

Indigenous & Frontline Communities' Vision:

Defining an Equitable and Just Transition to Building Decarbonization



LEAP LA Partners



COMMUNITIES
FOR A BETTER
ENVIRONMENT
established 1978



BACKGROUND

Indigenous Peoples and Frontline communities experience the consequences of climate change first and worst. Despite these injustices, Indigenous Peoples, including Tongva Gabrielino, Fernandeno Tataviam, and Chumash, and Frontline communities in the region are resilient and demand that they be included in shaping and centered in all policy, budgeting, and program decisions regarding climate justice.

Frontline communities are often low-income communities and communities of color living in neighborhoods that lack the basic infrastructure needed to support them, and who will be incredibly impacted as a result of increased flooding, fires, heatwaves, and energy prices. Frontline communities often live adjacent to the oil industry, oil drilling, and extremely toxic infrastructure. Additionally, Frontline communities also include laborers whose daily work or living environments are polluted or toxic and those whose jobs are impacted by climate change and/or the transition to clean energy.



Building decarbonization is a term that has been created recently to describe the transition to energy efficient buildings. It uses language that is not easy to understand, which is problematic as it leaves out a lot of people from the conversation. However, it is important to know what is meant by the term Building Decarbonization. Therefore, rather than trying to impose this new language, it is important to acknowledge and bring clarity around what Building Decarbonization is and what it means.

Building decarbonization is the plan to remove greenhouse gas emissions from a building's energy use. Greenhouse gas emissions are produced by human activities and cause climate change. Most greenhouse gas emissions come from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas.

Building decarbonization policies typically include:

Electrification:

Replaces polluting natural gas appliances with all-electric appliances, such as using an electric stove instead of a gas stove.

Cleaner Energy Sources:

Moves to pollution-free and carbon-free energy sources such as wind and solar.



Energy Efficiency:

Reduces energy use by making home/building changes that help use less energy (e.g. replacing windows, insulation, upgrading lighting).

Frontline communities shared that they are already reducing energy consumption in their homes to keep energy costs low. They are deploying strategies such as being outside at public parks/pools or in public spaces like libraries and shopping centers to cool off. Additionally, many keep plants inside and outside their home, wake up early to cook family meals for the day, or close curtains during peak sun times to mitigate the heat. The City must acknowledge these efforts as important contributions to building decarbonization, and further actions in building decarbonization should not only protect but prioritize Frontline communities as beneficiaries of this transition.

Community members made it clear that these typical elements (electrification, energy efficiency, and cleaner energy sources) alone do not ensure a just and equitable transition to building decarbonization.

Additional measures are needed to ensure a just transition. A Just Transition is recognizing past harm, actively stopping the bad, building the good our communities need by moving the money to prioritize community-led solutions, having community members lead deep democracy, and changing the rules regarding energy efficiency to incorporate holistic solutions. Community members shared their concerns with the City's development of building decarbonization policies, and offered their own recommended strategies to ensure that Indigenous and Frontline communities are not harmed by this transition but are prioritized in receiving the benefits of such a transition.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- *Correct injustices created by existing policies and ensure that future injustices are not created.*
- *Identify the connections and consider the intersecting demands of local and global land back, public health, environment, housing, and labor movements.*

Work in solidarity with global movements of Indigenous, black, and people

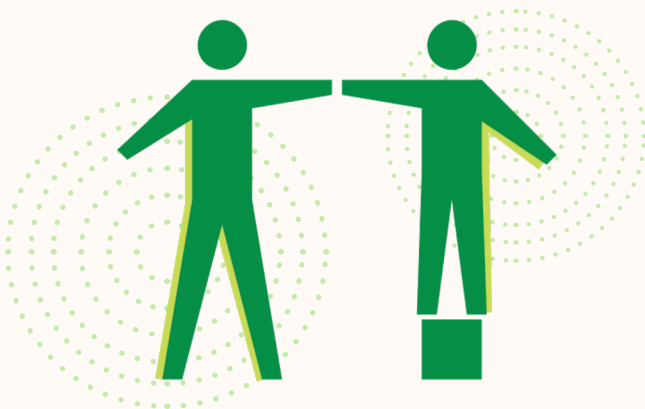
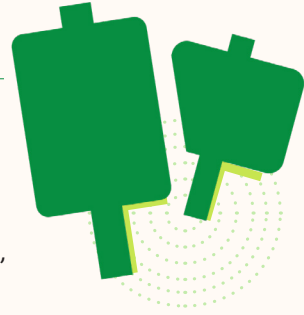
- *of color fighting the impacts of extractive industries.*

Do not transition from one extractive industry to another.

- *Phase out oil drilling and create a plan to transition away from fossil fuels.*
- *Apply the seven generations principle, an Iroquois philosophy that dictates that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.*

EQUITY

- *Ensure that economic benefits from decarbonization technologies are passed down to low-income tenants (i.e., energy bill savings from solar, energy efficiency retrofits).*
- *Incentives are in place specifically for low-income people to be able to access the technologies right from the start at no upfront cost*
- *Acknowledge past harms and trauma, and prioritize establishing or mending current relationships and avoiding continued harm.*



LAND

- *Implement Indigenous land management practices for cooling and temperature regulation around native landscapes, thus providing natural ways to increase energy efficiency in buildings.*
- *Ensure the City has a maintenance plan that it implements to care for native landscapes and trees.*
- *Continue or reinstate tax credits for zero-scaping funding for homeowners that specifically address heat reduction measures.*
- *Restore the soil to a healthy state to capture carbon.*
- *Give the land back to the **Tongva Gabrielino, Fernandeno Tataviam, and Chumash**, as well as support and partner with them for land stewardship efforts.*



PLANT & ANIMAL LIFE

- *Protect plant and animal life by ensuring that habitats are not disturbed, and that people can have a reciprocal relationship to place.*
- Increase access to solar panels on existing buildings and infrastructure as a way to limit expansion and protect habitats.*
- *Find ways to reduce overall and peak energy demands will allow for greater system efficiency so that we will need fewer energy projects and fewer environmental disturbances overall.*



MATERIALS, ENGINEERING, & ARCHITECTURE

- *Integrate traditional ecological knowledge to inform engineering, architecture, and materials used for housing and commercial buildings to be more energy-efficient and less carbon-intensive by using materials that do not require as much energy to process or transport (i.e., California Earth Domes).*
- *Require new housing to be developed in ways that utilize the natural landscape to reduce energy use to reduce heat from coming into the home.*
- *Ensure materials for the home (solar panels, appliances, weatherization materials, etc.) do not contain toxins and that materials have a circular design requirement, in which the makers of these materials are required to take back materials that are at the end of their life to recycle or repurpose.*



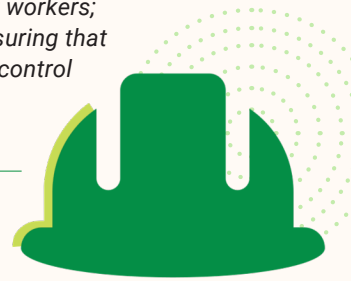
HOUSING

- *Include strong anti-displacement language in all electrification policies that affect low-income renters and owners, as well as address temporary displacement during retrofits.*
- *Protect tenants so they can stay in their homes, through strong rent control, just-cause eviction laws, and ample relocation funds, along with strong local government enforcement.*
- *Increase homeownership programs and opportunities for Indigenous and Frontline communities.*



JOBS

- *Prioritize making economic opportunities work for Indigenous and Frontline communities.*
- *Make provisions for undocumented individuals to get access to training and jobs.*
- *Ensure unionization, living wages, and strong benefits for workers.*
- *Provide support for just transition measures such as pension/retirement security, job retraining, and job placement for younger workers.*
- *Provide protection as well as hiring and training programs for workers who have been displaced and are entering a new industry and individuals with employment barriers.*
- *Encourage energy efficiency but not at the expense of workers; protect employees (such as domestic workers) by ensuring that there are comfortable and safe levels of temperature control when they are working.*



HEALTH & SAFETY

- *Increase air quality monitoring in Frontline communities.*
- *Improve indoor air quality through electrification.*
- *Provide masks for severe air quality conditions.*
- *Phase out oil drilling and create a plan to transition away from fossil fuels.*
- *Share resources and conduct outreach on adaptation strategies to improve health.*



ENERGY

- *Develop resilience hubs where people can go if there's a power outage to charge medical devices and other devices, store food, and keep cool (making sure resilience hubs have some capacity for cooling and air quality control during climate crisis events as well).*
- *Integrate solar plus storage to support residential buildings in transitioning from natural gas to electric while maintaining dependable electrical connections.*
- *Support locally generated and distributed renewable energy sources/ systems (i.e., solar on apartment buildings, public buildings, houses, etc.).*
- *Provide incentives to owners to make changes to their home(s)/ building(s), such as solar panels, which are costly and out of reach for the community.*

COST

- *Develop subsidy programs for low-income tenants, low-income homeowners, and small-scale property owners to support the electrification of homes; ensure that programs do not have many requirements to qualify.*
- *Ensure energy rates are structured in a manner that does not disproportionately harm Indigenous and Frontline communities.*
- *Ensure energy cost-saving benefits from solar and energy efficient appliances are passed down to renters.*
- *Ensure subsidies are not provided for luxury developments and must increase the requirement to include a higher percentage of new developments to be designated for low-income housing.*
- *Ensure tenant protections so that property owners do not evict tenants to complete the retrofits, and if tenants need to move from the property to make improvements, there are provisions to ensure accommodations.*
- *Create new rates and incentive programs to ensure no cost to low-income ratepayers.*



CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

- *Develop a list of trusted companies that community members can use or hire to make modifications to their home.*
- *Ensure materials used are certified to ensure their quality and that they are doing what they are intended to do.*
- *Implement a City inspection program that reviews retrofits (solar, weatherization, and appliances) after installation and the building decarbonization retrofits (from solar to appliances to weatherization) every five years to ensure the quality of work and materials, and that these retrofits are operating as they should to reduce carbon emissions.*



ENGAGEMENT & EMPOWERMENT

- *Create an inclusive and representative process that includes the input from Indigenous peoples in the region and frontline communities that can either stand to benefit most or be most harmed from this transition.*
- *Provide ongoing education around Building Decarbonization, ensure the transition is centered around and co-developed with Indigenous and Frontline communities.*
- *Provide training, information, and a community hotline for residents to understand retrofitting and installation, and outreach to tenants, so they understand the process and their rights as tenants.*
- *Create a community advisory committee made up of multigenerational (including youth) tenants and low-income homeowners (who are resourced to participate) with decision-making authority to guide policy development and receive reports quarterly regarding updates during implementation so that they can provide guidance on modifications.*
- *Resource and facilitate community conversations where community members can exchange strategies on what they are doing now to conserve energy and mitigate heat and where they can get resources.*
- *Institute an environmental education program, specifically regarding building decarbonization in public school curriculum.*
- *Develop an ongoing relationship and communication line where the community, advocates, and experts can discuss, share information, and answer questions about what is going on in the community around building electrification pilots and policies.*
- *Support and increase the capacity of Indigenous and Frontline communities to allow for more meaningful collaboration and co-development of building decarbonization policies.*



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