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# The Darden Clean Energy Project - Local Investment Program

Updated 6/6/25

## Darden Local Investment Program Introduction

IP Darden I, LLC and Affiliates<sup>1</sup>, a subsidiary of Intersect Power, strives to be an active member and steward of the Fresno County community. As part of the Local Investment Program for the Darden Clean Energy Project (Darden), Intersect Power plans on making significant investments totaling over \$2 million dollars over the next ten years to community-based initiatives and programs in the Fresno County area.

A Fresno-based multicultural outreach firm was hired by Intersect in the Spring of 2023 to help advise and support critical community outreach, including the creation of the Local Investment Program. Since that time, the Intersect Power team, with the assistance of the local consultant, have engaged key stakeholders including labor and workforce development entities, nonprofit partners, local schools, Environmental Justice organizations and tribes to research, receive input, and create the Darden Local Investment Program.

The Local Investment Program partner organizations were selected utilizing the process detailed below:

1. Research: key information was gathered from several sources, most notably the 2020 Fresno County Community Health Needs Assessment<sup>2</sup>. The Assessment identified key community issues to include a lack of accessible and affordable public transportation, the need for economic opportunity, air pollution, a lack of community engagement in planning, access to affordable and quality housing, and access to healthy foods.
2. Community Input: community input was gathered through meetings with local stakeholders. These interactions confirmed the findings of initial research and identified additional opportunities for investment, ensuring integration of the community's thoughts and perspectives into the Local Investment Program.
3. Resource Assessment: a thorough assessment was conducted to understand what community resources currently exist in western Fresno County, the area closest to the Darden site. The Intersect Power team met with the leaders of the partner organizations to understand their mission and how their programming and services support the residents of western Fresno County.

The table below identifies the key focus areas of the Local Investment Program and the identified partner organizations:

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<sup>1</sup> "Affiliates" means IP Darden II, LLC, IP Darden III, LLC, IP Darden IV, LLC, IP Darden BESS I, LLC, IP Darden BESS II, LLC, IP Darden BESS III, LLC, IP Darden BESS IV, LLC, and IP Darden BAAH, LLC. IP Darden I, LLC and Affiliates are indirect subsidiaries of Intersect Power, LLC.

<sup>2</sup> <https://chhs.fresnostate.edu/cvhpi/documents/2020chna.pdf>

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Partner Organization</b>
<b>Economic Opportunity</b>	Valley Build Program, The Beyond Housing Foundation (formerly known as Fresno County Housing Education Corps), Golden Plains Unified School District
<b>Access to Public Transportation</b>	Fresno County Rural Transit Agency
<b>Air Pollution</b>	Central California Asthma Foundation, Tree Fresno
<b>Access to Affordable Housing</b>	Westside Elementary School
<b>Access to Healthy Foods</b>	Central California Food Bank, Centro la Familia Advocacy Services

The Local Investment Program strategically incorporates annual commitments spanning the duration of 3 to 10 years, emphasizing the establishment of enduring partnerships throughout the project's development process and into operations. In addition to the formalized Local Investment Program, Intersect Power's commitment extends to supporting other organizations outside its purview. Furthermore, a designated portion of funds are allocated to anticipate and seize new opportunities that may emerge in the future. This multifaceted approach underscores our dedication to sustained community engagement and adaptability in addressing evolving needs and opportunities. Intersect Power provided financial support to organizations not formally incorporated in the Local Investment Program, including The Fresno Center, The Westside Housing and Economic Network, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, The Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce, Riverdale Community Sports, Green Raiteros EV Rideshare Program, Mendota Chamber of Commerce, The Mendota Community Corporation, The Latino Peace Officers, The Rotary Club of Kerman, The Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation, and Mendota Unified High School.

We believe that genuine community involvement goes beyond financial contributions. To date, our employees have volunteered over 100 hours in western Fresno County, with the Darden team volunteering alongside and in service to community members at Central California Food Bank's San Joaquin & Mendota Neighborhood Market Food Distribution events.

The Intersect Power team will meet with the Local Investment Program's partner organizations on an annual basis to plan for the upcoming year, receive feedback and reporting on the prior year's programming, and to discuss opportunities for expanded involvement by Intersect Power employees, including participation in local volunteer projects.

## Direct Benefits of the Darden Project

By establishing the Darden Project site as the point of sale Sales Tax and Property Taxes will be paid directly to Fresno County that will benefit the Fresno County area through the funding of public programs and services. Intersect Power estimates that the Project will create an average of 1,100 jobs during construction and up to 40 permanent jobs in Fresno County for project operations. Intersect Power has also executed a Letter Agreement with the five crafts, securing their support for the Darden Project.

Beyond this, Intersect Power has coordinated with the local halls, and will host local job fairs and collaborate with the local community college system to maximize local hiring potential.

Though not required, the Project established a point of sale in Fresno County for the purchases of major equipment and materials, which will enable local government to benefit from \$36M in direct sales tax revenues between now and 2027 alone. The bulk of these sales tax revenues are required to be spent on critical transportation and road improvement projects in the County pursuant to existing local law.

Mortenson, our construction partner for Darden, will establish and maintain a list of locally-owned, veteran-owned, and minority-owned subcontractors that will be established and maintained, including these businesses in their bidding opportunities. Mortenson has demonstrated their commitment to investing in the local economy. They plan to source \$67 million in materials, equipment, supplies, and services directly from local small and medium-sized businesses in Fresno County's west side. To facilitate this, Intersect and Mortenson recently hosted a small business event in Kerman on May 20, 2025 to help share more information about the goods and services needed for the Project and the resources available to help them prepare. We've established partnerships with the Fresno Workforce Development Board and the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation's Confía Rural Program. These collaborations help local businesses prepare for and secure procurement contracts with the project, and even assist new small businesses in forming to capitalize on these opportunities.

Mortenson has created a project website <https://www.dardencleanenergyproject.com/services> sharing information on how local businesses can get involved with procurement opportunities on the Darden site.

## Economic Opportunity Partners

### Golden Plains Unified School District

The Golden Plains Unified School District, located in western Fresno County, serves rural communities near the Darden site. Intersect Power is currently providing funding for programming for Cantua Creek Elementary and Tranquillity High School. This funding has enabled the creation of an after-school Steinway Piano Program at Cantua Elementary, offering valuable arts education to young students. Intersect Power's financial support at Tranquillity High School enriches the educational experience and fosters a vibrant school environment through various activities for its students.

### Valley Build

Engagement has begun with key workforce development organizations to understand opportunities for partnership, in particular the Valley Build program. Valley Build is a pre-apprenticeship program co-founded and sponsored by the Building & Trades Council of Fresno, Madera, Tulare, and Kings Counties and the Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board. Valley Build prepares minorities, women, and hard-to-serve individuals, including the formerly incarcerated and veterans, for careers in the construction industry. Intersect Power has partnered with Valley Build leadership to bring information about the pre-apprenticeship program to rural western Fresno County. The project is tied to a Project Labor Agreement that requires union labor, providing opportunities for residents to benefit from union apprenticeship

programs. This initiative is crucial for bridging the gap for rural residents, benefiting both the community and Intersect Power. Eight public information sharing opportunities about the Programs, starting in May 2024 in Riverdale, CA, have been held in collaboration with schools and select rural city officials, aiming to introduce the pre-apprenticeship program.

## **The Beyond Housing Foundation**

The Beyond Housing Foundation (BHF), formerly known as The Fresno Housing Education Corps is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Fresno County Housing Authority dedicated to empowering families by providing comprehensive educational support. BHF offers financial aid and resources to support area residents in achieving educational and career goals. The organization enhances early childhood education and promotes literacy among children and families and provides engaging summer and after-school programs to maintain educational momentum throughout the year.

Intersect Power's financial contributions will be used to support and expand the reach of existing literacy and STEM-related programs and scholarships programs as detailed below:

- BHF has existing partnerships with entities such as Valley PBS, Fresno County Libraries, and area school districts to provide literacy programming for early learners and school-aged children. Intersect Power's contributions will be used to expand this programming to elementary schools in western Fresno County and to support program staff and coordinators, ipads, books, school supplies, food and transportation associated with the literacy programming.
- A scholarship program is currently in place to support residents seeking to attain the GED/High School equivalency certificate, undergraduate/graduate degrees, certificates, or vocational training. Intersect Power's donation will be used to fund a scholarship program for high school students, with preference given to students in the western Fresno County area, that meet the criteria of a 2.0 GPA and who have been accepted into a 2 or 4 year college, vocational certificate program, trade school, or other post-secondary institution.
- In partnership with Valley PBS, BHF plans to fund "Engineer It, Kids!" workshops for kindergarten to 6th-grade children to experience STEM fields and develop their skills and interests in such areas. Additionally, children will have the opportunity to work alongside real engineers in audio, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering. Intersect Power's donation will be used to support existing programming, as well as potentially expanding the program to elementary schools in western Fresno County.

## **Public Transportation Partners**

### **Fresno Rural Transit Agency**

The Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) is the public transportation provider to the rural portions of Fresno County. The FCRTA recently launched a rural microtransit program to connect rural unincorporated communities to the City of Fresno and other nearby incorporated cities. This initiative is the first of its kind in the United States and is designed to bridge the gap between rural communities and broader connectivity within Fresno County. Currently the program operates in the community of Biola.

The next phase of the program will include the city of San Joaquin, which will provide services to the communities closest to the Darden project site.

The service utilizes a Chevy Bolt all-electric passenger vehicle, providing residents with reliable and affordable transportation to larger metropolitan cities for essential errands. This environmentally sustainable initiative offers transportation at a fraction of the cost of ridesharing services, ensuring accessibility for all members of the community.

A local Biola resident is employed as a trained and dedicated driver for the program, ensuring transportation for local residents to job training, interviews, non-emergency medical appointments, social services, and other essential lifeline transportation needs.

Intersect Power will execute an agreement with the FCRTA, supporting the rural microtransit's programming over the next 3 years:

- In 2024, a donation from Intersect Power will be used towards augmented fares for the current rural microtransit program in Biola. As a result of this donation, fares will be augmented 50% for all passengers.
- In 2025, a donation from Intersect Power will be used towards augmented fares for the expanded rural microtransit program in San Joaquin. San Joaquin microtransit will provide service for the communities of San Joaquin, Cantua Creek, El Porvenir and Tranquillity. As a result of this donation, fares will be augmented 50% for all passengers.
- In 2026, a donation from Intersect Power will be used for operations of the microtransit service, including to help fund the driver's salary. Local residents hired by FCRTA's subcontractor will be trained as drivers and have the opportunity to earn a Class B license.

## Air Pollution Partners

### **Central California Asthma Collaborative**

The Central California Asthma Collaborative's (CCAC) mission is to reduce the burden of asthma and related chronic health conditions on residents of the San Joaquin Valley through education and interventions, along with strong climate and air pollution policy, advocacy and intervention. Additionally, CCAC provides technical assets and tools to ensure Valley NGOs and community residents can accurately describe and identify local and regional environmental health concerns, evaluate their potential impacts, and use that information to inform local policy and advocacy efforts.

CCAC works to reduce inequities in Low Income and Disadvantaged Communities in the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley by addressing health and climate harming environmental sources. They advocate to and pro-actively partner with various state agencies, associated boards and commissions including, but not limited to, CalEPA and its subsidiary agencies, California Department of Transportation, California Department of Energy, California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California Department of Public Health.

CCAC's emphasizes the importance of healthy indoor air quality through its multi-component asthma intervention program, Comprehensive Asthma Remediation and Education Services (CARES). CARES works to ensure all residents have a safe place to breathe. CCAC operates CARES in all eight San Joaquin Valley counties. The program educates and assists families in reducing or eliminating in-home asthma triggers, improving medication compliance, and their overall home and school environment. The program improves asthma disease management and significantly reduces asthma emergencies among high-risk populations, while reducing costs to the overall health care system.

Intersect Power's donations will be used to support CARES initiatives in the Western Fresno County area. CCAC will conduct targeted outreach for CARES in the areas surrounding the Darden project site, including door to door outreach and parent engagement in Five Points, Cantua Creek, Three Rocks, and at Westside Elementary school. These efforts will include sharing information about the availability of the asthma trigger home remediation program, a program that provides tools such as air purifiers, HEPA vacuums, home ventilation improvements, etc. Additionally, instruction is provided on how to access air quality health alerts on CCAC's web application "SJVAir" that utilizes the CCAC community air monitoring network.

## **Tree Fresno**

Tree Fresno was formed in 1985 with the mission of transforming the Central San Joaquin Valley with trees, greenways, and beautiful landscapes. Since that time, Tree Fresno has planted over 53,000 large-canopy, drought-tolerant trees primarily for the purpose of reducing the impact of extreme heat and improving poor air quality.

In recent years, Tree Fresno has enhanced its focus on improving the climate resiliency of the Central San Joaquin Valley region. This work is done by expanding into the development of vegetative barriers which mitigate the impacts of pollutants for socio-economically disadvantaged communities affected by various pollution sources. In addition to tree planting work, in 2001, Tree Fresno began a workforce development program in partnership with the Fresno Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce. This program is designed to engage young adults in "tree-related" industries, which can lead them to well-paying employment with energy companies, cities, landscape contractors, and others.

Over the next few years, the Central San Joaquin Valley is projected to experience more frequent and longer extreme heat events. The collaboration between Tree Fresno and Intersect Power will focus on delivering relief in the form of shade trees to schools and other community partners (i.e., non-profits, public agencies) in western Fresno County. The ten-year plan includes placing a focus on expanding the tree canopy for schools and other community spaces. In particular, Tree Fresno is currently evaluating sites for plantings near the Darden project area within the communities of Cantua Creek and Five Points.

## **Affordable Housing Partners**

### **Westside Elementary School**

The Westside Elementary School District operates a preschool and K-8th grade elementary/middle school in the Five Points area of western Fresno County. The students of the district are primarily children of

farmworkers who live in the 150-square-mile district boundaries. The school serves as an unofficial community center for the area, hosting many community meetings and distributing community information and resources.

Today, the school serves approximately 130 students – down from a high of close to 300 children more than a decade ago. Enrollment in the school has been in decline as a result of larger corporate farming entities acquiring smaller family farms and eliminating associated employee housing. Many families with school age children are leaving the district in order to pursue new employment opportunities. Westside Elementary school primarily receives funding based on enrollment numbers and as a result of the declining enrollment, has not been able to fund needed upgrades and maintenance of the campus.

The Westside district has been working partly through a non-profit entity to explore options to increase housing in its service area. Housing is the chief need within the district. A small portion of district property has been sectioned off as a potential location to extend farmworker housing. The concept is in the early stages of development.

Intersect Power has executed an agreement with the Westside Elementary School District to financially support upgrades to the campus and to help support efforts to increase housing in the area over the next 10 years. In 2023, donations from Intersect Power helped to fund a study on the feasibility of extending farmworker housing on district property. Subsequent funding between 2024-2032 will be used to continue work on the need for housing, infrastructure upgrades to the campus and other district needs.

## Healthy Foods Partners

### **Central California Food Bank**

Central California Food Bank (CCFB) is the region's largest non-profit organization focused solely on ending hunger. CCFB's mission is to fight hunger by gathering and distributing food, engage in partnerships that advance self-sufficiency, and provide community leadership on issues related to hunger. CCFB provides food to low-income families with children, seniors, immigrants, veterans, and college students struggling with food insecurity and lack of access to healthy foods. Through their comprehensive hunger-relief programs and services, CCFB provides food and hope to more than 300,000 people each month, including over 100,000 children throughout Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings, and Kern counties.

The Central Valley counties served by CCFB have some of the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the state. CCFB recognizes that many neighbors across Fresno County experience barriers to food access including lack of transportation or public infrastructure, access to nearby grocery stores, unemployment or under-employment, low-wages, or being immunocompromised. A wide network of food offerings is imperative to the health and wellbeing of Fresno County neighbors experiencing hunger.

In alignment with Intersect Power's commitment to the residents of western Fresno County, CCFB currently provides nutritious food to neighbors experiencing hunger in the communities of Cantua Creek, Three Rocks and Five Points. Over the next 10 years, CCFB plans to use Intersect Power's contributions to help sustain the rural comprehensive feeding programs detailed below:



- **Neighborhood Market:** these fresh produce distributions are a unique approach to increasing healthy food consumption in low-income and rural populations. They focus on providing families with large amounts of fresh produce right directly from their community to combat food insecurity. Similar to a farmer's market, in addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, this program provides neighbors with bread, bakery items, and canned goods when available. Many clients bring their own shopping carts, wagons, or other pushcarts, while volunteers pass out bags of food to neighbors.
- **Mobile Pantry Truck:** utilized in small and rural communities, the mobile pantry truck sets up in the parking lots of churches and other community agencies to distribute food. Clients remain in their vehicles and drive up to the side of the truck to receive food from volunteers.
- **Child Hunger Programs:** CCDB's BackPack program supplies elementary school children a bag of food every Friday to take home for consumption over the weekend and the School Pantry Program, providing supplemental food to children and their families in a stigma free environment on campus.
- **The Farmworker Community Partnership Program:** In collaboration with the California Farmworker's Foundation, this program provides culturally appropriate food boxes that are distributed directly to farmworkers working in fields and packing sheds. These drive-up distributions are scheduled later in the day to accommodate farmworkers' schedules, so they may pick up food at the end of their workday before heading home.

## **Centro la Familia Advocacy Services**

Centro La Familia Advocacy Services Inc. is a non-profit organization that offers a broad range of social service and education programs supporting families and children, assisting crime victims, promoting health and wellness, encouraging civic engagement and more. Founded in 1972, the community-based organization operates throughout Fresno County and with a bilingual staff (English, Spanish, Hmong) delivering services in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner.

Centro La Familia operates four Neighborhood Resource Centers and a satellite office in Mendota. Annually, the organization serves more than 15,000 clients and also reaches 150,000 community members through outreach and education programs, presentations, workshops, special events and multimedia.

Each year, Centro La Familia regularly distributes food and other necessities, such as diapers and baby formula, to families in need. The organization serves thousands of families throughout the county annually.

Centro La Familia will use Intersect Power's generous donations to fund an initiative to supply, free of cost, high efficient air conditioner window units to interested households in the communities of Five Points, El Porvenir and Cantua Creek. Additionally, funding will be used to supplement the distribution of food and necessities to area families. .

## **Tribal Engagement**

In August 2023, Intersect Power initiated contact with tribes potentially interested in the project area. We have continued to engage with the Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Tribe, and are in discussions to execute a Tribal Monitoring Agreement and a Curation Agreement. .

## Community Engagement

Beginning in April 2024, Darden has sent a total of eight, completely voluntary courtesy mailers in both English and Spanish to all known property owners and residents within one mile of the Project site (the CEC has sent four letters to known addresses within 1000 feet of the project site and 500 feet of project linears). These courtesy mailers have provided information about the Project including a map of the site, upcoming CEC milestones, opportunities for public input, and our Community Engagement Team's contact information.

To ensure access to transportation was not a barrier for local residents to attend the CEC's hearings on the project, Darden provided free transportation for residents from Cantua Creek to Harris Ranch for the CEC Public Meetings held in October 2024 and February 2025.

Darden has extensively shared information about the project, hosting informational tables including ValleyBuild resources, at Community Resource Fairs in the communities of Mendota, Firebaugh, San Joaquin and Huron in July and August of 2024.

Notably, Darden also voluntarily hosted two separate community wide Open Houses in Cantua Creek and Five Points during the Spring of 2025 to share project information and address community members' questions and concerns about the Project. At the Open House events, Intersect Power representatives provided detailed information about the Project and residents had the opportunity to learn about small business and career opportunities with both Mortenson, the local Union Halls, and representatives from Valley Build. Additionally, representatives from community-based organizations involved in the project's Local Investment Program shared information about their services. Spanish interpretation was provided for both Open Houses.

Darden has proactively worked to ensure local Environmental Justice and community-based organizations including The LEAP Institute, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Rural Communities Rising and the Central California Environmental Justice Network had awareness and information about the Project beginning in December 2023. Darden has had over 15 meetings with these organizations over the past two years to share project information.

Recognizing that the communities of Cantua Creek and Five Points are unincorporated, Darden has worked closely with the school leadership in each of these communities as these schools serve as unofficial community centers for the area, hosting community meetings and distributing community information and resources. To date, Darden has had over 25 meetings with the leadership of Westside Elementary School and Golden Plains Unified School District to discuss project details and partnership opportunities.

Darden has also worked with the leadership of the incorporated western Fresno County communities, including the local Chambers of Commerce, the Municipal Staff and Mayors of Kerman, Mendota, Firebaugh, Huron, and San Joaquin to share project information, learn about community needs and promote economic opportunities associated with the Project. Notably, on October 4, 2024 Darden and Mortenson representatives participated in a tour of the westside communities with westside leadership to better understand the local goods and services available for procurement on the project. Most

recently, Darden hosted a Small Business Event in Kerman on May 20, 2025 to further publicize and promote local procurement for the Project. A career fair is planned for Summer 2025.