

Environmental Justice

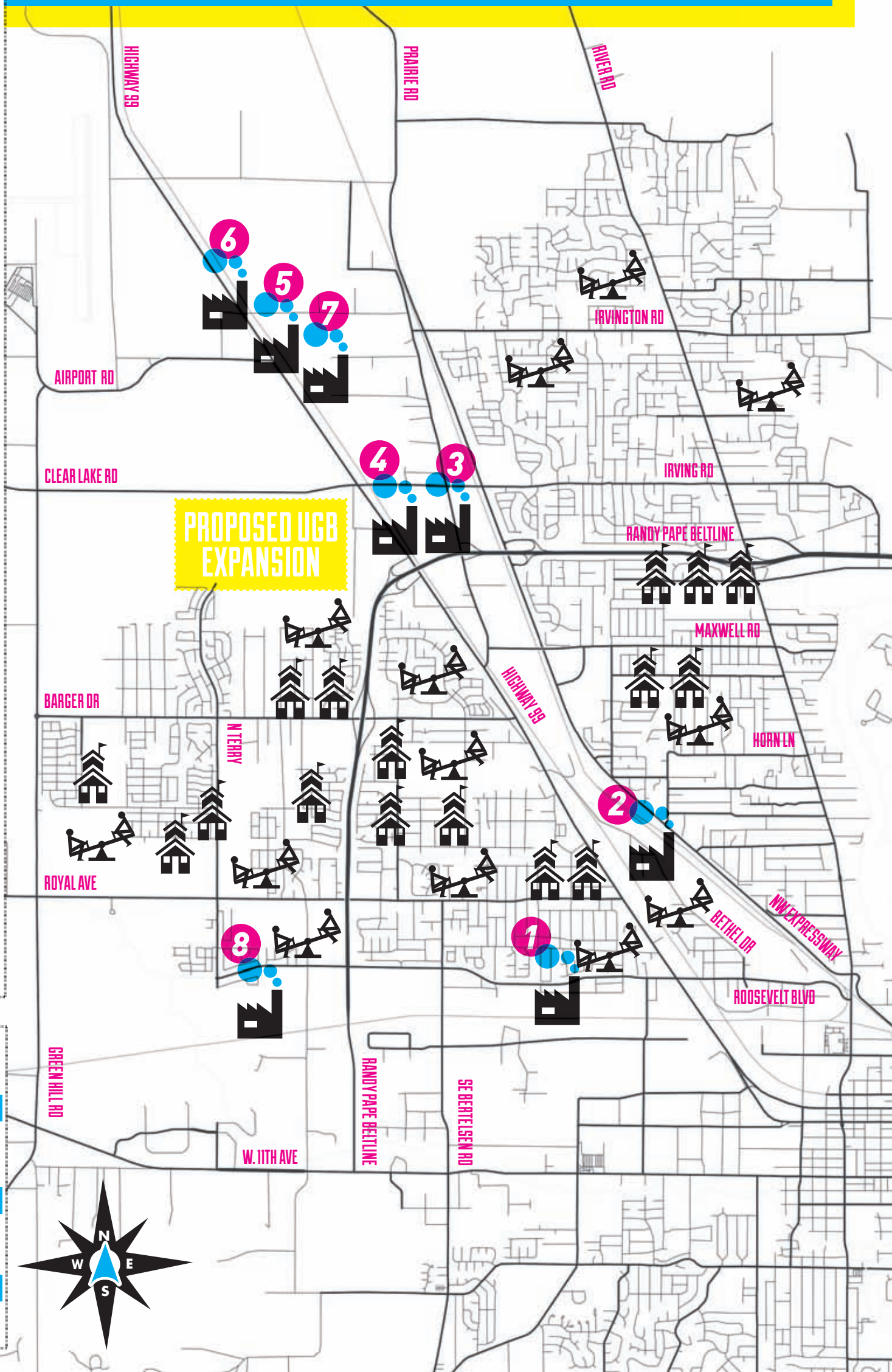
Bring up the environment in Eugene, and most people's eyes turn outwards. We look at the forests, rivers and public lands around the city, but not at our city itself or the people that breathe its air. Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) permits often refer to the effects that industrial emissions could have on the "class 1 airshed." But that airshed designation isn't about Eugene; it refers to national parks that are greater than 6,000 acres and national wilderness areas greater than 5,000 acres, such as the Diamond Peak Wilderness here in Lane County, according to the Clean Air Act. Visibility contributes to the aesthetic nature of the area.

Environmental justice hasn't gotten much play in Eugene until now. The EPA defines environmental justice as "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."

Beyond Toxics and Centro LatinoAmericano launched the West Eugene Industrial Corridor Environmental Health Project in 2010 with grants from the EPA after west Eugene residents began to express concerns about the new Seneca biomass plant adding to the air issues in their neighborhood. Centro and Beyond Toxics found that the affected neighborhoods have higher percentages of minority, elderly, disabled and poverty-level residents and that the families are disproportionately affected by higher concentrations of industrial air pollutants from surrounding industrial sources. They found that there are 50 air and toxic release sites and two Superfund sites listed within the 9-square-mile area of west Eugene.

One of the areas proposed in Envision Eugene's urban growth boundary (UGB) expansion lies in the west Eugene industrial corridor. Envision Eugene maps show single-family homes, parks and schools proposed south of Clear Lake Road, just off Highway 99. The maps also show proposed industrial expansion north of Clear Lake Road. Mapping by Beyond Toxics illustrates that the proposed expansion area would be close to existing industries, as well as the newer proposed ones. Concerns voiced by Beyond Toxics about the low-level, chronic and synergistic exposures to toxics families in the new homes would face have led the city to focus more on proposing homes in the LCC basin. — *Camilla Mortensen*

WEST EUGENE'S TOXIC LEGACY



KEY

TOXIC SOURCE

Industrial source of pollution

SCHOOL

K-12 schools

PARK/PLAYGROUND

Eugene city parks