

2023 ACTION REPORT



Build It
Green



Welcome



Recently, I was at a conference. Excited speakers talked about new coalitions, policy wins, emerging financing tools, evolutions in the construction industry, and more. These were well-earned celebrations. It struck me though, that even with recent significant achievements in improving California's housing system, we are only beginning to scratch the surface of what's needed. We are far from meeting the environmental, affordability, community-building, and social equity aims that our diverse changemaker field is working toward.

What is really necessary to transform California's housing system into one that truly serves human and ecological vitality? At Build It Green (BIG), this overarching question drives all our work.

Does California need new ideas and new ways of applying innovative ideas to the housing system? Yes. So we catalyzed work, in deep cooperation with partners, such as the Community Housing initiative that aims to spread community-led, alternative ownership models across the state, and the POWER group that pursues technical innovations for home electrification affordability.

Do we need to break down silos to enable changemakers to coalesce, build trust, and work together rather than at cross purposes? Also yes. That's why in November 2023, in Folsom, we convened 100 California doers, thinkers, and leaders, from every corner of the housing system, for the second Housing System Innovators Network Gathering.

Do we need programs to ensure new ideas and collaborations make a concrete difference to California communities, especially those that are most marginalized, and natural systems? Absolutely. To make this happen, BIG recently launched the Regenerative Communities Program to work directly with community-anchors, build their transformative capabilities, and tap the innovations generated by our collaborative work with partners.

To truly transform California's housing system, we also need something else—regenerative ways of thinking about, and doing, the work. The growing field of changemakers BIG is convening needs to see the system holistically and bring systems thinking to realize transformation. Collectively, we can begin to see and tap into the unique potential of our communities instead of seeing only problems. BIG is enthusiastically committed to fostering these new approaches.

If you are already partnering with us, thank you for your energy and wisdom. And if you aren't, we invite you to join us on this transformational journey!

In partnership,

Jeremy Madsen
Executive Director



About Build It Green and our Role and Approach

Most Californians would agree that there are better ways to develop and maintain our communities. Build It Green believes that regenerative communities—which are not extractive and go beyond sustainability—are the way forward so that everyone can live in a place that’s affordable, equitable, safe and healthy.

In our first 10 years, BIG worked with builders through offerings like our GreenPoint Rated program to normalize building green homes throughout California. After a decade of success focused on individual homes, BIG expanded our focus to transforming communities as a whole. That’s why today we connect changemakers—like developers, community advocates, nonprofits, government officials, and more—throughout the state to break down silos, form new partnerships, and come up with innovative ways to design our communities and homes that don’t compromise on the things that matter most.

In all of our work, we center equity, regenerative principles and practices, and deep and genuine collaboration.

California Housing Innovators Network

The California Housing System Innovators Network is unlike any other. It is a place for builders, designers, developers, advocates, community-based leaders, decision-makers, and more to come together and transform California's communities into equitable, safe and healthy spaces.

THE NETWORK IS DESIGNED TO:

1. generate and move ideas to action by advancing Network Initiatives and creating space for new opportunities;
2. deepen relationships for collaboration and innovation in the California housing ecosystem; and
3. build capacity and regenerative skills across California housing innovators.

The 2023 Network Gathering

The Gathering is a place for Network members to connect and spark new ideas to create meaningful, intersectional impact. In 2023, BIG convened 100 California doers, thinkers, and leaders in Folsom.

70+

organizations from almost every region of CA

83%

reported gaining new perspectives and/or new ideas for the most vexing housing issues facing Californians

13

sectors represented, including architecture and design, land use planning, and public policy



Highlights from the 2023 Housing System Innovators Network Gathering

The 2023 Gathering was an inspiring and intensive three days in Folsom with BIG's team and housing changemakers from across the state. Together, we worked to find new and innovative ways to address the most pressing challenges facing California's housing ecosystem. We collectively agreed on several priority initiatives to focus on and move forward in 2024. Two of those include:



Scaling innovative funding frameworks to support diverse housing with equitable, community-centric benefits. Members asked critical questions about the current housing and development funding ecosystem which is not meeting the diverse housing needs for Californian's today. As a result of these discussions, BIG is spearheading work in 2024 to explore opportunities for new funding tools or products that support housing development that offers co-benefits and community wealth building.



Shifting building codes to promote innovation. Members also discussed California's building codes—an important tool for improving the way we build our homes and communities so that people and natural systems can thrive. We imagine a better, more effective code system for California, that doesn't just reduce harm but proactively innovates, meets the needs of our diverse communities fairly and supports a regenerative future.



The gathering helped me to understand that we can, and should, be looking at a wide range of options and solutions to the housing issues California is facing centered on BIG's goal of creating affordable, equitable, safe and healthy communities. I'm excited to get to work."

Dena Belzer, Principal, Strategic Economics



Spotlight on BIG's Key Initiatives from 2023

In 2023, BIG partnered with Network and community members to advance electrification and community-based development approaches in California's rural and urban communities. Our Panel Optimization Work and Electrical Reassessments (POWER) and Regenerative Communities initiatives achieved great things in the past year and are moving forward with renewed support and enthusiasm in 2024.



Electrical Panel Optimization

BIG convenes and facilitates diverse changemakers to advance electrification efforts across California. The POWER group centers on the idea that the electrical panel and associated systems are key levers to reaching our carbon-free future quickly and fairly.

In 2023, the POWER group grew to 130+ members; shifted the narrative around electrical panels to avoid panel upsizing when possible; and submitted data-backed public inputs to improve and update the National Electrical Code, addressing issues of affordability and access.



Through POWER, I met new partners, and together we co-applied for and received funding to advance electrification efforts in California housing, which would not have been possible without POWER.”

Abhijeet Pande, Vice President, Research and Consulting, TRC.



Regenerative Communities

BIG's regenerative communities initiative takes a place-centered, people-driven approach toward transforming the housing ecosystem. The program provides space for community leaders to build a shared understanding around key regenerative strategies.

In 2023, we piloted this initiative by working with the community of Greenville, in Plumas County, in their efforts to recover from the devastating Dixie Fire. We also held outreach sessions across California to explore regenerative community development strategies.

Check out our website for more information about our initiatives: <https://www.builditgreen.org/what-we-do/>.

Spotlight on Equitable Housing Co-ops

BIG's Theory of Change is not just a theory, it's a practice where new ideas emerge and are incubated into transformative programs to advance regenerative development. Below, we look at the trajectory of BIG's Equitable Housing Co-ops initiative through our Theory of Change. This work began in 2023 and is moving forward in 2024 more broadly as Community Housing.



COALESCE AND IDEATE

The equitable housing co-ops initiative came as a result of housing changemakers from across California coalescing and ideating at the 2022 Network Gathering in Santa Cruz. The group believed that housing co-ops could promote equity through shared access and affordability and community stewardship of beloved places.



CATALYZE AND INCUBATE

BIG catalyzed the idea by holding space with local community partners and organizations to share knowledge and discuss how expanding home-ownership models supports communities to build wealth through democratic governance. In the incubation phase, BIG worked with Network members to hold space for making new connections to drive projects forward.



IMPLEMENT AND SHARE

As the pilot projects progress, BIG is and will continue to share learnings from those pilot projects and resources collected and created by this group and partners, to make knowledge implementable and accessible for others.

Practitioner Spotlight



I gain so much from participating in BIG's Cooperative Housing Initiative and always leave inspired and hungry for more. This year, I made a connection that led to us developing a new partnership to advance equitable housing co-ops. I'm excited to see how this grows!"

Iliana Nicholas, Program Manager, EPACANDO



GreenPoint Rated Certification

BIG's GreenPoint Rated (GPR) certification program helps homebuilders and homeowners prove that their homes are built to trusted standards for sustainability, efficiency, durability, and health. GreenPoint Rated homes are verified by GreenPoint Raters, independent building professionals who are trained and certified by Build It Green. Here's a peek at the GPR program impact in 2023:



9.7K+

Earned GPR
certifications in 2023

107K+

Homes certified
since 2008

20.4K+

Equivalent metric tons
CO₂ avoided for 2023

Board Member Spotlight



The thing that makes BIG unique is it brings people together who would never come together otherwise, and helps them develop new ways of working that will help us actually get stuff done.”

Mick Penn, BIG's Board Treasurer



Special Thanks for Your Collaboration and Support

We'd like to thank the partners whose time and dedication make BIG's work possible. The collective knowledge you bring to BIG's events and the Gathering creates new housing possibilities and allows us to pave the path together toward a more affordable and equitable future for communities across California. Your ideas, collaboration, and support is helping transform California's housing ecosystem for the better.

Innovator's Network Steering Committee Members

Thank you to our 2023 Steering Committee members who played a pivotal role in guiding the Network and informing the Gathering event in Folsom.

Abhijeet Pande, TRC Companies

Iliana Nicholas, EPACANDO

Monet Boyd, City of Antioch

Amélie Besson, Association for Energy Affordability

Joanna Gubman, Urban Environmentalists

Nikki Beasley, Richmond Neighborhood Health Services

Andy Madiera, East Bay Asian Development (formerly)

John Rahaim, City of San Francisco (formerly)

Peter Cohen, Sacramento Housing Alliance (formerly)

Ayanna Davis, Healthy Black Families

Jordan Grimes, Greenbelt Alliance

Renee Schomp, Justice Catalyst

Ben Cooper, StopWaste

Kenneth Javier-Rosales, SV@Home

Robyn Leslie, California YIMBY

Bill Lindsay, City of Richmond (formerly)

Louise Bedworth, Center for Law, Energy, and Environment, UC Berkeley

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David Nieh, AGI Avant Group

Mina Wilson, Healthy Black Families

Srinidhi Sampath Kumar, RMI

Tyler Pew, LMNOP Design Inc

Holden Weisman, Greenlining Institute

Vaidehi Seth, Disruptive Creations

Founding Sponsors

In 2023, BIG launched our founding sponsor campaign. We extend a very special thanks to our founding sponsors for joining us and helping convene hundreds of California housing changemakers to join together and find new and innovative ways to address the most pressing challenges facing our housing ecosystem.

VISIONARY—\$25,000

San Francisco Foundation

CHANGEMAKER—\$5,000

Swinerton
Sam Ruben

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StopWaste
TRP

INNOVATOR—\$1,000

Disruptive Creations
Mary Davidge
Bill Lindsay

Strategic Economics
ECA, inc.

Jeremy Madsen
SACOG

Gathering Sponsors

The Gathering Sponsors made it possible for 100 California doers, thinkers, and leaders to come together in Folsom for an intensive and generative two-day event that continues to have impact and ripple effects. Thank you for your support and dedication.

GATHERING SPONSORS

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Sam Ruben

Mary Davidge
Crankstart Foundation
Google
Strategic Economics

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We're also grateful for the other philanthropic donors and supporters who have enabled all the work of 2023.

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Rachel Katz in honor of Carlton McMillan



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Rob Larson
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Vaidehi Seth
CEO + Co-Founder, Disruptive Creations

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