

Sustainable San Mateo County

Sustainability

Ideas Bank



An evolving resource for local leaders, cities and businesses throughout San Mateo County for accelerating sustainability



Sustainable
San Mateo County
Economy. Equity. Environment.

Executive Summary

The Sustainability Ideas Bank compiles sustainability solutions for cities and businesses that have been implemented successfully, both locally and elsewhere. We have included contact information so that leaders can talk directly with others who have implemented these solutions. The Ideas Bank is aimed at city and business leaders throughout San Mateo County who want to drive sustainability progress in their jurisdiction or business sector.

This resource, offered by Sustainable San Mateo County (SSMC), is designed to make it easier for cities and businesses to address climate change and other issues related to sustainability by removing the need for staff members to research the feasibility of ideas and for city attorneys to draft new ordinances. Instead, local leaders will be able to adopt solutions that have already proven successful elsewhere.

We don't want the Sustainability Ideas Bank to sit on a shelf. It will be a continuously evolving and growing resource as progress is made and new challenges arise. SSMC has been measuring annual sustainability progress by cities in San Mateo County since 1997 through its Indicators Reports, and this data can help guide cities and businesses on where to focus their efforts.

Affordable Housing

Mandatory Rent Registry

Establish an annual reporting requirement for property owners/managers regarding residential rents and other information about rental units during the annual business license renewal process. This registry will inform the City Council about the rental market, housing trends and housing stock throughout the city, creating more transparency. The City Council of El Cerrito, Calif., recently adopted an ordinance that requires an up-to-date rent registry. Cities such as Los Angeles and San Jose have adopted similar ordinances, but no jurisdictions in San Mateo County have done so yet. Having a registry will make it easier to discover landlords who evict tenants on the pretext that they are planning to live in the unit, only to rent it to someone else at a higher price.

Housing Impact Fees

Housing impact fees help address the "jobs-housing fit," meaning housing affordability needs to address the range of community incomes within a city. These fees are assessed on a per-square foot or per-unit fee basis on new market-rate housing construction to offset its impact on the community. A number of cities in San Mateo County have already enacted housing impact fees on residential and/or commercial developments, but others have not. In 2014, 15 jurisdictions in the county, plus Palo Alto, cut costs by jointly funding a "Grand Nexus Study." With conservative estimates, it found that \$470 million could be generated if impact fees were charged on all projects in the county proposed at that time. This revenue could help fund affordable housing. The study can be found here: <https://homeforallsmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Grand-Nexus-Study-Final-Report-March-2016-3.pdf>

Campaign Contribution Regulation

This idea proposes restricting campaign contributions from real estate developers to elected officials. Not all stakeholders are fairly represented when developers contribute millions to the campaigns of local elected leaders. The Los Angeles City Council has taken measures to regulate campaign finance from developers. More info here:

http://davidryu.lacity.org/press_release_city_council_approves_campaign_finance_reform

Missing Middle Housing

This idea modifies current zoning for neighborhoods zoned for single family homes to allow for the development of "middle" housing – units that are viable for individuals with moderate incomes. These include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and bungalow courts within residential neighborhoods. Adopting a "form-based code" approach – see <https://formbasedcodes.org/definition/> – will allow for the development of these types of housing. Redwood City is considering the missing middle housing approach. The City of Minneapolis has adopted a missing middle housing pilot program; see <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/housing/MissingMiddle>. More information can be found here at <https://missingmiddlehousing.com>. Tips on how to regulate it are at <https://missingmiddlehousing.com/about/how-to-regulate>.

Waste Management

Single-Use Plastic Foodware Ban

Some local cities are currently providing input to the Office of Sustainability for an ordinance that would prevent all food service establishments within their jurisdiction from using plastic, single-use foodware items, including straws, stirrers, utensils, drink plugs, containers, cups and lids. Compostable plastic (PLA) is also banned because it acts like conventional plastic in the environment if littered. All foodware items must be natural fiber-based (e.g., paper, wood, sugarcane, bamboo), and customers must specifically request them. Palo Alto adopted a similar ordinance that will take effect January 1, 2020. Details are here:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/pwd/zerowaste/projects/foodware.asp>. San Francisco has already adopted such an ordinance that took effect on July 1, 2019. Details of Ordinance No. 294-18 can be found at: <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0294-18.pdf>. Berkeley also passed such an ordinance, effective March 27, 2019. Ordinance No. 7,639-N.S. can be found at: https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Solid_Waste/2019-02-19%20Item%2001%20Ordinance%207639.pdf

Deconstruction and Construction Waste Management

This type of ordinance requires all residential or commercial projects that include a whole structure demolition to undergo a salvage survey and/or to practice deconstruction. Waste from construction projects constitutes the greatest portion of our waste stream that goes to landfill, and demolition results in mixed waste that has poor reuse potential. Portland, Ore., adopted a deconstruction ordinance in 2016 that has proven successful; details are at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/70643>. Palo Alto recently adopted an ordinance that will effectively ban contractors from demolishing entire buildings beginning in July 2020. Instead, workers will be required to systematically disassemble structures, with the goal of reusing or recycling the bulk of the material on the site. Palo Alto's ordinance can be found here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/72092>

Personal Reusable Cups for All Employees

Under this measure, every employee is given a ceramic or metal cup and paper cups are no longer available. Oracle implemented this program in one building with much advance publicity. New hires also received the cups. After one month, there was an 81 percent reduction in paper cup waste, and average paper cup use has stabilized at a 70 percent average reduction. After seven months, the project has already saved \$50,000 and 600,000 paper cups. Contact information for the key person who established this program is available upon request.

Responsible Recycling of Electronic Waste

San Mateo County has approved an ordinance that requires electronic (e-waste) recyclers to be certified by a third-party organization approved by the county. In addition, e-waste collectors may only deliver waste to certified recyclers. The purpose of this regulation is to ensure that e-waste is recycled responsibly, posing no health or safety risks to residents, recycling workers, other countries and the environment. Regulating e-waste is important and timely because e-waste from the U.S. is harming workers in developing countries that process it. Child labor is often used, and the working conditions are incredibly unsafe. Additionally, much of the waste is dumped in landfill instead of being recycled properly. E-waste is expected to increase dramatically when people begin discarding cell phones for 5G ones. To date, none of the 20

cities in San Mateo County have adopted the county's e-waste ordinance, which can be found here: <https://www.smcsustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/SMC-e-waste-ordinance-12122017.pdf>

Renewable Energy / Electrification

Community Microgrids

Microgrids are becoming increasingly relevant throughout California as PG&E becomes more costly and less reliable with its Public Safety Power Shutoffs. Community microgrids offer a sustainable solution to this dependence. They offer a way for neighborhoods and towns to source their power locally. These grids are also largely supported by renewable sources of energy such as solar. Traditional microgrids often serve a single customer or a small area, but community microgrids can span an entire substation grid area. This method is more cost-effective, more sustainable and more reliable than dependence on PG&E's grid. An initiative called Peninsula Advanced Energy Community is in progress in southern San Mateo County. Its goals include implementing emergency solar microgrids, improving EV infrastructure, improving energy storage, and streamlining government planning and implementation. More info is here: <https://clean-coalition.org/peninsula-advanced-energy-community/>

Reach Codes

Many cities throughout the county are discussing and adopting Reach Codes. An important deadline is approaching fast. Reach Codes must be adopted by the end of the 2019 calendar year in order to go into effect concurrently with the California 2019 Title 24 Standards. Reach Codes are building codes with more stringent regulations than those required by the state, encouraging electrification and reducing dependence on fossil fuels in new construction. Peninsula Clean Energy offers technical assistance and grants of up to \$10,000 for cities within the county working toward Reach Code adoption. A draft letter of intent for City Councils can be found here: <https://peninsulareachcodes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/PCE-LOI-for-Reach-Code-Grant-v8.docx>.

All-electric buildings dramatically reduce carbon emissions. They are also cleaner, safer and less expensive to build. If you would like more information about Reach Codes, please contact Christine Kohl-Zaugg at christine@sustainableanmateo.org.

ECO100

Cities can opt up to ECO100 with Peninsula Clean Energy, making their energy supply 100 percent renewable, which helps them reach their GHG emission reduction goals. San Mateo County and 15 jurisdictions within the county have opted up to ECO100 for their municipal operations, and Portola Valley enrolled all of its residents automatically in ECO100. Residents are free to opt out of the program if they choose. Increasing our reliance on renewable energy is gaining traction as PG&E becomes more costly and less reliable with its power shutoffs. More info is here: <https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/opt-up/>

Water

Gray Water and Purple Pipes

With California's long history of droughts and the growing threat of climate change, water conservation is critical for local communities. Gray water (gently used water from bathroom sinks, showers, tubs and washing machines) can be used for landscaping, crop irrigation and other non-potable uses. Ordinances can be adopted to encourage or mandate reclaimed water use for public landscaping and irrigation. Additionally, new construction and significant remodels can be required to install an option for "purple pipes" that carry reclaimed water from bathrooms and laundry rooms to landscaped areas. Sherry Bryan of Ecology Action has proposed an ordinance requiring residential property owners doing major construction to build dual-drainage plumbing and dual water supply gray water systems into their home construction and remodeling projects. Menlo Park has a gray water landscaping ordinance here:

<https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/MenloPark/?MenloPark12/MenloPark1244.html&?f>

Building

Cool Roofs

These roofs are designed to reflect more sunlight and absorb less heat than a standard roof. Cool roofs can be made of a highly reflective type of paint, a sheet covering, or highly reflective tiles or shingles. The City of San Mateo has posted a residential guide to cool roofs here:

<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/47783/ROOF---COOL-ROOF---RESIDENTIAL-Guide-v-10>

Environment

Beekeeping Regulation

Beekeeping has been addressed in San Mateo County before, but four jurisdictions still have very restrictive policies. Bees are prolific pollinators that are essential to the functioning of the ecosystem as well as our agricultural efficacy and, thus, the stability and resilience of our food system. Three-quarters of San Mateo County has adopted a nuisance mitigation strategy to regulate beekeeping, meaning that residential hives are regulated upon complaint. Redwood City recently updated its policy to comply with nuisance mitigation. The Beekeepers' Guild of San Mateo County, led by Nickie Irvine, is advocating for this effort. The Beekeepers' petition to support a bee-friendly policy can be found here: <https://www.sanmateobeeguild.org/bee-legal/>

County Ordinances Already Enacted

Which cities haven't yet approved the county's plastic bag and polystyrene bans? Are there other environmental ordinances already on the books that we can encourage cities to adopt, such as Burlingame's leaf blower ordinance? It's here:

https://www.burlingame.org/departments/sustainability/leaf_blowers.php

Finance

Environmentally Preferred Purchasing

This policy entails purchasing products or services that have a positive effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. The county has an environmentally preferred purchasing policy here:

<https://hr.smcgov.org/environmental-procurement-policy>.

Palo Alto's green purchasing policy is here:

http://www.responsiblepurchasing.org/bay_area/policy.pdf

Transportation

Electric Vehicle Purchase Incentives

Transportation accounts for the lion's share of emissions in San Mateo County jurisdictions. Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE) offers a variety of programs and incentives to encourage electric vehicle (EV) purchases, including EV test drives, tax credits and rebates on purchases. Details are here: <https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/electric-vehicles/>.

Through December 31, 2019, San Mateo County residents can buy gas-electric hybrid and electric vehicles at substantial discounts through a special PCE program with eight local car dealers. The cost of an all-electric 2019 Nissan Leaf S is just \$16,585, compared to the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) of \$30,885, and a plug-in hybrid 2019 Prius Prime LE costs only \$20,192, compared to the MSRP of \$28,544. You can download the discount details here: <https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PCE-EV-Incentive.pdf>

In partnership with Peninsula Family Service, PCE is offering discounts to income-qualifying San Mateo County residents of up to \$4,000 on used electric vehicles. Details are here: <https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/driveforwardelectric/>.

Food Security

Green Mondays

According to *Drawdown* (<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank>), eating a plant-rich diet is the fourth best way to reduce carbon emissions, and it's something that individuals can easily do. The "Green Monday" program encourages eating no – or less – meat one day a week; encouraging local stores, restaurants and schools to offer more meatless choices; and educating the public about the benefits. Cities around the world have adopted resolutions encouraging various versions of this practice, including several East Bay cities. Berkeley's resolution is one of the oldest and most comprehensive. (SSMC can provide you a copy.) The City of Mountain View approved a policy in October 2019; details are being worked out.