

# GREEN ZONES AND GRASSROOTS

How California's Climate Investments Benefit Los Angeles County's Disadvantaged Communities



February 2017

Executive Summary





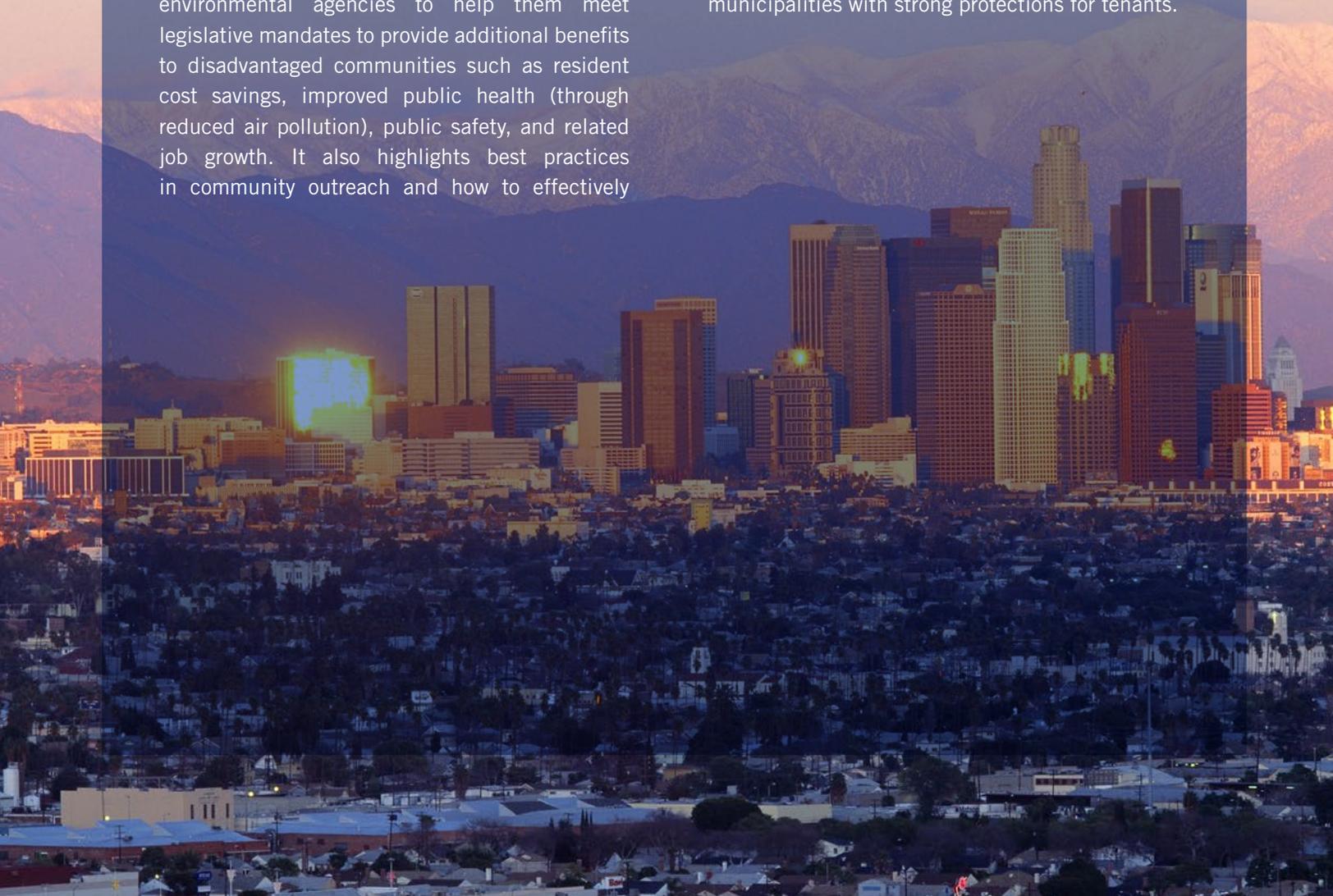
## Executive Summary

*Green Zones and Grassroots* analyzes how California's investments to fight global warming have impacted low-income communities of color—or environmental justice communities—in Los Angeles County during the first few years of implementation. We find that most (but not all) of the California Climate Investment (CCI) programs have come close to meeting their goals by targeting expenditures and related economic and health benefits to legally defined “disadvantaged” communities. However, there is even greater potential if program administrators work closely with grassroots community-based groups to expand the participation of low-income residents in these groundbreaking programs to help transform toxic hotspot neighborhoods into sustainable, healthy, and “green” communities.

This report provides information for California environmental agencies to help them meet legislative mandates to provide additional benefits to disadvantaged communities such as resident cost savings, improved public health (through reduced air pollution), public safety, and related job growth. It also highlights best practices in community outreach and how to effectively

evaluate and prioritize community participation in projects awarded cap-and-trade funding. We hope that community advocates will find the report a valuable resource that provides detailed analyses of how programs can be further strengthened to advance social equity priorities (e.g., including better job training and career pathways; reducing language, cost, and application barriers; and addressing tenant needs).

*Green Zones and Grassroots* also identifies the threat of direct and indirect displacement of low-income people from Los Angeles' neighborhoods as investments in transit-oriented neighborhoods increase real estate values. We urge consideration of proactive measures such as targeted community economic development, increased spending on affordable housing for very low-income families, and the need to prioritize program investments in municipalities with strong protections for tenants.



## Section 1: California Climate Investments (CCI) in Los Angeles County

This section presents “dashboards”—or visual snapshots of 13 CCI programs that include investment maps, key program elements, and funding information. The dashboards identify where investments are distributed in L.A. County and how significant the co-benefits are in disadvantaged communities. There are two broad types of programs and related recommendations:

### 1. Direct services and rebates directly accessible to low-income households.

*Examples: Solar panel installations and clean vehicle rebates.*

#### Recommendations include:

- Remove barriers to low-income markets with targeted disadvantaged community outreach strategies;
- Improve productivity of labor-intensive outreach through improved coordination across programs; and
- Seek direct community input to improve targeted recipients’ access to program benefits.

### 2. Project developments awarded funding through competitive programs.

*Examples: Affordable housing development, transit infrastructure and operations, and urban greening.*

#### Recommendations include:

- Improve incentives to stimulate the creation of economic and public health benefits in communities facing the greatest toxic exposure;
- Enhance program evaluation through increased transparency and improved tracking of program goals and intended benefits;
- Focus transit investment in transit-poor communities on lines with high rates of low-income ridership; and
- Adopt metrics that identify and reward increasing levels of community participation in the design and implementation of equitable and sustainable projects.



## Section 2: Building Community Partnerships

In Section 2, we identify the capacities of grassroots community-based organizations (CBOs) operating in Los Angeles County that can improve the distribution of climate investments and help to ensure their transformative power. Some of these grassroots capacities and resources include:

- Strong networks to facilitate the extensive community outreach sought by program administrators;
- Expertise in building community leadership and establishing vibrant community partnerships for disadvantaged community stakeholders; and
- Experience developing crosscutting strategies that reduce carbon emissions, stimulate jobs, improve public health, save costs, and protect residents and businesses against displacement.



This section also features a set of best practices for community outreach informed by the experience of several L.A.-based environmental justice and grassroots organizations:

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)  
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ)  
Pacoima Beautiful  
Redeemer Community Partnership (RCP)  
Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)  
Tenemos que Reclamar y Unidos Salvar la Tierra-South LA (T.R.U.S.T. South LA)  
Union de Vecinos



- **Door knocking, although time-intensive, is the most effective method for program uptake**
- **Climate-themed events are effective at promoting multiple programs**
- **Discussions facilitated by CBOs between administrators and community members can build trust and help evaluate programs**
- **Focus groups can uncover strengths and obstacles in specific programs**
- **Connect services and incentives to important needs of the community**
- **A trusted organization opens many doors that would otherwise remain closed**
- **Provide people with a range of options to build interest and optimize door-to-door efforts**
- **Enable outreach staff to determine eligibility, provide application assistance, and approve on-site**
- **More time and repetitive visits are necessary for successful business outreach**

## BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Section 2 also identifies exemplary community-led developments** that serve as instructive models for the State’s new Transformational Climate Communities program, including an integrated design case study that illustrates community input and involvement strategies.

### Section 3: Maximizing Equity— Discussion and Recommendations

The report culminates with a discussion of how to match the valuable expertise and experience of grassroots CBOs to improve upon the important benefits already achieved by California Climate Investment programs. We provide specific, actionable recommendations on how to:

- **Increase Community Benefits** by improving evaluation of programs, strengthening low-income stakeholders involvement in program design, and tracking progress towards equity goals.
- **Improve Program Outreach** through specific strategies learned by the extensive experience of grassroots CBOs.
- **Maximize Community Participation** through clearly defined partnerships with CBOs that can engage community networks and facilitate the creation of an informed and holistic community vision.



## Community Participation Metric

Section 3 also recommends a **Community Participation Metric** to help state agencies identify and award progressive levels of community inclusion and suggests concrete examples of activities that can confirm authentic community consultation, collaboration, partnership and leadership.

<p><b>Community Consultation</b> 25%</p> 	<p><b>Activity Examples</b> Workshops, roundtable discussions, focus groups, surveys</p>
	<p><b>Requirements</b> Documented record of activities and detailed notes of communication Evidence of how consultation influenced the final proposal</p>
<p><b>Community Collaboration</b> 50%</p> 	<p><b>Activity Examples</b> Design charrettes, groundtruthing, crowdsourcing, community mapmaking, participatory budgeting, participatory research, workshops, collective wayfinding</p>
	<p><b>Requirements</b> Must occur prior to a fully envisioned project Evidence of mutual learning between the community and technical advisors A final design that is representative of the created collective vision</p>
<p><b>Community Partnerships</b> 75%</p> 	<p><b>Activity Examples</b> Community Benefits Agreements (CBA), advisory groups, citizen advisory committees, participatory budgeting, delegated actions and authority</p>
	<p><b>Requirements</b> Decision-making authority must be shared with community stakeholders Occurs over multiple phases of project development or implementation Targeted activities directly related to equitable outcomes Contracted agreements, not stated intentions Reporting requirements and clawback provisions for agreed-upon benefits</p>
<p><b>Community Leadership</b> 100%</p> 	<p><b>Activity Examples</b> Any activities resulting in the creation of a project, provided they occur with a community-driven participatory development model</p>
	<p><b>Requirements</b> Final decision-making authority in the hands of the community Support for a community-owned plan (e.g., assistance with funding grassroots participation, provision of technical assistance, aid in project implementation)</p>

# Green Zones and Grassroots: Summary of Recommendations

Require applicants to provide documentation substantiating projected benefits and avoidance of harms.

Award points for project elements that create co-benefits exceeding program requirements, with strong emphasis on quality job creation accessible to disadvantaged workers and mandated reporting on achievement of targets.

Transit program administrators should require disadvantaged community investments to improve transit lines with heavy low-income ridership, such as local bus services.

Low-Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) administrators should prioritize funding for service and operations improvements on transit lines with fewer funding sources.

Increase transparency of projects and administrative decision making in all CCI programs, especially when public agencies directly receive funding.

Require open and accessible public meetings and letters of cross-sector support for all projects to qualify for disadvantaged community investments.

## INCREASE COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Coordinate community outreach efforts of multiple programs to maximize productivity of time-intensive activities.

Create, fund, and implement targeted disadvantaged community outreach strategies with community-based organization (CBO) partners.

Provide people with a range of program options and provide on-site prequalification and application assistance.

Provide line item “use it or lose it” funds for outreach services rather than a percentage of the administrative budget.

## IMPROVE PROGRAM OUTREACH

Sign MOUs between public agencies or developers and CBOs to provide community outreach, participatory input, holistic analysis, and/or crosscutting intervention design.

MOUs should clearly define the roles, responsibilities, compensation, and decision-making authority of each partner and establish how residents will be empowered to shape policies.

Adopt a community participation metric that recognizes and rewards increasing levels of community consultation, collaboration, partnership, and leadership.

Require all Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) applications to provide MOUs establishing community partnerships with CBOs with a comprehensive approach to economic, environmental, public health, and displacement impacts.

## MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

Prioritize partnerships with organization(s) possessing expertise in conducting participatory activities and experience in designing multi-benefit projects.

Establish partnerships with CBOs that demonstrate a history of community organizing, ongoing membership activities, leadership development, and a staff/volunteer base of local residents who bring experience with:

- Door-to-door residential and business outreach;
- Facilitating discussions between administrators, technical experts, and community members;
- Conducting focus groups; and
- Connecting services and incentives to important needs of the community.

## IDENTIFY COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**Liberty Hill Foundation thanks the following individuals for their assistance in reviewing this report:**

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