



# County of Santa Clara Sustainability Master Plan

*Building a livable, equitable, and resilient County.*

January 2021



Prepared by the County of Santa Clara  
Office of Sustainability



# Executive Summary

The County of Santa Clara's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship has produced a wide array of forward-looking local and regional initiatives. As the County's portfolio of sustainability initiatives expanded and matured, the Board of Supervisors elevated the need to develop a vision and road map to build a Sustainable County. This required developing a cross-departmental action plan and institutionalizing a comprehensive system for leading, organizing, and managing the County's expanding sustainability activities.

The County of Santa Clara's Sustainability Master Plan (SMP) integrates the County's many existing policies, programs, practices, and Countywide initiatives that promote the three core elements of sustainability: Environment, Economy, and Equity. The SMP has three components:

- Sustainability Vision and Vision Themes
- Priority Areas and Actions with corresponding goals, strategies, and targets
- Sustainability Dashboard and Management System that supports implementation, ongoing monitoring, and improvement

## Sustainability Master Plan Vision Statement

*Build and maintain a healthy and safe County by reducing climate pollution, adapting to a changing global climate, enhancing natural resources and the environment, fostering a prosperous and just regional economy, and meeting the needs of current and future generations to ensure all people have equitable opportunities to reach their full potential.*

## Priority Areas

The mission is achieved through promoting actions across four Priority Areas (listed below) that combined include eight goals, 30 strategies, and 90 targets to monitor the implementation of the County's sustainability vision. A snapshot of all the goals and strategies is presented on the next page.



**Climate  
Protection  
and Defense**



**Natural  
Resources and  
the Environment**



**Community  
Health and  
Well-Being**



**Prosperous  
and Just  
Economy**



## Climate Protection and Defense

### Goal 1. Carbon Neutrality

Become a carbon neutral County that supports a transition to zero waste and zero emissions.

- 1.1. Clean Energy
- 1.2. Decarbonization of Buildings and Facilities
- 1.3. Clean, Safe, and Active Transportation
- 1.4. Smart Growth
- 1.5. Zero Waste
- 1.6. Carbon Sequestration

### Goal 2. Resilient and Prepared County

Increase preparedness and resilience to respond to the shocks and stressors that impact Santa Clara County and the services it provides.

- 2.1. Planning and Assessment
- 2.2. Emergency Preparedness and Response
- 2.3. Regional Collaboration and Training

## Natural Resources and Environment

### Goal 3. Air and Water Resources

Maintain a healthy environment for all residents and living creatures.

- 3.1. Air Quality and Pollution
- 3.2. Water Use and Conservation
- 3.3. Water Quality and Stormwater Management
- 3.4. Streams and Riparian Corridors
- 3.5. Hazardous Materials Management

### Goal 4. Natural Lands and Land Use

Enhance and protect natural and working lands so that they provide a range of social, environmental, economic, and health benefits for County residents and businesses.

- 4.1. Habitat Conservation
- 4.2. Working Lands
- 4.3. Parks and Recreation



## Community Health and Well-Being

### Goal 5. Healthy Communities

Improve the overall health and well-being of all County employees, residents, and visitors and eliminate health inequities to minimize the potential impacts of disasters and climate change on the most vulnerable residents.

- 5.1. Public Health and Prevention
- 5.2. Health Systems and Access to Care

### Goal 6. Equitable and Inclusive County

Encourage the civic participation, leadership, and engagement of all County residents and ensure all are supported in getting their basic needs met and reaching their full potential.

- 6.1. Civic Engagement
- 6.2. Community Engagement and Leadership
- 6.3. Safe and Affordable Housing
- 6.4. Social Services
- 6.5. Education

## Prosperous and Just Economy

### Goal 7. Prosperous County

Cultivate a prosperous and economically vibrant County that builds career pipelines to match County residents with job opportunities through education, training, and resources.

- 7.1. Workforce Development
- 7.2. Local Economy and Diverse Job Opportunities

### Goal 8. Lead by Example

Leverage the County's resources and influence to advance sustainability, strengthen internal operations and responsiveness, and lead by example.

- 8.1. Partnerships and Collaboration
- 8.2. Procurement and Investment
- 8.3. Governance
- 8.4. Culture of Leadership and Learning



## Looking Ahead - Upcoming County Actions

The SMP presents the long-term plan with major steps and milestones needed to build a livable, equitable, and resilient County. Many programs and projects called out in the SMP are already underway - over the next two to three years, several new efforts will be completed that will further the County's standing as a leader in sustainability and resilience.

### Decarbonization of County Facilities and Unincorporated Areas

- Install solar photovoltaic systems that have a combined capacity of up to 12 megawatts and are microgrid-enabled across thirteen County sites, such as the Silver Creek Office, Berger Campus Parking Lot, and St. Louise Regional Hospital; and up to 4.7 megawatts of energy storage capacity across four County sites including O'Connor Hospital and Elmwood Correctional Facility.
- Update the County Green Building Policy in 2021 to include electrification and zero-net energy standards for new and existing County-owned buildings.
- Adopt local building electrification Energy Reach Codes by June 2021 for new private developments in unincorporated Santa Clara County areas.

### Preparedness and Resilience to Climate Hazards and Impacts

- Update the wildfire, sea level rise, flooding and heat climate change hazard and stressor maps for Santa Clara County using the latest data based on the Fifth Climate Assessment Report (5AR). Identify socially vulnerable areas and public health impacts to inform resiliency planning efforts for disadvantaged communities.
- Use the Silicon Valley 2.0 Climate Change Preparedness Decision Support Tool to reduce the vulnerability of critical assets, such as roads, highways and rails, energy and wastewater systems, and community services.
- Launch a County Collaborative composed of cities, public agency staff, and nonprofit and private-sector partners to build capacity for cross-jurisdictional resiliency planning and project solutions, and develop a Santa Clara County Resiliency Strategy.
- Update the County's Safety Element in the General Plan by 2022 to include climate risks and resiliency goals and strategies.
- Install at least five microgrids by 2025 at the County's most critical facilities such as at the Emergency Operations Centers and County Communications and Medical Centers to ensure continuity of operations and resilience during peak load events or disasters.

### Tree Planting and Stewardship Initiative

- Plant 1,000 trees annually Countywide over three years by 2023 to reduce urban heat islands, enhance tree canopy, improve air quality, and absorb carbon. One thousand mature trees can be expected to reduce 1,352 metric tons of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, which is the equivalent of removing nearly 300 cars from the road for one year.

### Employee Telecommuting and Zero-Emission Travel

- Further evaluate telecommuting opportunities that are client-focused and department-specific for County employees to increase the utilization of virtual first-service delivery post COVID-19 for departments with jobs that can readily be performed remotely. After the County's COVID-19 shelter in place order, employee telecommuting jumped from 3.8% in February 2020 to 33.7% in June 2020. Continued telecommuting at this scale would result in preventing 33,800 MTCO<sub>2e</sub> annually, which is the equivalent of removing 7,302 passenger vehicles from the road each year.
- Launch an employee-commuter shuttle pilot program from the Diridon Station to the Valley Medical Center at Bascom to decrease the percentage of County employee single-occupancy vehicle commuters by at least 10% below 2020 employee commute levels.

### Sustainable Purchasing

- Adopt a Sustainable Purchasing Policy and implementation guidelines that prioritize procurement decisions to advance environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

## Implementation and Monitoring

Four cross-cutting themes of Commitment to Equity, Collaborative, being Cutting Edge, and acting as Change Agents will drive how the actions will be implemented to contribute to the County's overall sustainability vision and goals.



**Commitment  
to Equity**



**Collaborative**



**Cutting Edge**



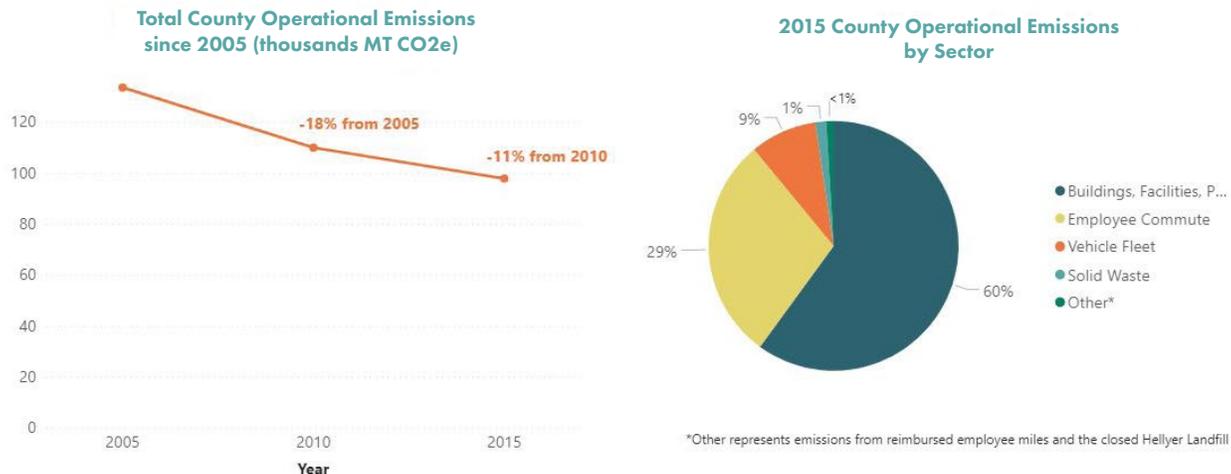
**Change Agents**

The SMP will have an accompanying publicly accessible website and Dashboard that will allow community members and County leaders to easily view and track annual progress on sustainability goals and targets across all Priority Areas. Integrated into the SMP website, the Dashboard will include interactive, easy-to-understand visualizations of baseline and progress data for targets identified in the SMP. The Office of Sustainability will also produce an Annual Sustainability Report for the County Board of Supervisors that will include a brief review of the past calendar year's achievements and goal progress, a high-level overview of major initiatives expected to be accomplished in the next calendar year, and a summary of any additional recommendations from the annual review of the SMP.

Figure 1: Sustainability Dashboard Example

## Sustainability Dashboard Example

**Target:** Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from County's operations, facilities, vehicles, and equipment below 2010 levels with 13.5% reduction every five years from 2020 through 2050 (County Board Resolution 2018-145).  
**Scale:** County Operations + Facilities Target



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