



THE POINT

WHERE COMMUNITY AND CREATIVITY CONNECT.

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Environmental Justice Priorities For The Obama Administration

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THE POINT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

THE POINT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. As one of many Environmental Justice Communities within our state¹, Hunts Point and its residents bare the brunt of a disproportionate number of polluting industries and public infrastructure that allow our city and region to prosper and operate efficiently but enjoy very little benefits of such policies. As a result, we are struggling with one of the highest asthma rates in the nation. These conditions are interconnected with and exacerbated by a complex myriad of social and economic issues plaguing our communities. These challenges are not new, but their negative consequences certainly do grow and expand with every generation of young people and families that have to live with the outcome of policy, for better or for worse. There has been much to celebrate for Environmental Justice in the last couple of weeks and lots of hard work behind those victories. We hope that his task force will take a historical viewpoint in its approach to this project and build upon the foundations that have been laid through partnership in coalitions such as NYCEJA (The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance), OWN (Organizations for Waterfront Neighborhoods) and SBRWSA (Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance) as well as community led youth work of ACTION (Activists Coming to Our Neighborhood) and VOICE to mention a few. We are very honored to be asked to join such esteemed groups and individuals that have paved the way for this serious and thoughtful action to occur. We feel strongly that the incoming Obama Administration has the opportunity to radically change the current landscape of environmental justice communities nation wide by investing in sustainable development initiatives, pathways that link our greatest resource, our young people, to the emerging green economy, and the implementation of policies that will effectively limit and regulate the polluting industries operating in poor, disenfranchised communities. Community groups nation wide such as THE POINT have been working to combat these critical issues fro decades and will be a key component in effecting real on the ground, bottom up change in the tough times ahead. Therefore we urge the Obama Administration in ensure that grassroots organizations receive the support necessary to continue to mobilize and engage citizens in creative solutions needed to move our nation ahead.

THE POINT serves the Hunts Point community on the peninsula of the South Bronx of New York City. The targeted population of students and their families reside within Community Board #2 in the Bronx at the southern tip of Congressional District #16, one of the poorest districts in the country. Hunts Point is a community of color. Nearly two-thirds of its residents are of Latin American descent and almost one-quarter identifies as African-American. According to the 2005 census, the Bronx has the third lowest median income in the nation at \$29,228



and remains the poorest urban county in the country. The Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, Inc. lists Hunts Point as among the highest neighborhoods citywide for risk to children's well being. In this community, 50.5% of children under 18 live below the poverty level compared to the national average of 17.6%.

Hunts Point forms a portrait of environmental racism. The peninsula bears a disproportionate amount of NYC's industrial infrastructure, with the majority of the land zoned for heavy industrial use. Hunts Point has one of the highest concentrations of truck traffic in New York City. Already home to the one of the largest produce markets in the country, Hunts Point recently became the new location for the Fulton Fish Market, increasing the daily truck traffic to upwards of 20,000 per day. There are over 15 waste transfer stations in the community as well as a number of waste related facilities such as the DEP wastewater treatment facility and the NY Organic Fertilizer Company (NYOFCO). Until recently, Hunts Point had one of the smallest residents-to-parkland ratios while being surrounded by three major highway arteries - The Bruckner Expressway, The Cross Bronx Expressway and The Sheridan Expressway.

. THE POINT CDC has worked on these areas with our community over the years in the areas of air quality, waste management advocacy, development of mixed use open green space and the long-term maintenance of those spaces, sustainable economic development opportunities for community members young and old and advocating for and working to create meaningful platforms for community engagement in the shaping of their neighborhood and the policies that impact them daily. Specific advocacy campaigns include the success battle in preventing AMR from adding yet another waste management facility to Hunts Point. THE POINT has also worked collectively with community partners, local elected officials and city agencies to direct millions of dollars of funding to support projects such as The South Bronx Greenway (including the development of a maintenance entity for the project), The Jose E Serrano Riverside Campus for Arts and The Environment, South Bronx Waterfront BOA, The transfer of South Brother Island- all long term strategies aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of failed policy within our community.

Other Specific Issues we feel should be addressed moving forward include:

- **Education and Investment in Urban Youth:** It is imperative that youth development programs such as ACTION, an environmental advocacy training program that provide stipends for high school students while offering academic assistance, leading to college placement, civic engagement, technology and leadership training must receive boosted support in the harsh economy ahead. THE POINT has dedicates roughly 75% of its 1.3 million dollar annual operating budget to youth development programs for South Bronx youth and this investment must be matched and leveraged at the national level through investment in Out of School Time and Job Training programs throughout urban areas.

- **Equitable Solid Waste Management**

Ensure that all of the agencies responsible for the permitting and oversight of such facilities are adopting health and development standards that aim at reducing the net pollution in our environmental justice communities. Many legislative courses of action have been put forth to tackle this issue and we are looking forward to discussing them.

- **New York Organic Fertilizer Company (NYOFCO) Permit Negotiations**

According to the website of Bronx Congressman Jose E. Serrano, NYOFCO is a publicly-supported private venture that "pelletizes" up to two-thirds of New York city 's sewage sludge. The NYOFCO plant is located at 1108 Oak Point Avenue, near the Hunts Point and Longwood residential areas. The plant has been cited for repeated violations of its solid waste permit including instances of voluntary discharge of untreated sludge into the East River, the spilling of sludge into the streets surrounding the facility and a long record of air quality complaints filed by residents about the plant since it began its operations over a decade ago. THE POINT CDC has been working in partnership with community groups such as Mothers on The Move, The office of Congressman Jose E Serrano and the Department of Environmental Conservation to reform the ineffective regulatory and operational practices that have enabled this facility to pollute Hunts Point with no recourse. THE POINT has engaged The Columbia University Environmental Law Clinic to support these on going efforts.

- **The Hunts Point Monitoring Control Committee (HPMCC)**



THE POINT has conducted outreach for and participated in a charrette process for the NYS Department of **Environmental Protection**'s planned wastewater treatment facility in Hunts Point. The teens also testified at the Draft Environmental Impact Hearing for the facility. These efforts set the stage for a record \$20 million community benefit package awarded to Hunts Point. As a result, the DEP has agreed to make possible 1) a floating pool located at the recently opened Barretto Point Park, 2) an education center at THE POINT's José E. Serrano Campus for the Arts and the Environment, 3) a building for the South Bronx Greenway maintenance entity, which will house tools and materials for park upkeep and 4) Hunts Point streetscape projects such as tree plantings and clean-ups. We must endure that all of these benefits reach the community in a timely and equitable fashion. It imperative that we continue to push for the City of New York to utilize the most advanced technologies available for an upgrade of this magnitude and limit the negative environmental impact a project of this nature will have on any community.

- **Air Quality The South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy Study**

According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), 17% of school-aged children in the South Bronx have asthma, a rate twice as high as the New York City average. THE POINT has worked as a community partner with Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, Nos Quedamos, The New York Sports Foundation, The Office of Congressman Jose E Serrano and **New York University** to help conduct the **South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy Study** aimed at “ finding out how poor air quality in the South Bronx is, why it is bad, and what is in it to make it that way.” The concluded study was featured in The New York Times Metro section in October 2006. Findings from the study indicate that high asthma rates in the Bronx (and of course every other place like it) can be attributed to air pollution caused by truck traffic and industry in this area. Studies by the DOHMH also indicate a strong association between asthma hospitalizations and socioeconomic conditions demonstrated by higher rates of asthma hospitalization among residents of low-income areas compared to residents of high-income areas. This is just one of numerous studies to draw such a correlation and we are eager to discuss what it will take within the resources available here to feel and breathe change on the ground.

- **Sustainable Development and Green Infrastructure:** Open space, sustainable and affordable development must be supported in low income communities of color nation wide. There is a need for community based organizations and average citizens to have access to resources that allow for Brownfield Remediation such as BOA (Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program) and federal funds for park development and maintenance of green spaces in urban environments.