

Center for Sustainable Development



Project Description

Housing costs, construction workforce gaps, and the underuse of locally sourced natural materials are interconnected challenges across the Redwood Region. The Center for Sustainable Development addresses all three from a 7,000-square-foot warehouse in Arcata that has been converted into a trades education hub where prefabricated, low-carbon housing is designed, prototyped, and produced using local lumber and materials like hempcrete, with a specific focus on reaching Tribal, rural, and BIPOC communities in their trainings. The Center seeks to teach skills that can benefit entire communities and strengthen relationships that help create local resilience, and they want to start by providing workshops to community members to teach them skills that will help them in their everyday lives. The Center will also host community events, which will connect the project to local artists, farmers, and other community members it aims to serve.

Intended Outcomes

- Provide 9 workshops and classes that teach sustainability-focused life skills, such as recycling.
- Create 4 jobs by hiring contractors, and later full-time and part-time employees, to develop programs.
- Create a local workforce training program that provides skills in woodworking and housing construction.
- Develop the warehouse to accommodate more classes and workshops.



Lead Organization: Humboldt Homes

Key Collaborators: Playhouse Arts

More Information: bit.ly/CenterHumboldt

Sector: Working Lands and Blue Economy;
Arts, Culture, and Tourism

Progress Update: Challenges & Achievements to Date

The Center for Sustainable Development has hosted eight workshops for the local community focused on learning new skills while building planter beds and herb boxes. Most workshops have served the local Indigenous community, with one focused on the local African American community and another offered as a women-only herb box workshop. The Center has also hosted permaculture, recycling, and Building Basics workshops. Together, these workshops have engaged more than 130 community members and resulted in approximately 90 planter boxes, while teaching basic skills in tool safety and woodworking principles.

The project has strengthened existing partnerships with organizations such as the Northern California Indian Development Council (NCIDC) and Potowat Garden, while building new relationships with the Jefferson Community Center, Blue Lake Rancheria, Cal Poly Humboldt's Food Sovereignty Lab, United Indian Health Services, and the Warrior Institute in Hoopa.

The Center has found practical ways to teach basic carpentry skills while helping community members build greater food security. Planter boxes serve as an accessible entry-level project for learning carpentry, with the longer-term goal of building skills that can support pathways into the trades or help people build their own homes. The Center has also integrated arts, culture, and sustainability into its workshops. While the planter bed workshops have reached more than 100 people, some workshops have had lower attendance, and the Center continues to work through challenges related to marketing its offerings and gathering community input.

Ways to Engage and Support the Project

- Follow our Instagram at bit.ly/CenterInsta
- Reach out via email at humboldtthomes@gmail.com
- Find a workshop to join at bit.ly/CenterWorkshop

