



## Environmental Justice Community Meeting Series Summary

In February 2021, Contra Costa County hosted a three-part Environmental Justice Community Meeting Series using the online conferencing platform Zoom. The meeting series served as the culmination of an extensive community outreach and engagement process to gather feedback on draft goals, policies, and actions related to environmental justice, which began in November 2020. Meetings were held on the three Wednesdays between February 3 and February 17, 2021. Participants were able to join via computer, tablet, or phone, and Spanish materials and interpretation services were provided. Each meeting focused on a subset of related topics to allow time for a detailed discussion of the relevant draft goals, policies, and actions:

- Meeting 1
  - February 3, 2021, 6 pm – 8 pm
  - Topics: Sustainable Economy, Homes, and Jobs
  - Participants in attendance: 35
- Meeting 2
  - February 10, 2021, 6 pm – 8 pm
  - Topics: Community Engagement, Transportation, and Infrastructure
  - Participants in attendance: 22
- Meeting 3
  - February 17, 2021, 6 pm – 8pm
  - Topics: Food, Health Services, Recreation, Air Quality, and Hazardous Materials
  - Participants in attendance: 70

At each meeting, County staff and consultants presented an overview of Envision Contra Costa 2040, SB 1000, and the draft environmental justice policy guidance. Following the presentation and a question-and-answer session, participants were moved into virtual “breakout rooms” where they worked in small groups to collaboratively review and provide feedback on the draft goals, policies, and actions related to each topic. Participants were encouraged to collaborate and share their perspectives and ideas regarding the draft text. Notetakers captured comments and suggested revisions in a shared Google Doc visible through screenshare. Following the small group discussions, all groups returned to the main meeting room to report back on their conversations and highlight the main points of their discussion. The feedback shared during the small group discussions is briefly summarized below. The Google docs showing the full set of comments and edits for each group are attached to this summary.

The input received from the three meetings will be used to inform further refinement of the draft goals, policies, actions.

## SUMMARY OF INPUT RECEIVED

### ***Goal EJ-A: Equitable distribution of social and economic advantages among all communities in the county so that no community is disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution or other hazards.***

Goal EJ-A was discussed in Meeting 1. Many small group participants suggested that conditional approvals for fossil fuel industry projects include community benefits that are directed strictly to disadvantaged communities. In addition, participants voiced that residents, collaboratives, Municipal Advisory Councils, and other local organizations should be invited and encouraged to participate in all planning processes and in determining needed community benefits. Participants want to see the County provide more details and transparency regarding the phasing out of fossil fuel industries. They also requested a higher level of detail about an economically viable and just transition to clean energy, and recommended that the County pursue the removal of old gas and oil wells, followed by immediate site remediation/cleanup. Residents are concerned that various policies and actions may be vague or subjective. Overall, most residents support phasing out fossil fuels, directing community benefits towards disadvantaged communities, remediating contaminated sites, and upholding strict protections for disadvantaged communities.

### ***Goal EJ-B: Equitable and convenient access to fresh and healthy foods among all communities in the county so that all residents find it easy to make healthy food choices.***

Goal EJ-B was discussed in Meeting 3. Participants voiced strong support for maintaining and expanding community gardens, including establishing a community garden for Bay Point residents. Residents would like to see businesses and the County work together in conducting nutrition workshops, health events, and other related outreach and education efforts. They also recommended including specific language to differentiate healthy and fast-food options and to ensure healthy restaurants and grocery stores are prioritized. Participants advocated for language to support affordable and high-quality food, rather than focusing only on healthy food options. Finally, participants recommended expanding food bank services with delivery and subsidized options for residents most in need.

### ***Goal EJ-C: Equitable access to safe and sanitary homes among all communities in the county so that no resident has to live in an unsafe or unhealthy place.***

Goal EJ-C was discussed in Meeting 1. Participants expressed that preserving and expanding affordable housing in disadvantaged communities is important. Furthermore, participants would like to see tenants' rights be protected and avoid future displacements or rent hikes for residents living in these communities. Participants appreciated the policy language about tiny homes and requested that the text reference more diverse options for alternative forms of affordable housing. Participants also recommended that the County partner with more agencies beyond just Contra Costa Health Services when conducting land inventories for housing. Residents think that there needs to be zero-interest financing for low-income and disadvantaged community residents who need air conditioners, solar panels, and other equipment. Residents advised the County to prioritize infill residential development to help preserve the character of

their neighborhoods. Participants also suggested there be more language in the draft policies and actions about meeting the housing needs of homeless individuals.

***Goal EJ-D: Equitable access to job training, job opportunities, and economic stability among all communities in the county so that all residents can access safe jobs, earn a living wage to support their families, and build shared prosperity.***

Goal EJ-D was discussed in Meeting 1. Participants want to see stronger language and a commitment to a first source hiring program. They recommended that the County promote tax credits, project labor agreements, and permit fast-tracking for project applicants hiring local workers. Participants voiced strong support for job training programs and advised they be expanded to include community colleges and high schools, in partnership with labor unions and County departments. Participants also recommended that the County implement micro-loan programs for businesses in disadvantaged communities.

***Goal EJ-E: Equitable engagement with all communities in the county so that all residents share an equal voice in decisions that affect their community.***

Goal EJ-E was discussed in Meeting 2. To support equitable engagement, residents suggested that the County place equal, if not greater, focus on non-electronic communication methods, such as newsletters, banners, and flyers, to reach individuals who may not use online services. Participants felt that County representatives need to be more involved with disadvantaged communities to strengthen the relationships between residents and the County. In support of that concept, they recommended that the County expand partnerships with trusted community leaders, community-based organizations, and faith-based groups. Most participants cited the need for more designated space for farmers markets and other community events.

***Goal EJ-F: Equitable, convenient access to a safe, affordable, multi-modal transportation network among all communities in the county so that all residents, regardless of age, ability, race, culture, or economic status, are less dependent on cars and enjoy opportunities to walk, bike, roll, or take transit to their destinations.***

Goal EJ-F was discussed in Meeting 2. The community's greatest concerns related to transportation include a lack of connectivity across jurisdictions, especially in disadvantaged communities and rural areas, along with a lack of shelter and benches at bus stops, schedule inconsistencies, traffic congestion, and sea level rise threats to existing infrastructure. They recommended creating hubs in disadvantaged communities that concentrate services and resources where public transit and other services are more accessible and user-friendly. Participants suggested that the County expand transportation subsidies to include rideshares and "smaller" buses, and cited the need for more County-led initiatives to promote bike, walk, and first-and-last mile programs designed for commuters going to and from BART stations. Residents would like to see lighting improvements listed among other prioritized transportation improvements. Finally, participants voiced strong support for limiting truck traffic and parking, and working across jurisdictions to design a cohesive truck route plan.

***Goal EJ-G: Equitable distribution and quality of public facilities, infrastructure, and services among all communities in the county so that the fundamental needs of all residents are met and all residents can access the services they need.***

Goal EJ-G was discussed in Meeting 2. Residents indicated that the most pressing issues related to infrastructure and services are the lack of facilities, inaccessibility, and issues related to illegal dumping. They voiced that the high costs for proper waste disposal and the infrequency of trash pickup services are major contributors to the problem. They recommended that the County work with the waste companies to lower fees through subsidies and increase services. Residents also suggested that the County implement a standardized baseline for maintenance of public facilities throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. Participants also advocated for grants instead of loans to stimulate green infrastructure development in disadvantaged communities.

***Goal EJ-H: Equitable and convenient access to health services among all communities in the county so that all residents can find the physical and behavioral health care services they need within their community.***

Goal EJ-H was discussed in Meeting 3. Meeting participants strongly voiced the need for a hospital or medical facility in western Contra Costa County that provides emergency and mental health services. They recommended that the County provide additional medical services through community-based clinics, potentially using schools as hubs for services throughout the county.

***Goal EJ-I: Equitable access to safe recreational activities and parks among all communities in the county so that all residents are empowered to choose an active lifestyle that supports their health.***

Goal EJ-I was discussed in Meeting 3. To increase access to parks and recreational facilities, participants recommended that the County enhance walking and biking facilities, while simultaneously creating and promoting programs to raise awareness about these amenities. Many participants shared the desire to expand parks and develop aquatic amenities in Rodeo.

***Goal EJ-J: Equitable and healthy air quality among all communities in the county so that all residents, including those with high sensitivity to unhealthy air, can live in their community without facing disproportionately high risks of respiratory disease and other health problems.***

Goal EJ-J was discussed in Meeting 3. The most prevalent concerns reported are protections for workers, lack of community education, and vulnerable communities. Residents felt that to have a just transition, workers must be actively involved and heard as the main voice during the discussions. They recommended that the County expand educational and "community right to know" programs to better inform residents regarding refinery and other industrial activities and projects. Residents also suggested that the County set stricter and clear standards for truck traffic impacts.

***Goal EJ-K: Communities that are safe and resilient from hazards associated with the use, transport, treatment, and disposal of hazardous waste and hazardous substances, including from fossil fuels, chemical refining, and power plants.***

Goals EJ-K was discussed in Meeting 3. Some residents advocated to end further expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure through the County's land use authorities. They also recommended that the County designate an independent agency to assess hazards and risks. To support the transition away from fossil fuels, residents suggested rezoning lands to limit further expansion and reusing existing industrial lands to build new green infrastructure. Many residents discussed the need for polluting industries to be responsible for clean-up and remediation of sites they contaminate.

### ***Online Engagement***

In addition to the input gathered during the Environmental Justice Community Meeting Series, the County received comments through a post on the Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development Facebook page about this topic; this section provides some of the key takeaways. The most prevalent issues reported online are high levels of pollution and dumping throughout the county, lack of infrastructure, homeless encampments, restrictive recycling policies, and lack of road maintenance. Similar to comments from the in-person meetings, commenters cited the high cost of waste disposal, restrictive recycling policies, and poor enforcement as major contributors to worsening illegal dumping. They recommended that the County redirect their recycling and dumping policies to meet the needs of their citizens. Commenters also suggested that the County use the "old naval yard," presumably the decommissioned portion of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, or a similar location to establish a homeless transition center that provides shelter and social services. Residents also recommended that the County collaborate with other municipalities using all available resources to improve road maintenance. Lastly, participants advocated for more and safer parks that provide learning opportunities for kids.

### **DETAILED NOTES**

Detailed notes in their original form from all three meetings and the online comments are attached.