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# REDUCING EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE IN COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACES



Rural Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership



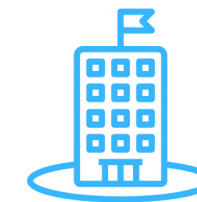
# WHO IS THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH COLLABORATIVE (CHC)?



CHC is a public benefit, nonprofit organization with the mission of “changing lives by improving health and wellness”.



CHC is committed to improving health outcomes for underserved and underprivileged communities throughout California.



CHC was founded in 1982, is headquartered in Fresno, and has multiple offices and outstationed personnel throughout California.



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COLLABORATIVE



# CHC Services

- **Tobacco Prevention**
- **Nutrition & Physical Fitness**
- **Diabetes Prevention**
- **Maternal Wellness**
- **Health Care Support Service Projects**
- **Senior Services–MSSP**
- **Education on Early Detection of Breast and Cervical Cancers**





# REAL Project

Rural Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership



**We are committed to reducing the harmful impact of tobacco in our communities by:**

- **Preventing youth access and exposure to tobacco products**
- **Education on policies that create healthier environments (Smoke-Free Outdoor Spaces Ordinance)**
- **Empowering local leaders, youth, and organizations to promote a tobacco-free future**



# MEET THE TEAM



**Evi Hernandez**  
Program  
Director



**Jorge Yopez**  
Program  
Coordinator



**Marissa Mercado**  
Community  
Engagement  
Coordinator



**Natalie  
Estrada**  
Student Intern



**Natali Fuentes**  
Student Intern



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# ATWATER

## LOCATION

Atwater is a small rural city located in Merced County, situated in the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley. It is North-west of the city of Merced.

## POPULATION

32,013

14

Parks and Open Spaces



57.5%  
of the population  
identify as  
Hispanic/Latino

32  
Tobacco  
Retailers

13  
Schools

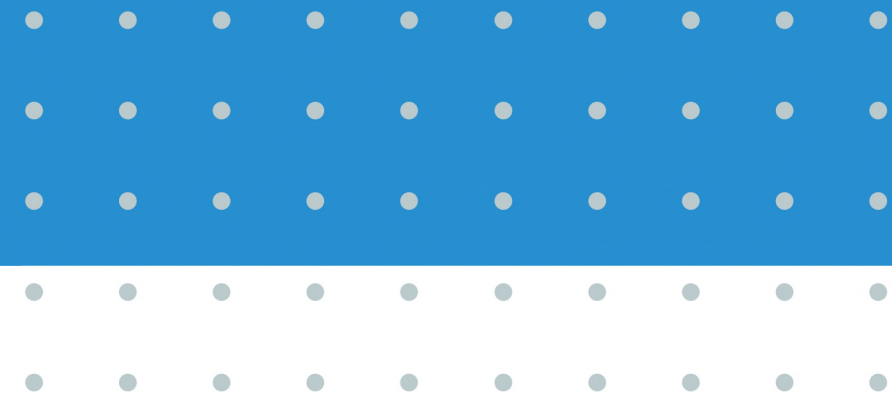


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# SMOKE-FREE OUTDOOR SPACES ORDINANCE

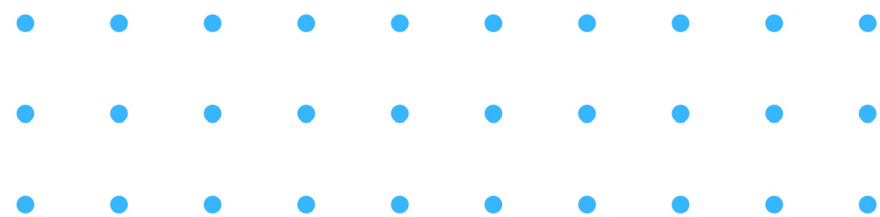


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# WHAT IS A SMOKE-FREE OUTDOOR SPACES ORDINANCE?

A local policy that prohibits smoking or limits it to certain areas in outdoor public spaces. These ordinances can be established by state and local governments, and can apply to a variety of places, including parks, recreational areas, outdoor dining areas, and other locations where people gather and are vulnerable to secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure.



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

**California Clean Air laws prohibit the use of tobacco products in the following outdoor areas:**

- 25 ft from playgrounds and certified farmers' markets
- Public and charter school campuses
- 20 ft from main entrance/exit and operable windows of government buildings
- State parks and coastal beaches

**With a Smoke-free Outdoor Spaces Ordinance, we are:**

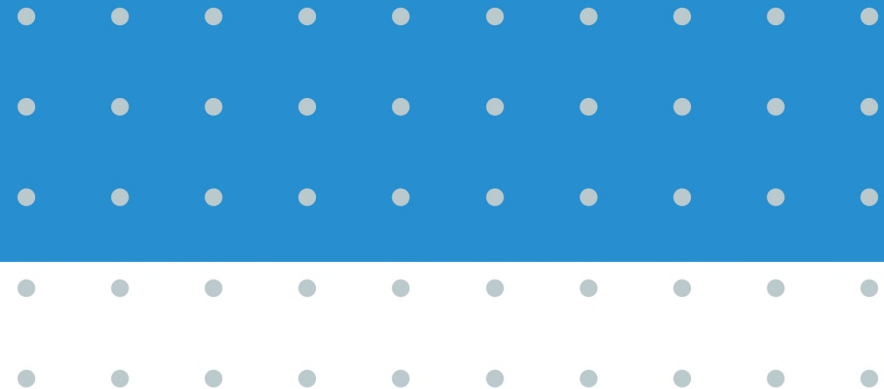
- Enforcing and strengthening CA Clean Air laws
- Protecting children, older adults, families, pets, and the environment from dangerous tobacco litter and secondhand smoke



# LOCAL DATA COLLECTION



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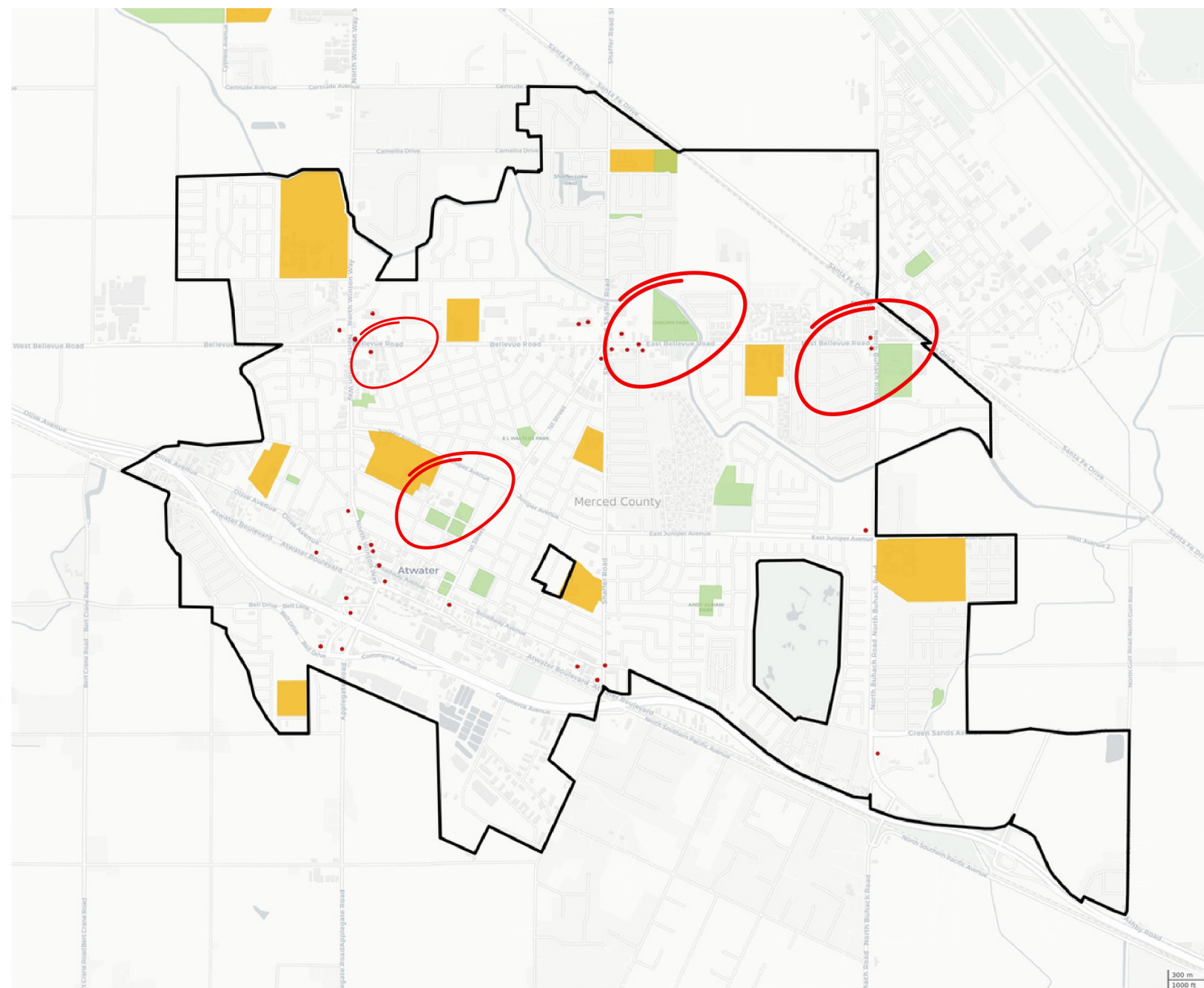


# OBSERVATIONS

In August, September, and October 2024, the REAL Project conducted surveys at four outdoor locations in Atwater to assess tobacco-related signage and litter. These observations were done to gather baseline information about tobacco use in public spaces and determine if there is a need for a smoke- and tobacco-free outdoor air policy in the city.

## Locations Observed

- Ralston Park
- Obsborn Park
- Veterans Park
- Castle View Apartments



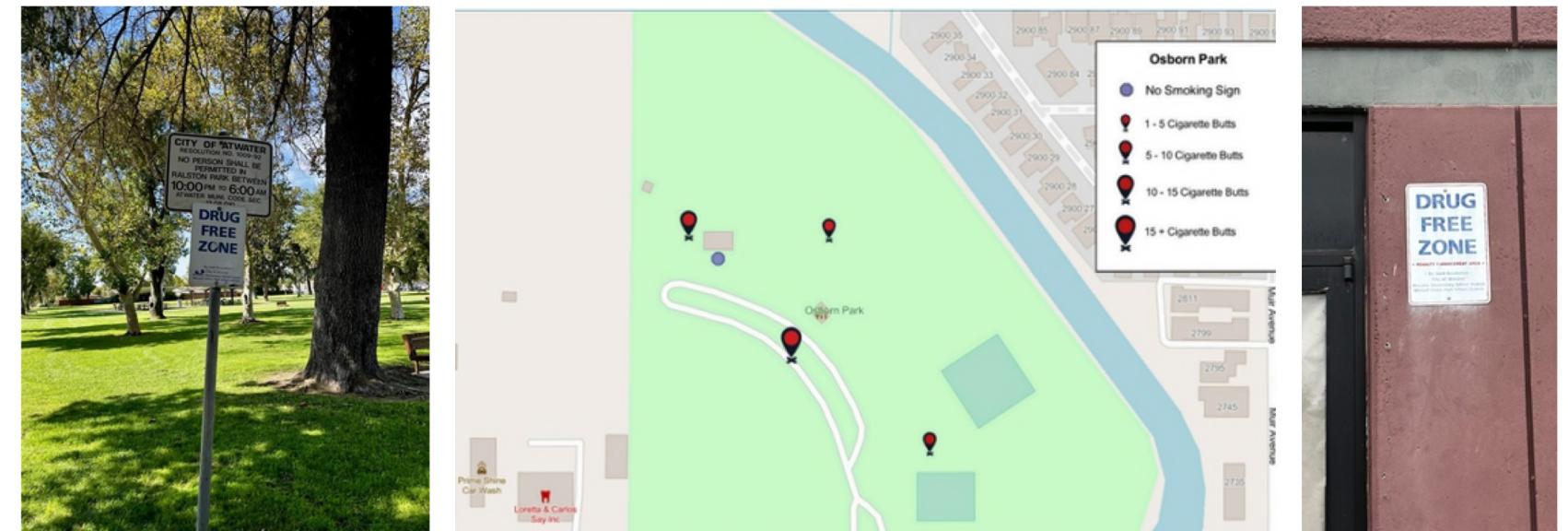
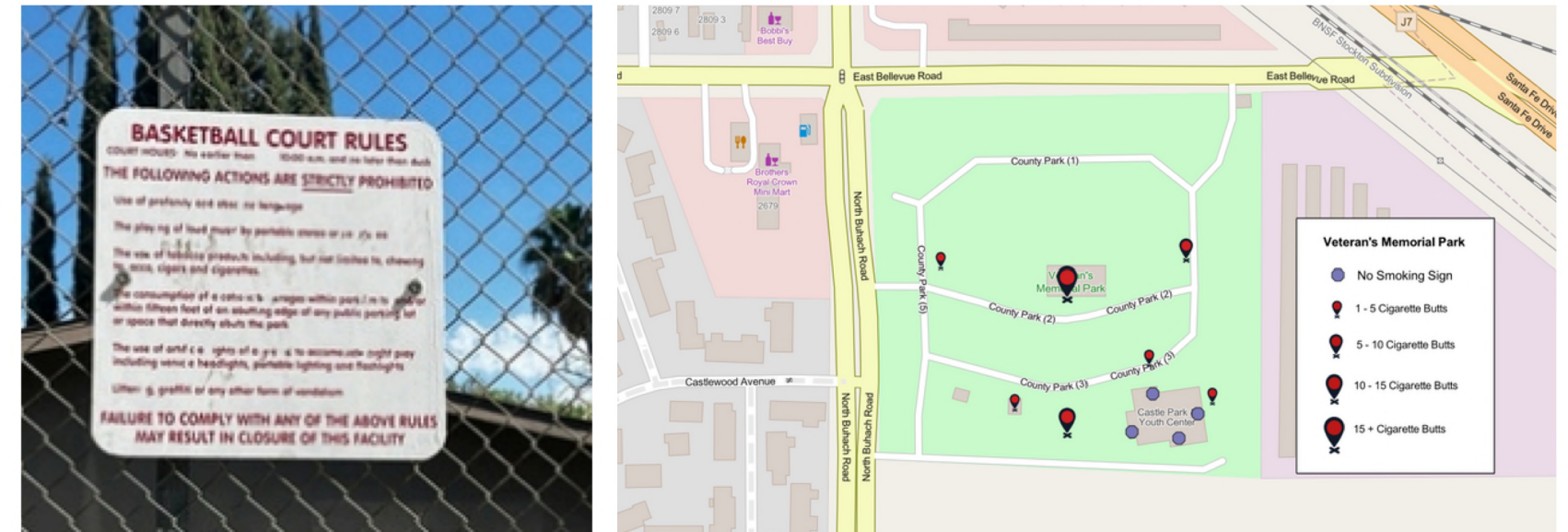
# KEY FINDINGS

## Tobacco Litter

- High: Osborn Park (50–100 butts), Veterans Park (20–30 butts + needles)
- Low: Ralston Park & Castle View (<5 butts each)

## Signage

- Some “Drug-Free Zone” & multi-rule signs (incl. tobacco use bans).
- No standardized “No Smoking” signs.



# PUBLIC OPINION POLL

The REAL Project asked Atwater residents to share their thoughts about tobacco in the community. A total of **57 surveys** were completed, all from people who live within the city limits of Atwater. The information gathered helps us better understand what matters most to the community when it comes to tobacco use and local rules.

**Note:** REAL will be continuing the collection of public opinion polls in order to get a better sample size.

## The goal was to find out two things:

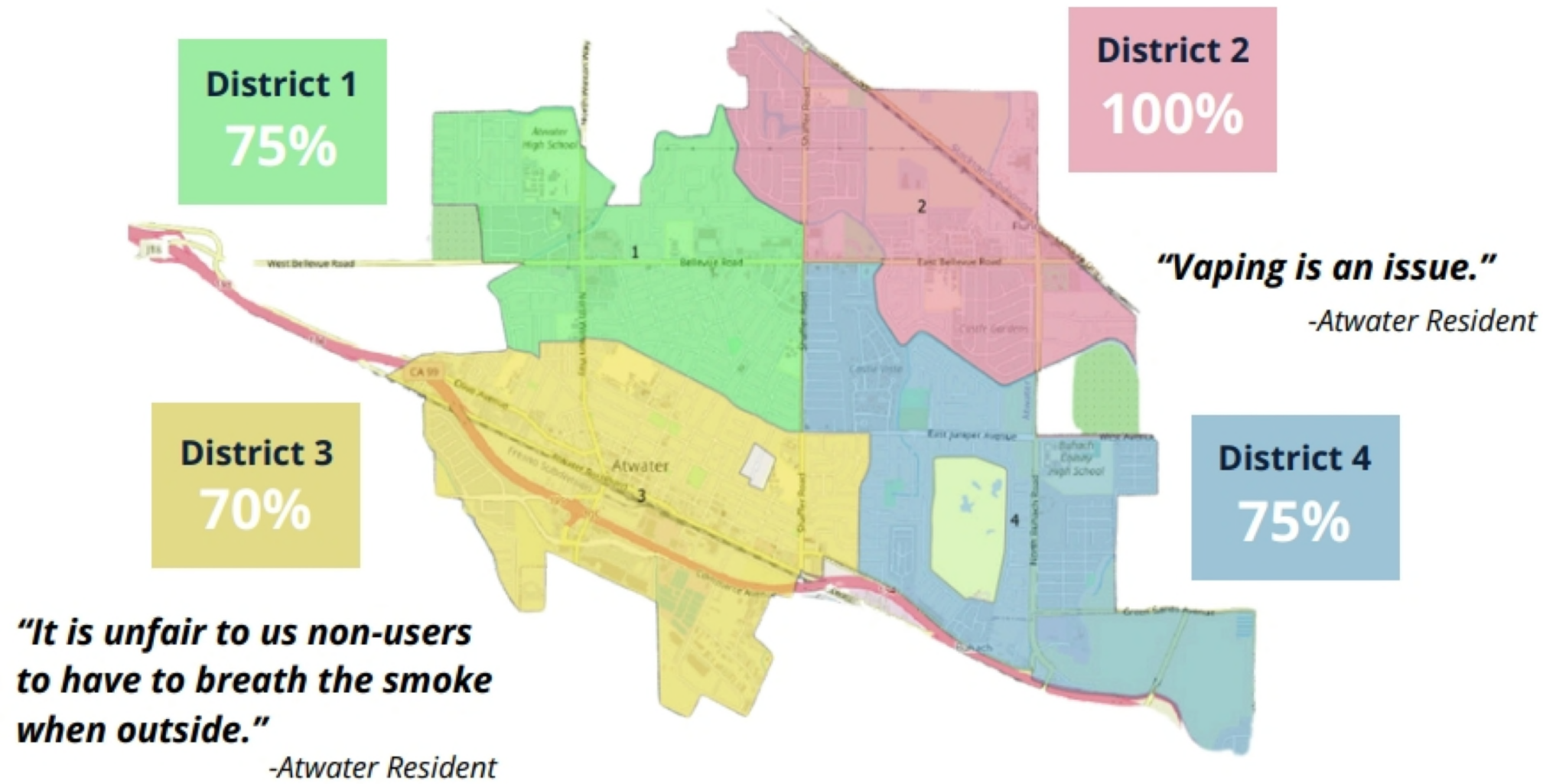
- How concerned residents are about tobacco-related issues in Atwater
- Whether residents support or oppose new smoke- and tobacco-free rules the city might consider

## Surveys were collected at:

- The Atwater Fourth of July Parade in Downtown Atwater
- The Midwest Academy Strategy Chart Meeting, held on August 7, 2024, in Atwater
- Email listserv

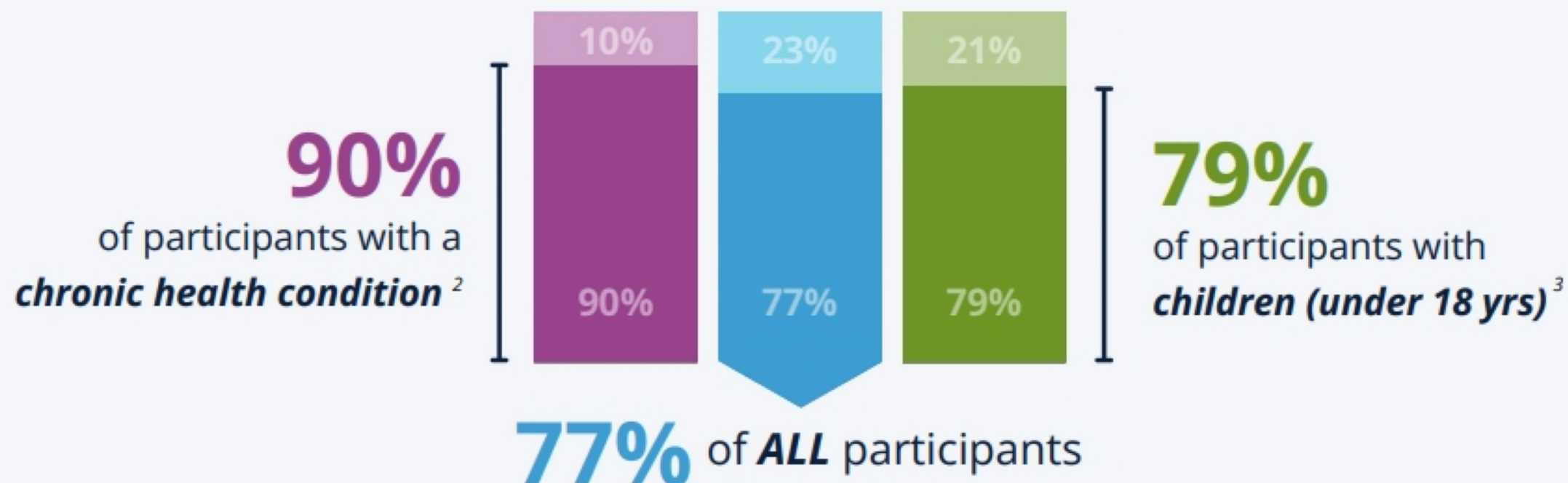
A screenshot of a survey form. At the top, there is a teal header with the California Health Collaborative logo and the text "CALIFORNIA HEALTH COLLABORATIVE". Below the header, the title "Tobacco Opinion Survey - Atwater" is displayed. A paragraph of text explains the survey's purpose: "Our program is doing a survey to learn what people think about smoking and tobacco use in public areas such as parks, downtowns, and restaurants. Your name will not be recorded, and taking the survey is your choice. The information you provide will be added to other people's answers and used to tell local leaders what the community thinks and wants. Thank you!". Below this, a question is shown: "Do you live in Atwater? \*". The question is marked as required with an asterisk. A small teal box with the number "1" is positioned above the question. At the bottom of the visible form, there is a radio button next to the word "Yes".

## Support for a Law Restricting Smoking and Vaping in Public Places by district <sup>4</sup>



## Support for a Law Restricting Smoking and Vaping in Public Places

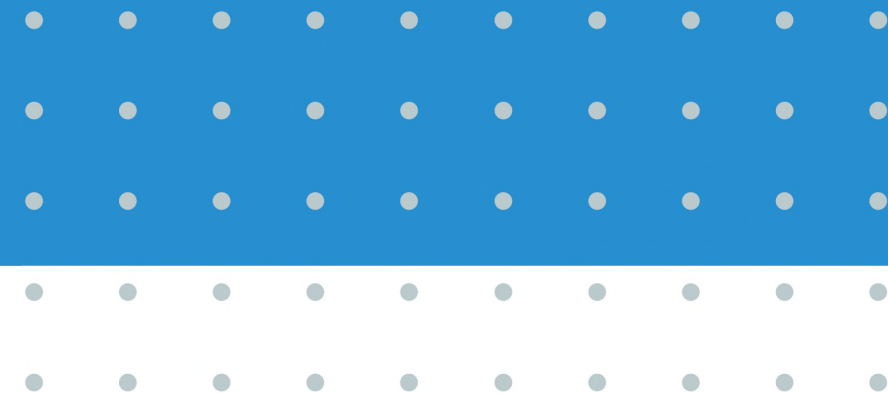
(outdoor spaces, restaurants, parks, and in downtown)



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



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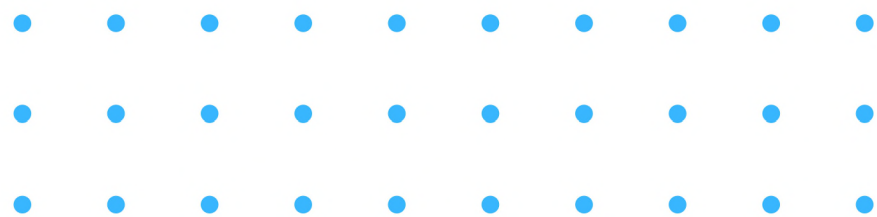




# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT (CEA)

A Community Engagement Agreement (CEA) is a type of subcontract, valued at less than \$5,000. CEAs are meant to support California Tobacco Prevention Program (CTPP)-funded projects in completing approved scope of work (SOW) activities.

- This funding allows agencies that may be new to tobacco prevention to explore creative ideas that advance local policy campaigns and community engagement work.



# HEALTHY LUNGS ALLIANCE (HLA)



HLA is a dedicated student club at Buhach Colony High School in Atwater, focused on empowering youth and promoting a tobacco-free lifestyle. Their mission is to inspire their peers through positive coping strategies and raise awareness about the harmful effects of smoking. By leading advocacy efforts on campus, HLA not only uplifts students but also drives change within the broader community. Their commitment to creating healthier environments strongly aligns with the goals of the REAL Project.



**@bchs.hla**



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## Current activities:

- Park clean-ups
- Social Media Campaign
- Conducting interviews at a nearby cancer center
- Lunch time presentations

# VALLEY ONWARD

Valley Onward is a nonprofit organization based in Merced County, focused on fostering civic engagement, promoting health equity, and empowering women, people of color, and disinvested communities, ultimately aiming for more equitable policies and healthier communities.



## Current activities:

- Setting up meetings with decision makers
- Collecting surveys
- Setting up and recruiting community members to attend educational presentations
- Helping out with the planning of a local tobacco-free event



**@valleyonwardmerce**

**d**

# PUBLIC HEALTH PIPELINE PROGRAM

The REAL Project launched a paid internship program specifically designed for students attending UC Merced who are interested in deepening their knowledge of tobacco prevention and gaining valuable hands-on experience in the field of public health. This internship offers participants the opportunity to engage in community-based initiatives, support local policy efforts, and build practical skills that prepare them for future careers in health advocacy and education.

## INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

### Intervention

- Social Media Posts
- Creating Newsletters
- Develop Fact Sheets
- Attend In-Person Events
- Community Outreach

### Evaluation

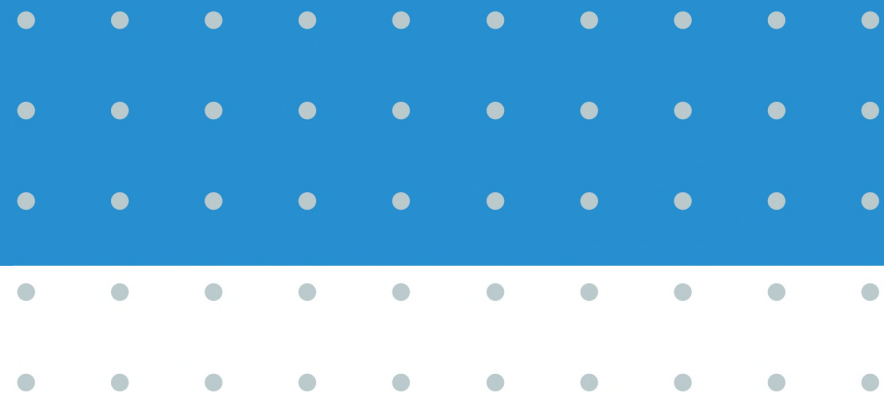
- Data Entry
- Analyzing Data
- Report Writing



# LOOKING AHEAD



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## EVENTS

## GOALS

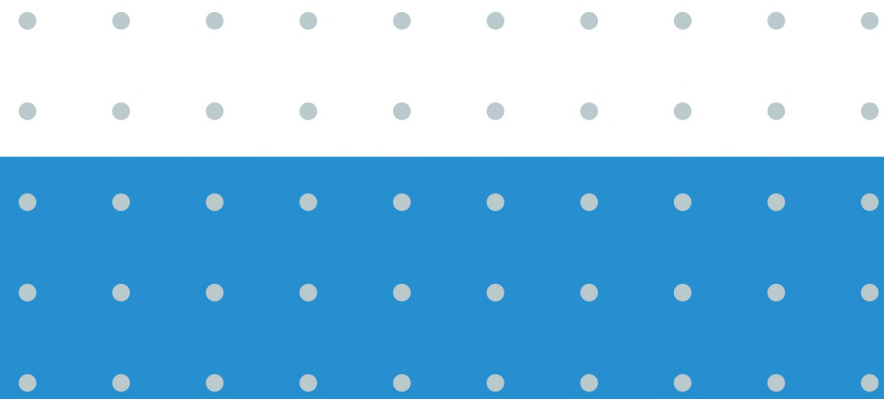
- Educational presentations throughout Atwater
- Trainings
- Park Clean-Ups
- To stay up to date with events, follow us on Instagram @real\_chc

- Help get a Smoke-Free outdoor spaces policy passed in Atwater
- Adding "**tobacco-free**" signs in public outdoor spaces
- Sustaining momentum and community engagement



Our  
Website





# THANK YOU



Questions?

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