

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF BUILDING DECARBONIZATION

When we make our buildings more sustainable, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential unintended consequences of decarbonization for frontline communities and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

Potential consequences include:

- Energy cost burden
- Displacement and gentrification
- Inaccessible benefits
- Employment disparities
- Negative health impacts
- Tribal sovereignty limitations

1 PASSED DOWN COSTS AND DISPLACEMENT

Frontline communities and BIPOC households often have lower incomes and may already struggle with high energy costs.

When we alter our buildings to use less energy, the cost of those alterations can fall on tenants. Commercial and individual landlords may use the upgrades as a reason to raise rent, temporarily or permanently. High rental costs in BIPOC and low-income neighborhoods can cause forced displacement of individual families and entire communities.

2 INACCESSIBLE BENEFITS

Frontline communities can be excluded from decarbonization in a number of ways. The high upfront costs of green technologies, lack of financial assistance for renters, and lack of green job training programs can make the transition to clean energy and healthy buildings very difficult. Climate change solutions should not be withheld from any communities, especially those who are most affected by things like extreme heat and intense storms.

3 NEGATIVE HEALTH IMPACTS

Reducing building energy often requires opening and accessing a building's interior structure.

If there is not proper ventilation and personal protective equipment, then tenants and workers can be exposed to respiratory irritants such as **mold, dust, lead, asbestos, pests, and insulation**. For children and elders in particular, this exposure could lead to health complications. Other impacts include noise pollution and general disruption to daily activities.

4 IMPACTS TO TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Tribal communities have experienced decades of trauma at the hands of the energy industry. When the energy industry was developed in the US, tribal lands were illegally exploited, soils and waters were contaminated, and Tribal peoples were excluded from financial benefits ([TEES](#)).

As our market moves toward renewable energy and decarbonization, the same systems that have excluded tribes in the past are continuing to threaten tribal sovereignty. Most states do not require tribal consultation when making large utility decisions like transitioning to renewable energy. This means tribes can be excluded from these decisions and limited when adapting to decarbonization efforts and accessing funding for these projects.