

Environmental Justice and Identification of Target Areas

The purpose of Environmental Justice (EJ) is to prevent minority communities and low income communities from disproportionate adverse environmental effects of projects and programs. The basis for addressing EJ is Presidential Executive Order (EO) 12898. As per FTA Circular 4703.1, EO 12898 calls on each Federal agency to achieve “environmental justice...by identifying and addressing, as appropriate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations...”. This circular also implies that agencies such as Bel-O-Mar can facilitate compliance by incorporating EJ principles into transportation decision-making process and environmental review documents. The overarching objective of EJ is a fair distribution of the benefits or burdens associated with Federal programs, policies and activities.

Department of Transportation implemented EO 12898 in its order on EJ. The DOT order provides that if a DOT program, policy or activity will have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low income populations, that program policy or activity may only be carried out if further mitigation measures or alternatives that would reduce the disproportionately high and adverse effects are not practicable. In determining whether a mitigation measure of alternative is “practicable,” the social, economic (including costs) and environmental effects of avoiding or mitigating the adverse effects will be taken into account.

In order to conduct an EJ analysis, it is important to know geographic location of minority and low income populations. Once minority and low income communities are identified, disproportionate effects of transportation projects and programs can be studied.

Bel-O-Mar previously identified EJ target areas with disproportionate minority and low income populations within the urbanized areas using 2000 Census data. In addition, persons with no auto available and elderly (65+) persons were also considered in identifying the target areas. These target areas have been used for analysis for over a decade. In this report, new target areas are identified based on the 2010 Census data and the estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS). The 2010 Census data is based on 100% count, while the ACS estimates are based on a five year sample collected from 2006 to 2010. In identifying new target areas, FTA Circular 4301.1 is followed.

Demographic of the Area

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) consists of three counties. Belmont County in Ohio and Ohio and Marshall Counties in West Virginia. The MPO area covers 948 square miles and has a population of 147,950. Of the total population, 4% is minority and 16% is low income. The minority population includes American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. The Census Bureau identifies persons below poverty based on the original version of federal poverty measure. The thresholds are updated annually. For this analysis, ACS estimate of persons below poverty is used.

To identify EJ target areas, it is necessary to seek out communities or subareas with concentration of minority and low income populations. The identification process is data driven. The two readily available data sources are the 2010 census and ACS Survey. Other data sources

exist but are not considered due to cost and complex availability concerns. The Census data is available at different geographies. Due to the confidentiality concerns, the data suppression becomes an issue at smaller geographic units such as census block.

Identification of Target Areas

In order to address needs of minority and low income populations, it is necessary to identify areas where these populations are located. Once minority and low income areas are known, effects of projects, programs and policies on these areas can be studied. In identifying target areas, it is important that the disadvantaged and under represented minority and low income population make up a large proportion of the total population of the candidate areas. If target areas are in close proximity of each other, the effects of projects and program may be readily discernable. However, the size and proximity of a target area is dependent on the availability of data needed for identifying the target area. While a census block is well suited, the data availability is minimal at this scale. The SF1 and ACS data is available for block groups and census tracts. Depending on the regional area size, population density and demographics of a region, appropriate geography can be selected for defining target areas.

The three county area covers 948 square miles and the population density is 156 persons per square miles. The minority population density is only 7 persons/square mile. The low income population density is 24 persons/square mile. Given such sparse densities of target groups, a smaller geographic unit is better suited locally. Census Block Group (BG) is the smallest unit for which relevant data is available. Thus BG data is used for defining EJ target areas in the Bel-O-Mar Region.

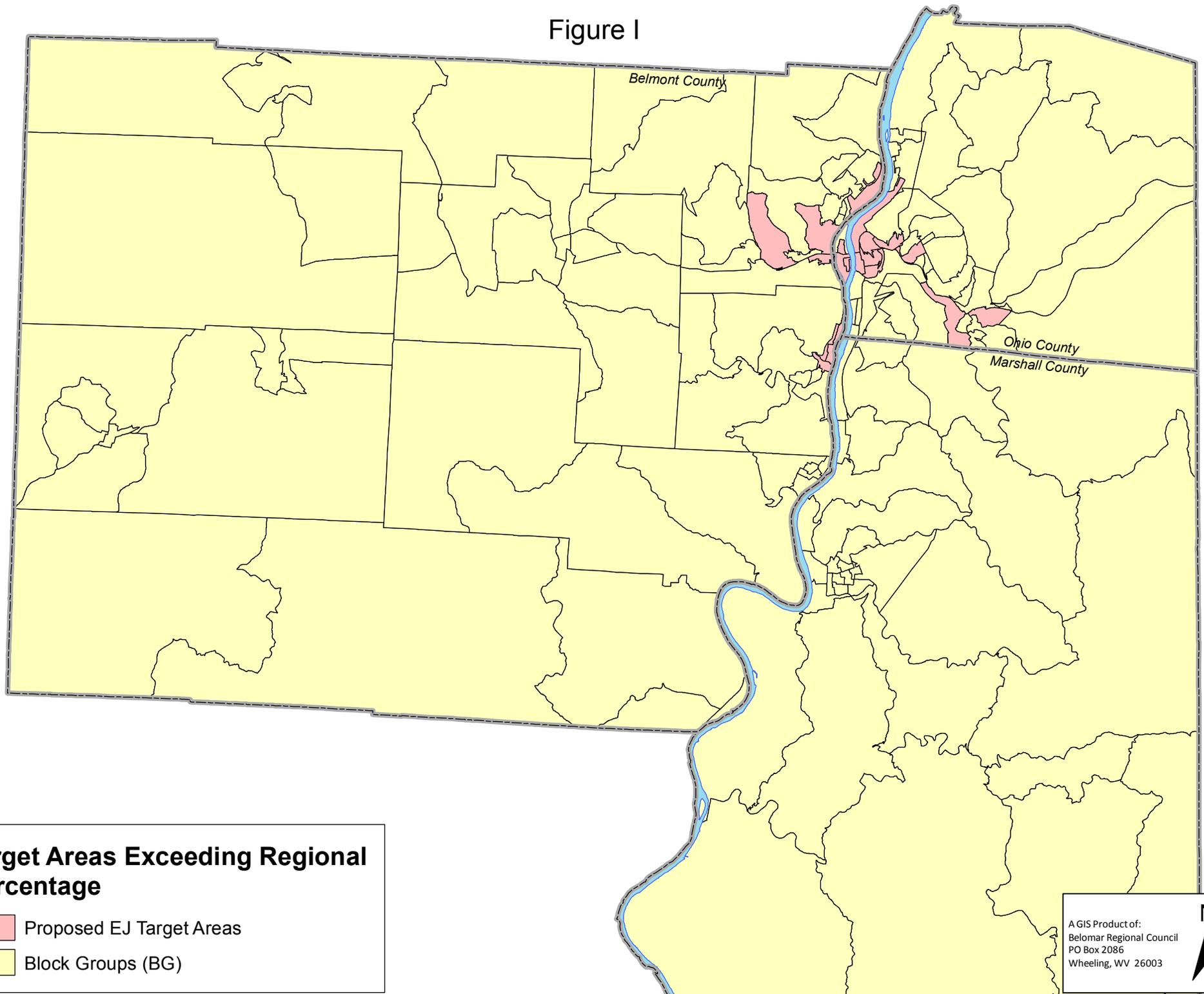
The percent of minority population in the three county area was determined. The regional percentage, based on 2010 Census, is 4%. Similarly, based on the ACS data, regional percentage of low income persons is 16%. The percentage of minority in each block group was compared to the regional percentage and all block groups exceeding the regional percentage were flagged. Similarly block groups were flagged for low income. In addition, block groups exceeding the regional percentage by 125% were also flagged. This provided an opportunity to consider two scenarios, first all block groups exceeding regional percentage were mapped and then all block groups exceeding the regional percentage by 125% were mapped. These scenarios are presented in Figure I and II.

Scenario I considers block groups that exceed regional percentage for both variables. From a regionwide total of 149 block groups, 20 are selected. Most of the blocks are in the inner cities of the urban core. However, a couple of block groups are separated by distance and are in the suburbs. These block groups barely exceed the regional percentage in at least one of the variables. No block group in Marshall County meets the criteria.

Scenario II selects areas that exceed the regional percentage by 125% for both variables. A total of 17 block groups are selected. For the most part, these areas are contiguous with a few exceptions in Belmont County. No block group meets the scenario I or scenario II criteria in Marshall County. A close up of selected block groups in Scenario II is presented as Figure III.

After identifying the candidate areas, street addresses for multi dwelling Section 8 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) buildings were solicited from the housing authorities in the region. Addresses were then geocoded and displayed over the regional map of candidate

Figure I



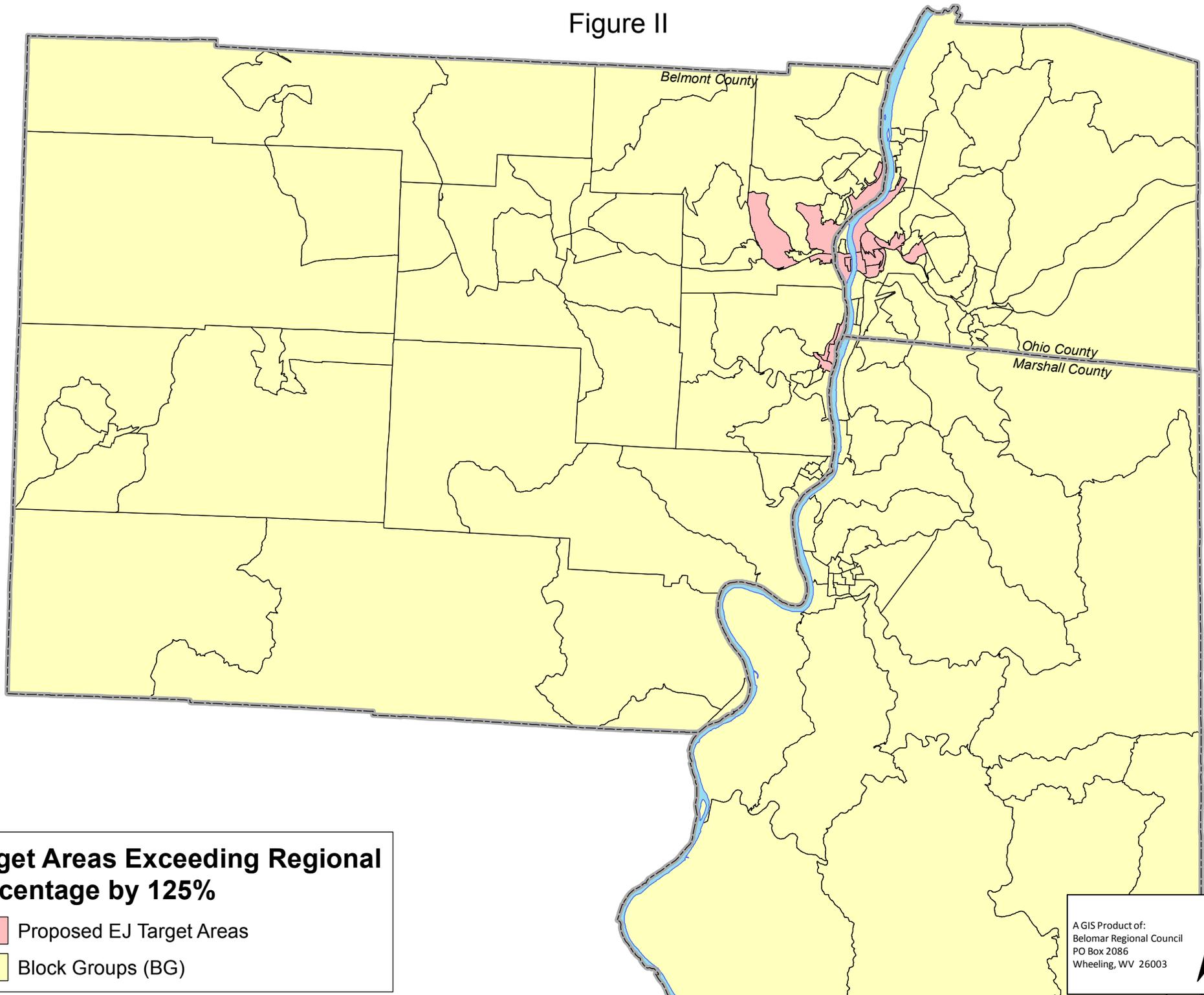
Target Areas Exceeding Regional Percentage

- Proposed EJ Target Areas
- Block Groups (BG)

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Figure II



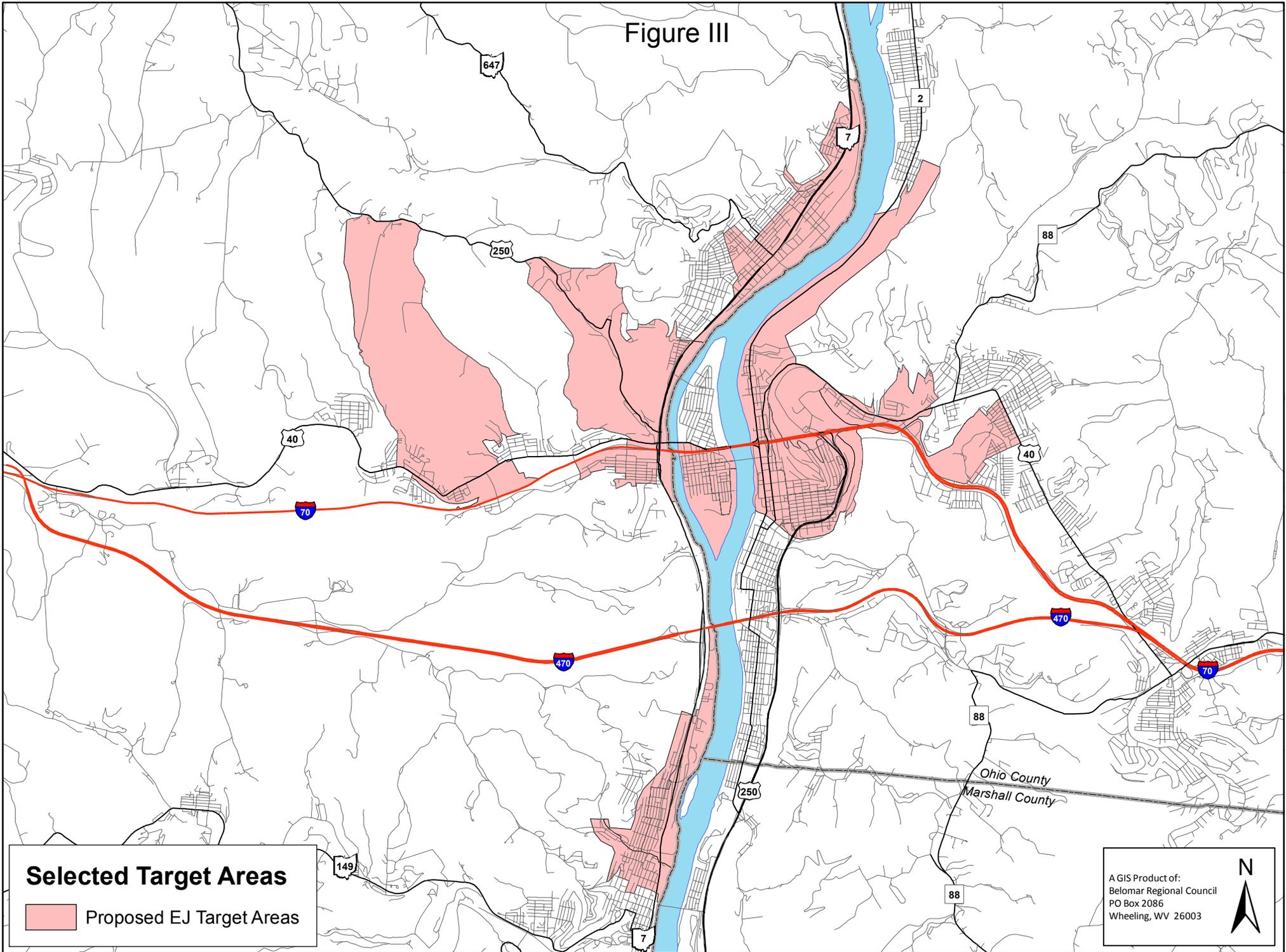
Target Areas Exceeding Regional Percentage by 125%

-  Proposed EJ Target Areas
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Figure III



Selected Target Areas

Proposed EJ Target Areas

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target areas. Based on this display, and the contiguity of the candidate areas, scenario II is the preferred scenario locally. It brings forth areas where the EJ focus is most needed. Out of 149 block groups in the region, 17 block groups are selected. Block groups also provide a more spatially focused approach than the census tracts. Thus, the target areas shown in Figure II and III are the EJ target areas in the region and will be analyzed, as needed, to determine beneficial or adverse affects of the projects and programs in the region.

It is possible that isolated pockets of minority and low income populations may exist outside the concentrated populations in target areas. These pockets may have been missed in a regional level process using block group level data. In analyzing projects for environmental justice, care would be taken to address effects, if any, on any identifiable isolated pocket of minority and low income population in the three county area.