

Executive Summary

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Together, this plan and others in the region will help keep our community safe and contribute to national and global carbon reduction goals.

A Resilient and Fossil-Free Future

Scientists have long warned of the dangers of climate change. In recent years, these have become impossible for our community and region to ignore: eerie orange skies and hazardous air quality caused by smoke from out-of-control wildfires, extreme heat exacerbating existing health conditions, especially for the elderly and small children. A multi-year drought combined with flooding from a series of atmospheric rivers has shown the extremes climate change can create. These dangerous events are expected to become only more common.

This climate action plan builds on our past progress. Alameda County recognized the threat climate change poses with our first formal commitment to action in 2006. The County previously adopted two climate action plans: one focused on our operations and services in 2010 and one focused on our unincorporated community in 2014. (See these plans [here](#).) Our plans are policy tools that establish how we plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and respond to related climate impacts.

Our Climate Action Plan for Government Operations and Services Through 2020, adopted in 2010, set a path for County operations to achieve a minimum greenhouse gas emissions reduction of 15 percent and a stretch target of 30 percent by 2020 from a 2003 baseline. The plan also set a long-term target of an 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050. Our efforts exceeded the 2020 stretch target: we achieved a 31 percent reduction in operational emissions.

Guided by this plan, we will invest in resilient service delivery and aggressively pursue emissions reductions in the County's operations. We look forward to supporting and collaborating with the communities and groups already being affected by climate change. Thousands of communities across the country are taking action, and we are proud to join them.

This new climate action plan sets a target for County services and operations that exceeds our earlier 2050 target and aligns with California’s target of carbon neutrality by 2045. It establishes a series of steps the County needs to take between 2023 and 2026 to move us toward that goal. And it establishes a set of actions to both protect our community from climate impacts and protect the County assets and services important to serving the public.

Climate action aligns with the County’s strategic planning. [Vision 2026](#), the County’s vision for anticipating community challenges and meeting residents’ needs, was adopted in 2018 and provides goals and guiding principles for County work through 2026. It includes four vision elements—Healthy Environment, Safe and Livable Communities, Thriving and Resilient Population, and Prosperous and Vibrant Economy—which are all supported by climate action.

How We Developed the Plan

We began work on the plan with baseline assessments of our operational and supply chain emissions. The last plan focused largely on cutting emissions and was a 10-year plan. We soon realized that we needed to take a different approach for this plan. We decided on a four-year timeframe, which aligns with the Vision 2026 update in 2026. As the Bay Area was battered by climate change’s effects, including severe storms and heat waves, it became increasingly clear that we needed to think not only about future emission reductions but also about mitigating the effects that were already here. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing inequities within the County and the need to prioritize equity in our planning process.



Equity

The County is committed to addressing racial injustice and other social and health inequities. To help develop measures and priorities, we partnered with an experienced climate plan consulting firm, a local equity consultant, and community organizations to convene focus groups, listening sessions, and door-to-door surveys with members of frontline communities—groups disproportionately burdened by climate change—to understand and incorporate their needs, priorities, and concerns.

Project teams of County employees also reviewed measures using the pilot [Equity Amplification Tool](#), a worksheet with questions on equity implications of draft climate measures.

Public Outreach and Staff Engagement

In addition to our outreach to frontline communities, we conducted an online public survey, held workshops, and set up two online feedback forums for our residents to share their priorities and concerns. Written documents, such as the survey, were available in English, traditional Chinese, and Spanish, and interpretation was offered for workshops.

Internal work on the plan was guided by a Climate Action Development Group, comprised of more than 30 staff from 10 agencies. The group set the strategic direction and assisted in plan development as managers and implementers of climate action in their respective roles. County leads for climate action areas, such as built environment or transportation, regularly consulted staff who will implement measures or have relevant expertise in those areas. We also invited County employees to weigh in on the plan through an employee climate survey.

What We Aim to Accomplish

The plan sets the County on a path toward the goal of carbon neutrality for government services and operations by 2045. Climate neutrality means removing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that we produce beyond what the planet naturally removes; it requires dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To meet this goal, the County must:

- Expand mobile work and virtual-first service delivery, which reduce the need for employees and County clients to commute to work or to travel to receive services.
- Consolidate space needs and use County-owned and -leased space efficiently to avoid wasting resources, including electricity, gas, and water, on underused space.
- Electrify County building equipment.

The plan sets the County on a path toward the goal of carbon neutrality for government services and operations by 2045.

- Continue to purchase carbon-free renewable electricity from the local power provider.
- Electrify the County vehicle fleet and expand electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.
- Continue to use renewable fuel sources, such as renewable diesel, for vehicles in our fleet that do not yet have viable electric alternatives.
- Support the development of a regional circular economy for goods and food through reuse, repair, redistribution, and procurement activities.

In addition, we aim to develop resilient services and support resilient neighborhoods. Resilience metrics are less standardized than greenhouse gas reduction metrics, so we will need to develop an approach to measure resilience outcomes that are influenced by county government action. We know that to help our services and our region become more resilient, the County must:

- Invest in preparedness for specific impacts, including wildfires, storms, and floods.
- Provide protective actions training to the public, to County employees, and to community-based partners, such as how to prepare for heat waves.
- Increase accessibility of resources for preparedness and information during emergencies by diversifying languages and communication channels.
- Expand support for populations most affected by climate impacts, including low-income communities, communities of color, people experiencing homelessness, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Build systems to coordinate across County agencies and with community and regional partners to reach shared goals.



Credit: Sibila Savage

How We Have Structured the Plan

The plan is divided into six action areas, each of which plays a key role in reaching our goals: Built Environment, Community Resilience, Green Economy and Prosperity, Sustainable Materials Management, Transportation, and Climate Leadership and Governance. Each action area has:

- An introductory narrative to orient readers.
- Two to four subsections containing groups of aligned measures.
- Seven to 12 measures in total, each with a table showing the actions or “submeasures” to achieve the measure’s goals.

For each measure, a table lists all submeasures, the key departments implementing them, their priority climate action benefits and any co-benefits, and the amount of investment needed. Icons used in these tables are described in the plan overview.

Action Areas

Built Environment (BE)

Manage the County’s buildings, infrastructure, and landscapes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the climate resilience of our County portfolio.

Community Resilience (CR)

Increase the resilience and preparedness of the communities we serve to protect from climate shocks like heat waves, wildfires, or flooding.

Green Economy and Prosperity (GEP)

Invest in win-win strategies that reduce the County’s environmental footprint while growing the local economy and creating jobs and economic opportunity for residents.

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM)

Implement upstream solutions and circular economy principles to reduce the amount of waste generated in County operations.

Transportation (T)

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the County’s fleet operations and employee commutes.

Climate Leadership and Governance (CLG)

Amplify actions through external communications; reduce climate risk in investments; and provide a foundation for other plan actions by creating implementation structures, addressing cross-cutting approaches like telework, and supporting employees to prepare for climate impacts.

Built Environment (BE)

Alameda County owns or leases approximately 8.7 million square feet of facilities and maintains public infrastructure in unincorporated areas. Achieving our climate target will require us to decarbonize energy use by transitioning away from natural gas to electric-powered equipment in our buildings. This will eliminate burning fossil fuels on-site and instead power equipment with renewable energy. We plan to design and construct new buildings and major renovations to produce zero carbon emissions, maximize energy efficiency, and incorporate distributed energy resources. We will also reduce sources of greenhouse gas emissions by locating new buildings near public transportation, using space efficiently, selecting equipment with lower global warming potential refrigerants, and choosing lower-carbon construction materials, practices, and designs. We plan to complement these efforts by sequestering carbon through smart landscape management choices.

As County facilities provide many essential services to residents, we will take steps to make our built environment resilient to climate risks, such as adding battery storage at buildings so they can operate during power outages.



Credit: David Wakely. Artwork in the County's Castro Valley Library by Jos Sances, part of the Alameda County Art Collection.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT MEASURES

Program Management

BE 1: Policy Development and Program Management

Reduce Emissions

BE 2: Decarbonize New Construction

BE 3: Decarbonize the Existing Portfolio

BE 4: Low-Carbon Operations

BE 5: Green Lease

Reduce and Remove Carbon

BE 6: Optimize Site and Space Planning for Carbon Efficiency

BE 7: Minimize Life Cycle Carbon Emissions of Construction and Building Materials

BE 8: Carbon Sequestration

Prepare the Portfolio

BE 9: Climate Resilience for the Building and Infrastructure Portfolio

BE 10: Manage Lands for Climate Resilience

BE 11: Water Conservation and Drought Preparedness

Community Resilience (CR)

An important part of the County's mission is to provide services to our communities, including social, health, public safety, and infrastructure services. To continue providing essential services, we will prepare our County emergency management systems and health and social programs to ensure that they can function during climate shocks.



One of the needed services is to help our communities become more resilient to climate change impacts such as wildfires, sea level rise, and changes in precipitation patterns. We will support our communities by creating accessible resources and resilience facilities and supporting our residents' mental health. We will help our communities prepare by sharing locally relevant information on climate-related emergencies and ways they can protect themselves. Outreach will emphasize reaching our residents who are most harmed by climate change and our historically and presently underreached communities.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE MEASURES

County System Preparedness

- CR 1: Resilient Emergency Management
- CR 2: Outreach and Communications
- CR 3: Resilient Health and Social Services

Community Preparedness

- CR 4: Resources for Resilience
- CR 5: Place-Based Resilience
- CR 6: Mental Health and Resilience

External Coordination

- CR 7: Regional Resilience
- CR 8: Equitable Community Engagement

Specific Impact Readiness

- CR 9: Reduce Fire Risk
- CR 10: Flood Control

Green Economy and Prosperity (GEP)

As a county government, we want to ensure our communities and local businesses share in the benefits of the transition to the low-carbon and socially inclusive green economy. Being employed and housed and having resources for self-protection help people be resilient to the impacts of climate change. This section of the plan includes diverse strategies at the intersection of ecology, economy, and equity.



We will help current and future County vendors and service providers operate more sustainably, help their clients become more prepared, and stay safe from climate impacts. We will support County departments and vendors in recovering food and reducing food waste and in sourcing lower-carbon food choices. We will also support County farmers and a local sustainable food economy through land use and neighborhood-based programs and incorporate [circular economy](#) principles throughout the County and region.

To ensure the green economy benefits residents, we plan to expand our partnerships with local workforce development programs to support a diverse, trained, and ready workforce.

GREEN ECONOMY AND PROSPERITY MEASURES

Procurement

- GEP 1: Vendor Sustainability and Resilience
- GEP 2: Contracting With Small Nonprofits

Workforce

- GEP 3: Hiring on Climate-Related Large Capital Projects
- GEP 4: Green Job Promotion
- GEP 5: Growing the Alameda County Climate Workforce

Materials Management

- GEP 6: Developing the Regional Circular Economy
- GEP 7: Expanding Edible Food Recovery
- GEP 8: Sourcing Healthier, Low-Carbon Food
- GEP 9: Integrated Circular Food Economy

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM)

We will incorporate upstream waste reduction initiatives in our operations and move away from linear and disposal-based practices to reduce emissions from extracting, producing, manufacturing, transporting, and distributing new products. Focus areas

include providing technical assistance and outreach through programs and projects to reduce waste generated by the County. This involves educating staff, stakeholders, and community members to get more people involved in waste reduction programs. Another focus is supporting a circular economy, to keep goods and materials in use for as long as possible, by expanding internal reuse and repair efforts, exploring alternatives to new purchases, implementing policy support of these efforts, and developing strategies for hosting zero-waste County events and meetings.

In procurement, we will strengthen purchasing policies to minimize the environmental impact of high-priority County goods, such as technology and furniture, and use our purchasing power to help develop the market for sustainable design and manufacturing. Lastly, we will promote circular economy principles in the built environment by salvaging building materials and durable goods from demolished buildings and using them in new buildings and renovations.



Photo of Tool Lending Library by David Wakely, courtesy of Berkeley Public Library

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Technical Assistance and Outreach

SMM 1: Operational Program Implementation

SMM 2: Education and Outreach Strategy

Circular Economy

SMM 3: Reuse Hierarchy Policy

SMM 4: Reuse and Repair Implementation

SMM 5: Zero-Waste Events

Procurement

SMM 6: Strengthening Purchasing Policy

SMM 7: Construction and Demolition

Transportation (T)

County employees' commutes and on-the-job travel contribute a large portion of our operational emissions. Support for remote work is covered in the Climate Leadership and Governance action area. Sustainable transportation for employees to work and at work is outlined in this action area. We need to make the County's fleet green. We plan to do this by electrifying vehicles in line with the state's 2035 zero-emission vehicle mandate and improving fleet efficiency. This includes the efficiency of Public Works Department vehicles, which are often heavy and diesel-burning. We also need to support clean commutes. This section recommends approaches to incentivize and support employees to travel in more efficient ways than driving alone, such as by expanding shuttle and bike services.



TRANSPORTATION MEASURES

Green Fleet

- T 1: Fleet Transition
- T 2: Fleet Management
- T 3: Sustainable Fleet Practices
- T 4: Public Works Agency Fleet

Employee Commutes

- T 5: Clean Commute Incentives
- T 6: Smart Parking Policies
- T 7: Shuttle and Bike Services
- T 8: Micromobility
- T 9: Transit Pass Program

Climate Leadership and Governance (CLG)

Moving a plan from words to action requires people to lead it and effective foundational policies. The Climate Leadership and Governance action area includes four focus categories: advocacy and outreach to advance climate action, an operational framework for plan implementation, support for employee preparedness, and financial strategies. The advocacy and outreach actions include plans to advocate for state and federal support and to share what we learn with our community and other governments in our region. An internal accountability structure to ensure action happens, as well as targets and metrics to measure whether those targets have been met, will be essential. We will take leadership actions that move us toward carbon neutrality, from reducing employee commutes through telework to keeping our climate goals in mind as we develop budgets, create plans, and develop our vision. Agencies will also need technical resources, from grant writers or grant writing training to on-call consultants and fellows, to be successful.



To best serve the community, our employees need to be safe from climate shocks and have resources to support their mental health. To act consistently and have the funds we will need, we must ensure our financial investments support climate-healthy actions and come up with innovative approaches to fund our climate actions and support resilience.

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE MEASURES

Advocacy and Outreach

CLG 1: Legislative Advocacy

CLG 2: External Sharing

CLG 3: Public Outreach

Plan Implementation

CLG 4: Visions and Strategic Plans

CLG 5: Implementation Structures

CLG 6: Implementation Resources

CLG 7: Targets

Employee Preparedness

CLG 8: Supporting Remote Work

CLG 9: Employee Safety

CLG 10: Equipping Employees for
Climate Response

Financial Strategy

CLG 11: Investments

CLG 12: Funding Approaches

How We Will Implement and Evaluate the Plan

This plan was designed to function as a flexible map, not a checklist. While key implementing agencies are listed for each submeasure or action, we expect that County divisions will prioritize which actions they tackle based on their circumstances, needs, funds, and scope. We also expect that not all actions in this plan will move forward. Agencies are welcome to develop different or additional actions to achieve the measure goals and overall targets.

Project and action area teams will establish and track metrics to understand how and whether the measure goals are being met. We are committed to accountability and transparency and will provide annual updates to the Board of Supervisors and the public.

Conclusion

This Climate Action Plan for Government Services and Operations represents an expanded definition of climate action, one that includes sustainable prosperity within our community, a foundational goal of advancing equity, and preparedness and response activities to protect our residents from the harms caused by climate change. The shorter timeframe of this plan allows the County to be nimble and shift our prioritized actions, while keeping ambitious goals and this robust understanding of climate action.

Hundreds of County staff members and thousands of community members contributed ideas, goals, and thoughtful review to this plan. Together, this plan and others in the region will help keep our community safe and contribute to national and global carbon reduction goals to slow the progress of our changing climate. We look forward to making this plan a reality, in partnership with all of you.