



2023

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



ecology center

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The Ecology Center is part of a global tsunami of community action, and we are your local champion for adopting and accelerating solutions



Dear Friend,

In our unending commitment to safeguarding our planet and fostering sustainable communities, we continue to confront the profound challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Despite technological advancements and global awareness, we continue to fall far short of the changes needed to sustain the planet for future generations. Our food systems work is a critical part of our broader mission to inspire and build a healthy, sustainable, and just future for the East Bay, California, and beyond. With your help, we know another world is possible.

At the Ecology Center, our work begins at the grassroots level, catalyzing sustainable solutions within our communities. Through initiatives addressing zero waste, climate equity, food and farming, and youth development, we empower individuals and foster resilience. Our approach encompasses education, advocacy, direct service, and demonstration, amplifying the impact of our programs.

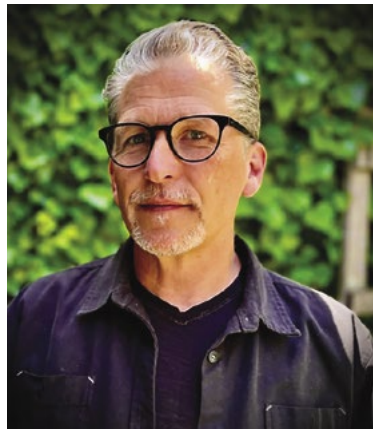
2023 was a year of reemergence where we returned to many activities beyond the essential services of the pandemic years. We expanded our store offerings to include refill options, revitalized our farmers' markets with many new vendors, restarted our Youth Environmental Academy, drove public policy at many levels, expanded our statewide food access and equity work, and developed critical partnerships and collaborations. We offered reassurance, information, and resources to our community as we explored the new post-pandemic landscape together.

In this report, you will discover the tangible impacts of our efforts across various sectors. None of this work would be possible without your support. Your generous contributions are integral to our mission and operations. Together, with hope and gratitude, we can continue to drive positive change and build resilient communities for generations to come.

With vision and conviction,



Martin Bourque
Executive Director





About Us

Incorporated in 1969, the Ecology Center is a nonprofit organization located in Berkeley, California, that models how to reduce the impacts of urban society on people and the planet. Our mission is to inspire and build a sustainable, healthy, and just future for the East Bay, California, and beyond. We envision a world where human activity nurtures the ecosystems that we all depend on.

Faced with our current crises, we work to develop empowered, resilient communities; pathways to zero waste and zero toxics; equitable access to a healthy regenerative food system; sustainable resource use; and a safe and stable climate.

We provide solutions that are equitable and accessible for all. We are community-based and people-powered. We think globally and act locally.

*We are small but mighty,
providing top-notch
services and leadership
for lasting change*

FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

Indigenous Permaculture Project

Greywater Action

**Bay Area Coalition for
Headwaters (BACH)**

**Berkeley Community
Gardening Collaborative**

CURRENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Curbside Recycling

Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR)

Resourceful.app Reuse and Recycling Tool

Book, DVD, and Seed Libraries

Classes, Events, and Workshops

EcoStore for Sustainable Living

Public Resource Center, Help Desk, and Online Sustainability Resources

Berkeley Farmers' Markets

California Alliance of Farmers' Markets

Market Match (CalFresh Match Benefit at CA Farmers' Markets)

Youth Environmental Academy

LEADERSHIP FOR LASTING CHANGE

2022

Climate Equity Collaborative

2019

Nation's First Disposable Foodware Reduction Ordinance

2014

Nation's First Soda Tax

2013

Berkeley Climate Action Coalition

2012

California Market Match

2009

Nation's First "Plastic Free" Farmers' Markets

2003

First CA Farmers' Markets to Accept EBT (electronic food stamps)

2002

Nation's First Biodiesel-Powered Recycling Fleet

2001

Berkeley's Food and Nutrition Policy

1996

Report of the Berkeley Plastics Task Force

1990

Support Base for Redwood Summer

1988

Styrofoam Foodware Ban

1987

Berkeley Farmers' Markets

1982

Waste Incinerator Ban

1973

Nation's First Curbside Recycling Program

1970

Founded on the First Earth Day

How We Make Change

The Ecology Center addresses critical issues through a model of education, demonstration, replication, and advocacy.



Education

Hosting classes and workshops in our Resource Center, facilitating conversations and panel discussions, and leading campaigns. Connecting people and decision-makers with the information they need to make change and engage in solving problems from the local to the global level.

Demonstration

Piloting new solutions and building infrastructure to support a safe and stable climate, healthy and sustainable urban ecosystems, and equitable food access. Testing and improving new ideas while countering deceptive claims and greenwashing that mislead the public.

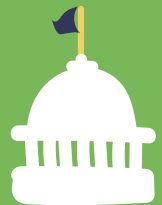


Replication

Laying the groundwork to spread scalable solutions more widely by sharing our successes and providing the information, training, and technical support to help others adopt effective models.

Advocacy

Advancing policies that support the mainstream adoption of demonstrated local successes. Stewarding pilot efforts to full scale, embracing early adopters, and bringing along the holdouts.



We use this approach to punch above our weight and leverage our local program work to generate broadscale transformative change

It all starts with education

We deliver information you can act on and help connect people with the resources they need to take the next step on their sustainable living journey. We build coalitions and organizational partnerships that inspire and build a sustainable, healthy, and just future for the East Bay, California, and beyond.

In 2023, our Education and Engagement team served over 85,000 community members by responding to help desk questions and requests for information or library materials; hosting educational events; delivering information through fact sheets and blogs; and maintaining an online reuse and recycling tool called Resourceful.app.

Some highlights include:



41,004

pageviews of our blogs



18,216

views of our fact sheets



15,000

searches in our Resourceful.app online tool



2,155

participants in our online and in-person events

WASTE AND CONSUMERISM

Untrashing the Planet

We have a massive, global waste problem. Each year, humans produce an estimated 2.12 billion tons of waste worldwide, most of which are landfilled or incinerated, or end up in the natural environment. Of that, there are an estimated 400 million tons of plastic waste. Micro- and nanoplastics are found in our soil, water, air, food, and bodies. For the convenience of single-use plastic, we burn millions of tons of carbon-emitting fossil fuels and deplete the earth's natural resources at an unsustainable pace.

To reverse this trend and untrash our neighborhoods, shorelines, parks, waterways, and open spaces, the Ecology Center delivers zero waste solutions through our community programs and services, as well as by forging new initiatives.

In its 50th year, our Berkeley Curbside Recycling program recycled 7,134 tons of resources, putting them back into use and avoiding the emission of 8,214 metric tons of greenhouse gasses and the manufacturing of virgin materials.

The Ecology Center served as a hub for zero waste practices and resources with programs such as Plastic Free July, Resourceful.app reuse and recycling tool, Recycling Education, the EcoStore Refill Station, and our Resource Center and Help Desk.

We partnered with other local and national organizations to advocate for and follow through on anti-plastic legislation in California.

Our Executive Director Martin Bourque represented the Ecology Center and the Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers at the United Nation's INC-3 conference. There he joined forces with partner organizations in the zero waste movement to help forge an international plastics treaty that holds plastic producers accountable and addresses environmental justice issues.



EDUCATION

2,155 people

attended 28 zero waste and sustainable living events, including Plastic Free July events

1,317 people

engaged in 19 Recycling Education events and activities in the Berkeley community

15,000 searches

in our Resourceful.app reuse and recycling tool

DEMONSTRATION

7,134 tons

of material diverted from landfill and recycled through our curbside recycling program, avoiding the emission of 8,214 metric tons of greenhouse gasses, and the manufacturing of virgin materials

3,694 shoppers

purchased sustainably sourced products in our EcoStore

REPLICATION

28 women-owned and 10 local businesses

sold their zero waste and toxic-free products through our EcoStore

Refill Station Launched

providing an alternative to purchasing single-use plastic containers—EcoStore customers can now replenish their household and body care products by refilling their reusable containers with sustainability sourced and toxic-free products

ADVOCACY

Global Plastics Treaty

Advocated for a global plastics treaty at the United Nations INC-3 conference alongside our partners in the zero waste movement Global Alliance of Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) and Break Free From Plastic

Better Bag Ban

Supported the development of an expanded bag ban in Berkeley that would eliminate thicker “reusable” plastic shopping bags and require produce bags be compostable



FOOD AND FARMING

Unbreaking the Food System

Despite living in one of the top food-producing countries in the world, most Americans don't eat a healthy diet. Despite living in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, 44.2 million Americans experience food insecurity. America's industrial food system produces an abundance of cheap food, but this does not result in healthy eating or equitable access.

Local food systems break this pattern by providing higher quality and more affordable produce while supporting local farms and living wages.

Furthermore, local farmers invest in rebuilding the soil and keep pesticides and toxins out of the land. And the

organic, sustainable, and regenerative methods that small farmers practice sequester carbon, limit greenhouse gas emissions, and build biodiversity.

The Ecology Center's food and farming programs have been supporting the growth of local food systems since 1987. We provide an alternative to industrial agriculture and its environmental degradation and serve as a model for other communities seeking a more healthy, sustainable, and just food system.

Our programs include the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, the California Alliance of Farmers' Markets (CAFM), the administration of CalFresh EBT and Market Match at California farmers' markets and farm direct sites, and the Farmers' Market Finder online directory. Additionally, we are fiscal sponsors of urban agriculture programs, including the Bay Area Seed Interchange Library (BASIL), the Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative, and the Indigenous Permaculture Project.



EDUCATION

58,883 people

learned about their local farmers' markets through the Farmers' Market Finder online directory, as well as via CAFM social media text and posts offered in English, Spanish, and Chinese

39 local nonprofits, partner organizations, and government agencies

teamed up with the Berkeley Farmers' Markets to educate and inform the public at weekly farmers' markets

DEMONSTRATION

\$19.4M of CalFresh and Market Match

food benefits were distributed at over 574K visits to over 290 farmers' markets and direct farm sites, in 116 cities across 38 counties in California. The programs delivered an estimated 38.8M servings of fruits and vegetables to low-income shoppers

222,749 visits

to the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, representing an 8% increase in growth of our direct farm-to-customer local food markets

REPLICATION

20 new farmers' markets

began matching CalFresh with Market Match through our grant funds and technical assistance. We reached 51,000 new customers across all our sites

944 farmers' market professionals and trainees

participated in CAFM training programs, including the first Farmers' Market Manager Certificate program; the first-of-its-kind Alliance Marketing Internship program; and Racial Equity at the Market and De-Escalation training for over 40 market sites throughout California

ADVOCACY

\$35M of Funding for the California Nutrition Incentive Program,

which funds our Market Match program, was secured with the help of our collective action and grassroots advocacy

Berkeley Farmers' Market Week

was declared by Mayor Jesse Arreguín and the Berkeley City Councilmembers, raising awareness of the beneficial impact of an alternative food system on the local community



CLIMATE EQUITY

Overcoming Climate Inequity

2023 was the warmest year on record since global weather data began to be tracked in 1880. With impacts far and wide, the climate crisis causes extreme weather events that result in devastating emergencies, driving famine, displacement, heal, forced displacement, hunger, and a range of physical and mental health problems.

As climate change unfolds before our eyes, we know that it compounds already existing forms of oppression, impacting Black, Indigenous, and communities of color more severely than others. Environmental and social

justice are deeply linked. Thus, equity and justice are central to the work at the Ecology Center—from helping to establish Berkeley’s first-of-its-kind Residential Energy Conservation Ordinance to more recently helping to build equity guardrails into Berkeley’s Existing Building Electrification Strategy.

In 2023, we continued to build on these precedents. After securing funding through Berkeley’s Climate Equity Fund in 2021 and launching the Climate Equity Collaborative in 2022, we continued to strengthen relationships with grassroots partner organizations, lead educational sessions about climate change’s impact on BIPOC communities, and distribute resources to build resilience.

By amplifying the voices of those most impacted by the climate crisis and helping to build their capacity to influence climate solutions at the municipal level, we address both climate change and its disparate impacts.



EDUCATION**2,155 people**

participated in climate action events, including the East Bay Green Home Tour

375 Responses

to questions posed via our Help Desk, on topics including sustainable gardening, toxics, and building electrification

DEMONSTRATION**72 Induction Cooktops**

lent to community members, supporting the transition of households from gas to electric appliances

36 Climate Resilience Measures

distributed, including transit passes, induction cooking kits, and air filters

REPLICATION**6 Educational Sessions**

conducted about climate equity and electrification with Climate Equity Collaborative partners

“I really want to thank you for taking the time to give me this information. It is SO great to have kind people like you sharing information to help keep us safe.”

- Jennifer, Help Desk Inquirer

ADVOCACY**Developed the Principles of Equitable Engagement,**

a guiding tool for equity-centered community work, which has been presented to four departments and commissions within the City of Berkeley

9 Letter Signing Campaigns

undertaken to support clean energy, climate resilience, and zero waste initiatives



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Releasing Leadership

Since 2001, the Ecology Center has hired and trained young people from our community with a focus on youth from BIPOC and marginalized communities historically excluded from environmental opportunities and leadership roles. The Ecology Center has opened doors for these young people to gain exposure to the language, skills, and experiences needed to become leaders in their own ways as they grow into adults who are active in our community.

Youth alumni have gone on to be leaders in environment, health, and community engagement sectors. They have become program managers, program coordinators and on-call staff within the

Ecology Center and other local non-profits, and one alum now serves as the vice president of the Ecology Center Board of Directors.

Youth have been important participants in all of our campaigns and played a key role in passing the Nation's First Soda Tax. They provide peer-to-peer education on nutrition and Big Soda's marketing of sugary drinks to marginalized communities. In 2021, Ecology Center youth advocates' efforts helped pass the city ordinance to expand Berkeley's plastic bag reduction regulations, eliminating non-compostable produce bags, among other things.

EDUCATION

1,200 hours of Environmental Education

delivered through a carefully crafted environmental literacy curriculum. The Environmental Education curriculum builds on participants' existing knowledge to prepare them with concepts, vocabulary and the understanding necessary to take on environmental issues of today



Roughly 1,100 community members,

including first year Berkeley High School students, were educated about the potential dangers of sugary beverages through tabling and pop-ups at community events and Berkeley Farmers' Markets

DEMONSTRATION

Youth Interns and Program Assistants supported donor events, services and programs. Specifically at the Berkeley Farmers' Market and in the Ecology Center Store. Youth staff were trained in and directly supported the delivery of our Market Match and EBT CalFresh food benefit programs

REPLICATION

After years of providing high quality stainless steel reusable water bottles to all incoming 9th graders at Berkeley High School, the Berkeley High Health Center has now adopted this practice. They now supply all incoming 9th graders with their own high quality water bottles during 9th grade orientation to ensure drinking water is normalized and reusable water bottles become as integral to the high school experience as textbooks and lockers

“Working as a Youth Scholar in 2023 has given me environmental awareness and has taught me community outreach skills. I am currently a Youth Intern in 2024, and it has been an amazing experience. With both positions, I have gained leadership skills, and I feel attached to the Ecology Center organization itself. I connect more with the public, by supporting them with their needs.”

- Yelitza, Youth Intern



Leveraging Your Support

Your support is what makes the Ecology Center truly impactful. While we have been able to bring many pilot programs into the mainstream and fund them with a strong business model, grants, or government contracts, it is your individual support that allows us to innovate, activate, and advocate.

Most grants and government contracts have strict limitations on how we can spend the funds and even prohibit policy advocacy. Your unrestricted donations give us the flexibility and freedom to pilot new approaches; provide untainted accurate, independent information; and speak truth to power.

Without your support, we cannot take on corporate interests, pilot new innovations, or leverage our success through legislation.

Your financial support empowers us to make lasting transformative change at the local, state, and national levels

Please Make A Donation Today

Together we can build a more healthy, sustainable, and just community for now and for generations to come.



Make a secure donation online: ecologycenter.org/donate



Ways to Give

One-Time Gift

Your one-time gift is always appreciated and will go directly to Ecology Center programs.

Monthly/Recurring Gifts

This is an easy and convenient way to spread your generosity throughout the year. Knowing that we can rely on your sustained contributions makes your gift especially valuable.

Annual Giving

Plan your giving at the end of the year as part of your tax planning.

Major Gifts

Become a major donor with a gift that will make a substantial and positive impact on our ability to fulfill our mission.

Estate Planning/Legacy Giving

Honor the past and ensure the future by joining our Legacy Circle. Including the Ecology Center in your estate plan or will is a tax-effective way to give and a lasting way to ensure your wishes will live on through the work of the Ecology Center for generations to come.

Memorials and Dedications

Celebrate the life of a loved one by making a donation in their honor or memory as a one-time gift. Or create a continued memorial gift each year, leaving your loved one a long-term legacy.

Company Match/Workplace Giving

Companies big and small often match their employees' charitable giving. Check if your company will match your donation.

Donor Advised Fund

These are charitable giving accounts, offered by a sponsoring organization. This is an easy way to support the Ecology Center.

Stock Donation

Consider giving stocks instead of cash to the Ecology Center. This often results in a larger donation to the organization, as the gift is tax-deductible, and there are no capital gains taxes to pay.

Start a Giving Circle

Making your donation through a giving circle of friends and family has become popular because it is both fun and practical and creates increased financial impact in your giving.

Donate a Vehicle

Donating your vehicle is a great way to support our work. Proceeds from the sale of your donated vehicle will help support Ecology Center programs, and you may qualify for a tax deduction.

*For help making any donation,
please contact:*
give@ecologycenter.org

THANK

UP TO \$100

Aaron Reaven
 Abbot Russell Foote
 Abigail Mugglestone
 Afy Downey
 Akai James
 Akinwunmi
 McKinzie
 Alan Schoenfeld
 Albert Nahman
 Alexis Gabriel
 Alice Green
 Alice Lemieux
 Aline Barta
 Alison Ehara-Brown
 Allan Daly
 Amaal Juma
 Amanda Beth Mosola
 Aminah Gordon
 Amy Allum-Poon
 Amy Gorman
 Amy Griffith
 Amy Nixon
 Amy Twite
 Andrea Moss
 Andrée Thompson
 Angela Powlen
 Angela Warkakins
 Angelina DeAntonis
 Angie Kohtz
 Angie Pettitt-Taylor
 Anirvan Chatterjee &
 Barnali Ghosh
 Anita Malmig
 Ann Elliott
 Ann Gonski
 Ann Overton
 Anna Deering
 Anna Kondolf
 Anna Korn
 Anna Qiu
 Anna Smalley
 Annabella Adams
 Anne Buckley Hill
 Anne Mayoral
 Anne Mester
 Annette Kindred
 Anthony Somkin
 April Gavin
 Ariana Thompson-
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 Straten
 Arven Lawrence
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 Bex Clark
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 Bill Marthinsen
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 Brindha Dhanbala
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 Caroline Moyer
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The Louinsky's
Theresa Smith
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Wendy Niles
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