



# Access to Open Space

As Santa Clara County's population increases the need for publicly accessible open space is growing.

**Christopher Prendergast**

**March 3, 2022**

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## Santa Clara County, California, USA

- ***Scroll*** down to zoom in closer to Santa Clara County.



Coyote Ridge, Santa Clara Valley, California





- ***Continue scrolling down to zoom in even closer.***





Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County.

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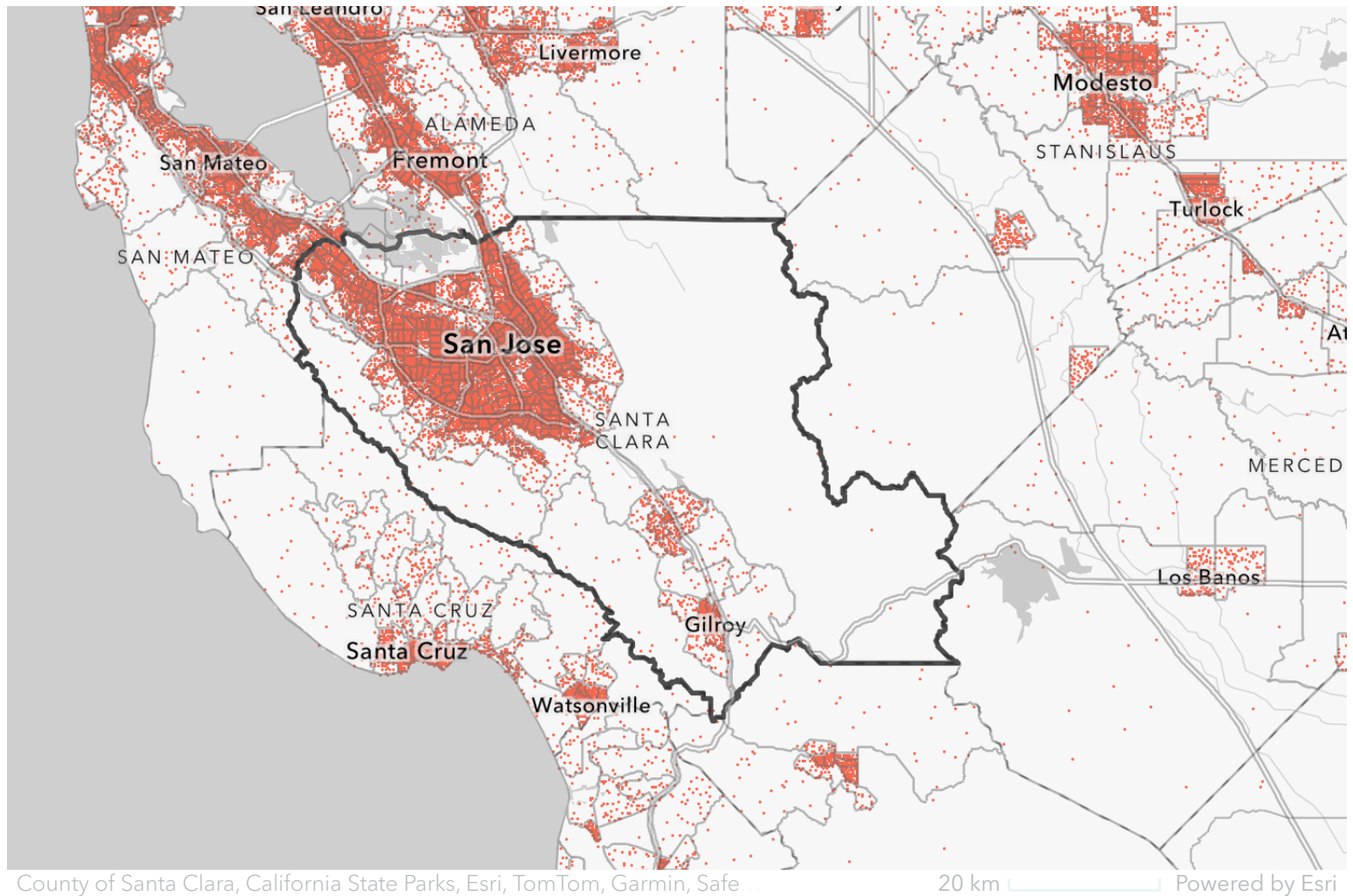
## Santa Clara County

The San Francisco Bay Area, which consists of nine counties, is home to approximately 7.75 million people. Of these nine counties, Santa Clara County has the largest population.

- ***Scroll*** down to continue reading the story.



Coyote Valley, Santa Clara County.



## Population

This is a densely populated area. According to the 2020 census, Santa Clara County is the 6<sup>th</sup> most populous county in California. With a total area of 1,304 square miles, the county has a population of 1,936,259 people.

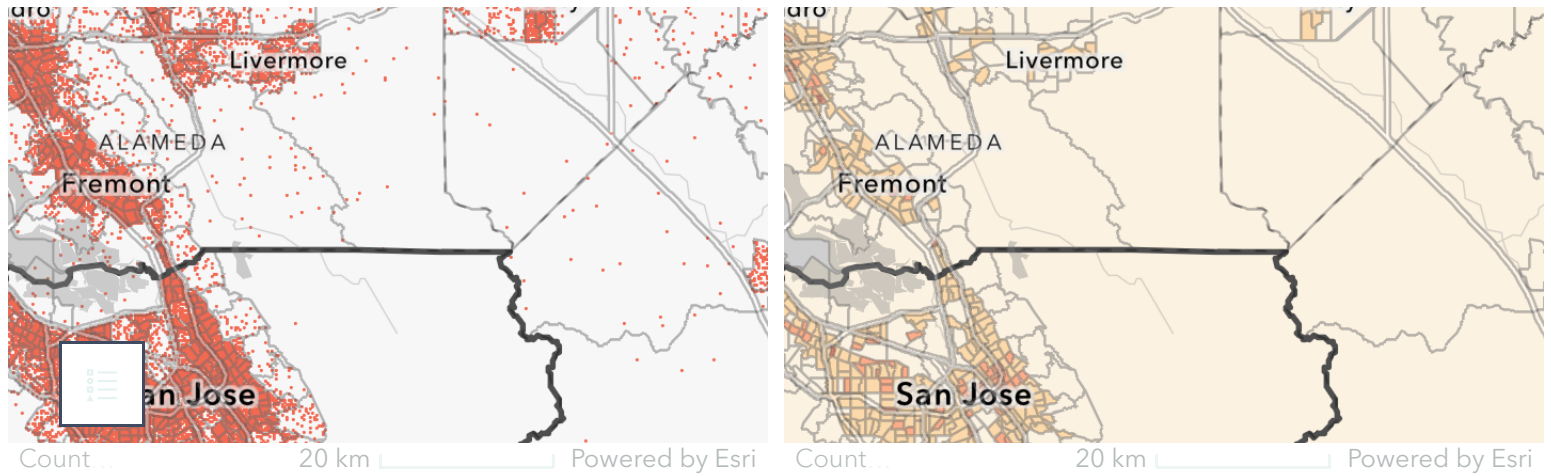
Importantly, this population is not evenly distributed in space across the county; the main population centers, including the City of San Jose, are clustered around the southern end of the San Francisco Bay. There are two smaller population clusters in the south of the county centered around the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy.



- **Zoom** in to see more details.
- **Click** inside any census tract to see a popup with more details of its population.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



View of downtown San Jose, California, looking to the southwest.



- **Swipe** left to reveal a map of the population density classified into discrete categories. The categories shown in this map are classified according to the geometric interval method which highlights extreme values, both large and small.
- **Click** inside any tract to popup details of its population.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



San Jose skyline at night.



## Urbanization

### Urban Areas

Today, the bulk of Santa Clara County's population is concentrated in urban areas. In fact, 95% of the county's population lives in cities. The growing urban population has only increased the need for more publicly accessible open space.

- ***Scroll*** down to continue reading the story.





View of San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley.



Count

20 km |

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Count

20 km |

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## City Limits

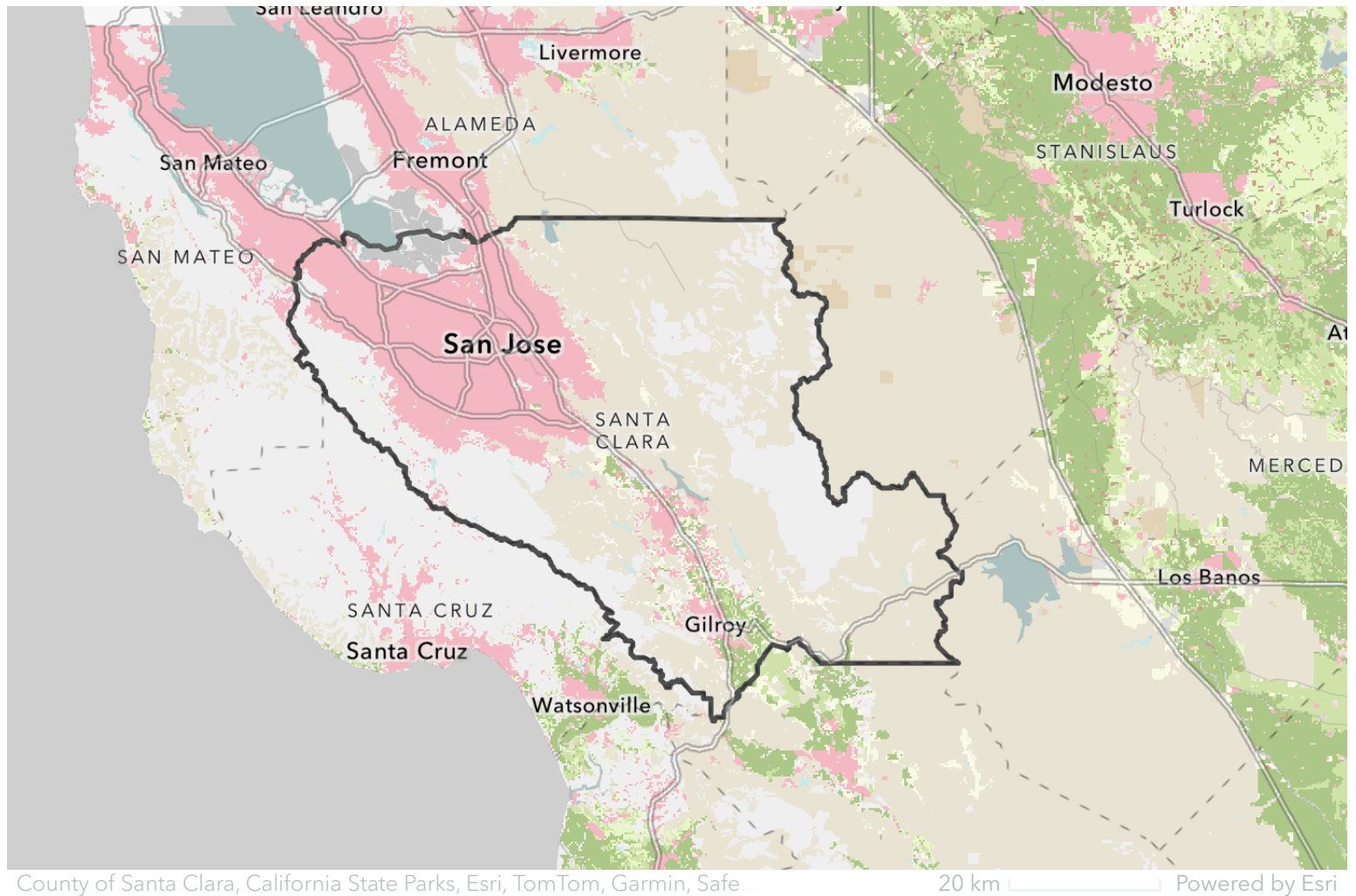
Most of the the Bay Area's population is concentrated in urban areas which lie within city limits. However, as you explore the data, you will see that although the urban areas fall mostly within city limits, they do not correspond exactly with the boundaries established by the city limits.

The top ten cities in Santa Clara County in descending order of population size are listed in the table below.

Rank	City	Population
1	San Jose	945,942
2	Sunnyvale	140,081
3	Santa Clara	116,468
4	Mountain View	74,066
5	Milpitas	66,790
6	Palo Alto	64,403
7	Cupertino	58,302
8	Gilroy	48,821
9	Campbell	39,349
10	Morgan Hill	37,882

Populations of the top ten cities in the Bay Area.

- **Swipe** left to reveal an overlay showing the limits of the cities in Santa Clara County.
- **Click** within any city boundary to display a popup with that city's information.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



## Land Use

### Farmland

Historically the Santa Clara Valley was known as "The Valley of Heart's Delight." In the Spring the valley used to be filled with many thousands of acres of blooming fruit trees. Today, rapid development and growing urbanization has consumed much of this formally agricultural and rural land. However, small areas of the county are still classified as "prime farmland" and "farmland of local importance."

This map illustrates the extent of the urban areas and shows the



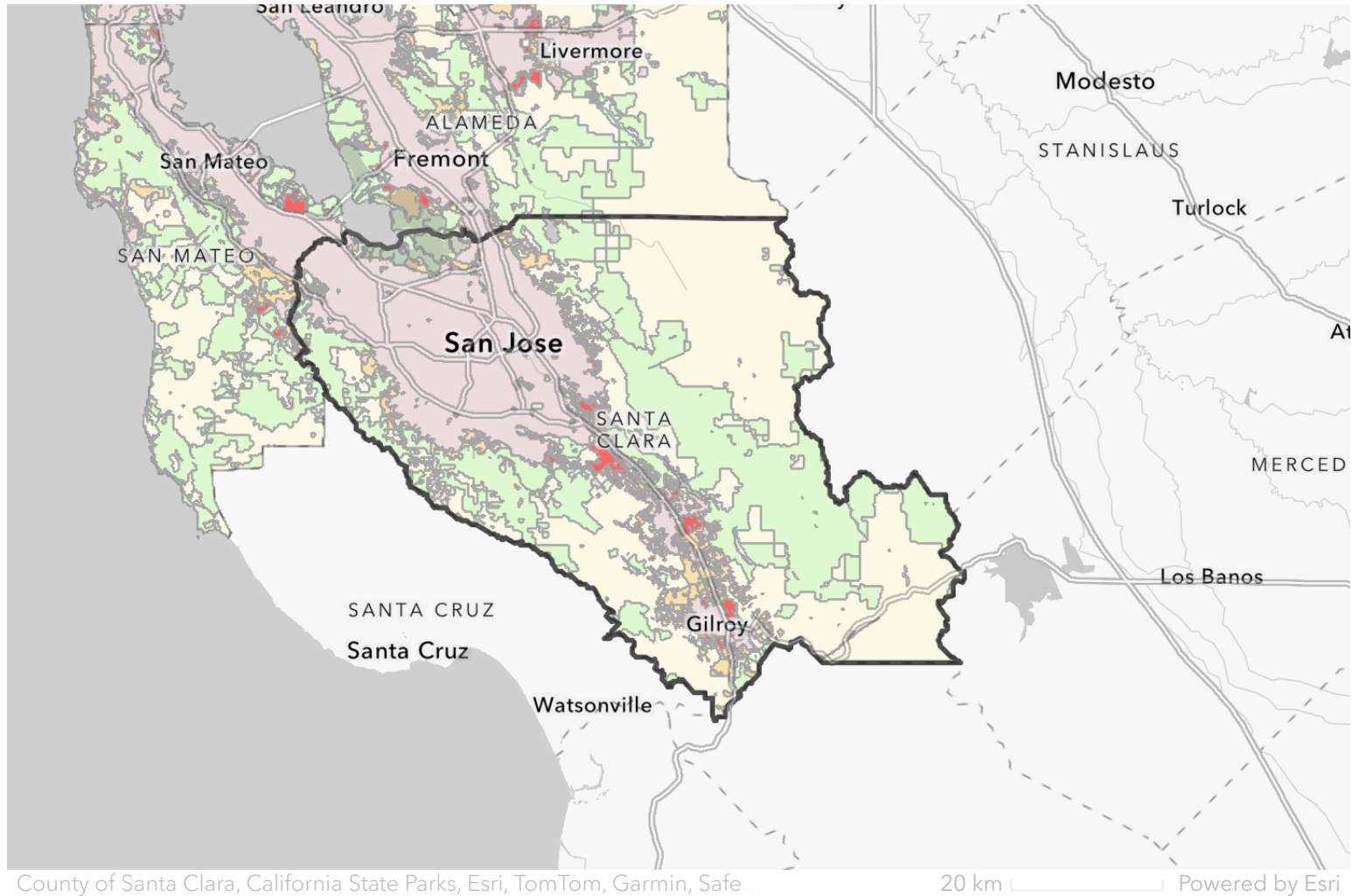
remaining farmland within the county. Sadly, increasing pressure for development threatens many of the remaining rural areas and farmland.

### **Why Saving Coyote Valley is So Important**

Update on Wednesday, November 6, 4:00 p.m.: After decades of debate over land use, the San Jose City...

<https://openspacetrust.org/blog/saving-coyote-valley/?wvideo=rdxoa73buf>

- ***Scroll*** down to continue reading the story.



## Development Risk

Much of the land in the county is either already urbanized or permanently protected from development. However, some of the few remaining rural and farmland areas are threatened with a high risk of development.

This map highlights those areas facing the greatest risk of development.

## Coyote Valley - The Impossible Dream (Co...

After decades of debate over land use, the San Jose City Council recently entered into agreements with...

<https://openspacetrust.org/blog/coyote-valley-protected/?wvideo=zukohinfk1>

- ***Scroll*** down to continue reading the story.



## Open Space

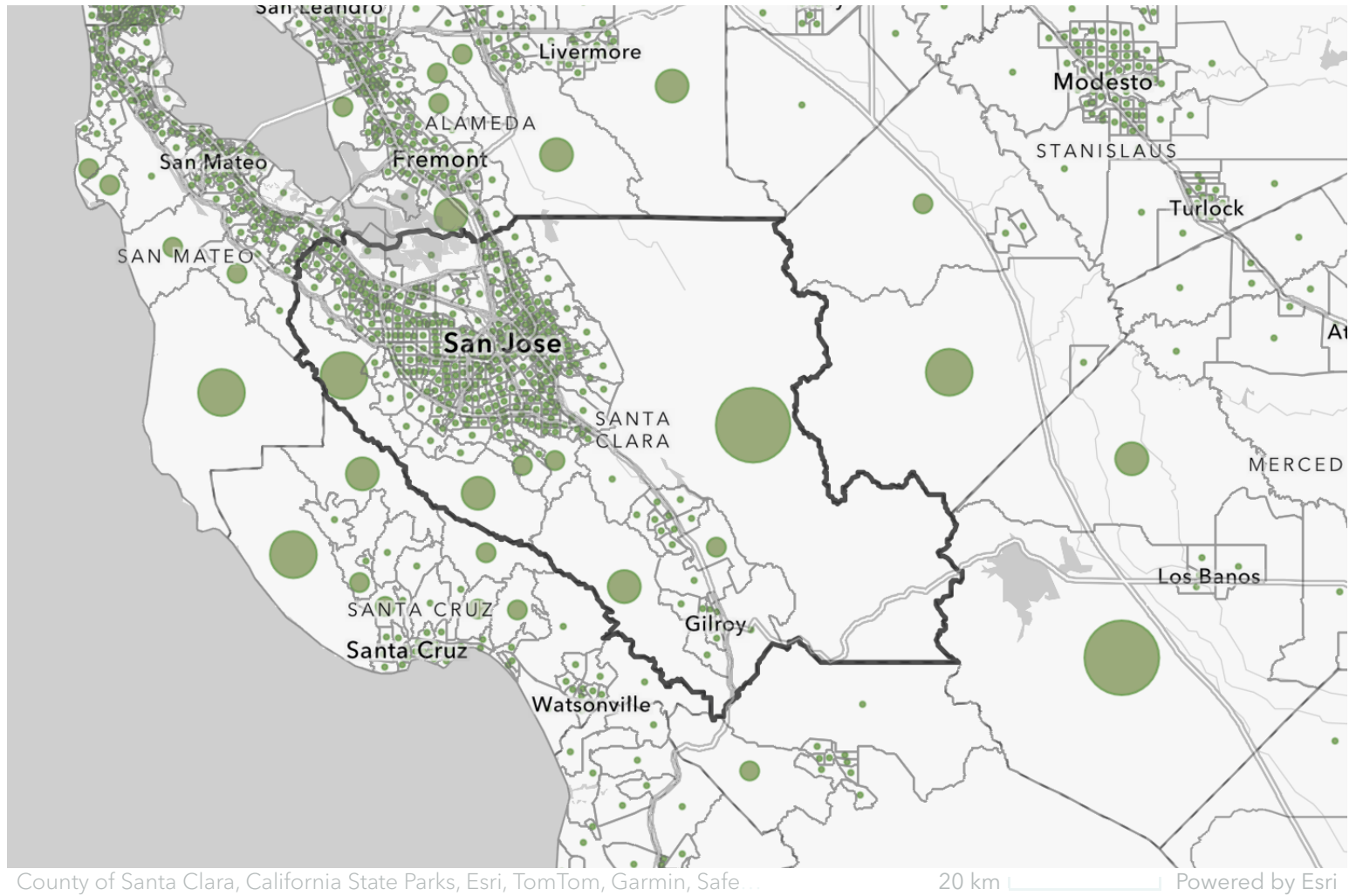
Fortunately, Santa Clara County already enjoys a wide range of publicly accessible open space preserved, owned, and managed by a variety of public agencies.

Watch the video below to take an aerial tour of the open space areas managed by the Midpeninsular Regional Open Space District. The district, which covers part of Santa Clara County, manages 62,000 acres and 2 open space preserves.



Midpen - A Bird's Eye View. Credit: MROSD/YouTube.

- **Zoom** in to see more details.
- **Click** on any open space area to explore the data.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



## Distribution

Publicly accessible open space areas are not evenly distributed in space across the county. While residents of urban areas have access to many smaller open spaces, larger open space areas are typically located in more rural areas further outside the city limits.

This map shows the total open space area for each census tract.

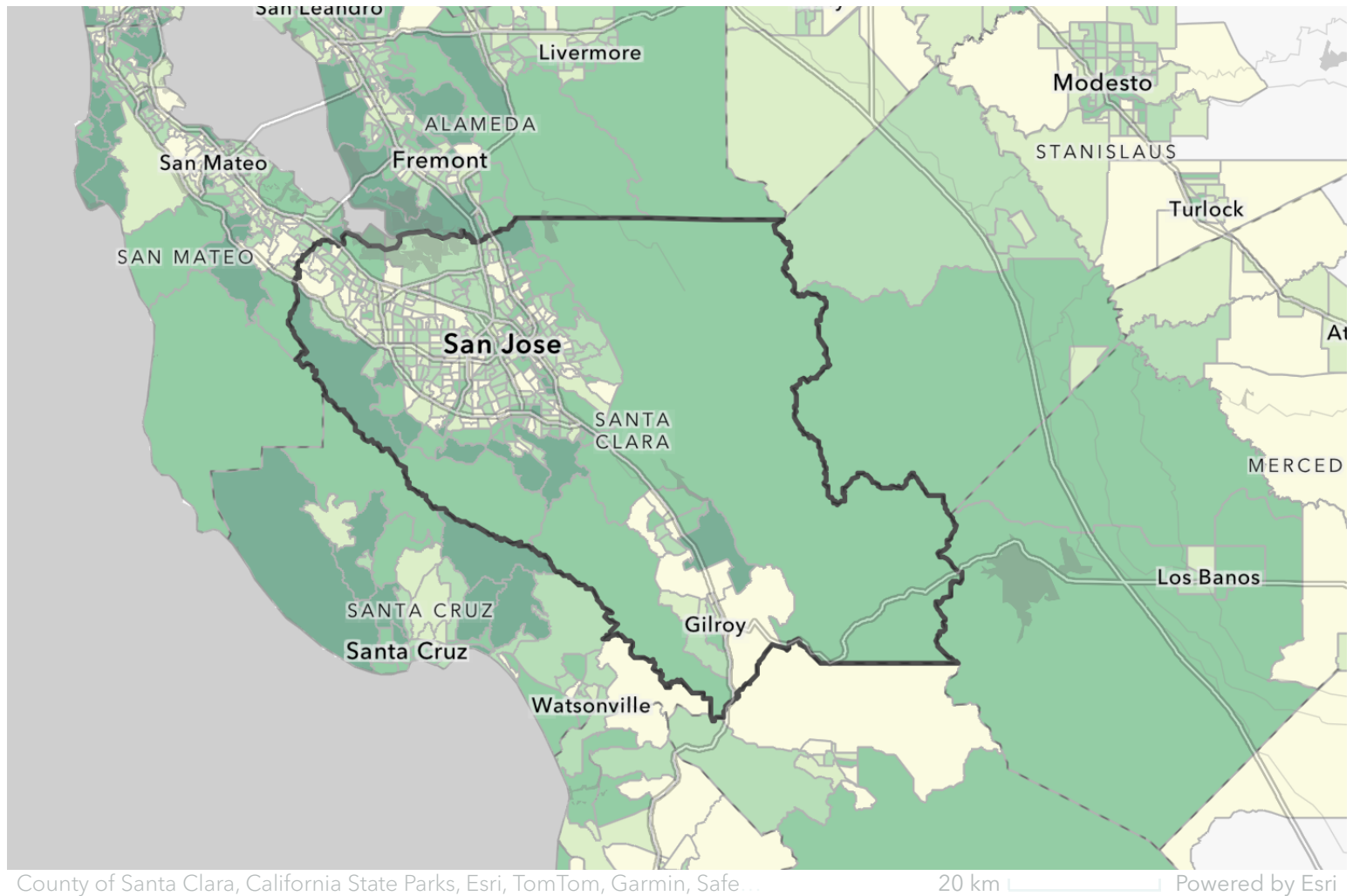
Watch the video below to see how the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority has protected over 16,000 acres of beautiful open space, agricultural lands, watersheds, and wildlife habitat in Santa

Clara County.



Your Open Space Lands in Santa Clara County. Credit: SCVOSA.

- **Click** on any census tract to popup summary information for open space within that tract.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



## Accessibility

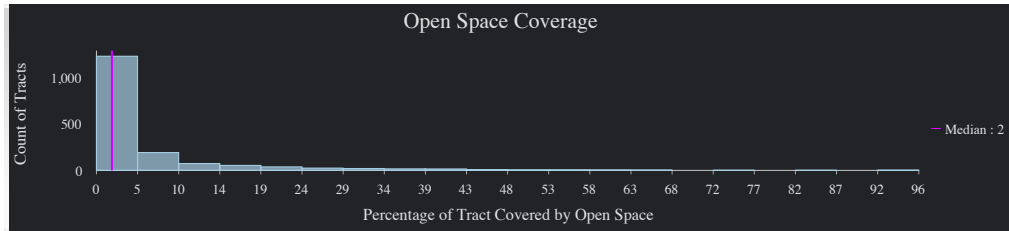
### Open Space Coverage

Open space coverage offers one measure of the accessibility of open space areas. Coverage is the ratio of the area of land dedicated to open space divided by the total land area calculated for each census tract.

In general, as this map illustrates, open space coverage tends to be lower in urban census tracts and higher in non-urban census tracts. Explore these differences by clicking on the buttons below to view and compare the statistics for urban and non-urban census

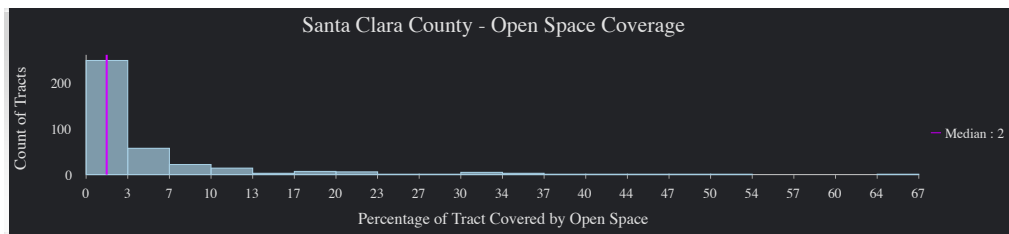
tracts.

## Initial View



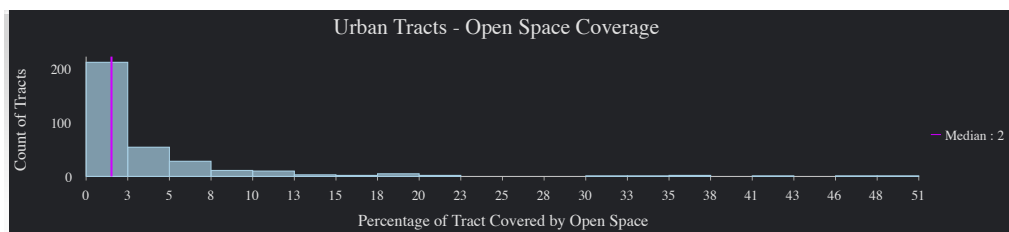
Open Space Coverage for census tracts within 50 miles of Santa Clara County.

## Santa Clara County



Open Space Coverage for census tracts in Santa Clara County.

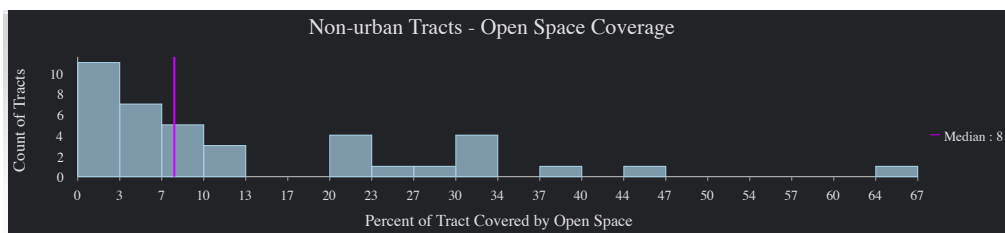
## Urban Tracts



Open Space Coverage for urban census tracts in Santa Clara County.

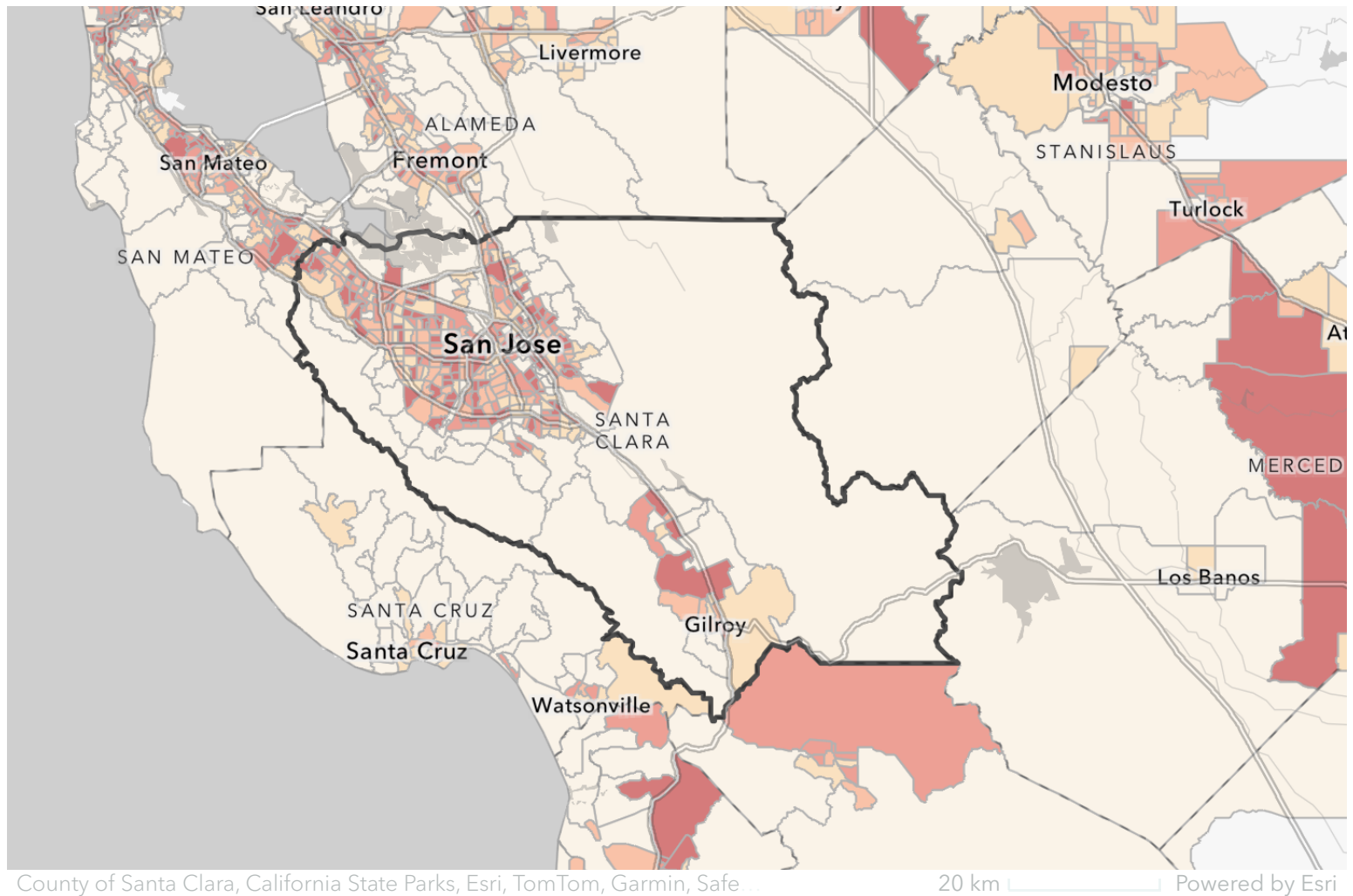


## Non-urban Tracts



Open Space Coverage for non-urban  
census tracts in Santa Clara County,

- **Select** one of the buttons above to filter the data displayed in the map.
- **Click** on any census tract to popup details of open space coverage for that tract.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.

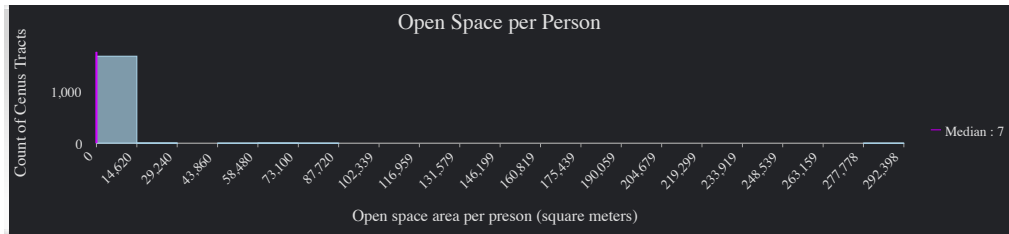


## Open Space per Person

A second measure of accessibility is the area of open space per person calculated for each census tract.

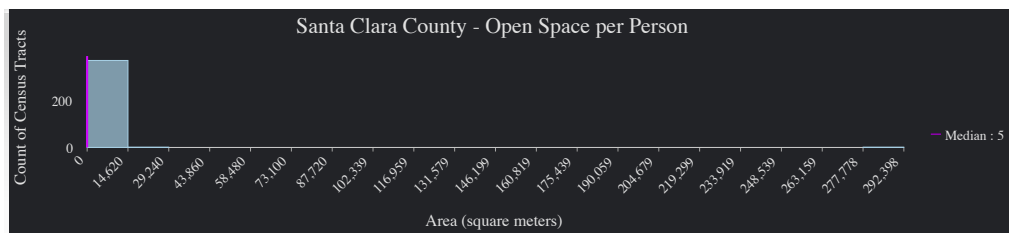
This map shows that, in general, the open space per person is lower in urban census tracts and higher in non-urban census tracts. This pattern occurs because large open space areas are often located in non-urban census tracts which typically have lower population densities. Explore these differences by clicking on the buttons below to view and compare the statistics for urban and non-urban census tracts.

## Initial View



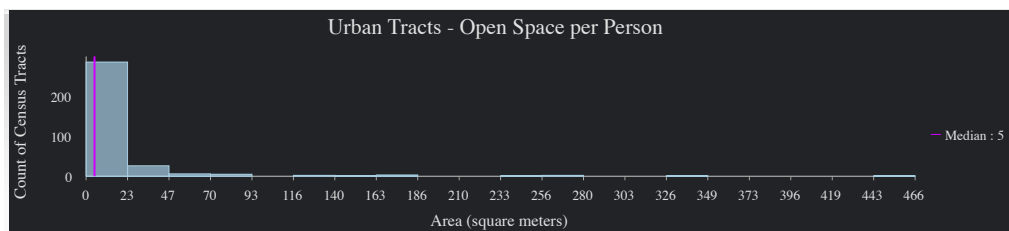
Open space per person for census tracts within 50 miles of Santa Clara County.

## Santa Clara County



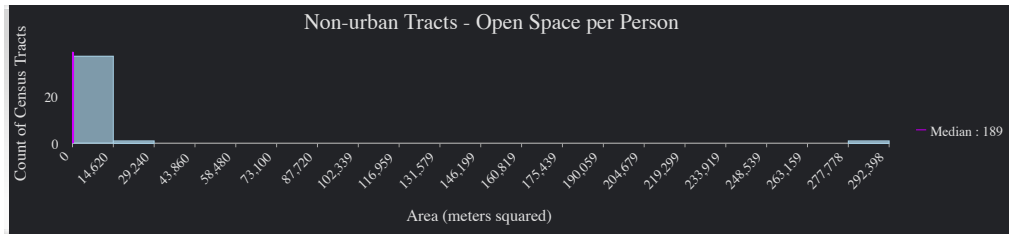
Open space per person for census tracts within Santa Clara County.

## Urban Tracts



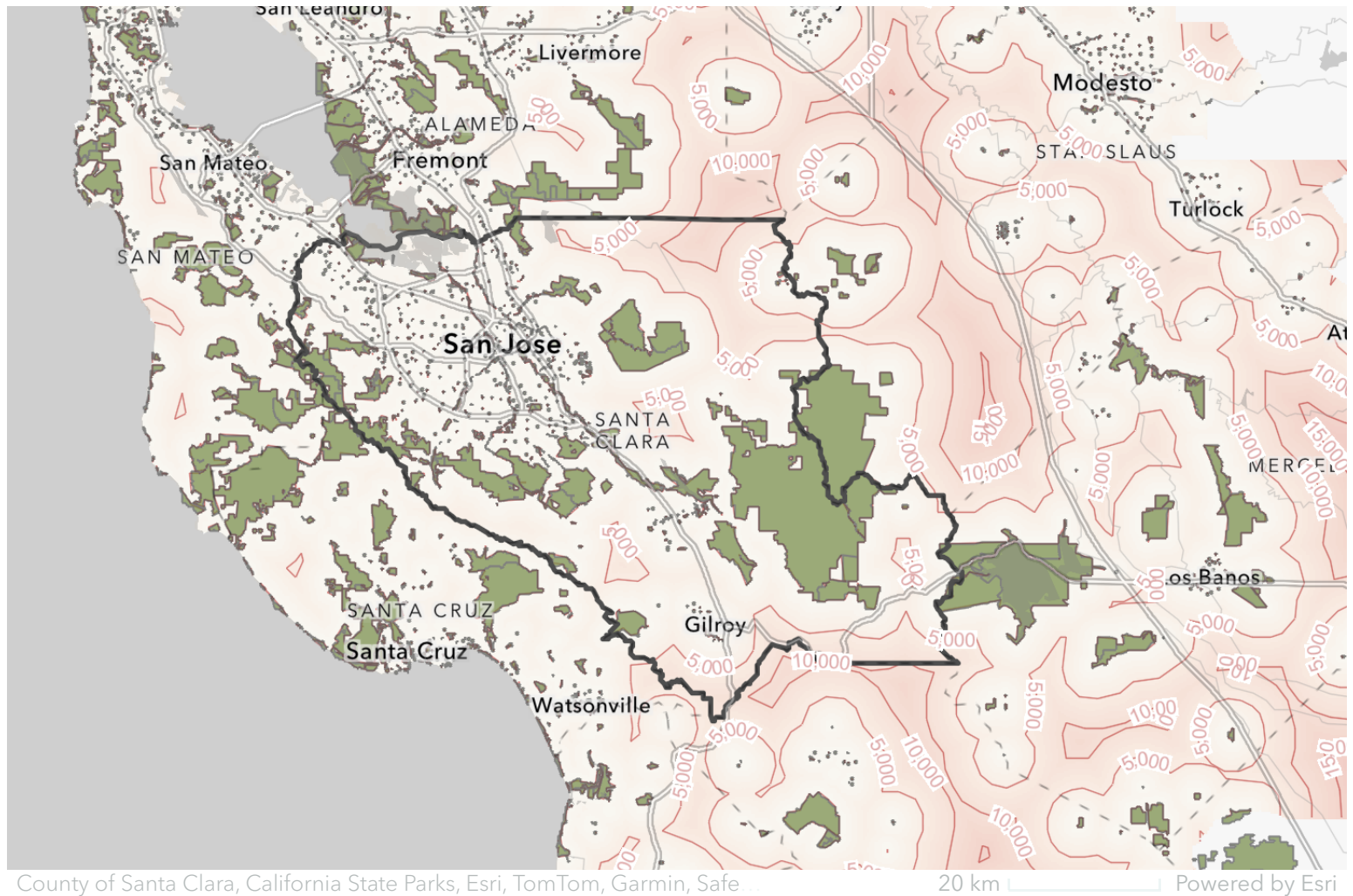
Open space per person for urban census tracts within Santa Clara County.

## Non-urban Tracts



Open space per person for non-urban census tracts within Santa Clara County.

- **Select** one of the buttons above to filter the data displayed in the map.
- **Click** on any census tract to get more information on the ratio of the tract's total open space area to its population.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



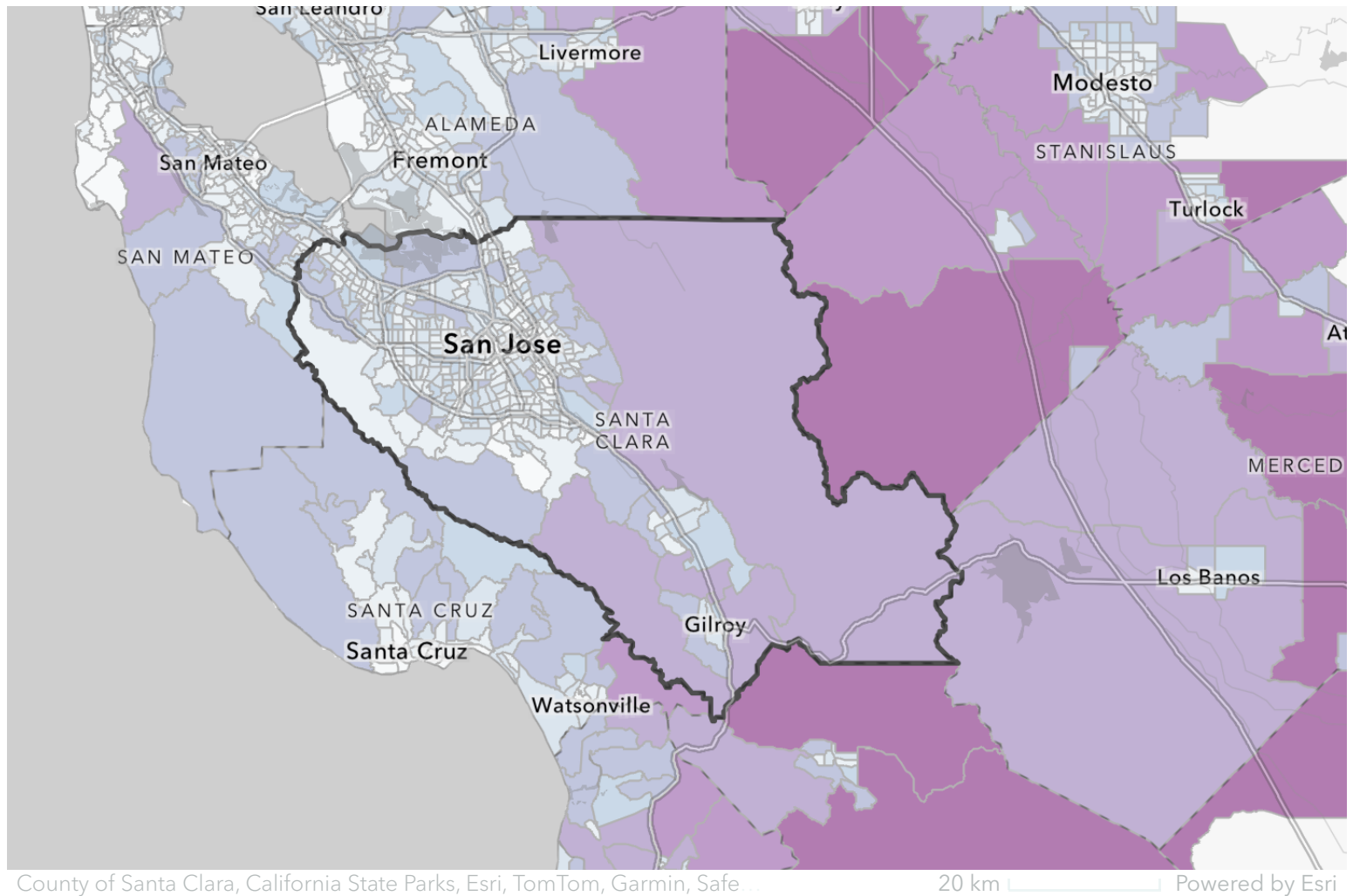
## Distance to Closest Open Space

A third measure of accessibility is the distance from any point in the county to its corresponding closest open space area.

This map shows the distance to the closest open space area across the county. You will see that residents in the northeast corner of the county must travel the furthest to reach publicly accessible open space.

- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



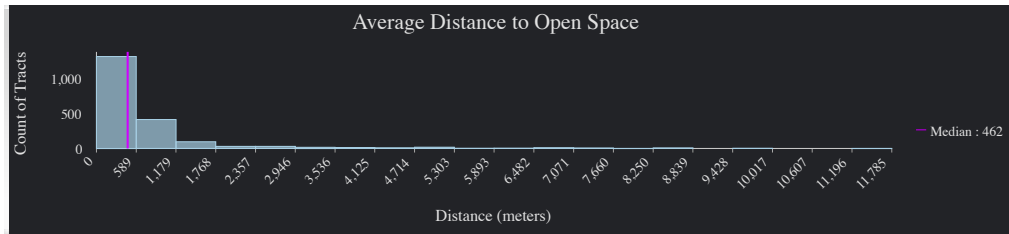


## Average Distance to Open Space

A fourth measure of accessibility is the average distance to the closest open space area calculated across all points within each census tract.

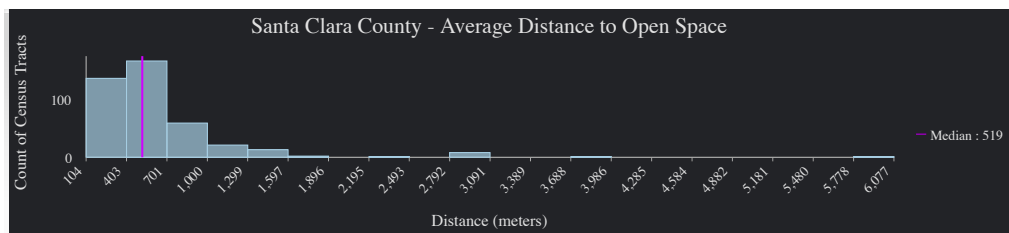
This measure is more useful for urban areas where each census tract typically covers a smaller area and open space areas are often smaller and more numerous. For more rural areas, particularly large non-urban census tracts, this average measure can hide significant variation in accessibility within each census tract. Explore these differences by clicking on the buttons below to view and compare the statistics for urban and non-urban census tracts.

## Initial View



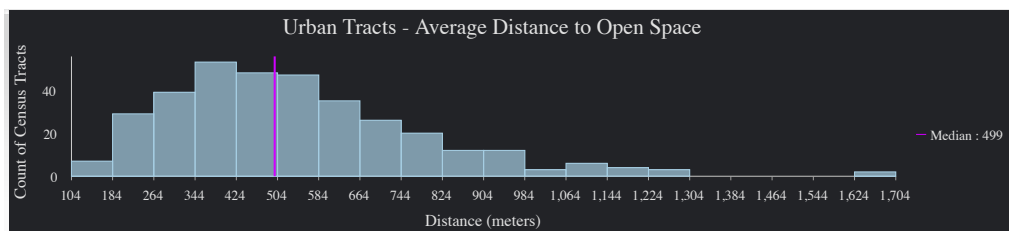
Average distance to closest open space for census tracts within 50 miles of Santa Clara County.

## Santa Clara County



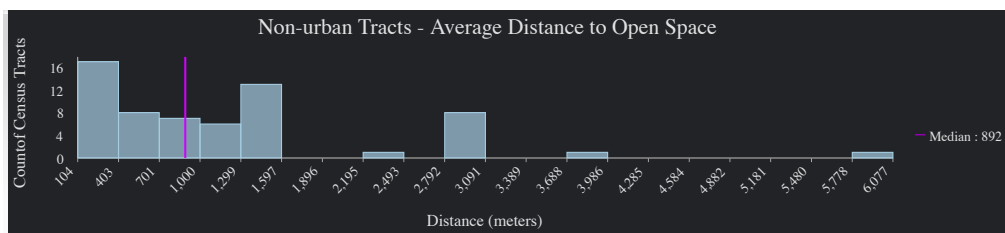
Average distance to closest open space by census tract within Santa Clara County.

## Urban Tracts



Average distance to closest open space for urban census tracts in Santa Clara County.

## Non-urban Tracts



Average distance to closest open space for  
non-urban census tracts in Santa Clara County.

- **Select** one of the buttons above to filter the data displayed in the map.
- **Click** on any census tract to see the average distance residents of that tract must travel to reach their closest open space area.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.



## Service Area

A final way to measure the accessibility of open space is to calculate half-mile service areas around each open spaces. One half mile corresponds to the distance an average person can cover on foot in 10 minutes. This map highlights those areas that lie outside the combined half-mile service areas of all open space and, therefore, are not considered to be within a walkable distance from any open space area.

- ***Scroll*** down to continue reading the story.



Almaden Lake Park, San Jose, California.

## Ten-Minute Walk Campaign

The “10-Minute Walk Campaign” is a nationwide movement to promote safe access for everyone to a quality park or green space within a 10-minute walk. You can view and explore open space accessibility in the San Jose area using the *ParkServe* application provided by the Trust for Public Land.



**ParkServe®**

Find address or place



Esri, USGS | Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, USFWS

Powered by Esri

**EXPLORE****10-MINUTE WALK STATISTICS****Urban Cities And Towns By % Population In A 10-Minute Walk. Enter Your City Name In The Search Bar At The Top Of The Site To Learn More About Park Access**

*For a streamlined interface, some features are not available for mobile users. For full functionality, please view the app on a desktop browser.*

**The Trust for Public Land - Park Serve**

- **Click** anywhere in the window above to interact with the ParkServe application.
- **Scroll** down to continue reading the story.

## Conclusions

A clear difference can be seen between urban and non-urban census tracts in terms of the quantity and accessibility of open space areas. There are also significant differences in the quality of open space areas. In general, urban open spaces are smaller and less wild than non-urban open space areas.

Consequently, open space is not equally accessible to all county residents. Urban residents enjoy less easy access to open space than their non-urban counterparts. This is problematic because the vast majority of county resident now live in urban areas and city dwellers are often in greater need of the many benefits that easy access to public open spaces can provide.

## View and Download Maps

### Open Space Accessibility Maps

Click here to view and download static maps of open space accessibility in Santa Clara County, California...

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/bbb3cb3c31764259b57a05bbcede88f7>

### Data Sources

<b>Satellite imagery</b>	Maxar, EarthStar, Esri, <a href="#">ArcGIS Map Service</a>
<b>Population, census tract boundaries</b>	<a href="#">US Census Bureau</a>
<b>Farmland, rural and urban areas</b>	<a href="#">California Department of Conservation/ Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program</a>

<b>City limits</b>	<u><a href="#">Santa Clara County</a></u>
<b>Land at risk of development</b>	<u><a href="#">Greenbelt Alliance</a></u>
<b>Open space</b>	<u><a href="#">GreenInfo Network</a></u> , <u><a href="#">California Protected Areas Database (CPAD)</a></u>
<b>10-Minute Walk Campaign</b>	<u><a href="#">Trust for Public Land</a></u>
<b>Images</b>	Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, POST, Wikipedia