Environmental Justice Assessment for Lowndes County, Georgia

August 21, 2018

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Guidelines and Objectives

In combination with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898, (established in 1994), has defined the Environmental Justice requirements to be adhered to by all federally funded programs. As a recipient of federal funding, the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) is required to follow the following three major principles of Environmental Justice:

1. Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low income populations.

2. Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

3. Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority or low income populations.

Transport Studio prepared an assessment of priority populations within Lowndes County to promote compliance with Environmental Justice requirements during the VLMPO transportation planning process. This assessment includes mapping and analysis of 2015 five-year American Community Survey data and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics from the US Census Bureau. Data is reported at the Census Tract level; where appropriate and available, data is also reported at the Block Group level. The assessment includes identification of priority populations through the following characteristics:

- Median household income
- Households below poverty (percent)
- Race, percent Nonwhite population
- Educational attainment of population over 25 years
- Age of population (percent over 65 years)
- Disability status
- Limited English Proficiency and Spanish speaking households
- Vehicular access (by household)
- Average travel time to work (minutes)
- Low income job locations

Methodology

As defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency, **Environmental Justice (EJ)** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Identification of EJ priority populations will promote compliance with EJ requirements during the VLMPO transportation planning process.

The environmental justice (EJ) assessment includes mapping and analysis of EJ priority populations of 2015 five-year American Community Survey data from the US Census Bureau. Data is reported at the Census Tract level; where appropriate and available, data is also reported at the Block Group level. Countywide data is included to determine specific areas that have a relatively high proportion of EJ populations as compared to the countywide measure.

The assessment includes an overlay of indicators to highlight areas that have priority populations based on more than one characteristic (for example, low income and elderly). Transport Studio also mapped low wage jobs based on monthly wages reported by Census On The Map Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program to show where EJ populations are likely to work.

Indicators

Minority Population

Transport Studio calculated the proportion of Nonwhite residents by subtracting White population from Total population reported. Areas with a relatively high proportion of Nonwhite residents are concentrated in the City of Valdosta as shown below. Tracts with percent Nonwhite population above the county average are listed to the right of the map.
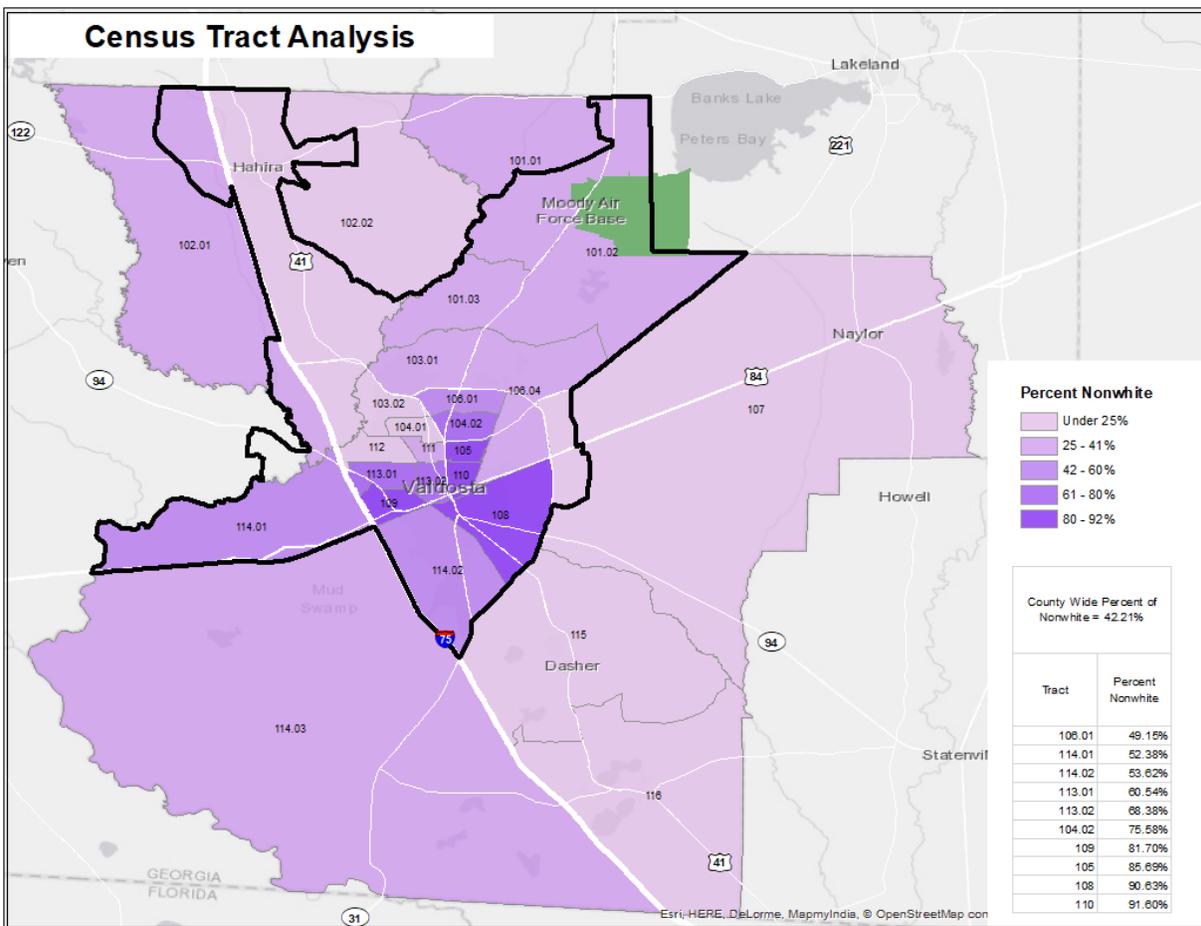
Figure 1 Percent Nonwhite Population by Tract, 2015

The map of Block Groups below represents race data at a finer scale. Block Groups (BG) with percent Nonwhite population above the county average are listed to the right of the map.

Census Block Group Analysis

Percent Nonwhite

- Under 25%
- 25 - 41%
- 42 - 60%
- 61 - 80%
- 80 - 92%

County Wide Percent of Nonwhite = 42.21%

Tract	BG	Percent Nonwhite
106.04	BG 2	42.98%
102.01	BG 2	43.65%
101.01	BG 2	43.67%
101.02	BG 3	43.70%
104.02	BG 1	43.84%
101.03	BG 2	44.86%
101.02	BG 4	47.95%
113.02	BG 1	48.95%
113.01	BG 3	55.51%
114.02	BG 2	67.28%
106.04	BG 1	67.89%
108	BG 3	68.28%
113.01	BG 1	77.77%
104.02	BG 2	78.06%
109	BG 1	78.08%
105	BG 3	79.27%
114.01	BG 2	79.48%
106.01	BG 3	82.70%
105	BG 2	83.67%
104.02	BG 3	83.99%
110	BG 2	84.01%
109	BG 2	84.36%
113.02	BG 2	89.68%
108	BG 2	92.37%
110	BG 1	96.67%
108	BG 1	96.92%
105	BG 1	97.56%

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Figure 2 Percent Nonwhite Population by Block Group, 2015

The map below shows Census Block race data, with concentrations of Black persons in central Valdosta. Diverse populations, including Hispanic people, are located west of I-75 in the county.
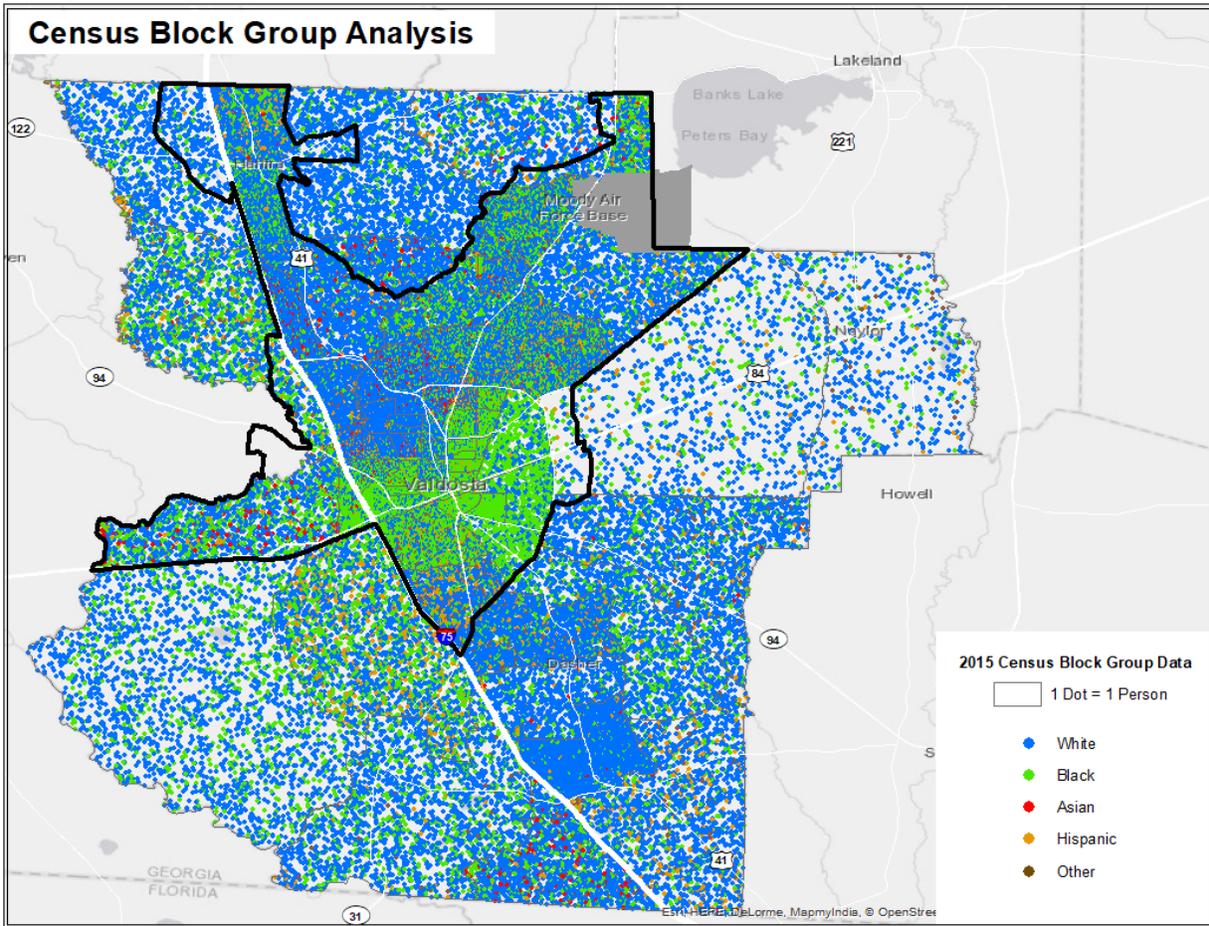
Figure 3 Race by Census Block, 2015

Poverty and Income

Households below poverty are concentrated within the City of Valdosta along US 84/221 and US 41 to the north of the central business district.
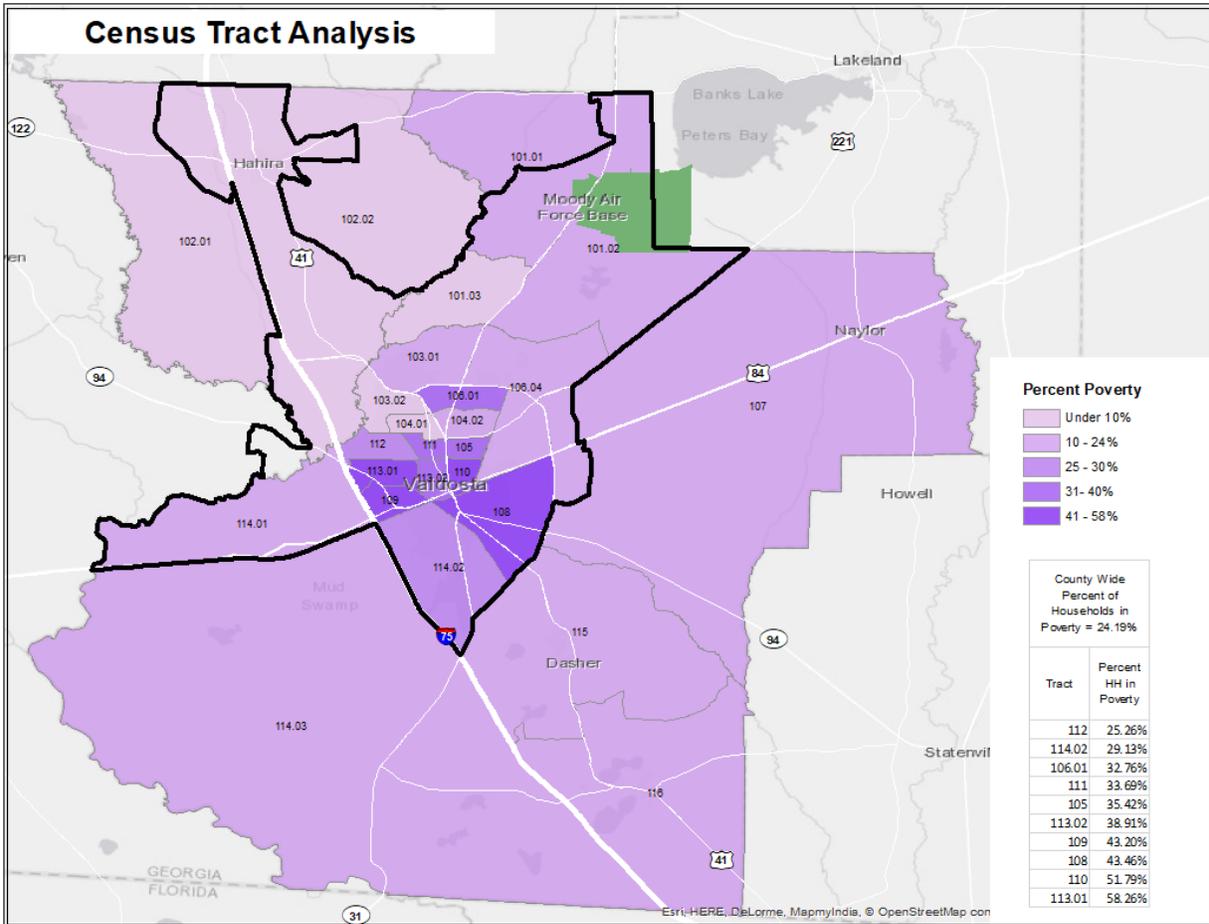
Figure 4 Households in Poverty by Tract, 2015

The map below shows households below poverty for Block Groups. The Bock Group north of Moody Air Force Base has 85 households below poverty of 182 total households. Other areas of concentration are in central Valdosta where several thousand households are below poverty.

Census Block Group Analysis

Percent Poverty

- Under 10%
- 10 - 24%
- 25 - 30%
- 31 - 40%
- 41 - 68%

Tract	BG	Percent HH in Poverty
113.02	BG 2	24.75%
104.02	BG 1	26.88%
114.03	BG 4	27.34%
115	BG 1	28.61%
105	BG 3	28.86%
104.02	BG 3	29.31%
106.04	BG 1	29.44%
106.01	BG 3	30.65%
112	BG 3	31.59%
111	BG 1	33.62%
111	BG 2	33.75%
114.02	BG 1	35.45%
105	BG 2	35.54%
114.03	BG 2	37.78%
106.01	BG 1	38.40%
109	BG 1	40.98%
112	BG 4	41.96%
114.01	BG 2	45.11%
109	BG 2	46.06%
110	BG 2	46.63%
101.02	BG 4	46.70%
113.02	BG 1	47.21%
108	BG 1	48.64%
113.01	BG 3	49.93%
108	BG 2	51.12%
105	BG 1	52.19%
110	BG 1	54.67%
113.01	BG 2	57.32%
113.01	BG 1	67.70%

County Wide Percent of Households in Poverty = 24.19%

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Figure 5 Households in Poverty by Block Group, 2015

Vehicle Ownership and Commuting

The map below shows concentrations of households without access to a vehicle in central Valdosta as well as in areas to the west of I-75 and south of US 84. Tracts with percent of households without access to a vehicle above the county average are listed to the right of the map.
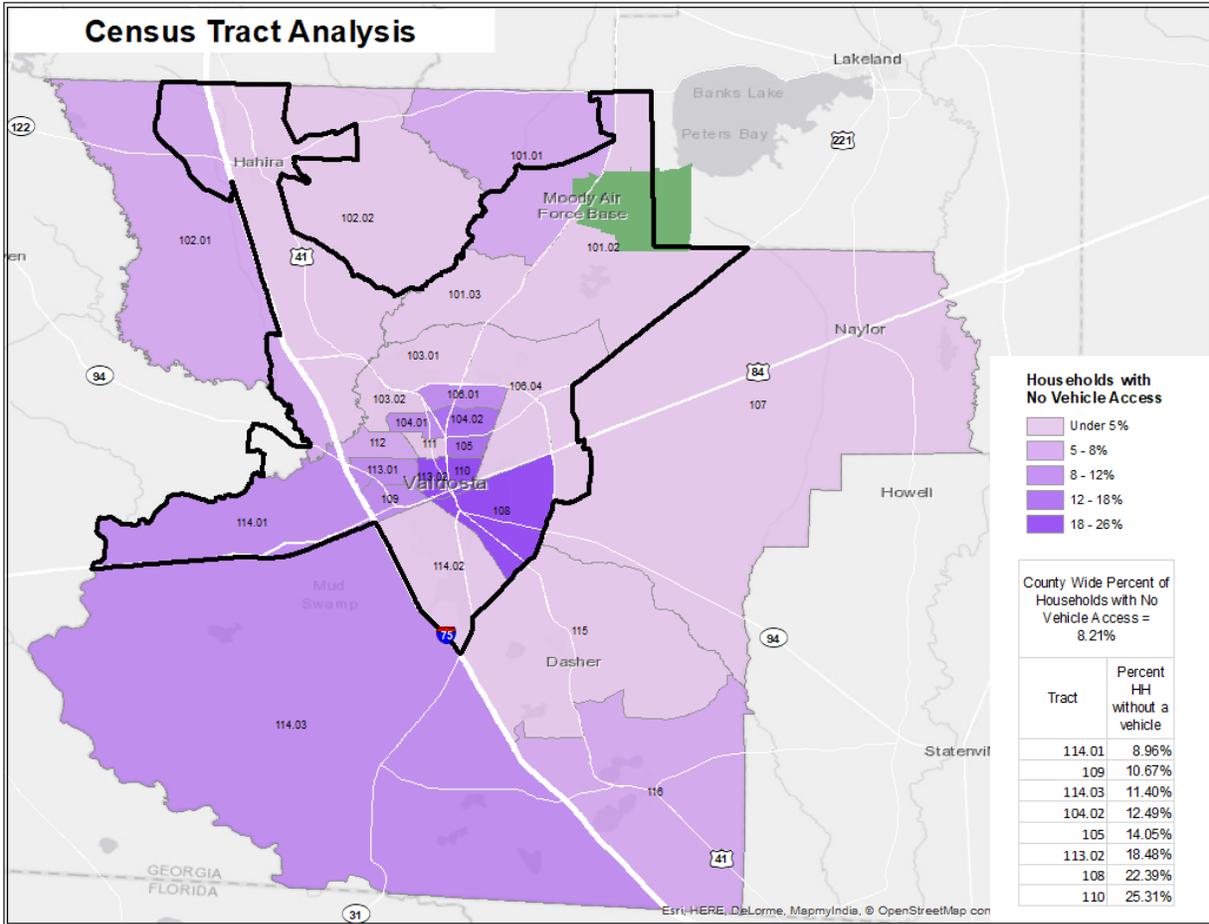
*Figure 6 Households with Zero Vehicle Ownership by Tract, 2015*

The map below shows percent of households without access to a vehicle by Block Group. This map shows that priority households in areas to the west of I-75 are located near the interstate.
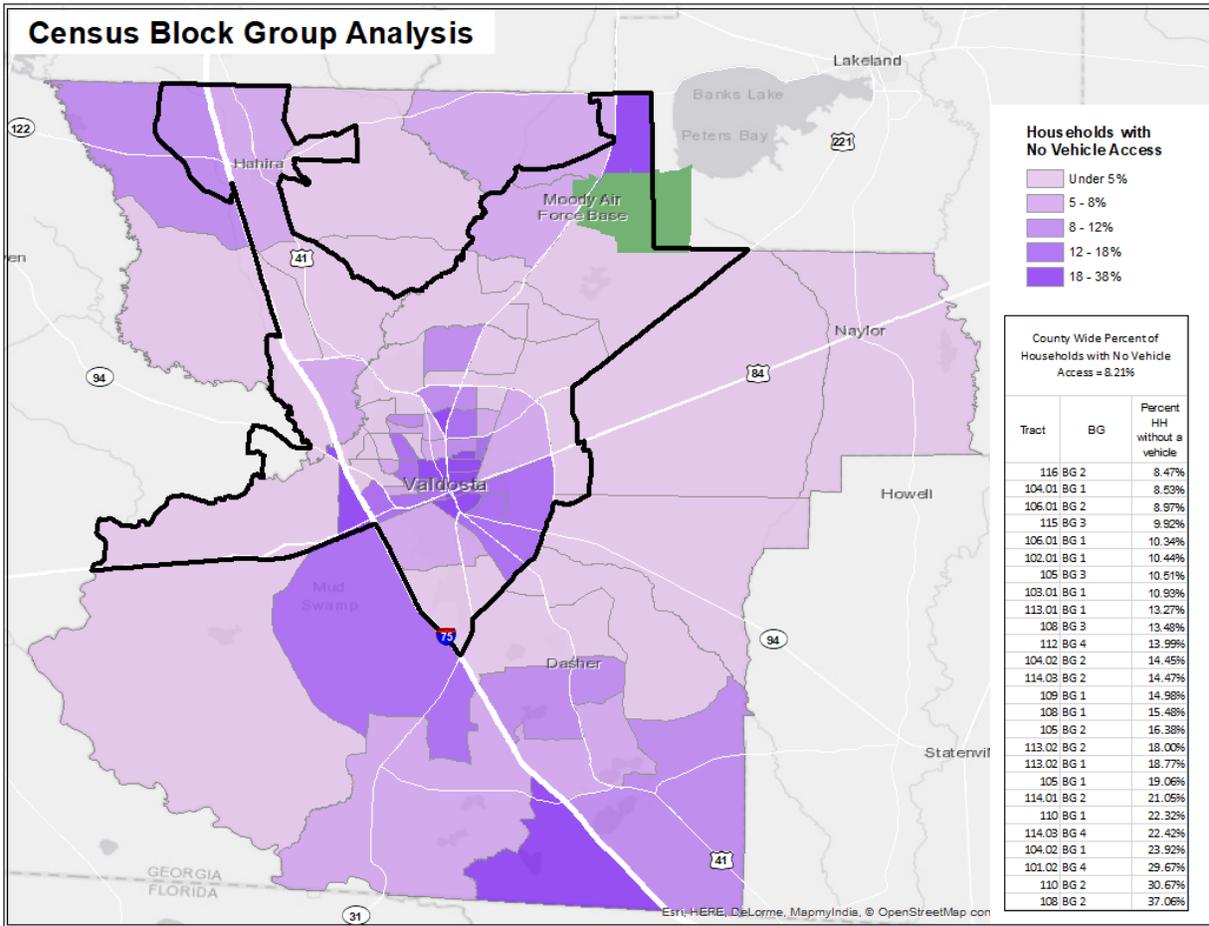
Figure 7 Households with Zero Vehicle Ownership by Block Group, 2015

The next map shows average travel time to work by Tract. Tract 110 in central Valdosta has a relatively high average travel time to work at 26 minutes. However, there are low wage job centers south of Valdosta and in other non-central areas where these residents may be employed. Not surprisingly, other Tracts with above average travel times are primarily located outside of the City of Valdosta as those residents likely commute into the city.
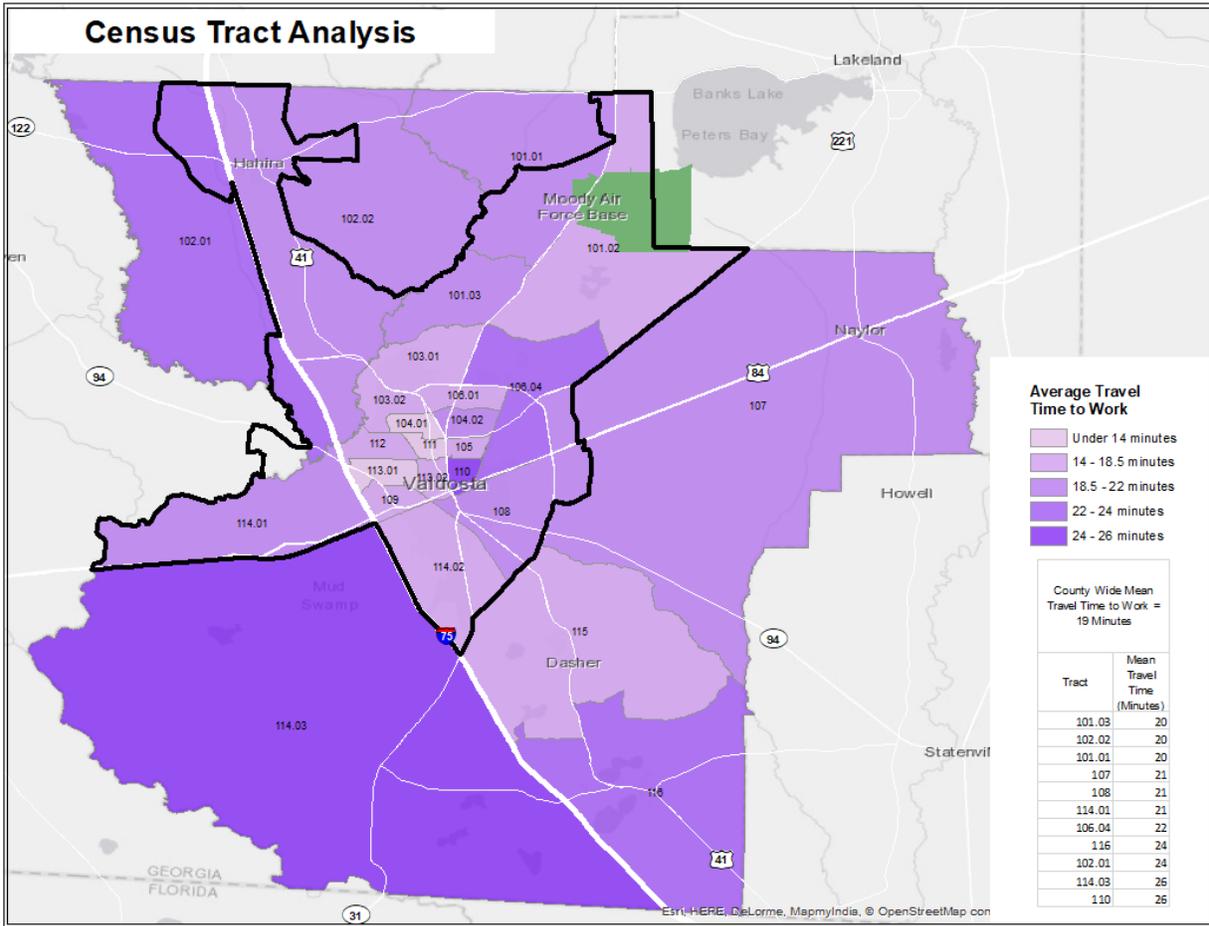
Figure 8 Average Travel Time to Work by Tract, 2015

Note that Average Travel Time to Work was not collected at the Block Group level.

Map overlays in the analysis section show areas where low income workers are concentrated with relatively long travel times to work. Mobility may be an issue for residents in these Tracts. As discussed below, minority populations are concentrated in most of these areas.

The map below shows where low wage jobs based on monthly wages are located. Each dot represents the number of jobs by Census Block in 2015 in the lowest wage category reported by Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics.
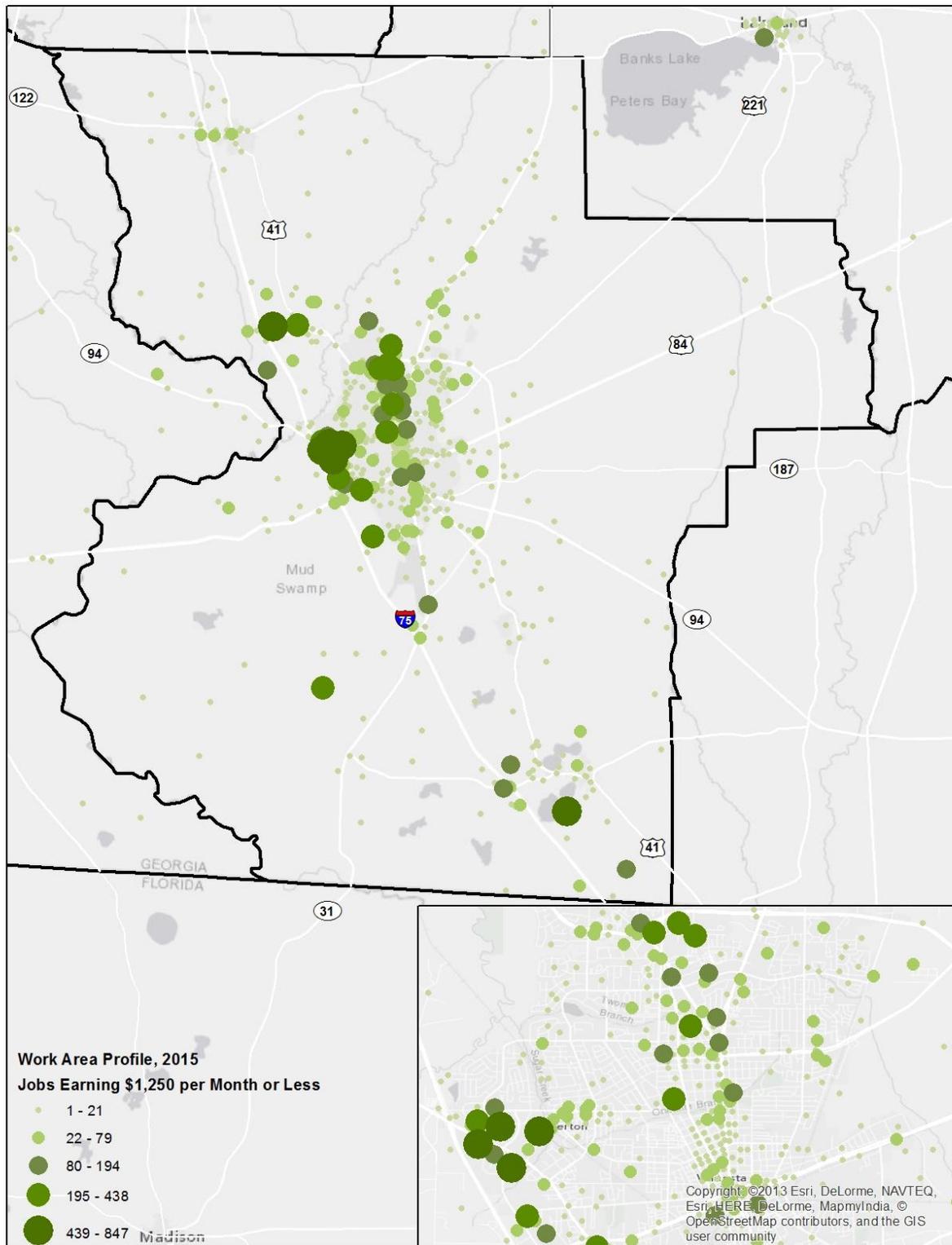
Figure 9 Low Wage Job Locations by Census Block, 2015

Age

The map below shows percent of population 65 years and over. The elderly population is located in areas around the county. Tracts with percent of elderly above the countywide percentage are listed to the right of the map. Locating areas where elderly populations coincide with low income and low vehicle ownership in the sections below is key to understanding potential impacts on the planning process.
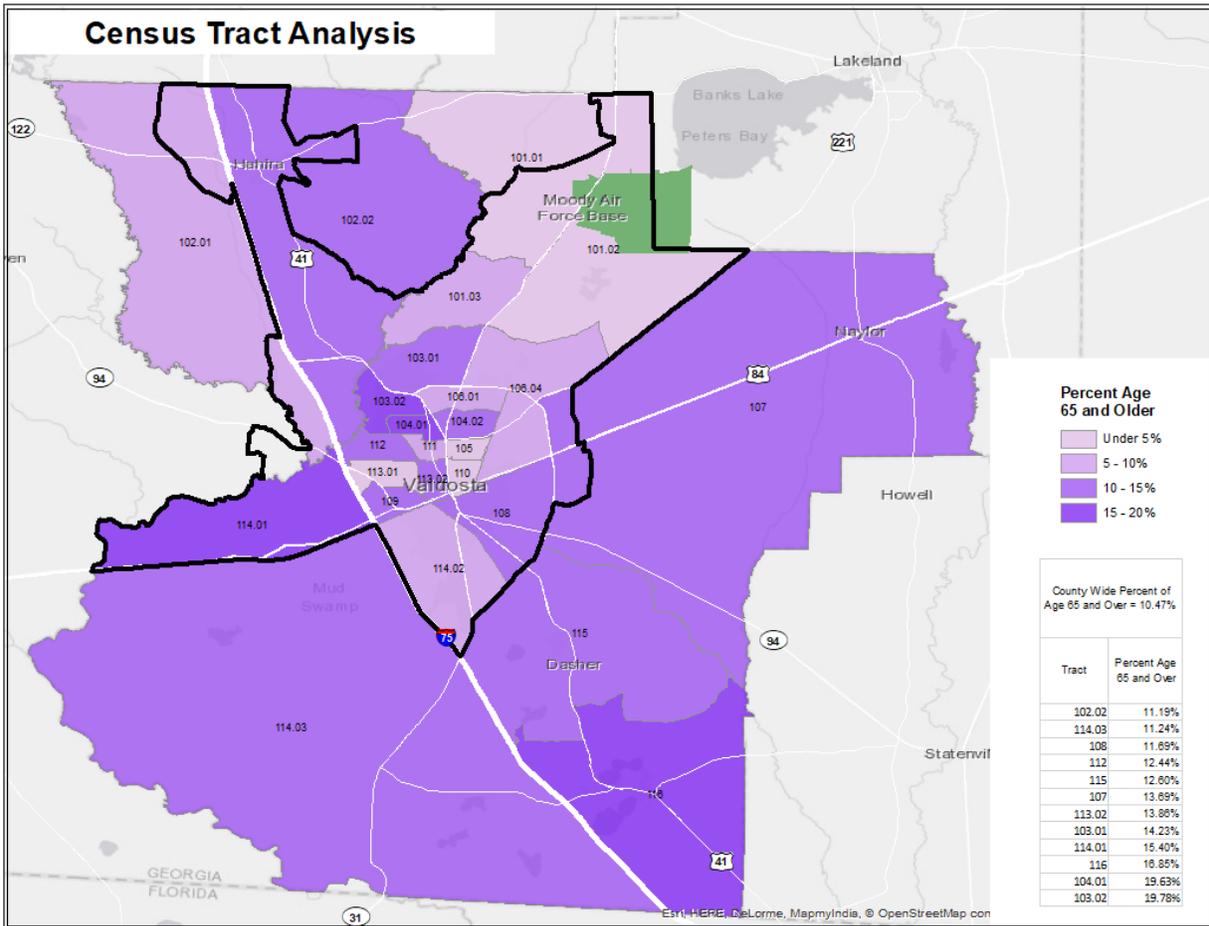
Figure 10 Percent Elderly Population by Tract, 2015

The map below shows elderly population by Block Group. Most Block Groups with a high proportion of elderly are along US 41 in northern Valdosta and outside of the city. Lake Park has a high proportion of elderly.
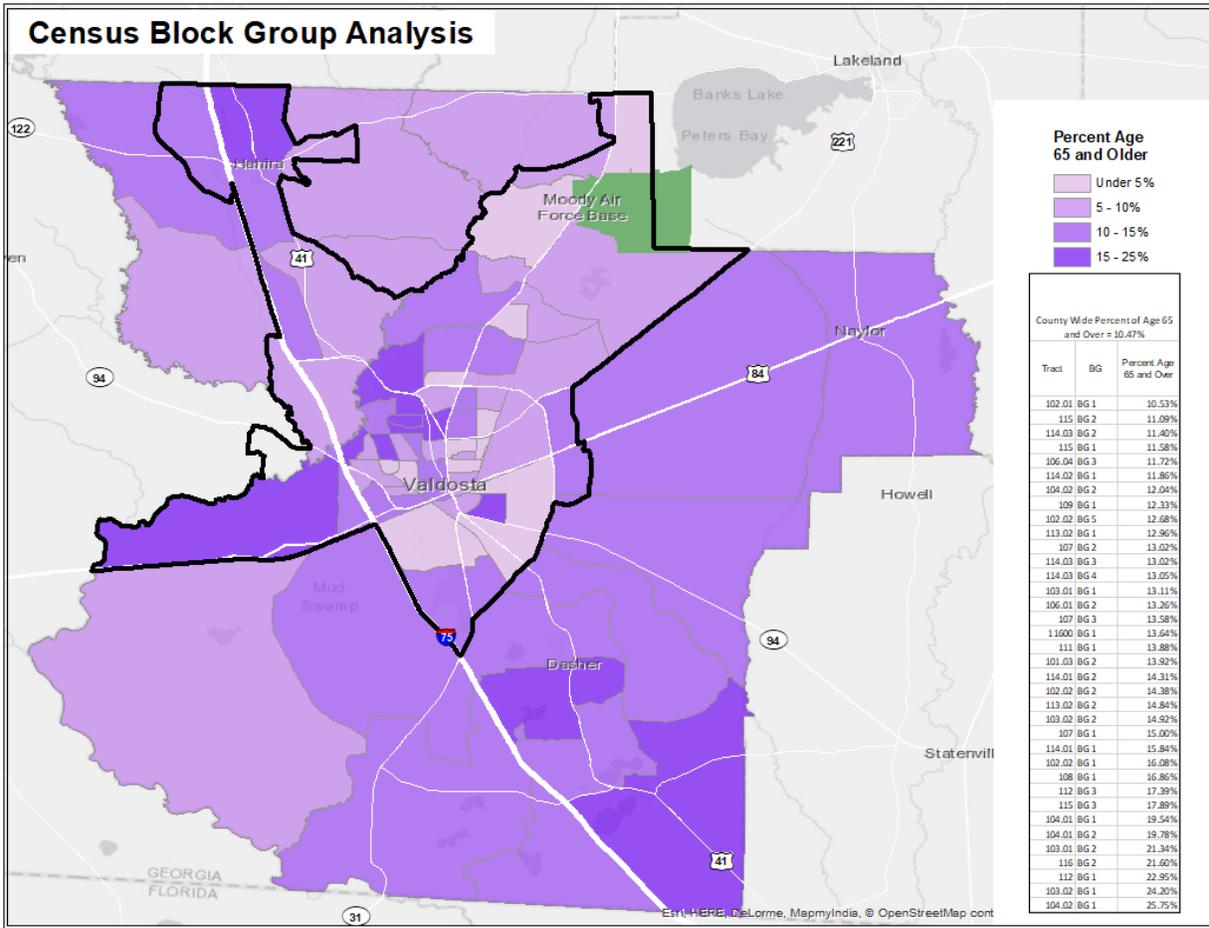
Figure 11 Percent Elderly Population by Block Group, 2015

Disability

The map below shows the Census Tract households with one or more persons with a disability. The countywide proportion is 26.63% of households have a disabled resident.
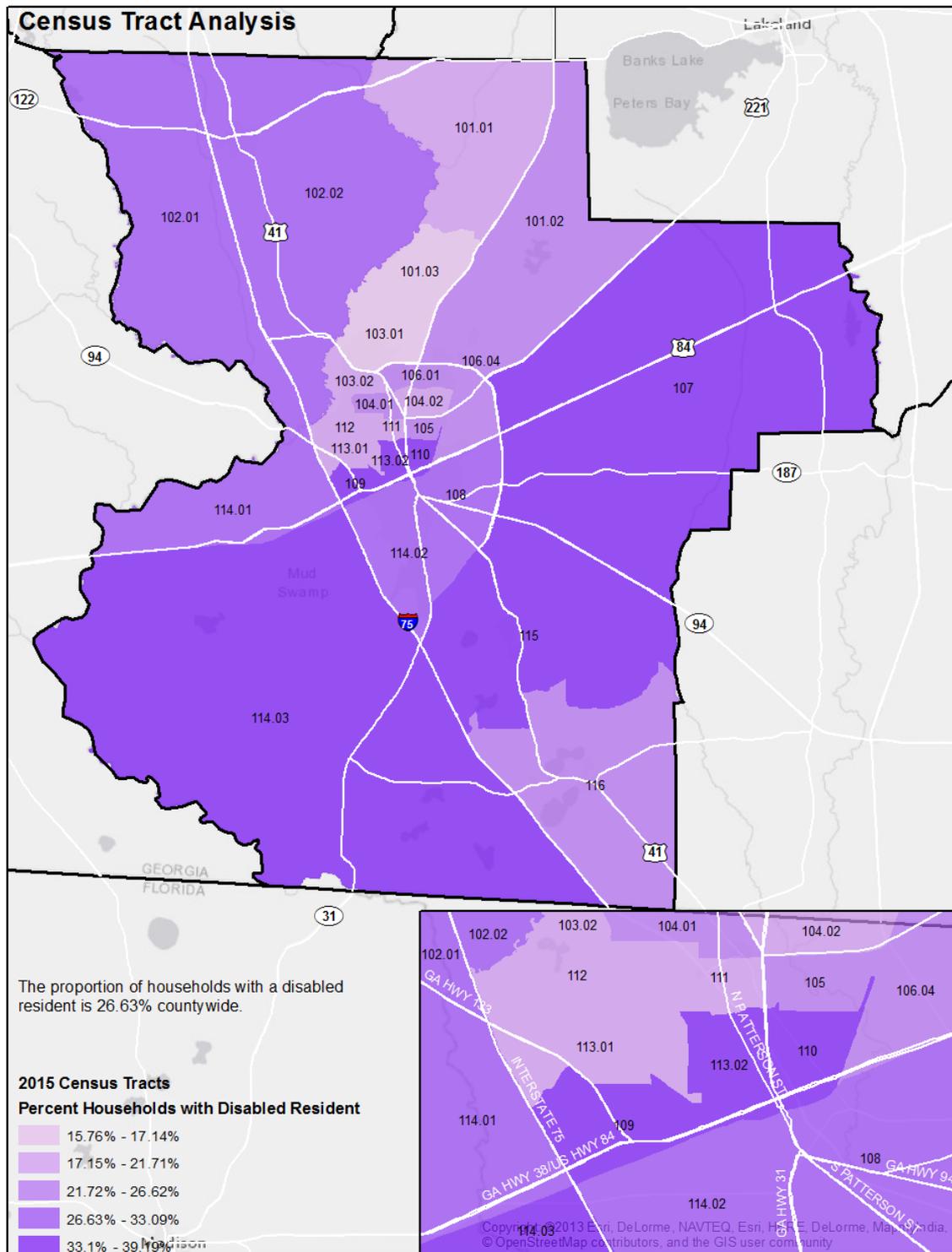
Figure 12 Percent Households with One or More Disabled Residents by Tract, 2015

The map below shows the Census Block Group households with one or more persons with a disability. The location of priority Block Groups largely reflects the distribution within Tracts. As VLMPO plans for public and human service transportation, the areas with disabled residents will be a focus.
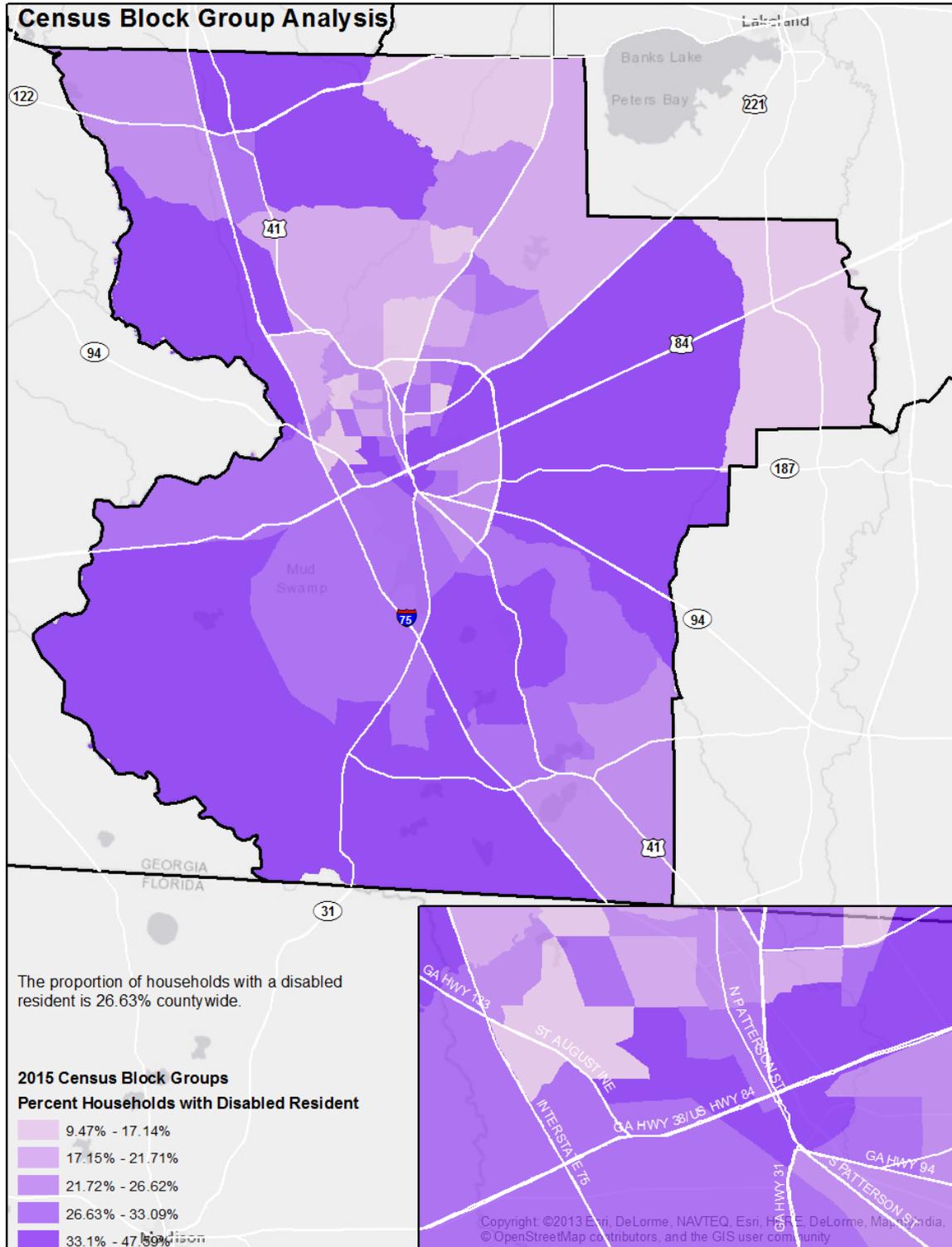
Figure 13 Percent Households with One or More Disabled Residents by Block Group, 2015

Educational Attainment

The map below shows the percent of people over 25 years with a high school diploma. Populations with low educational attainment are concentrated in central and southern Valdosta as well as west of I-75.
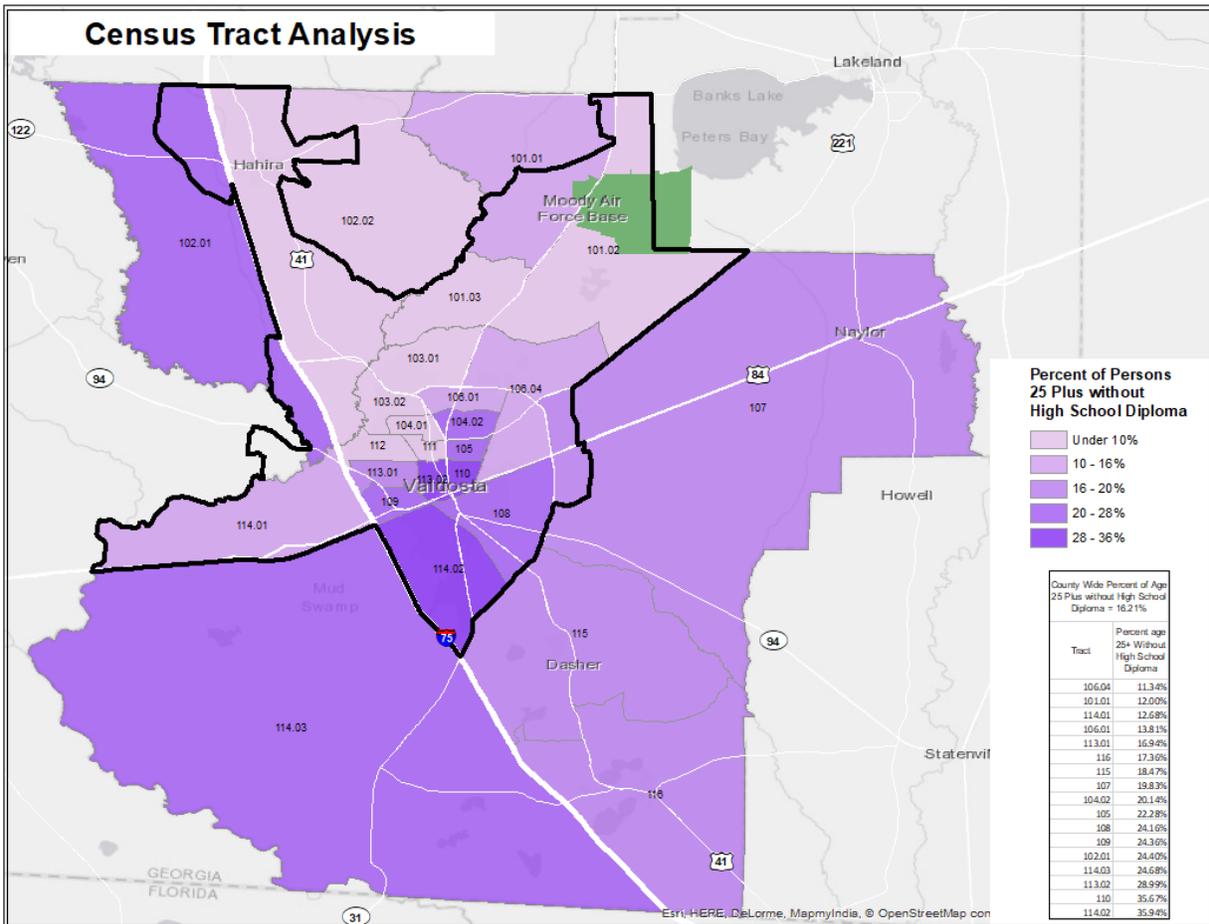

Figure 14 Persons without High School Diploma by Tract, 2015

The map below shows the percent of people over 25 years with a high school diploma by Block Group. Block Groups with relatively low educational attainment are located in central and southern Valdosta and to the west of I-75.


Census Block Group Analysis

Percent of Persons
25 Plus without
High School Diploma

	Under 10%
	10 – 16%
	16 – 20%
	20 – 28%
	28 – 44%

County Wide Percent of Age
25 Plus without High School
Diploma = 16.21%

Tract	BG	Percent age 25+ Without High School Diploma
116	BG 2	16.29%
101.01	BG 1	16.42%
106.01	BG 1	16.66%
105	BG 2	17.87%
116	BG 1	18.11%
109	BG 1	18.78%
115	BG 2	19.07%
107	BG 3	21.16%
114.01	BG 2	21.20%
107	BG 2	21.61%
114.03	BG 1	21.97%
102.02	BG 1	23.21%
115	BG 1	23.59%
114.03	BG 3	24.75%
104.02	BG 2	24.76%
113.02	BG 2	25.80%
108	BG 1	26.64%
108	BG 2	28.12%
109	BG 2	29.91%
113.01	BG 1	30.05%
110	BG 1	30.18%
104.02	BG 1	31.30%
102.01	BG 2	32.24%
113.02	BG 1	32.67%
114.02	BG 1	33.33%
114.03	BG 2	36.60%
114.02	BG 2	37.42%
106.04	BG 1	41.09%
105	BG 1	42.42%
110	BG 2	43.53%

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Figure 15 Persons without High School Diploma by Block Group, 2015

English Proficiency

Of all households in Lowndes County, 1.3% are Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Spanish is the dominant non-English language spoken in LEP households and in Lowndes County overall. Based on the assessment, LEP households speaking other languages are minimal as of the 2015 ACS. Nearly 5% of households speak Spanish. The next two most prevalent languages reported (regardless of English proficiency) are "Other Indo-European" at 1.9% of all households and "Asian and Pacific Island" languages at 1.1% of all households. The range of languages and the number of households where languages other than English are spoken should continue to be monitored. Because of the county-wide demographics, our assessment focuses on Spanish-speaking households as the EJ concern.

The first two maps below show percent of households where Spanish is spoken, regardless of English proficiency. The Tract south of US 84 and east of I-75 has the highest proportion of households where Spanish is spoken. Concentrations of Spanish-speaking LEP households are also located there (as shown on the following pages). During the planning process, VLMPO should consider translating materials to Spanish to engage these residents consistent with EJ requirements.
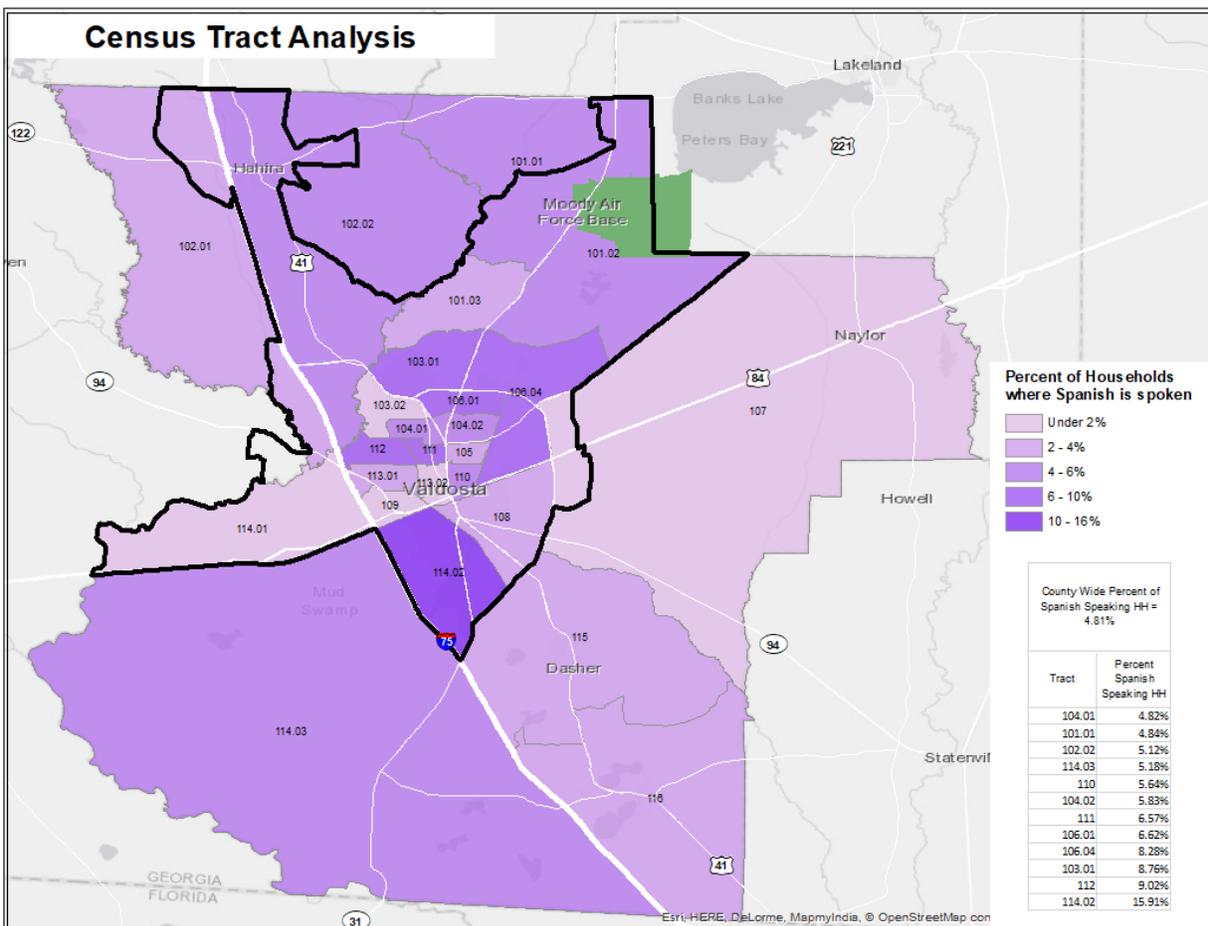

Figure 16 Percent of Households where Spanish is Spoken by Tract, 2015

The map below shows households where Spanish is spoken by Block Group.
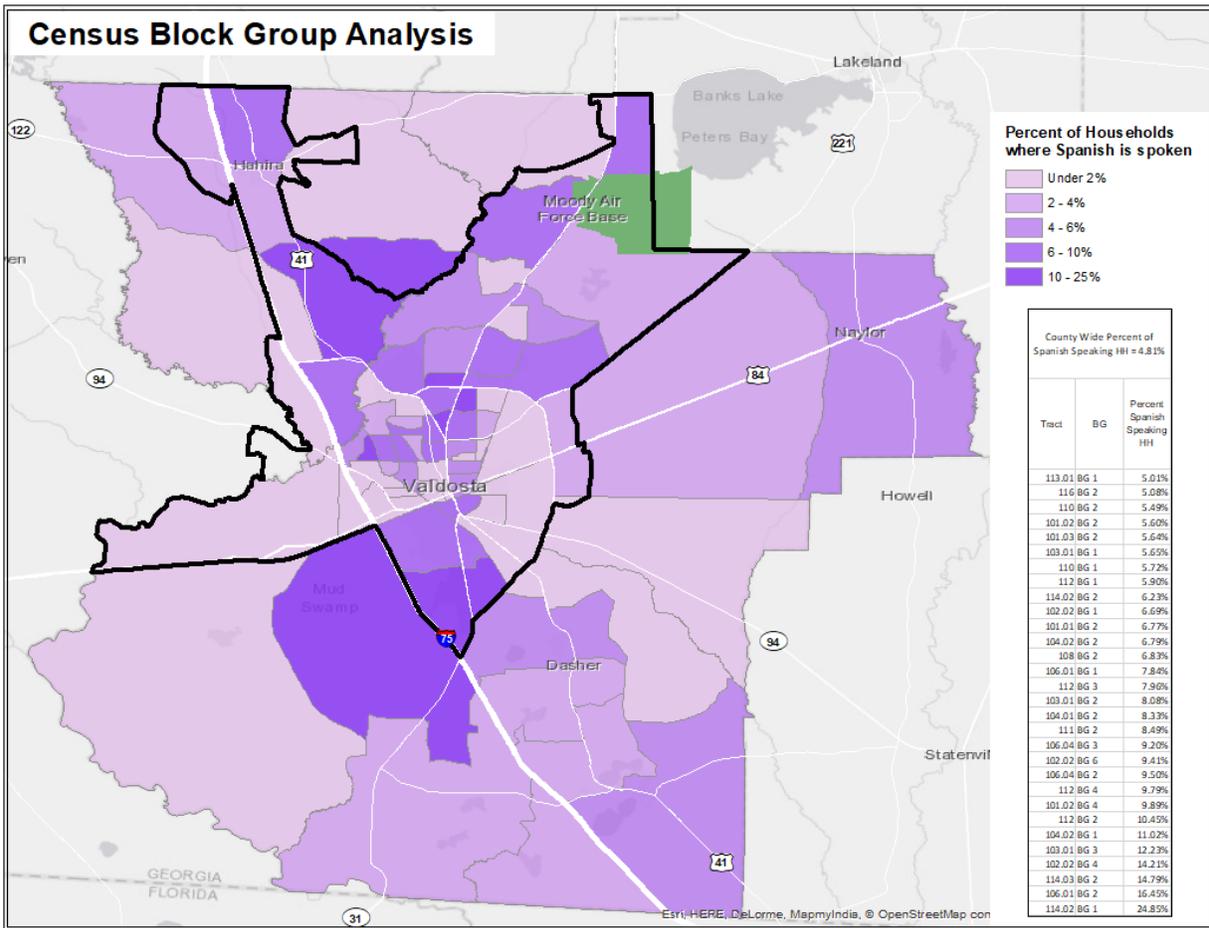
Figure 17 Percent of Households where Spanish is Spoken by Block Group, 2015

The maps below show concentrations of Limited English Proficiency households where Spanish is spoken in the southwest part of the county as well as in central Valdosta between E Park Avenue and US 41 and south of US 84 just inside the city limits east of I-75. The area along the I-75 corridor south of US 84 shows the highest concentration, between 7 and 11 percent by Block Group.
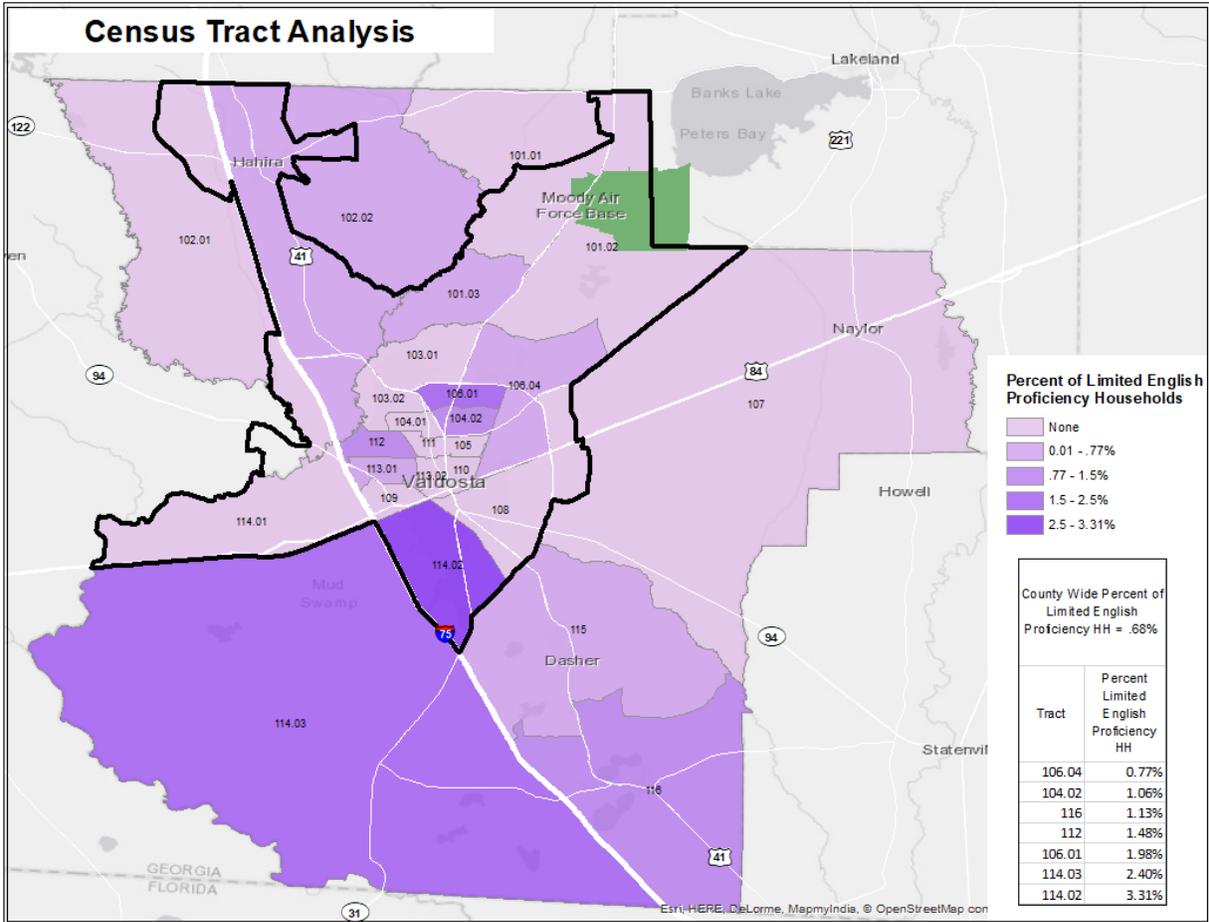

Figure 18 Percent of Households with Limited English Proficiency where Spanish is spoken by Tract, 2015
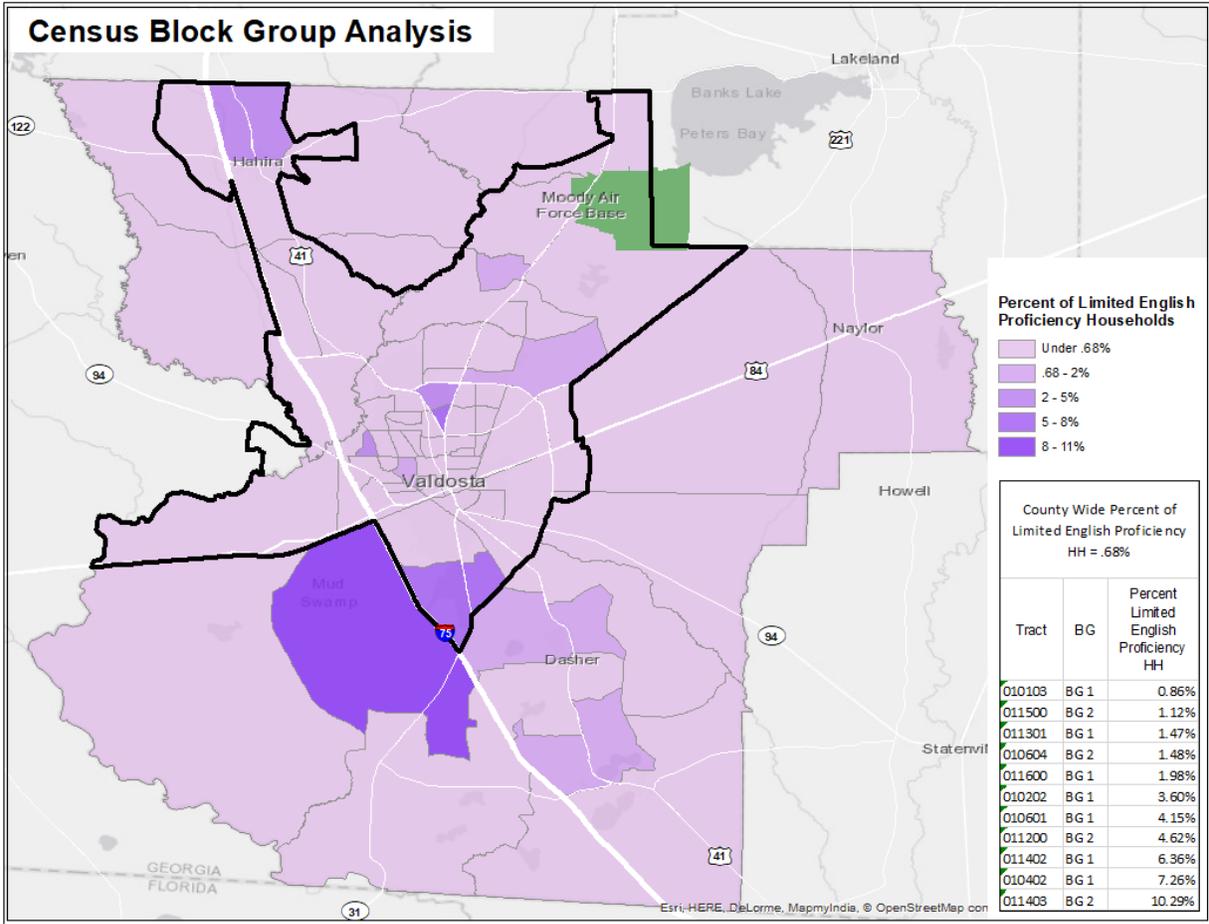
Figure 19 Percent of Households with Limited English Proficiency where Spanish is spoken by Block Group, 2015

Assessment of Critical Environmental Justice Areas

Areas within Lowndes County with concentrations of priority populations based on multiple indicators include central and south Valdosta. Additionally, areas between US 41 and E Park Avenue show concentrations of low income, Limited English Proficiency households. These areas should be a focus of targeted outreach and communication during the planning process and as transportation improvements are identified that provide human service and public transportation. Walkability may be critical in these areas to provide mobility to populations with low vehicle ownership and low income.

Areas with Potential Mobility Issues

The map below shows low income and/or high poverty areas with low vehicle ownership areas and long commute times. Note that while Tract 104.02 is not high poverty relative to the county as a whole, it is an area with a concentration of low income households and is therefore an area of low income, low vehicle access, and long commute time. Tracts 110 and 108 are high poverty, low income, low vehicle access, and long commute time areas. Mobility may be an issue for residents in these Tracts because of a lack of resources; above average travel times to work are an indicator of mobiltiy limitations. As discussed below, minority populations are concentrated in most of these areas.
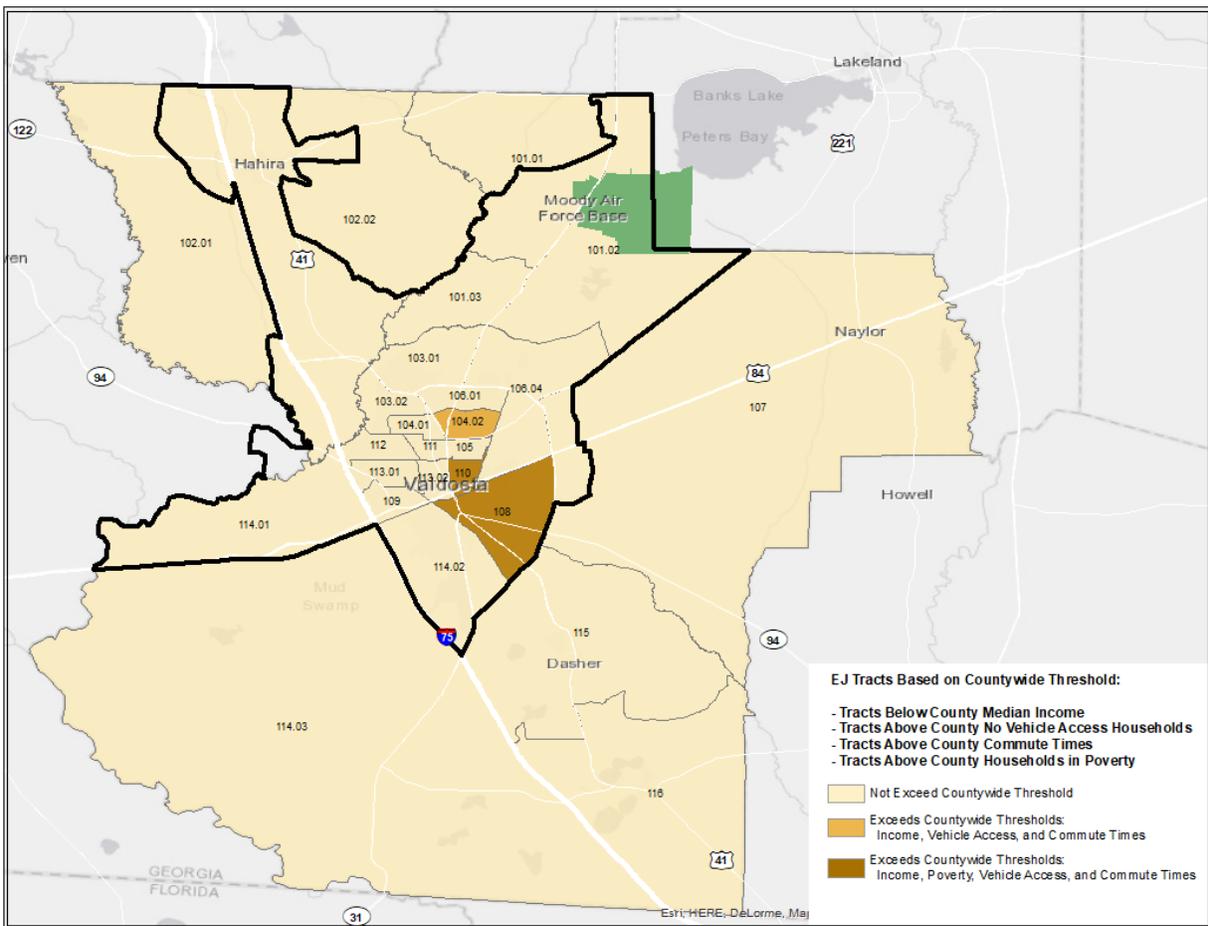

Figure 20 Tracts with Low Income or High Poverty, Low Vehicle Access, and Long Commute Times, 2015

The maps that follow document where elderly populations reside that are also low income or below poverty. Zero vehicle households are concentrated in the same Tracts.
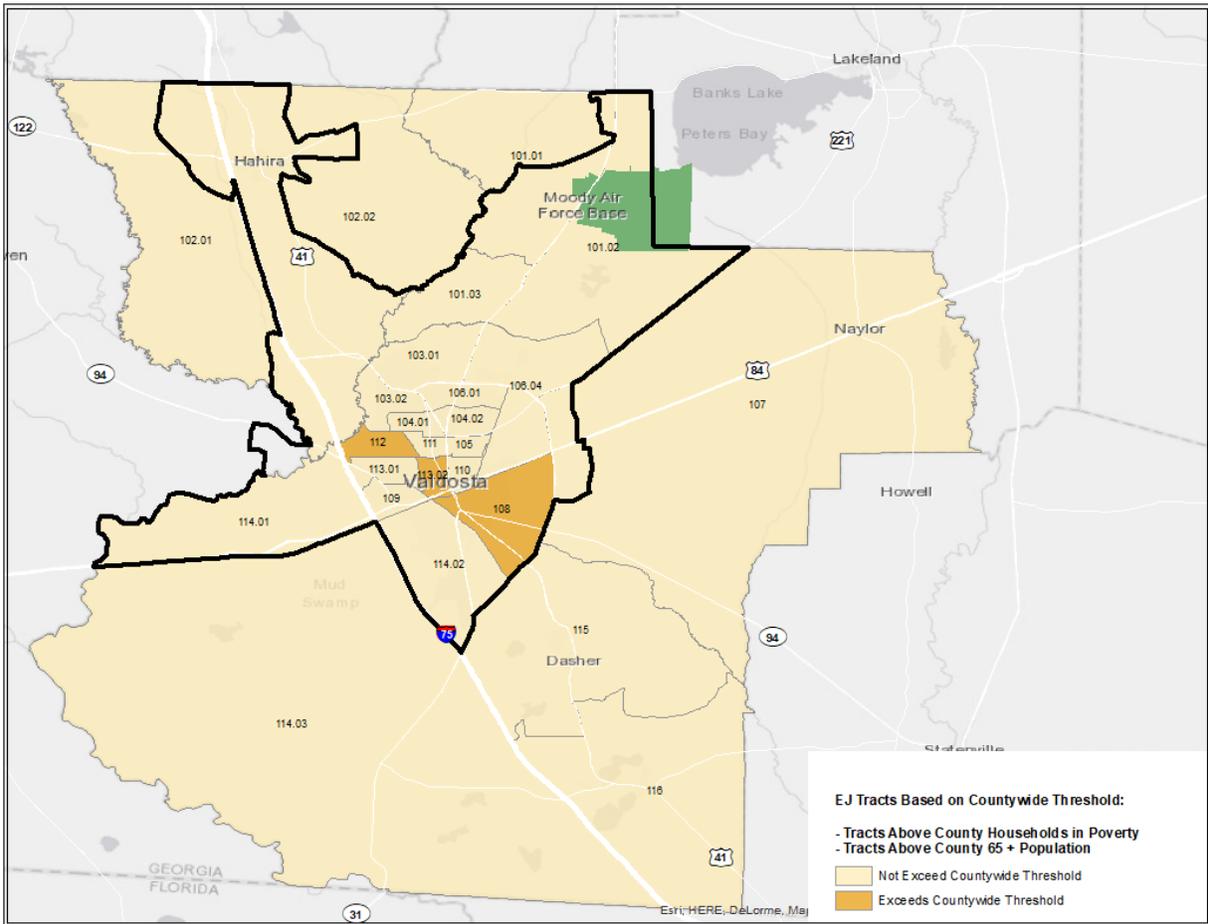

Figure 21 High Poverty Tracts with Concentrations of Elderly, 2015

The map below shows the Tracts with high proportions of elderly, low income, high poverty, and low vehicle ownership. Both Tracts meet thresholds for all four paramters; no additional Tracts are a concern when low income and high poverty areas are assessed separately. These same Tracts have concentrations of minority (Nonwhite) populations.
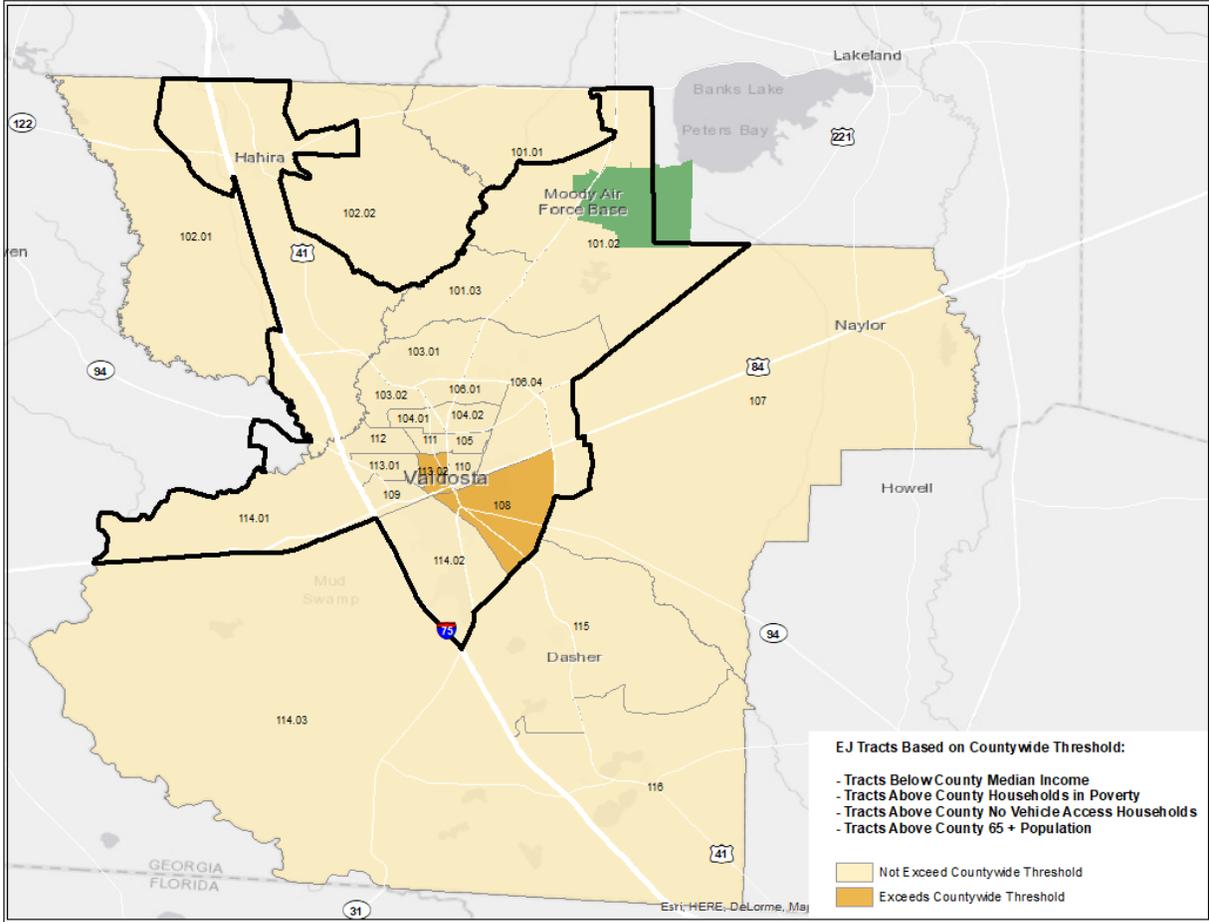

Figure 22 High Poverty and Low Income Tracts with Concentrations of Elderly and Low Vehicle Access

Areas with Limited English Proficiency

The maps below highlight areas with Limited English Profifiency (LEP) and mobility restrictions due to income or low vehicle ownership. Tract 104.02 along E Park Avenue also has a high proportion of minority population at 76%.
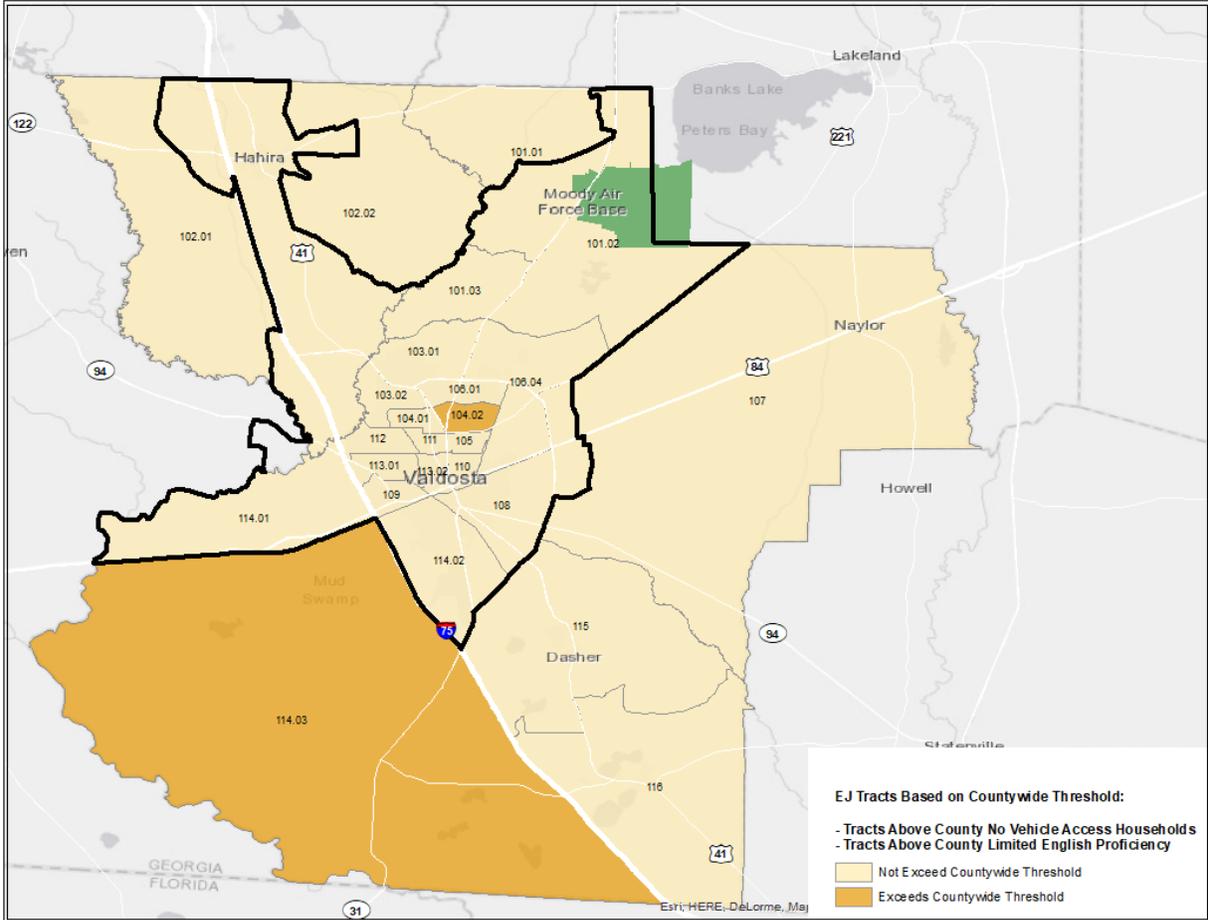
Figure 23 LEP Tracts with Low Vehicle Access, 2015

In addition to the LEP and low income households mapped, all three Tracts highlighted in the map below also have a high proportion of minority population at greater than 49% Nonwhite.
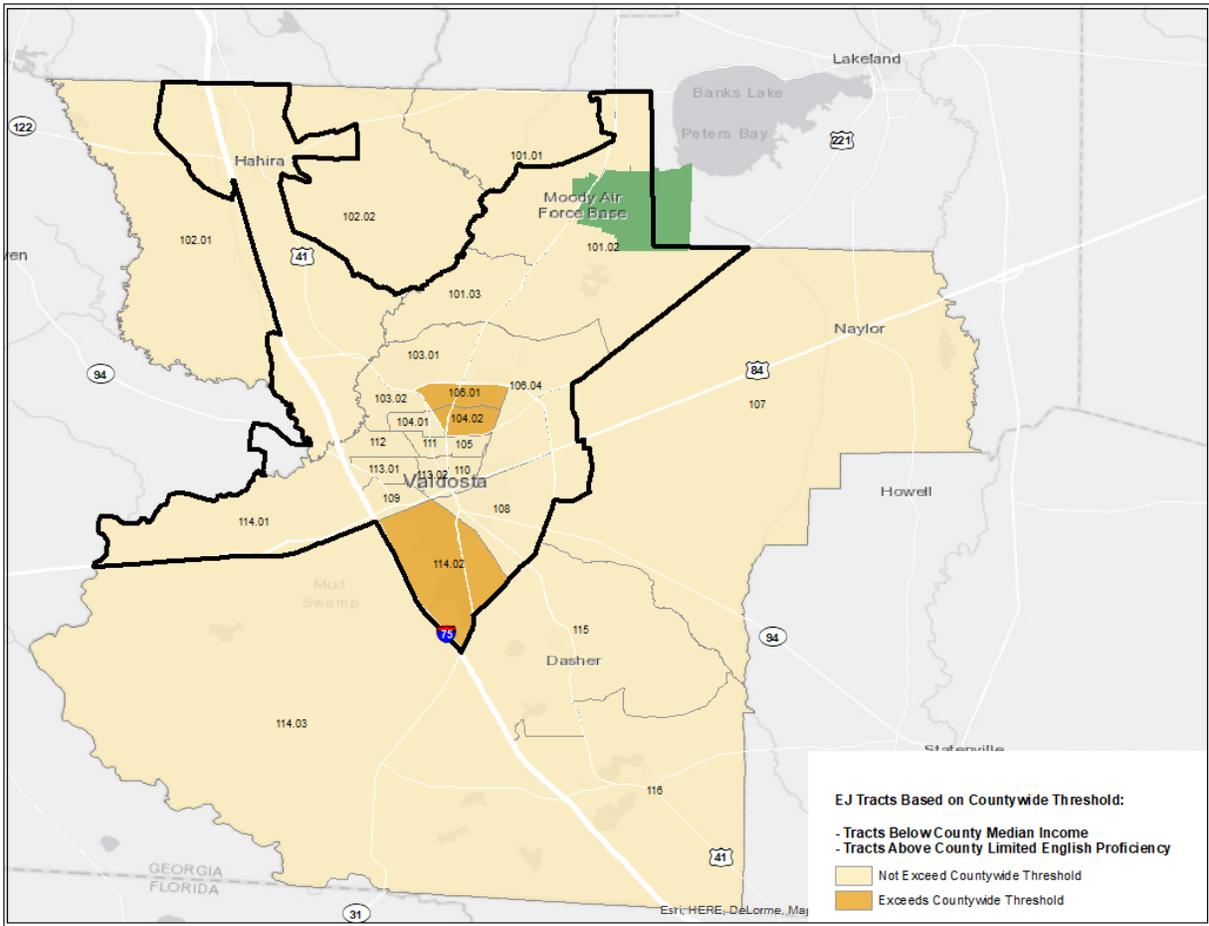

Figure 24 LEP Tracts with Low Income, 2015

As shown below, Tract 104.02 is a low income Tract with low vehicle ownership, high proportion of LEP households. This Tract has high proportion of minority populations at 76% Nonwhite.
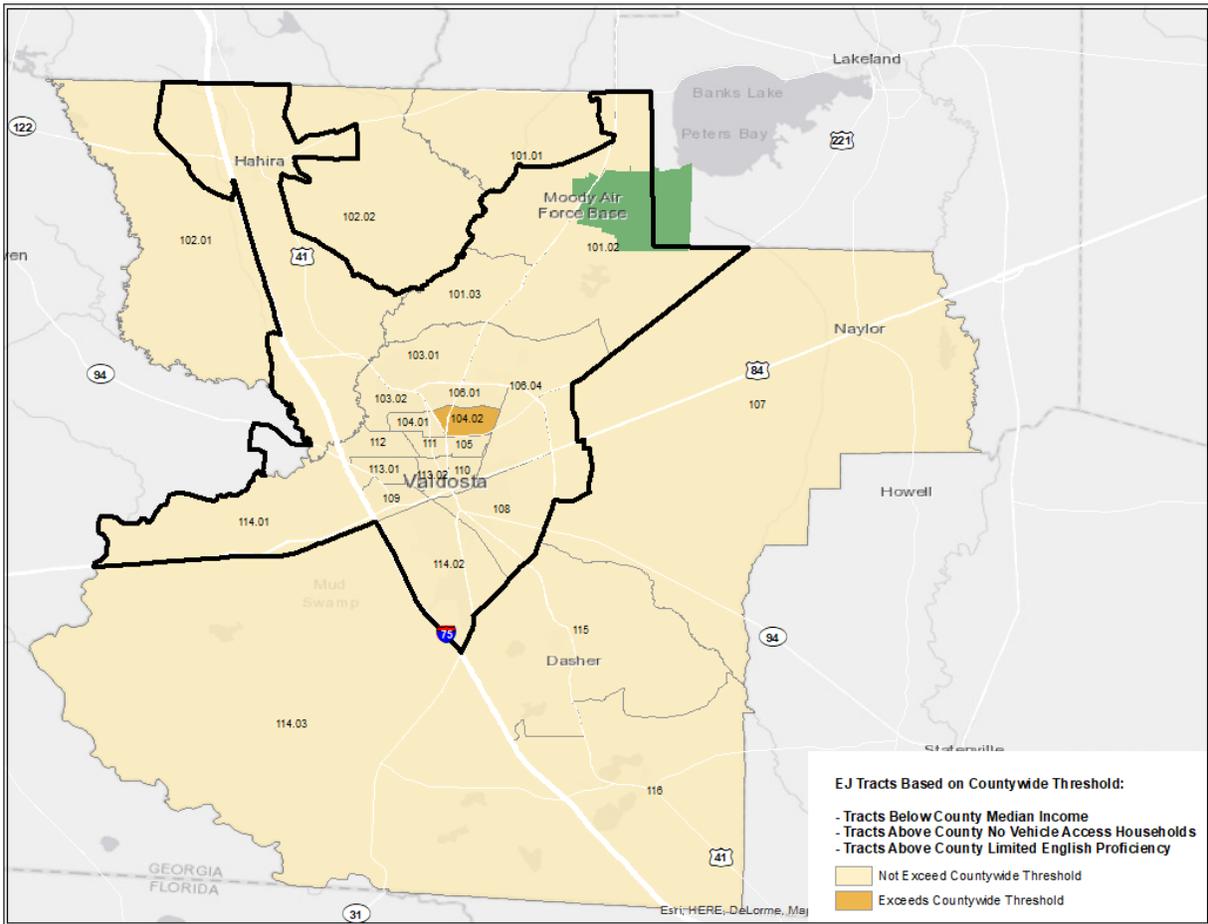

Figure 25 LEP Tracts with Low Income and Low Vehicle Access, 2015

Discussion

The Environmental Justice (EJ) assessment shows that several Tracts should be an area of focus in VLMPO planning efforts to ensure compliance with EJ requirements. These include Tracts 104.02, 105, 106.01, 106.04, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113.01, 113.02, 114.01, 114.02, and 114.03. The map below shows these EJ focus area Tracts. While each Tract does not exceed county-wide thresholds for all of the EJ parameters, all of the areas shown exceed the county-wide threshold for two or more parameters.

Particular attention to areas with low vehicle ownership and elderly populations may help in planning public transportation to promote mobility for EJ groups. The overlay of various indicators shows that many EJ populations are concentrated in central Valdosta. Impacts due to transportation investments planned for these areas should be closely evaluated. VLMPO should make every effort to solicit public input from residents in the EJ areas indicated.
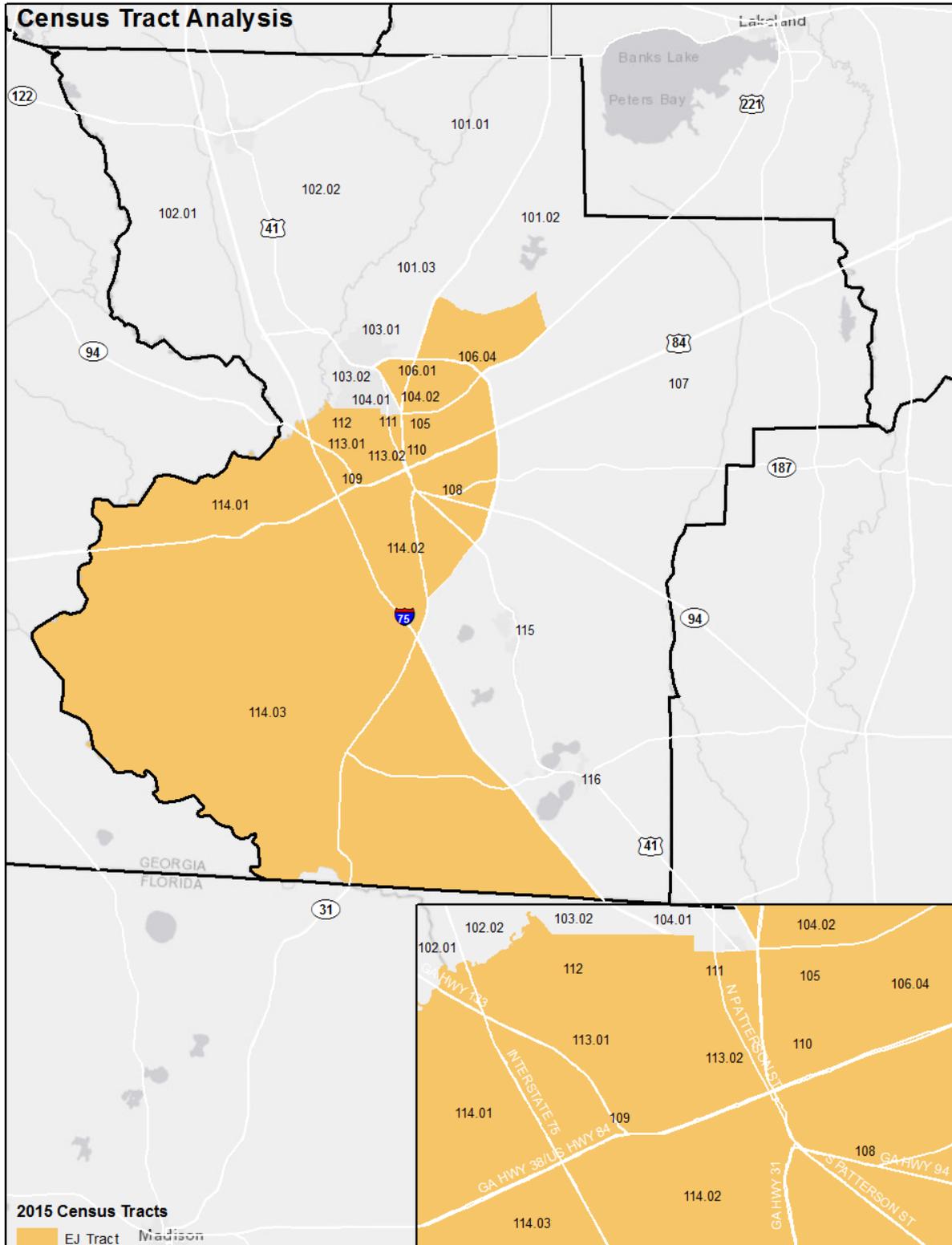
Figure 26 Environmental Justice Focus Area