

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the California Legislature passed a law (Assembly Bill 617) requiring the state's air districts to partner with communities highly impacted by air pollution to create community-based emissions reduction plans. Since 2018 the Air District has partnered with community members from the Richmond, North Richmond, San Pablo community - otherwise referred to as the Path to Clean Air (PTCA) area. The area's approximately 160,000 residents live, work and spend their time near many air pollution sources, which include oil refining, and other large industrial businesses, freeways, rail yards, a marine port, and many smaller sources. The PTCA was nominated by the Air District and selected by California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop a Community Air Monitoring Plan in 2018, which was completed in 2021. In 2021 the PTCA area was nominated by the Air District and selected by CARB to develop a Community Emissions Reduction Plan. The resulting PTCA Plan charts a path towards equal partnership in the work to improve local air quality.

The PTCA Community Steering Committee (CSC), representative of members who work, live or grew up in the PTCA area, directed the plan development, while the Air District provided technical and logistical support. Early work between the CSC and the Air District centered on relationship building and balancing power dynamics. For example, CSC norms were established in certain subcommittees to prioritize community voice in a "progressive stack" format wherein people from marginalized groups are selected to speak first at meetings. Similarly, the CSC's consensus process empowered the community to drive decision making by designating local industry representatives and city and government representatives as non-voting members. In 2023, the CSC established a process to revise the Charter as part of the transition from a governing CSC to a community led CSC. The CSC's Governance Ad Hoc changed the Charter to further clarify the statement of purpose, membership makeup and voting requirements, roles and responsibilities, meeting procedures, materials, and participation.

In parallel with relationship building, the CSC and Air District began developing a common understanding of the area's air quality issues. A list of community concerns was developed with CSC input based on a variety of public engagement efforts, from traditional town hall meetings to use of community organizing and Social Pinpoint mapping in which community-members provided information on location-specific community assets and challenges. The community's influence during the assessment phase resulted in successfully leveraging existing social networks to collect over 500 comments documenting the impact of poor air quality in which health consequences from air pollution and physical reactions to air pollution were the most commonly expressed concerns.

In addition to community-identified issues and challenges, the PTCA Plan is based on a comprehensive technical assessment. The technical assessment categorizes air pollution contributions - in terms of both emissions and exposure - for each of the area's main sources such as fuel refining and other industrial activities; cargo ships, rail operations, and construction equipment; goods movement and vehicle traffic; and fireplaces and gas appliances. Findings from the assessment reveal that some of the worst pollution emitters currently operate with Air District permits. The technical assessment quantifies and identifies pollutants, such as fine particulate matter, and attributes pollutants to each of the main sources; it also includes modeled exposure contributions. It is with this detailed assessment that specific strategies were developed to target the most egregious pollution sources, including the Chevron Richmond

Refinery, as well as strategies to target specific pollutants, such as fine particulate matter, which is especially dangerous due to its potential to contribute to cancer, heart attack, stroke, and other respiratory diseases.

The Community Description chapter and appendix document the racial, ethnic and socio-economic composition of the area and provides a stark analysis of the health outcomes of PTCA residents. The PTCA residents are predominantly Latinx, Asian, and Black/African American. Despite a rich history of activism against fossil fuel operations as well as air pollution regulatory initiatives, disparate health outcomes persist. Low-income and Black/African American residents experience higher rates of emergency room visits in comparison to non-White residents, a higher risk of dying from strokes and heart disease, and higher rates of asthma among children and Black residents.

It is within the context of severe pollution burden and associated health disparities that the CSC created PTCA Plan goals to develop more stringent air pollution policies that advance social healing and restoration, to lower the community's disproportionate exposure to air pollution by reducing toxic emissions, to empower the community and to hold government accountable to enforce regulations more effectively on high-polluting industries.

The PTCA Plan was co-written with the CSC members.

Air District staff and CSC members spent several months writing strategies that seek to achieve the community's desired transformation. The PTCA Plan includes a range of strategies, from practical procedural changes to highly ambitious and transformative actions. Rather than limit the expansiveness of strategies, actions include discussion of likely political, fiscal, and legal limitations and potential obstacles, in order to balance expectations. In this way, the PTCA Plan introduces an assertive program of strategies and actions to fundamentally address long standing environmental injustices. The strategies involve moving towards a "just transition" to a renewable energy economy and holding the fuel refining industry accountable. Other far-reaching strategies detailed in the plan include eliminating health disparities by expanding health care to low-income PTCA residents and supporting guaranteed income programs. Many other visionary strategies are contained in the PTCA Plan and it is imperative that the Air District, the CSC, and the multitude of partner agencies responsible for implementation convene and work with the business community to ensure enduring change.