



AS YOU SOW

NORTH POINT ST. JOE COMMUNITY FIGHTS AGAINST HAVING TOXIC EMITTERS AS NEIGHBORS



2016: The North Port St. Joe Project Area Committee (NPSJPAC) was formed by residents and property owners to develop sustainable plans for neighborhood resilience.

2018: NPSJPAC formulated a detailed plan for the redevelopment of Martin Luther King Boulevard that addresses both the needs and intentions of the community for future land use and economic incentivization according to city policy and zoning codes.

2019: Residents of North Port St. Joe met with the Gulf County Task Force to identify the community's top priorities, and a 2019 report issued by the Florida Department of Health, North Port St. Joe is historically known to be "separate and unequal" to the rest of the city.

2022: North Port St. Joe residents learn of a proposed Liquid Natural Gas plant, despite plans for the plant having been in the works between Nopetro and the St. Joe Company since 2020.

2022: *As You Sow* contacted by NPSJPAC and Public Citizen to assist with shareholder action.



2023: *As You Sow* engages the Company in dialogue as NPSJPAC, Public Citizen, and other allies, encourage the Company to not move forward with the LGN facility.

"It is critical that the environmental concerns of North Port St. Joe community members are thoughtfully considered and addressed so that, moving forward, the residents are a central part of the decision-making process."

-Olivia Knight, *As You Sow* Racial Justice Initiative Manager

2023: The St. Joe Company publicly states that Nopetro has withdrawn their proposal for the proposed LNG facility.

December 2023: *As You Sow* escalates the need for community concerns to be heard by the Company by potentially filing a shareholder resolution.



North Point St. Joe residents meet in 2023

ONGOING: It is critical that the environmental concerns of North Port St. Joe community members are thoughtfully considered and addressed so that, moving forward, the residents are a central part of the decision-making process. *As You Sow* will continue to highlight the St. Joe Company's action as a material risk until the Company is ready to respond and come to the table with our allies in the hope of create positive, just, and sustainable development in Port St. Joe.



North Point St. Joe Community Fights Against Having Toxic Emitters as Neighbors

The City of Port St. Joe, Florida has a history of systemic racism that has shaped the city's physical layout as well as its social identity. Port St. Joe is horizontally split by railroad tracks that separate the historically Black community of North Port St. Joe from the rest of the city. At the heart of North St. Joe lies Martin Luther King Boulevard, a once-vibrant center comprised of small-businesses that reflected the heritage, culture, and identity of the community.¹ The sites of two closed industrial factories, the Arizona Chemical Company and St. Joe Paper Company, reside on this side of town. Less than a mile west of Martin Luther King Blvd lies the waterfront and the port of Port St. Joe and the polluted brownfields² of the shuttered St. Joe Paper Co. which, earlier this year, was the proposed site for a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export project.³

History of the Area

Previously known as the St. Joe Paper Co., the St. Joe Company⁴ owns most of the land in the Florida panhandle, primarily operating in the Residential Real Estate and Commercial Real Estate sectors. The company's roots began in 1936 with the construction of the St. Joe Paper Mill on the northside of Port St. Joe. In operation for nearly six decades, the paper mill was not only a major employer, but also a major polluter, dumping mill wastewater into the surrounding wetlands⁵ and releasing contaminants such as dioxins and furans, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other heavy metals.⁷ To this day, this land has not yet been fully cleaned up, and many Black families still live directly above wetlands containing lead, arsenic and other toxic substances.⁷

The St. Joe Paper Company opened its mill in 1938 and acquired thousands of acres of timber in the area as well as a nearby railroad which it extended into Port St. Joe. The mill provided thousands of union jobs over the decades, but with a declining market, the Company sold the mill in 1996. The final closure of the local paper mill was completed in 1998. The St. Joe Company then moved into the real estate and land development industries.

The loss of its main job provider led to an economic decline which took a strong hold on North Port St. Joe over the next decade. Unemployment rates increased and the town experienced a population drop. By 2008 conditions within the Black community had deteriorated to such an extent that the city commissioned a Finding of Necessity Study, which concluded that the city should adopt a resolution stating that the rehabilitation, redevelopment, and conservation of North Port St Joe would be in the interest of public health, safety, morals, and welfare⁸. Subsequently, the city adopted a resolution declaring North Port St. Joe a qualified redevelopment area.

According to a 2019 report issued by the Florida Department of Health, North Port St. Joe is historically known to be "separate and unequal" to the rest of the city, with census data showing that over 21% of the Black population live in poverty compared to 12.5% of the white population.⁹ This geographic segregation means that, in addition to socioeconomic deprivation, Black residents face ongoing environmental racism. When the Category 5 Hurricane Michael destroyed homes in 2018, the Black residents of North St. Joe did not receive the aid that white neighborhoods were given. In a 2019 survey, 47% of North Port St. Joe respondents remarked



that their homes still had roof issues because of the previous year's storm,¹⁰ and four years later, "the community is still recovering from 2018's Hurricane Michael, with the roofs of some homes covered by tarps."¹¹

In March 2019, 31 residents of North Port St. Joe met with the Gulf County Task Force to identify the community's top priorities: 1) Abandoned/ rundown structures; 2) Affordable Housing; 3) Lack of Jobs; 4) Affordable, Safe, Clean Water; 5) Rundown vacant lots.¹² A recurring issue expressed by members of the community is the lack of low-income, subsidized or rent-controlled available housing.¹³ Ongoing economic stagnation has meant that lack of employment continues to be a barrier for a town which is largely reliant on fishing and tourism.

In 2016, the North Port St. Joe Project Area Committee (NPSJPAC)¹⁴ was formed by residents and property owners to develop sustainable plans for neighborhood resilience. These plans include building an urgently needed, multi-use community center on the former Washington High School campus, collaborating with local organizations to build a community garden next to the former High School campus, and implementing training programs for new home buyers in alliance with affordable housing initiatives.¹⁵ In 2018, NPSJPAC formulated a detailed plan for the redevelopment of Martin Luther King Boulevard¹⁶ that addresses both the needs and intentions of the community for future land use and economic incentivization according to city policy and zoning codes.¹⁷

Since its creation, NPSJPAC has brought together community residents, local and State elected officials, federal and State government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations to address the numerous social, housing, health, economic, and environmental issues that are having a negative impact on the quality of life for residents living in the North Port St. Joe Community. This has moved the community closer to creating a livable, sustainable, and more resilient North Port St. Joe. NPSJPAC wants to see climate and environment-friendly industries located on the old mill site, industries that provide good-paying jobs and support the North Port St. Joe Community Redevelopment Plan.

Early plans by the St. Joe Company and Nopetro to create a Liquefied Natural Gas Storage and Export facility on company-owned land in Port St. Joe were vigorously opposed by the community once the plans became public, with opponents citing the negative impact such a facility would have on the environment, home values, tourism, and the health and safety of residents. This controversy underlined the need for closer communication between the Company and the community. NPSJPAC and Public Citizen have encouraged the St. Joe Company to explore renewable energy production options, in addition to other sustainable development, and to engage with the community in evaluating future opportunities.

***As You Sow* & Environmental Justice Engagement**

In partnership with Public Citizen and NPSJPAC, *As You Sow* has a unique role to play as shareholder advocates. It is crucial to create a long-term corporate accountability strategy for St. Joe Company, the largest landowner and developer in the Florida Panhandle. It is paramount that the shareholders of St. Joe Co. are made aware that the Company's actions could pose a material risk to brand reputation if development creates adverse conditions for affected communities.



In 2023, *As You Sow's* Racial Justice Initiative sought to escalate the concerns of Public Citizen and the North Port St. Joe Project Area Coalition directly to the Company. In a meeting with *As You Sow*, the Company expressed a commitment to collaborate with community representatives. According to our engagements with our allies, the Company's actions are in direct opposition to their statements. The St. Joe Company has gone silent, refusing to answer meeting requests from *As You Sow* and our allies. As shareholder representatives, we believe this is of grave concern. The Company should be aware that moving forward with any proposed development without direct stakeholder input could have major implications on their carefully constructed brand image as a community-minded company.

St. Joe Company claims that it “focuses on thoughtfully planned destinations to live, work, play, shop, and vacation near the region’s beautiful white sand beaches.”¹⁸ Community members have had a dissimilar experience. Because of its history of polluting the predominantly Black community of North Port St. Joe, the Company should enter into dialogue with the local community to find a sustainable and just solution, such as investing in the NPSJPA’s [Sustainability plan](#) for redeveloping the area. It is critical that the environmental concerns of North Port St. Joe community members are thoughtfully considered and addressed so that, moving forward, the residents are a central part of the decision-making process. *As You Sow* will continue to highlight the St. Joe Company’s action as a material risk until the Company is ready to respond and come to the table with our allies in the hope of creating positive, just, and sustainable development in Port St. Joe.

1. [Comprehensive Plan Consistency: Building Community Resilience | North Port St. Joe Project Area Coalition](#) (3)
2. [Gulf County Brownfield Areas and Sites | Florida Department of Environmental Protection](#)
3. [Gas project, EJ concerns collide in the Florida Panhandle | E&E News](#)
4. [The St. Joe Company | joe.com](#)
5. [2006 Public Health Assessment for St. Joe Paper Mill | U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) (3)
6. [2006 Public Health Assessment for St. Joe Paper Mill | U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) (5)
7. [2006 Public Health Assessment for St. Joe Paper Mill | U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) (10)
8. [psjra.com/file/Redevelopment/PSJ FON Report 12_19_08_Final - reduced file size.pdf](#)
9. [Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health: Port St. Joe, Florida | Florida Department of Health](#) (1, 2)
10. [Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health: Port St. Joe, Florida | Florida Department of Health](#) (37)
11. [Gas project, EJ concerns collide in the Florida Panhandle | E&E News](#)
12. [Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health: Port St. Joe, Florida | Florida Department of Health](#) (6)
13. [Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health: Port St. Joe, Florida | Florida Department of Health](#) (8)
14. [Redeveloping North Port St. Joe Homepage | Redeveloping NPSJ](#)
15. [Pioneer Bay Community Development Corporation | Redeveloping NPSJ](#)
16. [Redeveloping MLK | Redeveloping NPSJ](#)
17. [Comprehensive Plan Consistency: Building Community Resilience | North Port St. Joe Project Area Coalition](#) (6-13)
18. [The St. Joe Company | joe.com](#)