

**CEQA**  
**The California**  
**Environmental**  
**Quality Act**  

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**CASE STUDY**

PHOTO CREDIT: EDWARD SMITH



# *Impact on Equity and* **Environmental Justice**

**SOUTH FRESNO, 2018–PRESENT**

## **Amazon Warehouse Expansion**

### **Safeguarding School Children and Public Health Using CEQA**

The community of South Fresno, predominantly populated by low-income people of color, is the most environmentally burdened neighborhood in all of California. Located just outside the city limits, community members have no voice on the city council, and development decisions by the city have polluted their air and water and destabilized their housing market. This community used CEQA to protest a planned warehouse expansion that would have drastically increased air, water and noise pollution and traffic safety issues in their community, including at an elementary school. As a result, the developer and the city made significant concessions, including establishing a community benefit fund for home improvements to mitigate impacts, committing to developing a pedestrian and bicycle safety plan,

conducting and implementing a traffic study to reduce the impact of new truck and van traffic, extending city water and wastewater services to the affected community, providing a construction liaison to deal with problems during the project's construction phase, taking steps to facilitate third-party air quality monitoring, and providing funds for workforce development so the new warehouse creates local jobs. By using CEQA as a tool to ensure their voices were heard, community members have convinced the City of Fresno to move forward with a specific plan to address land use decisions in a systematic way and meaningfully address public health and housing stability in the long term.

SOURCE: ASHLEY WERNER, LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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**JUSTICE ALLIANCE**

**The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is an important tool for advancing environmental justice (EJ) and protecting the rights of communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and poverty in our state.** The law allows a community to not only be notified of development projects that are being proposed for their neighborhood; it also provides them with a formal process to share their concerns and recommend improvements so that a project can better serve and protect the community. CEQA also provides a mechanism for holding certain projects accountable if they insufficiently analyze potential harms against local residents and neighborhoods.