

# Guide to Community Benefit Agreements

What is  
a CBA?



Community  
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# What is a Community Benefit Agreement?

20 years ago, organizers and activists in Los Angeles developed a tool to create binding agreements between development projects and community coalitions: the Community Benefit Agreement, known as a CBA.

*Business as usual*



# Disciplined organizing is the heart of a successful CBA.

## The Coalition



This requires a strong core of leaders who respect and trust each other; organizational commitments of time, staff, political clout and money; and a broader group of supportive organizations and individual residents who show up for meetings, send letters and call local officials.

Engage the community: educate neighbors through meetings, publication, and one-one-one conversations. Maybe survey residents to build your case. Build support by engaging community in setting CBA priorities, and organizing big and small actions to demonstrate support.

One or more strategic researchers help the coalition understand everything about the project including info on jobs, affordability, design, financing, public investment and the timetable for approval. If the project has already received all necessary government approvals, it is probably too late!

Lead coalition partners can provide education and advocacy on possible solutions. If there's not an experienced organization on every key issue, consider dropping that demand.

Don't set your goals too low! As members of the public and therefore investors in the project, you have the right to expect a seat at the decision-making table and measurable outcomes for the community.

Find legal support, since you may need help understanding land use regulations and how to use them to create leverage, what laws might restrict your work, and how to legally circumvent them.

Involve coalition members in negotiating sessions. Keep everyone updated frequently on progress and obstacles. Any CBA worth the name must be clearly and concretely accountable to the community.

# What's in a ?

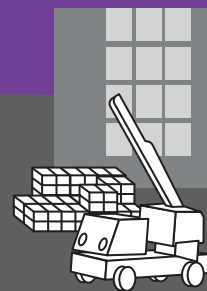
CBA's include some elements that are common to most agreements, and locally specific elements that reflect the immediate needs of the neighborhood.

## What kind of jobs & who gets them?

CBA's can require local or targeted hiring requirements, with preference based on geography, income, or race (in private agreements not restricted by law). Preferences can be set for chronically unemployed people, previously incarcerated or homeless residents, or any other category the coalition agrees on.

To be successful, these kinds of provisions need a committed agency to lead recruitment, training, and placement of residents.

CBA's can also set standards for good jobs, often with union participation. No point in creating a jobs pipeline to low-wage jobs without standard benefits!



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## Who can afford to live there?

In the face of high housing costs, a CBA can mandate very specific affordability standards, including things like percentages for very low-income residents, units appropriate for the size of neighborhood families, and including affordable housing in initial development phases, not an afterthought that may later be scrapped.



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## How will this impact our neighborhood?

CBA's have been used to address a wide range of conflicts around new development, which begins by understanding and addressing how any new development impacts the neighborhood and its residents.

Throughout a campaign, organization partners should use their advocacy experience to share information and documentation on needs for good jobs, affordable housing, environmental protections, community friendly design, and more.

Technical or observational research can strengthen your case. For example, photos showing:

- + lack of workforce diversity on similar projects

- + existing parking and traffic congestion demonstrating that a proposed design destroys historic community roots

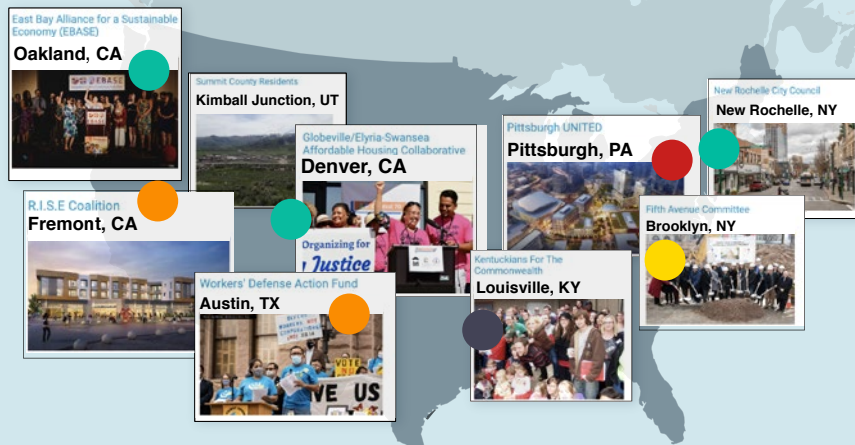
- + community monitoring of traffic or pollution.

A resident survey can help identify strongly supported local issues.

What if instead of being left behind we were leading? Residents should get to determine what is built in their cities as well as their neighborhoods.



# Across the United States, coalitions use Community Benefit Agreements to democratize development!



Learn more at  
[CommunityBenefitsResources.org](https://CommunityBenefitsResources.org)