



**FUNDERS FOR
A JUST ECONOMY**
NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

BUILDING POWER IN PLACE

The Inland Region: Creating Local Solutions & Implementing New Visions

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE PROJECT	2	THE BUILDING BLOCKS: LAND	17
INTRODUCTION: THE PROCESS	3	Reclaiming and Remaking Mobile Homes	17
OUR METHODOLOGY	3	Environmental Justice	18
INTRODUCTION: THE INLAND REGION	8	Toxic Air	19
THE BUILDING BLOCKS: GEOGRAPHY & DEMOGRAPHICS	9	Water	19
Indigenous Communities & Current Organizing	9	Public Transportation	20
The Region	9	POWER IN PLACE: CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE	21
Migration and Shift from LA to IE	10	POWER IN PLACE: MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE	22
Criminalization, Immigration Enforcement, & Detention	10	Building Relationships, Building Coalitional Power	23
THE BUILDING BLOCKS: CAPITAL & CORPORATIONS	12	Creating Local Solutions & Implementing New Visions	23
THE BUILDING BLOCKS: LABOR	13	A New Generation Comes to Power	25
Temporary Growth, Permanent Stratification	13	POWER IN PLACE: WHERE FUNDERS FIT	26
Logistics Industry	14	Showing Up with Long-Term, In-Depth Support	26
Hiding from Accountability	15	Importance of the Inland Region to National Funders	26
		Jumping into the Inland Region's Pooled Funds	26
		Investing in Infrastructure	27



WHO WE ARE



Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG) is a network of national and local grantmakers throughout the U.S. We bring together funders to learn, connect, and mobilize resources with an intersectional and place-based focus. We create inspiring organizing spaces for funders to explore shifting power and

money in philanthropy towards justice and equity. Our member network includes donors, philanthropic institutions, and their staff interested in supporting racial, economic, gender, and climate justice movements across the US.

Leading the Building Power in Place project, **Funders for a Just Economy (FJE)** is a program of NFG committed to advancing the philanthropic conversation around intersectional economic justice and workplace power. We are committed to placing organized labor, worker centers, worker justice campaigns, policy efforts, and organizing strategies at the center of our efforts. Partner groups address the disparate impact of economic policies on people of color, women, migrants, and low-income individuals and families. Two of our key programs include (1) Meeting the Moment, creating collaborations for a just future of work(ers) that also addresses long-term racial, gender and climate justice and (2) Labor's Evolution, strengthening ties among labor unions, community-based organizations and philanthropy and charting new directions in worker-led organizing.

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Special thanks to NFG communications & administrative teams for all they do!

Our BPP work in the Inland Region is only possible thanks to long-term foundational work from and FJE's partnership with NFG's Amplify Fund, and the Fund for Inclusive California.

Launched as the first grantmaking fund at Neighborhood Funders Group (NFG), **Amplify Fund** believes that community power is the key driver of just and equitable development. As a funder collaborative, the Fund supports Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income communities to build power and to influence decisions about the places they live and work. Amplify centers racial justice and believes in following the wisdom and guidance of local leaders. In addition to guiding strategies and grantmaking, Amplify is committed to living these values through internal operations, administrative functions, and behavioral norms to the fullest extent possible. They fund in 8 places -- Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and in California (via the Fund for an Inclusive California). Amplify selected these places because of: 1) the prioritization of power building work led by people of color and low-income people, and focused on equitable development; 2) the relative absence of national philanthropy; 3) the potential to mobilize local philanthropic dollars. In each place Amplify follows the guidance of local advisors and the wisdom of those with lived experience to develop context-specific strategies.

Fund for Inclusive California is a collaborative philanthropic effort that centers community-driven solutions to the urgent need for housing justice in vibrant neighborhoods across California. Their leadership principles, philanthropic practice, and relationships with community organizations were essential components of this effort.



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NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

INTRODUCTION: THE PROJECT

The newest uprisings for Black lives, accelerated in 2020, not only put Black-led organizing at center stage, but it also remapped the ways philanthropic and other institutions think about power to incorporate the South and Midwest. So too has the success in shifting state-level power and national electoral results in Georgia and Virginia. Yet places like the Inland Region of California are rarely on the radar as hubs of change, often coming to national headlines in times of disaster. Yet such a headline-driven view obscures both active changes and the seeds of long-term transformation to build power.

More broadly, the impulse and intention to direct new resources to the South and Midwest and to rural communities can often be met with confusion on where to even begin - or with rapid action wrapped in assumptions on what works where. This can translate into frustration in these underfunded areas as local movements for change are bypassed for more well-resourced groups with national reach, or are asked to replicate one model that may not fit local geography, history, and power relations.

When it comes to expanding the geographic reach of funding to support lasting change on inequality, in other words, mobilizing resources must be

met with a deeper knowledge of and partnerships with Black, Indigenous, migrant, and people of color-led movements rooted in place. Local funders, too, must also be considered in this landscape and as potential partners.

Building Power in Place emerges from a recognition that there is no “one size fits all” solution to addressing low-wage worker issues and economic inequality in the US, especially if we want to pay attention to race, gender and climate. In fact, many challenges workers and low-income communities face are place-based or geographic. Think about how local policies like a \$15 minimum wage can be undercut by state pre-emption, or the power that corporate forces like Amazon or agri-business exert in rural and exurban places. This has never been more clear than under COVID-19, where essential worker protections are a complex patchwork, and often include battles among local cities and state governments in intervening in dangerous industries like meatpacking.

We ask: How are low-wage workers and organizations that represent them addressing unequal economic, health conditions, given the complex geography of power in the US? Where are their connections among places in terms of both what low-income Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities face and how they organize? What role are funders



playing – and where can they shift - to best respond to the specific place-based conditions related to economic justice?

This project is as much a research process rooted in community voices as it is an active process to help forge a shared understanding among funders, community, and labor organizations, and other key stakeholders through listening, learning, and building together.

Generously funded by the Public Welfare Foundation, BPP has **3 goals**:

#1 Identify specific urban and rural communities with organizing, policy advocacy and other efforts regarding economic justice for low-wage workers and understand how conditions are shaped by place-based factors such as state preemption. Deepen knowledge of the ways in which organizations respond to geographically-specific conditions and the ways they tangibly shift power and the economic prospects for low wage workers.

#2 Bridge donors, funders, and organizations engaged in related areas - including workforce development, community health and equity - regarding building power for workers. Share more information about worker-led strategies shifting precarious conditions and creating new visions of the economy in places that have not traditionally received significant funding

for movement-building and grassroots organizing.

#3 Build and strengthen relationships with local and regional funders in the identified communities through larger events on issues facing marginalized workers, and facilitate a deeper relationship to national funders, community groups, and NFG.

INTRODUCTION: THE PROCESS

OUR METHODOLOGY

BPP is driven by interviews, public conversations and informal dialogue as qualitative research. Each site was selected in partnership with our member organizations, with community groups where we have partnerships, and with our NFG programs. They were narrowed down through a process where we mapped places (1) outside the more conventional sites of significant foundation funding; (2) where NFG programs had active ties, in order to build on our prior commitments and ensure longevity of work; (3) where there was active worker organizing and/or locally-specific manifestations of anti-worker policy (for example, state preemption.) Sites were then filtered to include a diversity of rural-urban or state/local relationships, and to ensure spread across South, Midwest, and rural regions.



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NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

In the case of the Inland Region, much of our data came from the insights and information shared from over 30 movement leaders, as well as several funders, during the [2021 Southern California's Inland Region Learning Visit](#). We followed up with 5 interviews with both local community, family, and collaborative grantmakers, as well as state/national funders with a strong and active presence in a location. Questions included what the interviewee viewed as the most pressing economic justice issues; how foundations supported work to change these conditions; what challenges they faced in distributing funding; and what gaps they see in local and regional funding related to economic justice. Interviews lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour, and were recorded with transcripts.

We also connected with several of the labor and community organizations who participated in the learning visit to conduct more in depth follow up interviews, an approach designed to both gather data and foster new connections among these movements and foundations. Partners for this are selected based on analysis of active worker-led organizing; groups were selected that (1) are led by BIPOC, including in management, (2) work across labor unions and community organizations, and (3) include an emphasis on intersectional organizing.

In the case of Inland California, the Fund for Inclusive California was essential to this process, having developed their Inland Region strategy using a co-created process with key local labor/community organizations since 2018. The perspectives and activities of these organizations were gathered throughout the process of developing and executing a virtual joint Learning Visit in July 2021. The Learning Visit was recorded to also ensure accuracy in quotes.

Quotes are anonymized to protect confidentiality. Qualitative data was supplemented and fact-checked with secondary source academic literature, labor and economic statistics (most significantly from the University of Southern California Equity Research Initiative (ERI)/PolicyLink [National Equity Atlas](#)) newspapers, and other media.

OUR ANALYTICAL APPROACH

How do we begin to get a grasp on the local economy? To start to address this, we turned to a longer tradition of theory that views the economy as underpinned by **land, labor, and capital** (where corporations are subsumed). These three planks are not fixed containers, a long history of political and economic research tells us, but in fact, there is significant tension between the drive to commodify these and the social destruction reaped by free



market ideas and practice. **Indigenous, Black radical, decolonial and/or feminist scholars and activists** have driven this point home repeatedly, **showing how we value land, labor and capital is never a given.** How we conceive of property or work can be transformed to better serve all life and reflect broader visions beyond the destructive, extractive market – as it has been historically in certain indigenous, Black and other cultural traditions, and many strive today to make possible at a community level in many ways. While (racial) capitalist transformation has sought to make land, labor and capital solely profit-driven, there have been key moments of political transformation that have pushed back to redefine these economic elements more responsive to and rooted in social needs like care. In other words, these *Building Blocks* of the economy **not only shape power but are active sites where power is contested and challenged.** The terms of labor, land and capital (from the local on up) must be up for debate if we are to shift the systemic, historical inequalities that shape worker’s lives. To highlight place dynamics tied to people and environment, we also look at geography and demographics as building blocks influencing the local economy.

In what ways then, do movements practically shift power on this complicated terrain? Significant new work has been done linking movements, funders, and practice in place. Focusing on the possibilities for progressive governance at the US state level, the **University of Southern**

California Equity Research Institute (USC ERI) [Changing States framework](#) lays out six key arenas for contesting and wielding governing power. The research shows the electoral, legislative, judicial, administrative, communication, and corporate must each be addressed to make change last. The USC ERI framework offers a critical intervention in both recognizing the specific ways power plays out at different geographic levels, but also where and how movements develop multi-issue, multi-faceted strategies that can take them from building bases and influencing decision-making towards wielding governing power. These arenas of governance thus form one leg of how *Power in Place* is enacted.

Frameworks like *Changing States* and related movement research helps address what capacities are necessary, such as a diverse coalitional and leadership development structures, to change arenas of governance. To understand more precisely how the specific economic landscape fits, we brought in a third area of research by scholar Beverly Silver and others on **the ways workers historically have shifted economic power.** First, workers can build associational power with political or community groups via legally-recognized forms. Second, they can wield their position in the market, such as striking when there are few options to replace them. Finally, they can leverage their position in a key industrial area or production process. Merging these complementary vantage points on progressive



movement and worker power under *Movement Ecosystems*, we paid attention to **both the forms and strategies power-building takes** - and how these respond to and reshape local (and state, national, and global) economic building blocks.

Foundations are, of course, inseparable from movement capacities and strategic orientations to the economy, so we also include them in Power in Place. Our findings across these **lead to our roadmap on ways forward for philanthropic partners in change, *Redefining Power***. As all of our research is rooted in local realities, each of these recommendations will look different by place – though we anticipate commonalities that we will also use to inform our own responsibilities as a funder network.

Components	Key Elements	Key Questions
Building Blocks	Geography & Demography	What key contextual elements shape the landscape of economic & political power?
Building Blocks	Capital Labor Land	Where is economic power contained & sustained locally?
Power in Place	Arenas of Governance	Where and how do government and other institutional actors enact power over land, labor, and capital locally?
Power in Place	Movement Ecosystems Where Funders Fit	Where and how do movements organize and strategically wield power in the economic building blocks? Where do/how can funders play a role in this?



INTRODUCTION: THE INLAND REGION

The Inland Region is a large, heterogeneous region, with community-specific issues and solutions. The Inland Region is the third largest region of California, after Los Angeles County and the Bay Area, despite often not receiving the same amount of attention as its two larger counterparts. Discussions among philanthropy often describe it as an area too big, overwhelming, and difficult to make a dent in - a common misconception for rural areas. But the region is in fact criss-crossed by interconnected challenges, familial and community ties, and movements. Organizers feel strongly that the movement landscape is emerging, and they show up as consistent, reliable, thoughtful partners ready to continue doing the work with even more support and coordination.

The Inland Region has a long history of domination by large corporate interests who have promised big and delivered little - all the while relying upon the highly-undervalued labor of Black, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, and indigenous groups, as well as depleting the environment. While global billion-dollar logistics companies have sold a narrative of increased jobs and opportunities in exchange for tax breaks, the promises for a boom of jobs for the region rarely add up. Challenging this has been

worker-led efforts, including a new movement in coordinated local union organizing. While the patterns of co-governance among corporate power - whether it be agriculture, developers, prisons/police and goods movement - and local elites has shaped the Inland Region for decades, a new movement infrastructure has become more visible to give residents a real voice in shaping the present and future agenda.



Photo Credit: Inland Empire Labor Council



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THE BUILDING BLOCKS: GEOGRAPHY & DEMOGRAPHICS

Indigenous Communities & Current Organizing

Indigenous communities in this region are diverse and include the Yuma, Maara'yam (Serrano), Cahuilla, Gabrielino, Luise'o, Chemehuevi, and Mojave tribes. Throughout the Inland Region are stories of violence and resource destruction by settlers, and resistance from indigenous communities. The theft and genocide against Native communities occurs through residential schools, such as Sherman Indian School which still exists as a public high school for Native students¹, and resource destruction, such as Nestle's water extraction from Strawberry Creek² that impairs surface water resources.

The Region

Among the interconnections is a history of settler colonialism that included industrial, commercial agriculture where daily life was controlled by large growers and smaller, working class and wealthy white towns that often were meant to create "frontier" enclaves and idyllic, racially-segregated "garden"

¹ http://www.shermanindianmuseum.org/sherman_hist.htm

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/29/the-fight-over-water-how-nestle-dries-up-us-creeks-to-sell-water-in-plastic-bottles>

cities (and later, in the 1950s, white flight exurbs). Over time, ranching, citrus, grain, grapes, dates and other industrialized agriculture have been developed regionally, with Coachella Valley still a site for much production. With this, many farmworkers built life in Mexican *colonias* (tied to Spanish colonial history) and other multi-racial rural, under-resourced communities that included Fillipinx, Chinese, Japanese, Middle Eastern and other migrants.³ These histories have meant that today, government services are few and far between, and infrastructure is a patchwork. For example, many families in remote areas have been without electricity for several years and cannot afford installation to connect to the new grid, which is about \$35,000 with the Imperial Irrigation District. The price of such policies is reflected in the area's poverty rates, wealth gaps, and public health disparities, which are among the highest in California and on many scales, in the United States.

The flipside of such histories of exclusion is that there are deep and long histories of multi-racial activism, whether it be historical labor activism or contemporary environmental justice work, as well as interconnected indigenous, Black, Latinx and API cultural efforts that are continually rising up to redefine the region.

³ For more, see: Garcia, M. (2010). *A world of its own: race, labor, and citrus in the making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. Univ of North Carolina Press. And Patterson, T. C. (2016). *From acorns to warehouses: historical political economy of southern California's inland empire*. Routledge.



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Migration and Shift from LA to IE

Part of what brought this region to the attention of many funders and policymakers is the rapid growth of Black, Latinx, and Asian and Pacific Island populations moving to the region, following displacement out of the increasingly expensive central Los Angeles area. Across Riverside and San Bernardino, Latinx people make up more than half of residents (50 and 54% respectively), and are expected to grow in share of the population to an average of two-thirds by 2050. Asian and Black populations are between 7 to 8%, predicted by current trends to remain steady in their share of a growing population, while white residents' share declined. While many assume migration to Inland Region is shaped by new migrants, movement is actually internal, second and third (and more) generation non-white communities. Only about 15% of Latinx residents were foreign born in 2010. Nor is this necessarily new: the movement has built upon existing indigenous and Latinx populations (dating back multiple generations to pre-US borders), and made for a heterogenous, dynamic Riverside and San Bernardino county.

New or not, this more diverse population is also increasingly young. According to a young, local team of researchers Terriquez et. al. (2021), 63% of residents under 25 identified as Latinx; 5% are Asian, 7% Black and 21% white. The median age of white residents is 45, versus 31 among Latinx residents (and 36 overall), and youth were a larger share of the overall

population compared to the state.⁴ Yet such a new generation is growing up where key resources to personal and community development, like a solid safety net and services, have not existed - or have been kept under tight control by wealthy landowner classes or by homeowners who have privatized access. Backlash from entrenched power interests has been fierce, but communities are locally in ways that give space for young, diverse groups to redefine their future - and with it reimagine organizing.

Criminalization, Immigration Enforcement, & Detention

Meanwhile, while new migration from outside the US may be subsiding, that hasn't stopped the region from being a place where lawmakers and police target first generation immigrant populations. This includes an almost-defiant proliferation of Secure Communities agreements in areas like Riverside County, where the Sheriff's Department has a long, documented history of violence against undocumented immigrants. The region is also home to the GEO group-operated Adelanto Detention Center, which has expanded in the last decade to house nearly 2,600 migrants during COVID-19, and has been cited for inhumane conditions, including lack of medical care, punitive use of solitary confinement and bedsheet nooses present in numerous rooms.⁵

⁴ <https://transform.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EmergingYouthPowerReport2021.pdf>

⁵ Shoicet, Catharine (2018). Inspectors found nooses hanging in cells at an ICE detention facility. CNN. October 3. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/03/politics/immigrant-detention-adelanto-oig-report/index.html>



More broadly, the region is part of California’s rural and exurban prison landscape, and many of the areas have been hard hit by mass incarceration. With displacement from central Los Angeles and radically high rent, the region is also one of the places where recently-released people can find a place to live. The histories of white flight to the region mean that many white residents have adopted a “law and order,” police-dominant system, and allows police unchecked control of everyday life.

Prisons have also become a source of jobs, selling a false narrative of economic prosperity in the waves of collapsing agriculture and manufacturing in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶ In the 10-year fight by immigrant rights activists to shut down Adelanto, GEO group and others have drummed up fears that closure would lead to mass job loss (with realistically 600-800 jobs tied to the facility). According to organizers’ calculations, the prison brings anywhere from 1 to 1.5 million to the city budget, which is about 10-15% of the budget. More broadly, the area relies on private, state, federal prisons and even jails to get revenue. But the fact is that a few hundred jobs is the extent of the prison’s role: it has done nothing for real economic growth, and most prison jobs are far from high-road, middle-class opportunities. Ironically, the long-outlawed cannabis industry is actually creating more jobs and revenue; in a few years, it brought hundreds of jobs that have a union track.

⁶ For more, see:



Source: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice



THE BUILDING BLOCKS: CAPITAL & CORPORATIONS

Corporate Goods Giants & Power

The Inland Region has a long history of domination by large corporate interests who have promised big and delivered little - all the while relying upon the highly-undervalued labor of Black, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, and indigenous groups, as well as depleting the environment. This has included ranchers, agriculture, real estate developers, and prisons. The logistics industry is the latest such behemoth, going often town-to-town touting the contributions of warehouse and distribution centers under Walmart and Amazon's control. The Inland Region became particularly valued for its location at the juncture of freeways and train freight from the Port of Long Beach/Los Angeles - the busiest in the US thanks to imports from China and the Pacific - and highways leading throughout the US. But in exchange for billions in profit from controlling goods flows, companies like Amazon have provided local communities little and exploited with abandon - detailed more comprehensively in the Labor and Land sections.

What is critical here is understanding the ways contemporary logistics corporations co-opted municipal and regional power structures. Los Angeles proved more expensive, and residents and companies pushed back on creating warehouse towns alone, and with it bringing truck traffic and

more. Port boosters for the greater LA region set their sights on the Inland Region as expendable and with space for millions in square feet, and local municipalities were co-opted over time with big promises by corporations like Wal-Mart.⁷ And they came at a time of significant distress, when continued manufacturing movement overseas and the Great Recession had unemployment at all-time lows.

Logistics giants have found their ways into tables meant in fact to grapple with long-term, sustainable and equitable economic development. They have also co-opted local infrastructure. Announced in May 2020, [SB Airport Communities](https://sbairportcommunities.org/home), a coalition of labor, environmental justice and other community groups, have challenged the development of Amazon's newest location at the San Bernardino International Airport and are seeking guarantees for good jobs for local residents and mitigation against air and noise pollution that the development will cause.⁸ Ultimately, Amazon wielded its power to push the San Bernardino International Airport to approve a 750,000 sq. ft. air cargo logistics Eastgate that would solely benefit the logistics giant.

At the state level, such corporations have been major anchors in efforts to halt closing tax loopholes for corporations in Proposition 13 (1973) property tax system (a measure proposed in 2020). Put bluntly, an interviewee explained, "The warehouse economy has been left to the vulgarities of the

⁷ See De Lara, J. (2018). *Inland Shift*. University of California Press.

⁸ <https://sbairportcommunities.org/home>



market. The market controls everything, and politicians bend over backwards hoping for more jobs and tax revenue and growth.”



Photo Source: Warehouse Workers Resource Center

THE BUILDING BLOCKS: LABOR

Temporary Growth, Permanent Stratification

While global billion-dollar logistics companies have sold a narrative of increased jobs and opportunities in exchange for tax breaks, the promises for a boom of jobs for the region rarely add up. According to data from the University of Redlands’ student-led, collaborative research, the average percentile for unemployment across census tracts with warehouses is 58% compared to the state average of 50%.⁹ The pandemic uptick in logistics - where as of 2021, one in eight Inland Region workers were employed in logistics - is in part because many of the other industries declined, such as hotels, arts and entertainment, recreation, and restaurants.¹⁰ Unemployment otherwise is still relatively high, and jobs are often of a temporary, low-wage nature - that risk entrenching intergenerational inequality.

Challenging this has been worker-led efforts, including a new movement in coordinated local union organizing. Both the Inland Empire Labor Council’s diverse leadership and the nascent [Inland Empire Black Worker Center](#) represent the kind of intersectional approach emerging. The IE Black Worker

⁹ Torres, Ivette; Victoria, Anthony; Klooster, Dan and the Students of Environmental Studies 277 at University of Redlands (2020). “Warehouses, Pollution and Social Disparities.” University of Redlands.

https://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/files/warehouse_research_report_4.15.2021.pdf

¹⁰ Lanser, Jonathan (2021). “Pandemic drove logistics jobs up to 12% in Riverside, San Bernardino counties.” Press-Enterprise. April 1.

<https://www.pe.com/2021/04/01/pandemic-made-logistics-12-of-jobs-in-riverside-and-san-bernardino-counties/>



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puts racial inequality at the center of an understanding of worker power, and also interlinks it to a dynamic workforce development pipeline through the new IE Works Program that provides equitable pipelines to public sector water infrastructure jobs. Drawing from its relationship to the SoCal Black Worker hub and knowledge of the value of pre-apprenticeship in addressing the kinds of historical inequalities affecting Black workers, this promising program is prioritizing those impacted by criminalizing systems and centering good jobs that also respond to the region's lack of public infrastructure.

UFCW's Local 1176 has moved in new directions, organizing cannabis workers and providing expungement services for workers affected by mass incarceration. IBEW, the Carpenter's and other trades have become involved in Just Transition conversations. Healthcare workers with the USW and Teamsters have moved forward campaigns that have helped their wages advance to meet the realities of life.

Logistics Industry

At the backbone of the logistics industry are thousands of low-wage, often Black and Latinx workers who provide the critical work that run the warehouses, trucks, trains, and behind-the-scenes movement of goods tied to the global economy. In an era where Amazon clocked more than \$468

billion in revenue and \$33 billion in profits in 2021,¹¹ thousands of people operate round-the-clock at breakneck speed and with minimal protections. One of the key ways that companies have put pressure on workers is through setting quotas of processing items per hour (often 200 or more), reported through scanning devices that put workers at risk of performance reviews or firing and continually polices "time off task."¹² The high rates are part of what leads Amazon warehouses to have two times as many injuries as other warehouses, at a rate that has been rising consistently year after year.¹³ Such breakneck speeds have also affected drivers, who have been known to urinate in bottles to be able to make inhumane times set by the mega-company.¹⁴

The Warehouse Workers Resource Center (WWRC), a worker-led space that offers education and organizing on issues such as wage theft, health, and compensation, has been at the forefront of the national movement for logistics workers. Their organizing brought to light the price of Amazon's quotas, leading to Assemblymember Lorena Gonzales' successful bill to give

¹¹ Davis, Don (2022). "Amazon's North America revenue ticks up 18.4% in 2021." *Digital Commerce 360*. <https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/article/amazon-sales/>

¹² Selyukh, Alina (2021). "California Bill Passes, Giving Amazon Warehouse Workers Power To Fight Speed Quotas." *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/08/1034776936/amazon-warehouse-workers-speed-quotas-california-bill>

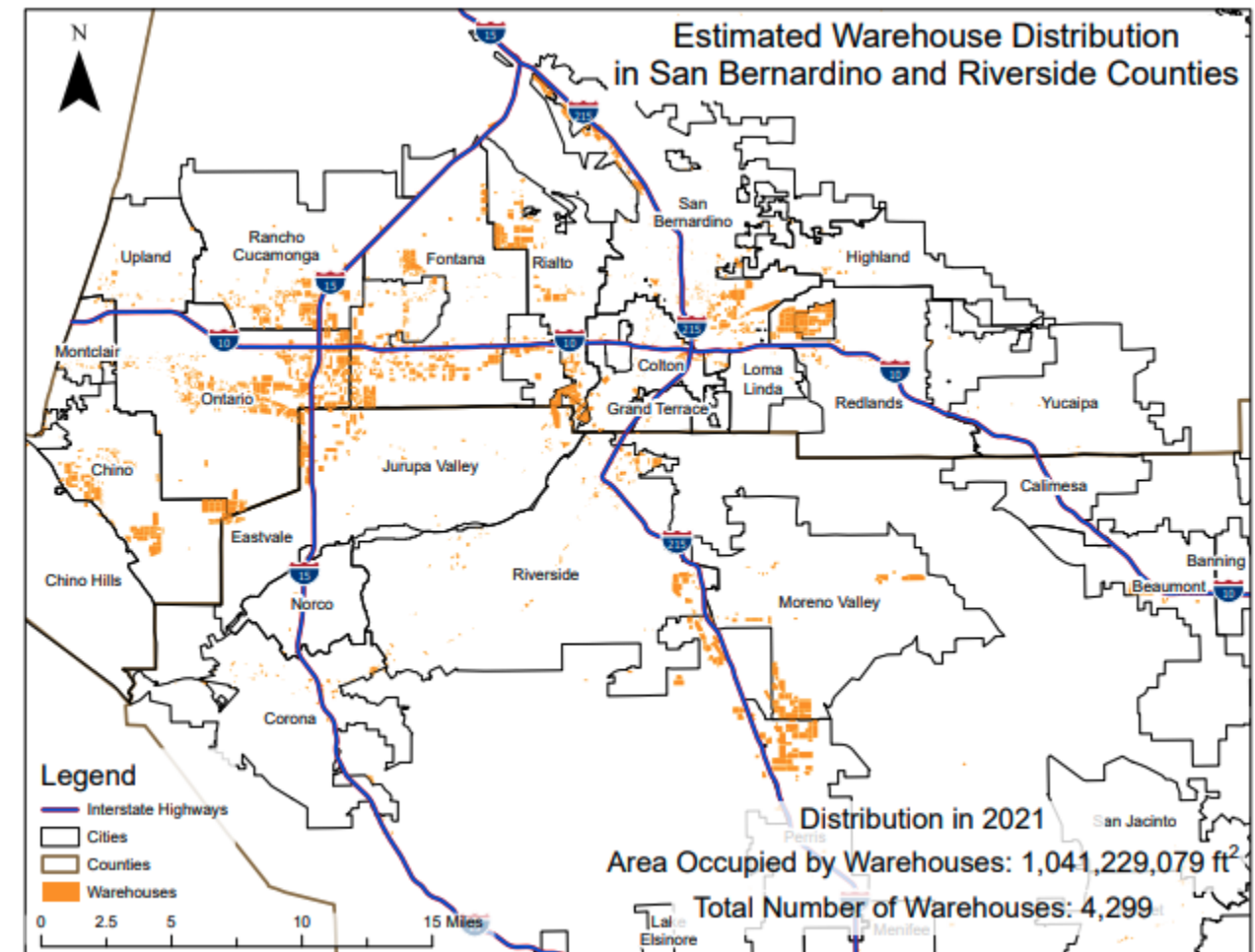
¹³ Evans, Will. (2020). "How Amazon hid its safety crisis." *Reveal*. <https://revealnews.org/article/how-amazon-hid-its-safety-crisis/>

¹⁴ Taylor, Kate and Avery Hartmans (2021). "Amazon drivers say peeing in bottles is an 'inhumane' yet common part of the job, despite the company denying it happens." *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-drivers-say-pee-ing-in-bottles-common-despite-company-denials-2021-3>



temporary agencies, and [an economy without] long term quality jobs, which is seen as the most viable employment in the region.”

One of the ways organizers with Warehouse Workers Resource Center have fought companies’ efforts to avoid accountability is the “Warehouse Indirect Source Rule.” Implemented by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), this requires warehouse operators to track the number and types of trucks that come to their door in order to calculate how much emissions they are creating. IBEW Local 11, which has supported green energy efforts, as well as other environmental and community-based groups came together with WWRC to achieve this important milestone. The warehouses will then be required to comply with emissions standards and respond by utilizing clean, green energy or paying emissions taxes. These have stood up to legal challenges and gained support from throughout the state and the country as a model to begin to regulate unchecked global logistics power, especially as they affect underserved communities like the Inland Region.



Source: Redford Conservancy at Pitzer College. “We mapped the warehouse takeover of the Inland Empire” - Los Angeles Times.
https://www.sbcounty.gov/Uploads/CAO/NewsClips/Content/NewsClips_5-2-22.pdf



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THE BUILDING BLOCKS: LAND

Housing Disinvestment

Land in the Inland Region has been swallowed rapidly by commercial housing development and warehousing. Since the 2010 recession, over 150 million square feet (about 3,300 football fields) of industrial space, mostly warehouses, has been built in the Inland Empire, according to real estate services company CBRE.¹⁸ Meanwhile, despite the booms and busts of the foreclosure crisis and subsequent economic instability, tract housing has advanced far into both agricultural land and natural resources.

The Fund For Inclusive California's [Funding Housing Justice For Thriving Communities](#) research has shown that even as housing stock has grown, discrimination in housing access persists, housing stock quality is problematic, and evictions hit working-class households hard. The portrayal of the region as a cheap alternative to Los Angeles has meant that real estate companies and landlords have taken advantage to actually push market prices higher. In communities like Victorville, where there is increased growth, background checks and other mechanisms are used to block formerly incarcerated people from obtaining much needed homes.

Infrastructure and public resources do not also necessarily accompany

¹⁸ <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/are-warehouses-inland-empire-blessing-or-curse>

growth. In San Bernardino, organizations report more vacant lots than occupied buildings - some 2345 vacant lots by some estimates. The city leadership has so far failed to hear organizer's ideas for an agricultural incentivized zone, a policy that allows zoning to accommodate community gardens and urban farms.

Transforming these histories is the work of [Time for Change Foundation](#) and others, working on creating housing owned and managed by formerly-incarcerated women and other hard-hit communities. As one organizer shared, "Instead of just fighting for Section 8 Vouchers that perpetuate poverty [through draining rental structures, we are focusing on owning land, becoming builders of wealth - this is how we reconnect with land and liberate ourselves."

Reclaiming and Remaking Mobile Homes

Mobile home parks have also been the site of affordable and safe housing crises and new kinds of organizing. The Oasis Mobile Home in Eastern Coachella Valley is one of the larger mobile home parks, with 220 trailers housing about 1,900 people, majority-Latinx and Purépecha community, on Torres Martinez Reservation land. Residents of Oasis experience inadequate housing infrastructure, drinking water high amounts of arsenic, sewage pools near homes and improperly treated wastewater that further contaminates drinking water, and water and power outages, most frequently in the summer months. Despite intimidation, threats, and price gouging,



residents have come together over the years to speak up regarding conditions and demand solutions.

At same time, as a strategy in this land afflicted by displacement, families have created locally-owned mobile home parks of up to 12 units, known as polancos. Many built mobile homes without permits because they didn't know how to get them, seeking grassroots affordable housing opportunities. Some Inland cities have evicted these makeshift parks, and pushed mobile homes into tribal lands that are already taxed and needing infrastructure. One member of the local area shared, "this unique community took matters into their own hands - they are not bad actors willfully neglecting tenants, and they need technical assistance. No program has supported mobile home/polanco communities, or seen them as affordable housing projects." Polancos exemplify the layers of issues residents deal with, including their desires to have sovereignty over their housing while being facing obstructions from local officials who do not listen to their perspectives and dealing with long-term disinvestment in infrastructure.

Environmental Justice

Environmental degradation in the region is severe and dangerous due to the climate and geography, logistics and shipping industries, and lack of adequate public services. The Inland Region has long had notoriously poor air quality because natural air currents bring gaseous pollutants and particulate matter from the Los Angeles area while the warehousing and

logistics boom has potentially increased emissions from diesel trucks and trains.¹⁹ In fact, Riverside ranks 93 percentile in pollution burden as measured by the [CalEnviroScreen](#). Community organizers have identified the connections between the local air and water quality and environmental racism and corporate interests, and have mobilized in response. This provides a robust framework for which philanthropy can further understand the Inland Region's environment, both the organizing landscape and the land itself.



Source: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice

¹⁹

<https://insideucr.ucr.edu/stories/2021/06/02/poor-air-quality-and-warehouses-linked-inland-empire-covid-19-in-equities>



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Toxic Air

One of the main environmental concerns is air pollution, the presence of harmful or toxic pollutants in the air, most of which come from energy production and use. Air quality in the Inland Region is adversely impacted due to both geography and the logistics and shipping industries. Air pollution already exists from the same dynamic experienced in Los Angeles - lots of sun and surrounding mountains means that air pollution gets trapped near the ground by these surrounding mountains and a layer of warm air in the atmosphere called an inversion layer.²⁰ Traffic, which has increased significantly as a result of the logistics and shipping industries, is a significant source of air pollution - the average percentile for traffic across census tracts with warehouses is 67% compared to the state average of 50%.²¹ In addition to traffic, warehouses themselves contribute to environmental pollution. There are more than 3,000 large warehouses (over 100,000 sq ft) in southern California, and they are concentrated in areas that rank in the highest percentile for toxic emissions in the state (worse than 86% of the state's census tracts).²²

The impact of poor air quality is dire and manifests itself quite concretely. In 2018, the city of San Bernardino experienced 102 bad air days for ozone pollution²³, meaning nearly a third of the year was spent in an unsafe environmental state, just based on air quality alone. This air pollution

adversely impacts the health of communities, from short-term respiratory illness to long-term effects. This is especially dangerous during a pandemic: one nationwide study showed that just a small increase in fine particulate matter (PM2.5), was associated with an 11% increase in the COVID-19 death rate for U.S. counties.²⁴

Water

Water pollution is yet another indicator of environmental neglect in the Inland Region, particularly in the Coachella Valley, where there are issues with drinking water, sanitation, and wastewater as a result of poor water infrastructure. In polanco communities in the Eastern Coachella Valley, arsenic is present in drinking water, and in fact some mobile home parks have onsite wells that are 90 parts per billion (maximum RCA levels are 10 parts per billion) - an issue that goes unaddressed by government infrastructure services. Communities often have to rely on inconsistent water deliveries, or utilizing their own resources to purchase bottled water.

Wastewater is also a severe issue in Eastern Coachella Valley, due to poor wastewater infrastructure. Wastewater pipes leak into the soil and drinking water pipes will pull in those contaminants from the wastewater into the drinking water, making the drinking water contaminated. These pipes also

²⁰ <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/are-warehouses-inland-empire-blessing-or-curse>

²¹ https://earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/files/warehouse_research_report_4.15.2021.pdf

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/apr/15/amazon-warehouse-boom-inland-empire-pollution>

²³ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fe2811197ce1427db17a808593f1526e>

²⁴ Wu X, Nethery RC, Sabath MB, Braun D, Dominici F. Air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: strengths and limitations of an ecological regression analysis. *Sci Adv* 2020;6:eabd4049. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054502>



leak, allowing untreated water into the ground. Additionally, there are straight pipes, meaning that the pipe comes out of the residential unit without any water treatment. These issues pose significant health risks, infectious diseases, and overall degrades and challenges the immune system, even potentially impacting overall cognitive development.

Despite this, organizers are finding ways to get their communities safer water with minimal capital and investment. [Pueblo Unido CDC](#), an affordable housing initiative, identified the need for community-led solutions and found a technology that could address this issue - a reverse osmosis filtration system called Short Term Arsenic Treatment program (STAT) that is a cost effective, interim solution to address water contamination at mobile home parks. Many homes may not be able to consolidate with municipal services due to more remote locations, and will have to rely on decentralized systems like reverse osmosis filtration, septic systems, and some other form of stone water control.

Public Transportation

In the Inland Region, public transportation is inadequate to serve the community's needs and as a result is underutilized. The Southern California Association of Government's region profile from 2019 shows that only 1% of those in Riverside and 2% of those in San Bernardino that are commuters actually use public transportation.²⁵ Public transportation provides

community access to movement and is an important piece of the puzzle in creating environments where communities can thrive. It also connects to community autonomy and ability to participate in climate justice, as walking, biking, and using transit reduces greenhouse gas and the lack of public transportation inhibits that ability.

²⁵ <https://scag.ca.gov/data-tools-local-profiles>



POWER IN PLACE: CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Stemming from the longer history of rancher dominance and settler colonialism, the Inland Region's city councils and county governments are dominated by older white residents tied to economic power. This has created a sense among some of those we spoke to of an "explicit exclusion" of communities of color by the institutions of power. Even where funding has been put from state projects towards local community engagement, these processes rarely involve trusted groups or proven ways of engaging diverse residents.

Strongly allied to conservative, entrenched power are police officer's associations, like that of Riverside Sheriffs Association, which fund the District Attorney at 20 times the rate of any other DA in the country, as well as provide donations to Supervisor's races. Prison guard associations and private prison groups have also held significant sway, such as GEO group, which has been shown to attempt numerous backroom deals in cash-strapped Adelanto to help keep its immigration detention facility open against state mandates.²⁶ Developers have also become intimately involved in governance (and as noted elsewhere in this analysis, goods movement companies). Riverside County Supervisors' unanimous approval of the luxury, million-dollar home Thermal Beach Club with a massive lagoon

exemplified these patterns. The decision pleased developers but made no sense to local residents facing water tainted with arsenic (and limited water altogether) or living in trailers, with few other resources.²⁷ On the flip side, while funding moves to police, prisons and mega-developments, residents in areas of Eastern Coachella and other rural areas must wait years for infrastructure projects.

Young leaders have taken up the challenge to transform these dynamics, such as Ben Reynoso, who ran and won to be the councilperson for San Bernardino's 5th Ward. Endorsed by the Inland Empire Labor Council and other labor groups, Reynoso's campaign has focused on inclusive development, educational access, and environmental justice and health access - all of which involve challenging the status quo power of goods movement. Change has been visible: in 2010, only 1 of 10 county supervisors was BIPOC; in 2021, the number shifted to 3.²⁸ This has only been made possible by deep and long-term engagement to increase voter registration (noted in Movement Infrastructure).

One area where shifts have happened more rapidly is in state legislature representation. Spurred by broader efforts in California to scale up movement power to the state, organizations in the 501(c)(4) space have been able to mobilize to elect more progressive state representatives. In general,

²⁷

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2020/10/28/thermal-beach-club-approved-despite-resident-opposition/3756109001/>

²⁸ <https://transform.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EmergingYouthPowerReport2021.pdf>

²⁶<https://www.desertsun.com/in-depth/news/2020/01/24/private-prison-giant-geo-thrives-california-state-wants-out/2589589001/>



with this overall transformation at the state level, community groups seeking to hold goods movement companies accountable or to enact environmental justice legislation have found friendlier reception at the state level, even if it's from electeds in adjacent areas (such as San Diego-area former representative Lorena Gonzales).



Source: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice

POWER IN PLACE: MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

While the patterns of co-governance among corporate power - whether it be agriculture, developers, prisons/police and goods movement - and local elites has shaped the Inland Region for decades, a new movement infrastructure has become more visible to give residents a real voice in shaping the present and future agenda. Many of these organized efforts are not new but reflect deepening member bases and a more visible set of strategies that engage directly and consistently at the local and state levels of power. A simple glance at the mapping of organizations created by the [UC Riverside Center for Social Innovation and by community at the 2021 Inland Empire Policy Initiative](#) shows the deepening roots of an infrastructure of “collective initiatives that advance core values of resilience, inclusion, sustainability, and equity.” Undergirding this expanding infrastructure is an attempt to re-imagine shared life. One organizer shared: “We want to imagine new lives for ourselves, and that means bringing to light questions and centering issues of social and economic justice.”



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Building Relationships, Building Coalitional Power

Fundamental to this process is long, patient relationship building. This has been vital to efforts like the Indirect Source Rule that came from the broad-based coalition of labor, environmental justice and other grassroots residential groups. New leadership at the [Inland Empire Labor Council](#) has been critical to developing more transformational movement groups with community and labor, as have the [Warehouse Workers Resource Center](#) intersectional approach and attempts to create high-road, whole-worker solutions. Another organizer shared regarding the strategies redefining goods movement and environmental justice, “the key is that it is labor and environmental and community organizations and community members working seamlessly together after years and years of building relationships.”

Countering the corporate influence over regional development tables and local governance, the [Just San Bernardino Collaborative](#) (or Just SB) has been a critical actor in setting a new agenda, the People’s Agenda for Economic Inclusion. Supported by a \$2.7 million multi-year investment from James E. Irvine Foundation and the Inland Empire Community Foundation, the joint movement effort has turned to grassroots to understand needs and set economic and governance priorities. Through their launching survey, they sought input from more than 4,000 residents to grasp perspectives on labor, housing, education, environmental justice, economic development,

arts/culture, and health care.²⁹ Participating in Just SB are [Time for Change Foundation](#), [BLU Educational Foundation](#), [Youth Action Project](#), [Arts Connection](#), [Inland Empire Labor Council](#), [Warehouse Workers Resource Center](#), [Inland Congregations United for Change](#), [Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement](#), and the [People’s Collective for Environmental Justice](#).

Just SB organizations and the coalition have also been part of concerted community development efforts, like the fight for community benefits and sustainability in the Carousel Mall redevelopment. Set to become a multi-use shopping and housing center by master developers, San Bernardino Development Company, Just SB, and allies have fought for a binding agreement securing local hiring and good jobs, sustainable and clean energy infrastructure, and affordable housing.

Creating Local Solutions & Implementing New Visions

Important to this expanding landscape is the way that organizations like Time of Change have not just addressed the impact of prisons but put formerly incarcerated/incarcerated communities at the center of this conversation. They have also linked long term activism to the patient, every day work of reconnecting parents and children, defining a new economy

²⁹

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/03/12/2-7-million-grant-will-help-just-san-bernardino-launch-economic-inclusion-plan/>

<https://iecn.com/through-a-peoples-plan-for-economic-inclusion-san-bernardino-can-achieve-economic-justice/>



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through new entrepreneurship funding, linking people to jobs and more. Youth, parents, and faith-based leaders at ICUC also helped secure city funds in San Bernadino for the California Partnership for Safer Communities (CPSC) alternatives to punitive violence in lieu of hiring new police officers in 2017. Youth-led groups have also taken a new vision decentering punishment to schools, with organizations like Alianza successfully pushing for adoption of restorative justice at four high schools, while also reshaping the Local Control Accountability Program to prioritize such efforts.³⁰

With the kinds of disinvestment and elite dominated local politics outlined that have defined the histories of the region, another leader explained: “Organizing and mutual aid is filling the gap of things public agencies aren’t doing, so we begin to ask ourselves what are public agencies not doing right now and how can we fund those projects that support longer term infrastructure engagements, in order to come up with the best solutions for our communities.” In other words, movements and groups like [Time for Change Foundation](#) have both addressed short term needs but are also coming up with innovations that can build community-controlled services and infrastructure.



Source: Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice

³⁰ <https://transform.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EmergingYouthPowerReport2021.pdf>



A New Generation Comes to Power

Coalitional work has also deepened organizations' capacity and commitment to build power between election cycles that has proven effects on local governance. The increasing move to create more inclusive state and local representation has been preceded in many ways by a surge in voter registration and engagement led by local movement groups like Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), TODEC Legal City, and Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. Their collective efforts have proven vital among youth, with voter turnout with youth 18-24 tripling between 2014 and 2018 midterm elections (which are often very low).³¹

Several groups that are part of these coalitions also have sister or partner 501(C)(4) arms that allow them to more directly support new leadership and initiatives.

As the above makes clear, youth are at the center of new movements in the region across issue areas, and binding many coalitions together. They have not just set the agenda, vision and analysis, but even conducted much of the research that goes to shape policy (and cited in this project). For example, youth of [CCAIE](#)'s research and effort on making technical emissions regulation accessible to the public helped move the Advanced Truck Rule, passed in 2020, by the California Air Resources Board to require truck manufacturers to sell an increasing number of clean, zero-emission trucks in

California.³² Their multi-faceted approach, that asks deep questions and seeks more expansive answers, requires real resources. As one organizer shared, "Lots of local grown social justice advocates [particularly] young organizers and young people are embracing queer abolitionist feminist politics as a way of talking about social justice organizing. We need to support our young people right," specifically by "organizing multiracial coalitions" and building other forms of resources that center the vision, analysis, and strategies of the Inland Region's next generation.

³¹ See more details on this work at:
<https://transform.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EmergingYouthPowerReport2021.pdf>

³² <https://transform.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EmergingYouthPowerReport2021.pdf>



POWER IN PLACE: WHERE FUNDERS FIT

For many years, movement organizations have built with little resources or attention from organized philanthropy. As this changes, it is critical not to lose sight of the organizations that have done the patient, deep work of relationships, research and responsiveness in the Inland Region. Organizers also cautioned the dangers of inadvertently supporting tables or structures that only further corporate power and influence in the Inland Region, or set regional agendas without giving real voice to those most affected.

Showing Up with Long-Term, In-Depth Support

Fortunately, as movements have innovated and built new relationships, so too are some funders giving examples of how to nurture lasting change. Weingart Foundation has made a much more concerted effort to expand from its traditional focus on Los Angeles to the Inland Region, and in patient collaboration with organizations, radically simplified its grants process while deepening its commitment to long-term funding. The James Irvine Foundation has also put a massive \$2.7 million dollar, multi-year investment in Just SB, a more inclusive and expansive vision for local development counter to the corporate-dominated regional development spaces. TCE's 10-year investment in Coachella Valley also set an example of what it means to engage, learn and grow alongside community while putting forward unrestricted multi-year funding.

Importance of the Inland Region to National Funders

An understanding of the now more visible movement organizing, as well as the possibility of making global and national impact on issues like logistics/goods movements (i.e. Amazon's massive power), climate change, housing, and racial justice via community governance has attracted even more funders to the Inland Region. But as often found in such cases of rapid interest by philanthropy, the tendency for foundations to swoop down with little knowledge or relationships often upends relationships, redirects energy from long-term efforts, or other disruptive trends. As one program officer shared, "People from the outside don't know where to invest." To address this, funders can partner with local funders, or collaborative pooled funds to learn about the region and make investments aligned with community-driven priorities.

Jumping into the Inland Region's Pooled Funds

To better support deep and lasting change, organizers and more active and rooted foundations in the region urge philanthropy to turn to several new pooled mechanisms that offer outside funders, including national ones, a means to support in more inclusive ways. The Inland Empire Funders Alliance is one local mechanism in Southern California. The Fund for Inclusive California (F4ICA) which has dedicated much engagement and resources to the region, is also an important progressive funding mechanism. F4ICA has also chosen to focus on the systematic issues that shape the region's housing and development crisis, and do so in a way that



will “provide long-term, unrestricted, and flexible grantmaking commitments that invest in the leadership and vision of the communities most affected by housing injustice.”³³

F4ICA is a key partner also of [NFG’s Amplify Fund](#), which likewise turns to deep, community-led philanthropy to support the work of Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income communities to build power and shape the decisions made about the places they live. Importantly, Amplify Fund integrates these values through its local grantmaking strategy, internal operations, administrative functions, and behavioral norms.

Organizations and funders alike have also urged groups to follow suit with some of the above-named foundations to invest in unrestricted, core support that lasts longer than one year (or one project.) Cyclical election funding is poured to shift state or national power, but imbalances budgets and leaves groups in the lurch in the off-years. Given how much the long-term, off-cycle work has reshaped the electoral map in the Inland Region, it is vital to actually turn to support for the movement infrastructure itself.

The need for long-term leadership development funding was also raised by many movement and philanthropy interviewees and participants at the [FJE/Amplify Inland Region Learning Visit](#). As one organizer shared, it is vital

now to “support youth organizers at a rate that’s sustainable for their work and honors their organizing efforts and power as much as that of adults.” While many program officers feel that they do not know where to begin in what feels like such a big region with multi-faceted challenges, movement leaders point to the need to also fund regional strategies and regional networks for organizing.

Investing in Infrastructure

In such a critical juncture, philanthropic investment has the power to not just support movements, but also help advance the kind of infrastructural and public solutions grassroots groups are fighting to realize. As one leader shared, “It takes between 7 and 9 years for a project to be implemented through local government - if we think in terms of community health and sustainability, we cannot afford to wait that amount of time. Government driven approaches are not the answer entirely to resolve these issues. Encouraging investment from private donors, corporations, foundations can help deploy resources swiftly.” This can include investing directly in affordable housing efforts, with groups like [Pueblo Unido CDC](#) starting a project that is geared toward private donors, as well as Time for Change Foundations’ [community-controlled emergency, supportive and permanent housing](#) for formerly incarcerated people.

Funders, in other words, have a key role in actually helping move the regional and local development conversations and action to center

³³ <https://fundforaninclusiveca.org/whats-ahead-for-the-fund-for-an-inclusive-california-2/>



community-based solutions; they can wield their clout and capital to bring local groups to the table and to help support real grassroots-shaped infrastructure in a region in serious need of housing, water, and other key systems. One program officer shared: “Funders play a key role whether it's prioritizing pots of money for historically excluded and disenfranchised communities, allowing nonprofits to continue institutionalizing transformational change in their service areas, or breaking down barriers so that smaller grassroots, community-based organizations get their footing. In many circumstances these organizations are addressing issues that have been neglected by many, but are as important to be overcome”. Funders can help champion these innovative and absolutely necessary solutions.

It is clear in the Inland Region there is no shortage of innovative visions for inclusive economies and neighborhoods, transformational collaborations, and strategic action to make the region work for all its residents, including honoring indigenous communities. Philanthropy has numerous opportunities to participate in this effort in ways that will make an impact on global issues like goods movements, climate change, prisons, and housing - with success assured if they, learning from movements, build with respect, deep relationships and responsiveness to those most affected and who are already working in coalition for change.

