

Citywide Strategic Plan 2023-2028

The five-year Citywide Strategic Plan provides vision and overall direction for the City of Santa Cruz. The Strategic Plan is a living document, featuring a framework that balances the needs of the community and the City's resource capacity. The plan reflects the policy priorities of the City Council and was adopted by City Council on August 8, 2023. The plan contains seven high-level focus areas that identify the outcomes intended to be achieved through an associated set of strategies. The Citywide work plan will use the Strategic Plan as a guide and report back regularly to the City Council.

A VIBRANT, HEALTHY, AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY FOR ALL.

Overview of the Development Process

The planning process started in late summer 2022 and involved several activities over the next year including collecting 275 community survey responses, receiving 13 Department Director Survey responses, conducting 6 Council interviews, historical research, reviewing past media stories, and hosting 2 workshops. On April 18, 2023, the City conducted a Council study session and workshop dedicated to the Strategic Plan. As a result of this session, the draft vision, focus areas, and associated strategies were formulated and consolidated into the City of Santa Cruz Strategic Plan draft document.



Strategic Plan Framework

The strategic plan is a living document, featuring a framework that balances the needs of the community and the City's resource capacity. It is a policy document that reflects the policy priorities of the City Council. It informs budgeting and annual staff work plans. After adoption, the staff integrates the policy focus areas into its operations and workplans.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK



The vision sets the focus for the future. It is an aspirational statement of where the City wants to be. Focus areas will guide the direction and focus of the City for the next several years. They are closely aligned with the vision and state the desired outcomes to be achieved. They help City leaders decide on which of the many worthy projects should be done and when, within available resources. Goal statements elaborate on what is to be achieved in each focus area. Strategies express how the City plans to accomplish its goals. They articulate the means to achieve desired outcomes for each strategic focus area. Strategies generally include broad areas to pursue, rather than individual projects.

A workplan is the blueprint for carrying out the strategic plan. It contains the detailed steps that must be taken to ensure that the goals and strategies are achieved. Workplans are developed and used by staff to provide a framework for determining specific timelines, assignments, and resource allocations. They are a management tool to help the organization assure that goals are attained and are well-suited to periodic check-in about progress, changes, or challenges.

Focus Areas and Strategies

The selected strategic areas of focus were informed by the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats identified through engagement activities. Seven multi-year focus areas were established. These identify intended outcomes to be achieved through an associated set of strategies.

Further details on the strategies set forth to achieve the goals of the Citywide Strategic Plan can be found [here](#).

<p>Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency</p>	<p>Ensure that the City is on a strong financial trajectory, through planful investments and revenue development</p>
<p>Strong Business Communities and a Vibrant Downtown</p>	<p>Cultivate a thriving downtown and local businesses citywide to support economic health and vitality</p>
<p>Housing</p>	<p>Create and preserve housing for all with a focus on affordable and workforce housing.</p>
<p>Homelessness Response</p>	<p>Working with the County and community partners, move toward positive outcomes in homelessness response, safety and health, balancing the interests of persons who are unhoused and housed, and the business community.</p>
<p>Public Safety and Community Well-Being</p>	<p>Provide public safety services that support well-being and healthy communities.</p>
<p>Natural and Built Infrastructure</p>	<p>Invest in sustainable, climate-adapted infrastructure and community assets in both the natural and built environment.</p>
<p>Thriving Organization</p>	<p>Advance a high-performing organization where employees are empowered to deliver outstanding services to the community.</p>

How the Strategic Plan is Incorporated into the Annual Budget

The decision making that occurs within the budget process centers on how the upcoming year’s budget advances the City in meeting its strategic plan goals.

The City Manager’s Message lays out the annual budget’s themes and the connection between the budget direction and the City’s strategic plan.

In addition, the department summaries in the Annual Budget provide specific links between the current year’s accomplishments, the upcoming year’s goals, current workload indicators and performance measures and the focus areas in the Citywide Strategic Plan. The titles in the boxes in the chart above are used to reference the focus area.

Progress on the Strategic Plan

The City Manager's Office published an a [Strategic Plan Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2025](#) to provide an update on the progress of the City in moving the strategies behind each strategic plan goal forward. Here are the highlights of the progress and accomplishments detailed in that report:

Focus Area 1: Fiscal Sustainability and Transparency

1. Improved cost recovery with 3% credit card service fees added to online tax and parking payments
2. Completion of a Public Safety Impact Fee (PSIF) Nexus Study
3. Passage of new, 5-year Wastewater rates
4. Advancement of water infrastructure by utilizing grants and low-interest loans
5. Introduction of an online interactive budget tool for the public
6. Launching of a new Utility Customer Assistance Program (UCAP) to provide bill credits to qualifying low-income water customers
7. Passage of the Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax (SSBT) general fund revenue
8. Implementation of Measure Q funding to support wildlife prevention, habitat restoration, forestry, watershed protection, and open space management

Focus Area 2: Strong Business Communities and a Vibrant Downtown

1. Construction is underway for the Downtown Plan and Paseos project
2. Expansion of the Downtown (DT) Pops! Program through the activation of three new locations
3. Establishment of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District to aid infrastructure projects and incentivize investments in the Downtown Plan Expansion area
4. Completion of the Downtown Design Standards and Improvements project
5. Progression on the Ocean Street Beautification project
6. Relocation and expansion of the Farmers' Market
7. Support for the Seabright and Harbor businesses during the Murray Street Bridge Construction project
8. Strengthening infrastructure on the Wharf
9. Streamlining of plan approvals for commercial tenant improvements

Focus Area 3: Housing

1. Completion of the Downtown Expansion Plan

2. Pacific Station North expected completion in Fall 2026
3. Settlement agreement reached with owners of St. George Apartments to preserve affordability for tenants
4. Progress on the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)
5. Groundbreaking on the Downtown Library Affordable Housing Project (DTLHAP)
6. Kicked off 100% affordable development project at 136 River Street
7. Continued implementation of the Housing Element Workplan

Focus Area 4: Homelessness Response

1. Received \$4.03M Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) Grant to respond to encampment challenges in the Harvey West neighborhood
2. Granted \$3.98M in ERF funding to Housing Matters to acquire the Santa Cruz Inn for interim housing units
3. Decrease in homelessness as measured by the latest point-in-time count by 40% in the last three years
4. Activated the extreme/severe weather shelter across 18 nights
5. Supported 180 shelter and safe-sleeping spaces and received a \$2M grant to provide operational support for the shelter at the Santa Cruz Armory facility
6. Received a \$30M Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Project (BHCIP) grant to construct a 50-bed adult residential substance abuse treatment center
7. Supported the maintenance of Day Services after the closure of Housing Matters' drop-in services
8. Expanded the Homelessness Response Outreach Team (HRT) with additional limited-term personnel



Focus Area 5: Public Safety and Community Well-Being

1. Added a new Type 6 Wildland Fire Engine
2. Expanded Marine Safety with two full-time equivalent Marine Safety Officers
3. Began Street Sweeping Pilot Program
4. Undergoing Police Staffing study
5. Expanded Parks and Recreation community programming
6. Introduced technology-driven policing tools
7. Extended Fire Service agreement with UCSC

8. Renewed youth-focused public safety grants
9. Implementing a Fire Department drone program
10. Creating a new Fire Explorer Program for local youth
11. Implementing a City Wildfire Resiliency Plan
12. Began an emotional support K-9 program
13. Citizen Academy program in English and Spanish languages

Focus Area 6: Natural and Built Infrastructure

1. Murray Street Bridge Construction Project began
2. Park and park facility planning and modernization began
3. Coastal Rail Trail Segments 8 and 0 project began
4. Water Supply Augmentation Implementation Plan (WSAIP) projects began
5. 2025-2030 Local Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan approved by FEMA and City Council
6. 5-Year Roadmap for West Cliff adopted
7. Expanded citywide tree planting and vegetation management
8. Resilient Coast Santa Cruz 2.0 projects began
9. Opened Harvey West Pool to the public
10. Bethany Curve Culvert mosaic project underway
11. Advanced a unified, long-term water reliability strategy

Focus Area 7: Thriving Organization

1. Launched a 12-week Supervisor and Manager Academy
2. Modernizing City's core business systems with kick off of Project NATE
3. Implementing Enterprise Permitting and Licensing (EPL) system to modernize permitting tools
4. Updated and streamlined Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP)
5. Completed 2025 Compensation Study
6. Awarded \$2M to launch Monterey Bay Green Youth Service Corps
7. Hosted the inaugural Youth Liaisons Program
8. Launched a refresh of the City website
9. Introduced Engage Santa Cruz, a framework and toolkit for public engagement
10. Citywide labor negotiations completed with the City's eight bargaining groups



Climate Action Plan

Background

The City of Santa Cruz' Climate Action Program was established in 2008. In 2012, the City Council adopted by resolution the City's first Community-wide Climate Action Plan (CAP) with a 2020 time horizon (CAP 2020). Since the CAP 2020 was adopted in 2012, the threat of climate change and the need to drastically decarbonize has become even more urgent.

With the CAP 2020 sunset, in 2021 the City allocated funding to begin work on its second community-wide Climate Action Plan with a 2030 time horizon (CAP 2030). The mayor's appointed community Climate Action Task Force and a dozen local equity advisors were requested to serve as an advisory body to the CAP 2030 development, and adopted the final version of the plan, entitled "[Resilient Together](#)," in September, 2022.



Vision and Values

Adopted on September 13, 2022, the City of Santa Cruz CAP 2030 builds on the strong foundation of climate action in the City and provides a framework for updated policies, programs, and incentives for the community to work toward



EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, PRIZES, AND MORE!

climate mitigation, climate restoration, and building a climate economy. In order to rapidly enact local climate solutions that support and enhance a thriving and equitable community with robust active and public transportation; plentiful housing that is affordable, sustainable, and resilient; and healthy regenerative landscapes, the plan seeks to reduce greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions through a series of measurable actions in the realms of sustainable government,

climate mitigation, climate economy, and climate restoration.

The community values that have guided the development of the CAP and will continue to guide its implementation are:

- Ensure equity in all policies
- Build people-centric transportation infrastructure
- Promote efficient and low carbon/ no carbon energy and water
- Protect and enhance natural resources and urban parks
- Eliminate food waste and support local food sources

The City also adopts a 3-year workplan and each department develops 1-year workplans to ensure execution of the CAP occurs on schedule. The workplans include mechanisms to institutionalize climate action into City processes, policies, and procedures.

2025-2030 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan - Climate Adaptation Plan

Background

Climate adaptation is how we respond to the impacts of climate change caused by global warming induced by the combustion of fossil fuels. While simultaneously drastic decarbonizing our City, climate adaptation also requires ongoing actions by individuals, businesses, and government. The City's 2018-2023 Climate Adaptation Plan was incorporated into its 2018-2023 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), resulting in the creation of a new document called the [2025-2030 City of Santa Cruz Local Hazard Mitigation Plan – Climate Adaptation Plan](#) (2025-2030 LHMP-CAP) in 2025.

Like previous versions of the LHMP and CAP, natural and climate-related hazards are addressed and include coastal erosion, dam failure, drought, earthquake, extreme heat, flood (riverine flood, flash flood, and coastal flood), landslide, tsunami, sea level rise, and wildfire. In addition to a risk assessment, the 2025-2030 LHMP-CAP includes mitigation and climate adaptation strategies and sets goals.



Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Goals

The 2025-2030 LHMP-CAP goals and objectives include the following:

1. Avoid or reduce the potential for loss of life, injury, and economic damage to Santa Cruz residents from hazard events.
2. Education and engage the community on preparedness for, and mitigation of, potential impacts from hazard events.

3. Increase the ability of the City government to communicate local emergency information and serve the community during and after hazard events.
4. Protect Santa Cruz's unique character and values; scenic beauty; quality of life; and historic, natural, and cultural resources from being compromised by hazard events.
5. Encourage mitigation activities and climate adaptation strategies to increase the disaster resilience of systems essential to a functioning Santa Cruz, critical facilities, infrastructure, other major assets, institutions, and private companies.



How CAP and LHMP-CAP are Incorporated into the Annual Budget

Every department summary has four sections on the current year and budget year activities, presented as their accomplishments and goals and workload indicators and performance measures. CAP workplan tasks are expected to be incorporated into departments' goals and accomplishments. A tree icon (🌲) representing sustainability has been added to these sections in the department summaries to clearly identify and connect these activities to the CAP and LHMP-CAP.

Connections to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects that implement the Climate Action Plan and the 2027-2031 LHMP-CAP are provided in a listing in the CIP section of this document.

Health in All Policies

Background

On November 26, 2019, the Santa Cruz City Council demonstrated their commitment to community well-being by voting unanimously to adopt the [Health in All Policies \(HiAP\)](#) policy and implementation recommendations. City leaders recognized that community well-being is not simply influenced by individual choices but by the interactions of many factors including the decisions by, and policies of, local government.

Guided by a HiAP City Council Committee, the City adopts a HiAP workplan each year and staff report annually on the progress. Every agenda item submitted to City Council presents the way(s) in which the staff recommendation included supports HiAPs.



Community Well-Being Outcome Metrics

The HiAP program identified eight interconnected conditions that are necessary for health and wellbeing throughout the community which are tracked through a set of community wellbeing outcome metrics.



HiAP is a collaborative approach to improving the wellbeing of all people by prioritizing equity, sustainability, and public health in decision-making across sectors and policy areas. The goal of HiAP is to ensure that all decision-makers are informed and consider these pillars during the policy development process and, starting in FY 2025 and since, in budgeting for capital investments.

How HiAP is Incorporated into the Annual Budget

The HiAP program has been incorporated into the accomplishment, goal, workload indicator, and performance measure sections of each department summary in the budget document. The accomplishments, goals, workload indicators, and performance measures that support the objective of HiAPs are labeled with icons to identify easily and clearly which pillar they support. Specifically, if they support public health, they are marked with a heart icon (❤️) and if they support equity, they are marked with a justice

balance icon (⚖️).

The Capital Investment Program (CIP) section of the Annual Budget also presents a map of the “opportunity zones” of Santa Cruz- where equity needs are the greatest- and the locations of CIP mapped projects to demonstrate the degree to which capital investments are concentrated in those areas. For FY 2027, 36% of these projects are in the City’s opportunity zones.

The CIP section also contains a write-up of the prioritization scores that are given to projects requesting General Fund funding. Part of the scoring system is a consideration of the degree to which the project at hand supports the HiAP goals. The projects with the greatest impact receive the highest scores and become more

likely to be chosen as a CIP project to receive the scarce General Fund funds available.

