

Urban Habitat: Community Climate Action Engagement Project

An Environmental Justice Grant Success Story

Project Overview

The purpose of the Community Climate Action Engagement Project was to increase the Richmond community's ability to engage in the development of the City's Energy and Climate Action Plan (ECAP) and to engage decision makers in addressing the significant impacts that climate change has on the city's low-income communities of color.

The Community

The community of focus for the Climate Action Engagement Project which was funded by a [\\$25,000 Environmental Justice Small Grant](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency, is



A Richmond, CA community disproportionately affected by pollution emitting source.

Richmond, California. Currently, the city of Richmond is experiencing major economic transitions. Once known as a booming center of industrial activity, Richmond is now on pace to become a hub for the high tech green industry.

Although the city is in a prime position to change its economic composition for the better, Richmond's low-income communities of color continue to cope with extreme social and economic hardships. These underserved populations lack access to affordable health

care, lack access to living wage employment options, and reside in unsafe housing conditions. In addition to these economic and social factors, Richmond's underserved populations also face serious challenges related to their immediate environment. Many residents of low-income communities of color coexist with several petrochemical and industrial companies that put them in harm's way of environmental toxins and pollution.

While the devastating effects of petro and industrial pollution on the poor are well documented the opportunity exists to bring Richmond's decision makers and disadvantaged communities together to work collaboratively in developing solutions that address a common threat.

Project Description

In 2010, EPA awarded Urban Habitat a [\\$25,000 Environmental Justice Small Grant](#) to fund their Community Climate Action Engagement Project (CCAEP). The project builds public awareness regarding the benefits of developing an Energy and Climate Action Plan through public alerts and briefing sessions, and works to increase the capacity of Richmond residents and stakeholders to help them participate effectively in planning efforts related to climate change.

Urban Habitat will accomplish this by creating and implementing a “Climate Justice Curriculum” that connects climate change to local and regional efforts around transportation justice, affordable housing, equitable development, and quality green jobs.

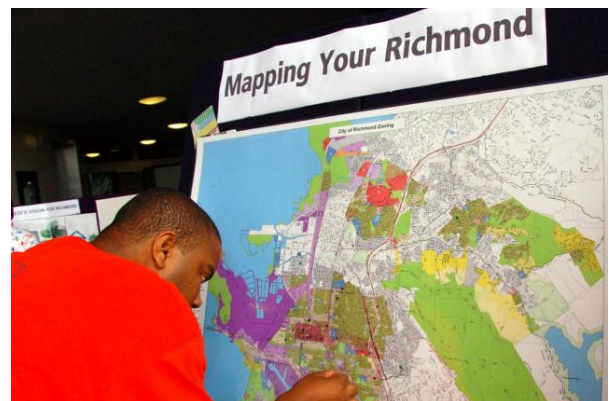
Urban Habitat views this grant project as being the perfect opportunity to mobilize, educate, train, and build the capacity of Richmond residents so that they are better able to engage in the city’s Energy and Climate Action Planning process.



Richmond Mayor McLaughlin and City Council Members Butt and Thurmond commit to REDI principles.

The Results

Urban Habitat, along with their partners representing Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Laotian Organizing Project, and Communities for a Better Environment, has met with city staff to discuss mutual goals around the Climate Action Plan. During the meeting, Urban Habitat highlighted the need for greater community engagement and involvement in the process of writing the Richmond Climate Action Plan, and discussed the need for urgency to include plans that address industrial/commercial emissions beyond their coverage in the Energy and Climate Change Element of Richmond’s General Plan.



2007 Richmond Equitable Development participant maps important EJ areas in Richmond, CA.

Urban Habitat has also convened numerous community education events and forums that have reached an estimated 300 community residents.

Because of these workshops and learning sessions, Richmond residents have become more knowledgeable of the issues affecting their community and have enabled them to increase their attendance at city council meetings.

Ultimately, the successful adoption and implementation of a Climate Action Plan depends on the continued meaningful interaction between Richmond decision makers and Richmond’s low-income communities of color.

Reflection

Although Urban Habitat has been able to make substantial strides towards meeting their proposed grant goals, the organization faces significant barriers to successfully implementing an equitable Climate Action Plan. Chevron Corporation, which is responsible for a majority of

Richmond's industrial GHG emissions, has shown increased opposition to a Climate Action Plan that uses GHG emission fees as mean to finance the implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

Opening of New Doors

The prospect for Richmond to create a bold and effective Energy and Climate Action Plan is ripe. City staff has told Urban Habitat and their partners that the political will exists for Richmond decision makers to work collaboratively with Urban Habitat, APEN, and CBE to develop a more progressive Climate Action Plan that benefits all rather than a few. Increased engagement between Urban Habitat, their partners, and Richmond decision makers has enabled all parties to develop a potential best practices model to strengthen community engagement.

What's Up Next For HGIC –

As Coordinator of the Richmond Equitable Development Initiative, Urban Habitat continues to work with their Richmond Partners and city staff to move the Climate Action Plan campaign forward. Urban Habitat plans to take a leadership role in conducting outreach and organizing for CAP meetings.

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT KEY RESULTS

- Actively engage both Richmond's low-income communities of color and Richmond Decision makers
- Increased Richmond's low-income communities and communities of color ability to effectively engage in the development of an Energy and Climate Action Plan
- Increased accountability of Richmond's decision-makers to the city's low-income communities and communities of color
- Developed new partnerships with other social justice organizations in order to actively engage untapped communities

To learn more about Urban Habitat's Community Climate Action Engagement Project, please visit Urban Habitat or contact Colin Miller, Coordinator for Climate Policy and research, at (510) 839-9519 ext 311