

Faith-based activists win fight to clean up Los Angeles drilling site

The oil drilling facility is 130 feet from a church and 730 feet from an elementary school, reported a local coalition fighting for regulation of such sites.

by [Heather Adams](#) in the [July 3, 2019](#) issue

After years of advocacy by community and faith organizations, the city of Los Angeles is requiring an oil and gas company to close and clean up a neighborhood drill site.

“It’s one of the closest sites to residential homes within the whole city,” said Niki Wong, director of policy and organizing at Redeemer Community Partnership, a local faith group.

The site is 130 feet from a church and 730 feet from an elementary school, reports Stand-L.A., a local coalition that includes faith-based groups.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the decision to clean up the site came after Redeemer Community Partnership learned in August that Sentinel Peak Resources planned to shut down the facility. Owners told the city they were preparing the site for another use “yet to be determined.”

That left organizers uneasy about the future. The nonprofit began working to make sure the closure and cleanup are done in a timely manner and that the site isn’t abandoned by the company.

“They’re very toxic industrial sites; they operate in a way that requires a lot of chemicals,” Wong said. “There have been so many people that have gotten sick.”

City officials found “there was sufficient evidence that the operator intends to abandon the oil drilling facility. . . . Also, it was discovered that there remain ongoing nuisances from the oil drilling operation.”

With the May 15 city ruling and the passing of the appeal date on May 30, the company will have 36 months to close and clean up the land properly.

It’s not the only drilling site Redeemer Community Partnership and Stand-L.A. are fighting. A rally in September promoted legislation for a 2,500-foot buffer between extraction sites and homes.

All members of Redeemer Community Partnership live in these neighborhoods they’re fighting for, Wong said.

In three years, members of the community are hoping the old Jefferson Boulevard facility will be transformed into affordable housing, a library, or a park, Wong said.

“We really see it as our mission to bring the kingdom of God to this little space in South LA as best we can,” she said. —Religion News Service