

10th Annual Statewide Energy Efficiency Forum

Session Block #1 – Chasing the Twin Goals of Carbon Reduction and racial Equity

Salon A
Level: All - Track: Policy and Planning

Wednesday, June 26, 2019
2:45 – 4:00 PM

Notes prepared by **Michael Jimenez**, CivicSpark Climate Fellow at Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Speakers:

Rich Chien, Department of Environment, City and County of San Francisco
Ammon Reagan, Department of Environment, City and County of San Francisco
Chris Selig, PODER
Leah Obias, Race Forward

Session Summary:

What are cities like San Francisco doing to achieve emissions reductions and racial equity? Panelists spoke to this Twin Goal by providing solutions and ideas in their work. The audience was introduced to the San Francisco Zero Cities project and the role of community engagement, racial equity, and environmental justice in lowering cities' emissions.

44% of San Francisco's emissions come from commercial and residential buildings; 94% of these emissions attribute to natural gas. One key path to achieve emissions reductions from buildings prioritizes 1) energy efficiency and 2) a transition away from natural gas. Cities oversee buildings and can leverage emissions reductions in commercial and residential sector through data modeling, community engagement/needs assessment, and equitable public policy.

To explore community-based solutions, the audience participated in a storytelling exercise. Members were invited to engage with their neighbors about solutions for climate change and racial equity. This discussion linked the impacts of institutional racism with creating equitable, justice-based policy that brings marginalized communities to the urban policy table while seeking short- and long-term climate solutions.

What was inspirational or hopeful about this session?

Underserved and overburdened communities hold extensive knowledge about the experience of adverse impacts, such as racism, environmental hazards, and barriers to jobs and housing. Through a bottom-up approach toward community engagement, where communities come to the table with cities and public servants to craft equitable policies and programs, community knowledge will lend itself to the solutions we need for healthy, equitable, and climate-ready cities and environments.

Quotes:

"Zero Cities can bridge the gap [in lowering emissions from residential buildings] through building will in the public sector and relationships [between the city] and [its] communities." –Rich Chien

"2% of buildings in San Francisco [are] larger than 20,000 square feet, [but those buildings account] for 53% of building emissions." –Ammon Reagan

"If you leave the room knowing anything, it's that the dual goal [for cities is to center racial equity while talking about carbon emissions]." –Leah Obias

"If you start with equity, you will get to efficiency. If you start with efficiency, it's much harder to get to equity." –Leah Obias



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“In events of climate emergencies and extreme weather events, neighbors and community can be the best network to survive and recover.” –Chris Selig

“We have to tell our stories and listen to others to generate new ideas for what’s happening.” –Chris Selig

