



**ELLA BAKER  
CENTER for  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

She led. So can you.



# OAKLAND CLIMATE ACTION COALITION

A Toolkit to Create Climate Action in Your Community

## About the Ella Baker Center

The Ella Baker Center is named for an unsung hero of the civil rights movement who inspired and guided emerging leaders. We build on her legacy by giving people opportunities and skills to work together to strengthen our communities so that all of us can thrive.

**Mission Statement:** Through organizing, leadership development and advocacy, the Ella Baker Center unlocks the power of low-income people, people of color, and their allies to transform California and inspire the world.

## About the Green-Collar Jobs Campaign

The Green-Collar Jobs Campaign builds a thriving, green economy that puts the planet and people before profits. We promote solutions to pollution and climate change where every community will experience prosperity.

- We fight for policies in Sacramento that restore the planet and create opportunity and prosperity for all
- We convene bold, cross-sector coalitions to promote public health, good jobs, and the well-being of the environment
- Through leadership development and voter mobilization, we build the power of people to shape an equitable and thriving green economy

## Acknowledgments

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- All Oaklanders who played a part in passing the ECAP
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Volunteers build a community garden at the OCAC's Let's Get Down and Dirty event on October 10th, 2010.



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Volunteer signs into the OCAC’s Let’s Get Down and Dirty event on October 10th, 2010.

## Why We Created This Toolkit

Between 2009 and 2011, the Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC) helped write and pass the boldest and most equitable Energy and Climate Action Plan (ECAP) of any city in the country with unprecedented community participation.

At the Ella Baker Center, we are proud that Oakland is a model for community-based climate solutions. We created this Toolkit to honor the achievements of the Oakland Climate Action Coalition, and to share our winning strategies and best practices.

In sharing our experience, we hope to encourage other cities' civic and community leaders to create climate solutions that protect the health and wealth of low-income communities and communities of color. Through this Toolkit, we aim to provide building blocks for other cities to develop solutions-based climate plans that put people and the planet first.

## Who is This Toolkit For?

The Ella Baker Center designed this Toolkit with two audiences in mind: community-based organizations working to equitably address the impacts of global warming, and city staff responsible for managing and providing the necessary resources to accomplish this goal.

We trust our winning strategies and best practices in helping draft and pass the ECAP in Oakland will benefit similar efforts in cities across California and the country.

## What is in Oakland's ECAP?

Oakland's ECAP raises the bar for climate solutions in Oakland and throughout the country. Leading with high greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, the ECAP outlines 150 actions the city could take to bring emissions down to the adopted goal of 36% below 2005 levels by the year 2020, and 85% below 2005 levels by 2050. In order to achieve these goals, the ECAP includes a long-term plan for the next 10 years and a short-term plan for the upcoming 3 years.

In a time of environmental and economic crisis, Oakland's ECAP brings a message of opportunity. By setting goals and mechanisms to build a stronger green economy, the ECAP commits Oakland to solutions so that neighborhoods most impacted by pollution benefit from cleaner air, healthier food, and lower energy bills.



Amanda Wake, Youth Organizing Manager for Forward Together, holds up a sign at the OCAC's Rally at City Hall on March 30th, 2010.

# What is the Oakland Climate Action Coalition?

## Mission

The Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC) is a cross-sector coalition building a thriving green economy through the equitable development and passage of Oakland's Energy and Climate Action Plan.

## How We Started

In early 2009, Garrett Fitzgerald, Oakland's Sustainability Coordinator, announced the city's decision to begin drafting an ECAP. The Ella Baker Center's Green-Collar Jobs Campaign saw this as an opportunity to engage Oakland residents most impacted by poverty and pollution in drafting and passing job-creating solutions.

On April 9th, 2009, more than 50 people from 30 community organizations crowded into the cinder-block basement of the Ella Baker Center to answer the question: "What would a people's Energy and Climate Action Plan look like in Oakland?"

We covered the basement walls with neon pink, green and yellow post-its with our hopes and dreams for Oakland's Plan. From this meeting, the Oakland Climate Action Coalition was born.

## How We Worked

The OCAC had four tiers of involvement: Convener, Steering Committee Members, Coalition Members, and Coalition Allies.

As OCAC Convener, the Ella Baker Center provided staff to coordinate the coalition. We led the drafting of the coalition's mission and goals, and facilitated Steering Committee and Coalition meetings to ensure we met our benchmarks.

The Steering Committee was made up of co-chairs of the OCAC's seven Committees:

1. Transportation and Land Use
2. Building and Energy Use
3. Consumption and Solid Waste
4. Food, Water and Urban Agriculture/Forestry
5. Climate Change Adaptation Planning
6. Community Engagement
7. Port of Oakland

Each committee was led by two co-chairs, one policy and one grassroots, and convened monthly to work on specific policy advocacy. Coalition Members participated in monthly General Coalition meetings. Coalition Allies signed onto specific OCAC actions as desired.

**"The Ella Baker Center founded and convened the OCAC so that Oakland's ECAP would not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also create jobs, improve health, and save people money. As Coordinator of the Coalition, it was an honor to bring together community, business, and government to draft and pass climate solutions."**

*-Emily Kirsch, Founding OCAC Coordinator  
and the Ella Baker Center's Lead Organizer for the Green-Collar Jobs Campaign*



## Winning Strategies

The OCAC achieved our goals through a dual strategy of policy advocacy and community engagement. In working with city staff, the OCAC provided critical research, language, and policy recommendations that were included in the final ECAP. On the other hand, the OCAC's grassroots efforts grounded us in our communities and provided the lens through which we championed our solutions.

### Policy Advocacy

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, Oakland City Council passed the most ambitious Energy and Climate Action Plan of any city in the country.

#### Helping Draft the ECAP

Before city staff came out with their first draft of the Plan, the OCAC drafted and presented our own comprehensive ECAP based on community workshops in Oakland's low-income, flat-land neighborhoods. City staff incorporated the vast majority of our proposed ECAP policies into their first draft of the Plan.

After the city released its first draft, we used track changes to submit edits, allowing the city to copy and paste our suggestions into the next draft of the Plan. We submitted two subsequent revisions of the city's ECAP draft using this successful tactic.

#### Reframing the ECAP

In addition to getting our specific policies included in the Plan, the OCAC played a huge role in changing the overall framing of the ECAP by rewriting the introduction to the Plan. In doing so, we ensured the ECAP was not just about reducing GHG emissions but also about creating jobs, saving money on bills, and cleaning up the air.

#### Recommending Adopted Policies

Over 50 of the 150 policies included in Oakland's ECAP were authored and championed by the Coalition. Below are a few examples of what we fought for and won:

- We provided scientific rationale to pass some of the highest greenhouse gas reduction targets in the country: 36% below 2005 levels by the year 2020, and 85% below 2005 levels by 2050.
- We strengthened the stability of our neighborhoods by preventing displacement through tenant protection language, and were able to include affordable housing near transportation-oriented development as a climate solution.
- We petitioned the California Public Utilities Commission for local administration and control of \$3-\$9 million per year of energy efficiency funds from PG&E to create and maintain at least 30 local green-collar jobs.
- We built community resilience by championing policies to grow food on idle, underutilized, or vacant lots.



Ella Baker Center's Heal the Streets Fellow participates in the OCAC Rally at City Hall on March 30th, 2010.



## Community Engagement

The OCAC hosted dozens of community events that engaged, in person, more than 1,000 low-income residents and residents of color in Oakland's climate planning process. Through these events, the OCAC provided the space to highlight and lift the voices of those most impacted by climate change.

### Workshops

Between September and October 2009, the OCAC hosted 14 workshops that gathered feedback from residents who were mostly low-income people of color. Their invaluable input contributed to the development of Oakland's ECAP. These community workshops were essential in gathering climate solutions directly from the Oakland residents most impacted by pollution and poverty.



Forward Together organized a workshop in the San Antonio neighborhood of East Oakland. 80 high school students role-played what climate solutions look like in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools.

Movement Generation facilitated a Spanish-speaking workshop in the Fruitvale district. Those who attended included members of Mujeres Unidas y Activas, a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women who promote personal transformation and building community power for social and economic justice.



Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) organized a Chinese-speaking workshop in Oakland Chinatown with their members.

## Community Convergence for Climate Action

On November 18th, 2009, more than 400 people came out to Laney College for the Community Convergence for Climate Action hosted by the OCAC. The event included live hip-hop, a theatrical performance on climate change by high school-aged girls, and a report-back from Oakland community residents who attended our climate workshops in the flat lands of East and West Oakland. The Convergence demonstrated community power and interest in the ECAP, and created space for Oakland residents to participate in climate solutions beyond GHG emission reductions.



Forward Together girls perform at the Community Convergence for Climate Action.

## Rally at City Hall

On March 30th, 2010, the OCAC organized a 200-person rally at City Hall, where Oakland City Councilmembers listened to community, labor, and business leaders' recommendations on how the ECAP could transform Oakland.

Emily Kirsch, Founding OCAC Coordinator and the Ella Baker Center's Lead Organizer for the Green-Collar Jobs Campaign, led the crowd to raise their voices, calling for "Green jobs, not jails!" Councilmembers Rebecca Kaplan, Nancy Nadel, Larry Reid, and City Council President Jane Brunner also spoke in support of a strong ECAP.



**"I spoke at the rally to show that labor leaders and community leaders are united for job-creating climate solutions. By passing a strong ECAP, we can get our members off the bench and into jobs."**

*- Andreas Cluver, Secretary-Treasurer,  
Alameda County Building Trades Council*



## Green Mayoral Forum

The OCAC hosted a Green Mayoral Forum on September 14th, 2010, where 200 Oaklanders, a majority of whom were people of color, gathered to hear Oakland's mayoral candidates' ideas on how they would champion and implement the ECAP.

Hosting the Green Mayoral Forum set a precedent that political candidates in Oakland need to have a strong platform that promotes environmental equity.



The OCAC hosts mayoral candidates at the Oakland Museum.



**“As Mayor, what would you do to ensure that low-income communities have the resources to grow their own food?”**

*- Silvia Lopez, resident of Fruitvale and member of Mujeres Unidas y Activas, at the OCAC's Green Mayoral Forum*

**“As Mayor, what would you do to clean up the port without placing the burden on low-income truck drivers?”**

*- Manuel Rivas, a Port of Oakland truck driver, at the OCAC's Green Mayoral Forum*



## Let's Get Down and Dirty on 10.10.10

On October 10th, 2010, the OCAC hosted a solar-powered concert featuring hip hop legends Pete Rock and CL Smooth. As part of 350.org's "Global Work Day," several hundred Oakland residents installed a garden for the school's culinary program and a rainwater catchment system at Laney College.



Mayor Jean Quan and APEN members Sau Chun Kwan and Hu Wen Guo are shovel-ready for climate solutions.



Hip hop legends Pete Rock and CL Smooth perform at the OCAC's Let's Get Down And Dirty event.

# Who Made It Happen

## The Oakland Climate Action Coalition, 2009-2011

The Ella Baker Center is honored to have founded and convened the OCAC from April 2009 to December 2011. We led the Coalition to its victory when the ECAP was adopted on March 1st, 2011. As the Convener, we provided thought-leadership, guidance, and cohesion in organizing coalition members from different sectors, neighborhoods, and areas of expertise.

Our success as a coalition was made possible by the Steering Committee, which provided invaluable time and leadership throughout the process. Together, with over 50 coalition members and allies, we lifted the voices of low-income communities and communities of color to address the needs of those most impacted by climate change.

### Convener

The Ella Baker Center For Human Rights

### Steering Committee

- Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- Bay Localize
- Causa Justa :: Just Cause
- Center for Progressive Action
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Local Clean Energy Alliance
- Mobilization for Climate Justice West
- Movement Generation
- Pacific Institute
- Transform
- Urban Habitat
- West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project

### Coalition Members

- Forward Together
- California Food and Justice Coalition
- Environmental Defense Fund
- First Unitarian Church of Oakland
- DIG Cooperative
- Greenbelt Alliance
- Greenlining Institute
- HOPE Collaborative
- inNative
- International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6
- Kehilla Synagogue
- Mandela Marketplace
- Planting Justice
- Progressive Jewish Alliance
- Starr King School for the Ministry
- Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry California
- The Workforce Collaborative

### Allies

- Alameda County Green Business Program
- Alliance For West Oakland Development
- America Works
- California Interfaith Power and Light
- CiviCorps
- ClimateChangeEducation.org
- East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy
- Environmental Conservation Options
- Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
- Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives
- Greywater Action
- Grind for the Green
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Union Local 595
- Live Real
- Northgate Environmental Management
- Oakland Food Connection
- Oakland Resilience Alliance
- Pesticide Watch
- PUEBLO
- Rising Sun Energy Center
- Sierra Club
- Sungevity
- Sun Light & Power
- Sustainable Earth Initiative
- Sustainable Economies Law Center
- US Green Building Council
- Wellstone Democratic Club

### Other Key Players

#### City Staff

The OCAC had the opportunity to work directly with Public Works' Environmental Services Division to help draft the ECAP. Oakland's Sustainability Coordinator, Garrett Fitzgerald, was lead author of the Plan.

#### Elected Officials

Oakland City Council collaborated with the OCAC and city staff throughout the drafting process, and officially adopted the ECAP on March 1st, 2011.

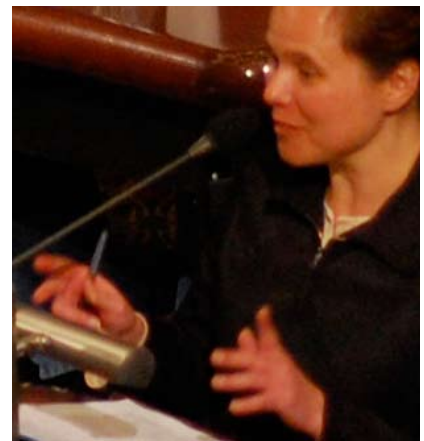


“Being a part of the Oakland Climate Action Coalition was instrumental in building support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which was included in Oakland’s Energy and Climate Action Plan. We also worked to ensure that new development near transit is done equitably through tenant protections and affordable housing.”

– Joél Ramos, Community Planner, TransForm

“Bay Localize and the Local Clean Energy Alliance proposed bold, science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets for Oakland. We were proud to partner with the Oakland Climate Action Coalition to get them passed. It was a shining moment for our city and showed the power of working together across sectors and organizations.”

– Kirsten Schwind, Program Director, Bay Localize

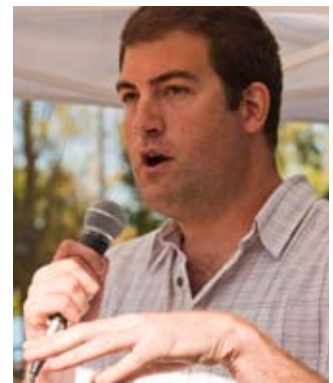


“As an Oakland native and a green business owner, I support the Oakland Climate Action Coalition because the more the city reduces emissions, the more energy efficiency jobs I can create for other Oakland natives.”

– Dahlia Moodie, CEO, Environmental Conservation Options

“The Oakland Climate Action Coalition made my job a lot easier by providing smart, specific recommendations for the Plan, and doing a lot of work to bring more of Oakland’s voices into the process. It’s rare to find community partners as dedicated and willing to collaborate with city staff as the OCAC.”

– Garrett Fitzgerald, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Oakland







**“I’ve been a Councilmember for 16 years and I’ve seen a lot of environmental plans. Oakland’s Energy and Climate Action Plan is unique because it lifts the voices of low-income communities and communities of color.”**

*– Nancy Nadel, Councilmember, City of Oakland*

**“We moved to Oakland because we love the city. The commitment to climate solutions made by Oakland’s people is an inspiration.”**

*– Danny Kennedy, President, Sungevity*



**“Pacific Institute worked with the Coalition to mobilize residents from Oakland’s most vulnerable communities to take action to address climate change impacts.”**

*– Catalina Garzon, Program Co-Director, Pacific Institute*

**“I am proud of the Oakland Climate Action Coalition for the work they have done to help pass one of the best Energy and Climate Action Plans in the country. This is a plan by the community for the community. I encourage other cities to look to Oakland as a model for climate solutions.”**

*– Jean Quan, Mayor, City of Oakland*



## Best Practices



Community leaders and city officials stand together at the OCAC Rally at City Hall on March 30th, 2010.

### Build Cross-Sector Collaboration

One of the OCAC's strengths was the diversity of leaders in our coalition. We recruited businesses, labor organizations, environmental organizations, and social justice organizations throughout different neighborhoods in Oakland. Within the OCAC, we taught and learned from one another on a range of topics. Together, we were a powerful force that provided cross-sector expertise on a host of issues, including: Transportation and Land Use, Building and Energy Use, Consumption and Solid Waste, Food, Water and Urban Agriculture/Forestry, Climate Change Adaptation Planning, Community Engagement, and Port of Oakland.

### Establish a Clear Mission and Goals

The OCAC was effective because it had a specific mission. Because the OCAC had clear objectives, we strategized accordingly and held ourselves accountable to our end goal. Having a clear mission allowed us to attract and recruit the people and organizations we needed to be successful. We also worked to make sure we were always one step ahead of the city's timeline. Within a period of less than 2 years, the OCAC mobilized the city and community to help draft and pass an impressively ambitious ECAP.

### Invest in Relationship-Building With Diverse Community Members

The OCAC reached out to community members who are often shut out of planning processes to ensure the ECAP was truly inclusive and reflective of Oakland's diversity. By providing the coalition's time and expertise to write and revise ECAP drafts, we developed a great working relationship with city staff and elected officials. Moreover, through our community events, we included low-income communities and communities of color so that their perspectives and needs would be prioritized in our policy advocacy. From the beginning of the OCAC, to the passing of the ECAP, we realized the merits of cultivating relationships with broad community stakeholders.

## Next Steps

After Oakland's ECAP was adopted in 2011, the Ella Baker Center stepped back from our role as Convener to lead different projects that bring people-power to Oakland's green economy and allow space for new leadership.

Upon stepping back, the Ella Baker Center was enthusiastic to learn the OCAC wanted to carry on the legacy of what we started. With new leadership, the OCAC continues to move forward in ensuring a more just and sustainable Oakland.

## How You Can Get Started



Cintya Molina provided Spanish interpretation for the OCAC Rally at City Hall on March 30th, 2010.

1. Identify a coalition convener—or become one!
2. Determine strategic allies for broad-based partnerships
3. Decide on specific goals
4. Establish a coalition structure and strategy
5. Provide your own policy research
6. Gather community input through public meetings and actions
7. Do the city's homework: Draft your own proposed ECAP
8. Meet with city staff and elected officials
9. Show community support for a strong ECAP through events, actions, and media
10. Demonstrate persistence

## Conclusion

As our namesake, Ella Baker, said, “Give light and people will find the way.”

Through the OCAC, community groups, city officials, and local residents worked together to create a landmark ECAP that shines light on climate solutions for our communities. By lifting the voices of low-income communities and communities of color, we ensured those most impacted by climate change were at the forefront of the decision-making process for solutions.

The OCAC used a range of winning tactics to work with diverse community stakeholders. Our commitment to working with elected officials and city staff allowed us to directly influence decision-making.

More importantly, our dedication to working with our communities sustained our motivation and gave us political leverage. Together, we showed how people-power can truly bring about meaningful change.

We encourage other cities across the state and nation to learn from our experience and create Energy and Climate Action Plans that are just as bold and equitable as Oakland's, if not more so. We hope you will use this Toolkit as a source of inspiration in bringing about real climate action that puts people and the planet first.



## Learn More

### Contact

The Green-Collar Jobs Campaign at the Ella Baker Center  
[climateactiontoolkit@ellabakercenter.org](mailto:climateactiontoolkit@ellabakercenter.org)

Please visit the Ella Baker Center's website, [www.ellabakercenter.org/climate-action-toolkit](http://www.ellabakercenter.org/climate-action-toolkit), to access:

### Videos

- The Oakland Climate Action Coalition
- Community Convergence for Climate Action
- Let's Get Down and Dirty—Oakland, California
- Jean Quan, Green Mayoral Forum—Oakland, California

### Documents

- Oakland's ECAP
- OCAC Mission
- OCAC Structure
- OCAC Membership Application

### Media

- Naomi Klein's Blog on Ella's Voice: *Oakland Lighting the Climate Path*
- *New York Times* : *Oakland to Discuss Plan to Reach Aggressive Greenhouse-Gas Reduction Goal*



Author and journalist Naomi Klein interviews Hui Zhen Li, APEN member, and Amber Chan, APEN's Community Organizer.



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