

Environmental Justice and Architectural Design in the Ironbound Community of Newark, NJ

TEDC Associate Directors Ana Baptista and Brian McGrath will discuss their two Fall 2018 courses: Environmental Justice and Architectural Design, where students collaborated with the Ironbound Community Corporation on several ongoing projects:

- Development of a physical and digital brochure describing the history and current EJ campaigns
- Development of a physical and digital EJ Tour History booklet, describing multiple histories and narrative threads covered on Environmental Justice Tours
- Design ideas for the Blue Acres properties, re-imagining an urban sponge for flood and rain waters in the “The Island” impacted by Sandy and surrounded by Industry.
- Provide research, design and mapping support for the Ports Area Redevelopment Plan/ Master Plan
- Help develop and install an open-air museum and story boards about climate, EJ, migration, community transition stories at the Down Bottom Farm. Develop ideas for how to make this space an anchor for Anti-Displacement/Gentrification
- Ideas and website for community outreach for Combined Sewer Overflow consent decree.

The Ironbound neighborhood of Newark

The city of Newark has a long history of pollution and environmental injustice from the Dutch settlements that decimated Native Lenape people along the Passaic River to the dramatic despoiling of the meadowlands through the industrial revolution to today's concentrated pollution impacts from global goods movement, regional waste and other intersecting injustices. This industrial history together with a legacy of racialized planning, lax environmental regulations, residential racial segregation and economic disinvestment has resulted in disproportionate impacts on some of Newark's most vulnerable low-income communities and communities of color. The spaces where environmental degradation and marginalized communities of color and low-income people come to coincide are fertile spaces for gaining insight into the social and political processes that are often hidden from society. These invisible places are the products of an unequal, throwaway society that lives a comfortable existence at the expense of sacrifice zones, referred to as environmental justice communities. The communities living in these marginalized spaces are fighting not just for a clean and healthy environment, but for the ability to design and shape the conditions of their environment and be shaped by it in positive, empowering ways.

The Ironbound neighborhood, located in Newark's East Ward, is located in close proximity to major industry and transportation nodes including the largest seaport on the east coast and the state's largest garbage incinerator. The neighborhood's name, “Iron-bound” is derived from its location, which is enclosed on all sides by railroad lines and the Passaic River. Today, the area is home to a vibrant and diverse population of over 50,000 people, from around the world, a majority are people of color. The Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) is a community based organization that has been an active voice for environmental justice for over three decades. ICC is committed to intersectional, community organizing and social justice advocacy strategies on a range of issues that impact local residents, including immigrant rights, economic empowerment, housing rights and environmental justice. This intersectional approach to environmental justice informs the range of potential collaborative projects that can help illuminate the rich history of advocacy by the organization as well as the future-casting articulation of alternative futures that are possible.