

# Local orgs fight environmental injustices with new funding

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LOS ANGELES — Environmental injustices have affected generations of South Los Angeles residents, but new funding just approved by the state aims to address widespread inequities.

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## What You Need To Know

T.R.U.S.T. South LA is one of several organizations that received state grants for many environmental mitigation efforts

The organization's director of social impact and community organizing says the grant is going to "help remediate years of environmental racism that has happened in our communities"

A recent study from UCSD's School of Global Policy and Strategy found that in most cases, low-income neighborhoods suffer disproportionately from urban heat across the country

The state grant funds will also begin to address the effects of incompatible land use, density and less vegetation, according T.R.U.S.T South LA leaders

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As the environmental justice planner for T.R.U.S.T. South LA, Lorna Avila says their weekly food distribution effort is the perfect opportunity to educate the community on what many consider a foreign concept: clean mobility.

"It's really important for South LA because we want folks to have alternative modes of transportation," Avila explained as she drove an electric car as part of a new car sharing program called BlueLA powered by Blink Mobility.

But Avila, and the director of Social Impact and Community Organizing for T.R.U.S.T. South LA, Siris Barrios, say most of the community does not know this resource is available, nor do they understand how to use an electric vehicle or the app to rent it.

By driving the car and offering rides in a space where the community already feels comfortable, they are working to bridge the gap.

“To demystify ‘What is an electrical car?’ and ‘How do you turn it on?’ and ‘How does this app work?’” Barrios explained. “But also to gather information on where are some of the barriers and how we overcome the barriers for the community.”

Barrios says she’s encouraged by the \$35 million state grant just awarded to her organization and several others for many environmental mitigation efforts to include solar roof panels and address urban heat, which she says significantly reduces the quality of life for those living in this region.

“It’s gonna help remediate years of environmental racism that has happened in our communities,” Barrios explained.

On a federal level, environmental scientists like UCSD Professor Jennifer Burney are conducting new research to show the need for a change in policies that reflect the pledge to address climate change.

In a recent study from the University of San Diego’s School of Global Policy and Strategy, Burney and her team used satellites to analyze the surface temperature of more than 1,000 counties across the country and found that in most cases, communities with higher rates of poverty like South LA were up to 7 degrees warmer than wealthier neighborhoods like Beverly Hills during the summer.

It proves that low-income neighborhoods suffer disproportionately from urban heat across the country.

“This urban heating is really strongly associated with race and ethnicity,” Burney explained. “Across the U.S., across cities new and old, big and small. That is, I would say, evidence of a systemic failure, or repeated systemic failures in a lot of these urban areas.”

The state grant funds will also begin to address the effects of incompatible land use, density and less vegetation, Barrios and Avila say, by planting thousands of trees to create an urban canopy in South LA. It will also support programs like the electric vehicle sharing program.

“It’s so important because right now, South LA has a lot of air pollution. South LA has a lack of equitable transportation, so this program is necessary to reduce air emissions so folks can have a healthy, fulfilling life.”

For not just this generation, but many more to come.

Burney and the team of USCD researchers created an app where the community can search their neighborhood to see how the temperatures compare. To access it, visit [sabenz.users.earthengine.app/](https://sabenz.users.earthengine.app/)