

Clean Power to the People: A Crucial Moment for East Bay Community Energy

March 15, 2016



Clean Power to the People was a mixer/celebration of the Clean Energy & Jobs Oakland Campaign and an update on efforts to establish a Community Choice energy program in the East Bay that advances economic, environmental, and racial justice.

Participants/Attendees

Approximately 25 people representing 15 organizations (including Asian Pacific Environmental Network, SEIU 1021, Planting Justice, Rooted in Community, and the Sunflower Alliance, among others) participated in Clean Power to the People.

Purpose/Goal

The goal of the Clean Power to the People gathering was to build support for an East Bay Community Choice energy program that would meet our communities' needs. With a Community Choice energy program, decisions about where our electricity comes from are in the hands of a public agency. However, establishment of the Alameda County Community Choice energy program is moving forward on a fast track *without our communities' active involvement*. This event was meant to inform our communities about what is happening and how they can shape the program to meet community needs: by calling for community leadership and participation in governance of the program and inclusion of community benefits goals in the foundational documents establishing the program.

Program

Following a mixer/celebration (thank you to [Masa Pa' La Raza](#)), the event began with an overview and Q&A about the Community Choice vision being advanced by the East Bay Clean Power Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of organizations advocating for an East Bay



Community Choice program that achieves strong community benefit goals. This vision discussion was followed by small breakout groups focused on some of the most important community goals.

The gathering concluded with an invitation for organizations to [sign on to the “Put Our Communities in Community Choice” letter](#), which will be presented to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in advance of an upcoming vote.

Vision Overview 101

The East Bay Clean Power Alliance calls for a vision of Community Choice that prioritizes development of community-based renewable energy resources. This means investing in energy efficiency and in renewable electricity generation in our communities, and in that way creating community benefits like good, family-sustaining and unionized jobs; opportunities for worker cooperatives and small/diverse businesses; creation and retention of wealth in working-class, low-income, indigenous, and people of color communities; and improved public health.



That vision for Community Choice energy makes it a vehicle for our communities—particularly frontline communities most impacted by climate change, poverty, pollution, police, and prisons—to directly own, control, and govern local clean energy resources, and in that way empower them

to advance environmental justice, improve racial and economic equity, and build stronger, resilient communities.

To achieve that vision requires the participation and leadership of community organizations in the governance structure of this new Community Choice agency. With a more diverse, equitable, participatory and truly representative governance structure, East Bay Community Energy (the name of the nascent Alameda County Community Choice program) has the potential to advance a strong community benefits vision.

Community Goals

The East Bay Clean Power Alliance has developed seven Community Choice program goals, which are critical to achieving its vision of Community Choice. The County is already pursuing two of these goals:

- Provide competitively priced electricity to customers, at more stable and lower rates than Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E).
- Achieve Alameda County’s Climate Action Plan Greenhouse Gas reduction goals and comparable goals of all participating jurisdictions, while also exceeding the California renewable portfolio standard (RPS) and the renewable portfolio of PG&E.



However, the County is not prioritizing the other five goals. At the Clean Power to the People gathering, participants broke into groups to explore how to advance these five goals:

- Prioritize the development of local renewable resources, including reduced energy consumption and renewable electrical generation, with goals of at least 18% reduction in electricity demand through conservation and energy efficiency, and at least 50% of renewable energy being locally generated, all within 10 years of the start of the program.¹
- Generate family-sustaining, high-quality, clean energy jobs through local renewable resource development that prioritizes union jobs, spurs local workforce development, overcomes barriers to employment in historically disadvantaged communities, and includes local small businesses, diverse business enterprises,² and cooperative enterprises.
- Promote local and community ownership and control of renewable resources, spurring equitable economic development and increased resilience, especially in low income communities and communities of color, which are most impacted by climate change.
- Improve community health and safety by reducing pollution from fossil fuel power generation and by electrifying vehicle transportation.
- Include community stakeholders in the decision-making process of the Community Choice program and ensure inclusive representation.



Update on East Bay Community Energy

Alameda County staff, advised by their consultants, is moving two main initiatives forward on a “fast-track” to establish an East Bay Community Choice energy program.

1. The County is conducting a “feasibility study” to determine if the County should continue with plans to create the program.
2. The County is simultaneously moving to set up a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) of participating cities that would have authority to oversee the program.

Both these efforts are scheduled to be voted on by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in only a couple of months—in June.

The problem with this “fast track” approach is that it leaves our communities out of the process. It is crucial for our communities to organize and stand up for our right to be involved in the governance of the program.

¹ Targets taken from scenario in, [East Bay Community Choice Energy: From Concept to Implementation](#).

² Includes minority-owned, women-owned, and disabled veteran-owned businesses, and other such enterprises.

Outcomes: Sign-on Letter—Put Our Communities in Community Choice

The March 15 Clean Power to the People gathering helped build support for a Community Choice program focused on delivering key community benefits. The gathering launched an effort to reach out to East Bay communities to sign on to a “Put Our Communities in Community Choice” letter. That letter calls for the Joint Powers Agreement that establishes the program to include:

1. Direct community involvement in the governance of the program
2. A stated commitment to the program goals put forward by the East Bay Clean Power Alliance

Follow-up

The Clean Energy & Jobs Oakland Campaign, a member of the East Bay Clean Power Alliance, is seeking to build a broad constituency of labor, environmental/social justice, faith-based and youth groups. Campaign activists hope to meet with organizations one-on-one, where possible, to do Community Choice energy workshops with an emphasis on the community benefits made possible by local build-out of renewable energy resources.

In addition, two public events are being planned:

- A Community Choice energy 101 workshop is being planned for Wednesday, May 4 at 6 - 7:30 pm at 339 15th St, Suite 208-212 in downtown Oakland, and
- A follow-up community convening is being organized for May 18th at 5:00 pm at Oakstop (1721 Broadway) in downtown Oakland.

The Campaign encourages organizations to become engaged, depending on capacity, and invites them to be supporters of the Clean Energy & Jobs Oakland campaign and to promote the efforts of the East Bay Clean Power Alliance.

Organizations that are interested in joining the East Bay Community Choice energy initiative are invited to request presentations for membership, executive boards, or other bodies within your organization. Please direct any inquiries about the campaign or presentations to:

Jessica Tovar: jessica@localcleanenergy.org 415-596-3517

Available Resources

- [Program Vision: East Bay Community Energy](#)
- [East Bay Community Choice Energy: from Concept to Implementation](#) (in-depth 34-page report)
- [Community Choice: Economic Development Clean Energy & Jobs](#) (two-page handout)
- [Promoting a Labor Friendly Community Choice Program](#)

