



Sustainability Annual Report

2023

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY, COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA



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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following departments provided their updates and progress on sustainability goals for 2023:

CEO	Office of the County Executive
CEPA	Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency
DESJ	Division of Equity and Social Justice - Office of the County Executive
DPD	Department of Planning and Development
FAF	Facilities and Fleet Department
OEM	Office of Emergency Management - Office of the County Executive
OSH	Office of Supportive Housing - Office of the County Executive
OOS	Office of Sustainability - Office of the County Executive
Parks	Parks and Recreation Department
PRC	Procurement Department
PHD	Public Health Department
RDA	Roads and Airports Department
Reentry	Diversion and Reentry Services
ROV	Registrar of Voters
SCCLD	Santa Clara County Library District
SCVH	Santa Clara Valley Healthcare
SSA	Social Services Agency

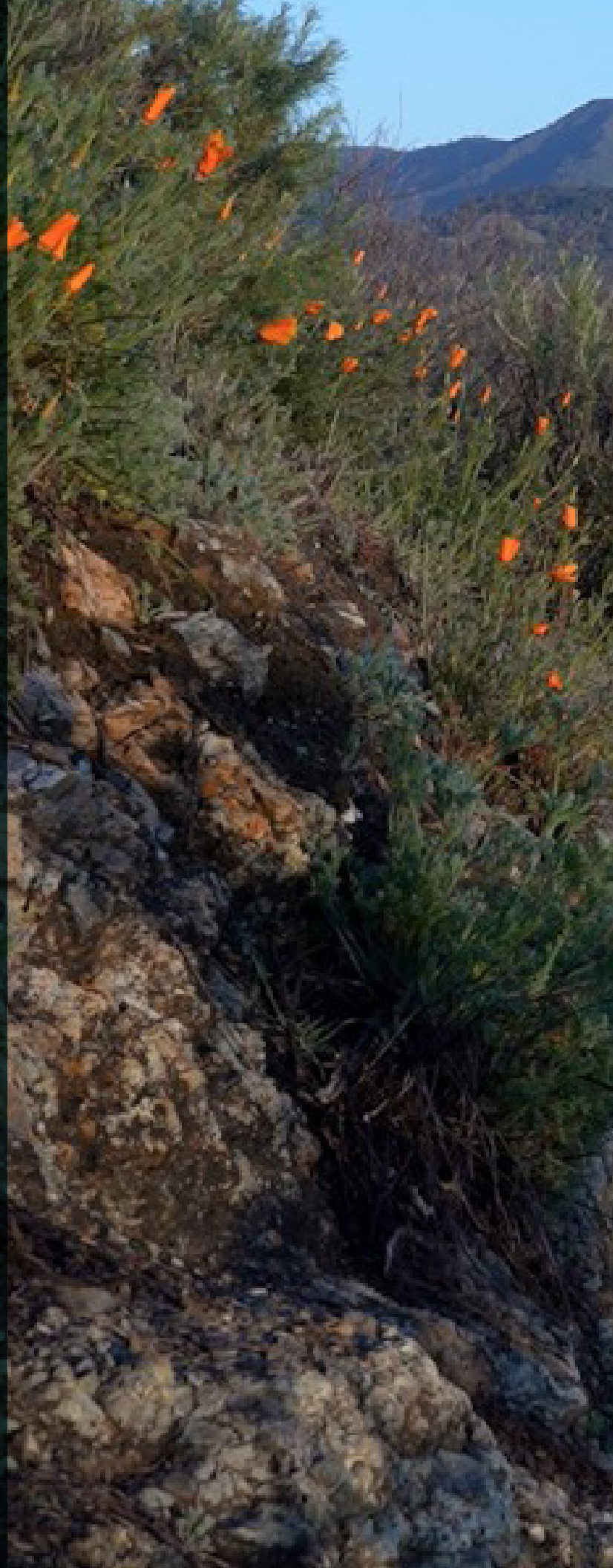
PHOTO CREDITS

Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Planning and Development
Facilities and Fleet Department
Office of Sustainability
Parks and Recreation Department
Public Health Department
Santa Clara Valley Healthcare

REFLECTIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

A Deeper Focus on Resiliency

2023 was a year of meaningful achievements across Santa Clara County as we continue to reflect on and implement better ways to improve operations and connect with and serve communities that face underinvestment in physical and social infrastructure, linguistic isolation, and disproportionate climate impacts. From prioritizing climate action and resiliency in County operations, holding community meetings in multiple languages and offering food and childcare, to planting trees to abate heat in targeted neighborhoods, we deepen our commitment to our residents and our future.





Office of Sustainability and Resilience (OSR)

We are excited to announce that the Office of Sustainability (OOS) will soon be renamed the Office of Sustainability and Resilience (OSR) to recognize that climate change is already impacting our communities and reflect the importance of integrating resilience in our work. This change will more accurately communicate both internally within the County and to our communities and external partners the breadth and depth of our office's focus on building systems and communities that can adapt, grow, and thrive from shocks and stresses. Sustainability and resilience, when addressed together, provide co-benefits that enable society to continue to adapt in the face of change. This new name affirms our commitment to building a livable, equitable, and climate resilient county together.

In 2024, we also look forward to convening the newly formed Santa Clara County Sustainability Commission, which include two youth members, providing a conduit to community input on sustainability and climate issues.

County Operations

Carbon Neutrality by 2030 Roadmap for County Operations Adopted

The County made large strides this year in our journey toward carbon neutrality. In October 2023, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution approving the Carbon Neutrality by 2030 Roadmap for County Operations. This plan sets guidelines on how we can reach net zero carbon emissions a full 15 years ahead of the State's deadline.

Santa Clara Valley Healthcare Climate Achievements

One County entity that is already leading in this work is Santa Clara Valley Healthcare (SCVH). SCVH signed the federal Health Sector Climate Pledge and completed its 2023 goal of creating a Climate Resilience Plan. They created a Climate Action Collaborative to operationalize climate action within various SCVH hospitals and programs. This Collaborative identified various opportunities in their operations, resulting in 33,358 pounds of waste diverted from the landfill, transitioning away from single-use plastic bottles, offering healthier and less carbon-intensive food options, and more.

County Fleet and Sustainability Purchasing Program Recognized

County departments continue to receive recognition for their sustainability efforts. Our County Fleet was ranked #6 in the nation and #19 in the NAFA Green Fleet Awards, and Procurement won the 2023 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement for our Sustainability Purchasing Policy and Program.





Collaboration and Partnerships

Building Equitable Climate Resilience Together

As we reflect on all the efforts currently underway, the common thread weaving through our journey towards sustainability and resilience is partnerships. The strong growth of the Santa Clara Climate Collaborative demonstrates increasing awareness, need, and urgency to build our region's resilience to climate change together. In 2023, the Collaborative launched a pathway for its diverse stakeholders to become official participants. By the end of the year, 33 CBOs and cross-jurisdictional partners had joined. Collaborative partnerships raised \$4 million collectively to advance equitable climate action across four impact areas: achieving net zero emissions, empowering communities to build climate resilience, preparing communities for extreme heat and impaired air quality, and decreasing flood risk.

Focus on Youth Development

Many partnership efforts are focused on growing the capacity and leadership of our county's youth in a climate resilient future. Caltrans, San Jose Conservation Corps, BayREN, Acterra, and the Rising Sun Center for Opportunity continue to provide green workforce training to local youth through the litter abatement programs, Green Business Summer Internship Program, and the Green House Call Program, respectively. The Santa Clara County Youth Climate Initiative (YCI) launched in 2023, bringing together five organizations to lead efforts in developing programs for climate literacy, youth engagement and leadership, climate action and climate focused careers.



Community Oriented

Addressing Language Barriers in Home Electrification

We sought new and creative ways to connect with our diverse residents to address their needs in a climate resilient future. To overcome language barriers in home electrification, the County hosted its first in person bilingual induction cooking experience for the Vietnamese American Community in partnership with the Bay Area Regional Energy Network and ICAN. 185 residents enjoyed the event with celebrity Chef Tú David Phu, leading to more than 70% of surveyed attendees considering the switch to induction stovetops.

Funding Food Providers Serving Vulnerable Communities

To improve food access, reduce food waste, and create a more sustainable food system, the County continues to aggressively implement its Food Systems Workplan. Key successes in 2023 include hiring a Food Systems Manager and allocating \$4.7M in funding to 18 CBO food providers through the Direct Food Assistance Grant Program to serve more than 500,000 individuals with particular focus on children, seniors, and unhoused individuals. Groups like the Food System Kitchen Cabinet and the Climate Resilience and Food Systems Resident Advisory Committee are collaborating to implement the Workplan and support community involvement in the process.

Prioritizing Health and Well-Being

In response to concerns about air quality from residents around Reid-Hillview County Airport, the County has been selling only unleaded aviation gasoline at Reid-Hillview and San Martin Airport to reduce the airborne lead exposure of vulnerable populations including children. We also continue work to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Through the Public Health-led Juntos Program, over 1,300 children and adults participated in hikes and gardening activities; 2,000 free County Park parking passes were provided to Juntos families; and the Parks Department and Santa Clara County Library District expanded their Library Parks Pass Program which allows anyone to “check out” a parking pass to visit county parks for free.







COUNTY OPERATIONS

County adopts Carbon Neutral by 2030 goal for County Operations

CARBON NEUTRAL KEY MEASURES

The County of Santa Clara has set an ambitious goal to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030, a full 15 years ahead of the State of California’s 2045 deadline.

- Electrifying Valley Medical Center’s (VMC) chillers to reduce County’s total natural gas usage by 25-30%
- Offering transit subsidies and additional EV charging stations to encourage employees to use public transportation or drive electric vehicles.
- Electrify light duty fleet, as well as medium-heavy duty vehicles, as feasible

Carbon Neutral Initiatives

The County of Santa Clara has set an ambitious goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, a full 15 years ahead of the State of California’s 2045 deadline. In October 2023, the Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution approving the [Carbon Neutrality by 2030 Roadmap for County Operations](#).

Goals of the Roadmap

- #1 Reduce natural gas use by 50% in County buildings
- #2 Cut commute emissions by 74% and County fleet emissions by 75%
- #3 Divert 100% of organic waste

An Operational Emissions Inventory will be conducted in 2024 to quantify and measure progress.

To be able to reach these goals, County departments are looking both broadly and deeply for opportunities to make their operations more sustainable and to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Zero Waste

To support our departments in their journey to carbon neutrality, the Board of Supervisors, on September 19, 2023, approved an agreement with GreenWaste Recovery for waste service to all County-owned facilities that will help us make a big step toward advancing the County’s Zero Waste goals. Execution of this agreement completes a key strategy identified in the Carbon Neutrality Road Map to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Service under the new agreement will commence January 1, 2024, which will include 1) Transitioning of facilities to a more efficient 3-dumpster system for waste, recyclables, and compostable materials; 2) Implementing a waste service “right-sizing” approach, wherein bin sizes and service days will be adjusted to align with the volume of waste generated; 3) A streamlined system for maintenance staff and facility managers to efficiently request waste services; and 4) Training, outreach and education to County maintenance staff and general workforce on waste diversion.

Other Accomplishments in Carbon Neutrality

20% reduction in gas-powered equipment

20% of Parks and Recreation Department's (Parks) gas-powered landscape equipment, such as blowers, line trimmers, and chainsaws up to 18 inches, have been replaced by electric alternatives. Efforts continue to transition to all electric as gas equipment wears out.

\$40M energy efficiency measures

County Hospital Energy and Water Audit Report was completed summer 2023, identifying over \$40 million of energy efficiency measures at the Valley Medical Center, St. Louise Regional and O'Connor Hospitals, including LED lighting and occupancy controls, retrocommissioning, HVAC and fan upgrade measures.

31% participation in telework

31% of employees participated in telework in 2023, with an average of 1.5 telework days per week per employee.

703 employees completed Climate Change course

As of December 2023, 703 employees across 17 departments in the County have completed the course: Climate Change: What we can do., with 80 currently in progress, and 55 registered.

3,000 fees transitioned to online billing

The Agriculture and Weights & Measures Divisions now has approximately 3,000 fees transitioned to online billing procedures, greatly reducing the amount of paper used and its corresponding carbon footprint.



2023 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement awarded to County Procurement Department (PRC)

PRC received the 2023 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award for the Sustainability Purchasing Policy and Program, which includes leading the County to ensure compliance with SB 1383 purchasing requirements to reduce methane emissions. A Sustainable Procurement Program SharePoint portal was developed to help departments understand and comply with the new requirements.

Highlight

Santa Clara Valley Healthcare

In 2023, Santa Clara Valley Healthcare signed the **Health Sector Climate Pledge** administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Climate Change and Health Equity.

SCVH formed a Climate Action Collaborative, led by Dr. Jennifer Tong, M.D., with multi-disciplinary representation including pharmacy, facilities, environmental services, food services, physicians, and operating room staff. The group also includes collaboration with other County departments such as the OOS, Facilities and Fleet Department (FAF), Public Health Department (PHD), and Procurement Department (PRC). SCVH staff is also working with the Sustainable Procurement Program (SPP) workgroup, led by PRC and OOS, to plan and develop procedures and standards for implementing sustainable purchasing throughout the County health system.

COMMITMENTS

Dec. 2023 (completed)

Developed and released a climate resilience plan for continuous operations. Anticipate the needs of groups in their 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 at least 50% by 2030 and achieve net-zero.



PROGRESS THUS FAR

33,358 lbs waste diverted

63,737 devices across SCVH were collected for reprocessing via the Stryker Sustainability program which equated to 33,358 pounds of waste diverted. The projected savings for SCVH based on reprocessing equipment instead of purchasing new equipment is over \$1 million in 2023 alone.

27 lb reduction in waste in one month

Piloted initiatives to reduce waste in SCVH ambulatory clinics by transitioning to paperless alternatives where able (e.g., After Visit Summaries and clinical referral faxes) and reduction of medically unnecessary glove usage. In one clinic alone, the reduction of medically unnecessary glove usage resulted in a 27 pound reduction in waste over the course of one month.

Completed 1 Climate Pledge commitment

Created the Extreme Weather Conditions & Climate Resilience Plan for Continuous Operations as an annex of the SCVH Emergency Management Manual, completing one of the commitments for the Climate Pledge.



Switched to non-plastic water containers

St. Louise Regional Hospital and O'Connor Hospital have fully transitioned to non-plastic water bottles in their cafeterias as well as patient meal trays. Valley Medical Center has started offering non-plastic water packaging in their cafe.



50% + reduction in "red bag" waste

Reduced weight of "red bag" waste by over 50% - "Red bags" collect regulated waste from operating rooms that need to be autoclaved/incinerated but often gets regular waste mixed in. Staff were educated on the limited number of items that must be disposed of in "red bags" leading to reducing waste that must be processed through energy-intensive means.

3 INITIATIVES FOR 2024

Waste

- Track waste data to increase recycling to over 15% of total waste and decrease regulated medical waste to less than 10% of total waste.
- Increasing the usage of reusable linens, reusable equipment, and reusable sharps containers.
- Full elimination of plastic packaging for water and increase composting of food waste.

Food and Nutrition

- Increasing purchase of vegetable products while decreasing the purchase of meat products.
- New food vendor to provide regional, antibiotic-free and hormone-free meats.
- Implement Universal Meals to provide climate-friendly, plant-based options for staff and visitors and include on the menu for inpatient selection.

Medical Operations

- Working toward an alternative delivery system that minimizes the detrimental environmental impact of nitrous oxide, which is a greenhouse gas and is a commonly used anesthetic in Operating Rooms.
- Staff education to reduce prescription on certain types of inhalers for asthma treatment that has disproportionately negative environmental impact in favor of more climate friendly alternatives.

CONTINUED EFFORTS



The County continues its efforts to reduce emissions from our transportation sector

In partnership with PG&E, 46 charging stations, which include DC Fast charging stations, will be installed at 10 different County facilities for County fleet vehicles. 32% of the County's fleet is now electric, hybrid, and alternative fuel powered vehicles.

To support public transportation use, the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Shuttle has been extended through fiscal year 2024 and the VTA SmartPass Program has been extended through calendar year 2024.



The Fleet Management Division Team earned its second consecutive national Top 50 Leading Fleets Award - Ranking of #6 in the Nation

Team improved upon over last year's ranking of #12 and competitively achieved an overall ranking of #6 in the nation and #3 within the large fleet category.



Looking Ahead

→ Building Decarbonization

To meet the County's ambitious Carbon Neutrality goals through a reduction of natural gas usage in our operations, efforts are underway to electrify the Valley Medical Center chillers. Currently in the design phase, project work to date includes assembling the design team, equipment selection, and approving the team's proposal for design. More to come as this exciting project moves forward!

→ The Future of Fleet Electrification

Fleet Management continues to "green" the County fleet. 55 standard vehicles in fiscal year 2025 will be replaced with electric, hybrid electric and plug-in hybrid electric models, of which the Office of the Sheriff vehicles make up 14% of this total. An additional eight hybrid electric patrol models will be provided to offer the greatest fuel and emissions reductions of these purchases.

To meet state Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulation the County is required to start transitioning its medium to heavy duty fleet to Zero-Emission Vehicles (ZEV) and starting 2027, ensure that 100% of all trucks purchased are ZEVs. To prepare for this transition:

- Parks will be purchasing two electric trucks and two Mobile Off-Grid Solar Charging Stations to see how EVs perform in different park and outdoor settings. Testing the trucks with the mobile charging stations at different County Parks will help determine the charging needs based on truck use and location.
 - Additional EV charging stations for Berger and Roads and Airports Department (RDA) East Yard campuses are being assessed to provide charging stations for the County's medium and heavy-duty fleet vehicles located at both campuses.
-



[Watch video on how Santa Clara County is transitioning to zero emissions vehicles](#)



COMMUNITY ORIENTED

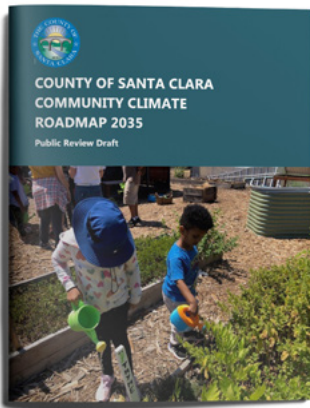
Carbon Neutral Initiatives

The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions extends past County operations and into the community. This is achieved through outreach and engagement, technical assistance and resources to support community wide waste reduction, natural resource enhancements, and residential and business efforts to reduce carbon footprint.

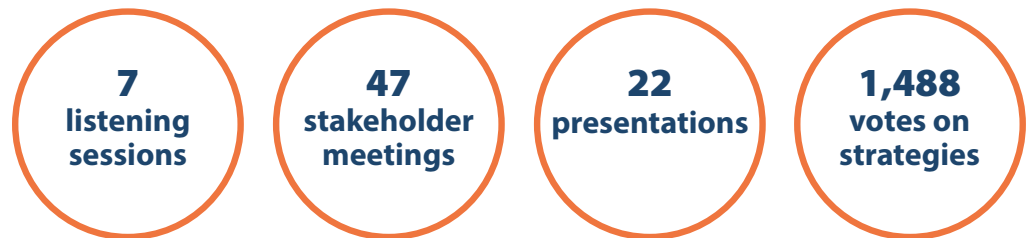
Community Climate Roadmap 2035

The County is finalizing a Public Draft Community Climate Roadmap 2035, which provides strategies that will accelerate climate action in unincorporated areas of the county, as well as regionally, to transition away from fossil fuels. The Roadmap will outline strategies and actions designed to reduce unincorporated county greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and creates a pathway to achieve a carbon neutral future by 2035.

A Draft Public Review document will be released in Summer 2024. The strategies identified to support these actions were developed using an extensive equity-centric community outreach process to ensure that voices across Santa Clara County were heard. The general public and key stakeholder groups were able to provide feedback through multiple outreach opportunities offered by the County.

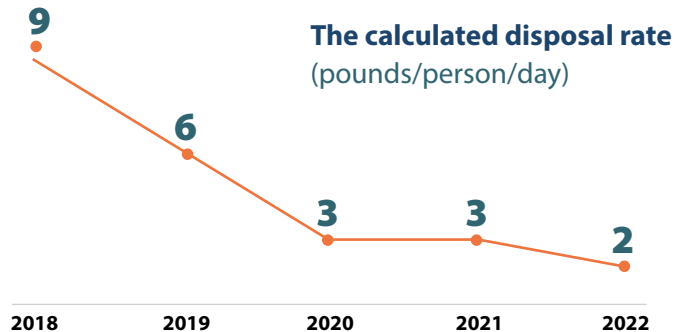


Roadmap Development Outreach



Zero Waste

To help with the requirement of diverting organics from the landfill, the County continued to support efforts for residential and business waste management and reduction as required by [SB 1383](#). Education and outreach efforts included collaboration with the Bay Area Regional Outreach Campaign (BayROC) and the development and utilization of direct mail, online resources, and leave-behind materials. These campaigns focused on promoting organic waste separation and collection, food waste reduction, proper sorting to support diversion from landfills, and optimization of recyclable materials. Further, implementation of the Annual Public Education and Outreach Plans (PEOPs) with the unincorporated County's three franchised haulers resulted in customer service staff answering calls with residential and commercial customers in multiple languages, broadening the reach of zero waste efforts across communities with language barriers and creates access to information beyond traditional means. The result of all these efforts helped the County continue reducing the amount of waste disposed per person per day (see figure).



In addition, Joint Venture Silicon Valley received funding from all cities in Santa Clara County to provide educational outreach by developing six webinars for different sectors regulated under SB 1383, such as restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, schools, health facilities, and large venues. The webinar series promotes food waste prevention measures specific to each regulated sector, including peer-to-peer sharing about successfully implemented programs and strategies; provides food recovery tips and best practices; and teaches businesses and organizations how to comply with SB 1383 and local ordinances.



Zero waste efforts include improved communications to linguistically isolated county residents with waste hauler staff fielding customer calls in multiple languages





Carbon Neutral Economy and Businesses

The County's [Green Business program](#) helps support and certify businesses seeking to reduce their carbon footprint.

13 out of 40 green businesses are BBIPOC/LGBTQIA

In 2023, a total of 40 Green Businesses were recognized, of which, 13 are BBIPOC/LGBTQIA¹-owned, representing 33% of total certifications. This is a 10% increase in number of BBIPOC/LGBTQIA-owned businesses being certified compared to the previous year.

Equitable Outreach 250 hispanic small businesses reached

The Green Business program focused on equitable outreach this year, including presenting at the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to over 250 Hispanic small businesses. These 40 certified businesses saved 8,945 lbs of CO₂, equivalent to planting 13 acres of urban trees, 12,861 gallons of water, or the equivalent of 306 bathtubs of fresh drinking water for a year, and 52 gallons of hazardous waste (calculated using California Green Business Network tracker).

Youth Summer Internship Program Launched high school students mentored in business outreach

The Green Business Program launched its first youth summer internship program in partnership with Acterra during the summer of 2023. Ten high school students were mentored by Green Business coordinators to do in-person business outreach in Cupertino. The internship educated over 100 restaurants and food service businesses about the Cupertino foodware ordinance and enrolled 22 businesses into the Green Business Program.

Energy Efficiency

The County also continued to administer the BayArea Regional Energy Network (BayREN) programs to provide local energy efficiency and electrification resources for homeowners, renters, multifamily property owners, businesses, and jurisdictions in the County. In 2023, the program upgraded over 2,000 single and multifamily homes paid over \$2.3 million in rebates to residents and property owners, provided 559 residents with energy and water efficiency kits, and promoted multilingual induction cooking events for residents. The relaunched Business program completed 4 projects with annual energy savings of 19,156 kWh and \$53,638 in incentives paid. For more information, see the [2023 Impact of BayREN Programs in Santa Clara County](#).



2,000+
single and multi-family
homes paid \$2.3 million
in rebates

¹ BBIPOC - Black, brown, indigenous, and other people of color. LGBTQIA - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual

Highlight

Induction Cooking Community Event

The OOS, in partnership with BayREN and ICAN, hosted the County's first in person bilingual induction experience for the Vietnamese American Community on September 26, 2023 in San Jose featuring celebrity Chef Tú David Phu.

The event was well-attended with 185 residents enjoying the live event showcasing the health and environmental benefits of induction. ICAN provided live translation to Vietnamese, which added a sense of community and familiarity to the event. Partners from City of San Jose, Silicon Valley Clean Energy, San Jose Clean Energy, the Vietnamese American Service Center, Rising Sun, and BayREN were available to share electrification resources and rebates as well as promote induction loaner programs so community members could rent and try an induction cooktop set at home before buying.

The room was packed with excited community members who watched and got to taste Chef Tú's delicious fried rice made using an induction cooktop. Seventy-two attendees completed a survey at the end of the event to gauge interest in switching to induction cooking. More than 70% of the respondents wanted to or were seriously considering the switch, while 15% were interested but wanted to learn more. The positive reviews and response from attendees underscored the impact of a culturally appropriate event, made possible by a CBO partner familiar to the community.

185
attendees watched
the live cooking demo

[Check out the highlight video](#)





Agricultural Resilience

In addition to urbanized areas, the County is working on increasing the resilience of the agricultural sector. The Santa Clara County Agricultural Liaison (Ag Liaison) worked with several County departments and the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) to strengthen and improve agricultural policies throughout Santa Clara County and administer the County's Agricultural Resilience Incentive (ARI) grant program. The County awarded more than \$200,000 to 12 small, family farms to implement climate-smart practices. The Ag Liaison works with the UCCE Small Farms Team to provide technical assistance to growers in our County. The Ag Liaison also helped coordinate several workshops with ranchers to issue Ag Passes to landowners needing access to livestock in the event of a wildfire, and worked with the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to survey farmworkers in Gilroy about their housing needs. Currently the Ag Liaison is assisting one grower with permits for 20+ farmworker housing units, and also assisting multiple small farmers with permits to build new and/or upgrade existing facilities to enable them to operate profitable farms. The Ag Liaison is writing several grant proposals, totaling more than \$10M of federal funds, for Santa Clara County climate-smart agriculture projects.

The County continues to work with the United States Department of Agriculture to receive \$750,000 in grant funding that was allocated for the expansion of the ARI grant program. These funds are expected to become available for use in the 2024-2025 timeframe.

2023 ARI Grant Overview

41
total applications

\$632,343
funds requested

\$200,000
funds available

12
awarded projects

These twelve projects are estimated to capture 1,152 MTCO_{2e} year, or the equivalent of 129,740 gallons of gasoline consumed, across roughly 500 acres within the County.



Natural Environment Protection

California Coastal Cleanup Day

The California Coastal Cleanup event on September 23, 2023 was hosted at four park locations including Calero Reservoir, Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear, Stevens Creek, and Uvas Reservoir County Parks. Over 70 volunteers participated at the four park locations and collected 575 pounds of trash and recyclables. Each year, kids, families, and participants from all over Santa Clara County come together to prevent pollution at the source which could otherwise travel through storm drains, creeks, and rivers to become pollution in San Francisco Bay. Countywide, 1,209 volunteers cleaned over 61 miles of creeks and waterways and collected over 27,000 pounds of trash and recyclables.

Continued Efforts

- Supported by grant funds, weed abatement continues across the county to help reduce fire hazard and protect the biodiversity of native ecosystems. In 2023, Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA) partnered with local non-profit Cal-IPC to help control invasive weed species in the tidal marshes around Alviso and Palo Alto.
- Parks is updating the Countywide Trails Master Plan Map to reflect current planning and changes to the countywide trails network that have occurred since the original map was adopted in 1995. Parks conducted significant public outreach in 2023, including 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 County continued work with EcoHero Show to provide anti-litter education to school-aged children at five elementary schools in unincorporated Santa Clara County.



In 2023, OOS partnered with Our City Forest (OCF) to plant 282 trees in priority areas aligning with the CalEnviroScreen index.



CALIFORNIA COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

2,969

pieces of litter picked up by youth during [cleanup events](#)

79 tons of solid waste, 185 tires, 96 mattresses, and 603 lbs of electronic waste

removed by San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC) at illegal dumping spots and other areas

55

commercial/industrial inspections completed to prevent stormwater pollution

3% increase

in businesses that participated in County's hazardous waste drop off program

Almost 1,300 tons

of hazardous waste collected and managed safely



Community Resilience

Planning

Community Wildlife Protection and Local Hazard Mitigation Plans Adopted

A number of plans focused on protecting the community from natural hazards were finalized and presented to the public in 2023. The [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) was published and presented to the public on August 30, 2023. This plan provides an assessment of countywide wildfire risk and protection needs, brings together all responsible for wildfire management and prevention, and provides a framework for future planning and implementation of necessary mitigation measures.

Another plan is the County's [Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan \(MJHMP\)](#), adopted by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on December 12, 2023, aims to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life, property and the environment from natural and climate hazards. This plan guides what measures need to be taken or implemented to protect our communities from disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, and various climate impacts. Required to be updated every five years, the 2022 MJHMP was developed in partnership with all 15 cities and towns in Santa Clara County, along with Valley Water.



Air Quality

Air quality is a key community concern that the County is working hard to address. Through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) Air Filtration Grant, Public Health Department (PHD) received 50 Congregate Air Filtration Units and 200 Home Air Filtration Units for distribution.

7

congregate air purifiers

given to LifeMoves shelters serving unsheltered and climate vulnerable communities in San Jose.

8

home air filtration units

distributed to patients in climate equity priority populations with respiratory conditions identified on home assessments done by PHD Nursing Team.

Emergency Response for Extreme Heat Events

As part of the County's role to protect its residents, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) coordinated the activation of cooling centers during extreme heat events. In the third and fourth quarters of 2023, a total of 47 cooling centers opened in the Operational Area to provide the Santa Clara County community members with a safe refuge from the high temperatures.

Seven County Libraries became dedicated cooling centers, offering a sanctuary for anyone seeking respite from the extreme temperatures. County libraries are often activated as cooling centers due to their proximity to public transit.

Highlight

Lead Emissions

Airborne lead, particularly near county airports, was an air quality concern for the community. Since the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted to eliminate the sale of leaded aviation gasoline (avgas) at Reid-Hillview Airport and San Martin Airport in **August 2021**, large strides have been taken to reduce the health impacts of airborne lead on children in surrounding neighborhoods.

Based on data collected by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), the concentration of airborne lead at Reid-Hillview has shown a general decrease from 2017-2020. The County's more recent change to unleaded fuel is expected to further improve air quality.

In a recent development, the Environmental Protection Agency acknowledged that lead emissions cause or contribute to air pollution which may be reasonably anticipated to endanger public health and welfare. The Agency will be creating regulatory standards to address lead emissions from aircraft engines. With the actions that the County has taken at Reid-Hillview and San Martin Airports, we are better positioned than many for the coming changes and anticipate continued progress in our efforts toward reducing impacts from airborne lead.

TRANSITION TO UNLEADED

In January of 2022, the County took over assets at Reid-Hillview Airport, including ownership of the four fuel tanks, and started selling only unleaded avgas. The fuel conversion appears to have little impact on airport operations as fuel sales and airport activity remain largely unchanged. In January 2022, San Martin Airport also started selling only unleaded aviation gasoline.





Community Engagement and Education

The County continues to build a livable and equitable community by celebrating its diversity and supporting efforts that make it thrive. The Registrar of Voters (ROV) worked to remove barriers to civic engagement by hosting and participating in over 150 voter education and outreach events, reaching thousands of community members across Santa Clara County. These events include a series of voter language workshops presented in 14 different languages: English, Chinese, Hindi, Vietnamese, Gujarati, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, and Telugu; a celebration of National Voter Registration Day with members of the media and public, and over 100 community outreach events. Attendees learned how to register, sign up for election reminders, request mail-in ballots, how and where to vote, early voting options, and more.

In an effort to make the outdoors accessible to all, the PHD worked with partners on the [Juntos Program \(Park Rx\)](#) and on system level policy changes and disseminating materials promoting the [Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights \(COBOR\)](#) at community events. The COBOR continues being shared at community outreach events including Hispanic Binational Health Week, Gilroy Night Out, Black Breast-Feeding Day, and SCC Kids Mural Party, as well as at SJSU Nursing Student presentations. In addition, PHD staff collaborated with the City of San Jose on two summer reading program events: The Great Outdoor Adventures and The Curious Garden providing hands on nature activities to participants.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

Over 1,300 people (children and adults) participated in hikes and gardening activities offered by the Juntos Program (Park Rx)

10 community health workers completed Promotores Program training for gardening leadership²

2,000 free parking passes to County Parks granted to Juntos families

² In partnership with Veggielution



BookDash, a contactless home-delivery solution for the growing older adult community and those unable to go to the library due to access issues, now serves Gilroy, Morgan Hill, Campbell, Los Altos, Milpitas, and unincorporated areas.

Jobs and Economy

The Summit Steering committee planned and successfully executed the 2023 LGBTQ Summit in-person with the theme of "All Work Is Work." A total of 180 participants attended five workshops.

Office of Immigrant Relations administers programs to support job training for special status immigrants, including asylees and those holding select visas. A 10-week program was planned, implemented, and evaluated, graduating 12 immigrant students/fellows from the program in August 2023.

Procurement Department (PRC) collaborated with Office of Countywide Contracting Management (OCCM) to organize a 'Vendor Outreach Event' aimed at recruiting local vendors capable of offering 'Sustainable Goods, Services, and Solutions.'

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Our county agencies provide a broad array of services to help residents access the basic necessities of life, including health care, housing, food, jobs and income, and general support. The Social Services Agency (SSA), Behavioral Health Services, Office of Supportive Housing (OSH), and Office of Diversion and Reentry Services (DRS) do much of their critical work in partnership, supported by many community-based organizations, to help those most in need. As you can see below, there is continued increase in the number of residents seeking supportive services in the past year, reflecting broad need in the community.

California's Healthy California for All goal intends to make high quality affordable health coverage available to all regardless of wealth, zip code, race, gender, or disability. As part of this strategy, Medi-Cal has expanded over the course of 2016 – 2024 to be available to more low-income residents, positively impacted over 64,000 people, regardless of immigration status. The most recent and final expansion was to cover ages 26-49, effective January 2024. Almost 37,000 residents transitioned to full scope Medi-Cal in January 2024 alone.

In terms of mental health, DRS collaborates with Behavioral Health to deliver needed behavioral health services to clients at the Reentry Resource Center (RRC). The goal of this partnership is to serve high-need clients who experience greater instances of chronic homelessness, substance use, and mental illness.

In 2023, through this partnership, the RRC provided 2,013 outpatient behavioral health services to their clients, serving 1,567 unique individuals. This is a significant change from 2022, representing a 179 percent growth in the number of behavioral health services provided (722 services) and a 154 percent growth in clients served (616 clients).

Housing

In addition to behavioral health services, the RRC offers many other services to formerly incarcerated county residents, supporting their needs and re-emergence into society to strengthen families and build a safer and more inclusive community. One of these critical services is housing. DRS works in close partnership with the OSH to house RRC clients, with the goal of supporting households to become self-reliant over time.



Physical and Mental Health

In Santa Clara County

451,527
children, adults,
and seniors
receive their health
care coverage through
the Medi-Cal program.
(almost a quarter of our population)



696
Reentry Resource
Center clients
housed in 2023. A
growth of 16 percent
from the 601 clients
housed in 2022.



Highlight

Addressing Food and Hunger in Our Communities

Santa Clara County aims to reduce hunger and food insecurity in our communities, with the goal of improving the health and wellness of all residents. Towards this end, we are looking at the resources, activities, and people involved in bringing food from farms to our plates, as well as managing food waste, through the [Food Systems Workplan](#). Approved in 2021, this plan serves as a framework for the County to work with diverse stakeholders to build a food system that is more equitable, resilient, and sustainable.



Key accomplishments of the Food Systems Workplan in 2023

Providing significant funding for food security and continued implementation of food recovery initiatives. Notably, a manager was hired in December 2023 to lead the Food Systems Program and implementation of the Workplan.

FUNDING FOOD SECURITY

500,000 individuals served

The County allocated \$4.7M in funding to 18 CBO food providers through the Direct Food Assistance Grant Program. To date (at the halfway point of the grant), more than 500,000 individuals have been served through this program with particular focus on children, seniors, and unhoused individuals.

2,000 residents supported

The Urban Grower Network (UGN) launched in Summer 2023 with initial inventory item funding from Supervisor Chavez. This network is comprised of 8 grassroots organizations collectively serving more than 2,000 county residents to support food justice and food sovereignty through coordinated efforts and collaboration.

Food Recovery Initiatives

The County partners with Joint Venture Silicon Valley to help implement certain measures in the Food Systems Workplan. In 2023, the Food Recovery Initiative of Joint Venture Silicon Valley received almost \$50,000 from the Recycling and Waste Reduction Commission (RWRC) of Santa Clara County to scope a range of recommendations, including recovered food hub infrastructure. Recovered food hub(s) would offer shared facilities to support expanding the recovery of prepared food and keeping that food in-county. These hubs also create a space in which other community programs, such as education, job training, community composting, and public food distributions, can be co-located.

3 affordable housing sites served

PHD also funded Joint Venture's Food Recovery Initiative to conduct a pilot program to provide a regular supply of recovered food (including both groceries and prepared foods) to affordable housing sites, with the goal of augmenting the quantity, variety, and convenience of food assistance available to residents, as well as managing inventories and minimizing waste. Together with Martha's Kitchen, First Community Housing, and Alta Housing, the pilot was implemented at three affordable housing sites in 2023. The second phase of the pilot will test additional program elements, designed to further increase accessibility and convenience, and implement lessons learned at a fourth pilot site in summer 2024. Joint Venture has funding through 2026, with nearly \$100,000 per year allocated.

Joint Venture also launched a pilot Food Recovery Capacity Building Grants Program, intended to increase food recovery capacity in Santa Clara County by providing small, one-time grants for equipment and supplies that support the best use of surplus edible food that would otherwise go to waste. Notably, reducing food waste also helps reduce methane emissions, which is more potent as it traps more heat in the atmosphere per molecule than carbon dioxide.

10% increase in CalFresh participation

CalFresh is a nutrition program that allows participants to buy groceries at most stores and farmers markets. There continues to be growth in CalFresh participation throughout the community. From December 2022 to December 2023, participation increased from 114,655 individuals to 125,925 individuals. This equates to a 10% increase within one year and the number of CalFresh participants is now 7% of our total county population (1.9M). In addition, PHD and Valley Health Foundation partnered to bring SNAP/CalFresh redemption to farmers markets at both Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and St. Louise Regional Hospital.

1,817,117 total meals served in 2023

Another way to reduce hunger in our communities is by offering cooked meals. These programs include Meals on Wheels, which delivers meals to homebound, older neighbors, and the Senior Nutrition Program, which is again offering in-person dining and socializing opportunities at most locations. In total, 1,817,117 total meals were served to the community in 2023 (almost 5,000 meals a day on average). This is comprised of 864,748 dine-in/to go meals and 952,369 home delivered meals. 5,121 new clients were enrolled in the past fiscal year.

Other Supportive Services

18% more clients assisted with General Assistance, CalFresh, Medical, and other public benefits

DRS, in collaboration with SSA, has a shared goal of ensuring that anyone who is eligible to receive public benefits receives them in a timely and efficient manner. In 2023, 6,625 clients were assisted with General Assistance, CalFresh, Medical, SAR7, Discontinuance, application processing, verification, card replacement, and other services. With 5,607 clients served in 2022, this is a growth of 18 percent.

DRS also provided temporary assistance while clients wait for more permanent solutions, decreasing their likelihood of recidivism. In 2023, over 6,653 bus passes, bus tokens, Department of Motor Vehicles vouchers, food pantry services, hygiene kits, lunch bags and other small but tangible and meaningful items were provided. This is a growth of 7 percent from 2022 (6,235 services).

24% growth in services to foster self-sufficiency among reentry clients

DRS, through its diverse network of departments and community-based organizations, work in synergy to enhance the health and well-being of RRC clients. In all, this collaborative network has delivered a total of 22,527 services in 2023, all aimed at fostering self-sufficiency among clients. With 18,132 services delivered in 2022, this is a growth of 24 percent.

Internships, Employment, and Income

400 youth participated in Intern & Earn

This year, approximately 400 youth from the CalWORKs, CalFresh, and Foster Care programs participated in Intern & Earn, a program offering employment readiness skills and connection to job opportunities. These youth gained valuable work experience while earning \$18.50 per hour for up to 30 hours per week over the eight-week paid internship.

15,000 individuals participated in CalWORKs programs

There has been significant growth in CalWORKs participation throughout the community. With almost 15,000 individuals participating in 2023, including over 10,000 children, the program has grown by 22% since 2021. Importantly, we also provided close to 500 CalWORKs families with housing assistance this past year.

6,000 adults assisted every month

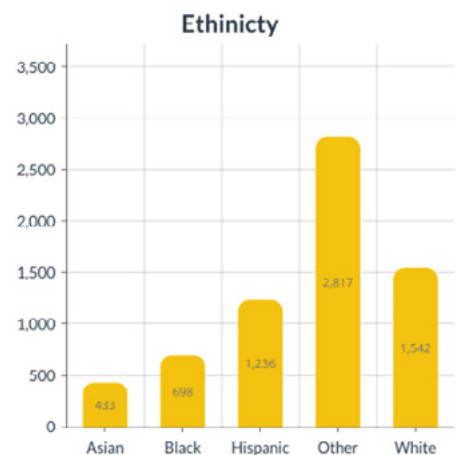
General Assistance (GA) is a program that provides financial assistance to adults who do not have dependent children. In 2023, about 6,000 adults were assisted every month by the GA program. Approximately 50% of these individuals are unhoused. About 32% of GA recipients are unable to work and may be eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). GA's SSI Advocacy Program helps eligible clients navigate the complicated SSI process, from application to appeal, with the life-changing goal of receiving a permanent cash benefit that is much larger than the GA grant.

General Assistance - Demographics of Individuals Served

6,726

community members

participate in General Assistance every month. Approximately 50% of those community members are unhoused.



2023 DEBS Annual Report, County of Santa Clara, Social Services Agency.

Looking Ahead

→ Sustainability Commission

On January 23, 2024 the Board appointed the County Executive recommended nominations for the Sustainability Commission. With appointment of the six County Executive recommended nominees, the Sustainability Commission will achieve full membership (11 members) and can commence official business. The first meeting of the Sustainability Commission will be held on February 29, 2024. Thereafter, regular bimonthly meetings would start in March, with the Commission convening in the odd numbered months of the year.

→ Food System Kitchen Cabinet

A Food System Kitchen cabinet was created, comprised of leadership and representative staff from County agencies whose work touches on various aspects of the food system. The cabinet will foster ongoing communication, assess opportunities for greater collaboration among County programs, highlight successes, evaluate barriers, and leverage new and existing resources for food systems work and will convene at a kickoff meeting in late spring of 2024.

→ Veggielution Collaboration

Veggielution will collaborate with PHD to co-lead a Climate Resilience and Food Systems Resident Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC will consist of a diverse group of community residents invited to share their experiences on the food system/food access and the impacts of climate change on their community. Residents will be able to share their thoughts and experience on PHD programs and initiatives and the County's Food System Workplan, as well as strengthen their capacity to develop resilience to climate and health impacts and address food system challenges.

→ Planning Updates

The Santa Clara County General Plan's Safety and Health/Environmental Justice Elements are completing their updates to add policies to address community safety concerns due to climate change and health inequities and elevated pollution burden experienced by priority communities. Drafts for public review are planned for 2024.

Roads and Airports Department (RDA) is working on a draft for the Active Transportation Plan and is preparing for public review in 2024.

OOS will be releasing the Climate Roadmap 2035 for public review in summer 2024.

→ County Park Pass Program

The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) will expand their County Park Pass Program to all SCCLD Libraries where anyone can "check out" a pass allowing free vehicle entry to our county parks, which removes a financial barrier for many to experience all the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of being out in nature. In addition, the Silicon Valley Reads committee selected a sustainability theme for our 2024 community read, "[A Greener Tomorrow Starts Today.](#)"

→ Transit to Parks Campaign

PHD staff is working with Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to roll out a Transit to Parks campaign. The campaign highlights 20 parks that are accessible by public transportation with the goal of getting more people to use transit to explore parks and opens spaces.



COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Our sustainability and climate work in the county would not be possible without partnerships. From the Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative where we connect and partner with organizations around the county to strengthen our ties to each other and mobilize climate action, to the Climate Resilience Leadership Academy building local CBOs' capacity to lead on climate resilience, to different ways of getting our youth – the promise of our future – engaged in climate leadership, education and green workforce training, the OOS creates and supports climate action in a myriad of ways. Critical to our work are our partnerships.

Building a Climate Network

OOS launched the Climate Network Map tool, created to help connect community-based organizations, public agencies, and other stakeholders to advance climate action by sharing information on local climate action and adaptation in Santa Clara County. The tool includes a searchable directory of organizations working on climate in our county and compiles climate action plans for each city. According to this resource, there are currently 112 organizations doing climate-related work in Santa Clara County, and four local jurisdictions that have adopted Climate Action Plans with Carbon Neutrality targets by 2045. Visit www.climatetworkscc.org for more information.

Working Together to Build Community Resilience

10 community organizations receive training in climate resilience

The Climate Resilience Leadership Academy (CRLA) launched its first cohort in July 2023 with 10 community-based organizations from throughout the County. Public Health Department (PHD) contracted with local food systems community-based organization Veggielution to develop the curriculum for this Academy and co-lead the effort. This effort is part of a jointly held \$2.5M Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, secured in partnership by PHD and OOS, to build organizational capacity and community resilience to the health impacts of climate change, specifically extreme heat and impair air quality.

Engaging our County's Youth

Workforce Development

Employing Local Youth in Green Workforce Development

The Watershed Protection Division (WPD) under a new agreement with Caltrans and the San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC) continues to provide green workforce training to local youth ages 18-27. Since the SJCC started cleaning up freeways and Caltrans properties under this new agreement, the crews have worked 13,635 hours and removed 93 cubic yards of solid waste and 929 cubic yards of vegetation and debris. Roadway litter including plastics is a key source of stormwater pollution and removing it from the county's highways and freeways keeps our rivers, streams, and SF Bay clean and improves human and ecosystem health.

Additionally, in partnership with Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) and Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, the Green House Call program employed 9 local youth as Energy Specialist and Site Program Managers to install and deploy 170 home energy and water efficiency kits in the summer to renters and homeowners in Santa Clara County at no cost. 389 kits were also delivered as part of the virtual assistance program. In total, the Green House Call Program served 559 homes in 2023. For more information, see the [2023 Climate Careers Santa Clara County Report](#).

Youth Climate Initiative Launched

The Santa Clara County Youth Climate Initiative (SCCYCI) launched in 2023! This program brings together organizations that are leading efforts with youth and climate action, including Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action, Climate Resilient Communities, San Jose Conservation Corps + Charter School, Fremont Union High School District, and Santa Clara County Office of Education. Foundational work include creating a core project team and establishing four focus areas of work that include 1) gathering youth perspectives on needs, 2) developing youth leadership programs for environmental and climate action, 3) climate literacy in 9-12 grade curriculum, and 4) building pathways to climate focused careers. Each organization is now outlining key tasks and objectives to embed the four focus areas into their current programming to engage and expand youth engagement and education on climate literacy and leadership.



San Jose Conservation Corps workers clearing hazardous vegetation on Caltrans right-of-way.



Learning and Connection

Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD) partnered with all public school districts in our service area to offer free library electronic Accounts (eAccounts) to every K-12 student. This eAccount provides access to online resources such as research databases, scholarly articles, eBooks, tutoring, language learning, and more. Because students need down time, they can also access digital movies, music, eComics, videos and more from the online library. A dedicated Student Portal for Library Resources has been created for eAccounts at <https://student.scclld.org/>

Highlight

County Climate Collaborative

The County continues to cultivate and strengthen relationships with Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative partners and stakeholders as it is clearer than ever that we need each other to effectively tackle the challenges of building an equitable, carbon neutral, and climate resilient county. Partners allow us to expand our reach, leverage existing resources, and make sure no one is left behind.

2023 was a productive year for the Collaborative. We launched a pathway for stakeholders to become an official part of the Collaborative and by the end of 2023, a total of 33 community-based organizations, nonprofits, and local jurisdictions and public agencies have joined.

The Collaborative work groups are growing and engaging stakeholders on key areas including climate action, equity in community, extreme heat and air quality, and flooding and sea level rise. This year, we launched two new work groups - the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Work Group to coordinate on a \$1M EPA grant received by the OOS, and the Equity in Community Work Group, which is focused on building the capacity of community-based organizations to advance climate solutions for community resilience as well as help inform the broader Collaborative on equity issues.

The more established Heat and Air Quality Resilience Work Group finalized a three-year work plan, established co-chairs, hosted four meetings, and helped launch a successful social media campaign on extreme heat.

Read more about Collaborative and work group accomplishments in the [2023 Collaborative Annual Report](#).

THE FOUR IMPACT AREAS OF THE COLLABORATIVE



Achieve Net Zero Emissions



Empower communities to build resilience to Climate Change



Prepare communities for extreme heat and impaired air quality



Decrease flood risk





32
participant organizations
 committed to the Collaborative



\$4M
secured
 to advance equitable climate action

“Through these partnerships, we have been able to share knowledge, resources, and expertise to more effectively advocate for and implement climate justice initiatives.”

COLLABORATIVE MEMBER



Equity in Community work group launched to support community organizations with climate resilience projects



EXTREME HEAT CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

To improve community understanding of and response to extreme heat, we launched a successful social media campaign for six weeks in early summer 2023 that covered topics including heat-related illnesses, cooling centers, and how heat impacts vulnerable populations. This multilingual campaign – in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese - had 3.1 million impressions and recruited 16 local governments and CBOs to be Heat Ambassadors to help amplify messaging.

Looking Ahead

→ Tree Canopy Awareness

In early 2024, Canopy will provide outreach and education engagements focused on how to advocate for, grow, and maintain tree canopy in urbanized communities.

→ Priority Climate Action Plan

A Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) for Santa-Clara/San Benito counties will be submitted as part of the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant and grant applications will be submitted to secure implementation funding.

→ Continued Efforts

In 2023, OOS began to make progress in implementing the CalFire grant. A new staff member was hired to manage the project and the Santa Clara Valley Urban Forestry Alliance. Urban forestry analysis and planning will begin in early 2024.

The Santa Clara Valley Urban Forestry Alliance, a workgroup of the County Climate Collaborative will be re-launching in 2024 and will guide development of the Regional Urban Forestry Master Plan.

The Climate Collaborative will develop a Strategic Plan that serves as a roadmap for guiding project prioritization and fundraising efforts over the next three years to advance climate initiatives.





OOS Team

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PREPARED BY: County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability

DESIGN: Cartwright Design Studio



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