

Vision & 2

Guiding Principles

This chapter presents a vision and guiding principles for the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan. These guiding principles are a statement of core community values to guide land use, transportation decisions, and conservation in Santa Cruz County. The guiding principles served as the touchstones for the preparation of the Plan as they help to define the community's special identity and aspirations for the future.

The vision statement and guiding principles were prepared based on public input from a series of community workshops in October of 2012. At this workshop, participants described their vision for the future of the county and discussed the following questions:

- 1. What does sustainability mean to you, relating to concepts such as environment, equity, and economy?**
- 2. What are the ways that we can become more sustainable in Santa Cruz County?**
- 3. Of the ways to achieve more sustainable communities identified in the prior conversations, which ideas are most important for Santa Cruz County?**

Following the community workshops, the County drafted guiding principles and a vision statement based on responses to these questions. The guiding principles and vision were reviewed by the Advisory Group and Planning Commission on December 12, 2012 and approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 12, 2013.



Visioning Workshop small group discussion (top) and card with ideas for promoting sustainable development in Santa Cruz County (bottom)

A Vision for Sustainable Communities in Santa Cruz County

All parts of Santa Cruz County, both urban and rural, benefit from the increased vitality of more sustainable patterns of development and conservation. Within all neighborhoods, investments in transportation improvements have increased residents' transportation options, mobility, and quality of life. The unique needs of the various communities are taken into account in County policy-making and transportation decisions, allowing appropriate solutions for each area. The rural areas maintain the character and densities that recognize their topography and important natural resources, and that distinguish them from the urban part of the County. There are improved links among rural areas and between rural and urban areas. Residents, businesses, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies work together in an effective partnership to encourage economic growth and private investment that benefits county residents and businesses, and supports the ability of governmental agencies to provide necessary facilities and services.

Within all neighborhoods, there are retail and other services that meet the needs of residents. The robust economy generates increased County revenues, which can then be leveraged to obtain grant-funding necessary to provide the expanded multi-modal transportation system desired by the community. Commercial centers feature quality design and convenient connections to neighborhoods for pedestrians and cyclists. Local businesses contribute to a distinctive sense of place and community pride, with jobs providing a living wage to residents. The area is attractive to knowledge-based industries that benefit from the County's unique assets, such as lifestyle enterprises, ecotourism, and sustainable industries. The environmental and social stresses of a large commuter population have been reduced by increasing the number of local well-paying jobs. All residents have the opportunity to benefit from this growth and prosperity – the area is known as a diverse and inclusive community with equal access to opportunity. A healthy local economy contributes to the fiscal sustainability of schools and public agencies and enables the County to provide the high quality services desired by all residents.

Within urban areas, infill development has occurred on vacant and underutilized commercial properties along key transportation corridors. In some places, this development is mixed use with residential or office uses located above ground-floor commercial uses. The best characteristics of favorite areas, such as the Villages and lower 41st Avenue in Pleasure Point, have been replicated elsewhere. Development is well designed to support a walkable environment and a unique sense of place. Along key corridors, development is of sufficient intensity to support an active environment with transportation choices. New development provides a variety of housing types, and there are housing options that are affordable to households of all income levels. All residents who wish to are able to live within easy walking distance of activity centers that enhance community ties.

A Vision for Sustainable Communities in Santa Cruz County (continued)

Transportation choices are such that residents can leave cars at home for some of their daily trips. Bike and pedestrian infrastructure has been optimized so that there is a good network of on-road lanes and sidewalks, supplemented by some off road facilities. It is easy and safe to walk or bike from one neighborhood or commercial area to another, as new connections supplement the existing grid pattern. The railroad and rail trail contribute to transportation and recreation choices, as well as enhancing the sense of community and the vitality of the industries that use the rail. The barrier created by Highway One between the ocean and inland sides of the County has been lessened by strategic improvement of crossings and connectivity to those crossings. Better functioning Highway One reduces travel times on the freeway and also removes some pressure from local streets, increasing the reliability of travel.

Development within urban areas reduces development pressure in rural areas of the County and helps to preserve valued open space. Development in the Plan area is environmentally friendly due to its location, density, and green building practices. Within the urban area open space and natural habitat are protected, and new development is designed to help protect these resources. The area is a part of a sustainable system of food production with community gardens, urban agriculture, artisan food businesses, and organic farming practices. Development is designed to minimize per capita consumption of resources such as water and energy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles were used to guide the preparation of the Transit Corridors Plan for Sustainable Communities in Santa Cruz County.

- **Focused Development.** When market demand stimulates new commercial, residential, office, or retail activity, encourage those new uses to use land efficiently. New development should be compact, located primarily within existing urban areas, and should feature a mixture of uses and development intensities that support transportation choices including transit, cycling, walking, and carpools, and to the extent possible, promote the fiscal sustainability of the area.
- **Transportation Choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and efficient transportation choices to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote public health, and enhance quality of life. Recognize that specific strategies to promote transportation

alternatives will vary depending on the unique characteristics of different places.

- **Open Space and Resource Preservation.** Preserve the County's unique natural resources and habitats by carefully managing new development outside the urban and rural services line. Inside the urban and rural services line, promote the reuse of existing structures or developed land, and ensure that open spaces and parks are protected, accessible, and open to all County residents.
- **Unique Community Character.** Enhance the unique characteristics of communities by investing in healthy, safe, attractive, and walkable neighborhoods and efficient transportation choices between communities. Focus County investment within existing communities to increase community vitality, provide infrastructure efficiently, increase mobility, and promote social connections while protecting open space and existing community assets.



Santa Cruz Metro bus, Cabrillo College



Congregational Church of Soquel

- **Economic Vitality.** Support locally owned businesses that bind the community together and new businesses that generate environmentally friendly, well-paying jobs and local economic prosperity. Encourage businesses that generate tax revenue such as hotels that generate transient occupancy tax, enterprises that generate sales tax, and manufacturing and other basic productive economic



Medical Offices, Dominican Hospital

developments that create demand for indirect supportive economic activity, so that important services such as police, fire, community services and a social safety net can continue to be provided to residents. Support efforts to train and prepare County residents to occupy locally available jobs. Ensure that County regulations encourage private investment and allow for economically feasible development projects consistent with sustainability goals.

- **Housing Options.** Expand housing choices for people of all ages and incomes to lower the combined cost of housing and transportation and to promote diversity in terms of age, income, and family size throughout the County. Recognize that many factors including economic feasibility affect the provision of housing choices.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making.** Encourage community and stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making. Ensure that planning decisions are

predictable, fair, forward thinking, and cost-effective. Reform the project review process to encourage high-quality infill development and reduce unnecessary uncertainty and expense.

- **Governmental Coordination.** Align policies and funding among local, County, regional, and State governmental agencies, including schools and colleges. Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, improve local control over local resources, and increase the effectiveness of all levels of government that impact growth and development in Santa Cruz County. Improve financial sustainability of city and county governments, especially given the loss of redevelopment financing for local projects.
- **Fiscal Sustainability.** Recognize that there is a significant gap between the level of governmental revenue that is generated by the existing land use pattern in Santa Cruz County and the level that is needed to sustainably fund necessary public facilities and services. Promote development patterns and specific land uses that generate revenues to provide the infrastructure and services necessary for thriving communities. Recognize that economic development projects help fiscal health by generating revenues that enable high quality public services.