

2024 - 2026

Strategic Plan

Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative



Santa Clara County
Climate Collaborative

Table of Contents

Purpose & Process	3
Climate Collaborative Overview	3
Vision For a Resilient Santa Clara County.....	3
Collaborative Guiding Principles.....	3
Strengthening Core Collaborative Functions	4
Alignment: Building an Impact Network.....	4
Activation: Building Regional Funding and Political Will	4
Amplification: Building Capacity and Accelerating Best Practice.....	4
Achieving Measurable Impact	5
Impact Area 1: Empower Communities to Build Resilience to Climate Change.....	5
Impact Area 2: Achieve Net Zero Emissions.....	6
Impact Area 3: Prepare Communities for Heat and Air Quality.....	7
Impact Area 4: Eliminate Risk From Flooding and Rising Seas.....	8
Ways of Being	9
Integration, Coordination, and Leveraging Resources to Achieve Impact	9

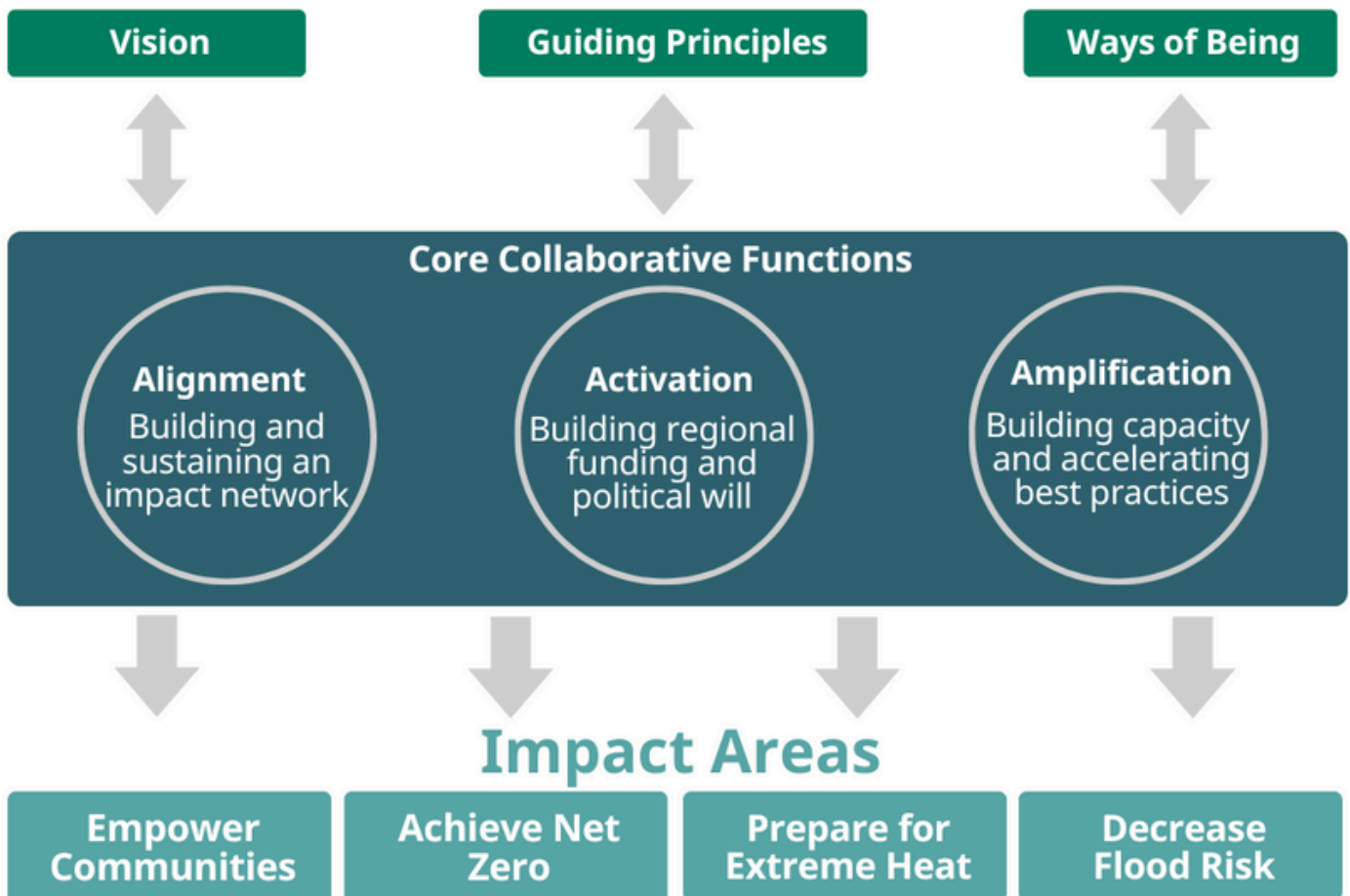


Purpose & Process

The purpose of the Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative Strategic Plan is to guide the prioritization of projects and fundraising efforts taken by the Collaborative over the next two years. The Strategic Plan provides a transparent guide to how the Collaborative engaged with participants between 2022 and 2023, gathering projects, activities, and ideals and is actively responding to those through the pursuit of the Collaborative’s four impact areas. The Strategic Plan will complement and inform the fundraising plan and strategy, governance, and work plans of the individual Work Groups.

Between 2022 and 2023 the Collaborative convened over 160 participants through Work Group meetings, Community Based Organization (CBO) meetings, and full meetings of the Collaborative. Through these meetings, the Collaborative sought guidance on the types of projects and activities it should prioritize, the partnerships to forge, and the approach to take to accelerate climate action across Santa Clara County. Between March-June 2024 the Collaborative Leadership Advisory Team and Equity in Community Work Group reviewed and prioritized projects and activities for the Collaborative to pursue.

Strategic Plan Elements



Climate Collaborative Overview

Vision for a Resilient Santa Clara County

We envision a Santa Clara County where diverse stakeholders come together to partner on and coordinate regional strategies to combat climate change and protect people and the natural environment, while advancing strategies to eliminate inequities and improve quality of life for all.

The Collaborative is a multi-sector network and community of practice for public agencies, academia, nonprofit and community-based organizations (CBOs), and business and community leaders to advance regional solutions to climate change through resource and expertise sharing, joint-funding opportunities, and partnership development.

The Collaborative is committed to embedding and leading with Equity and CBOs will ground the work of the Collaborative priorities, projects, and decision-making in the needs of the communities. Based on input from CBOs, this will occur through the formation of an Equity in Community Work Group (EiCWG) that will empower the leadership of CBOs and serve as a forum to help advance equity and environmental justice within their own climate work, as well as within the Collaborative.

Collaborative Guiding Principles

The Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative and its participants are committed to the following principles:

- **Sustain a diverse impact network of staff** from Santa Clara County public agencies and organizations to advance regional climate projects, programs, and policies.
- **Develop and formalize partnerships** to coordinate and fund programs and projects that enhance the the ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change across the County.
- **Empower communities** through inclusive decision-making, culturally responsive engagement and capacity building to support the integration of equity and climate justice in the Collaborative.
- **Prioritize natural and nature-based climate solutions** to promote regional resilience.



Strengthening Core Collaborative Functions

Alignment: Building an Impact Network

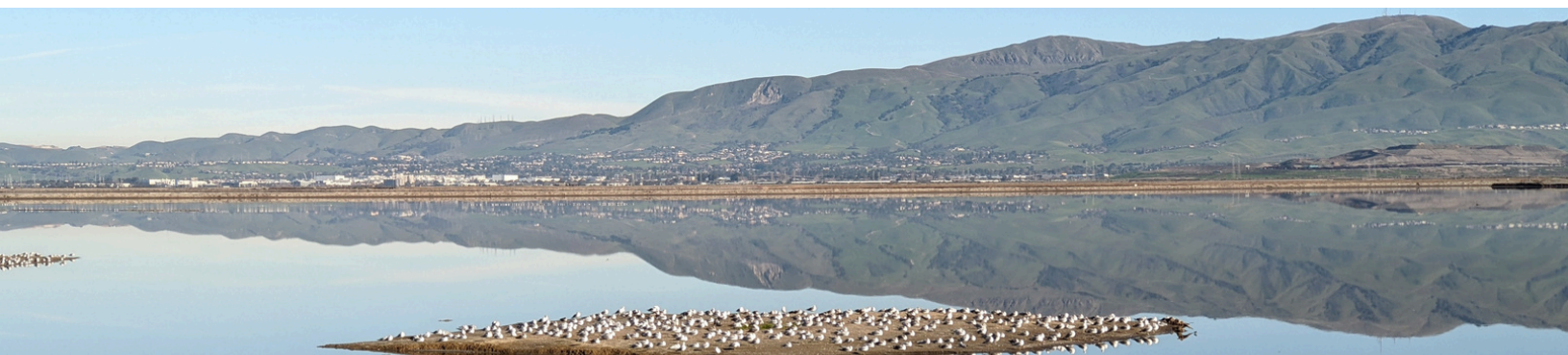
- Sustain a diverse impact network of staff from across Santa Clara County, including public, private, and non-profit sectors to advance regional climate projects, programs, and policies and integrate organizations working across climate related fields including housing, food systems, workforce development, agriculture, and conservation.
- Develop and formalize partnerships to coordinate and fund programs and projects that enhance the county's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Activation: Building Regional Funding and Political Will

- Establish a Regional Resilience Fund that leverages public commitments to attract public, philanthropic and private funding and is governed by participants of the Collaborative. The process for the establishment of this fund will include completion of a Resilience Fund Project Prioritization and Implementation Plan, securing seed funding to launch and pilot the Resilience Fund concept and establishing a public/private/community partnership model.
- Galvanize political will to take coordinated climate action across the County and create models, policies, and usable templates for municipalities to introduce aligned policies on climate resilience.

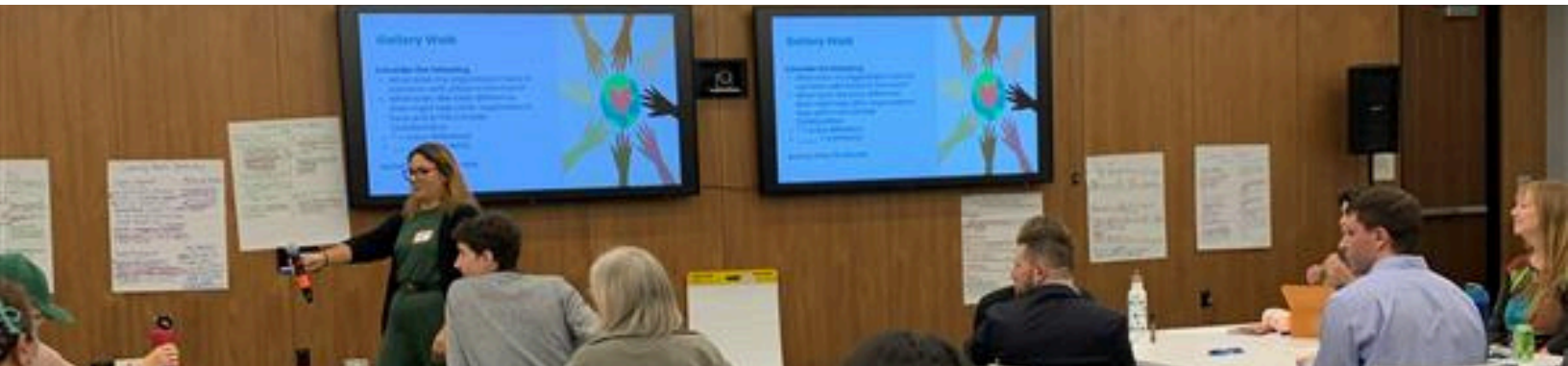
Amplification: Building Capacity and Accelerating Best Practice

- Connect and align Youth Climate and SCC Climate Collaborative efforts and support youth leadership, career pathways, and education initiatives through partnerships with educational institutions, private sector and public agencies.
- Expand training and education programs to build CBO capacity to advance climate solutions in communities most heavily impacted by climate change - low-income communities, communities of color, youth, and unhoused and older adults.
- Create a Santa Clara County Climate Resilience Accelerator Program to increase access to climate maps, data, and other tools that Collaborative participants need for climate informed program and project design.



Achieving Measurable Impact

IMPACT AREA 1: Empower Communities to Build Resilience to Climate Change



Apply a community centered approach to mitigate impacts of climate threats, build the capacity to withstand and recover from events and advance climate solutions.

1. **Establish baseline data** on the level of understanding of climate resilience and climate change impacts across the county.
2. **Create resources for addressing climate change impacts** in CBOs missions and programs, via operational resilience and identification of how climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities of served populations.
3. Develop and **implement a training program for organizations new to the climate space** to discuss and enhance capacity to work on climate issues.
4. **Enlist funded CBOs to serve as mentors** for new or newly identified CBOs in the Collaborative.
5. **Establish the Resilience Fund as a sustained funding source for CBOs** that provides multi-year, flexible funding for operational resilience, and a capacity building program providing access to climate data, communications, disaster preparedness, high-touch technical assistance and project funding.

Community Resilience Leadership Academy

Beginning in 2023 and as a collaboration between Veggielution and the County of Santa Clara Department of Public Health, the Community Resilience Leadership Academy (CRLA) has educated participants from community organizations on the basics of climate change, climate vulnerability, and creating action plans to address community needs. Continuously growing in both participants and impact, the program significantly contributes to advancing the goals of the SCC Climate Collaborative Strategic Plan to enhance capacity and climate resilience among local community-based organizations and their clients. Moving forward, we will explore how best to align and integrate the CRLA into the Collaborative.

Achieving Measurable Impact

IMPACT AREA 2: Achieve Net Zero Emissions



Set ambitious targets and implement plans to decrease greenhouse gas emissions countywide and across local jurisdictions with a focus on educational and financial assistance for low-income and disadvantaged communities (LIDAC) across all actions.

1. **Advocate for increased grid resilience initiatives** particularly for to disadvantaged communities (LIDAC) and underserved neighborhoods.
2. **Prioritize and support countywide emission reductions** in the transportation sector through non-vehicle end electric vehicle mobility options.
3. **Accelerate building electrification** including public buildings, with countywide funding models and amplify existing energy and electrification assistance programs for LIDACs, incentives, and guides for privately owned buildings and multi-family units.
4. **Integrate CBOs into building electrification initiatives** and build capacity to advocate for electrification programs, e.g. EV charging stations to serve and support LIDAC/underserved neighborhoods and communities first.
5. **Pilot and accelerate carbon sequestration and blue carbon restoration** that provide co-benefits to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience such as urban greening, regenerative agriculture, biomass utilization, and wetland conservation.

Electric Advisor & Grid Resilience Initiatives

Silicon Valley Clean Energy, Electric Advisor Program and Grid Resilience Initiatives provide personalized and free live service to residents to go electric on the road and at home and strengthen the energy grid to withstand climate impacts. More information available at <https://goelectric.svcleanenergy.org/>. The City of Palo Alto's Home Efficiency Genie Program provides over the phone energy and water efficiency advice for all Palo Alto residents. Genie advisors begin by asking about energy goals and home concerns, analyze past energy and water consumption patterns and provide custom recommendations for residents. More information available at <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Utilities/Residential/Home-Efficiency-Genie>. These programs advance the Climate Collaborative's goal of achieving net zero emissions and enhancing overall resilience.

Achieving Measurable Impact

IMPACT AREA 3: Prepare Communities for Extreme Heat and Impaired Air Quality



Help communities reduce the impacts of extreme heat and impaired air quality through a multifaceted approach that prioritizes implementation of strategies and projects that advance equitable solutions to address the health impacts of heat and air quality hazards.

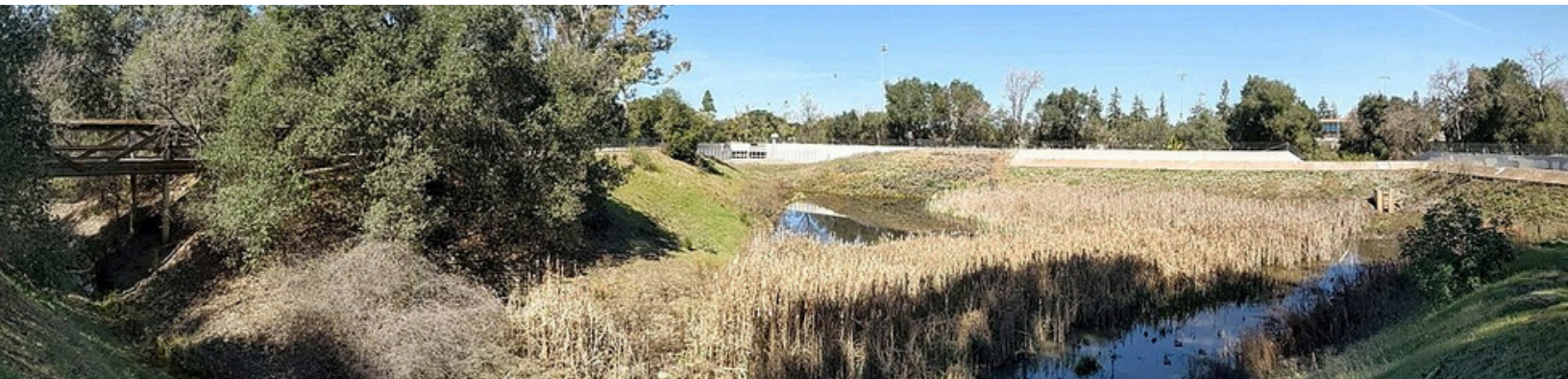
1. **Create and share a map** of all the existing resilience hubs and cooling centers, and the resources available at each.
2. **Engage with and educate communities** on the impacts of climate change and solutions and resources available to mitigate health impacts.
3. **Secure funding through the Resilience Fund to support countywide nature-based initiatives** such as tree planting and urban greening to reduce heat islands.
4. **Develop and share model strategies, policies, and plans** that address impaired air quality and extreme heat and prioritize vulnerable communities.
5. Support the **implementation of projects that advance community resilience to heat and air quality issues** with targeted strategies for priority populations such as seniors, vehicularly-housed or unhoused population, and farmworkers.

Santa Clara University - Expanding Access to Cooling Centers Assessment

An assessment to evaluate the current operations of cooling centers in Santa Clara County and proposed enhancements to accessibility and utilization has been completed by Santa Clara University Environmental Studies & Sciences Program. The geospatial analysis utilized various vulnerability indicators, including tree canopy coverage, income levels, homelessness, and age, to identify areas with the highest vulnerability within SCC and compared them with existing cooling center locations. This work will be expanded to map and document resources at cooling centers and resilience hubs across the County.

Achieving Measurable Impact

IMPACT AREA 4: Eliminate Risk from Flooding and Rising Seas



Undertake collaborative efforts between public agencies and communities for flood and sea level rise risk elimination that supports socially vulnerable communities first and foremost.

1. Identify, develop, and create the **Resilience Fund as a funding source for green infrastructure and nature-based resilience projects** especially in LIDAC communities and where nature is viewed as infrastructure.
2. **Support and/or launch a countywide green belt initiative** to expand connected natural ecosystems.
3. **Support and enhance work with land and conservation managers** to align traditional agricultural practices with carbon sequestration, habitat restoration, and floodplain management.
4. **Help develop shoreline adaptation plans to meet state requirements** and secure future funding for large-scale shoreline projects with habitat and flood protection for priority areas and socially vulnerable communities.

Community Led Nature-Based Solutions Toolbox

The Collaborative's Equity Implementation Partner, Climate Resilient Communities, is providing policy guidance and expert advice to expand the SCC Climate Resilience Tool that provides guidance on nature-based approaches, address climate hazards, and develop model policies for equitable nature-based solutions. CARAS, a community serving organization, will serve as the lead for engaging community members in Gilroy to gather input, ensuring the tools and policies reflect the needs and insights of those directly affected by climate impacts. Informed by communities lived experience, this project aims to create a resource guide to community-informed nature-based policies and tools, enhancing climate resilience through inclusive and equitable strategies.

Ways of Being

Integration, Coordination, and Leveraging Resources to Achieve Impact

Throughout the process of identifying projects and activities for the Collaborative, participants often shared the way they hope to see the Collaborative operate. These “Ways of Being” align with the Collaborative’s Principles and often cut across the Collaborative Impact Areas.

These themes reveal a network seeking to define itself through efforts that are strategic and forward-looking, and also inclusive and adaptable. Collectively, the ways of being and identified projects show that the participants of the Collaborative hope and expect the network operates for a collective impact in the realm of climate resilience for communities across Santa Clara County today, and into the future.

The “Ways of Being” participants identified are underpinned by a strong commitment to integration, coordination, and leveraging resources for enhanced climate resilience. Central to these priorities is the **establishment of a comprehensive framework that facilitates connections between existing and future initiatives and the need to bring together diverse organizations**, including those not previously engaged with, to pool knowledge, resources, and efforts. Collaborative participants also often call on the Collaborative to be a mechanism for partnering with neighboring counties, regional organizations, and the state. Additionally, there are aspirations for the Collaborative to unite and coordinate work across the various local jurisdictions and public agencies in Santa Clara County. Finally, the sustainability of efforts is also noted as a key priority. Participants want to see the Collaborative **adopt a strategic approach to identifying and connecting with funding sources, whether through grants, foundations, or seed funding, to ensure long-term viability and impact of climate resilience initiatives.**



Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative

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The County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability and Resilience provides fiscal and administrative support for the Collaborative with support from these implementation partners:

