

From the Director's Desk

H eading into 2007, Urban Habitat is poised to take on some of the challenges of a regional economy that is ever more starkly divided into the haves and the have-nots, and where communities of color continue to bear the burdens of growth, without receiving the benefits. Urban Habitat's expanding work on equitable development and quality jobs are keystones in building a new approach to regional development, so that good jobs, clean air and water, and accessible public transportation are available to all our communities.

In the last few years, as multinational corporations like Wal-Mart have invited themselves into the Bay Area's Alameda and Contra Costa counties, some local communities have split over whether to accept low-paying jobs as being better than no jobs. Well documented studies of Wal-Mart's impact on local businesses and on international labor standards have too often been ignored by local governments in the interest of short-term benefits, such as increased local sales tax proceeds.

To respond to this challenge, Urban Habitat is staffing a new effort by the Social Equity Caucus to make "Quality Jobs" a reality for our constituents. Working with the University of California Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, the Social Equity Caucus (a coalition of over 75 Bay Area nonprofit, union, and religious Organizations) has created a "Quality Jobs Working Group" (QJWG) to analyze and participate in movements to create quality jobs for our communities. Our formula for progress: research, analysis, and action. QJWG members are well-represented in this issue of *RP&E*: East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE), Women's Initiative for Self-Employment, Apollo Alliance, Bay Area Localize, Change to Win, and the National Economic Development and Law Center share case studies from their own organizing work. Six months into its development, the QJWG has already identified and moved forward on key research needed to drive future campaigns, building partnerships with allies along the way.

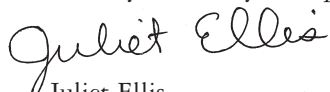
Newly elected Mayors Ron Dellums in Oakland and Gayle McLaughlin in Richmond both owe their new jobs to a sense that business-as-usual is not working for many people in these cities and across the region. The QJWG sees these and other Bay Area political shifts—including adoption of comprehensive healthcare services to uninsured San Franciscans and their employers at a reasonable cost—as indications that campaigns should gear up to take advantage of innovative leadership and start moving on a progressive jobs agenda.

In Richmond, our Richmond Equitable Development Initiative (REDI) has launched a comprehensive campaign to move the city towards a new framework for land use and economic development. The REDI coalition represents a diverse group of stakeholders, including academics, religious Organizations, labor advocates, lawyers, public health officials, and social and environmental justice organizations.

Working with our REDI partners—EBASE, Contra Costa Faithworks, the Center for Community Innovation at University of California Berkeley, Communities for a Better Environment, Ma'at Youth Academy, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and ACORN—we are laying the groundwork for a city planning process that will provide the residents of Richmond better jobs, cleaner air, and more effective transportation choices.

Of course, Urban Habitat transportation justice efforts and leadership institutes are also running full steam ahead, but we'll have more on that in the next issue. To stay abreast, please visit our website, www.urbanhabitat.org.

Thank you for all your support.



Juliet Ellis
Executive Director
Urban Habitat

& the **Race, Poverty Environment**

a journal for social and environmental justice



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