

## COMMUNITY

# TOOLKIT

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### HOW DO YOU CREATE A VOICE FOR UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES?

Many residents in low-income, unincorporated neighborhoods across California are living in substandard conditions: These poor, dense communities lack some combination of safe drinking water, sidewalks, streetlights, functioning gutters and sewer systems. What's more, community members are left not knowing whom to hold responsible and how to effectively demand improvements.

Here, we've collected contact information for key players in each community featured in "Neglected for decades, unincorporated communities lack basic public services," as well as officials, government agencies and organizations that serve the entire state. Within this React & Act, you'll also find answers to frequently asked questions and more resources for the more than 1 million people living in California's unincorporated communities.

The unincorporated communities profiled in "Neglected for decades, unincorporated communities lack basic public services" are facing uphill battles to improve their living conditions. Big questions loom and, as we explain here, the answers are often complicated.

#### How do you create a voice for unincorporated communities?

Residents can ask their county supervisor (see key players contacts above) to create a municipal advisory council, which represents unincorporated communities and advises the

county board of supervisors on issues like public health, land-use planning and sidewalks.

The municipal advisory council collects comments and recommendations from community members and shares them with the county board and other relevant agencies. Before establishing the municipal advisory council, you must:

- Decide the council's name, responsibilities and represented area.
- Determine how many members the council will include, as well as the selection process and qualifications. Members typically are appointed by the board of supervisors, but residents also can opt to elect them.
- Draft bylaws.

#### How do you overcome language barriers?

Public agencies that serve communities with large numbers of people who do not understand English are required to provide information in the language or languages they speak. (See the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act and California's Unruh Civil Rights Act.) If you need interpretation at a meeting or translations of documents, the agency must supply it unless it would create extreme financial hardship. The same applies to public records.

#### How do you achieve annexation?

Annexation occurs when a city, county or state takes in more land. This newly incorporated community will then be provided with access to services including but not limited to water and sewer systems. In return, the newly incorporated community is subject to the land-use laws and policies of the city, county or state that annexed it.

To begin the process, community members can work together to petition, or ask for, annexation, or the process can be started by public agencies. Every county has an independent local agency formation commission, or LAFCO, which makes the final decision on annexations, as well as the

provision of services and evolution of the presiding government. According to California Rural Legal Assistance, the purpose of LAFCOs is to “prevent bad planning like creating new communities instead of improving existing ones, protect land used for agriculture and open space, to ensure that communities are receiving services like water, sewer, and law enforcement in an efficient manner, and encourage the development of local agencies based on the needs of communities.”

### **How can unincorporated communities get access to safe drinking water?**

The state Department of Public Health’s Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund provides money to improve drinking water infrastructure and access to safe water. Funding extends to planning, design and construction of treatment plants, pipes, wells and storage.

Are you eligible? Communities with a water or utility district can push such agencies to apply for the funds. If your community does not have one of those agencies, then the county can apply on your community’s behalf. The Department of Public Health determines which projects receive funding. Drinking water projects are on a priority list, and disadvantaged communities may receive up to 80 percent of the project’s cost as a grant. According to California Rural League Assistance, projects with more community support and collaboration have a better chance of being funded.

### **What can you do if you live in an unincorporated community and have sewage problems?**

Residents can petition the county board of supervisors to create a public utility district, which provides unincorporated communities with sewer, garbage, lighting, water and other services. The petition is then sent to the local agency formation commission for review and approval. Voters in the district then vote. California law also allows for the creation of county service areas, which must be approved by the local agency formation commission and can

provide sewer, water and trash services, police and fire protection, libraries, and more. You can petition the board of supervisors to create the community service area. The petition must include how the services would be financed, provided and named. Then you need to circulate the petition and gather signatures.

There is a petition process, which will require gathering signatures; the petition must include how the services would be financed, provided and named. The State Water Resources Control Board also oversees the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is similar to the Department of Public Health’s Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund but focuses on the planning, design and construction of wastewater improvement projects.

### **How do you navigate the governmental process?**

Learning how to navigate the processes required to effectively demand changes in your community is not easy, but there are resources that break down issues like land use (the decisions, actions, policies and laws that determine how land is used), planning commissions and safe drinking water. California Rural Legal Assistance has informative publications available in English and Spanish, which can be ordered online or by phone at 415-777-2752.

### **What are your rights when it comes to participation in government meetings?**

The Brown Act protects community members’ participation and access to the decisions made by public agencies. All government boards must make almost all decisions in public meetings. They are required to inform the public when these meetings will be held and what information will be discussed.

According to the Brown Act, boards must post notices and agendas three days before a regular meeting, one day before a special meeting and one hour before an emergency meeting. They must provide the public with the same documents available to the board, hold meetings

locally in a free and accessible space, allow the media, and allow for public comments during the meeting and public comment period.

Closed meetings are allowed when employees, legal cases and negotiations are to be discussed. If you think a board has violated the Brown Act, you can write to the agency and request it to correct the action. The agency has 30 days to do so. If it does not, you have 15 days to file a legal claim against it.

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## KEY PLAYERS

### PARKLAWN (MODESTO)

#### Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Write: 1010 10th St., Suite 6500

Modesto, CA 95354

Call District 5 Supervisor Jim DeMartini: 209-525-4470

E-mail DeMartini: demartinij@stancounty.com

Website: [www.stancounty.com/board](http://www.stancounty.com/board)

#### Modesto Mayor Garrad Marsh

Write: P.O. Box 642

Modesto, CA 95353

Call: 209-571-5597

E-mail: [mayor@modestogov.com](mailto:mayor@modestogov.com)

Website: [www.modestogov.com/council/mayor](http://www.modestogov.com/council/mayor)

#### Modesto City Council

Write: P.O. Box 642

Modesto, CA 95353

Call: 209-571-5169

E-mail: [council@modestogov.com](mailto:council@modestogov.com)

Website: [www.modestogov.com/council](http://www.modestogov.com/council)

Council meetings are held on the first, second and fourth Tuesdays of every month at 5:30 p.m. in the basement at 1010 10th St.

#### State Assemblyman Bill Berryhill

Write: 4557 Quail Lakes Drive, C-3

Stockton, CA 95207

Call: 209-473-6972

E-mail:

[Assemblymember.Berryhill@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Berryhill@assembly.ca.gov)

Website: <http://arc.asm.ca.gov/member/26/>

#### State Sen. Anthony Cannella

Write: 918 15th St.

Modesto, CA 95354

Call: 209-577-6592

E-mail: [Senator.Cannella@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Cannella@senate.ca.gov)

Website: <http://cssrc.us/web/12/>

#### Stanislaus County Local Agency Formation Commission

Write: 1010 10th St., 3rd Floor

Modesto, CA 95354

Call: 209-525-7660

E-mail Executive Officer Marjorie Blom:

[blomm@stancounty.com](mailto:blomm@stancounty.com)

Website: [www.stanislauslafco.org](http://www.stanislauslafco.org)

#### Stanislaus County Department of Environmental Resources

Write: 3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite C

Modesto, CA 95358

Call: 209-525-6700

E-mail Director Sonya K. Harrigfeld:

[harrigfeld@envres.org](mailto:harrigfeld@envres.org)

Website: [www.stancounty.com/er](http://www.stancounty.com/er)

#### Stanislaus County Health Services Agency

Write: 830 Scenic Drive

P.O. Box 3271

Modesto, CA 95353

Call: 800-834-8171

E-mail: <http://user.govoutreach.com/stanislaus>

Website: [www.schsa.org](http://www.schsa.org)

#### THERMAL/RANCHO GARCIA MOBILE HOME PARK (COACHELLA)

#### Coachella City Council

Write: 1515 6th St.

Coachella, CA 92236

Call: 760-398-3502

Website: [www.coachella.org/index.aspx?nid=29](http://www.coachella.org/index.aspx?nid=29)

Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month. Information about the meetings is available at 760-398-3502.

#### Riverside County Board of Supervisors

Write: 4080 Lemon St.

Riverside, CA 92501

Call District 4 Supervisor John Benoit: 951-955-1040  
E-mail Benoit: [district4@rcbos.org](mailto:district4@rcbos.org)  
Website:  
[www.countyofriverside.us/government/boardofsupervisors.html](http://www.countyofriverside.us/government/boardofsupervisors.html)  
Board meetings are held at 9 a.m. most Tuesdays.

**Coachella Mayor Eduardo Garcia**

Write: 1515 6th St.  
Coachella, CA 92236  
Call: 760-398-3502  
E-mail: [edgarcia@coachella.org](mailto:edgarcia@coachella.org)  
Website: <http://ca-coachella.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=55>

**State Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez**

Write: 45-677 Oasis St.  
Indio, CA 92201  
Call: 760-342-8047  
E-mail:  
[Assemblymember.Manuel.Perez@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Manuel.Perez@assembly.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://asmdc.org/members/a80/>

**State Sen. Juan Vargas**

Write: 45-149 Smurr St., Suite B  
Indio, CA 92201  
Call: 760-398-6442  
E-mail: [Senator.Vargas@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Vargas@senate.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://sd40.senate.ca.gov/>

**Riverside County Local Agency Formation Commission**

Write: 3850 Vine St., Suite 110  
Riverside, CA 92507  
Call: 951-369-0631  
E-mail Executive Officer George Spiliotis:  
[gspiliotis@lafco.org](mailto:gspiliotis@lafco.org)  
Website: [www.lafco.org](http://www.lafco.org)

**Riverside County Department of Environmental Health**

Write: 47-950 Arabia St., Suite A  
Indio, CA 92201  
Call: 760-863-8287  
E-mail Indio Area Supervisor Tyler Skrove:  
[tskrove@rivcocha.org](mailto:tskrove@rivcocha.org)

Website:  
[www.rivcoeh.org/opencms/rivcoeh/index.html](http://www.rivcoeh.org/opencms/rivcoeh/index.html)

**Riverside County Department of Public Health**

Write: 4065 County Circle Drive  
Riverside, CA 92503  
Call: 951-358-5000  
E-mail Director Susan D. Harrington:  
[sharrington@co.riverside.ca.us](mailto:sharrington@co.riverside.ca.us)  
Website: [www.rivcoph.org](http://www.rivcoph.org)

**MATHENY TRACT (TULARE)**

**Tulare County Board of Supervisors**

Write: 2800 W. Burrell Ave.  
Visalia, CA 93291  
Call District 2 Supervisor Pete Vander Poel: 559-636-5000  
E-mail Vander Poel:  
[pvanderpoel@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:pvanderpoel@co.tulare.ca.us)  
Website:  
[www.co.tulare.ca.us/government/board/default.asp](http://www.co.tulare.ca.us/government/board/default.asp)  
Board meetings are held at 9 a.m. every Tuesday.

**Tulare City Council**

Write: 411 E. Kern Ave.  
Tulare, CA 93274  
Call: 559-685-2300  
Website:  
[www.ci.tulare.ca.us/local\\_government/city\\_council.htm](http://www.ci.tulare.ca.us/local_government/city_council.htm)  
Council meetings are held at 7 p.m. the first and third Tuesdays of every month at 491 N. M St.  
Information about the meetings is available at 559-685-5656, ext. 194.

**Tulare Mayor Wayne Ross**

Write: 411 E. Kern Ave.  
Tulare, CA 93274  
Call: 559-685-2300  
E-mail: [wross@ci.tulare.ca.us](mailto:wross@ci.tulare.ca.us)  
Website:  
[www.ci.tulare.ca.us/welcome/mayor.htm](http://www.ci.tulare.ca.us/welcome/mayor.htm)

**Self-Help Enterprises**

Write: P.O. Box 6520  
Visalia, CA 93290  
Call: 559-651-1000

E-mail: [info@selfhelpenterprises.org](mailto:info@selfhelpenterprises.org)  
Website: [www.selfhelpenterprises.org](http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org)

**State Assemblywoman Connie Conway**

Write: 113 N. Church St., Suite 505  
Visalia, CA 93291  
Call: 559-636-3440  
E-mail:  
[Assemblymember.Conway@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Conway@assembly.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://arc.asm.ca.gov/member/34/>

**State Sen. Jean Fuller**

Write: 5701 Truxtun Ave., Suite 150  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
Call: 661-323-0443  
E-mail: [Senator.Fuller@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Fuller@senate.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://cssrc.us/web/18/>

**Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission**

Write: 210 N. Church St., Suite B  
Visalia, CA 93291  
Call: 559-624-7274  
E-mail Executive Officer Ben Giuliani:  
[bgiuliani@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:bgiuliani@co.tulare.ca.us)  
Website: <http://lafco.co.tulare.ca.us/>

**Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency**

Write: 5957 S. Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, CA 93277  
Call: 559-624-8480  
E-mail:  
[www.tularehhsa.org/index.cfm/administration/agency-contacts/e-mail-health-services](http://www.tularehhsa.org/index.cfm/administration/agency-contacts/e-mail-health-services)  
Website: [www.tularehhsa.org](http://www.tularehhsa.org)

**LANARE (FRESNO COUNTY)**

**Fresno County Board of Supervisors**

Write: 2281 Tulare St., Room 300  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Call District 4 Supervisor Judy Case: 559-600-4000  
E-mail Case: [district4@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:district4@co.fresno.ca.us)  
Website:  
[www.co.fresno.ca.us/Departments.aspx?id=122](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/Departments.aspx?id=122)  
Board meetings are held at 9 a.m. most Tuesdays.

**State Assemblyman David Valadao**

Write: 1489 W. Lacey Blvd., Suite 103  
Hanford, CA 93230  
Call: 559-585-7170  
E-mail:  
[Assemblymember.Valadao@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Valadao@assembly.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://arc.asm.ca.gov/member/30/>

**State Sen. Michael J. Rubio**

Write: 2550 Mariposa Mall, Suite 2016  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Call: 559-264-3070  
E-mail: [Senator.Rubio@senate.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Rubio@senate.ca.gov)  
Website: <http://sd16.senate.ca.gov/>

**Fresno Local Agency Formation Commission**

Write: 2607 Fresno St., Suite B  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Call: 559-600-0604  
E-mail Executive Officer Jeff Witte:  
[jewitte@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:jewitte@co.fresno.ca.us)  
Website: [www.fresnolafco.org](http://www.fresnolafco.org)

**Fresno County Department of Public Health**

Write: 1221 Fulton Mall  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Call: 559-600-3200  
E-mail: [dph@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:dph@co.fresno.ca.us)  
Website:  
[www.co.fresno.ca.us/Division.aspx?id=2553](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/Division.aspx?id=2553)

**Fresno County Division of Environmental Health**

Write: P.O. Box 11867  
Fresno, CA 93775-1867  
Call: 559-600-3357  
E-mail: [environmentalhealth@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:environmentalhealth@co.fresno.ca.us)  
Website: [www.co.fresno.ca.us/DepartmentPage.aspx?id=908](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/DepartmentPage.aspx?id=908)

**STATEWIDE**

**Gov. Jerry Brown**

Write: State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Call: 916-445-2841  
E-mail: [http://gov.ca.gov/m\\_contact.php](http://gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php)  
Website: <http://gov.ca.gov>

**California Department of Public Health**

Call: 916-558-1784

E-mail: [cdph-lnc-hfcis@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:cdph-lnc-hfcis@cdph.ca.gov)

Website:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/facilities/Pages/LCDistrictOffices.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/facilities/Pages/LCDistrictOffices.aspx)

**California State Water Resources Control Board**

(Financial assistance for infrastructure projects)

Write: P.O. Box 100

Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

Call: 916-341-5700

Website:

[www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/grants\\_loans/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/)

**State Assembly Committee on Local Government**

Write: 1020 N St., Room 157

Sacramento, CA 95814

Call: 916-319-3958

E-mail: [alcl.committee@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:alcl.committee@assembly.ca.gov)

Website: <http://alcl.assembly.ca.gov/>

**California Rural Legal Assistance**

Write: 631 Howard St., Suite 300

San Francisco, CA 94105-3907

Call: 415-777-2752

E-mail: [www.crla.org/contact-us](http://www.crla.org/contact-us)

Website: [www.crla.org](http://www.crla.org)

**Rural Community Assistance Corporation**

Call: 916-447-2854

E-mail Loan Fund Director Michael Carroll:

[mcarroll@rcac.org](mailto:mcarroll@rcac.org)

Website: [www.rcac.org](http://www.rcac.org)