



01

It Took a Pandemic To

How COVID-19 Propelled
Social Change in
East Yard Communities

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Environmental Justice
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& UEPI Summer Internship Program



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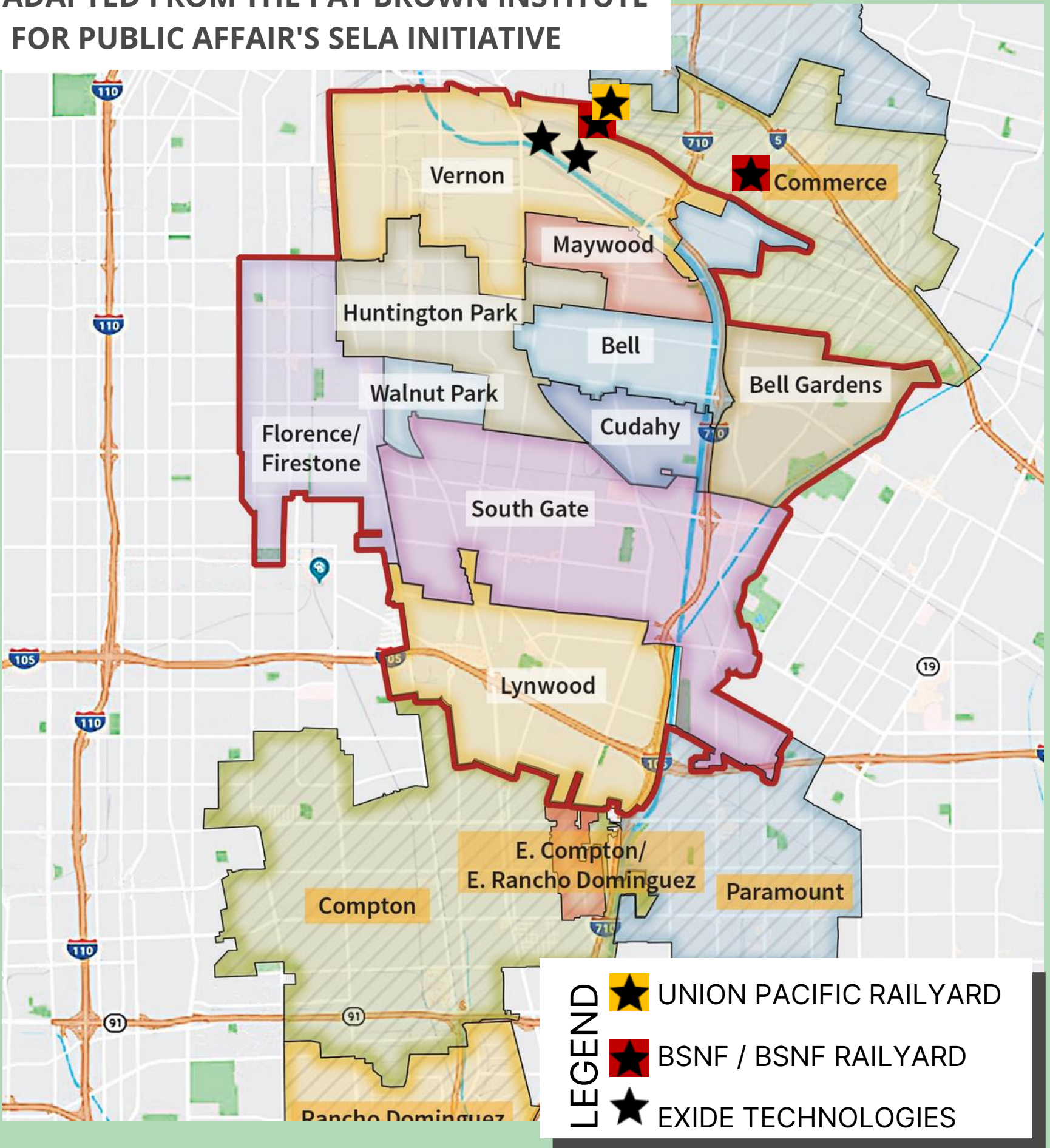
1. HOW EAST YARD WAS BORN

03

- environmental justice org founded by East LA and Commerce community members in 2001
- funded as a non-profit org under fiscal sponsorship of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs (SEE) in 2002
- **THE PROBLEM:**
 - increasingly toxic environmental and health impacts of **Exide Technologies'** + the **East LA Railyard** on surrounding communities since the 90's



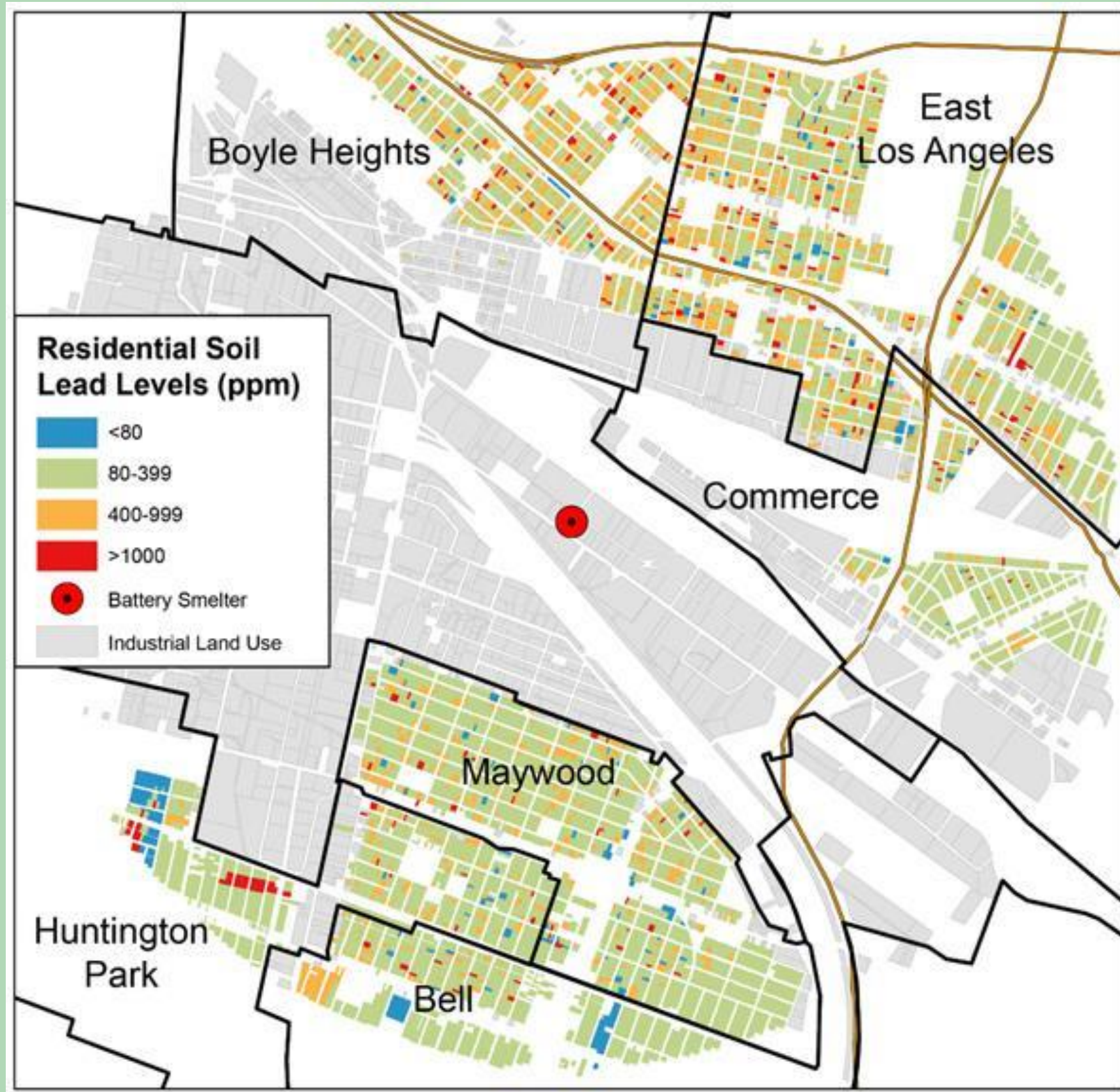
ADAPTED FROM THE PAT BROWN INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIR'S SELA INITIATIVE



East Yard works primarily with Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Compton, Cudahy, Huntington Park, Lynwood, South Gate & Maywood.

The stars are some of the local railyards and Exide Technologies sites.





Soil Lead Levels Based on Sampling by The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (2018).

This is why East Yard continues to advocate for safe and healthy environments in South East LA.





2. STRATEGIES: PRE- & POST-COVID

06

- focus on a "Theory of Change" which consists of
 - Base Building
 - Policy Change
 - Movement Building
- Besides the shift to being virtual, these remain the central aspects of their organizing



3. WHERE MY VIRTUAL WORK FITS EAST YARD'S MISSION

- researched multiple topics dealing with Community Stability and Policy Organizing which at first glance don't connect, but everything I've worked on ultimately contributes to East Yard's goal: a safe and healthy environment for East Yard Communities
- This presentations title is to highlight how COVID pushed Social Change to happen (on the local SELA level and the national level)



LYNWOOD

\$11.7 M

33% OF THE CITY'S
BUDGET GOES TO THE
LAC SHERIFF CONTRACT

MAYWOOD

\$4.8 M

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CONTRACT

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3.1.1. IT TOOK A PANDEMIC
TO EXPOSE POLICE & CITY
BUDGET INEQUITIES



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3.1.1 IT TOOK A PANDEMIC TO EXPOSE POLICE & CITY BUDGET INEQUITIES



RE-CONCEPTUALIZE, RESTRUCTURE, & REALLOCATE COMMERCE'S FUNDING

13%
OF THE
GENERAL
FUND

**WE
DEMAND
TRANSPARENCY!!!**

\$8.3
MILLION

The City of Commerce doesn't have a police department, but Law Enforcement is among their top expenses; each item in this category has vague descriptors like "Other Professional Services" with no other explanation

\$18.5M
to serve 9
communities

This is how much the LA County Sheriff Department gives the East Station - meaning only \$2 Million would actually go to Commerce assuming every city gets the same amount in resources.

It's unclear where the \$8.3 Million given by Commerce goes, but it is NOT going back into "Protecting & Serving" the community



COMMERCE SHOULD RENEGOTIATE THE LACSD CONTRACT AND REINVEST IN POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO POLICING THAT ALREADY EXIST IN THE COMMUNITY!

COMMUNITY SAFETY SPECIALISTS

- they currently receive **\$911K**
- they lead crime prevention programs like neighborhood watch & traffic safety
- this could reduce the need for the Sheriff Department altogether if properly funded



COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

- they receive less than **\$148K**
- they're in charge of disaster preparedness and city emergencies-- critical during this pandemic
- with the right funding, this could be an eventual alternative to the police!!

SOURCES CITED

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- LA COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT BUDGET 2020-2021



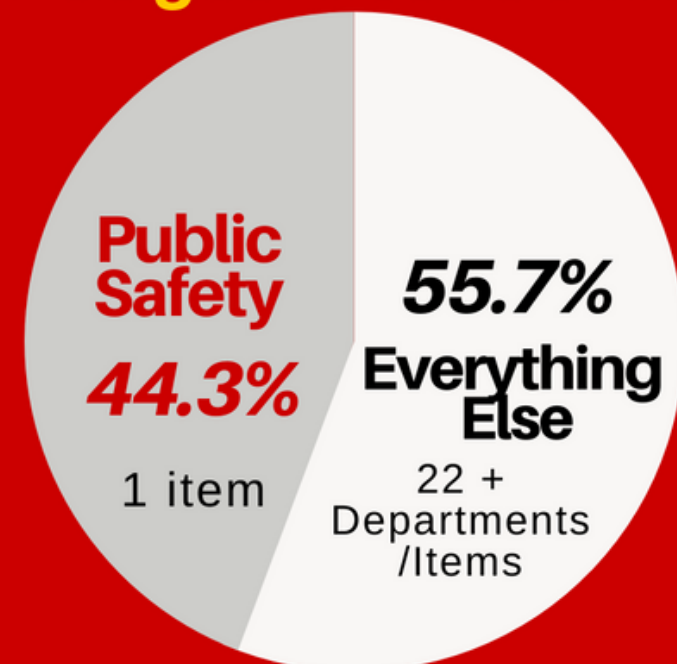
3.1.1 IT TOOK A PANDEMIC TO EXPOSE POLICE & CITY BUDGET INEQUITIES

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REIMAGINING CUDAHY'S BUDGET: FUNDING THE PEOPLE

Cudahy's total budget last year was **\$9,293,956** meaning that, although the city doesn't have a Police Department, we still spent **\$4,391,676** alone on contract law enforcement services from the LA County Sheriff. The new budget, formulated in response to Covid's economic impact, only reduces this number by 80,000.

Cudahy's Proposed Budget Breakdown



The **East Station of the LA County Sheriff's Department** which serves Cudahy alongside **8** other municipalities is given

\$18.5 Million

meaning that Cudahy likely will only receive **HALF** of what they pay for the service contract in the form of law enforcement resources from LACSD--assuming they distribute funds evenly.

WHAT IS "EVERYTHING ELSE"?

City Administration, Finance, Engineering, Planning, Community Development, Maintenance, Building Regulation, Community Preservation. City Funding is spread thin because a large portion of the general fund goes to one item.

SOURCE:
CUDAHY CITY ADOPTED CITY BUDGET 2019-2020
CUDAHY PROPOSED BUDGET 2020-2021
LA COUNTY BUDGET 2020-2021

What about the people of Maywood? Why rely solely on sparse federal funding during the current emergency?

Instead of overfunding the LACSD Contract, Prioritize Departments that support and improve the Cudahy Community during the pandemic



? **HOUSING VOUCHERS**
"RENTAL ASSISTANCE" ?
 ? **"RENT RELIEF"**

- Prioritizes Housing for profit
- Market-based solution
- Burdens tenants to apply
- Will exclude tenants based on documentation, language, access
- Will lead to "source of income" discrimination
- Budgets will dry up, which means assistance is a lottery
- Partial payments...
- Turns tenants into "pass-throughs": benefits go to landlords' bottom line
- Makes the Public pay



- Prioritizes Housing for use as homes
- Tenant-driven solution
- UNIVERSAL
- UNIVERSAL!
- UNIVERSAL!!
- UNIVERSAL!!!
- ...will never be enough!
- Buck stops here
- Makes the Banks and Corporate Landlords pay

eycej • Following
...

eycej the city of la, maywood, bell gardens, long beach & other cities are proposing or implementing rental assistance programs BUT we know this is NOT enough. these same cities are refusing to cancel the rent & are instead choosing to give money directly to landlords & not the tenants who need the assistance for groceries, medication, etc these cities (which are majority renters!) are subsidizing landlords who are threatening to illegally lock out and evict tenants.

We demand that these cities stop subsidizing big banks and corporate landlords! We demand these cities immediately implement the cancelation of rent and mortgages!!!!

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 TO ACKNOWLEDGE
 TENANT AND MORTGAGEE
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3.1.2 IT TOOK A PANDEMIC TO ACKNOWLEDGE TENANT AND MORTGAGEE NEEDS

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- HB 6515 - Ilhan Omar's Rent & Mortgage Cancellation Act back in April
- H.R. 6314 The Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act
- AB 1436 - COVID-19 Eviction Prevention and Housing Stability Act
- The Promising Case of Ithaca, NY
- Rent & Mortgage Moratoriums in San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, Alameda, LA County, and West Hollywood
- Banning of Evictions Due to Non-Payment of Right



3.1.2 IT TOOK A PANDEMIC TO ACKNOWLEDGE TENANT AND MORTGAGEE NEEDS

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We have to acknowledge that the issue of housing insecurity due to unaffordable rent existed before COVID and our response to it now will impact how we go about advocating for affordable rent in the future. Thus far the response to providing rental assistance has been inadequate.

Further, existing policies are not doing nearly enough to resolve the impending eviction waves following the end of the pandemic



4. The Significance of the Social Change Propelled by COVID in East Yard (& Everywhere Else)

The research I did is part of the first step of East Yard's strategizing: **base building**.

How does this fit the current context and the growing movement for change during and after COVID?

This is a critical moment of knowledge exchange, community building and organizing; the changes we initiate once we've solidified our base are of utmost importance.

It took the pandemic to cast a light on the issues that BIPOC communities have been fighting for years.

The social change that COVID has propelled will establish the basis for how we dismantle systems of injustice & oppression moving forward.

In generating this change, we also need to remember the **intersectionality** within our organizing.

Housing, safety, health, and environmental justice issues are deeply connected to each other, and their resolutions in the larger context will also be inextricably linked.



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