



2022 Mid-Year Sustainability Highlights

September 2022

Office of Sustainability, County of Santa Clara

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Acknowledgments

The 2022 Mid-Year Sustainability Report includes updates from the following departments:

- CEO** Office of the County Executive
- OEM** Office of the County Executive - Office of Emergency Management
- OOS** Office of Sustainability
- Parks** Parks and Recreation Department
- PHD** Public Health Department

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Facilities and Fleet Department / Parks and Recreation Department / Office of Communications and Public Affairs / Office of Sustainability / Public Health Department

Introduction

The County continues to work towards the goals and targets outlined in the [Sustainability Master Plan \(SMP\)](#). The 2022 Mid-Year Sustainability Highlights includes key successes and notable changes under the four Priority Areas of Climate Protection and Defense, Natural Resources and Environment, Community Health and Well-Being, and Prosperous and Just Economy, as defined by the SMP. The report will focus on achievements and sustainability wins for the period of January to June 2022.

To operationalize the SMP, the Office of Sustainability (OOS) led the following activities to support internal coordination, collaboration, and communications across County departments:

- Hosted two Sustainability Working Group quarterly meetings and coordinated a Learning Exchange to promote continual sharing of best practices;
- Provided on-going support to the following SMP working groups: Sustainable Purchasing Policy, Green Building Policy, Telecommute, Equity, and an Employee Climate Training Ad-Hoc Committee;
- Coordinated with departments on the [2021 Annual Sustainability Report](#) and maintained the SMP website and data dashboards;
- Launched the internal Sustainability SharePoint site for County Employees;
- Released four Green Memes employee newsletters and integrated an Employee Blog; and
- Celebrated Earth Month in April by hosting a Lunch and Learn Webinar Series.





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

Climate Roadmap

Efforts continue to develop and finalize the Community Climate Action Plan ([Climate Roadmap 2030](#)) which will outline actions the County will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County and joint effort with partners to reduce countywide emissions. In order to finalize the Roadmap strategies, efforts in 2022 have focused on community and partner input.

- Mini grants of \$5,000 each were awarded to three community organizations to help conduct outreach to hard-to-reach audiences and survey their communities on climate-related needs and challenges. The organizations, Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy and Services (CARAS), Breathe CA, and Support Life Foundation, used a variety of strategies to engage priority community members, including one-on-one meetings with community leaders, in-person outreach via tabling at schools and businesses and during food distributions, and conducting community workshops, focus groups and surveys.
- Held a workshop with public agency staff in Santa Clara County to develop regional strategies for building electrification and transportation.
- Invited input on the proposed Climate Roadmap strategies through the Consider.it tool, which was made available in both English and Spanish and a virtual community workshop.

The public outreach and input gathering period of the Climate Roadmap has been completed and a set of greenhouse gas emissions strategies to be included in the plan is being finalized.

Screenshot from Climate Roadmap Consider.it Tool (<https://climateroadmap.consider.it/>)

The screenshot shows a navigation bar with categories: Buildings, Transportation, Waste and Water, and Agriculture. The 'Active and Public Transportation' section is expanded, showing two survey items:

- Bikeway Connections: Identify opportunities and facilitate stakeholder discussions to connect the countywide trails network to public transit for easier access at the beginning and end of bus and train routes.** (3/23/2022, 5 pros, 6 cons, closed). A dot plot shows 54 opinions with a 78% average support.
- Provide access to secure bike parking at key destinations.** (3/23/2022, 6 pros, 6 cons, closed). A dot plot shows 59 opinions with a 70% average support.

Green Power for the Win

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced that the County of Santa Clara is #6 on Top 30 Local Governments List of the largest green power users from the Green Power Partnership! The County has an annual green power usage of 134,727,269 kWh, which is equivalent to 7,341 homes' energy use for one year.

County Fleet Services Earns National Recognition

The County's Facilities and Fleet Department (FAF) was ranked as the 12th leading fleet in the nation by Government Fleet Magazine at the Government Fleet Expo & Conference in Detroit. FAF was commended for its 98% fleet availability, 70-75% technician productivity and turnaround time of 75% within 24 hours. They are also committed to reducing the County's carbon footprint and are working hard to transition 600 trucks and 100 other light duty vehicles to electric before sale of new fossil fuel cars and light trucks end by 2035.

Electrification of Buildings and Equipment

- The County issued a Professional Agreement to kW Engineering for completion of electrification feasibility studies at County owned facilities. Work on this project kicked off in March and results of the studies will be available by the end of the year.
- FAF received \$1M in funding for FY '23 to install an estimated 55-60 level 2 electric vehicle charging station ports at the Berger campus. As a result of this project, the County will have much-needed infrastructure to support the purchase of more electric fleet vehicles.
- In preparation for Assembly Bill 1346 which will phase out the sale of new gas-powered small off-road engines in California by 2024, the FAF and Parks Departments are currently developing a plan to electrify outdoor gas-powered equipment such as leaf blowers, lawn mowers, and other equipment with small gas-powered engines. Such equipment emit nitrogen oxides (NOx), reactive organic gases (ROG), and particulate matter (PM), and adversely affect air quality and human health. As a start, the Parks Department is committed to have all new powered landscape equipment in County Parks be electric unless gas is the only available option (e.g., large chainsaws). This means that all blowers, line trimmers and chainsaws up to 18 inches will be electric moving forward, and as gas equipment wears out, the Department will be replacing them with electric equipment.

Waste Diversion

A waste audit of five County campuses was completed in February 2022. The study included Highland Campus, Valley Medical Center (VMC), Correctional Facility (Elmwood), Civic Center, Charcot Campus building. Auditors surveyed a total of 1,725 pounds of waste from five County facility locations. A few common findings among all five of the facilities include:

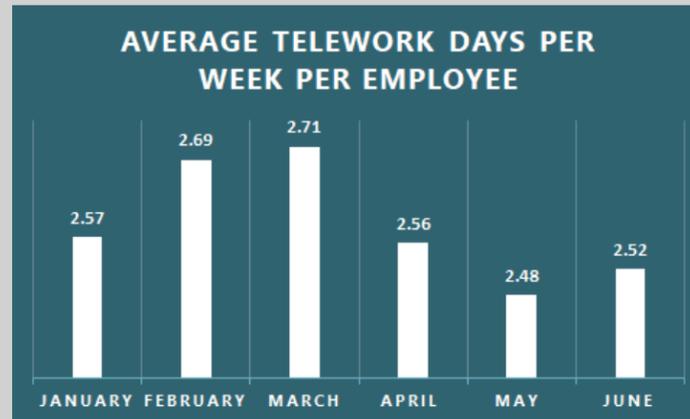
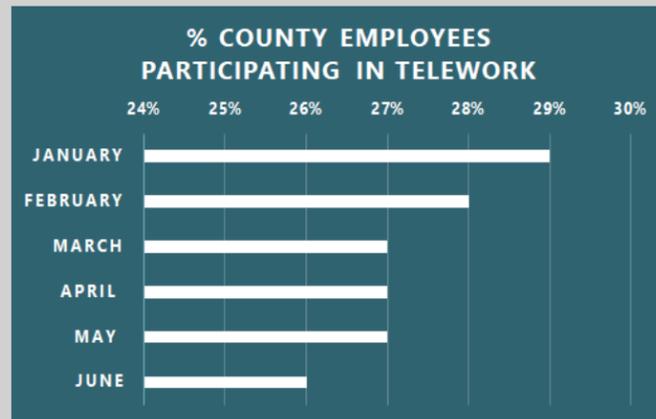
- Organics stream contamination accounts for up to 40% at some facilities.
- Plastic film from trash liners is a significant percentage of contamination.
- Office paper and cardboard make up a significant portion of waste from all waste streams.
- The recycling collection contained little contamination at most sampled sites.
- Landfill collection contained a significant amount of organic waste.

Data collected from this audit will help FAF develop strategies for achieving 100% diversion goal.

Employee Commute and Teleworking

- The Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (SCVMC) Shuttle pilot, which provides free nonstop shuttle rides from Diridon Station to the SCVMC Campus, was extended through the end of the calendar year. The Administration will continue to explore future funding options for a more permanent program to support other methods of transportation other than single occupancy vehicles.
- The County continues to implement its Countywide Teleworking Policy which recognizes that flexible work arrangements and reduced commutes may benefit the employee, the department, and County residents by making more efficient use of staff time. Based on the percentage of employees teleworking for the first half of 2022, the County is fulfilling its commitment to meet the Cut the Commute pledge goals of having at least 25% of eligible employees teleworking at least 1-2 days a week.

Employee Teleworking Data from January - June 2022



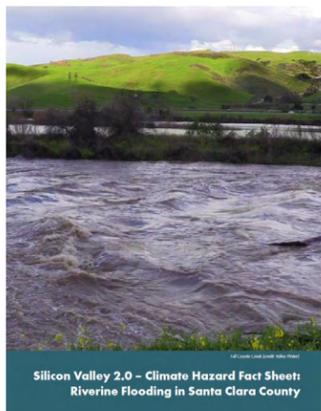
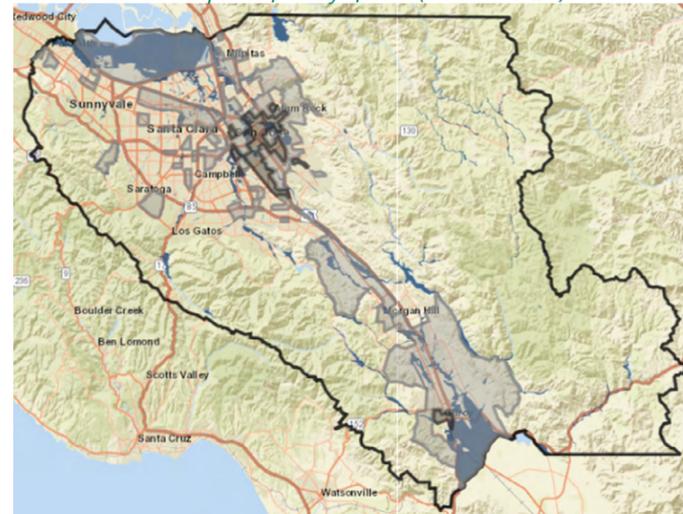
Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

An update to the [Silicon Valley 2.0 \(SV 2.0\) Climate Change Preparedness Tool](#) was launched and includes:

- Recent climate data based on the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- A social vulnerability index (SoVI) to highlight disadvantaged communities exposed to climate hazards.
- Fact sheets that summarize the projected climate impacts on both infrastructure.

SV 2.0 provides an exposure and vulnerability assessment of the County's infrastructure assets to four climate hazards: sea level rise and storm surge, riverine flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire. It also provides an economic risk analysis that estimates the cost of not implementing measures to adapt to these hazards.

Riverine flooding map over SoVI showing socially vulnerable communities in the path of 100-yr flood (source: SV 2.0)



County Resilience Planning

The County is updating elements of the General Plan as well as its Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) to account for climate hazards and their impact on disadvantaged communities and build the community resilience. Completion of these updates will guide development in the County to be more equitable and climate resilient.

- The Safety Element is currently being updated per State requirements. This element identifies and includes safety considerations during the decision-making and planning process of future developments within the County and the update will include goals and policies that address considerations for wildfire issues and climate adaptation and resilience.
- The Environmental Justice (EJ) Element is a new element required by [Senate Bill 1000](#) that identifies disadvantaged communities and the objectives and policies that prioritize improvements and programs that address their needs. Efforts are being made to align the EJ and Safety Element updates so estimated date of completion of both elements is June 2023.

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) defines resilience as the ability of people and their communities to anticipate, accommodate and positively adapt to or thrive amidst changing climate conditions and hazard events.

- Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) secured a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to fund the 2022 update of the LHMP. The update of the plan is estimated to begin in the fall of 2022 and will take approximately 10 months. All 15 cities and towns within Santa Clara County have agreed to participate in the planning process, with Santa Clara County Fire Department and Valley Water joining as special districts.

Extreme Heat Adaptation

OEM and the Santa Clara County Library District have partnered to offer all County libraries as cooling centers during extreme heat events. Since January 2022, three heat events have triggered the activation of cooling centers. County libraries were open an average of 7 days for each event.



Prescribed burn at Santa Teresa County Park



Wildfire Prevention

Earlier this year, Parks Ranger staff organized a series of prescribed burns of brush piles at County Park locations, including at Calero, Santa Teresa, and Ed Levin, as part of the Department's fuel load reduction efforts. Cal Fire engines and Parks equipment are on site during these burn operations, and patrols are conducted by Parks staff to ensure the piles are fully extinguished. These burns are vital for the reduction of the fuel load and lowers the risk of intense fire activity in County Parklands.

Regional Collaboration

Through the County Climate Collaborative, the County continues to build a cross-sector network and community of practice for public agencies, academia, nonprofit and community-based organizations, and business and community leaders to advance regional solutions to climate change. The Collaborative held its first in-person meeting in June 2022, at Valley Water's headquarters in San Jose. Important conversations were had, and valuable input was gathered as members finalized the Collaborative's vision and goals and discussed multi-benefit criteria needed for resilience planning.



On June 29, 2022, the Heat & Air Quality Resilience (HAQR) Working Group launched as part of the Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative. Thirty two people, including staff, attended the HAQR launch. The focus of HAQR is to share research and data, leverage resources, and coordinate implementation of strategies and projects to increase the county's resilience to extreme heat and impaired air quality. HAQR is co-chaired by the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department and Office of Sustainability.



The network was also expanded to include the existing Santa Clara Valley Urban Forestry Alliance (SCVUFA) as a working group of the County Collaborative. Fourteen cities and townships in the region have agreed to participate in SCVUFA. This alliance facilitates collaboration and sharing of tools and resources, expanding and preserving urban tree canopy and mitigating detrimental effects on the environment and human health, especially in areas with disadvantaged populations. Several regional nonmunicipal stakeholders are also participating in the Alliance including: the Sierra Club, Los Altos Green Hills, Stanford University, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and the Santa Clara Audubon Society.



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

Urban Forestry

- In collaboration with OOS, Parks Department was recently provided with the opportunity to receive trees that had been donated through One Tree Planted, and the Parks Department has accepted and will be planting a combined 240 trees, valued at \$394,500, throughout the park system, including at Calero, Grant, Santa Teresa and Hellyer parks. This effort will increase urban tree canopy in developed areas of County parks in line with the County's efforts to mitigate climate change impacts.
- The Office of Sustainability and the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) kicked off a 1,000-tree planting campaign on Arbor Day in April this year that will put roots in the ground at school campuses and surrounding neighborhoods throughout the county.

To facilitate tree planting and volunteer engagement, OOS, SCCOE and local urban forestry non-profit Our City Forest held an event at the SCCOE's South County Annex educational facility that featured school tree plantings by volunteers and speakers talking about the importance of tree planting and urban forestry.

- Over the past two planting seasons, 1,791 urban trees have been planted with trained tree stewards committed to providing necessary care and watering. A goal has been set, through the 2022-23 planting season, to plant an additional 1,209 trees in priority areas based on factors such as social vulnerability, excessive heat, low canopy cover, and human health.

Tree planting campaign kick-off in South County Annex educational facility during Arbor Day 2022



Water Conservation

- On May 24, 2022, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution urging all residents, businesses, and other entities in the county to adopt water conservation practices with the goal of achieving 15% reduction in water use compared to 2019 usage, regardless of the source of the water (e.g., municipal water, groundwater, etc.). To meet the Board's call for water conservation, the Parks Department is implementing a variety of practices to reduce water use in County Parks, including installing low flow toilets, converting turf to water efficient landscapes, prioritizing water leak detection and repairs, and reducing the run-time of irrigation timers for landscaping in developed areas of Parks by 15%.



- FAF issued a Professional Agreement for completion of [Energy and Water Efficiency Audits](#) at County's hospital facilities (O'Connor Hospital, De Paul Health Center, and St. Louise Regional Center), as well as Valley Medical Center at Bascom.

Trash Reduction: National River Cleanup Day

On May 21, 2022, over 75 volunteers at 5 parks collected nearly 700 pounds of trash 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. By engaging volunteers of all ages (while wearing masks and socially distancing, of course), we were able to stop nearly a ton of trash from ending up in our waterways. This also provided an opportunity for people to see others and work together after over a year apart, and volunteers and staff really enjoyed the experience.



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 potential

Juntos Initiative

The Juntos Initiative continues to grow, with a new Open Space Authority contract signed on January 10, 2022. In January 2022, a bilingual Health Education Associate was hired to support program coordination and to provide support at quarterly activities. The program is expanding to all 40 VMC pediatricians and twelve quarterly activities have been developed and implemented and a total of 313 participants (including children and families) have attended.

Air Quality

The Public Health Department (PHD) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAQQMD) are partnering on new and emerging air filtration programs to help with indoor air quality. Processes are being developed that will allow PHD to disseminate air filtration units to congregate settings and PHD clients with asthma or other respiratory lung disease.



Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights Adopted

In March 2022, the Board of Supervisor's adopted the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBOR). The key objectives of the COBOR are to: raise awareness of the importance of a child's connection to nature, engage the community in a shared vision where all children can access the outdoors and to ensure equitable access to nature for all children in our County. Staff is currently developing a website specifically for COBOR and working with external and internal partners to disseminate materials in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.



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

Green Business

Since January 2022, there have been 51 total certifications, including 9 new certifications and 42 recertifications. This is a 196% increase from this time last year. Businesses are recovering from the effects of the pandemic and Green Business staff have adjusted to a hybrid model to successfully cater to businesses' needs. We are currently on track to meet program requirements.

Sustainable Purchasing Policy

The Sustainable Purchasing Policy (SPP) working group has finalized the paper appendix and is in the process of finalizing the compost and mulch appendices to comply with SB 1383 requirements for paper product purchasing standards. The working group also created an internal newsletter for County departments and presented at the Procurement Liaison Committee meeting on the upcoming changes to the requirements for recycled content in paper purchases and limiting the amount of new paper being used and purchased in the County.

Workforce Development

Santa Clara County youth are being trained to promote energy efficiency in homes as a way to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In partnership with Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) and Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, the Green House Call program trained six local youth as Energy Specialists and two Site Program Managers. Together, the team continues to provide and install home energy and water efficiency kits for homeowners and renters in Santa Clara County at no cost.

Santa Clara County youth trained for the Green House Call program



Employee Leadership and Learning

- Climate and health are closely interrelated and PHD is leading the way in educating their staff on the how climate impacts human health. As of June 30, 2022, 81% of all PHD staff have completed a Climate, Health and Equity training. To expand on this training and open it up to all County employees, a countywide climate, health, and equity training is being created with the help of County staff across different disciplines and positions.
- In celebration of Earth Month in April, the Office of Sustainability hosted a Lunch and Learn Webinar Series that focused on steps that every County employee can take to help address climate change at work and home. The series covered three topics including induction cooking, transportation choices, and waste reduction. Over 300 employees learned everyday actions that can make a big difference for the health of our community – and our planet!

Earth Day, Every Day Employee Webinar Series Details:

Plug In to Induction Cooking: The Faster, Safer, and Healthier Way to Cook!	Featured a live cooking experience about electric induction cooking: a safer, healthier, and higher-performance cooking alternative to natural gas – for cuisines of all kinds.
Zero Waste @ Work	Revealed where the solid waste from County buildings goes and how it's processed and recycled.
Are You Looking for a Better Commute?	Highlighted the various transportation programs available to County employees to make commutes a little easier.

In person participants at the Plug In to Induction Cooking webinar that was live-streamed to a virtual audience





Office of Sustainability Team



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Office of Sustainability

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