



# EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

*Through Leadership Development  
and Capacity Building*



Office of University Partnership

PD&R

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Policy Development and Research

## University of California, Berkeley

### Graduate Intern Helps Nonprofit Advocacy Group Enter Debate About Green Economic Development Urban Habitat Oakland, California

If you live or work in Richmond, California, you quickly learn that it is not a good idea to ignore the sirens that periodically send a piercing alarm throughout the city. These sirens are not mounted on ambulances or fire trucks. Instead, they are part of a network of 17 devices, mounted on high towers throughout Richmond, that sound an ominous and unmistakable warning whenever the city of 100,000 experiences a chemical accident, a toxic cloud, an oil fire, or some other hazardous materials incident.

Richmond's community warning system is a necessity because the city, located 16 miles north of San Francisco, is home to more than its fair share of potentially dangerous industries, including chemical manufacturing plants and oil refineries, and a roadway and rail network that carries a significant amount of high-speed, commercial traffic. When the

city's sirens blare, it is time for residents to *shelter in place*—that is, to get inside, close and lock all doors and windows, turn off all ventilation systems, and stay put until they receive the all-clear signal.

In addition to protecting residents from imminent environmental harm, the sirens have become an uncomfortable symbol that identifies Richmond as an industrial and environmentally vulnerable community. In light of its reputation, it may have come as a pleasant surprise to some observers when the city passed a resolution in February 2006 in support of *green economic development*. In that resolution, the city, whose main employer is Chevron USA, went on record with its intention to attract environmentally friendly industries as a way to improve its environment and add *clean jobs* to the local economy.

The resolution had been strongly supported by Urban Habitat, a nonprofit social justice organization in nearby Oakland, which has been working in Richmond as part of a coalition of organizations committed to the principles of equitable development. That coalition, the Richmond Equitable Development Initiative (REDI), is keenly interested in strengthening the city's faltering economy, improving its inventory of affordable housing, and modifying its land use practices in ways that improve the economic viability of Richmond's low-income residents.



UC, Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneay, Heather Hood, Alex Schafran, Diana Abellera, Karen Chapple, and Amaha Kassah.

Green economic development had not been a priority on REDI's economic development agenda until California State Assemblywoman Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley) asked Urban Habitat to analyze whether a green economy would help Richmond address both its environmental and economic challenges. The city of Richmond soon made its own request for similar research after learning about an initiative, promoted by then-State Treasurer Phil Angelides, to use \$500 million in state pension funds to invest in the development of clean industries throughout California.

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING GREEN ECONOMY**

In “A Green Wave of Economic Development in Richmond, California: Evaluating Green Economic Development Through an Equity Lens,” CDWSP Fellow Jackie Tsou offers these recommendations for a city interested in developing a green economy:

- ◆ Coordinate and invest in a workforce development program that will train local residents for the industry’s high-skill, high-wage jobs.
- ◆ Develop a set of criteria so green industry businesses will be selected according to their ability to provide quality jobs to low-income residents.
- ◆ Strengthen local hiring and living-wage policies to ensure that the benefits of such legislation include as many residents as possible.
- ◆ Preserve industrial lands to ensure that sufficient areas are available for incoming industries.
- ◆ Communicate a plan for a green economic future that lays out strategies for attracting green businesses, developing a cluster of green technology businesses, and integrating green technology business with a ready and able labor force.
- ◆ Create a green business-friendly environment that includes a streamlined permitting process, fee waivers, tax incentives, or a city commitment to purchase a company’s green product.
- ◆ Appoint a green economy advisory board to serve as a liaison with firms in green economic development fields.
- ◆ Create a position for a green economy manager who could ensure that efforts to attract businesses are aligned with efforts to train and prepare residents for new jobs in the green economy.
- ◆ Collaborate and partner with key stakeholders who can work together to build up a robust economic development program.
- ◆ Coordinate and partner with other regional cities to allow all to benefit from industries in the burgeoning green economy.

Source: Tsou, J. 2006. *A Green Wave of Economic Development in Richmond, California: Evaluating Green Economic Development Through an Equity Lens*. Berkeley, California: The Center for Community Innovation, University of California, Berkeley.

Available on the Web at [www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/cc/04A!publications.html](http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/cc/04A!publications.html).

Eager to fulfill both requests for information but struggling with a small staff and an overwhelming workload, Urban Habitat asked Jackie Tsou to complete the green economic development research. Tsou, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley (UC, Berkeley) was working as an intern at Urban Habitat through CDWSP sponsored by HUD’s Office of University Partnerships. The result of her green economic development research was a paper titled “A Green Wave of Economic Development in Richmond, California: Evaluating Green Economic Development Through an Equity Lens,” which provided a broad

analysis of how green economic development has worked in other cities and how Richmond might go about preparing to welcome green industries to its business community.

“With Jackie’s support, we were able to advance REDI’s equitable development agenda and strengthen our relationship with the city of Richmond,” says Elizabeth Tan, Urban Habitat’s director of development and planning and Tsou’s internship supervisor. “Jackie was interested. She was smart and could work autonomously with little supervision. She really did bring quite a bit of capacity to us at that time.”

## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

**WEARING MANY HATS HELPS CDWSP FELLOW UNDERSTAND MANY PERSPECTIVES**

Ithaca, New York, located in the heart of the Empire State’s picturesque Finger Lakes region, was a perfect place for Jackie Tsou to earn her undergraduate degree in natural resources at Cornell University. The rural environment that surrounds the campus provided a host of ecosystems for Tsou to explore and presented a welcome change from the suburban Southern California neighborhood where she was raised. However, when Tsou headed back west after her 4-year course of study ended, the California she returned to was dramatically different from the one she left.

Instead of heading back to southern California, Tsou set down roots in the San Francisco Bay area. And instead of spending her time in the suburban environment that was most familiar to her, she created a professional life that revolved around the urban, industrialized city of Richmond, California. Tsou had traded Ithaca’s pristine waterfalls and colorful hiking trails for a city whose major employers are an oil refinery and a chemical plant.

Working at two part-time jobs in Richmond, Tsou found herself wearing a teacher’s hat some days of the week as she provided environmental education to urban teens for a local nonprofit organization. On other days, she wore the hat of a government employee working for the EPA to update a tool that local citizens could use to stay informed about the quality (or lack thereof) of their environment. That tool was the Toxic Relief Inventory (TRI), which provides detailed information about the type and level of toxic substances being released into the environment at specific facilities throughout the United States. The TRI was established in the 1980s after several chemical spills at home and abroad convinced the EPA that citizens had the right to know about the pollutants to which they were being exposed.

“There was a very real tension between the EPA and Richmond residents who were completely dissatisfied with what the EPA had or had not done about environmental issues in their community,” says Tsou. “So it was really neat to be out there as an environmental educator one day and the next day to put on my federal government hat and work on this really powerful tool that community members could use to educate themselves.”

The two positions had a profound impact on Tsou and would eventually affect her career plans. For one thing, she says, the positions developed her awareness of environmental issues in ways that her suburban upbringing and her rural college had not. “I was seeing the ramifications of pollution in a very, very different way that, because of where I grew up and where I went to college, I didn’t even fathom were possible,” she says. Her firsthand experience with serious pollution, and with the people who lived with that pollution everyday, also opened Tsou’s eyes to the many ways that environmental issues are tied to issues of social inequality and lack of economic opportunity. That awareness prompted Tsou to go back to school for a master’s degree in urban planning.

“I was really interested in looking at how urban planning could help achieve environmental justice,” she says. “I wanted to find out what tools of urban planning could be used to alleviate or prevent what I had seen in Richmond, which was the siting of dangerous facilities very close to residential neighborhoods.”

Finally, Tsou’s early work in Richmond created a bond with the city that would follow her through graduate school at UC, Berkeley. Tsou, a CDWSP fellow, made the conscious decision to complete two of her three graduate school internships in Richmond: one with

**Putting Experience to Work**

Indeed, Tsou’s background in environmental issues made her a perfect candidate for the green economy research job. A graduate student in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Berkeley at the

time of her internship, Tsou had received her undergraduate degree in natural resources from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. After graduating from Cornell, she returned to California and worked part time as both an environmental educator for a local nonprofit organization and as a pollution

the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency and one with the nonprofit social justice advocacy organization Urban Habitat.

“I wanted to work in the same geographic area, but on somewhat different projects, so I could see this city from different perspectives,” she says.

Those two perspectives came together in the final project of Tsou’s internship with Urban Habitat. That project was a paper that introduced city officials to the concept of green economic development, a community-building strategy that attempts to boost local economies through job creation in environmentally friendly industries. Not surprisingly, given her formative experience in Richmond, Tsou added an environmental justice angle to her paper, insisting that in order to be truly *green*, cities like Richmond must work to ensure that all residents will have access to the jobs and wealth created through the new green economy.

## LESSONS LEARNED

There are definite signs that Richmond’s mayor and members of the city council support green economic development, and Tsou hopes that such political support will eventually translate into an action plan to bring a green economy to Richmond.

“Political backing is absolutely necessary to achieve something like equitable green economic development,” says Tsou. “However, the complexity of translating political support and national momentum into a concrete strategy to attract new green industries and jobs for Richmond residents will still be a monumental task.”

It took Tsou a while to understand that complexity.



*Jackie Tsou, CDWSP fellow.*

“While I was doing my research, I would think, ‘Why wouldn’t a city want to pursue something like this?’ It was easy to have this narrow vision because I was kind of isolated in the office doing this research and interviewing people who had really good things to say about green economic development projects in other cities; however, the reality is that something like this is not easy to implement. As discussions with the city progressed, I learned to see the complexity of the situation and why it might be difficult to move forward. It was a great lesson to learn,” she says.

Understanding the political difficulties inherent in establishing a green economy does not mean that Tsou has given up on the idea, however.

“I’m optimistic that some version of green economic development will be in the Richmond spotlight in the future,” she says. “I don’t know when that is going to be, but I do feel optimistic about it.”

data analyst for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Tsou was also well acquainted with Richmond: both of her post-graduation jobs had been located there and her first CDWSP placement had taken her to the Richmond Community Development Agency.

“She had good relationships there and people really liked her,” says Tan. “It was an added bonus that she could tell us about some of the politics within the city, and she could help us make connections by placing phone calls to people who still worked there.”

Tsou's prior work experience had also given her a first-hand look not only at Richmond's environmental vulnerability, but also at the economic frailty of its residents. Median household income in the city, now at an estimated \$44,200, is \$20,000 lower than incomes in surrounding Contra Costa County. In 2000, the city's unemployment rate stood at 7.3 percent, with some areas reporting rates as high as 14 percent. Residents who are lucky enough to be employed within the city are usually relegated to less-skilled and low-paying positions, while nonresidents take most of the skilled jobs. Crime is a major city problem, and violence has claimed the lives of 680 residents in the past 20 years.

However, despite these challenges, Richmond is also considered a city "on the cusp of big change," according to Heather Hood, director of the Center for Community Innovation (CCI) at UC, Berkeley, who placed Tsou in both of her Richmond-based CDWSP internships.

"Richmond is right next door to the university, and it is going to be the next frontier in terms of urban development in the Bay Area," says Hood. "It needs to figure out how to position itself to take advantage of the private development that is coming. It also needs to figure out how to create benefits for the people who live there."

Fourteen UC, Berkeley graduate and undergraduate students now work at CCI, which is directed by Hood and Dr. Karen Chapple, a professor in the university's Department of City and Regional Planning. CCI, an active member of REDI, has used its 2004 COPC New Directions Grant and multiple CDWSP grants to



*Urban Habitat advocates for green jobs before an Oakland City Council Meeting.*

form partnerships and build the capacity of Richmond organizations for the past several years.

"This has allowed us to play an instrumental role in mediating relationships and building trust between city government officials and community advocates," says Chapple. "That trust is gradually blossoming into the passage and implementation of policies supporting more equitable development for the city."

Most recently, CCI interns have been actively involved in a variety of efforts to ensure that Richmond residents, many of whom do not speak English as their first language, can understand and participate fully in an ongoing process to update the city's general plan. In addition, Hood says that Tsou's work on green economic development keeps resurfacing in discussions around the city, even though Tsou has since graduated and moved on to a job in the private sector.

### **A Green Wave of Economic Development**

Green economic development remains a vague term that can encompass a range of potential industries and businesses that produce a variety of products, services, and processes. Those products—whether related to solar or wind power, electric cars, or biobased materials—all harness renewable materials and energy sources and, in the process, seek to reduce the use of natural resources or cut down on pollution and toxic wastes. Given the threat of global warming and rapidly rising costs for electricity and petroleum products, green industries are expected to grow by leaps and bounds in the next decades, particularly in California. In the solar area alone, according to Tsou's report, the state could gain 6,800 jobs in manufacturing and 3,500 jobs in construction and installation. The wind turbine industry could bring in 13,000 manufacturing jobs, and that is just the beginning.

Rather than simply touting green economic development as the answer to Richmond's growing challenges, Tsou's paper gave voice to Urban Habitat's unique perspective on this emerging industry. That perspective states clearly that green economic

development cannot be viewed only as a strategy to build Richmond's tax base. Instead, it must be viewed as a way to ensure the economic security of Richmond's low-income residents and its residents of color.

Green industries typically offer high-skill, high-wage jobs, according to the report, but what makes the green economy so compatible with Urban Habitat's social justice mission is that jobs in this emerging industry often do not require a college degree and, therefore, are accessible to anyone who has been trained in a particular set of skills. Tsou's paper suggests that Richmond's first tasks in developing a green economy should be to institute job-training programs geared toward the specific needs of green industries and then to make those programs accessible to low-income Richmond residents.

"We think Richmond is a great city to test out some of these green economic policies because it is such a heavily industrialized city with tons of environmental pollutants," says Tan, "but what we want to do is make sure that the issues of equity are first and foremost. The main focus of the green economic development movement has been on creating clean jobs for the environment, but Jackie's paper helps us focus on who will get those jobs and who will be trained for those jobs. That is why Urban Habitat is interested in the movement."

### Hope on the Horizon

Several recent events have created the anticipation that concrete action will soon develop around green economic development in the city of Richmond. In February 2006, the city worked with Urban Habitat to craft its green resolution, which stated Richmond's intention to pursue a green economic development strategy that incorporated "economic opportunity, environmental integrity, and social equity." A few days later, the city hosted a Green Economic Development Symposium, which showcased

Richmond as an attractive site for green industries and explored the state's plans to invest in those industries. In addition, political support for a green economy has been growing since Tsou's paper was published. Several city council members now support green economic development and, in 2006, Richmond residents elected Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, a member of the Green Party, whom Urban Habitat hopes will actively pursue this development strategy.

*"We try to take a comprehensive view of what makes a healthy community."*

—Elizabeth Tan  
Director of Development and Planning  
Urban Habitat

Growing momentum and support for green economic development at the national level has also added to the concept's credibility at the local level. Tsou has had an indirect hand in creating at least some of that momentum. Not long after her paper was completed, Urban Habitat worked with a national organization called the Apollo Alliance to produce a paper, entitled "Community Jobs in the Green Economy," which

examined the potential for green economic development to create good jobs in low-income communities. Urban Habitat used Tsou's research to help frame the paper from an equity perspective, and it also added a Richmond case study to the report. According to the Alliance, local coalitions around the country are using the report to back their *green equity* proposals. In addition, the Alliance used the report to provide testimony on green economic development at a May 2007 hearing before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

For its part, REDI is poised to take full advantage of this growing support for green economic development. The coalition has completed a set of policy recommendations to influence Richmond's General Plan and has included specific language about green economic development in the recommendations that address economic development.

"We will be looking for opportunities to work with the city to implement these policies," says Tan, who explains that although green economic development is now part of REDI's overall economic development agenda, it probably will not be pushed as a separate

initiative. “This is how we work,” she adds. “We try to take a comprehensive view of what makes a healthy community.”

### Contact Information

Elizabeth Tan  
Director of Development and Planning  
Urban Habitat  
436 14th Street, No. 1205  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Phone: (510) 844-1262  
Fax: (510) 839-9610  
E-mail: elizabeth@urbanhabitat.org

Jackie Tsou, Consultant  
Seifel Consulting Inc.  
E-mail: jackie.tsou@gmail.com

Heather Hood, Director  
Center for Community Innovation  
University of California, Berkeley  
316 Wurster Hall  
Berkeley, CA 94720-1870  
Phone: (510) 643-7553  
Fax: (510) 643-9576  
E-mail: hhood@berkeley.edu

## Massachusetts Institute of Technology

### Research Provides Insight About Refugees’ Growing Role in Maine’s Economy

Maine Department of Labor  
Augusta, Maine  
Catholic Charities Maine  
Portland, Maine

Two important facts about Maine have John Dorrer worried. First, Maine’s population is aging. Demographics experts estimate that by 2012, nearly half of the state’s residents will be “baby boomers” 65 years of age or older. Second, almost 97 percent of state residents are White.

Analyzed separately, these two facts might seem relatively harmless, says Dorrer, the Director of

Labor Market Information Services at the state’s Department of Labor (DOL). Taken together, he says, they represent a clear warning that Maine could face serious workforce recruiting challenges as early as 2011. Other states with higher numbers of foreign-born immigrants will be able to rely on those workers to replace at least some of these retirees, but Maine will not have that luxury. Although 12 percent of the entire U.S. workforce is foreign born, only 3 percent of Maine’s workforce is made up of immigrants.

“If the state of Maine is to continue to grow its economy, we must ensure that we have an available, well-trained workforce,” says Dorrer.

That challenge has led the DOL to examine how members of other population groups—those at the margins of the labor market—could help the state solve its anticipated labor shortage. To keep older workers on the job longer, the department has been considering a number of policy measures and has encouraged retailers to adopt workplace innovations that include creating flexible, part-time positions for retirees. To lure the state’s disaffected young people into the labor force, DOL has started developing strategies to help Maine’s employers target their recruitment efforts toward unemployed high school graduates who are younger than age 24. Finally, the department has set its sights on finding ways to train and hire members of Maine’s growing refugee population to fill jobs in a variety of industries and sectors. The exact number of refugees living in Maine is hard to pin down but the number is significant. Official population figures suggest that between 1982 and 2000, more than 4,000 *primary refugees*, many of them from the war-torn countries of the Sudan and Somalia, were resettled in Maine after demonstrating to the U.S. government that they had been persecuted or had a fear of persecution in their home country. These figures, however, actually represent only a portion of Maine’s total refugee population, according to Pierrot Rugaba, Director of Refugee and Immigration Services for Catholic Charities Maine, the state’s refugee resettlement agency. Refugees have been coming to Maine since the mid-1970s,

*continued on page 70*