

End of Year Report 2021



December 2021

Climate Resilient Communities



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Note from the Executive Director

Dear friends and communities,

It is a great honor to share this year's end-of-the-year report and take the time to look back on all the ground we have covered in our first year as an organization. It is humbling to share that as Climate Resilient Communities transitioned in September 2020, it was an organization of one full-time staffer, interns, an advisory board, and an anonymous donor. These are the people who shared our vision and passion to do all we can to support our communities in planning and responding to the impacts of climate change.

Addressing the changing climate is too great of a task for an individual; we need strong partnerships and resilience at every level to achieve our goal. When we plan for adaptation, we value the expertise of those enriched with traditional knowledge and experiences. We work collaboratively with our treasured community leaders to lead projects on the ground. We are a community-based organization working hand-in-hand with the Peninsula's working-class communities and leaders to help create resident-led solutions that elevate local voices and promote unity, resilience, and justice.

With the growth we have experienced this year, we have been able to expand our programs to North Fair Oaks and Belle Haven, alongside our longstanding work in East Palo Alto. In the Executive Summary, you will find general updates about our organization's progress, including new hires and funding, as well as the top line summary from each of our three flagship programs.

Together, let us continue on the path of action, never heeding to the disasters that come before us. The climate is already changing and we are faced with complicated challenges and uncertainty. However, to be resilient, we must continue to work together to find and implement adaptation strategies designed to protect our communities. We must prioritize actions that bring nature back as our first defense and make changes in our homes and neighborhoods to change course.

We are grateful to our funders, individual donors, partnerships, and communities for all the support you have given us. We look forward to continuing our work with you and on behalf of CRC, we wish you all a blessed and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,



Violet Wulf-Saena, Executive Director



Executive Summary

This year marked a significant step in our organization’s history and we are incredibly fortunate to have been able to make such profound impacts in just a short period of time. CRC officially branched off from Acterra in September 2020 with only a \$120,000 seed grant from an anonymous funder. Since then, we have hired two full time employees and are interviewing for a third. Our new employee will be hired from one of the communities we work in and will help lead our outreach and engagement projects. We have secured donations and grants totaling \$762,500, an increase in revenue of 635%. Through our **Community-Based Adaptation** program, projects started and completed this year will directly redistribute more than \$230,000 to our communities through cash compensation and technology like air quality monitors and air purifiers.

Despite the pandemic prohibiting the in-person contacts that make our **Resilient Homes** program so effective, we were still able to connect many home owners with much needed home repairs that promote safety, mitigate emissions, and promote resilience. All said, 43 residents benefitted from the program and more than \$145,000 in improvements were scheduled or installed. We hope to continue to ramp up the scale of our Resilient Homes program in the coming months, while continuing to prioritize the health and safety of our residents and community service partners.

Our **Climate Action Education** program was also slightly hamstrung by the pandemic but still saw overwhelming success. Through multiple events, we educated more than 80 young members of our communities on the foundations of environmental justice and their role in bringing about real climate justice. All said, our team of three was able to provide more than 250 hours of programming on the environment and its intersections with class and race to young people who are growing their capacity as leaders.



Youth discuss the environment at first Youth Climate Collective event in East Palo Alto – 12/04/2021

2021 By The Numbers

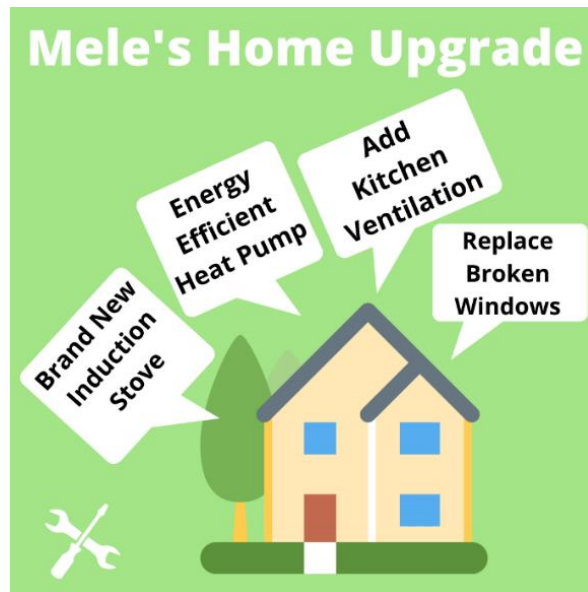
- **\$233,500** redistributed to community members
- **\$145,260** in home resilience & safety improvements
- **\$762,500** in total grants and donations, a 6x increase year over year
- **43** low-income residents benefitted from home upgrades
- **100** youth educated about environmental justice



As we look forward to the new year, we could not be more excited about where we will go. We will break ground on a project to install 25 rain garden and water cistern systems in our communities. The project will build food sovereignty, reduce flood risk, increase property values, and sequester carbon to build more green space. We will also begin training community members to restore wetlands and build our educational work into an extended fellowship with internship placement at other environmental justice non-profits. We could not be more proud of the impact we’ve made in such a short time and remain committed to putting our collective understanding of social structures, the climate crisis, and our own lived experiences to use in the real world to bring about the tangible, material changes necessary for a just world.

Resilient Homes

Despite the pandemic impacting our typical Resilient Homes programming, we've still been able to make significant strides for working-class residents in our communities. We have continued to work to provide services through our long-standing partners which include Rebuilding Together, Habitat for Humanity, GRID Alternatives, and El Concilio of San Mateo County. Additionally, we have been working closely with El Concilio on a new Home Upgrade program funded by Peninsula Clean Energy to provide no-cost electrification and home repairs to income-qualified residents. We are working toward enrolling many of our residents in this program, which runs through 2022. Across all service partners, we have started the home repair process for 19 households, with ten projects approved and two fully completed. The total value of all approved projects is \$145,260, and we are currently working to quantify the impact of 200+ previously completed projects to fully understand the impact of CRC's work.



These projects offer multiple, overlapping benefits to our community members and represent an intersectional approach to climate change adaptation efforts grounded in environmental justice. Home repairs improve property values to build lasting wealth for low-income homeowners. They also improve resident health by making homes safer and more livable, all while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

“Being on a fixed income, there was no way I could buy all the things I’ve had taken care of by CRC.” –

Franciel Branch, East Palo Alto Resident

In our communities, housing is a top priority—more than 82% of residents in East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Belle Haven are housing burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. We recognize that having a safe, comfortable, and resilient home is a pre-requisite for community-wide adaptation and the bare minimum deserved by every person, regardless of race, income, or birthplace.

For communities that face multiple, compounding burdens like housing insecurity, food insecurity, and job insecurity, the only equitable and just way to reduce emissions is through solutions that meet residents where they are and tackle multiple needs at once. Understanding those community needs is, therefore, a necessary first step for all of the work that CRC does, and why we insist on having community voices be decisive in our programming from the very outset of projects. Communities do not merely have “input” in our decisions, but rather exercise complete control over our mission and priorities. We see our role as an organization carrying out and implementing community priorities.

Community-Based Adaptation

We have made extensive progress on projects in our Community-Based Adaptation Program. One keystone of our program is our **Climate Change Community Teams (CCCTs)**. These teams consist of residents and leaders from community organizations, faith-based groups, businesses or elected officials, and are a vehicle for forming and expressing neighborhood priorities in the struggle for climate justice. We have two well established teams in East



Photo credit: Financial Times

Palo Alto and North Fair Oaks. Over the past year, we've grown these teams and will continue doing so because of their invaluable expertise and lived experience. One of our top priorities for the next year is creating a new team in Belle Haven and expanding our North Fair Oaks team.

In East Palo Alto, our CCCT led the way in proposing the idea for widespread rain garden and rainwater cistern installations in the community—a solution that sequesters carbon, promotes food sovereignty, mitigates flood risk, and improves property values. Working with the team, CRC applied for and received almost \$1 million from the California Coastal Commission to install 25 rain gardens and cisterns. The CCCT will work closely with CRC and our partners Fresh Approach, High Tide Intelligence, and Grassroots Ecology to recruit participants and serve as a community voice directing the project as it begins in 2022. In North Fair Oaks, our CCCT led the way in proposing widescale tree planting to grow the urban canopy, increase property values, and curb extreme heat. Limitations imposed by the county meant we were not able to plant as many trees as requested, but, with the help of Canopy, we have begun an advocacy campaign to remove barriers and make tree plantings accessible to all. The community has expressed a clear priority for shade and understands extreme heat poses real risks to their health. CRC and Canopy are helping to create those changes.

With Grassroots Ecology as lead applicant, CRC secured a grant from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority to conduct wetlands restoration at Cooley Landing and in the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. Our CCCT in East Palo Alto will help recruit and train residents to carry out the vital work needed to prevent habitat loss and restore wetlands that serve as a buffer against rising sea levels as well as host a series of educational events for the community.

We also began the process of enrolling families for the **Our Communities, Our Bay** study with Stanford University and El Concilio. [Featured in PBS Newshour](#), this four-year study will measure how low-income households adapt to a changing climate, including wildfire smoke, extreme heat, and potential flooding. The study will identify the environmental adaptation needs of 420 families in Redwood City, North Fair Oaks, East Palo Alto, and Belle Haven. We have hired Community Ambassadors to help conduct the outreach and enrollment into the study in culturally appropriate languages and maintain relationships with the enrolled families. All said, our residents will receive nearly \$225,000 in total compensation for their participation, including cash, climate adaptation technologies like air purifiers, and invaluable information about their exposure to pollution. Residents' contributions to the study will contribute to one of the largest and longest studies of climate change adaptation ever conducted.



North Fair Oaks residents turn out for a neighborhood planting event

Climate Action Education

Over the past year, we have also made significant progress in educating our community about the risks associated with climate change and how residents can protect themselves from its consequences. Much of this work is done through outreach contracts on behalf of other organizations or government officials—we host workshops, table at community events, and distribute information through unique channels. In our communities, internet connectivity is a serious hurdle, and trust in the information provided can be low. That is why CRC tries to distribute information in



CRC staff tabling at a community event hosted by the Bloomhouse in East Palo Alto – 10/16/2021

ways that are accessible and trusted by members of the community. This includes posting flyers in places where people regularly congregate like churches and grocery stores and including educational materials as part of the food packages they pick up from distribution centers. This year, we've had more than 4,000 community contacts as part of our outreach efforts.

Just a few weeks ago, at the beginning of December, we also launched the first event in our **Youth Climate Collective** program. Over the next six months, we will bring together a cohort of 15 young people from our communities who will learn the community advocacy

and leadership skills necessary to address climate change. At our launch event in December, a youth-led discussion identified the largest issues facing their community and what they'd like to learn in a six-month program.

Among their ideas were workshops on public speaking and writing to elected officials, outdoor excursions and hands-on events. They also expressed a need for long-term, structured opportunities because they want the opportunity to connect to one another and build new friendships. To close out the cohort's experience, there will be a small career fair with other local environmental justice non-profits offering paid internship opportunities for our youth. Through the educational interventions they've outlined and opportunities for long-term engagement, we hope to set our youth up to succeed in their ongoing struggles for a just and equitable future.



Youth field trip to experience King Tides at Cooley Landing during first Youth Climate Collective Event – 12/04/2021

Finally, we have plans to make accessible and actionable educational content for our communities by creating "tipsheets" in Tongan, Samoan, and Spanish with resources and responses for smoke events, floods, and heatwaves. These sheets will be a valuable resource when communities are faced with the increasingly unpredictable weather caused by a changing climate.

Acknowledgments

Our Climate Change Community Teams and Partners

The entire team at Climate Resilient Communities would like to extend our most sincere thanks to all of the leaders and organizations that make our work possible. Starting with our CCCTs, we thank you for your leadership and invaluable expertise and the contributions of your lived experiences. We would also like to thank our community partners:

El Concilio of San Mateo County	North Fair Oaks Community Alliance (NFOCA)
Youth United for Community Action (YUCA)	El Comite de Vecinos
One East Palo Alto	Fresh Approach
St. Mark's Episcopal Church	Nuestra Casa
Anamatangi Polynesian Voices (APV)	Habitat for Humanity
Rebuilding Together	GRID Alternatives
High Tide Intelligence	Acterra
... and many others along the way	

Our Individual Donors

We would also like to thank all of our individual donors. With your financial support you are now a valued partner in the work of ensuring that our community's future is safeguarded against the climate challenges ahead. Thank you for joining our cause and for all of the trust and inspiration.

Geoff Strawbridge	Robin Strawbridge	Sabrina Strawbridge
Angus Strawbridge	Josie Klieman	Jerry Hearn
Joan Ferguson	Graig Uhrich	Erik and Jill Olson
Eddie and Jebb Eddie	Helen Pellegrin	Matthew Burrows
James Webb	Megan Fluke	Michelle Domocol
Diane Bailey	Joel Valencia	Debbie Mytels
Tristan Padilla	Sarah Manney	Mirella Perez
Bia Lobato	Rodrigo Grabowsky	Gracie Newman
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Iris Balagtas	Jamie Barnett	Lara Waldman
Will Kingsfield	Katie Kingsfield	Frances Beckman
Esther Conrad	Theodore Mitchell	Peter Drekmeier
Jodi Libretti	Anne O'Connell	Vanessa Hayes
Katie Comfort	James Webb	Issac Perlman
Noelle Chambers	Trish Mulvey	Unitarian Universalist Fellowship - Sunnyvale

Our Foundations and Generous Grantors

We would also like to thank all of the generous grantors and foundations that have made this year a resounding success. Without your support at an institutional level, CRC would not be able to carry out the work that is so long overdue in these communities. In particular, we would like to thank:

Tundra Glacier Fund	Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Sand Hill Foundation	Grove Foundation
Peninsula Clean Energy	County of San Mateo
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative Community Fund	Meta
Palo Alto Community Fund	Haas Center for Public Service
Stanford Future Bay Initiative	Anonymous Donor
Castellano Family Foundation	

Our Community Members

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all of our community members. We are in this fight with you and are a tool at your service. Throughout our communities, we know that we take care of *us*. Our power, resources, and knowledge are unstoppable when put together in pursuit of a common goal. We will adapt, we will overcome, and we will thrive. Thank you so much for your trust, cooperation, and support. We will be with you for years to come.

“The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others.”

– bell hooks

Climate Resilient Communities is fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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