



# 2023 Mid-Year Sustainability Highlights

SEPTEMBER 2023

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY, COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA



County of Santa Clara  
**Sustainability  
Master Plan**  
Livable. Equitable. Resilient.



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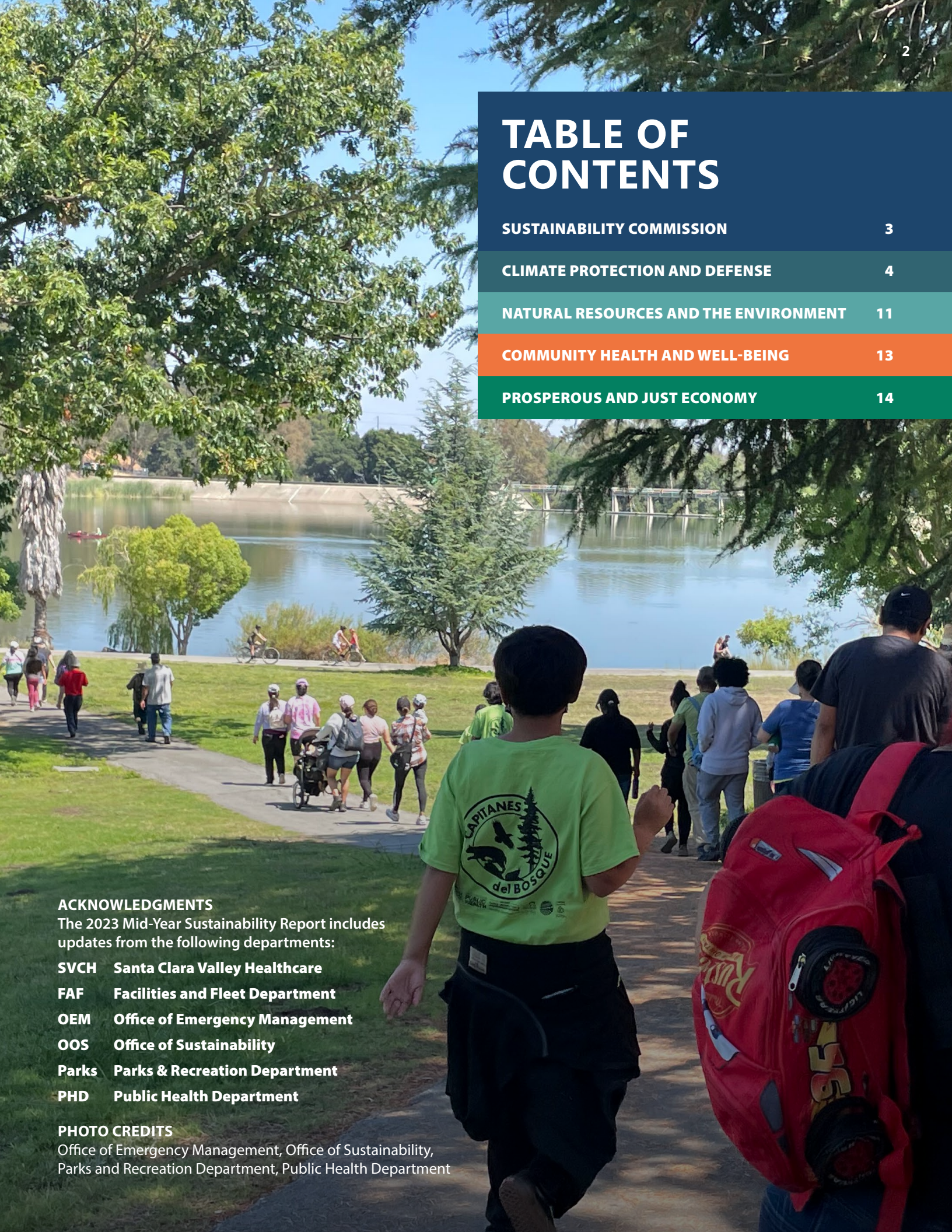
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2023 Mid-Year Sustainability Report includes updates from the following departments:

- SVCH** Santa Clara Valley Healthcare
- FAF** Facilities and Fleet Department
- OEM** Office of Emergency Management
- OOS** Office of Sustainability
- Parks** Parks & Recreation Department
- PHD** Public Health Department

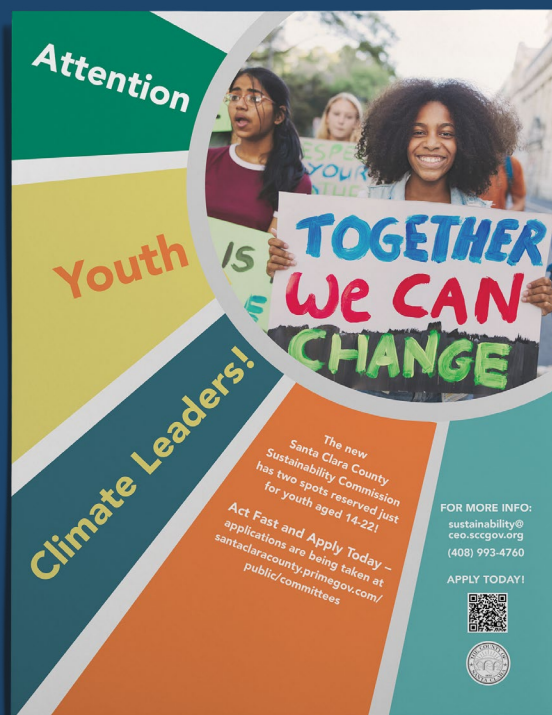
## PHOTO CREDITS

Office of Emergency Management, Office of Sustainability, Parks and Recreation Department, Public Health Department





# SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION



## BOARD ADOPTED THE SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

### April 18, 2023

The new 11-member commission, with two seats set aside for youth 14-22 years, is tasked with advising the County on policy, programmatic, and community engagement aspects related to the County Sustainability Master Plan. The County developed a multilingual Sustainability Commission media toolkit to attract and recruit diverse applicants. Outreach and recruitment are currently underway with expected launch of the Commission in Fall 2023. [Click here](#) for more information and to apply to be a Commissioner.

## 11

Commission seats

## 2

seats set aside for youth ages 14-22







# CLIMATE PROTECTION AND DEFENSE

## GOAL #1

### Carbon Neutrality

Become a carbon neutral County with zero waste and zero emissions

## GOAL #2

### Resilient & Prepared County

Increase preparedness and resilience to shocks and stressors

## COUNTY OPERATIONS CARBON NEUTRALITY

The County of Santa Clara plans to set an ambitious goal to achieve carbon neutrality earlier than the 2045 deadline set by the State of California. The Office of Sustainability (OOS) and Facilities and Fleet Department (FAF) presented a draft Carbon Neutrality by 2030 Roadmap for County Operations to Board Committees in April. The next step will be to present the final plan to the Board for adoption in Fall 2023.

As part of that effort, the County continues work to expand electric vehicle (EV) charging station capacity. A capital project is underway to assess the electrical infrastructure for adding EV charging stations at the Berger Campus to power our medium and heavy-duty fleet vehicles located there. In addition, the County is participating in the PG&E EV Fleet Program that can offer financial incentives for installing EV charging station infrastructure at various County facilities. PG&E is currently conducting analysis to determine which County facilities will be selected for this program.



## COUNTY FLEET SERVICES RECEIVES TOP 50 LEADING FLEETS AWARD

**#6**  
overall in the nation

During the 2023 Government Fleet Exposition and Conference (GFX), the FAF – Fleet Management Division Team earned its second consecutive national Top 50 Leading Fleets Award. The County's Team improved upon last year's ranking of #12 and competitively achieved an overall ranking of #6 in the nation and #3 within the large fleet category. The Team has continued to improve, overcome challenges, and achieve results that were judged by industry experts to be worthy of the #6 ranking. Halving the ranking over last year is a noteworthy achievement considering the level of competition within the top ten rankings.



## SANTA CLARA VALLEY HEALTHCARE (SCVH) SIGNED THE FEDERAL HEALTH SECTOR CLIMATE PLEDGE ON MAY 18, 2023

Healthcare in the US accounts for 8-10% of total US greenhouse gas emissions. For this reason, it is essential that healthcare institutions urgently engage in efforts to decarbonize, and support local, national and global commitments to reduce emissions to limit further global warming. SCVH, with its 3 acute care hospitals and 15 community clinics comprises a large part of Santa Clara County's carbon footprint, and its decarbonization and climate resilience initiatives are essential to the success of the County's Sustainability Master Plan. Moreover, these initiatives are critical to the health and wellbeing of our community.

### The federal health sector pledge signed by SCVH includes the following elements:

#### 2023

**Develop and release a climate resilience plan** for continuous SCVH operations during/after a climate related stress or climate related disaster by the end of 2023, anticipating the needs of groups in our community that experience disproportionate risk of climate-related harm.

#### 2024

**Conduct an inventory of Scope 3** (supply chain) emissions by the end of 2024.

#### 2030

**Reduce organizational emissions** by minimum of 50%.

#### 2050

**Achieve net zero emissions**, accounting for progress on this goal every year.



### FACILITY ELECTRIFICATION ASSESSMENT

To support the County's carbon neutrality goal, the County conducted a Facility Electrification Assessment, which assessed the feasibility and costs to fully electrify the County's portfolio of buildings. The study found that the County's fuel cell generators and 12 locations (3 hospitals, jail and correctional facilities, County Government Center, 4 Valley Health Centers, Crime Lab, Sheriff Dept, and Berger Campus) account for over 90% of the County's total building natural gas use. 39% of the County's total building gas use is for just one site: Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (VMC). Two key actions (purchasing bio-gas for the existing fuel cells and the VMC Chiller Electrification Project) would allow the County to meet its 2030 goal of eliminating half of natural gas use.



## 90%

County's total building natural gas use coming from 13 locations

## 39%

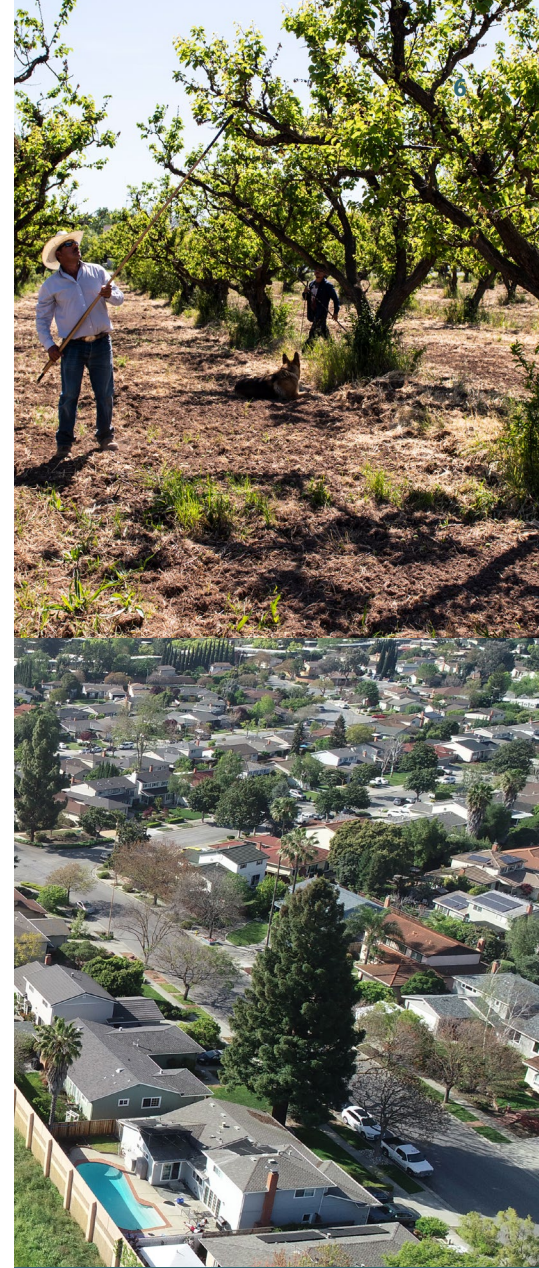
of total building gas use is from Santa Clara Valley Medical Center



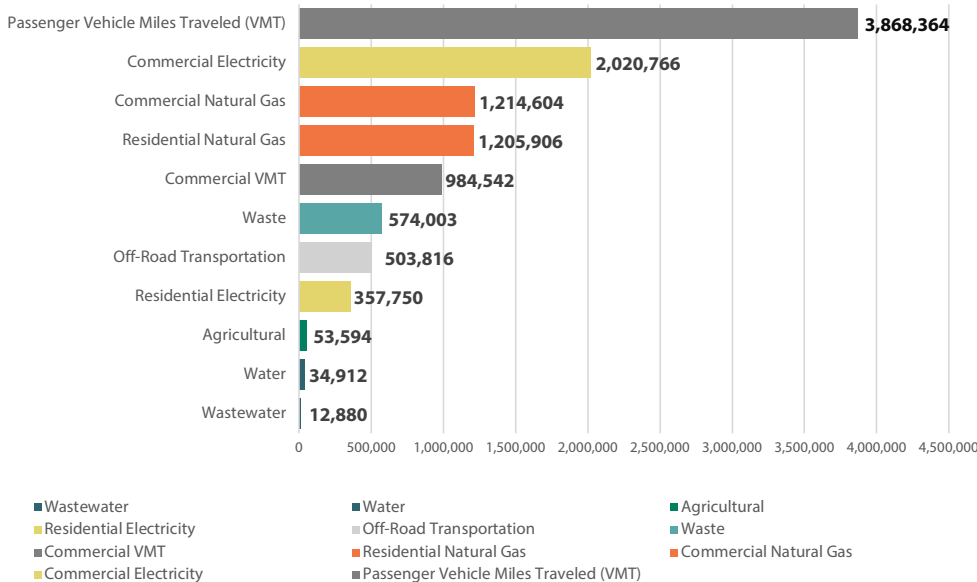
# CLIMATE ROADMAP 2035

As part of development of the Climate Roadmap 2035 (the Community Climate Action Plan), the County completed a greenhouse gas emissions inventory of **commercial agriculture practices**. Historically, the agriculture sector was not included in community inventories, however jurisdictions throughout the state, including San Mateo County, Contra Costa County, and Sacramento County, are now including agriculture in their community inventories. This is the first time Santa Clara County has developed a comprehensive analysis of emissions from agriculture, and it provides a crucial baseline for future monitoring. **Countywide, agriculture lands make up just 0.5% of total emissions, where as in unincorporated County, agriculture lands make up 12% of emissions.** However, agriculture lands can also provide important opportunities for carbon sequestration, which helps mitigate climate pollution. An analysis was conducted of potential strategies to increase carbon sequestration on agriculture lands and meetings are underway with agriculture stakeholders to share findings and solicit feedback on strategies and conducting additional engagement with the agriculture sector.

As an effort to support climate action planning in unincorporated county, OOS completed a community **Energy Resilience and Equity Study**, in partnership with Silicon Valley Clean Energy, that includes recommendations for advancing building electrification and energy resilience of existing residential and commercial building stock. The study identifies specific opportunities to decarbonize, improve resilience, and support equity across different building typologies and across varying geographic areas of unincorporated County.



## COUNTYWIDE GHG EMISSIONS (MT CO<sub>2</sub>E)



### ENERGY RESILIENCE AND EQUITY STUDY

#### Resilience and Equity Considerations

**3%** of households in unincorporated areas are below the poverty line, of which 54% are renters

#### Non-residential buildings

in unincorporated areas generate most of the emissions, despite being fewer in count and size

#### Majority of residential heating

is gas-based and should prioritize electrification to heat pumps and electric appliances



## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

### County Climate Collaborative

The Santa Clara Climate Collaborative continued to bring together stakeholders across the County to advance regional solutions to climate change. The Collaborative's Leadership Advisory Team (LAT) was formed to help guide its priorities and activities. The LAT is made up of leaders from five public agencies, four non-profit/community-based organizations, and one university to ensure representation from different sectors of the county.

The first Collaborative meeting of the year was held in-person at the Sunnyvale Community Center on May 4, 2023. There were nearly 60 attendees outside of Collaborative staff. This event prioritized networking and relationship building to foster collaboration among participants, with a strong emphasis on bringing together local initiatives and federal and state resources to amplify climate action efforts and increase community resilience. This meeting was also the launch of official partnership to the Collaborative where attendees were invited to sign a commitment letter to show their intention to participate in Collaborative activities moving forward.



### WORKGROUP

### Heat and Air Quality Resilience (HAQR)

**2**

Meetings hosted

February / 39 attendees

May / 30 attendees

The meetings included  
presentations from:

- Public Health Department, Climate Impact Compendium
- Breathe California, The State of the Air Report
- Santa Clara University, Assessing Extreme Heat Vulnerability for the Unhoused in San Jose

The HAQR Workgroup is currently developing a workplan for future activities.

### AWARDED

**\$300,000**

from the National Fish and Wildlife  
Foundation (NFWF)

To expand participation of community-based organizations in the County Climate Collaborative, as well as support planning and implementation of multi-benefit nature-based solutions to flooding and other climate hazards.

### SECURED

**\$42,000**

for Climate Resilient Communities  
from Resource Legacy Fund and  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

To assist with and advice on equity  
integration into the Collaborative.



AWARDED



**Climate Pollution  
Reduction Grant**

**\$1m**

Non-competitive grant from  
the U.S. Environmental Protection  
Agency (EPA)

From the U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency (EPA) Climate  
Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG)  
program on behalf of the San Jose-  
Sunnyvale-Santa Clara Metropolitan  
Statistical Area for regional climate  
action planning. OOS coordinated  
with eight agencies to develop project  
workplan, timeline, and budget.



AWARDED



**Youth Climate Initiative  
\$2m**

state grant requested by  
Senator Dave Cortese

To launch a Santa Clara County Youth Climate Initiative to elevate the leadership of youth in Santa Clara County on climate change and support youth from underserved communities to enhance their college and career preparedness. In May, OOS hosted a YCI partners meeting to document existing youth climate related initiatives in Santa Clara County. Through these meetings, OOS gathered information from 18 partner organizations on needs, opportunities, and resources related to the grant objectives and outcomes. OOS is now coordinating efforts with a Core Project Team, which include youth leaders and representatives from key partner organizations to support and inform the development of the project plan.





## PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

### Community Resilience

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is updating the Santa Clara County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJHMP) to assess the risks and vulnerabilities of local hazards on county residents and community assets. This update to the MJHMP is extremely timely given the multiple atmospheric rivers and winter storms that battered our area and caused major flooding during the first half of 2023. The MJHMP will include proposed long-term actions that reduce impacts on people and property. Local governments, special districts, and the County formed a planning partnership to help align planning efforts across the county and different jurisdictions. The planning effort has concluded and the Draft MJHMP has been published for public comment.

On the community side, the Public Health Department (PHD) secured funding to expand services, such as emergency preparedness, COVID, and food access resources, at community resiliency hubs in East San Jose, Gilroy and Mountain View. Resiliency hubs serve as trusted sites where local community can access resources, educational information, be connected to other agencies and other services by trusted members/leaders within the community. The hubs are being led by the Si Se Puede Collective, Nueva Vida and Community Action Team of Mountain View with additional support from Carry The Vision. The sites are mobile, stationary, and virtual to meet the needs of the specific community they serve. For example, the Community Action Team Mountain View is mobile, primarily working closely with community near the Rengstorff Park. Veggelution is a farm located in East San Jose and Nueva Vida has expanded from San Ysidro Park to apartment complexes and Las Animas Park in Gilroy.



### RESOURCE FAIR

During Earth Month in April, PHD and OOS participated in the quarterly Resource Fair at the Public Health Hub in San Jose to share sustainability and climate resilience resources. Activities included:

- Visiting the Climate Smart All-Electric Home demonstration trailer to explore the benefits of an all-electric home
- Learning how to use an electric induction cooktop
- Registering for free installations of home energy and water efficiency kits

This was the first time that sustainability initiatives and resources were incorporated at the Resource Fair.

**200**  
community members  
attended the event



## PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

### Emergency Response

During severe weather events, such as extreme heat days, storms, and freezing temperatures, Cooling and Warming Centers play a critical role in providing safe haven for our most vulnerable residents. When weather emergencies occur, the activation of these centers are part of the County's swift response to offer vital resources and shelter to ensure the safety and well-being of its residents.



#### COOLING CENTERS

On June 29, 2023, the National Weather Service issued a [Heat Advisory for the entire Bay Area beginning Friday, June 30 through Sunday, July 2](#). Inland areas braced for temperatures soaring into the 90s and even reaching the triple digits. Community members were encouraged to take precautions against the heat by seeking respite at the 23 cooling centers located throughout Santa Clara County.



#### STORMS AND WARMING CENTERS

In early 2023, the Bay Area faced a turbulent start as a series of atmospheric rivers impacted the region, bringing with them heavy rain, flooding, and strong winds that created hazards across Santa Clara County. The saturated soils raised the risk of further flooding and mudslides throughout the area.

On January 4, 2023, the County declared a local emergency due to the winter storms. Seven [County Libraries operated as warming centers, from January 3 to January 8, 2023](#). Evacuation warnings were issued for various areas, including HWY 101, Bolsa Road, the Watershed Areas of the Uvas Reservoir, the Pacheco Pass River Basin, and the Bloomfield Avenue Area in South County.

As frost and freezing temperatures returned to the region in late January, and again in mid February, 12 [warming centers were established](#) throughout Santa Clara County to provide much-needed refuge from the harsh weather conditions.

In late February, a [Winter Storm Watch was issued for the higher elevations in the South Bay](#), and 11 warming centers were swiftly activated, including all seven county libraries. The hours of [operation were extended, and the total number of warming centers eventually increased to 12](#) to accommodate the needs of the affected community members.

In March, Santa Clara County experienced cold temperatures and another onslaught of atmospheric rivers. The subsequent [Flood Watches](#) prompted the activation of 13 warming centers to provide essential support and respite to impacted community members. The [Frost Advisory](#) issued in late March activated seven warming centers for the community's use.



#### WILDFIRE PREVENTION

To help prepare for wildfire season, the Parks and Recreation Department (Parks) conducted a three-day training burn in Santa Teresa County Park in June. Prescribed burns help with reducing wildfire hazard, as well as improving rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restoring natural ecosystems. Parks equipment was on site during these burn operations, and patrols were conducted by Parks staff to ensure fires were fully extinguished.





# NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## GOAL #3

### Air and Water Resources

Maintain a healthy environment for all living creatures

## GOAL #4

### Natural Lands and Land Use

Enhance and protect natural and working lands

## STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

### Forest Health Plan

A Forest Health Plan was completed by Parks earlier this year to guide forest management activities at Sanborn and Upper Stevens Creek County Parks. Unhealthy forests have the potential for species loss, reduction in species diversity, epidemic levels of pests and disease, air and water quality degradation, negatively impacting wildlife populations, increasing wildfire hazards, and reducing recreational benefits. The Forest Health Plan recommends projects focused on fuel breaks to help slow the spread of wildfire, landscape forest health and resilience, and prescribed fire to reduce fuel loads and re-establish natural conditions. Parks provided outreach and several opportunities for public and agency review and comment on the Plan, with the intent to inform owners of neighboring properties, interested public agencies, and members of the public of the development of the Forest Health Plan and the Department's plan for implementation. A report and a draft of the Plan were presented to the Housing, Land Use, Environment, and Transportation (HLUET) Committee in June, and the Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in August.

## STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

### Urban Forestry

# 982

trees planted

During the fiscal year 2022-2023, spanning from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, Our City Forest (OCF), in support of the County's goal to plant 3,000 trees and expand the urban canopy, successfully planted a total of 982 trees in priority areas based on factors such as social vulnerability, excessive heat, low canopy, and human health.

### Webinar

On June 13, 2023, Canopy.org hosted a webinar titled "Growing Climate Resilient Urban Forest." The webinar garnered significant interest, with a total of 256 individuals registering. Of these registered participants, 155 attended the live session. This webinar is part of an urban forestry educational program made possible through grant funds from the County.





**PARKS AND RECREATION**

**Countywide Trails Master Plan Update**

County Parks continues to work on updating the Countywide Trails Master Plan Map to better reflect current planning and changes to the countywide trails network. County Parks conducted significant public outreach in spring 2023, which included the development of a GIS-based online feedback tool to seek public input as well as public meetings and presentations to City Commissions and other advisory boards. The purpose of the public meetings, city presentations, and online engagement was to gather input on the County’s proposed update to the Countywide Trails Master Plan Map and receive the public’s thoughts on proposed conceptual changes and trail prioritization, including location-specific feedback as part of the online survey. County Parks is currently reviewing and incorporating feedback received, and the map update is anticipated to return to the Parks and Recreation Committee, HLUET, and the Board of Supervisors in the winter/spring of 2024 for approval.



**WATER STEWARDSHIP**

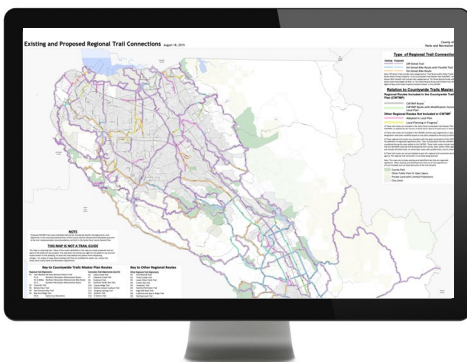
**NATIONAL RIVER CLEANUP DAY  
MAY 20, 2023**

**650**  
pounds of trash and  
recyclables collected

Over 60 volunteers at Calero, Stevens Creek, and Uvas Reservoirs collected nearly 650 lbs of trash and recyclables for National River Cleanup day. When trash falls to the ground in our neighborhoods, on roadways, and in parks, that trash eventually makes it to rivers, streams, and the ocean. Volunteers of all ages worked with staff at the events to stop trash from ending up in our waterways.

**COUNTYWIDE CLEANUP EVENTS TOTALS**

**50** sites along waterways  
**700** volunteers  
**30,000** pounds of trash and recyclables collected







# COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

## GOAL #5

### Healthy Resources Communities

Improve health and well-being and eliminate health inequities

## GOAL #6

### Equitable and Inclusive County

Encourage civic participation and leadership to achieve full

## HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

### Juntos Initiative

The Park Rx Program graduated over 20 youth as part of the Captains of the Forest component of the Program. Youth participants are now playing a leadership role assisting at programs leading park walks and activities. Over the last few months over 100 people have been attending Park Rx walks. As part of the Park Rx programming, a microgreens 3 part series was held in collaboration with Taylor Street Farm. Over 25 adult participants are now growing microgreens at home.

### Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

PHD continues to work with VTA and SCC parks on system level changes to address access to parks and transportation barriers. One system change has been the training of Santa Clara County Parks staff, PHD staff and community partners on facilitating community nature sculptures in park settings. Participants received training from Zach Pine, a nationally known nature sculpture artist. To learn more about Zach Pine and community nature sculptures, [click here](#).



## AIR QUALITY

PHD has been conducting outreach to organizations to secure placements of portable air filters that could be utilized to mitigate the impacts of wildfire smoke. With the BAAQMD Home Air Filtration project, PHD is developing a system where pediatricians from SCVH could refer qualified patients to receive home air filters. It is anticipated the referral process will be implemented in Fall 2023.





# PROSPEROUS AND JUST ECONOMY

## GOAL #7

### Prosperous County

Cultivate a prosperous and economically vibrant County

## GOAL #8

### Lead by Example

Leverage County resources and influence to advance sustainability

## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

### Green Business

Since January 2023, there have been 14 total certifications, including 9 new certifications and 5 recertifications. The Program has also recognized 13 entry-level businesses. Of these 27 total businesses, 12 are BBPOC<sup>1</sup>/LGBTQIA<sup>2</sup>-owned. The Program's first youth summer internship launched with 10 interns registering 19 businesses.

### Workforce Development

The County continued to administer the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) programs that focused on developing local government workforce, as well as our youth. Trainings on Energy Code Compliance was held for staff from County of Santa Clara (10 attendees), City of Milpitas (15 attendees), and City of San Jose (65 attendees). For the youth, Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, a BayREN partner, helped train and employ nine Santa Clara County youth to conduct Green House Calls in their home communities and were provided opportunities to explore careers in green industries.



## EFFORTS TO DATE

### Rising Sun Center for Opportunity



# 127

home energy and water efficiency kits installed

<sup>1</sup> Black, Brown, Indigenous, and/or Person of Color  
<sup>2</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual



## COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

### Employee Education

In celebration of Earth Month in April, the County held several activities to help employees become better sustainability practitioners:

- **OOS co-led the April 2023 Meeting at the Bridge “Climate Action for Health and Hope” event** to discuss the impact of a changing climate on our health and why we should remain hopeful as we work together to combat the climate crisis to ensure a healthy community for today and future generations.
- **In partnership, PHD and OOS launched the Climate Change: What We Can Do course for County employees in sccLearn.** The course covers the basics of climate change, what the County is doing to address climate change, what individual actions you can take, and the intersection of climate change and health equity.

**240+**  
employees  
completed training  
April - June 2021

### Sustainable Purchasing Policy - Good Food Purchasing

To support implementation of the sustainable purchasing practices across the County’s food related purchases, PHD is contracting with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to implement the Good Food Purchasing Program. The Center has completed a baseline assessment of all foods and beverages purchased in FY 21-22 for all three County hospitals. Based on the assessment, value-based procurement goals have been set and include increasing purchasing of water in non-plastic packages, meat free of antibiotics and hormones, and locally and regionally grown produce.



**CLIMATE ACTION FOR HEALTH AND HOPE**

**1,239**  
employees attended  
event virtually



### GRANT FUNDING RECEIVED

#### OOS RECEIVED

**\$3.7 million**

to advance climate efforts

- \$2 million State grant to launch the Santa Clara Youth Climate Initiative
- \$1 million EPA CPRG grant for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution
- \$365,000 BayREN grant to promote energy efficiency and electrification to residents, property owners and businesses
- \$300,000 NFWF grant to continue work on the County Climate Collaborative and climate resilience planning

#### PHD RECEIVED

**\$16,515,503**

from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to build internal capacity and increase community resiliency

#### Funds Include

- \$1,761,777 to be used toward resiliency outcomes
- \$1,085,594 to be used for climate change-related activities

#### Activities Include

- Developing a Resident Advisory Board that will help implement solutions around food systems and climate change
- Conducting resident-led neighborhood assessments to identify gaps in the food system and implement solutions





**Office of Sustainability Team**

Visit us at [sustainability.sccgov.org](http://sustainability.sccgov.org)

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**PREPARED BY**

County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability



County of Santa Clara  
**Sustainability  
Master Plan**  
Livable. Equitable. Resilient.