CLIMATE CHANGE
HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Executive Summary and Call to Action

Sustainable San Mateo County’s 23rd annual Indicators Report highlights sustainability performance in San Mateo County, with an emphasis this year on “Climate Change: How do we respond?” The Indicators Report includes comprehensive data, key challenges, business and community case studies, as well as solutions and action steps within San Mateo County.

The 2019 Key Indicator, one aspect of the full Indicators Report, focuses on six topics that address climate change. These are Long Term Planning for Emergency Preparedness, Sea Level Rise/Flooding, Transportation, Renewable Energy/Energy Use, Public Health and Adaptation/Resilience.

Social Equity is discussed in each topic and highlights how climate change can differentially impact socially vulnerable populations. Please visit www.sustainablesanmateo.org to view both the comprehensive Indicators Report as well as this year’s 2019 Key Indicator.

Climate change is one of our most pressing issues. Increasingly, we feel its consequences firsthand, from unprecedented heat waves and fires to flooding. The time to act is here and now. Let’s lead the way by acting with courage and intent – with an eye on results. Together, to enable a sustainable future for everyone in San Mateo County!
Long-Term Planning for Emergency Preparedness

To prepare for wildfire threats, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) has created Fire Hazard Severity Zones in San Mateo County to identify vulnerable areas. Other responses include educating people through the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program about disaster preparedness, as well as training them in basic disaster response skills. Information on creating defensible spaces or fire-resistant zones, preparing community warning systems, devising evacuation plans, and assembling a wildfire emergency kit is also available to the public.

Transportation

The transportation sector continues to be the largest contributor to GHG emissions in San Mateo County, driven largely by solo driving and commuting. The San Mateo Countywide Transportation Plan 2040 aims for cleaner and more accessible transportation, additional pedestrian and cycling pathways and incentives to purchase electric vehicles (EVs). Other planned initiatives in the county include more EV charging stations, a Mobility Resource Center to match elders with appropriate transportation services, and electrification of the Caltrain corridor from San Francisco to San Jose.
Public Health

Healthcare systems and overall human wellbeing stand to be impacted by climate change as extreme weather events become more frequent. In addition to many diseases increasing in prevalence due to climate change, existing conditions such as asthma might also be aggravated in some cases, impacting vulnerable populations the most.

Initiatives such as the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative are building community resilience in view of climate change and equipping residents and health departments to address its impact on health.

Renewable Energy/Energy Use

Behind transportation, energy-related emissions continue to be the second largest contributor to GHG emissions, most of which come from the use of fossil fuels. Great ways to reduce emissions include: choosing renewable energy for electricity, using LED bulbs and energy-efficient appliances at home, retrofitting buildings, using smarter electrical grids, and improving insulation by innovative techniques such as roof gardens and white roofing. These and other approaches are detailed in the county’s Energy and Water Strategy 2025 report. Such strategies also help to reduce the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect. The UHI is an increase in air and land surface temperature that results from replacing vegetation with concrete and asphalt or heat-absorbing infrastructure like buildings and roads.

See how individuals, government, and businesses are making a difference at SSMC’s website.
Socially Vulnerable Groups in San Mateo County

The graph above represents socially vulnerable groups in San Mateo County that require targeted support and capacity building for climate change adaptation and resilience building.

Housing Affordability Index
Select Regions, 2019

Sustainable San Mateo County’s Mission Statement:
To drive impactful action on economic, environmental and social equity issues that leads to sustainable practices and improves the long-term health of San Mateo County.

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