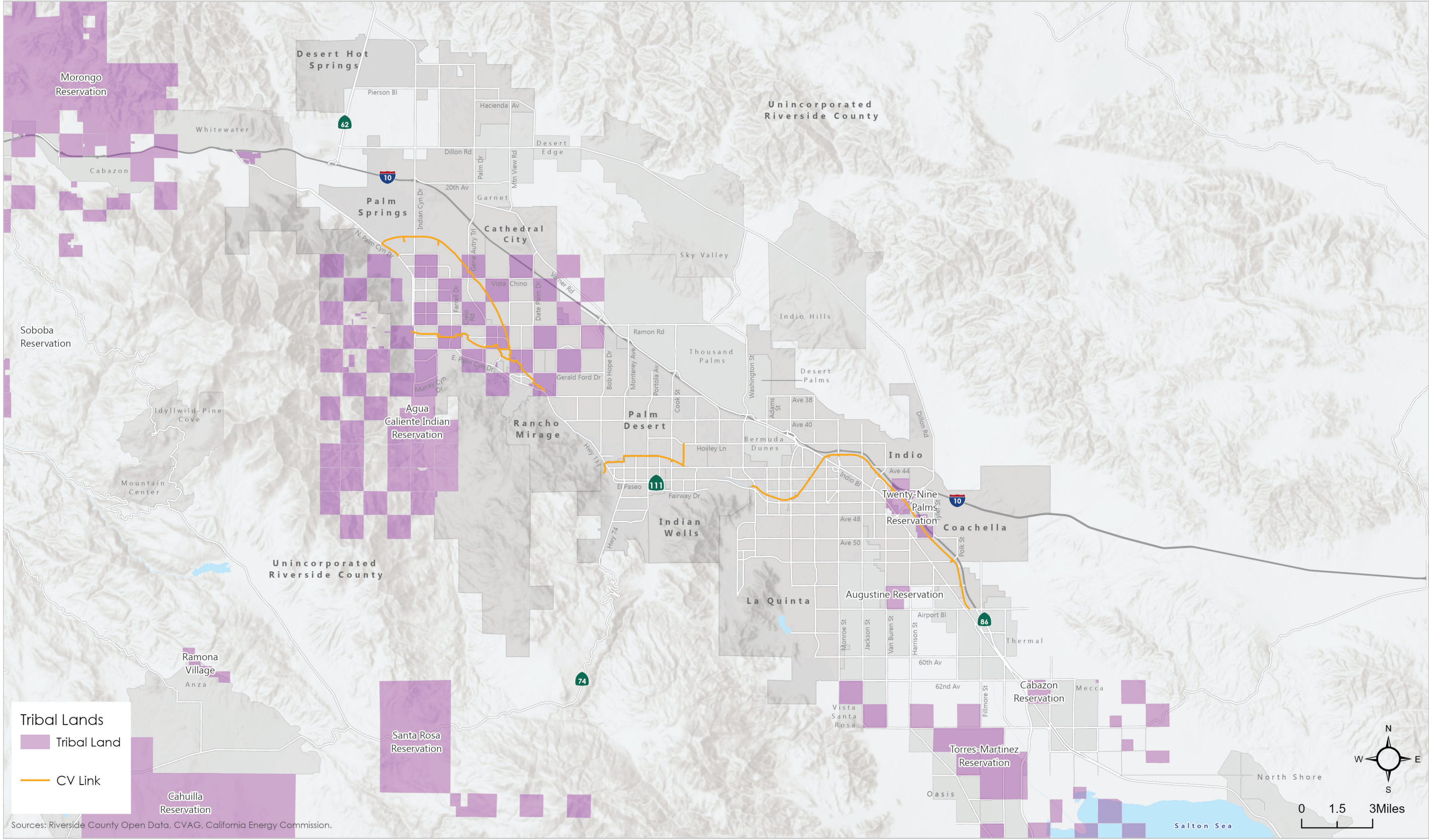


Figure 2.3 - Tribal Lands



2.2 Commuter Profile

Commuting characteristics were reviewed to understand where and how people travel for employment trip purposes. This section analyzes employment densities, regionally identified job centers, commute distances, modes, and trip origin-destination pairs. The information will aid in identifying potential connections that may be used to support work commutes.

2.2.1 Employment

Employment Density

While commute trips typically originate at residences, places of employment frequently serve as the destination. Building an understanding of these locations helps plan for future transportation services and infrastructure improvements that are most needed. **Figure 2.4** displays the density of jobs across the study area as identified by the US Census' 2023 5-year American Community Survey (ACS). Greater concentrations of jobs are located in Palm Springs, Palm Desert, and Indio.

Job Centers

SCAG-identified job centers are shown in **Figure 2.5**, closely mirroring the higher job concentrations shown in Figure 2.4. SCAG defines job centers as areas where employment density is significantly higher than their surroundings. In addition to the high-density job areas listed above, job centers can also be found in Desert Hot Springs, Cabazon, and Coachella.

Commute Mode

Commute mode, identified in the ACS, represents the way (or mode of travel) people get to work. **Figure 2.6** illustrates the prevalence of walking, biking, and transit use for commute trips. There are higher prevalences of non-auto commuters in Palm Springs and following the CV Link throughout the central and eastern Valley. There are additional pockets of non-auto commuters in Desert Hot Springs and to the north and south of the CV Link in the central Valley. These areas may be indicative of relatively higher active transportation activity levels that could benefit from additional connections to the CV Link.

Table 2.1 summarizes the proportion of commuters using different modes of transportation, including driving, walking, biking, and transit. Based on the ACS study of the approximately 190,000 trips taken, nearly three-quarters were taken while driving alone. Fewer than 3% of total commute trips were taken by transit, walking, or biking.

Table 2.1 - Commute Mode Share

	Total Trips	Drive Alone	Transit	Carpool	Walk	Bike	Work from Home
# of Trips	189,426	138,344	1,387	24,207	2,714	462	20,014
% of Trips	100%	73.0%	0.7%	12.8%	1.4%	0.2%	10.6%

Source: American Community Survey (5-year, 2023)

Figure 2.4 - Employment Density

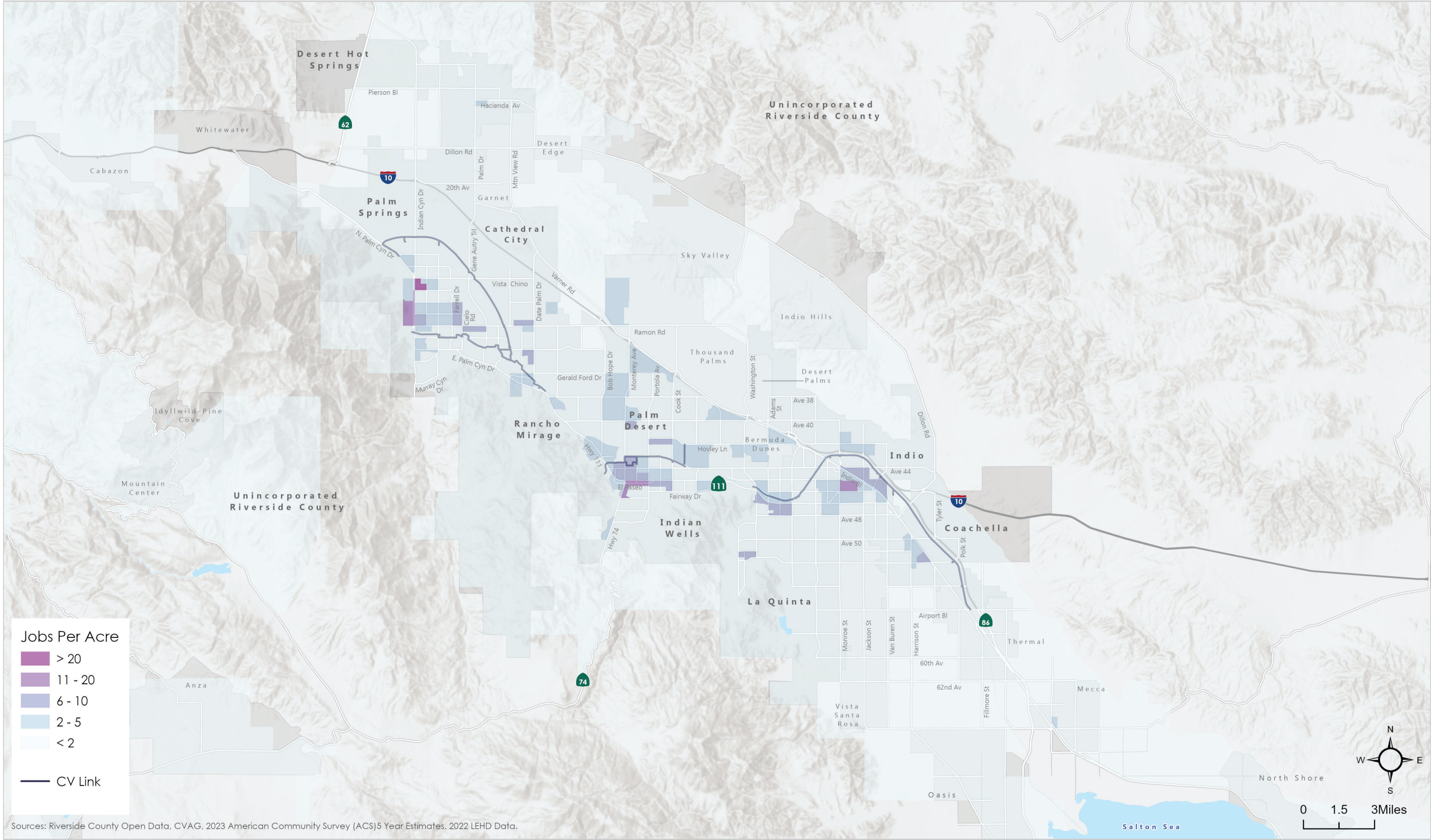


Figure 2.5 - Job Centers

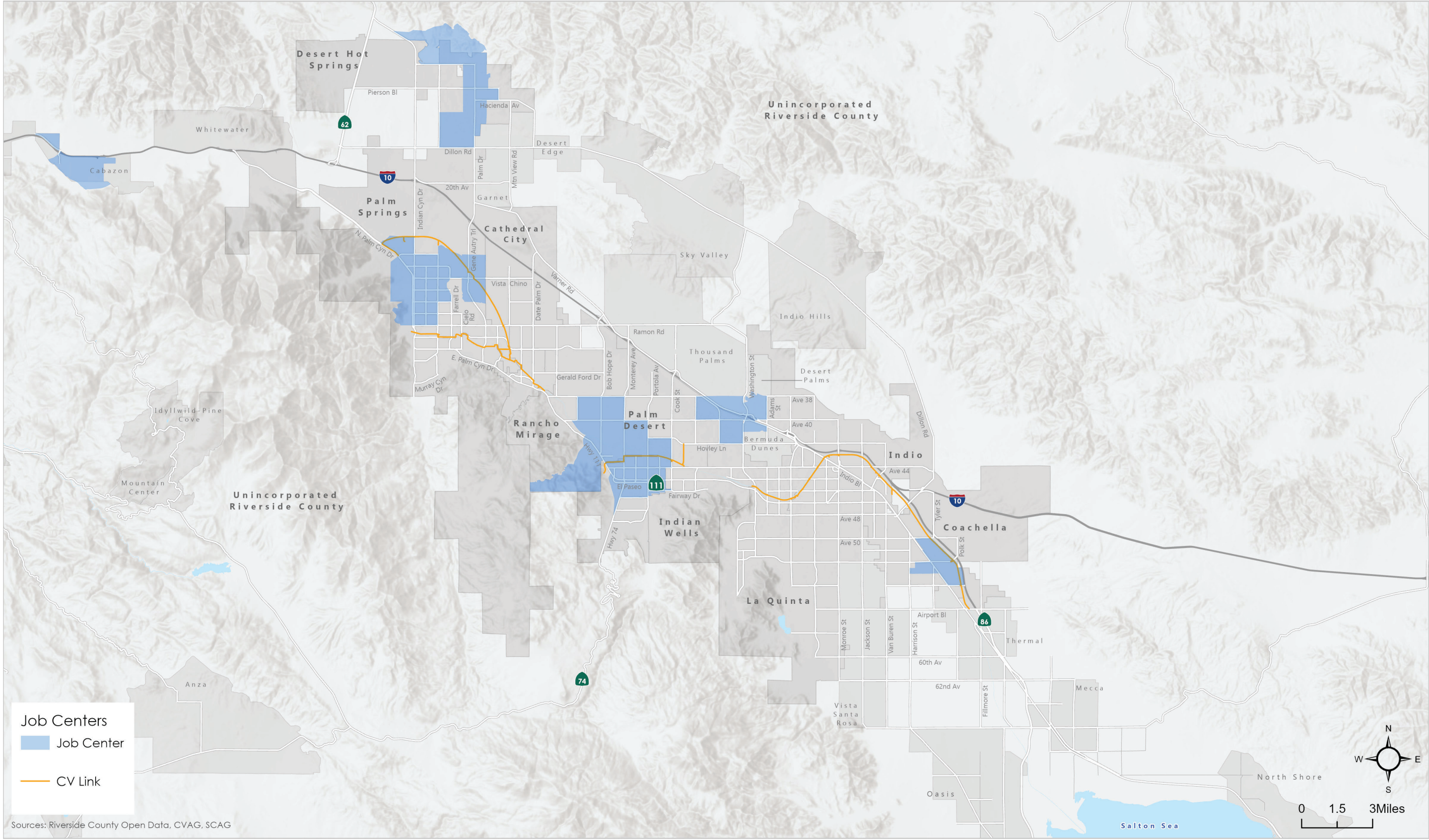
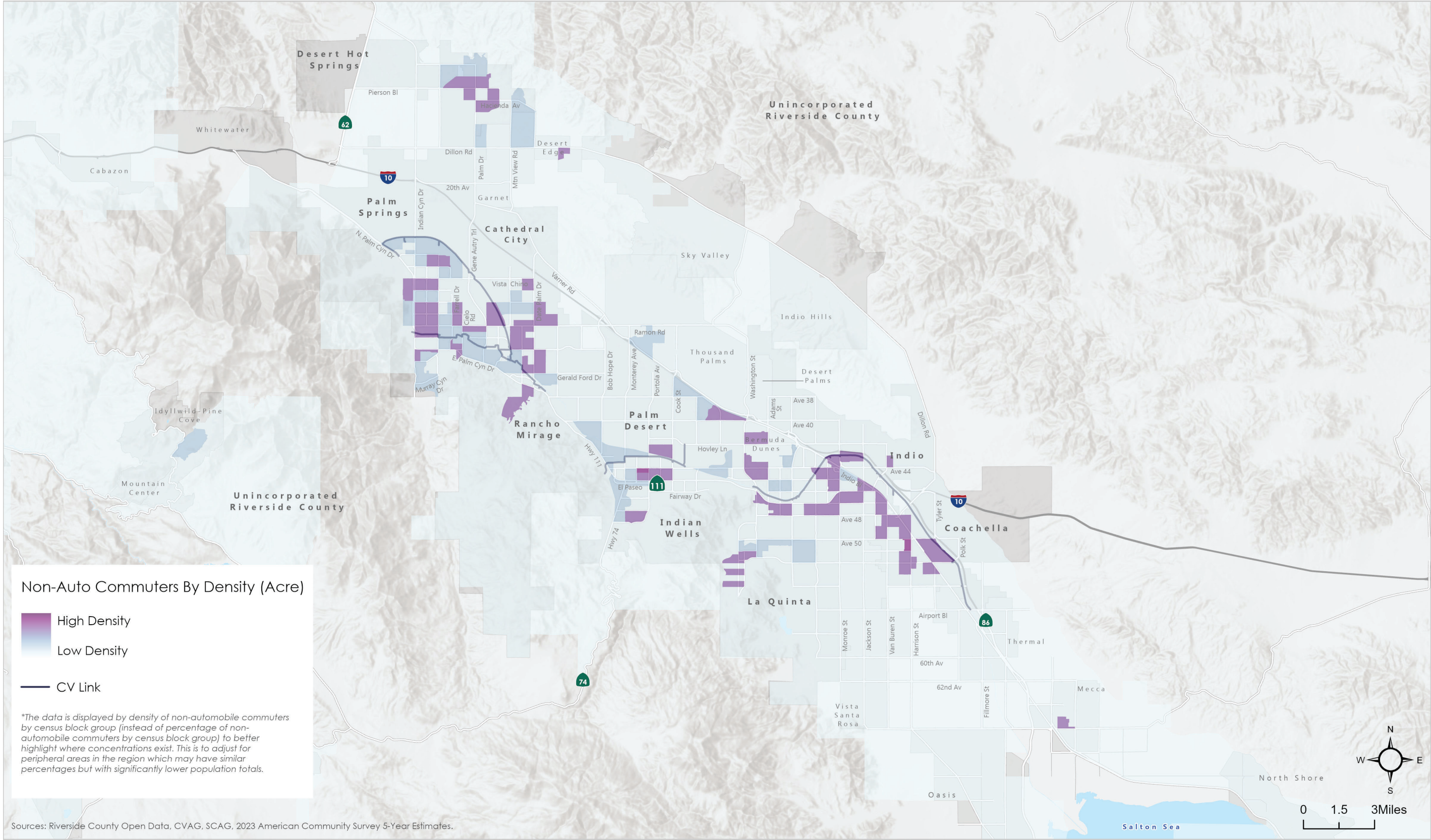


Figure 2.6 - Non-Auto Commuters



Commute Distance Under 10-Miles

Of Coachella Valley residents who work, two-thirds are employed within the Valley itself. **Figure 2.7** presents employment density (jobs per square mile) for people living within the Valley whose commute length is less than ten miles. These shorter trip commutes have a greater potential to be made via active transportation or transit, or a combination of modes. All three of the highest density job locations – Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs, El Paseo Shopping District, and 46th Avenue in Indio – also have high concentrations of trips under ten-miles. However, there are additional hotspots including the Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage, Cook Street in Palm Desert, 46th Avenue and Eisenhower Drive in La Quinta, Downtown Coachella, and near the center of Thermal.

Valley-wide, commute distances varied, as shown in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2 - Commute Distances

Jobs by Distance - Home Census Block to Work Census Block (2022)		
	Number	Percent
Less than 10 miles	76,246	44.00%
10 to 24 miles	27,660	16.00%
25 to 50 miles	8,299	4.80%
Greater than 50 miles	60,958	35.20%
Total All Jobs	173,163	100.00%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) (2022)

Commute Origin-Destination Pairs

Origin-Destination (OD) data was originally obtained from the Replica Big Data platform by Census Block Group (CBG) for the whole of Riverside and Imperial Counties, as well as portions of San Bernardino and San Diego Counties. The CBG data was aggregated into different “zones” based on jurisdiction and community boundaries, with an exception being the City of Palm Springs which was aggregated into three zones due to the relatively larger size of the city. This process resulted in 47 zones to simplify the OD pattern visualization and better understand travel patterns.

Figure 2.8 depicts the resulting origin and destination pairs for commute trips using lines to illustrate patterns of where people are traveling to and from. Commute trips that have both the origin and destination within the same area are depicted using dots. Relatively stronger pairings, indicated by the thicker lines, include Indio-La Quinta, central Palm Springs-Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage-Palm Desert, Palm Desert-Indio, and Indio-Coachella. Greater concentrations of commute trips both beginning and ending in the same area are shown in Indio, Palm Desert, central Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, La Quinta, and Coachella.

2.3 Demographics

This section analyzes demographic characteristics such as population density, age distribution, and other key factors to provide insights into who lives and travels within the study area. Understanding these patterns supports the development of inclusive and accessible community connectors.

Population Density

Figure 2.9 shows where residents are most concentrated (population density), helping to identify where trips are most likely to start. The greatest population densities are found in portions of Desert Hot Springs, Cathedral City, La Quinta, Indio, and Coachella.

Youth Population Density

The youth population map (**Figure 2.10**) depicts the distribution of younger residents under 18-years-old. This population may benefit greatly from improved access to schools and recreational facilities due to less vehicle access. The highest concentrations of youth populations per acre are in Cathedral City, just north of the CV Link, and in Indio and Coachella both to the south and the north of CV Link. There is an additional high-prevalence area in Desert Hot Springs. These areas are fairly consistent with the overall residential population density data presented in Figure 2.9.

Senior Population Density

Figure 2.11 highlights areas with higher concentrations of older adults who may have different mobility needs, such as higher reliance on transit and active transportation, as they age. Senior populations are distributed Valley-wide with a prevalence in the central region of the Valley. The highest concentrations can be found in southern Indio and in the northern part of Thermal, an unincorporated Riverside County area.

Figure 2.7 - Density of Jobs with Commute Distance Less than 10-Miles

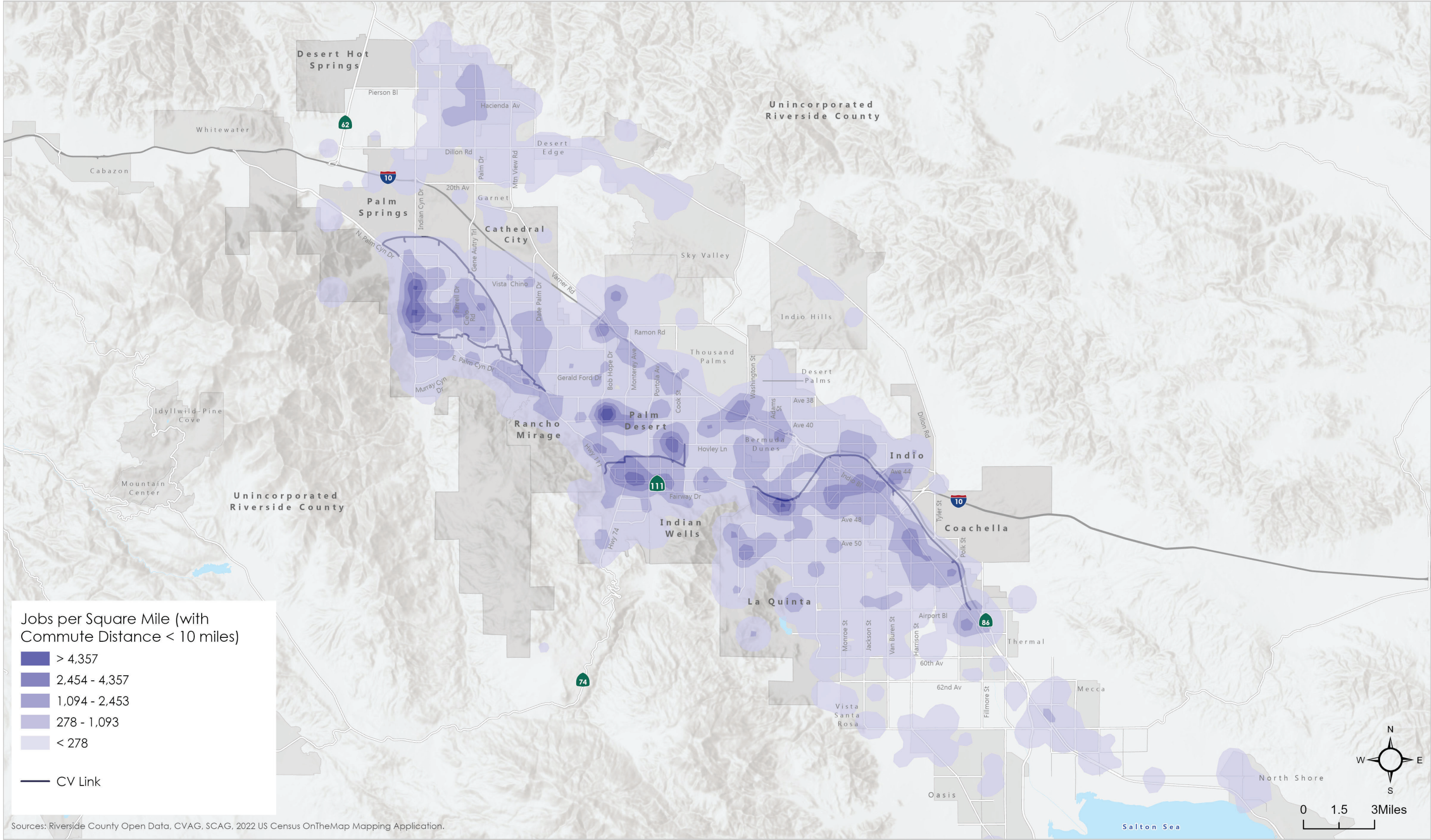


Figure 2.8 - Origin-Destination Pairs

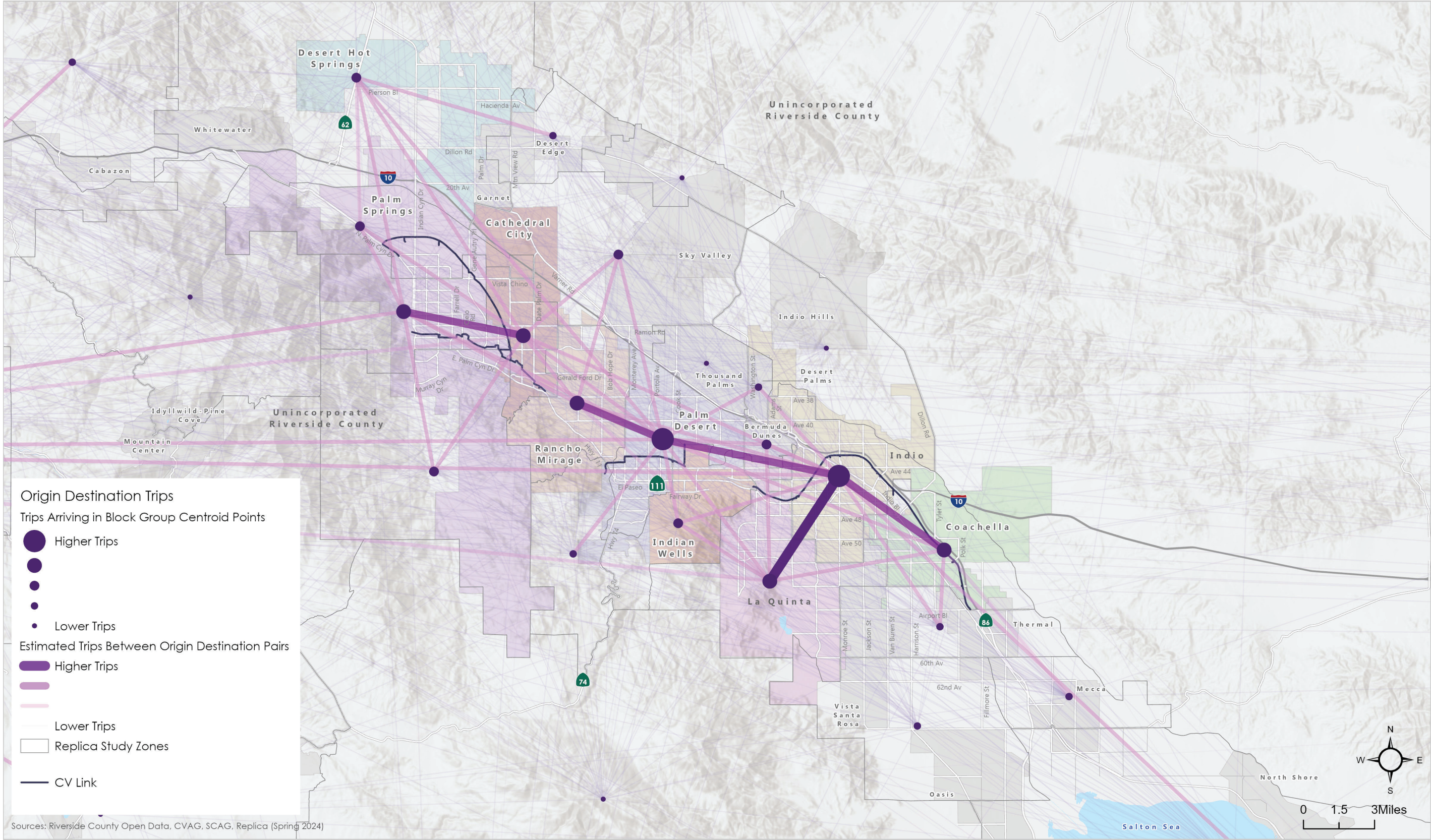


Figure 2.9 - Population Density

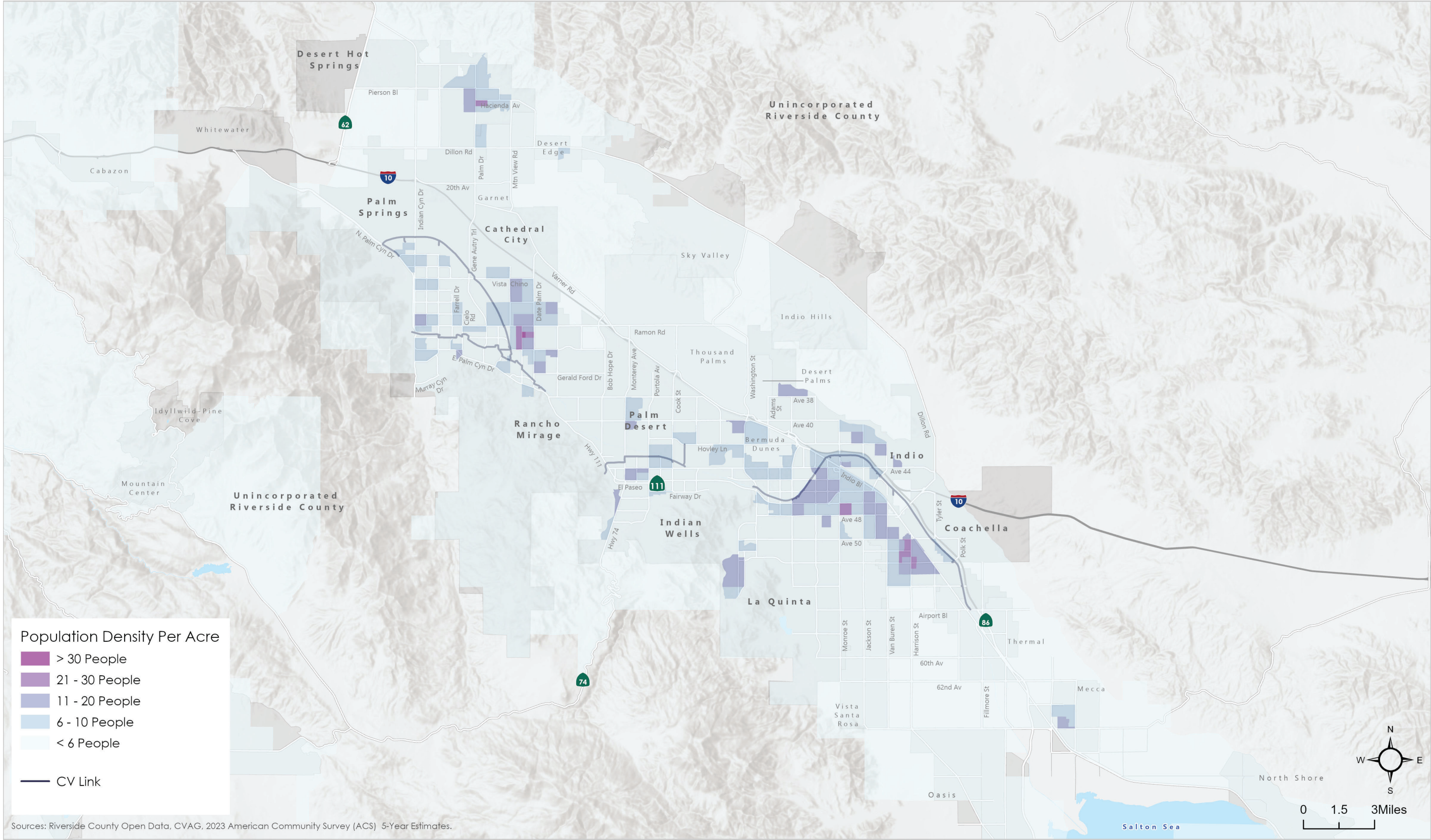


Figure 2.10 - Youth Population

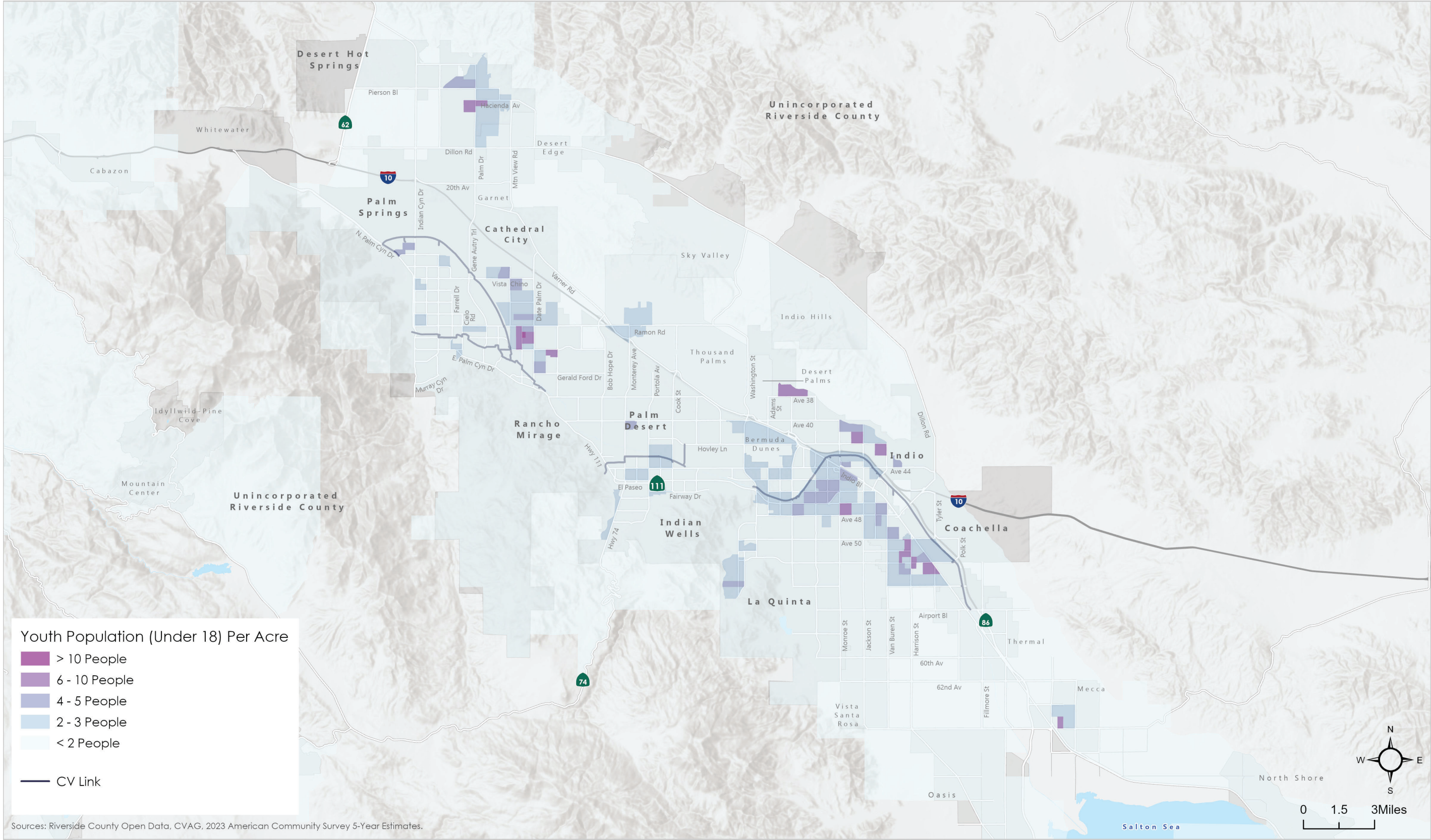


Figure 2.11 - Senior Population

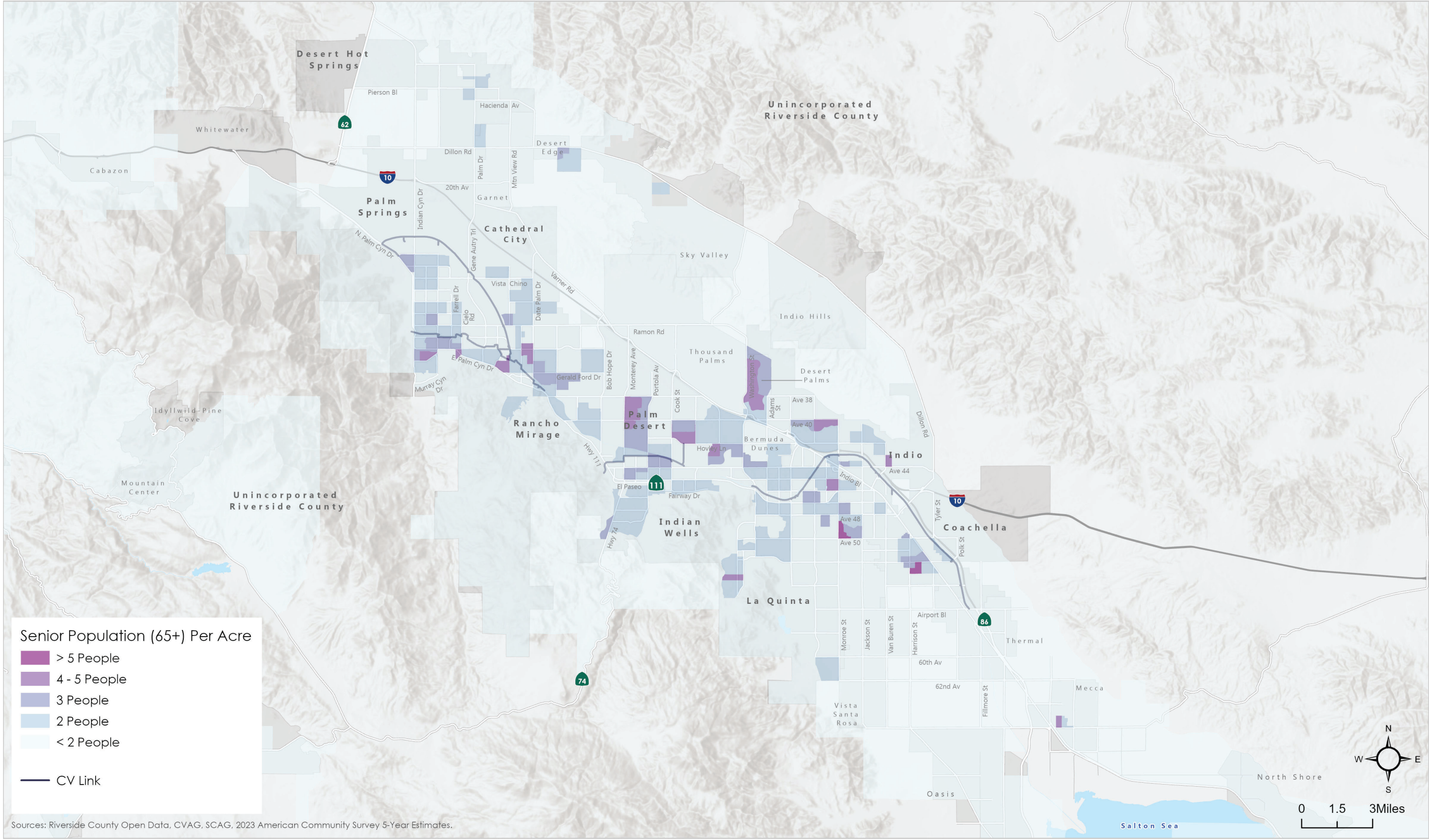
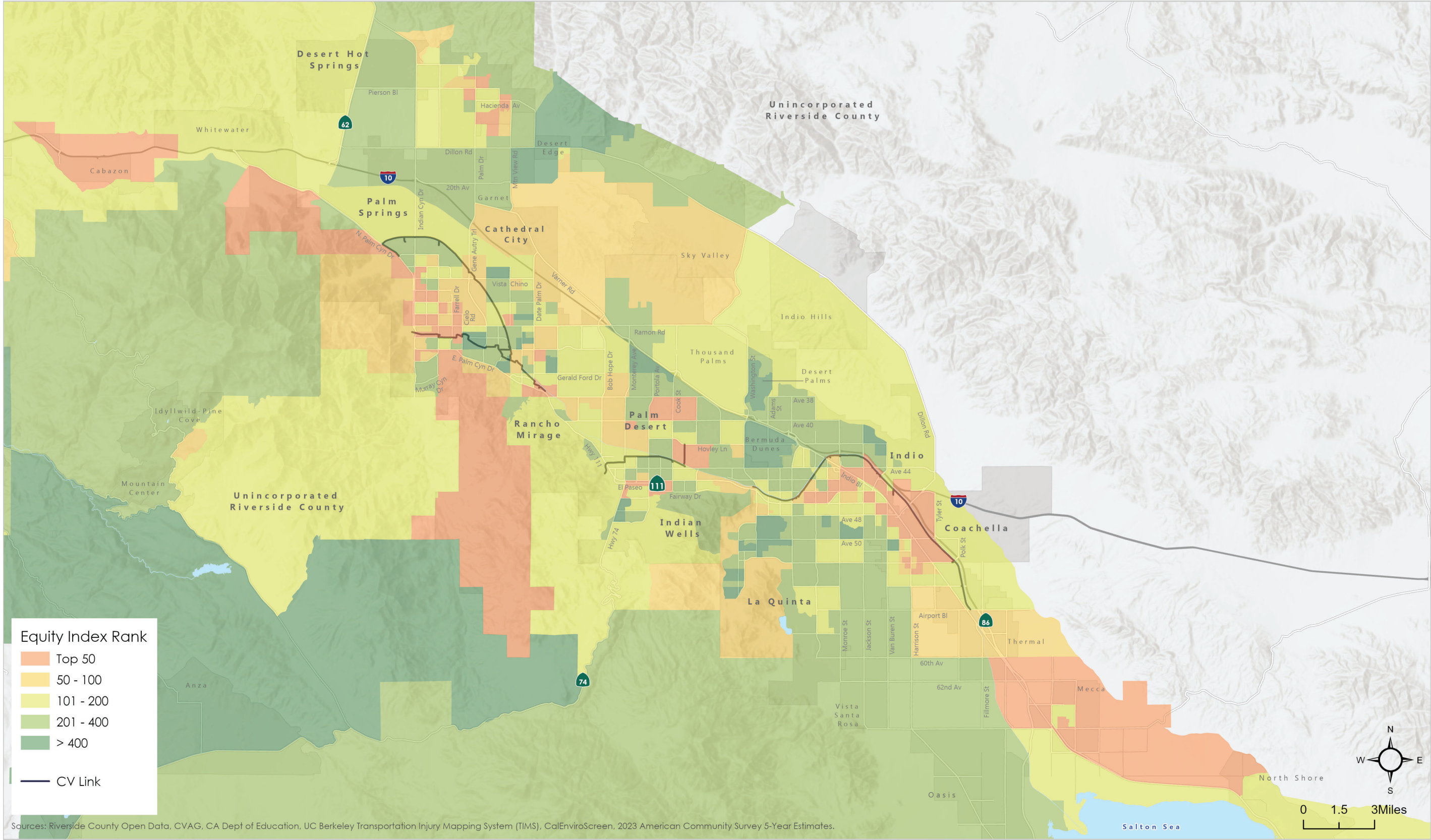


Figure 2.12 - Equity Index



2.4 Equity Indicators

Transportation equity ensures that historically underserved communities have access to safe, reliable, and affordable mobility options. This section identifies areas with higher concentrations of equity-focused populations and uses various indicators to guide equitable infrastructure investments.

An Equity Index, shown in, was created to visually represent the relative distribution of populations who may face transportation-related challenges based on multiple inputs. The Equity Index utilized the following datasets as input:

- CalEnviroScreen
- Zero Vehicle Households (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)
- Concentrations of Persons with Disabilities (2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Collision locations (2018 – 2023)
- Free and Reduced Lunch Program Eligibility (FRPM) 2023-2024

The assessment methodology and individual maps of the Equity Index inputs are provided in **Appendix B**.

Transportation investments in these areas may have outsized benefits for the people living, working, or visiting. These areas are indicative of relatively higher barriers to transportation, where additional investments can promote active transportation and increase transportation options, reduce VMT, and increase access to community resources, including affordable housing.

Figure 2.12 displays the Equity Index results. There are concentrations of higher equity needs Valley-wide with notable concentrations in Cabazon, Palm Springs, Indio, Coachella, and the southern extension of the CV Link through Thermal and Mecca. In relation to the CV Link, there are concentrations of the highest 20th percentile (worst performing tracts) to the south in Palm Springs and clustered around the CV Link in Indio and Coachella; there are smaller pockets close to the CV Link throughout the rest of the Valley.

2.5 Community Resources

Community resources, such as schools, parks, civic facilities, grocery stores, and medical facilities are critical destinations for residents' daily activities. This section examines the location and distribution of these resources to identify where improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can support better access to important destinations.

A Community Resources Index was established to understand where relatively greater concentrations of these key destinations are located. The following categories were used as inputs to produce the Community Resources Index:

- K-12 Schools
- City & County Public Parks
- Community Centers & Civic Facilities

- Grocery Stores
- Commercial/Retail
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Local Points of Interest
- Planned and Potential Affordable Housing Sites
- Job Centers

Appendix C provides maps displaying the distribution of the individual inputs across the region and the assessment methodology.

Figure 2.13 displays the resulting Community Resources Index. The greatest concentrations are located in Palm Desert along Highway 111, near Indian Canyon Drive in Palm Springs, and near Indio Boulevard in Coachella. Additional areas of higher concentrations are located near Monterey Avenue on the border of Rancho Mirage and Palm Desert, Highway 111 in La Quinta, and in northern Indio near Avenue 42.