



# Climate Resilient Communities 2022 Annual Report



# From Our Executive Director



It has been a tremendously busy year for Climate Resilient Communities, full of new projects, opportunities, and partnerships. The time for climate action has never felt more urgent, with record-breaking heat waves and flooding capturing headlines across the world. Now more than ever we know that the climate is already changing, and that it is under-resourced frontline communities that are already bearing a disproportionate burden from these changes. But we have also seen this year a groundswell of support for CRC's main tenets – putting community voices at the forefront of our climate planning, bringing light to disparities in environmental burdens, access, and protections, and striving for environmental justice.

We have been lucky enough to double the size of our staff this year, allowing us to take on many more urgent projects across East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Belle Haven. The projects described here represent only a small portion of CRC's work this year, but represent exciting examples of our work across multiple levels – individually, working with youth to teach about the local environment; at the household level, coordinating home repairs to make residents safe and healthy at home; in our communities, implementing infrastructure projects and contributing to local and regional climate planning.

I am currently serving in multiple roles to ensure that the voices of frontline communities are front and center in how we think about dealing with climate realities, including as the **Equity Program Manager for BayCAN (the Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network)**, a member of the **Environmental Justice Advisory Board for BCDC (the Bay Conservation and Development Commission)**, and as a **Community Councilmember of the Bay Area Air District**, among others. We look forward to continuing this work in the new year and for many years to come.

Resilience in the face of climate change requires working together to find and implement adaptation strategies that put the safety and wellbeing of our communities first. We are immensely grateful to our funders, individual donors, partners, and community members for sharing our vision and passion – thank you for all your support, this work would not be possible without you.

We look forward to continuing our work with you and on behalf of CRC, we wish you all a blessed and prosperous new year.

Faafetai tele lava,

Violet Wulf-Saena  
Executive Director

◀ Violet presenting to Silicon Valley Social Ventures (SV2) (March 2022)



# How We Work

## Our Mission

Since officially branching off from Acterra in 2020, CRC has been working hand-in-hand with under-resourced Peninsula communities to enact tangible, community-led climate adaptation projects.

## Climate Change Community Teams

Our Climate Change Community Teams (CCCTs) are the bedrock of our organization. These cross-sector community groups, composed of residents, faith leaders, non-profit organizers, and youth representatives, are formed to start climate resilience projects and programming at the neighborhood level. Currently CRC facilitates these groups in three communities: East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Belle Haven (Menlo Park). The CCCTs serve as a vehicle for forming and guiding community priorities as it relates to climate hazards and adaptation measures.

We work at the intersection of climate change and racial and economic equity, bringing together cross-sector leaders to build community resilience and capacity to implement solutions to climate change hazards like sea level rise, flooding, and extreme heat.



▲ Tabling at the Bayside Family Festival (April 2022)

## Our Programs

CRC works in three main program areas: **Resilient Homes**, addressing home safety and energy needs, **Resilient Adaptation**, implementing tangible infrastructure projects and advocating for community-identified priorities, and **Resilient Education**, educating and training the next generation of local climate leaders.

## What's Next

Climate justice is too big for any one organization to address alone – true progress comes from working in coalitions, recognizing the expertise of others and learning to leverage our collective strengths. In the coming year, will expand our work to:

- Become our own 501(c)(3)
- Grow our staff capacity
- Expand the CCCT model to nearby communities
- Pilot a new disaster preparedness program in East Palo Alto
- And many others – see “Up Next” section for more!

◀ Tabling at the We Love Earth Festival (April 2022)



Over **4,000** community members engaged in 2022, preparing them to protect themselves from climate change impacts



Our Climate  
Change  
Community  
Teams  
(CCCTs)



More than **90** residents  
active in Climate Change  
Community Teams in East  
Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks,  
and Belle Haven



**Climate Ready North Fair Oaks** began meeting in-person in April, and welcomed new team members including the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, Redwood City PAL, and the North Fair Oaks Library. The team developed project proposals focusing on emergency preparedness training and establishing climate resilience hubs in the community.

The **Belle Haven CCCT** launched in May of this year, and immediately got to work working to implement focus groups and a survey to inform the City's Environmental Justice and Safety Elements. The results of that project directly informed their next project focusing on air pollution, culminating in the Breath of Air Campaign.



The **East Palo Alto CCCT** began meetings in-person again this year and continued to focus on nature-based infrastructure solutions to climate change. This included planning for implementation of Resilience Hubs in East Palo Alto and preparation for a rain garden pilot program to roll out in 2023.



# CRC Expands Work to Belle Haven



Belle Haven Survey Development Meeting (April 2022)

The Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park is:

**90%** non-white,

geographically isolated by freeways,

and a historic dumping ground for industrial sites.

CRC first began working in Belle Haven alongside Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor who represents the district and served as Menlo Park's first Black woman Mayor. At the beginning of this year, CRC began working to create a Climate Change Community Team to help residents and community leaders advocate for environmental justice in their neighborhood. By March, Belle Haven CCCT representatives included Belle Haven Action, the Belle Haven Community Development Fund, Menlo Together, El Comité de Vecinos, and Dream.org, alongside many residents passionate about environmental justice and climate change in their community.

## Residents Leading Progress in Belle Haven

This year, the Belle Haven Climate Change Community Team:

raised funds for **160** air purifiers,

surveyed **400** Menlo Park residents  
about environmental justice issues,

and organized more than **120** of their  
neighbors to participate in Menlo Park's  
Environmental Justice Element Update.

Belle Haven represents decades of systemic racism ingrained in city and transportation planning that has cut off Black and Brown neighborhoods from white ones, limiting opportunities and creating a “dumping ground” for industrial sites, sprawling tech campuses, and other “undesirable” land uses.



Belle Haven Inaugural Meeting (March 2022)



# Breath of Air Campaign

Through our Breath of Air Campaign, CRC raised funds to distribute 160 air purifiers in homes across East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Belle Haven.

## The Need

As a consequence of redlining practices (racialized housing discrimination), decades of disinvestment, and institutionalized systems of racism, the communities of East Palo Alto (EPA), North Fair Oaks (NFO), and Belle Haven are disproportionately exposed to chronic air pollution and experience higher rates of breathing conditions like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). During wildfire events, these chronic conditions can become deadly, and even otherwise healthy residents can suffer profound consequences.

CRC and our CCCTs set out to address this gap by raising funds to purchase and distribute purifiers to community members with the greatest need. Initially setting a \$10,000 goal to purchase 100 purifiers, with the help of three faith-based partners – Spark Church, Beth Am, and Kol Emeth – we easily surpassed that goal and raised over \$30,000 in just three months, including \$21,000 in cash donations and an in-kind donation of 60 additional air purifiers from Stanford Medical School's Sean N. Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research.

CRC's three CCCTs are distributing the units to the neighbors they knew would benefit most, prioritizing elders, families with young children, and people with pre-existing health conditions.

Using an Air Purifier is one of the best ways to reduce air pollution exposure and alleviate other health conditions and allergies. Unfortunately, purchasing an air purifier is still prohibitively expensive for many residents of our communities.



▲ CRC staff posing with air purifiers (October 2022)



Over **\$30,000** raised for our Breath of Air Campaign to donate air purifiers to **160** families in need

▼ Community residents with new air purifiers (October-November 2022)



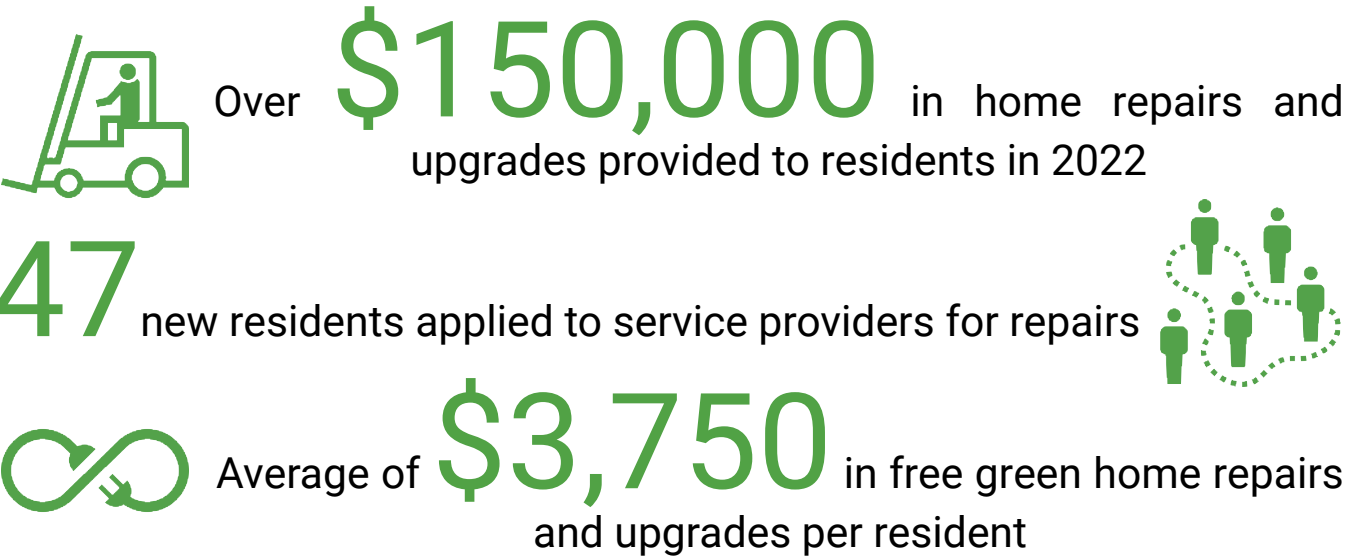


# Keeping Residents Safe at Home



The home is the first line of defense against climate hazards. CRC’s Resilient Homes program works with low-income residents to navigate available programs for free or low-cost solar, home repair, and weatherization programs.

Opal Harper has lived in her current home in East Palo Alto for over fifty years. In that time, she’s seen her community change dramatically. One thing that hasn’t changed however, is that over half of East Palo Alto residents live in FEMA flood zones. With sea level rise and heavier rainfall, this challenge is only expected to intensify.

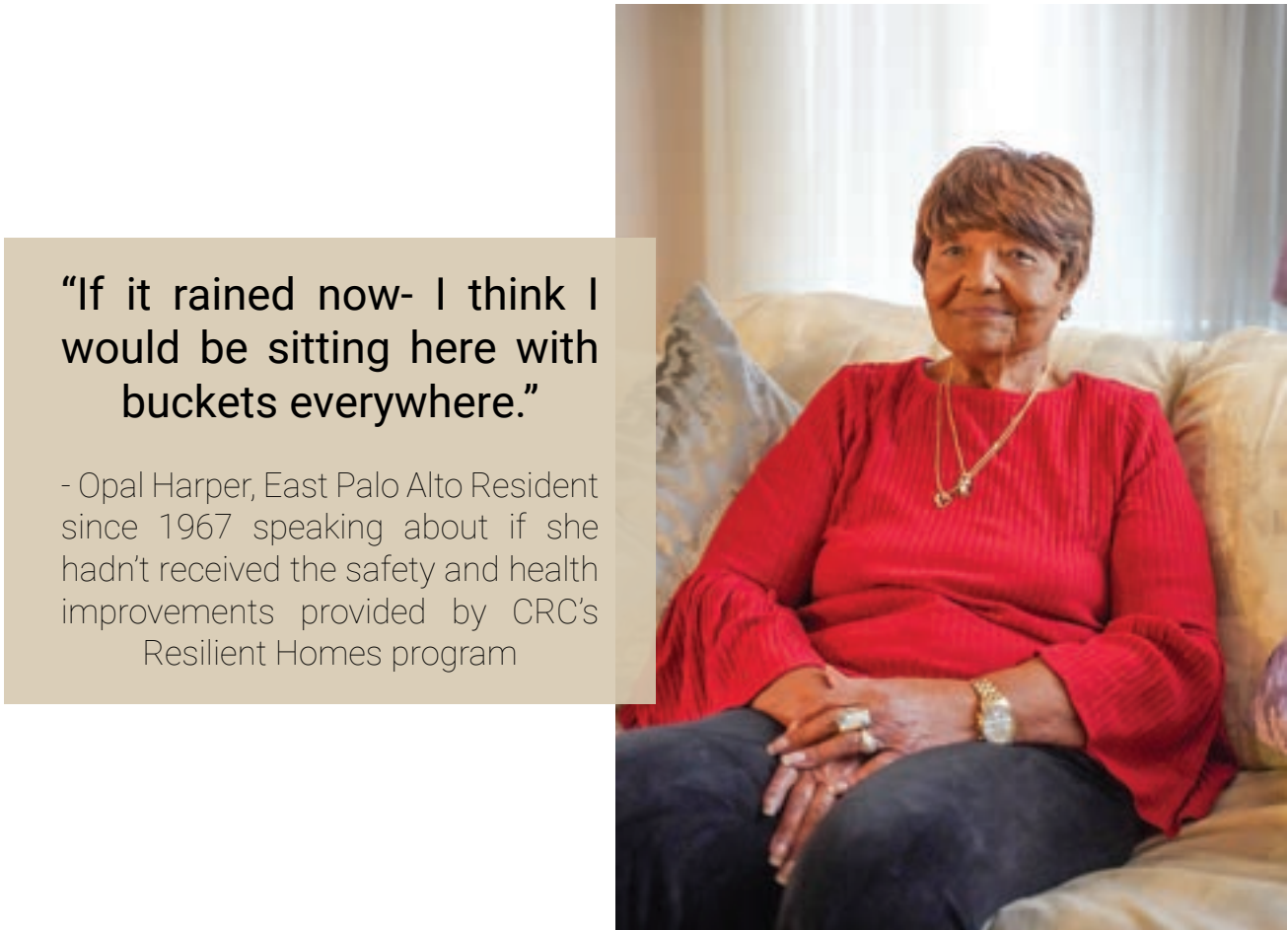


When Opal first reached out to CRC’s Resilient Homes Program, she was in need of a roof replacement. “If it rained now- I think I would be sitting here with buckets everywhere,” Opal told us.

But the new roof was only the beginning. Resilient Homes is about more than just climate readiness solutions such as weatherproofing or green appliances. **Resilient Homes are also about resilient people.** Of the residents we work with, some of the highest needs include accessibility modifications to age in place and safety improvements such as lighting or fencing. In addition to the new roof from Habitat for Humanity, Opal has worked with CRC to receive other safety and health improvements to her home, valued at an estimated \$20,000. These repairs include:

- An old fence taken down and replaced,
- grab bars installed in her bathroom and shower,
- switch to heat pump water heater (2-3x more efficient than other types of electric water heaters),
- electric panel upgrade and remediation to accommodate the electric water heater
- energy efficiency repairs (low-flow faucets, smart thermostat, LED lighting, and weatherstripping/air sealing),
- replacing carpet with vinyl (tripping hazard),
- plumbing repairs,
- and demolishing an old shed in the backyard.

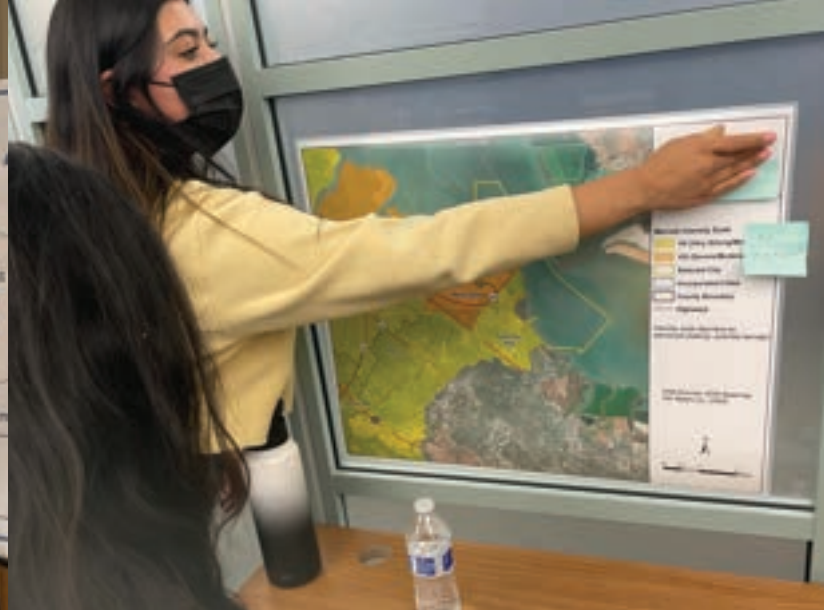
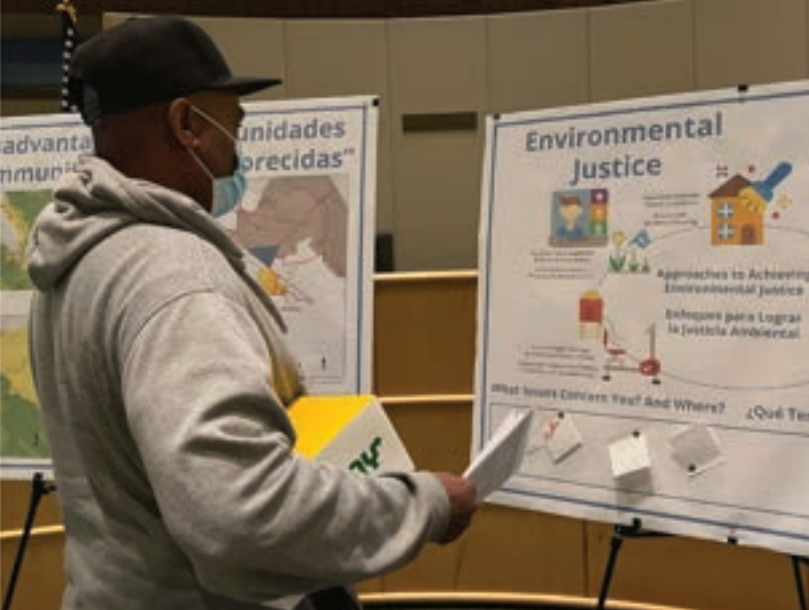
“I am so, so thankful because I was able to get the things I really could not afford,” Opal says. “The rods up in my bathroom, if they were not there, I would not be able to take a shower.” she said, “I could not get in and out of there.” Opal would recommend CRC’s Resilient Homes Program to her community. Take it from Opal, “The services have been such a blessing to me.”



“If it rained now- I think I would be sitting here with buckets everywhere.”

- Opal Harper, East Palo Alto Resident since 1967 speaking about if she hadn’t received the safety and health improvements provided by CRC’s Resilient Homes program





# Menlo Park Environmental Justice Element

"No one knows better what neighbors need to know than neighbors. That's what we thought a lot about. At the focus group, the best part was seeing how we all had ideas as individuals, but coming together we can contribute to something bigger."

- Telesia Alusa reflecting on the process of facilitating the focus group

## What is an Environmental Justice Element?

Each California city and county is required by State law to have a specific element in their General Plan focusing on Environmental Justice. As Menlo Park was preparing to write this element for the first time in 2022, the City contracted with CRC to conduct community outreach to ensure that all voices and preferences across the City were taken into account — particularly in Belle Haven, a historically redlined community within Menlo Park.

## CRC Outreach in Menlo Park

CRC led workshops, a survey, and language-specific focus groups to ensure that the lived experiences of historically marginalized populations within Menlo Park were gathered and incorporated into the plan. The Belle Haven CCCT helped create the outreach strategy and survey design.

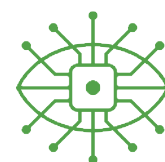
We worked with the Belle Haven Community Development Fund, El Komite de Vecinos, and longtime Belle Haven residents to organize each focus group. Marisela Ramos of El Komite de Vecinos shared why she first got involved in the project: "It is very important for the community to have their inputs be heard. We also wanted our communities to have a better understanding about climate change, since many of us, especially the older generations, weren't taught in school about these issues."

## What Were Residents Concerned About?

- Air pollution
- Water quality
- Cut-through traffic
- Dust and noise from construction
- Legacy contamination
- Inequitable infrastructure upgrades and repairs
- Lack of grocery store in Belle Haven
- Unequal distribution of development and affordable housing
- Sea level rise

## Next Steps

The draft Elements will be finalized in the new year. CRC will continue to solicit community involvement to ensure that residents' needs are translated into concrete goals.



**550+** Menlo Park residents reached through workshops, surveys, and focus groups

CRC tabled at **52** events and food distributions

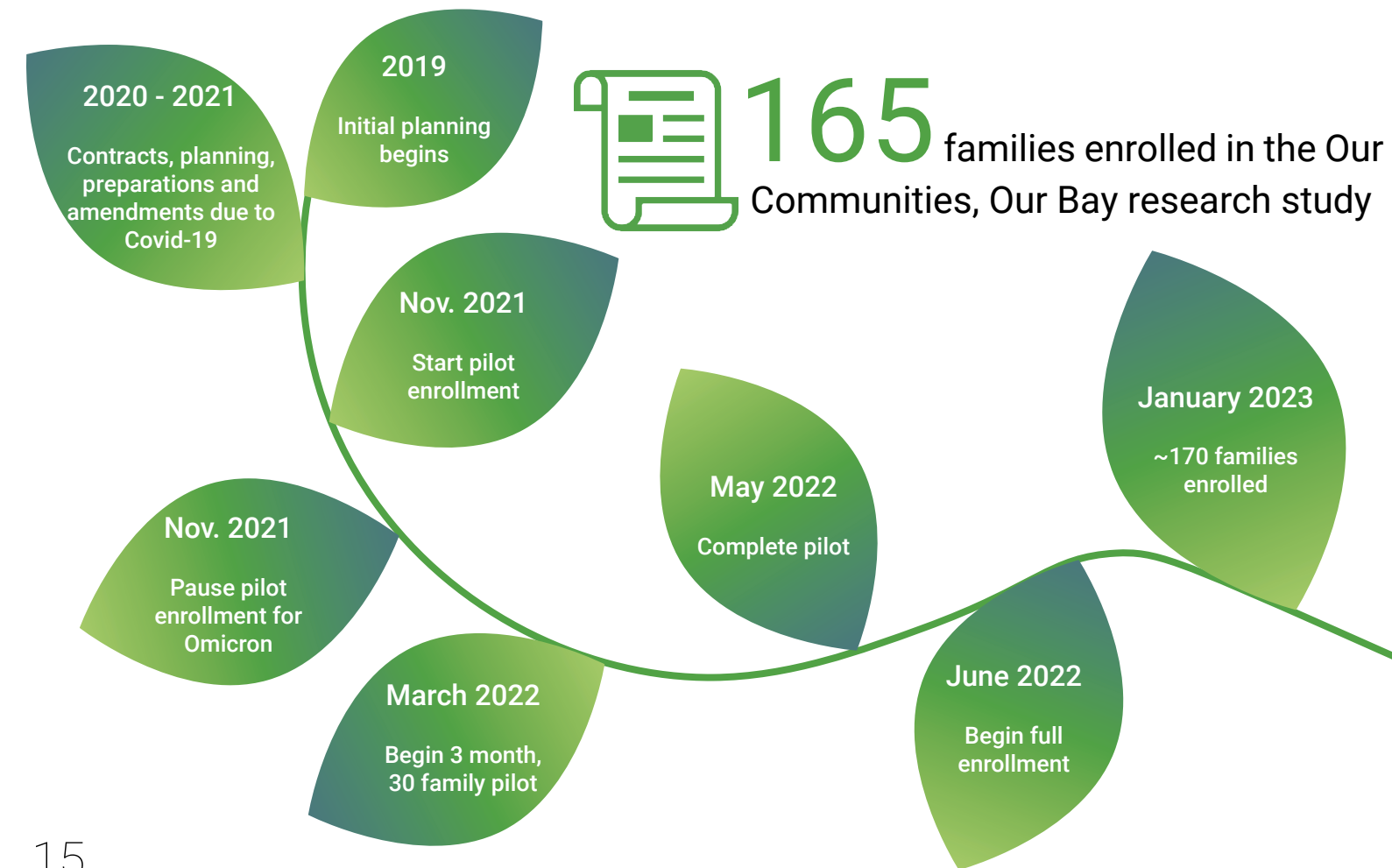




# Testing Technology for Climate Health



▲ CRC staff shares about our programs at the Primary School Resource Fair (March 2022)



## Project Background

Our Communities, Our Bay (OCOB) is a five year project dedicated to better understanding how climate hazards affect communities in San Mateo County – specifically in Belle Haven, East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Redwood City. Alongside Stanford University and El Concilio of San Mateo County, CRC is conducting a long-term study with households at-risk of experiencing climate hazards like wildfire smoke, extreme heat, and flooding. The goal of this research is to find potential strategies for climate resilience, test technology that may improve health, and determine which health interventions can make an immediate impact in our residents' lives.

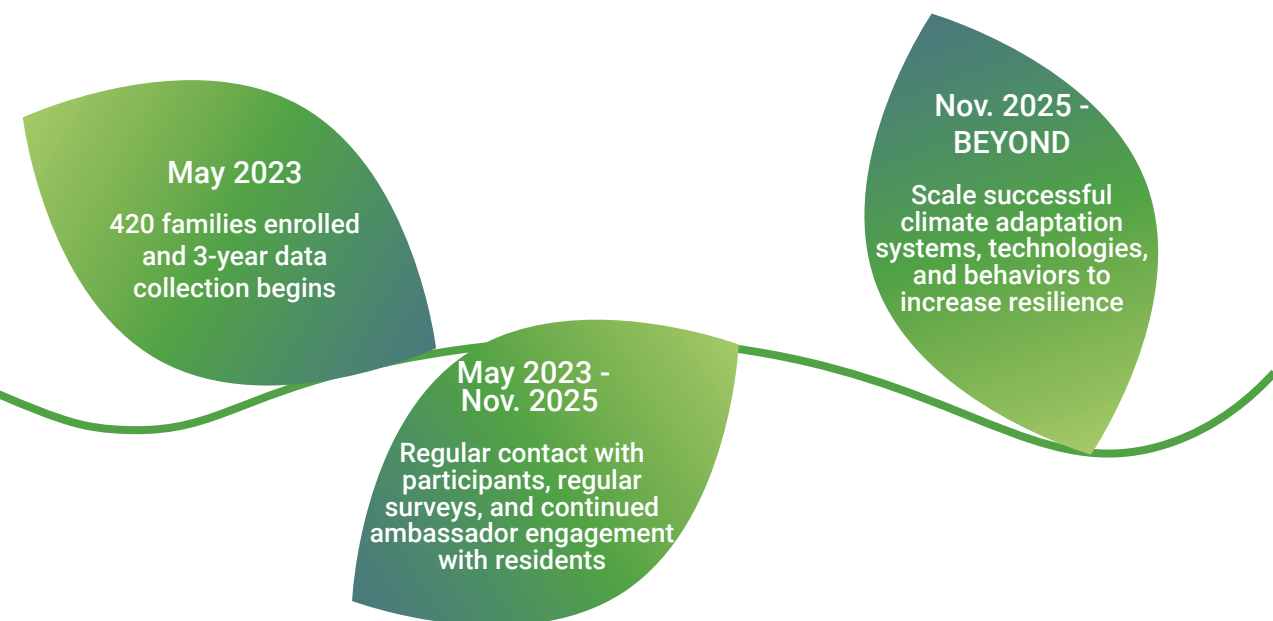
## Community Ambassadors

To find and enroll families in the study, CRC has hired community ambassadors to serve as liaisons for the project. These ambassadors are on-the-ground in their families and neighbors' homes, conveying information about the benefits of the project, helping install air monitoring sensors and other health technology, and teaching residents to use air quality readings and complete surveys on a mobile app.

## Tangible Benefits

The Our Communities, Our Bay collaboration offers an unprecedented and groundbreaking approach to community-engaged research. Our partnership materially benefits each of our residents, contributes to groundbreaking research in human behavior, and directly gives our residents the materials and information they need to navigate the worsening impacts of climate change– impacts that are ultimately compounded and created by an inequitable distribution of wealth and racialized systems of oppression.

 Over **\$123,000** distributed to our communities through cash compensation and adaptation technology like air quality monitors

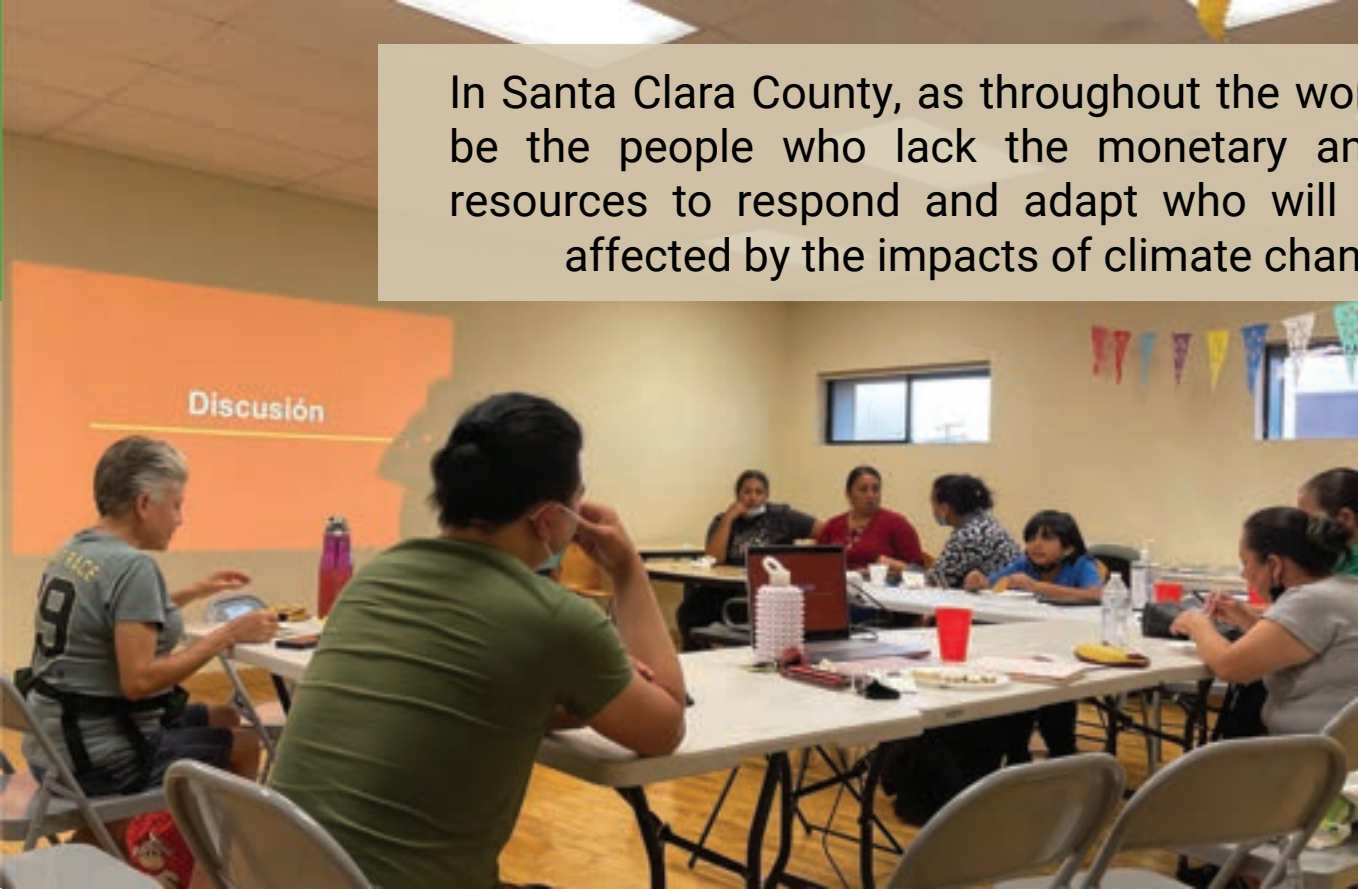




# CRC Expands Outreach to Santa Clara County

Earlier this year, CRC partnered with Santa Clara County’s Public Health Department to conduct focus groups about air quality and extreme heat. Low-income communities and communities of color are on the frontlines of air pollution burdens, extreme heat events, and are suffering more severe consequences from wildfire smoke exposure. Robust engagement with frontline communities is a necessity for equitable and just climate adaptation.

▼ Focus group participants (June 2022)



▲ LUNA focus group (June 2022)

## New Partnerships

We partnered with five organizations across the county: the Vietnamese Voluntary Organization (VIVO), Latinos United for a New America (LUNA), the International Childrens Assistance Network (ICAN), the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa, and the Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy, and Services (CARAS). Each organization co-facilitated a focus group with CRC to reach a diverse group of residents across the County, including Gilroy and East San Jose.

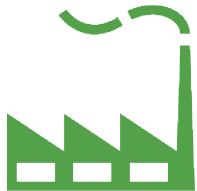
## An Urgent Need

Across the board, the conversations centered on a need to start actionable projects to address needs for cooling centers, basic needs supplies, and educational materials. CRC shared the results of this project at the inaugural meeting of the County’s Heat and Air Quality Resilience Working Group to ensure that the needs of frontline communities are centered in the County’s engagement and aid efforts.

This was CRC’s first major project in Santa Clara County, and we look forward to building on these efforts in the coming years.



75% of residents do not receive information about high heat or air quality days.



70% of residents or their families have been significantly affected by climate hazards.



# Getting Kids Outdoors



▲ Students write letters to their future selves on a field trip (May 2022)

Emily Ferrario is an Activities Director & Biology Teacher at Tide Academy, a small public high school located in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park. Ms. Ferrario weaves environmental justice and climate change throughout her yearlong biology curriculum to allow her “classroom to be inquiry driven and provide opportunities for students to explore and expand their solutionary mindset in comparing climate change.”

Ms. Ferrario got in touch with CRC after hearing Violet speak on a NPR podcast, looking for an opportunity to take her 60 9th grade biology students on a field trip to learn about local environmental justice issues.

CRC hosted Tide Academy’s 9th graders at Cooley Landing in May alongside four partner organizations – Grassroots Ecology, the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority, San Mateo County Office of Sustainability, and Environmental Volunteers – for a day of hands-on activities and exploration.

Grassroots Ecology took students on nature walks around the park to observe the marsh, plants, and learn about the history of the site as a landfill. They were able to explore local wildlife and see how Grassroots Ecology was restoring Cooley Landing’s ecosystem with local species.

CRC’s Resilient Education program aims to increase awareness and understanding of climate change and its impacts in frontline communities, particularly among youth. In addition to planning for the 2023 launch of our Youth Climate Collective, this year we worked with individual teachers and classes to develop climate change education field trips appropriate with student ages and curriculum.

The San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority used sponges to help students understand how marshland protects the coast from flooding due to sea level rise. Students discussed local legislation that was being voted on in order to combat future flooding.

Environmental Volunteers led a climate letter-writing activity (and brought a giant globe to explore all the different kinds of ecosystems across the world!); students opened up with their peers and staff about their future goals and how climate change could effect those goals.

The Office of Sustainability facilitated a round of the “Game of Floods,” an interactive board game for students to experience making decisions about planning for sea level rise. This activity sparked discussion on flood risk in the Bay Area and what structures would be most affected.





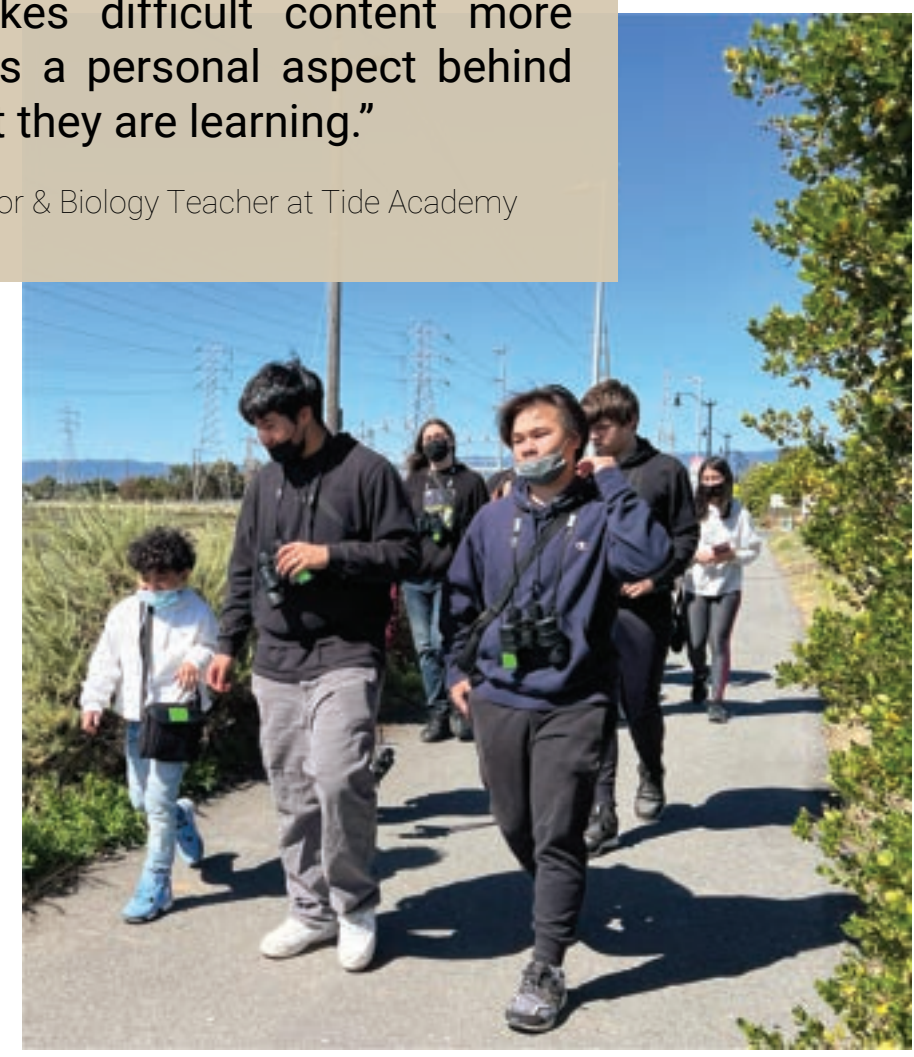
After the field trip, Ms. Ferrario shared about students’ experiences at Cooley Landing:

“We had an absolute BLAST on our field trip! Students loved being at Cooley landing, an area that many of them had regularly explored with their friends and family. All aspects of the field trip directly correlated with my classroom content as my students were working on a research project in which they had to accumulate data on a local environmental issue and then design or refine a solution to combat their chosen issue. Many of my students were inspired by the field trip and researched topics discussed with CRC! My students still talk about this field trip and are already telling my current students about what a great experience it was!”

“It is important to expose my students to local environmental issues because grounding classroom content in something that my students can directly relate to not only makes difficult content more accessible but also puts a personal aspect behind everything that they are learning.”

- Emily Ferrario, Activities Director & Biology Teacher at Tide Academy

  
**250+** hours of  
training for 100 youth about  
environmental justice





# Looking Ahead to 2023

This year has shown just how much CRC is capable of – moving into the new year, we're excited to continue many of the programs highlighted here, with much more in the works.

## Resilience Hubs

Alongside project partner Fresh Approach, CRC will retrofit two public spaces to serve as “resilience hubs,” places of refuge for hot, cold, or smoky days where residents can also access health- and climate-related resources. The project will also launch a regional Climate Health Collective to bring together other organizations and agencies working in either public health or sustainability, to forge partnerships, connections, and collaborations that center on the health consequences of climate change.

## Youth Climate Collaborative (YCC)

We are in the midst of developing a 6-month long paid program for youth to explore, learn, and engage with environmentalism. Youth were asked to help design a program that will foster this sense of curiosity and activism by creating something that is hands-on, inclusive, and providing specific topics of interest to drive this pivot of proactive change and leadership development. We will launch our first cohort in the Spring of 2023.

## Rain Gardens

Funded by the California Coastal Conservancy, CRC is installing 25 rain garden and water cistern systems for vulnerable homeowners in East Palo Alto. The systems, provided to residents at no cost, will promote food sovereignty, increase home values, curb water scarcity, and reduce the risk of flooding.

## “Resilience Starts Now” Campaign

To ensure that all of CRC's work can sustain far into the future, we're launching our first-ever major campaign to raise \$3 million by 2024 to meet the urgent needs of frontline communities facing climate change challenges in the Bay Area. This funding will allow us to continue in our existing efforts, expand our staff capacity, and ensure organizational sustainability.

## Baylands Habitat Restoration Project

Alongside Grassroots Ecology, CRC was awarded a grant from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority's Measure AA grant program to restore 2,400 linear feet of marshland along the Bay Trail at Ravenswood Preserve in East Palo Alto. Grassroots Ecology will lead the restoration effort and CRC will lead the community engagement and outreach, including hiring several interns from the local community to help with the work.



▲ Rain garden installation at YUCA



◀ Resilient Hub site at the Collective Roots Community Garden



# Our Supporters

None of this work would be possible without the support of all of our donors – big and small, individuals and foundations, it is your contributions that are empowering and protecting our communities. Thank you for joining our cause.

## Individual Donors:

Aaron & Noelle Thurlow  
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Packard Foundation  
Palo Alto Community Fund  
Peninsula Clean Energy  
Resources Legacy Fund  
Sand Hill Foundation  
Santa Clara County  
Silicon Valley Clean Energy  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SV2)  
Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund  
Skeo  
Stanford Future Bay Initiative  
Stanford University  
Tundra Glacier Fund  
Zoom Cares

The work continues to grow, and with it our capacity needs. There are always more projects to take on than we have time for – but with your help, we look forward to building our team, embarking on new projects, and securing additional funding in 2023. Thank you!

## ▼ CRC staff table at the East Palo Alto Farmers Market (May 2022)







## Project Partners:

Anamatangi Polynesian Voices (APV)  
 Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network  
 Belle Haven Action  
 Belle Haven Community Development Fund  
 BIOSPHERE Environmental Storytelling  
 Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula  
 Canopy  
 City Systems  
 Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy & Services (CARAS)  
 Congregation Beth Am  
 Congregation Kol Emeth  
 Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa  
 El Comite de Vecinos  
 El Concilio of San Mateo County  
 Environmental Volunteers  
 Fresh Approach  
 Grassroots Ecology  
 GRID Alternatives  
 Habitat for Humanity  
 High Tide Intelligence  
 International Childrens Assistance Network (ICAN)  
 Latinos United for a New America (LUNA)  
 Menlo Together  
 Metropolitan Planning Group, Inc.  
 North Fair Oaks Community Alliance (NFOCA)  
 North Fair Oaks Library  
 Nuestra Casa  
 Peninsula Clean Energy  
 Rebuilding Together  
 Redwood City PAL  
 Rise South City  
 San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority (JPA)  
 San Mateo County Public Health  
 San Mateo Office of Sustainability  
 Santa Clara County Public Health  
 Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter  
 Spark Church  
 Thrive Alliance  
 Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto  
 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale  
 Vietnamese Voluntary Organization (VIVO)  
 Youth United for Community Action (YUCA)



## Our Staff



From left to right: Najiha Al Asmar, Violet Saena, Caroline Beckman, Lesley Lopez, Maya Paulo, Cade Cannedy, Joel Valencia, and John Darroch





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