Community Action

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As the Executive Director, I am honored and humbled to be part of an organization that is committed to environmental justice and community engagement. We understand the importance of protecting our community from health hazards and ensuring their health and safety. We are dedicated to creating a healthy and safe environment for all our community members, through campaigns that address air quality, conserving prime farmland, and promoting sustainable communities.

By engaging in local community change initiatives, we can empower individuals to become active participants in their own futures and contribute towards a better world. By working together, we can build capacity within our communities and create a stronger sense of solidarity that will help us achieve meaningful progress on issues such as health, sustainability, and economic development.

We have seen great progress in this effort over these past couple of months, but there is still much work to be done. From building a strong Environmental Justice Ambassador program to advocating for strong, meaningful, intentional legislation and policies, to empowering our forgotten communities, we have developed a base of community leaders that will continue to demand change at all levels of government where we can make change where ALL people can thrive. We strongly believe that we must continue our commitment to environmental justice and community engagement in order to ensure a healthy future for everyone.

For this and many reasons CCAEJ’s Board of Directors has approved a new mission and vision statement that we want to share with you all, this will ensure that we are focused on dismantling the unjust systems that have caused harm in our communities for decades and always remember that we are here to serve and protect the communities of the Inland Valley Region:

**Vision**: To inspire social change by dismantling the root causes of environmental injustice.

**CCAEJ’s mission**: The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) is a progressive equity based organization that embodies hope, unites people y pueblos, to create inter-sectional solutions that transform communities “to bring people together to improve their social and natural environment.” Utilizing the lens of environmental health, we achieve regenerative change by developing resilient BIPOC intergenerational leadership, through the power of community base-building. Through strategic campaigns, we cultivate inclusive self-sustaining neighborhoods, where everyone can live, work, play, and thrive.
By Shane Ysais, Communications Coordinator CCAEJ

On Tuesday (3/28), the City Council approved new ward boundaries for the City Council, completing the eight-month Reshape Riverside process that included extensive community meetings and public input. After several potential maps were considered, the council chose Map A4, a community-facing map that we, at the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ), helped organize and pass.

The final map was chosen for complying with the Fair Maps Act and reflecting the Communities of Interest testimony that we received during the Reshape Riverside process. We appreciate the City Council’s decision to prioritize community input in its decision-making process, and we are proud of the hard work our team and the community put into ensuring that the final map reflects the community’s needs and desires.

Our team has been working closely with the community for nearly a year, engaging in dialogue and gathering input to ensure that the final map would be inclusive and equitable. We are pleased that the City Council recognized the importance of this process and made a decision that reflects the community’s voices and values.
The new map will become effective 30 days after adoption, meaning it will determine the boundaries for City Council elections in wards 1, 3, 5, and 7 in March and November of 2024. We are excited about the opportunities this map will provide for the community to have a stronger voice in local government and ensure that their interests are represented fairly.

We would like to thank all the community members who participated in the Reshape Riverside process, and we encourage everyone to stay engaged in the ongoing efforts to promote fairness and equity in local government. More information can be found at reshaperiverside.com, and we look forward to continuing our work with the community to create a better future for Riverside.
By Marven E. Norman, Policy Specialist  CCAEJ

Over the last several decades, once sleepy agricultural lands have given way to ever-larger concrete boxes springing up across the land like so many gray mushrooms. Once contained to primarily industrial zones such as directly east of the Ontario International Airport, they have steadily made their way east of I-15 and established new warehouse parks such as in the southern end of Moreno Valley and northern end of Perris, the “Donut Hole” in Redlands, and the World Logistics Center in Moreno Valley. In July of 2018, John Husing, the Inland region’s self-proclaimed economist stated that “we are running out of places to build” more warehouses. Additionally, as predicted by Husing, warehouse development has started to spill out of the valleys of the Inland region to also reach up into the High Desert and Coachella Valley—last year saw Desert Hot Springs approve one of the largest warehouses ever proposed which will enclose nearly 3.5 million square feet in a building almost 100 feet tall.

However, developers are not just going to new areas or building up. Instead, they have begun to undertake a more sinister path to finding the space for warehouses: Completely replacing entire communities. No longer are the warehouses merely being placed next to our schools, parks, and homes. Instead, developers are proposing to completely replace homes, schools, and community assets. Initially, this has happened on a small scale. One project might take out a dozen or so homes and another replaces a handful more. Recently, this was stepped up with the Bloomington Business Park Specific Plan which if built, will remove more than 200 homes. (That same developer is also buying a school adjacent to the proposed Specific Plan.)

Not to be outdone, the Inland Valley Development Agency, in partnership with the City of Highland and City of San Bernardino, are working on a plan to develop a warehouse district on land of the former Norton Air Force base. In the process, more than 700 homes are now under threat. While the agents of the various agencies continue to insist that it is all just a minor update to existing zoning and that people who want to live there could do so as long as they want, the reality is that they face considerable pressure and harassment from developers to sell in anticipation of the plan passing and unleashing even more warehousing on the area.

This is wrong, but there is some hope still. Currently, the IVDA has the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Project available for people to review and make comments and are still accepting new submissions. During this time, people can voice their concerns and opinions about what is proposed. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to turn the many thousands of pages of material that was prepared for the Project into substantive comments that get more than a passing response. Still, it is vitally important that everyone send in comments expressing their feelings on the Project to the IVDA itself as well as the two cities.
IRP Victory
Public Utilities Commission’s Integrated Resource Plan

By Liz Sena, Operation Manager CCAEJ

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) are 2 electric utilities that can either be publicly owned (POU’s) or investor-owned (IOU’s). Publicly Owned Utilities (POU’s) such as LADWP, Riverside Public Utility, and Colton Utility, are non-profit public entities managed by locally elected officials and public employees. The CPUC does not regulate these publicly-owned utilities. Investor Owned Utilities (IOU’s) are private companies with a shareholder-elected board and a management team of private sector employees. The CPUC does regulate the big investor-owned utilities, specifically, PG&E, SDG&E and SCE, as well as community-choice aggregators (CCAs) and electric service providers, who altogether provide about 80% of the electricity in the state. This means that what the CPUC decides has big implications on most of the gas plants in the state.

Every two years, the Public Utilities Commission initiates an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) proceeding, to plan how to meet our electricity needs. Part of that plan includes setting a new Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) target, which focuses on how much the IOU’s, CCAs and electric service providers are allowed to emit in greenhouse gasses. The CPUC also mandates how much new energy (clean or dirty) utilities have to buy to meet our energy needs.

Unfortunately, in past years the CPUC has made utilities buy more gas, which is not good. However, they can also mandate utilities to buy more clean energy like solar and wind, or batteries (which saved us from blackouts during last summer’s heat wave when they were deployed when the sun went down). In the past couple years, the PUC has mandated utilities to buy more gas, or to buy a lot more clean energy.

For the past few years CCAEJ and Regenerate, have been fighting to get a strong IRP decision that would slash the limit for how many greenhouse gas emissions utilities are allowed to emit and help lead us down the path to winning gas plant retirements. Finally, after a tough year of successfully fighting off new gas plants in the CARB Scoping Plan, the PUC released a very strong Proposed Decision that includes a lot of what the Regenerate Campaign has been fighting for!

The CPUC IRP vote on February 23, 2023 was a huge win for Californians across the state. For many EJ communities, this is a celebratory outcome of the CPUC vote and our progress toward healthier environments. CA’s new 30 MMT Power Sector target is a HUGE win for climate justice. All Californians deserve to live in clean air communities. Less gas means less Nox, less ozone, less smog, and less health problems.
Region In Crisis:
The Rationale for a Public Health State of Emergency in the Inland Empire

Region In Crisis
The Rationale for a Public Health State of Emergency in the Inland Empire
**What is the Region In Crisis Report?**

On Tuesday January 24, 2023, over sixty organizations joined The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, Sierra Club, and Robert Redford Conservancy in sending an open letter to Governor Newsom, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and California Department of Education Superintendent Tony Thurmond requesting that they take action in addressing the public health emergency faced in the Inland Empire due to unchecked warehouse growth. Included with the letter is an extensive 80-page report detailing the cumulative effects pollution has had on the region.

**Executive Summary**

In California’s Inland Empire (IE), warehouse growth is one of the most critical environmental justice issues of our time. The rise of e-commerce and associated warehouse expansion since the COVID-19 pandemic have brought decreased air quality and health inequities into sharp focus. These air quality inequities have continued to challenge our most vulnerable residents as we now face the latest health crisis, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The distinctive bowl-shape of Inland geographies captures pollutants, leading to cardiac, respiratory, and reproductive health impacts as well as cancers. Over the past 22 years, state and federal air quality regulations have progressed with reducing large particulate matter and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions. However, with the recent exponential increase in warehouses in the Inland Empire, decades of effort are becoming undermined as greenhouse gases (GHG) climb, and NOx, particulate matter (PM), and ozone continue to disproportionately impact certain communities. In addition, documents prepared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) have not sufficiently reported the extreme cumulative impacts that project development will have on the health of residents. As a result, decision makers have not accounted for the holistic and long-lasting effects these projects have on the health of community residents. Environmental injustices — impacts that disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities — have been ignored. This has resulted in exponential growth of warehouse infrastructure and related health problems that impact communities, workers, children, and the elderly, leading to a public health crisis in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Due to the unchecked escalation of warehouse growth within the Inland Empire:
Over 300 warehouses are 1000 feet or less from 139 Inland Empire schools; over 600 warehouses surround these same schools at 1500 feet.

Unhealthy air quality days in SB County rose from 14.8% in 2019 to 19.7% in 2020.

20,000 children have missed 11 or more days of school in SB and Riverside Counties within the last 12 months.

In 2010, 337,445 of Inland Empire residents lived within ¼ mile of a warehouse; by 2022 this number grew by 30,000 to 367,584 individuals, roughly 60% of whom are Latino. Some census tracts within SB County have close to a 20% asthma rate; in Riverside County, some census tracts have over a 15% asthma rate.

The Inland Empire has the highest concentrations of ozone in the country according to the American Lung Association’s and CalEnviroScreen 4.0’s most recent report.

Diesel exhaust is responsible for about 70 percent of the total cancer risk from air pollution; cancer risk is in the 95th percentile near the Ontario warehouse gigacluster—equaling 624 people per million, which is 95% higher than the rest of the basin.
The Inland Empire has the highest concentrations of ozone in the country according to the American Lung Association and CalEnviroScreen 4.0

No More Warehouses

Region In Crisis:
The Rationale for a Public Health State of Emergency in the Inland Empire

[Logos]
Executive Summary (Cont.)

These are signs of an escalating health crisis. In addition to the above, Inland populations suffered COVID-19 infection and mortality at higher rates, because people’s immune systems were weakened due to chronic pollution exposure. Inland populations, especially children, are also experiencing RSV hospitalizations at an increased rate for the same reason. Warehouse jobs include temporary labor within the logistics sector as well as trade union workers involved in warehouse and infrastructure construction. Though they have different challenges, all workers, including unionized trade workers, are exposed to airborne pollutants from poor air quality with both short term and long-term health consequences. Construction periods often last for years to contribute to the infrastructure of the global supply chain. The global supply chain often starts with transpacific shipments, container sorting at the ports, storage of good in the Inland Empire, and the movement of goods from the IE throughout the rest of the country. Government and corporate leadership, the public, economists, and public health advisors must consider the health and welfare of the current workforce, and the viability of the future work force. This report outlines the impact poor air quality has on the current workforce, the future work force, and their families who breath the air of the IE. The risks outlined will include high rates of respiratory illness, high or unaffordable health costs associated with labor practices, and high worker turnover due to acute and chronic health risks. The health risks to the people of the IE also threaten the nation’s supply chain reliability and are a leading indicator to health impacts at a national level.

Warehouses constitute a regulatory gray area. A regional moratorium—or temporary halt in warehouse construction—is required to address the gaps in current legislation and statutes that allow for continued building of warehouses despite significant health impacts that are currently deemed unavoidable. Without such a pause, the health, efficiency, and viability of the IE’s workforce is threatened, therefore, the nation’s supply chain is at risk.
This working paper provides a rationale for the following interventions within the shorter summary letter addressed to Governor Newsom, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and California Department of Education Superintendent Tony Thurmond:

1. Declare a regional warehouse moratorium of one to two years that allows time to implement policy changes.

2. Identify communities of high exposure from warehouse and/or industrial land uses; create higher standards supported by the state for project approval in high exposure, environmental justice, and disadvantaged communities.

3. Work collaboratively with the Office of Planning and Research, CARB, and impacted communities to codify best practices resulting from guidance documents and settlements that regulatory bodies, the Attorney General, or other litigants have established for warehouse projects. These should include but not be limited to project and fleet electrification, solar energy generation, siting truck, rail, and airplane routes away from sensitive receptors, mitigation, limiting of vehicle miles traveled, community benefits agreements, and setbacks from sensitive receptors. Authorize the Attorney General to enforce these provisions within the Inland Empire.

4. Expand or enforce existing regulations that are inconsistently enforced or unenforced at a local level.

The requests above are in accordance with GOV § 65302(h)(1)(A):

(A) Identify objectives and policies to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in disadvantaged communities by means that include, but are not limited to, the reduction of pollution exposure, including the improvement of air quality, and the promotion of public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.
Current land use planning processes disempower EJ communities. The input of EJ stakeholders is relegated to consultancy or tokenism, in violation of California EPA environmental justice legislation. Developers are in conversation with city personnel in the beginning stages of projects; these conversations begin collaborations that facilitate project approval sometimes months or years before a project has solicited community input. Because community members or nonprofits only participate in the public planning process that begins much later, they are not part of true decision-making, even though they are the ones whose lives are directly impacted by land use decisions. This is what gives the public the sense that projects have predetermined outcomes.

In EJ communities that are already heavily impacted by pollution and other environmental detriments, we argue that higher levels of community engagement should be mandatory at the beginning stages of any project. The built-in bias toward the development of warehouse projects is yet unmeasured except in the experiences of people and organizations attempting to combat warehouse growth as well as in the massive and growing warehouse footprint in the region. We now have a key opportunity to make the process better by taking a pause to consider the points above and to maximize community involvement in decision making regarding the streets they live on and the air they breathe.
For the 30 community members who completed the environmental justice ambassador program was the mission they shared when leaving on that final day, to find a way to spread information and fight on our own terms. The reality that all of us are needed to fight this fight, and what was learned was that as community members to find your own way to be a part of the solution. Not everyone can attend every city council meeting, or hold public office, some are needed and effective in other ways. Some excel at doing the research needed to support others who are effective at sharing information. Others are effective at organizing events and meetings, being the person that reaches out and converses with local developers, politicians, decision makers within our own communities to share and bring back information. People to write letters to local publications and universities in efforts to expand the awareness of environmental issues that are taking place in local cities and counties. It is up to everyone to expand the environmental justice community to extend beyond CCAEJ, or the Inland Empire, and even the ambassador program itself. This fight affects everyone, everywhere, and that is what it will take to make the change that is needed to protect the lives of future generations who will inherit the world that we leave behind.

Thank You
to all our partners for making this possible
The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) is a progressive equity-based organization that embodies hope, unites people y pueblos, to create intersectional solutions that transform communities “to bring people together to improve their social and natural environment.” Utilizing the lens of environmental health, we achieve regenerative change by developing resilient BIPOC intergenerational leadership, through the power of community base-building. Through strategic campaigns, we cultivate inclusive self-sustaining neighborhoods, where everyone can live, work, play, and thrive.

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