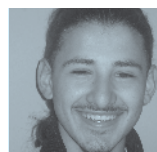
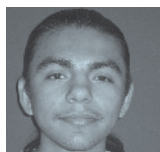


**SOWING SEEDS**  
**GROWING JUSTICE**  
**RESTORING**  
**COMMUNITY**



**HOW PODER MEMBERS ARE  
BUILDING A NEW ECONOMY NOW**





### **Lorenzo came to California nearly ten years ago from Mexico City.**

Moving between Napa and San Francisco, between fields and restaurants, he worked part-time, juggling multiple jobs, and sometimes being unemployed.

When times were hard, he lived in his car or moved from couch to couch. Even though employment has been sporadic and money scarce, Lorenzo has now managed to go back to school, and through it all he maintains a steady and strong role at PODER — improving the San Francisco's Mission District neighborhood where he lives, works, and plays.

## *Lorenzo's story echoes that of many of PODER's members.*

Even before the most current economic crisis, San Francisco was a deeply unequal city, with immigrants — 37 percent of the population — among its most vulnerable residents. Children born abroad or with a foreign-born parent make up almost two thirds of the city's young people. They are coming of age in a city where the middle class has been decimated, where income inequality is rising, and where job growth is disproportionately concentrated at the top and the bottom: either in low wage work or in jobs requiring high levels of education.

Along with the challenges of surviving in one of the country's most expensive cities, immigrants, along with the poor and communities of color overall, are segregated in neighborhoods that lack decent affordable housing as well as the parks and open space that children need and adults crave. Immigrant-rich areas such as southeast San Francisco are also encircled by freeways and live with other consequences of discriminatory land-use decisions.

**Lorenzo and other PODER members not only give voice to the challenges our families and communities face, but they also provide strategies for overcoming them.**

Every day, our members accomplish amazing things in their neighborhoods and contribute to the economic health and vibrancy of our city: They work hard, raise families, help neighbors, support schools, pay taxes, and celebrate culture.



In addition to these individual acts, our members – young and old, recent and long-time immigrants – form a community that organizes to find and implement solutions to the challenges they face. Lorenzo has joined other members at a community rally to protest a gentrifying development project. He has organized to convert a publically owned parking lot in the Mission District into a park and an affordable housing project. He is a leader in PODER's growing campaign to put the economy in people's hands.

PODER members like Lorenzo are committed to expanding democracy so that everyone, regardless of legal status, has a voice in ensuring that our economy benefits all San Franciscans. Together we are working to transform our neighborhoods into healthy, thriving places.

Committed to supporting the solutions that are emerging from our vibrant streets, PODER has conducted surveys and focus groups with our members, Latino immigrant families living and surviving in the Mission District, the Excelsior and other southeast San Francisco neighborhoods.

Our members reject the myth that our economy can rebound without deliberate actions, led by those most impacted by its failures. And as individuals and members of a powerful movement, they embrace the goals of urban sustainability, economic resiliency, and environmental justice.

To achieve these goals, however, requires that we create and put into practice strategies that can transform our neighborhoods. These strategies, relying on old wisdom but using new technology, are among the tools needed, locally, regionally, nationally and globally, to sow the seeds that can grow justice and restore community.



Leading the way for PODER!

*The following pages lay out four powerful strategies to cultivate economic resiliency and environmental sustainability.*



# FOSTER GREEN ZONES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

**SOME SAY:** *Maximize production and profits; workers and the planet be damned.*

**WE SAY:** *Restore health and home; honor work and land.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

In California, investment in a clean-energy economy would cut unemployment almost 1 percentage point by creating 175,000 jobs that would employ 96,000 workers with high school degrees or less.<sup>1</sup>

*“It’s not enough to have green jobs that simply take care of our environment if we turn our backs on the needs and survival of our people. We need to start with all of us.”*

— home care worker raising her son in the Tenderloin

The grassroots, people of color-led movement for Environmental Justice has always made the connection between the economy, environment, community health, and sustainability. This comprehensive approach sows the seeds for a just and green future where all communities participate in and benefit equitably from the essential task of confronting the global ecological crisis.

To be viable, solutions to the climate crisis must create healthier communities, socially equitable economic development, and workforce opportunities that lead to living wage jobs. Communities of color are at the forefront: We are formulating on-the-ground models to tackle this crisis and forge a resilient, green economy that benefits all San Franciscans. Also, together with our allies in the California Environmental Justice Alliance, we launched the *Green Zones for Economic and Environmental Sustainability* campaign, a comprehensive effort to ensure that public investments transform our communities overburdened with environmental hazards and lacking economic opportunities into healthy, thriving neighborhoods.





These are the hands that create our communities.

## HOW WE SUPPORT THIS VISION

PODER advocates for our city to commit to a green and equitable economy. As federal, state, and municipal funds are allocated to “green” our city, we believe the opportunity is ripe to ensure that public funds for these projects are invested in low-income communities of color. For example, targeting energy efficiency investments to disadvantaged neighborhoods can provide multiple benefits. Improving community health through deep retrofits that make housing for low-income people more habitable, while providing union jobs for youth to green their neighborhoods. Fortifying the infrastructure of neighborhoods will strengthen community-based assets.

### DID YOU KNOW?

People of Color in California experience over seventy percent more of the dangerous pollution coming from major greenhouse gas polluters than whites.<sup>2</sup>

*“We hope for an economy in which we can all grow together, a community in which we have access to jobs that benefit our community. We want the opportunity to take care of our environment, and provide an economic livelihood for the youth and families in our neighborhoods.”*

— immigrant youth leader from Veracruz, Mexico





# INVEST IN WORKERS AND COMMUNITY

**SOME SAY:** *The Market will save us.*

**WE SAY:** *Make our government serve us.*

*If I were the mayor, we would be a discoverer of talents in our neighborhoods. Our communities may be economically poor, but we are rich with talents that are too often underutilized. Our city should harness our community's talents to strengthen our infrastructure and create an equitable local economy."*

—grandmother and entrepreneur,  
originally from Puebla, Mexico

## DID YOU KNOW?

Results from a recent member survey confirm that half are looking for a job but cannot find one, 75 percent don't have any savings to tide them over when they lose a job, and 80 percent have not participated in a job-training program.

For too long, elite corporations and unaccountable government officials have hatched economic plans behind closed doors. As a result, generations of hard working San Franciscans struggle to get by in an economy that undermines opportunities for a better future and exploits workers through low wages and informal work. Meanwhile a callous economy and an unresponsive political leadership are devastating the promise of our next generation.

There is a better way. It begins with neighborhood solutions emerging from youth, elders, and everyday immigrant women and men talking and planning together. It continues with public agencies stepping forward as strong partners, providing policy changes and public investments. The Office of Economic and Workforce Development, for example, must guarantee that public investments put people to work in their own communities. Together, strong communities can combine talents, life dreams, and skills to build a strong, local economy.





Creating people powered institutions

*“We are thirsty to continue learning and developing ourselves. Our opportunities for training and education are very limited. These would open the door to give us economic opportunities.”*

— immigrant mother working in the Mission District

## HOW WE SUPPORT THIS VISION

Our neighborhoods are ready to lead community-based efforts to create new models and economic alternatives. PODER and our allies the Filipino Community Center and Coleman Advocates have been leading planning efforts to put the economy back in the hands of our community. We are spearheading efforts to establish city funded and supported local programs that create local jobs through public investments, uphold workplace rights, invest resources for cooperative and micro-enterprise development, and provide training in careers that strengthen and rebuild our communities.



It all begins with the people right here...



# HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT BEGINS WITH PEOPLE PLANNING THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES

**SOME SAY:** *Let private developers run The City and line their pockets.*

**WE SAY:** *Put the people in charge of planning their own communities.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the last five years in the Excelsior District, 14 market-rate housing projects with 191 units have been approved. In the same time, zero affordable housing projects have been developed.<sup>3</sup>

*“We have grand aspirations to be part of a new economy. We want to help create a system in which we know, from start to finish, who we are working with and how we are using our resources.”*

— domestic worker and student at City College of San Francisco

Development should be something we plan, rather than what happens to us when unscrupulous developers and public agencies impose decisions on our neighborhoods. Too often, they build luxury condos in working class neighborhoods or site polluting industries near homes and playgrounds. Greedy property owners keep valuable land off the market leading to vacant storefronts and empty lots. Reckless decisions like these deplete the amount of affordable housing resulting in families doubling or tripling up in over priced rentals or converted garages.

Communities have geared up to sit at the decision-making table, to shepherd their own neighborhood land assets, and to insist that underutilized land is creatively redeveloped. We are organizing to ensure cooperatively owned and permanently affordable housing, storefronts and businesses for low-income immigrant entrepreneurs and welcoming public places for families and neighbors to gather. We want spaces to house







Victory is sweet!

vital community programs and services, green spaces where people can cultivate and share food, and truly equitable transit-oriented development.

Organizing today with neighborhood leaders in our communities will plant new seeds to transform our urban spaces.

## HOW WE SUPPORT THIS VISION

PODER has been leading efforts to reclaim publicly owned land in our neighborhoods, to transform concrete lots into affordable housing villages, sites for community programs, and open spaces. Planting seeds together with the people, we have spearheaded community planning efforts at 17<sup>th</sup> and Folsom Streets in the Mission District and at the Balboa Park Station Upper Yard in the Excelsior District. PODER is taking neighborhood ideas to City Hall, and ensuring that agencies that own or exert control over land in our neighborhoods, such as the Municipal Transportation Agency, Public Utilities Commission, and the Planning Department, work collaboratively with community-based planning efforts.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Mission District had the second highest incidence of health problems such as asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease, adult congestive heart failure and adult diabetes in San Francisco.<sup>4</sup>

*“The conditions in our neighborhoods are harmful to our families; they cause stress and poor health. Too little money in our pockets for a hard day’s work means we can’t afford dignified housing, and we can’t fully participate in our communities.”*

— immigrant father and Excelsior resident



# BUILD A SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

**SOME SAY:** *Bankers & Bosses, Investors & Markets; they make the economy run.*

**WE SAY:** *Community-based and worker-run puts the economy back in our hands.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Over 3,500 people are employed in over 300 worker-owned businesses in the US, generating over \$400 million in annual revenues.<sup>5</sup>

*“We want an economy that values our people and our environment, is based on cooperative principles, and provides equitable opportunities for youth, low-income immigrants, and communities of color.”*

— immigrant youth organizer/ City College of San Francisco student

Economic times are hard, and the future is uncertain for many San Francisco working families. The city’s dominant economic agenda excludes us from decisions that affect our families, neighborhoods, city and region. Decades of failed economic development and workforce schemes relegate us into unjust working conditions, dead end jobs, disinvested neighborhoods, and unequal power relationships.

Instead we propose a different scenario — one in which everyday working families think creatively and organize fiercely to build on-the-ground strategies that increase opportunities for all, but especially for the vulnerable unorganized workers toiling in the informal economy.





Each one, teach one

## HOW WE SUPPORT THIS VISION

Our communities are ready to be active producers in their local economy, contributing to the management and well-being of their families and communities. PODER envisions worker-owner cooperatives, social enterprises, community currencies, consumer coops, community banks, worker centers, and other solidarity-based economic practices. These initiatives recognize our individual and collective assets, redefine the value of our ideas and labor, provide dignified working conditions, instill democratic decision-making, and invest in the resiliency of our local neighborhoods.

*“Our daily reality is not a full-time, stable, living-wage job, but rather piecemeal, low-wage, multiple short-term jobs that come and go. Debt and insufficient funds to pay our bills is what we live every day.”*

— Salvadoran immigrant mother working multiple jobs



We lived sustainably way before they coined the term



# LEADING THE WAY WITH COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

At a recent roundtable of PODER members, you can hear in the people's voice a desire to reclaim control of their economic conditions. Over the last year, our members have invested countless hours, with laughter and tears, to do the hard work to implement a bold, alternative vision. This four-point strategy does not represent an abstract manifesto but portrays efforts that are being led by our members and happening now in our own communities... the very same communities that are hit first and worst by our economic crisis. They teach us that the best policy makers come from our very own neighborhoods. Embedded in our four points are the need to rewrite the rules, build new institutions, and regain control of the decisions that affect our daily lives. We know that the transformation will take more than our neighborhoods or the city or even the nation. We also know that the journey begins at home and that by organizing at home and in solidarity with communities across the country and world, we can rebuild a new economy in the hands of our peoples.

## ENDNOTES

1. California Green Prosperity and Poverty Reduction. Robert Pollins, Jeannette Wicks-Lim, Heidi Garret Peltier. Political Economy Research Institute, U Mass, Amherst.
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3. San Francisco Planning Department. Information Request.
4. Immigrant Power for Environmental Health and Justice Internal Report prepared by Ken Kloc, Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, Golden Gate University.
5. US Federation of Worker Coops Fact Sheet.

*PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights) is a grassroots, membership based organization that seeks to create local solutions to environmental and economic injustices by organizing low income Latino immigrant families in San Francisco's Mission, Excelsior and southeast San Francisco neighborhoods. For nearly 20 years, we have achieved important victories that have restored our environment, strengthened our communities, and created assets in our neighborhoods for generations to come.*

## THIS PAPER WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM:

*Aepoch* — ASAP Fund  
*Aepoch* — Resistance and Resilience Fund  
*Center for Environmental Health* —  
*The Community Environmental Action and Justice Fund*  
*Common Counsel Foundation* —  
*Victor and Lorraine Honig Fund*  
*Common Counsel Foundation* —  
*Social and Economic Justice Fund*  
*James and Gretchen Sandler Philanthropic Fund*  
*The Mitchell Kapor Foundation*  
*The San Francisco Foundation*  
*Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*PODER would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this paper: Terry Allen, Sam Brown, Larisa Casillas, Gopal Dayaneni, Evelyn Ruiz Sanchez, Chris Selig, and Rhea Serna. We also want to thank our members for their commitment, creativity, and resilience.*

## ERIC QUEZADA, ¡PRESENTE! (1965 - 2011)

*In appreciation of a movement leader and dear friend.*