

A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST
SUMMARY OF PROPOSED POLICY SOLUTIONS
Central Coast Climate Justice Network

DRAFT ONLY

Introduction: Why a Green New Deal for the Central Coast?

Skyrocketing economic inequalities, rampant racist police violence, a global pandemic, droughts, wildfires, and the rise of anti-democratic political forces--these are some of the many threats that we face today, with implications for the quality of life and wellbeing for all people and the local and global ecosystems we rely upon. It is high time that we confront those threats head on and mobilize around a vision of change that is transformative, ambitious, and powerful in both its promise and impact.

The purpose of this document is to create a framework, a vision, and a plan of action for a Central Coast Green New Deal that is responsive to the series of intersecting and cascading challenges and crises we face, in order to chart a course for a future that is socially equitable, ecologically sustainable, economically uplifting, and rooted in the values of accountability, respect, care, interdependence, justice, and democracy. Moreover, we hope this document will prove useful for activists on the Central Coast to understand what issues are important to the community and help plan a way forward.

Methods and Data Sources for this Report

Research Question

In an effort to explore promising pathways forward for a regional Green New Deal, we begin by asking, *What sorts of policy ideas and considerations are important to residents of the Central Coast as they discuss the possibility of a regional Green New Deal?* Our objective is to present an understanding of community members' core values, hopes, and concerns.

The main method of data collection used was the **house meeting**. House meetings consist of gathering small groups of people in someone's home or another familiar space to discuss their vision of change. House meetings have their roots in grassroots social movements, specifically the efforts of the United Farm Workers. We conducted around 35 house meetings with 330 participants between 2019 and 2021. Also informing the Policy Solutions sections (see below) were a series of (ongoing) conversations among members of the Central Coast Climate Justice Network, and the results of the Climate Resilience Roundtable process, convened by the Community Environmental Council--a C3JN core member organization.

Main Findings, Themes, and Vision

Values & Ideals of the Green New Deal

Often before engaging specific conversations about proposed Green New Deal policy, house meeting participants offered their views on the values and ideals of the federal Green New Deal resolution.

A wide variety of values, problems, solutions, and concerns arose from the discussions at the house meetings. Some of the topics frequently raised were jobs and the Just Transition, changes in political process, Indigenous justice, environmental justice, local change, and coming together across political divides. Also addressed was climate urgency, transportation, housing, economic change, education, natural disasters, waste, public health, and community concerns.

Our Proposed Green New Deal Framework: Policy Solutions for Santa Barbara County and the Central Coast

The following section contains all of the major areas of policy discussion and proposals that came out of both the House Meetings and the many conversations among Climate Justice Network leaders who were reflecting on their interactions and engagements with community members. While this list and its contents are ambitious and far-reaching, the information presented here is by no means exhaustive. We invite comments and suggestions for deepening and strengthening our language and substance on each of these areas of policy consideration, and hope the reader will offer additional ideas for topics not covered here. Also important to note is that while policy solutions are the focus of this particular report, there are many other approaches to climate solutions, and meaningful climate action will require drawing on them all.

Agriculture, Food, and Healthy Soils

- Promote **sustainable agriculture** by implementing the following:
 - **Efficient water and fertilizer use** and reuse,
 - **Ban pesticides** known to be harmful to human health to protect farmworkers,
 - **A living wage, healthcare benefits, unconditional family leave and labor protection for farmworkers**
 - **Protections and mitigation actions to protect farmworkers from extreme heat, wildfire smoke, pandemics and other climate disasters.**
- Implement a county-wide **composting program** that links residents, businesses and restaurants, and farms in a system that will build healthy soils, vibrant gardens, and produce natural solutions to climate disruption.
- Promote BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) **farm ownership**. Relatedly, we seek to promote food security and food sovereignty for all area residents.
- **Food sovereignty** should be encouraged through food forest, community garden, and permaculture project funding.
- Building and sustaining at least **1 community garden in each neighborhood**.

- Reduce our reliance on industrial **animal agriculture** because of its documented harms to human and ecological wellbeing.
- Make grants for **beekeeping**, which provides vital ecological and public health benefits and can promote economic development

Climate & Disaster Planning

- Advocate for **inclusive planning** that is meaningful, accessible, culturally competent and engages diverse voices early in the process. Diverse knowledge systems and Indigenous practices and lived experiences should be included in all government and community-based organization-led resilience visioning and planning efforts.
- Support adoption of a '**code of conduct**' in **mutual aid agreements** to ensure responders from other jurisdictions have cultural sensitivity and awareness of the neighborhoods they are entering so that all people feel safe and supported in times of crises.
- Advocate for investment in **multilingual communication** capacity within all disaster, public health and service agencies to ensure all information is provided in all native languages.
- Support efforts to **restore Indigenous access** to public and private lands held by publicly funded non-profit organizations to use and manage lands to reduce fire risks and improve ecosystems with traditional cultural practices.
- Community-based **disaster and resilience planning**. Given the frequency of wildfires and the ongoing drought in our region, these phenomena are risks and realities that we will be living with for the foreseeable future. A key proposal from this part of our data includes greater investments in equitable and sustainable **fire prevention and planning**.
- **Change zoning** ordinances to restrict building in fire zones.
- Plan for **habitat replacement and coastal management** with fire recovery and attention to rising sea levels.
- Construct a **fire resistant green belt** around our cities.
- Build partnerships with Indigenous communities to deploy **traditional ecological knowledge** as a sensible alternative to mainstream disaster management
- **Reduce the toxicity within building materials** so if fires strike, the smoke is less harmful

Education & Communication

- Advocate for **climate resilience education campaigns** to include input and learnings from frontline and impacted communities and adapt them into culturally appropriate educational materials and outreach strategies.
- Encourage education campaigns to include **personal actions and low-cost resilience and emergency planning** anyone can do so that everyone feels part of the solution and empowered to help themselves and their families.
- Support development of **climate science literacy programs** for Spanish-language speakers and use more inclusive terminology to make climate science easier to understand and absorb by the general public.

- Create spaces and opportunities for **people to share stories** of hope, grief, loss through art and other mediums to expand ways for people to express their feelings. This is also where people can listen and learn from these experiences.
- Expand **environmental justice and climate justice education** curriculum in the school system, including primary, secondary, and higher educational institutions in our region. This effort will be a welcome and impactful complement to the newly expanded Ethnic Studies curriculum requirements in California's school system. Education programs focusing on **ethnic studies (with a focal point on Chumash studies), science, languages, gardening, waste management, stewardship, and restorative justice**, should be implemented.
- **Educational funding** -- for K-12 and higher education -- should be increased and decoupled from income and property taxes.

Energy

- *Solar Power*
 - Offering **cash rebates** to offset the initial costs of **solar panel installation** will provide long term benefits and will assist with prioritizing **low-income communities and job creation**.
 - **Compensate homeowners for surplus electricity** using performance-based incentives (PBIs)
- *Oil*
 - Grant **zero new oil drilling permits** in the Central Coast region, and phase out old projects within five years. This proposal builds on the recent victories in the region, including keeping Cat Canyon free of expanded oil drilling and winning a moratorium on drilling in parts of Ventura County.
 - Create County-mandated **setback zones** that protect communities (specifically, homes, schools, and healthcare facilities) from existing oil operations (note: in fall of 2021, Gavin Newsom signed an order setting up a buffer of 3200 feet from new oil and gas operations, so our proposal includes enforcing that rule and expanding it to existing operations).
- Increase **energy storage capacity** and advocate for the **decentralization of energy sources**
- Publicize the comparison of government **subsidies** to green vs. dirty energy projects
- Santa Barbara Clean Energy and 3CEnergy should adopt **100% renewable energy policies**.
- **Solar and wind solutions** should be aggressively pursued.
- **Microgrids** should be built to power commercial, industrial, and residential centers.
- **Grid maintenance** should be prioritized to enable climate resistance infrastructure and create jobs
- **Retrofits, efficiency measures, and electrification** should be subsidized in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, which will create jobs.
- **Methane gas leaks** should be repaired, which will create jobs.
- Consider **offshore wind** and **wind projects** at Tajiguas, which would create jobs

Equitable Economy & Financial Aid

- Advocate for policies that support an **equitable transition to a green economy** that reduces climate impacts and provides economic empowerment and opportunity.
- Advocate for a **sustainability labor union network linked** to the Green New Deal and support a publicly funded '**Civilian Just Resilience Corps**' to provide additional opportunity for entry and advancement in the green economy.
- Support policies to create County & State **relief funds for undocumented** immigrant workers & families. Advocate for a **mutual aid** response model to support minimum wage workers displaced during disruptions.
- **Local hiring practices** should be encouraged and mandated when possible.
- **Make the polluters pay** for the just transition to a post-fossil fuel economy.
- **Electrical and broadband utilities** should be made **public**.
- **Local banks and local currencies** should be encouraged, supported, and implemented.
- **Small businesses** should be subsidized.
- Tax reductions and subsidies should be used to encourage **curbing food waste**.
- Value **care work** by promoting fair wages and labor rights for our community members who provide this critical service to our families and community.
- **Higher wage** standards should be set by the county.

Health & Wellness

- Expand access to **affordable health care**--including mental health services--throughout the region
- Advocate for a comprehensive **whole-community wellness support system** for mental health recovery post-disaster – both in the immediate and longer-term. Ensure targeted mental health support for high risk, vulnerable communities and individuals (those with PTSD, clinically depressed, financial limitations, etc.).
- **Align Public Health agencies and the health care system** on climate resilience goals and advocate for a community supportive system that shifts resources from policing to health and social programs.
- Advocate and support efforts to expand **access to healthy local food** through free community garden space, reclaiming 'commons' for food growing, support of humanitarian food programs, expanding EBT at farmers markets, and teaching people and providing resources to grow their own food.

Housing

- Support policies that increase financial assistance to local governments, nonprofit housing organizations and public/private partnerships to provide **affordable, transitional, supported and emergency housing** to seniors, farmworkers, frontline and essential workers, and people with special needs.
- Local governments should work with local hotels to **house people during disasters**.
- Support changes at the state level to increase **affordable housing stock** at the local level and eliminate barriers to **alternative co-housing** and other lower cost housing options (accessory dwelling units, conversions, etc.). Encourage **cooperative housing**,

socialized housing, and **alternative housing** (cob houses, trailers, and tiny homes) through zoning laws and give these priority through the County. This proposal is linked to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions because it can lower the normally high number of vehicle miles traveled due to people living far from where they work.

- Advocate for eliminating or mitigating **risk factors of housing** in high pollution burden or high hazard areas. Support policies that provide funding to reduce pollution sources in targeted high risk, low-income and communities of color (fenceline or frontline communities).
- Expand **affordable housing** in the region, with particular emphasis on support for our unhoused neighbors. **Houslessness** should be addressed as a housing and economic justice issue and should be decriminalized. This demand is also reflected in the Red, Black, and Green New Deal (see <https://redblackgreennewdeal.org/>).
- **Rent and mortgage forgiveness** should be pursued by the county in the wake of COVID-19 and piloted for future applications.
- **Slumlords** should be aggressively held accountable.
- **Retrofits, energy efficiency, and electrification** should be pursued, especially for low-income residents.
- All new houses and buildings must adhere to green regulations, and existing buildings must be retrofitted to **improve insulation and energy efficiency**. Incentives and subsidies should be provided for low income residents to retrofit houses. This effort will create many jobs, reduce energy waste and reflect concerns seen in other Green New Deals (such as the proposed New York City Green New Deal).
- **Housing (and resultant educational) segregation** should be eliminated.

Indigenous Sovereignty and Support

- Obtain the **free, prior, and informed consent** of Indigenous peoples for all decisions that affect Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories, honor all treaties and agreements with Indigenous peoples, and uphold the **sovereignty** and **land rights** of Indigenous peoples (including non-federally recognized tribes).
- Link climate justice concerns with **Indigenous** community leadership and **sovereignty**, including gathering and tending rights on lands in the region, and support land reclamation for Indigenous Chumash communities in the region.
- **Land trusts** should be used to protect land from development, to create community ownership and management of land for the common good, and to manifest land rights for the Chumash people.
- **Land and water rights** should be restored to the Chumash people
- Chumash community members should be **consulted in all efforts aimed at repairing local ecologies**.
- Both **federally and non-federally recognized Chumash bands** should be consulted concerning all land use projects.
- **Reparations** should be made to Chumash communities.
- Chumash communities should receive additional **health services, free transit, and free higher education**.
- **Chumash Studies** should be a focal point for local ethnic studies curriculum.

Labor

- Allocate sufficient funds to support workers with the **transition to greener union jobs**, including **job training, severance pay, and healthcare**
- Mandate thorough new hire orientation training about **worker's rights** under the law and the benefits of unionization.
- Increase efficiency and transparency of labor union communication and dues, and **remove obstacles to unionization** for local workers.
- Establish **livable wages** for all laborers, including domestic, eldercare and childcare workers who are often included in green jobs narratives. In 2021, Santa Barbara County was named the least affordable county in the country, due to our high cost of living and comparably low wages. A livable wage should be available to all. This demand is also consistent with the Red, Black, and Green New Deal.
- Promote **Project Labor Agreements** for building a **green economy** with high quality jobs that are well-paying and that promote **equity and inclusion** (racial, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.)
- Approach all **new infrastructure** needs as an **opportunity to employ local skilled and trained workforces**.
- **Grants** should be given to those whose employment is jeopardized by the transition to a post-fossil fuel economy.
- **Retraining and transition laws** should be supported to ensure that the inevitable transition is also just, fair, and equitable.
- **Technical training partnerships** should be pursued among local government, city colleges, UCSB, industry, and trades unions.
- Create community service jobs and internships through a **2-year paid program** for youth and seniors. Use community service as a way to **end age segregation, isolation of the elderly, and criminalization of youth**.
- Student **debt forgiveness** in return for **community service**
- Create and expand options for community service work in **landfill diversion**

Legal System

- Make Santa Barbara a **sanctuary county** for undocumented persons. Undocumented persons make up a significant portion of our region's residents and workforce and they must be given the respect and protection they deserve. For too long, some environmentalists have blamed immigrants for our environmental woes, when in fact, immigrants (and the sons and daughters of immigrants) are among the region's strongest and most inspiring environmental leaders.
- Address the **systematic bias against formerly incarcerated persons** in various labor markets. One solution is to create programs that **expunge the records** of formerly incarcerated individuals when they apply to community workforce training programs, including programs providing pathways to renewable energy, clean mobility jobs, and the cannabis industry.
- **Systemic racial biases in policing** and racial profiling frequently result in people of color being disproportionately targeted for traffic stops and moving violations, which has

significant negative impacts on one's driving record and can create barriers to employment opportunities that involve driving. One solution is to **create expungement pathways** that will remove both misdemeanors/felonies and moving violations in order to open up pathways to employment. Furthermore, we must produce means of addressing the root causes of racialized white-supremacist policing.

- Having a record with convictions--especially felonies--creates significant barriers to accessing financing for new businesses and services. This has to change and we can address this challenge by 1) **outlawing the practices of lowering credit scores and offering substandard financing** on the basis of past convictions or any associated factors; and 2) **creating dedicated financing pathways** for formerly incarcerated individuals that facilitate increased access to capital.
- Link climate justice goals with the Movement for Black Lives' goals of **decarceration and defunding the police**. Reallocate police funding such as the [\\$26.7 million from the Sheriff's budget](#) as called for in 2021 by a coalition of SB County organizations to core community needs, social services and preventive solutions. Recent studies have demonstrated that mass incarceration contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, so there can be no climate justice without racial justice. This call is congruent with the recent development of the Red, Black, and Green New Deal.
- Stop treating law enforcement as the first and best solution to social problems. **Shrink the sheriff's budget**. New programs - transformative justice programs, substance use treatment services, and community mental health programs - should be established in departments autonomous from the sheriff. Change our emergency response system so that social workers--not police--are the first responders to incidents when people experience mental health crises.
- Establish an **independent civilian review board** to supervise the Sheriff's office. The Board of Supervisors is empowered to create such a board by AB 1185.
- **Reduce county jail populations**. We've made good progress on this front in the county in response to COVID, and the sky has not fallen, so we should continue and deepen these practices. This will require that the District Attorney cease sentencing for misdemeanor offenses, stop using the jails to intern houseless folks, and divert more would-be inmates to substance use treatment services and community-based mental health services. We can then trim the prison's budget by reducing our corrections officers and closing South County Jail.
- Police patrols should be phased out in favor of **on-call policing**.
- **County jails should release non-violent offenders**, those over 60 years of age, those who have been incarcerated 25-30 years, those facing indefinite punishment, and those with serious medical conditions.

Neighborhood Support

- Advocate for the **prioritization of climate protection** planning and implementation for socially vulnerable and lower income neighborhoods at highest risk for climate impacts.
- Increase **green/open spaces**, and, in turn, work to decrease the **urban heat island effect**. The urban heat island effect is a phenomenon that disproportionately harms

people of color and low wealth communities throughout the U.S., so attending to these concerns will have significant environmental and climate justice benefits.

- Provide funding for **resilience centers** at existing trusted locations (i.e., schools, community centers, houses of worship, government buildings) to support the community before, during and after climate disruption events. This should include locations that provide clean air, cooling, food distribution, training, services, off-grid charging, and critical information.
- Provide funding for **broadband internet and hardware** (modems, computers) for underserved neighborhoods to ensure access to public health and disaster information and to allow for home schooling and working from home during disasters.
- Advocate for jurisdictions to fund **community ambassadors** to work across agencies and departments to provide education, information and listen to residents' needs and concerns at the neighborhood and individual level.
- Community groups should be funded to pursue **permaculture, habitat restoration**, and other community service projects for youth and seniors.

Reinvigorating Democracy and Reimagining Community

- Promote **democracy** through regular Town Hall meetings and house meetings, held in multiple languages at accessible times of the day and evening. This effort will create more rigorous processes for soliciting and integrating public input on local government decision-making. Question and answer periods should accompany public comments during public meetings.
- **Multi-species justice** is a term that advocates and scholars are using to refer to ways that our policy making and daily practices can improve the wellbeing, quality of life, and accountability for humans and our non-human relatives and critical ecological habitats. Some specific proposals that have emerged on this front include **regenerating kelp forests** and increasing measures to protect marine life as well as for all who interact with our oceans. Such measures will also create jobs.
- **Habitat restoration** should be a top priority and is a job creator.
- A **regional environmental justice commission** should be created to investigate complaints of environmental and climate discrimination and injustice in the county.
- County election processes should be changed to include true **primary elections**.
- **Public meeting spaces** should be made available for free to coalitions of nonprofits and community groups.
- **Funding** for the above proposals can come from **removing fossil fuel subsidies, defunding the police, and taxing large corporations and wealthy households**

Transportation

- **Expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure** focused on safety and accessibility, including buffered bike lanes, bicycle parking and storage facilities, and curb extensions.
- Expand connectivity, accessibility, and consistency of public transportation within and between all relevant cities through greater investments in **public transportation**. Electric busses should be phased in by 2030. There are bus services within and between Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, but they are in serious need of

expansion, in terms of geographic coverage, frequency of availability, and accessibility. Public transportation is one of the best ways to reduce vehicle miles traveled in single automobiles--the greatest local driver of greenhouse gases.

- Transportation and housing needs should be considered and solved together, such as by building more **affordable housing closer to where people work**, and by building **public transit lines** from residential (periphery) areas to commercial (central) areas.
- Vision Zero should be considered the standard for **bike and pedestrian safety** (see <https://visionzero.santabarbaraca.gov/>).
- Incentives, programs, and subsidies should be used to encourage the market for **new and used electric vehicles**.
- **Light rail transit**, in addition to more reliable regional train and bus transit, should be pursued.
- **Bike paths** should be extended into agriculture roads.
- **Disincentives for gas vehicles**, including surcharges, should be explored.
- **Public transit** should be made free for use and paid for through progressive taxes.
- Expand **vanpools** to support commuting
- Encouraging **telecommuting**

Waste

- Local governments should work with local restaurants to **reduce plastic use** and implement collective **tupperware exchanges**.
- **Composting at community gardens** and at industrial facilities should be pursued.
- **Landfill diversion** projects, such as repair shops and second-hand goods warehousing, should be funded. Fund and organize “**Library of Things**” **centers** in each neighborhood staffed by residents currently taking GED courses.
- Build **small-scale recycling facilities** instead of relying on overseas recycling markets

Water

- **Water quality** should be improved.
- **Water management** should be conducted regionally, such as at the scalar level of the watershed.
- **Water conservation** should be encouraged through the use of greenhouses and water meters on condos and apartments.
- **Water mismanagement** should be discouraged, for example by discouraging vineyards and lawns.
- Chumash people should be ensured **water rights**.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge that what we call Santa Barbara County is made up of settlements built on the unceded land, waters and territory of the Indigenous Chumash peoples. We live, work, learn, and recreate in these spaces and places where the Chumash have resided continuously for some fourteen thousand years. The Chumash people are comprised of the descendants of Indigenous peoples removed from their Island of origin, including Limuw (Santa

Cruz), Anyapac (Anacapa), Wima (Santa Rosa) and Tuqan (San Miguel), subjugated by five missions during the Spanish conquest of the Central Coast region. For those of us who are settlers, it is our duty and obligation to be allies to Indigenous peoples and to listen to, learn from, and--when invited--work with our Chumash neighbors to build an equitable, sustainable and just community. We must acknowledge the trauma associated with colonization and ecocide, and work collectively to heal from those historic wounds and to decolonize our communities going forward.

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