



# ENERGY DEMOCRACY

Reparation | Regeneration | Reinvestment

## WHAT ARE COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCING AND WHY IS A SHIFT TO ENERGY DEMOCRACY NEEDED?

Low-income people of color are at the “frontlines” of experiencing the impacts of climate change and the harms of extracting and processing fossil fuels. Extractive economies profit from polluting industries at the expense of the health and financial wellbeing of low-income people of color and at the expense of the environment. Energy Democracy gives voice to a growing movement of frontline communities redefining the “clean energy revolution” to not only address climate change, but also the legacy of economic and social injustices that an extractive economy relies upon.

As efforts grow for public investments and comprehensive climate policies, such as a Green New Deal, shifting how our energy infrastructure is controlled, developed, and owned is vitally important. And for communities that have been marginalized and burdened by the current energy system, or have lacked access to healthy energy systems, now is the time for a transition away from an extractive and burdensome energy system to a renewable and collective one.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS FLIP BOOK

The values, principles, policies, and strategies of the work highlighted in the Energy Democracy book captured the enthusiasm and imagination of others throughout the country. This flipbook further advances a framework for radical shifts and meaningful change in our energy democracy. No community is exactly alike and each journey toward achieving energy democracy will be as unique as the local politics and places. Additionally, just because a local government may be developing and/or supplying renewable energy, that does not mean that they are supporting fair labor practices or really addressing related issues of racism and inequity.

## HOW TO USE THIS FLIPBOOK

Each column/flap represents one of the four themes of energy democracy (look at the top of each flap to see the theme). Each layer represents a different scenario in which the community may be experiencing-- one that has reached **ENERGY DEMOCRACY**; one that is **BETTER, BUT NOT GREAT**; and one that is **EXTRACTIVE**.

1. Read each item in the flipbook and put a check mark in the bubble next to the items that best represent the experiences facing you and your community.
2. For each column, turn the flap to the layer that you have the most check marked bubbles. What you will see is a snapshot of what your community may be experiencing.
3. Once you are finished reviewing or sharing this snapshot, turn to the page with the empty box located in the back of the flipbook to design your own vision for your community.

*This flipbook offers communities a guide to find out where they are on the energy spectrum and provides an opportunity to envision what energy democracy could look like in their community. This flipbook can be used by communities to share with their elected officials what they are experiencing and what would be necessary in order to transition to energy democracy. This flipbook provides an education tool, an assessment, and an accountability mechanism.*

The Energy Democracy Flipbook is a collaborative project curated by Emerald Cities Collaborative with project support from Anthony Giancatarino and Donna House. The project is supported by Race Forward and Sierra Club Ready for 100. **Contributors to the Energy Democracy Scorecard include members from following member-networks and organizations:** 100% NGO Network, Advancing Equity and Opportunity Collaborative, Antioch University, Catalyst Miami, California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), In-Site Collaborative, Energy Democracy Working Group, Energy Democracy Project, Energy Justice Institute, New York Energy Democracy Alliance, Southeast Climate and Energy Network, New Economy Coalition, Sierra Club Ready for 100, NRDC Sustainable and Thriving Communities, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, and Transform Finance. *For more information please contact Denise Fairchild of the Emerald Cities Collaborative* [dfairchild@emeraldcities.org](mailto:dfairchild@emeraldcities.org) or Anthony Giancatarino [agiancatarino@gmail.com](mailto:agiancatarino@gmail.com) Just Community Energy Transition (JCET) Project

## My Community Is: \_\_\_\_\_

*race/ethnicity, economic situation, location of the neighborhood*

*This flipbook is written from the perspective of frontline communities. Wherever there is the term “my community,” the community being referenced is a frontline community. Frontline communities are those that experience “first and worst” the consequences of an extractive pollution-based economy and environmental racism. These are Black, Brown, Indigenous, and low-income communities whose resources and labor have been exploited, neighborhoods often lack basic infrastructure to support them, have high exposure to toxins, and are most vulnerable to climate change.*

### WHAT'S THE EXPERIENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Communities are all different and may be undergoing unique experiences. **Use this flipbook to evaluate your community's Energy Economy: 1. It is Extractive. 2. It is not extractive, but not great. 3. It has reached energy democracy.**

Community members may be experiencing harm to their community and environment (**extractive practice**) when it comes to fair wages, but may be experiencing a better, but still not great (**transitional**) scenario when it comes to who controls the decision-making process. We understand that communities may be doing better on some issues used to determine energy democracy. Therefore, this flipbook lets you flip to the type that best represents the scenario your community is experiencing for each theme-- social justice, regenerative energy systems, moral economy, and governance.

### WHAT'S ENERGY DEMOCRACY?

To find out the type of energy economy in your community, answer questions related to 4 major issues:

**Social Justice** addresses issues of racism, inequity, inequitable access, health, and land rights.

**Regenerative Energy** addresses the type of energy we use, pollution, and energy policy goals.

**Moral Economy** addresses fair labor and wages, economic ownership, workforce development and training, finance, and adequate training and transitional assistance for those formerly employed by exploitative institutions (ex. coal miners).

**Governance addresses** how decisions are made, who controls the energy and political process, and where ownership ultimately lies.

### Energy Democracy

**Thriving community and healthy environment**

This type of energy economy represents a shift completely away from an extractive economy, energy, and governance system to one that is regenerative, provides reparations, transforms the power structures, and creates new governance and ownership practices.

### Better, But Not Great

This type of energy economy signifies some shifting away from fossil-fuel extraction and maybe even creating some community processes and green job solutions, but without any racial equity or environmental justice focus (for example, all the solar panels in the city could be on wealthy white households).

### Extractive

**Harms the community and environment**

This type of energy economy is where the dignity of labor, people's health, and the planet's wellbeing are exploited solely for profit in violent and polluting ways.



## Social Justice

- There is **no energy extraction** in my community. Land, water, and air are restored so people can thrive.
- My **community gets to decide how and where** renewable energy projects are developed. **Recognition of indigenous people and reparations** are central to any planning and implementation of renewable energy projects.
- **Affordable housing** in my community is prioritized for solar panels and energy efficiency.
- Everyone has **access to clean energy** and no one is disconnected from their utility.
- Programs like **community-solar** or **renewable energy cooperatives** have fair financing opportunities and access to all people in my community.
- Community-owned projects are prioritized in my community, while not creating harm for Indigenous or Black and Brown folks in my community.

## Regenerative Energy

- There is a **ban on energy sources such as natural gas, fossil fuels, waste incineration by 2030** with a plan to have workers of those facilities and community members who live near the facility to have control of new renewable energy systems that replace the polluting old ones.
- My community is on track to be powered by 100% renewable energy by 2040, with at least 50% of it being **produced in and owned by** my community.
- **Energy efficiency** efforts are invested in and prioritized for those in my community that need it the most.
- There is a reliable local energy system to use in case of a natural disaster or grid-failure.
- The majority of my community (urban areas) uses **public transit that is zero-carbon and affordable.**
- My community (rural areas) have a **public transit system that meets our needs.**

## Moral Economy

- All **investments are used for community or publicly-owned projects.**
- There are requirements for **wages, benefits, health insurance, and opportunities** for advancement with an emphasis on hiring practices that prioritize my community.
- There is **funding for training programs for green jobs** and people in my community are **prioritized for apprenticeships** and local hire and guarantee jobs.
- There are **worker retraining programs available and pensions for workers.** Also, those working in the fossil fuel industry and my community are able to shape a transition plan away from fossil fuels.
- The majority of renewable **energy developers are worker cooperatives.** My community and labor have control and ownership of energy development, production, and distribution.

## Governance

- Tribal Communities have the right to self-determination and are respected as nations.
- Energy doesn't just come from one or a few sources but comes from a lot of different sources.
- We have **resources for community-led training and organizing** and representation where decisions are being made.
- **Public Utilities Commissioners are elected** and have the majority of **representation from environmental justice communities like mine.**
- All energy decision-making process is informed by those in the community that are most vulnerable and impacted most by those decisions.
- Public **officials work in partnership** with my community to shape programs and give us clear information on programs.
- Community and labor have governance over utilities.





● Energy is not seen as commodity and domination, but is viewed through culturally appropriate terms, respecting rights to nature and people.

● There is **community ownership of renewable energy projects** and the majority of the jobs in these projects are **guaranteed for local residents** and provide **living wages**.



Photo Credits: Cooperative Energy Futures, Local Clean Energy Alliance, People Power Solar Cooperative and We Own It





## Social Justice

- Rates of **asthma and cancer still remain high** in my community even though there are **no fossil-fuel or waste incineration plants** in my community.
- There is **recognition of Indigenous land, the principles of Free, Prior, Informed Consent is respected**, and Indigenous peoples sit at energy planning decision-making processes.
- Solar panels are in my community, but do not guarantee that they will benefit affordable housing.
- My community **lacks access** to a **consistent energy supply**.
- **Renters** have **no access** to renewable energy.
- **Efficiency programs only reward the consumption** of new products but do not support housing for building efficiency improvements (windows, insulation, etc.).
- Renewable energy developers have community benefits agreements with **50% local job**

## Regenerative Energy

- There is a goal to have **100% renewable energy by 2050**, but only a very minimal commitment to investment in communities like mine.
- Renewable energy is **locally generated, but controlled by private utilities** with no community ownership.
- Energy efficiency is invested in, but the **majority of energy is still from producing renewable energy** sources instead of cutting back use.
- Just a small amount of the energy is from the local community-owned sources.
- A majority of my community **relies upon a car** to get around due to the **lack of reliable and accessible public transportation**.
- There is some infrastructure for electric vehicles at public spaces and public agencies and transit have committed to having half their buses, trucks, trolleys, and cars to be electrified by 2050.

## Moral Economy

- There is **funding for training programs** for green jobs, requirements for wages, benefits, health insurance and paid time off and people in my community are prioritized for apprenticeships, but there are **no job guarantees**.
- My community is prioritized to be hired for projects, but very **minimal requirements to hire women or “minority” owned business**.
- There are **worker retraining programs** available to my community and pensions for workers. But, those working in the industry and **my community does not have real power** but are only able to provide input on an advisory basis **regarding transition plan away from fossil fuels**.
- There are **some worker cooperatives** developing renewable energy projects in my community.
- Most municipal or state programs for renewables benefit incorporate renewable energy projects.

## Governance

- Investor-owned utilities distribute utilities and produce renewable energy from local and in-state generation projects and **prioritize communities like mine** (black, brown, and/or indigenous).
- Public Utilities Commissioners are elected but **lack voice from my community**.
- Community Choice Aggregation lacks grassroots control and Rural Electric Cooperatives and energy cooperative decision-making process have some public engagement with communities that are most vulnerable and impacted.
- **Free, prior, and Informed Consent** is recognized but only after multiple interventions.
- There is an increase in the development of community renewable microgrids with a public board that oversees the grid management.
- Regional or local entities hold energy utility or generator financially and economically accountable for neglect and malfeasance.

guarantees for living-wage jobs.



There is a **market-based carbon fee on extractive industries** with a targeted commitment to phasing out all nuclear and fossil fuel by 2030, but no investment in my community from this fee.

**Energy is seen as a commodity** that does not respect or hold sacred Indigenous traditions and values.

**Labor unions are engaged** in climate change issues **but are not in partnership with communities** advocating to move away from fossil fuels and retrain workers.

**Public meetings** are at different times of the day, with the opportunity for written comments and some transparent feedback.



Photo Credits: Cooperative Energy Futures, CEJA, and Emerald Cities Collaborative







## Social Justice

- Power plants, natural gas plants, incinerators exist in or are proposed for my community, most **people have asthma or cancer due to pollution from energy extraction** (i.e., oil refineries, mining, fracking, etc.).
- There is **no recognition of indigenous land**, the principle of “free and prior consent” is not applied, and indigenous traditions and values around resources are not respected.
- **I pay more than 10%** of my household budget toward energy.
- My **electricity or heat has been shut off** and is not reliable.
- **I don't have access to programs that offer solar** or other types of renewable energy OR to programs that help me make my home more energy-efficient (i.e., replacing windows, adding insulation, etc.).
- There are **no requirements** to ensure people from my neighborhood are guaranteed a job from local energy projects.

## Regenerative Energy

- My city or county has made a commitment to reduce climate change-causing emissions by 80% by 2050 but has **not stated that clean renewable energy will be produced where we live.**
- My community is getting its renewable energy from **buying and selling renewable energy credits.**
- Energy is **not renewable**, it comes from natural gas, coal, nuclear, coal waste, or oil. If there was a black-out or climate change disaster I'd probably **lose power.**
- **Indigenous treaties on water rights are ignored;** water is used in the process of energy extraction or generation, and access to clean water is not available due to pollution.
- The majority of the public transportation system (buses, trains, trolleys, cars) in my community runs off of gas or diesel and is **not electric.**
- The majority of my community **relies upon a car** to get around due to the lack of reliable and accessible public transportation.

## Moral Economy

- For renewable energy projects in my community, the city or county **hasn't set a requirement for wages and benefits** (prevailing wage).
- I have opportunities for training programs in green jobs, but **there are not actual opportunities for those types of jobs in my community.**
- There is **no plan for workers** in fossil-fuel or related industries to transition to a green job or another type of job.
- There are **no worker cooperatives** developing renewable energy projects in my community.
- **Labor unions are not engaged** in advocating for or advancing energy democracy efforts but are advancing dirty energy projects.
- There are **no public funds available** for small green energy projects in my community. Public, nonprofit, and institutional (such as universities) money being **invested in the fossil-fuel industry.**

## Governance

- Public meetings are in a government office, unadvertised, inaccessible, and **don't allow for public feedback.**
- There is **top-down** information sharing with limited or **no public engagement** hearings.
- Investor-Owned Utilities (IOU) own both generation and distribution of energy and/or **big corporations control energy generation** and sell it to Investor-Owned Utilities.
- Most Public Utilities Commission **appointees are from extractive** (i.e., oil, natural gas, etc.) **industries.**
- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of **indigenous people is not respected**, and treaties are disregarded.
- **Energy comes from one or very few sources** and is controlled by an independent service operator that doesn't have any real public accountability.
- Wrongdoing and neglect by the energy utility are ignored or they are **bailed out by funding from rate or tax-payers.**



Photo Credits: CEJA and POWER



## YOUR VISION

This box allows you to go beyond the co-created vision reflected in this flipbook to create your own vision for a new future and creates space for the dynamic and changing times. Use this space to draw or write what a thriving community and healthy environment looks like for you and your community.



# ENERGY DEMOCRACY STRATEGY MAD LIB

Based on the type of your energy economy (extractive, transitional, or energy democracy), identify some immediate next steps to help move towards energy democracy. Some questions to keep in mind:

## WHERE WE ARE & WHAT'S IN OUR WAY

My community is primarily \_\_\_\_\_ on the flipbook and \_\_\_\_\_ match up to my community vision. The biggest problem or challenge to achieving my vision is \_\_\_\_\_. Those that are most impacted by the problem are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, other: \_\_\_\_\_.

*red/yellow/green*  
*does-does not*  
*ie., political support, education, community organizing, etc*  
*Class Race*  
*Gender Location*

## CREATING SOLUTIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will help us address this problem. \_\_\_\_\_ will benefit from these solutions. \_\_\_\_\_ will be burdened by \_\_\_\_\_. The unintended consequences of my solutions include \_\_\_\_\_.

*Opportunities Solutions*  
*Who*  
*Who increased taxes*  
*/penalties/responsibilities*

## ADVANCING SOLUTIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will need to be in place to advance our solution. We will need \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ to achieve our solution. And we will need to partner with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to build power to win. We will also need to engage \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The policy should be implemented with \_\_\_\_\_ and this will require a \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will come if we are successful. And we need to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in order to prepare for them.

*specific action(s) specific action(s)*  
*resources (in addition to funding)*  
*Organization, individuals, group of people, etc.*  
*Stakeholders*  
*Agency*  
*legislative, regulatory, administrative, or legal policy solution*  
*opportunities or pushback*  
*what you need*



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