

3

STRONGER COMMUNITIES ELEMENT

NOTES FOR ALL ELEMENTS

The General Plan will call out policies and actions that address specific topics of concern raised by the community. For the reader's ease, policies and actions related to these topics of concern are identified throughout the General Plan using the following icons. The policies and actions related to each topic will be compiled in an appendix to the General Plan.



Community Health



Environmental Justice



Economic Development



Sustainability

In addition, the draft policy guidance uses the term “Impacted Community” to identify what are called “disadvantaged communities” under Senate Bill (SB) 1000. SB 1000 defines these communities as low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

Goals, Policies, and Actions

A. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Goal SC-1

Equitable distribution of social and economic resources among all communities in the county so that Impacted Communities are not disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution or other hazards.

Policies

SC-P1.1



In partnership with residents of Impacted Communities, affected workers, business/industry, environmental and environmental justice advocates, community colleges, workforce development and training entities, local government, and other appropriate agencies, support transition from petroleum refining and other highly polluting industries to renewable and sustainable industries that



provide living-wage jobs.

SC-P1.2



Streamline the permitting process for investment in new development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation that promotes community objectives in Impacted Communities, as identified in the Community Profiles.

SC-P1.3



Support development of small-scale walkable districts that provide a range of neighborhood-serving retail and service uses, public amenities, and related infrastructure to residents of Impacted Communities within walking distance of their homes.

SC-P1.4



Support cultural and community-driven events, such as art festivals, farmers' markets, and community service days, that support social connections, neighborhood identity, and environmental stewardship.

SC-P1.5



Maintain a streamlined process to permit and facilitate partial or temporary street closures for community-driven amenities and activities, such as parklets, farmers' markets, arts and cultural events, and outdoor dining, and assist applicants through the permit process.

SC-P1.6



For projects negatively affecting an Impacted Community, support community benefits agreements (CBAs) negotiated with the community and project applicant. The primary objective of these CBAs is to mitigate project impacts to the greatest extent possible, which could include mitigations exceeding the requirements of CEQA. Secondly, to compensate for impacts that cannot be fully mitigated, these CBAs should secure community benefits that exceed the inherent project benefits and support the community objectives identified in the Community Profile. Neighborhood-serving retail is exempt from this policy.

SC-P1.7




Ensure the ongoing staffing, funding, and other resource needs for the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice are adequately met to fulfill its mission and further the County's environmental justice goals.

Actions

SC-A1.1



Partner with the stakeholders identified in Policy SC-P1.1 to develop and implement a plan to transition from petroleum-refining and other highly polluting industries to renewable, sustainable, and clean industries that provide living-wage jobs. The plan should address site remediation responsibilities along with timelines and strategies to improve health, safety, infrastructure, job opportunities, and revenue opportunities



during the transition toward a net-zero-emission economy, paying special attention to developing new opportunities for Impacted Communities to realize economic, health, educational, and other benefits.

SC-A1.2



With input from residents of Impacted Communities, amend Title 8 of the County Ordinance Code to create an Impacted Communities Overlay Zone that applies to areas within and adjacent to Impacted Communities and establishes requirements for discretionary permits for non-residential developments of 25,000 square feet or more. The overlay zone will include an expanded set of required project findings that promote environmental justice and health and provide guidance for demonstrating consistency with those findings. Projects able to satisfy the required findings will:

- (a) Provide benefits that support the community objectives, such as those identified in the Community Profile.
- (b) Provide economic opportunities for the community.
- (c) Avoid unwelcome permanent displacement of existing residents or businesses in the community.
- (d) Support community resiliency to climate change.
- (e) Avoid negative impacts on health and the quality of life of residents within the community to the greatest extent possible.

SC-A1.3



Revise the Industrial Safety Ordinance to increase the hazard scores for projects with potential to adversely affect Impacted Communities, as well as address ambiguities and antiquated terminology that complicate administration of the ordinance.

SC-A1.4



Study the feasibility of implementing an amortization process to eliminate non-conforming land uses.

SC-A1.5



Upon each review of the General Plan, review health outcomes data for Impacted Communities and assess any updated information related to the delineation of Impacted Communities in Contra Costa County. Based on these reviews, update the map of Impacted Communities and environmental justice-related goals, policies, and actions accordingly.

SC-A1.6



As part of the annual General Plan progress report to the Board of Supervisors, describe specific efforts to implement the General Plan policies and actions related to environmental justice, highlighting efforts in each Impacted Community.



SC-A1.7



Submit a report to the Board of Supervisors on the feasibility of creating or participating in public-private partnerships, community land trusts, and other types of economic development and wealth-building tools to support local interests, community development, and long-term community ownership and housing affordability in Impacted Communities.

SC-A1.8



Establish a process for the County to assist with obtaining easily accessed financial support, such as grants, for community-based organizations or public-private partners to support physical improvements in Impacted Communities, such as murals, vegetative buffers, and planting strips.

SC-A1.9



Dedicate staff in appropriate departments to assist applicants from Impacted Communities in navigating the project application and review process for projects in their communities.

See the Land Use Element for policies on disadvantaged unincorporated communities pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 244.

B. COMMUNITY HEALTH

B1. Healthy Neighborhoods

Goal SC-2

Safe, welcoming neighborhoods that support physical activity and a healthy environment for all residents.

Policies

SC-P2.1



Within established communities, complete construction of sidewalks and crosswalks and encourage neighborhood design and development that supports safe walking, biking, and other micro-mobility options, convenient access to services and transit, and opportunities for local shopping.

SC-P2.2



Provide functional civic space and well-maintained public amenities near high-volume transit hubs. Each hub area should project a positive visual image, a strong and unique identity, and a safe, inviting environment for pedestrians and passengers.

SC-P2.3



Promote creation of community focal points and gathering places. (3-149)

SC-P2.4



Leverage community-specific natural features, such as creeks, shorelines, and trails, to strengthen community identity and connect residents to nature. (3-149)

SC-P2.5



Encourage development, preservation, and reinvestment that strengthens the unique character of each unincorporated community. Ensure that future private and public projects provide parks and playgrounds, complete streets, trees and landscaping, streetscapes, signage, and sustainable building design that reflect and improve the character of the community, along with long-term maintenance mechanisms to ensure continued benefit from the improvements into the future. (3-J, 3-15, 3-115, 3-z)

SC-P2.6



Stimulate investment in communities by using CEQA infill exemptions for qualifying projects (e.g., projects that do not increase pollution levels) to expedite environmental review and reduce project costs. (SB 226)

SC-P2.7



Welcome redevelopment of undesirable uses, highly

polluting industries, and other activities that detract from community character or well-being. (3-16)

SC-P2.8



Encourage land uses and activities that reflect and enrich the history and cultural heritage of each unincorporated community. (3-17)

SC-P2.9



Implement principles of universal and barrier-free design so that people of all physical abilities can enjoy mobility and accessibility in their communities.

SC-P2.10



Empower residents of all ages and abilities to volunteer toward improving conditions in Contra Costa County, and maintain a culture within County government that supports and celebrates such volunteerism.

Actions

SC-A2.1



Coordinate with the Contra Costa County Mosquito and Vector Control District to identify and remedy poor drainage areas to reduce disease risk from stagnant water. Support efforts by the Vector Control District to expand outreach programs to educate communities about potential increases in vector-borne diseases from stagnant water.



See the Land Use Element for additional policies and actions on community design that supports active transportation. See the Transportation Element for policies and actions on pedestrian and bicycle safety, Safe Routes to Schools, and access to public transit. See the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies and actions on equitable access to parks and recreation areas.

B2. Health Services

Goal SC-3

Convenient access to comprehensive, co-located health services so all residents can find the physical and behavioral health care services they need.

Policies

SC-P3.1



Provide sufficient access to appropriate health care and behavioral health facilities and services for all communities.

SC-P3.2



Pursue appropriate and feasible opportunities to co-locate healthcare services with other County services within new or substantially renovated County facilities.

SC-P3.3



Support and encourage the provision of paratransit, public transit, and other transportation services to neighborhood and regional healthcare facilities to meet identified gaps in service.

Actions

SC-A3.1



Welcome establishment of medical clinics, behavioral health facilities, and pharmacies in Impacted Communities.

SC-A3.2



Streamline zoning requirements for healthcare facilities to reduce barriers to their establishment in Impacted Communities.

SC-A3.3



Continue collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions to assess and address issues related to capacity and access to emergency, acute, and preventative/primary healthcare services, especially in the West County region.

B3. Healthy Food

Goal SC-4

Support and expand small-scale food production and urban agriculture in the county's urban areas, including growing, processing, and distributing fresh food. (3-194)

Policies

SC-P4.1



Encourage planting of home gardens and food-producing plants and trees on private property in urban areas. Encourage partnerships between property owners and gleaning and stewardship programs to harvest and maintain edible plantings. (3-194)

SC-P4.2



Encourage community gardens and urban agriculture with collectively shared and managed plots. (3-194)

SC-P4.3



Encourage demonstration or educational gardens operated by community organizations or educational institutions. (3-194)

SC-P4.4



Encourage all new residential development to incorporate community gardens into the project design and require incorporation of community gardens for projects that meet the criteria established through Action SC-A4.2.

SC-P4.5



Allow urban farms in locations where they will be compatible with adjacent uses, and allow associated limited on-site sales, processing facilities, and complementary agricultural activities. (3-194)

SC-P4.6



Support programs that increase the availability of recycled water for urban agriculture and landscaping through self-fill stations or similar facilities.

Actions

SC-A4.1



Amend Title 8 of the County Ordinance Code to include an urban agriculture ordinance that addresses the following:



- (a) Zoning districts where urban agriculture is allowed.
 - (b) Permitting requirements.
 - (c) Development and performance standards.
 - (d) Environmentally safe and sustainable practices.
 - (e) Sale of crops and/or cottage foods.
 - (f) Animal husbandry.
 - (g) Disposal of food waste and agricultural byproducts.
- (3-195)

SC-A4.2



Amend the County Ordinance Code to add a requirement for certain projects to incorporate community gardens into the project design. As part of this process, identify a threshold for when this requirement would be triggered, considering project type, size, and location, and establish standards for garden size and design. Consider the needs of Impacted Communities when developing these amendments.

SC-A4.3



Amend Title 4 of the County Ordinance Code to allow food trucks within certain designated areas and on private property with special permits under Title 8.

Goal SC-5

Convenient access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food in Impacted Communities.

Policies

SC-P5.1



Increase access to fresh food in Impacted Communities by allowing and encouraging grocery stores, urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and neighborhood kitchens on vacant or underutilized lands. Treat such uses as community benefits in and of themselves.

SC-P5.2



Maximize multimodal access to fresh food in Impacted Communities, prioritizing micro-mobility and pedestrian access, by encouraging grocery stores, healthy corner stores, community gardens, and outdoor markets at key transit nodes and within transit-oriented developments.

SC-P5.3



Provide temporary or permanent access to County facilities and land in Impacted Communities for farmers' markets and community gardens.

Actions

SC-A5.1



Inventory and map food deserts in the county. As part of the inventory, account for walking, micro-mobility, and transit access.

SC-A5.2



Update the County Ordinance Code to streamline permitting of grocery stores and markets in Impacted Communities and food deserts.

SC-A5.3



Develop incentives to attract grocery stores, markets, and establishments selling fresh produce in areas with poor access to fresh food.

SC-A5.4



Every five years beginning in 20##, review the Alcoholic Beverage Sales Commercial Activities Ordinance to ensure it protects Impacted Communities from experiencing disproportionate concentrations of, and impacts from, new bars and liquor stores. To support implementation of this ordinance, set up and maintain a shared data system between the Health Services and Conservation and Development departments that identifies the location of current establishments, along with information about public safety and health.

SC-A5.5



Study the feasibility of restricting fast food restaurants near schools, parks, and other places where children normally gather.

C. HEALTHY HOMES

Goal SC-6

Universal access to safe and sanitary homes.

Policies

SC-P6.1



Ensure that future improvements in Impacted Communities will not result in a net loss of affordable housing or significant displacement of residents.

SC-P6.2



Expand efforts to stimulate repair and rehabilitation of all substandard housing in Impacted Communities.

SC-P6.3



Coordinate with residents of Impacted Communities, community land trusts, the Housing Authority of Contra Costa



County, affordable housing developers, and other organizations to transition vacant, unentitled land in Impacted Communities into affordable and transitional housing and shared equity models, which could include many types of innovative housing products. This should include homeownership opportunities to help residents build intergenerational wealth.

Actions

SC-A6.1



Obtain additional funding for and address barriers to participation in the County's Weatherization Program and similar programs like the Contra Costa Asthma Initiative and Neighborhood Preservation Program for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income homeowners, seniors, landlords, and renters. Focus these efforts on homes in Impacted Communities, particularly rental housing and multi-family housing.

SC-A6.2



Create a bulk buying program or a revolving loan fund that allows people to purchase energy-efficient electric appliances, such as air conditioners, fans, air purifiers, heaters, and others at wholesale prices or minimal cost, and/or with zero-percent interest financing, to increase energy efficiency and replace hazardous appliances. Work with volunteer groups to help people install and dispose of air conditioners and other electrical appliances if they are unable to do so themselves, focusing on Impacted Communities and other areas with high levels of vulnerable

people. Consider augmenting energy-efficiency programs to reduce electricity use and help offset the cost of operating electrical appliances.

SC-A6.3



Partner with local solar providers, MCE, and PG&E to enact a solar group buy program to purchase solar panels and battery storage in bulk for installation in Impacted Communities, including establishment and subsidization of community solar programs for joint membership, which aggregate multiple consumers' electricity sourced from a single photovoltaic solar location. The program should include an educational component to teach the community about the benefits and process of solar installation and give them the opportunity to sign up for the program at a discounted rate.

SC-A6.4



Expand the County's first-time homebuyer program to provide more information and assistance, prioritizing outreach in Impacted Communities to spread awareness of the program.

See the Housing Element for a more comprehensive discussion of housing needs, homelessness, renter protection measures, and programs to affirmatively further fair housing.

D. ARTS AND CULTURE

Goal SC-7

Vibrant communities with strong identities reflected in public art and cultural events.

Policies

SC-P7.1



Support development of cultural facilities and programs, including public art, that are physically and financially accessible to all, with emphasis on bringing these to Impacted Communities. Work with residents, artists, and the Arts and Culture Commission to ensure works of public art are appropriate for the communities where they are installed.

SC-P7.2



Pursue arts and cultural investments as a tool for economic development, especially in Impacted Communities.

SC-P7.3



Support community groups and volunteer organizations in implementing temporary and permanent public art programs, especially in Impacted Communities.

SC-P7.4

Incorporate public art or artistic elements into County capital projects whenever feasible.

Actions

SC-A7.1

Amend the County Ordinance Code to establish a public art requirement for new development and funding mechanisms to create and maintain public art.

SC-A7.2



Partner with recycling centers to establish an artist-in-residence program at the centers to support art education while encouraging residents to conserve and repurpose natural resources and promoting new ways of thinking about the environment.



E. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

E1. Workforce Development

Goal SC-8

Access to and expansion of job training, job opportunities, and economic resources so that residents in Impacted Communities can acquire safe jobs, earn a living wage to support their families, and build shared prosperity.

Policies

SC-P8.1



Support schools, training programs, the Workforce Development Board, and other institutions whose mission is to develop and enhance local workforce skills. (8-dq)

SC-P8.2



Leverage opportunities to pursue workforce development, job training and re-training programs, and public-private partnerships that support economic growth. Support career pathway programs hosted by various County departments and encourage County staff to participate as mentors.

SC-P8.3



Welcome businesses, especially sustainable/clean/green businesses, that provide essential goods and services in Impacted Communities, including food stores with fresh produce, healthcare, childcare, pharmacies, and other retailers, while discouraging predatory lenders, liquor stores, tobacco and cannabis retail stores, dollar stores, and fast-food restaurants.

SC-P8.4



Promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and locally owned businesses and enterprises, especially ethnic, minority, and immigrant entrepreneurship, for the purpose of improving economic self-sufficiency and stability, including through outreach efforts to local small business owners while minimizing permitting barriers.

SC-P8.5



Encourage more daycares, preschools, and early childhood development centers to make childcare more viable and affordable for working families.

Actions

SC-A8.1



Establish a First Source Hiring Program requiring developers, contractors, and employers to use good-faith efforts toward employing residents of Impacted Communities, with emphasis on residents who are economically

disadvantaged. (8-dq)

SC-A8.2



Partner with school districts, community colleges, community organizations, large employers, trade associations, unions, and job training centers to support enhanced job-skills training, recruitment programs and services, and childcare services to support the county workforce, especially workers in Impacted Communities. Work with experienced groups to ensure that programs will be properly staffed and funded. Training and intervention strategies should reduce barriers to employment for youth, formerly incarcerated residents, and residents with limited English proficiency, and should support a just transition toward a sustainable economy by re-training displaced workers with skills for well-paying jobs in new industries.

SC-A8.3



Explore the feasibility of establishing a revolving loan fund, a grant program, and other economic development initiatives that support small business formation and expansion in Impacted Communities.

SC-A8.4



Develop and sufficiently fund a program to offer one-on-one support to small businesses in Impacted Communities; through this program, provide guidance related to available grants, marketing, financing, and mentorship.

SC-A8.5



Explore the use of existing federal and State government economic development programs, such as the “Opportunity Zone” program, “HUB Zone” program, and contracting designations, as means to generate funding for transit, housing, and capital improvements, while attracting private investment.

E2. Business and Innovation

Goal SC-9

Sustain a resilient, diversified economy that supports existing businesses, attracts new businesses, and encourages investment and innovation while fostering economic opportunities for all residents.

Policies

SC-P9.1



Support business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts that diversify and strengthen the economy with special emphasis on sustainable/clean/green businesses.



SC-P9.2



Work collaboratively with cities and other local agencies to leverage Contra Costa County's competitive assets and elevate the county's role in the economic and cultural growth of the Bay Area and California. (3-B)

SC-P9.3



Maintain a well-balanced regulatory environment that facilitates business investment and expansion while addressing community concerns about potential impacts.

SC-P9.4



Continue to support local tourism, including State and federal policies that protect the Delta ecosystem and its recreational opportunities.

SC-P9.5



Recognize agriculture as an important part of the County's economy and maintain conditions that support its ongoing economic viability.

SC-P9.6



Strengthen the viability of the Northern Waterfront as a dynamic economic asset and destination recreational area. Work with partner agencies to support beneficial, environmentally sustainable investment in this area.

SC-P9.7



Support establishment of a Green Empowerment Zone for the Northern Waterfront area, which would prioritize access to tax incentives, grants, loan programs, workforce training programs, and private sector investment in the renewable energy sector.

Actions

SC-A9.1



Adopt and implement an Economic Development Strategy. The strategy should define a vision for the county's economy, identify and target suitable growth industries, and facilitate different types of economic development and employment growth in targeted areas. (3-ac, 3-ad, 3-ae)

SC-A9.2



Implement the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative, including business attraction efforts aimed at biomedical and life science businesses, food and beverage processing, advanced materials and diversified manufacturing, advanced transportation technology, and clean technology.

SC-A9.3



Evaluate the Zoning Code on an ongoing basis to ensure that commercial and industrial regulations reflect contemporary activities, promote compatibility between new and legacy uses, and provide incentives to assist with

redevelopment of older commercial centers.

SC-A9.4



Evaluate regulations and permitting practices on an ongoing basis to identify barriers that hinder economic expansion, investment, and sustainable growth. Explore the feasibility of establishing a small and micro-business fee-waiver program.

SC-A9.5



Maintain and expand the County's participation in the State's Green Business Program.

SC-A9.6



Maintain and expand the Small Business Assistance Program, working collaboratively with technical assistance service providers.

See the Open Space, Conservation, and Working Lands Element for policies about agri-tourism, solar and wind farms, and sustaining the agricultural economy.

F. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Goal SC-10

Effective decision-making that seeks and incorporates the voices of county residents.

Policies

SC-P10.1

Strengthen public trust through transparency, accessibility, and accountability in applying and implementing this General Plan.

SC-P10.2



Provide residents with regular and convenient access to information in the predominant languages spoken in the community and expand opportunities to engage with County government.

SC-P10.3

Build positive relationships between residents, businesses, and County officials.

SC-P10.4

Make appropriate County-owned facilities available to nonprofit civic organizations and neighborhood groups for meetings and events.

SC-P10.5

Support community-driven/community-led initiatives that work toward the community objectives identified in the Community Profiles.



Goal SC-11

Residents empowered with strong voices to communicate needs and solutions.

Policies

SC-P11.1



Engage with residents of Impacted Communities in a meaningful and respectful manner.

SC-P11.2



Notify and engage community members, organizations, and leaders when County planning decisions on major projects are being considered in or near Impacted Communities. Conduct meaningful outreach and engagement with Impacted Communities early in the planning process, as follows:

- (a) Prepare public notices in the predominant language(s) spoken in the community and provide interpretation services at meetings as needed.
- (b) Make public notices and other important documents easy to understand and available in print at local libraries, community centers, or other gathering places.

- (c) Use a wide array of methods to inform community members of opportunities to participate, such as the County website, social media, texts, banners, mailers, and flyers.
- (d) Use supplemental outreach approaches that are appropriate for the participating community.
- (e) Schedule, format, and locate community workshops and meetings to be convenient for community members, both in person and online.
- (f) Use social media, virtual meeting platforms, recorded meetings, and other communication techniques to assist those without time or ability to attend public meetings.
- (g) Consider data that reflects the economic, gender, age, and racial diversity of the affected population.
- (h) Clearly explain potential adverse impacts of a proposed project in plain language that is easily understood by the participating community.

SC-P11.3




Provide community engagement and information access options for people in Impacted Communities without access to computers or internet. Use facilities such as public libraries and community centers as a resource for making information and technology available.

SC-P11.4



Strive for more diverse representation on County boards,



commissions, committees, and similar bodies to better reflect the county's demographics, with greater efforts to engage under-represented populations.

Actions

SC-A11.1



Designate County staff in various departments to be liaisons to each Impacted Community.

SC-A11.2



Identify communities with a significant number of non-English speaking households and develop resources and strategies to better engage them.

SC-A11.3



Hold semi-annual public meetings in each Impacted Community, including the County Supervisor representing the community and representatives from the full spectrum of County departments, to hear from residents of these communities, and use that input to inform the County's annual budgeting process. Provide interpretation services at these meetings.

SC-A11.4



Develop centralized outreach services to support all County departments with language interpretation, translation services for written documents, and sign language services for public meetings.

SC-A11.5

Review County procedures for collecting and disseminating data related to community health, safety, and economic vitality and study the feasibility of making additional data available to the public through accessible online tools.

SC-A11.6



Amend the County Ordinance Code to increase the public notification distance for hearings concerning refineries and other large stationary sources (i.e., any stationary source that emits, or has the potential to emit, 40 tons per year or more of nitrous oxides or sulfur dioxide; 15 tons per year of coarse particulate matter; 10 tons per year of fine particulate matter; and/or 200 tons per year of carbon dioxide) from 300 feet to 3,000 feet.

See the Public Facilities and Services Element for policies that prioritize public investment in capital improvements in Impacted Communities.