

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

The County of San Diego's vision for sustainability is to set the standard for evidence-based efforts for the San Diego region and beyond. A key objective is to support all communities in the region by efficiently using and effectively protecting our natural resources, balancing economic growth, and ensuring just and equitable provision of public services, without compromising the ability of future generations to also flourish and thrive. This starts with the County's own internal decisions and operations, which have considerable potential for measurable impact.

This second Departmental Sustainability report celebrates the County's progress with commitments across two fiscal years, from July 2023 through June 2025, and includes a summary of sustainability achievements. This process was facilitated by the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ), which advances collaborative sustainability solutions to repair systemic inequities and environmental burdens throughout the County organization and across the San Diego region.

The following are selected OSEJ key milestones during this time that will continue in support of departmental sustainability:

- Built foundational relationships and modes of communication between OSEJ and the four business groups

- Developed a beta version of an internal digital commitment tracking and reporting dashboard
- Developed standardized metrics for each commitment in alignment with the County’s 2024 Climate Action Plan
- Designing a public-facing dashboard for future annual reporting (under development)
- Codeveloping training modules to support standardization of language and importance of sustainability (under development)

Sustainability in Our Own Words

Sustainability is multi-faceted and requires a holistic approach where environmental, social, and economic impacts are balanced and considered together. Actions related to sustainability outcomes can vary widely and are shaped by personal values, cultural backgrounds, and everyday practices. The County embraces the diversity of perspectives and lived experiences represented across staff and departments, which leads to a range of activities contributing to a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all. Below, some of the sustainability champions of the County’s four business groups share what sustainability means to them.

Finance and General Government (FG3)

- *“Being a leader of integrating sustainability into all County Operations focused on energy, water, waste, and transportation.”*
- *“Being committed to building better health, living safely, creating thriving and sustainable environments.”*
- *“Supporting departments on implementing action plans to ensure sustainable infrastructures for the future.”*

Health and Human Services Agency (HHS)

- *“At HHS, sustainability means protecting the region, economy, climate environment, and communities through a comprehensive Sustainability Plan as part of the County’s sustainability effort to reduce disparities for current and future generations.”*
- *“Ensuring resilient and engaged employees, within HHS and our community partners, through focused knowledge-sharing efforts to sustain organizational knowledge and foster ongoing success.”*

Land Use and Environment (LUEG)

- *“Implementing sustainability initiatives and leading by example in the transition to a clean, greenhouse gas emissions-free economy that protects health, wellbeing, and biodiversity, while also reducing pollution and waste.”*
- *“Preserving and enhancing natural and agricultural resources and constructing and maintaining critical infrastructure that protects the public’s health, safety, and quality of life for current and future generations.”*
- *“Working collaboratively with community and local stakeholders to encourage sustainable development that fosters viable and livable communities.”*
- *“Sustainability means integrating environmentally responsible practices into everything we do, from reducing carbon footprints in County operations to advancing regional efforts like the Regional Decarbonization Framework.”*
- *“It’s about building a resilient future through data-driven climate action to ensure safe, healthy, and thriving communities for generations to come.”*

Public Safety (PSG)

- *“Sustainability has been a positive and meaningful initiative for PSG departments, their programs, and services as it has focused attention on a critical issue that directly impacts the region’s public safety.”*
- *“It is also an opportunity for PSG departments to explore more sustainable business practices that will ensure their respective programs and services endure for future County generations.”*

County Sustainability Goals

The chapters of this report align with the same categories of the Global Reporting Initiative¹ that guided the development of sustainability commitments. The following Sustainability Goals, adopted by the Board in 2022, are referenced throughout the Report with corresponding goal icon(s) to indicate a primary connection to an impact category.

County of San Diego Sustainability Goals

1. Engage the community in meaningful ways and continually seek stakeholder input to foster inclusive and sustainable communities.



2. Provide just and equitable access to County services, policy decision-making, and resource allocation in support of sustainable communities.



3. Transition to a green, carbon-free economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support green job creation and workforce development, and prepare for impacts of a changing climate.



4. Protect the health and wellbeing of everyone in the region, with a focus on collaborating with community partners and advocating for environmental justice for communities that have been disproportionately impacted.



5. Protect water in all forms.



6. Develop natural and organic land management policies and practices that protect ecosystems, habitats, biodiversity, and soil health throughout the County while providing opportunities for all residents to access and enjoy the outdoors.



7. Reduce pollution and waste and demonstrate reduction in consumption of resources.



PROCESS

Planning, operations, and communication are key for sustainability and continual improvement. By taking a proactive and streamlined approach, every department role and function can contribute to sustainability in operational outcomes that benefit the organization, environment, and community.

Planning

The development of actionable plans is a critical early step in achieving the County's sustainability goals. Some departments made specific commitments related to improving planning efforts and workflows beyond tracking activities.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- **Library:** completed the Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI) Certification. As of June 2024, San Diego County Library, with its 33 branches and more than 300 library staff, has become the first in California to be designated a "Certified Sustainable Library"².

Operations

It is essential to have a well-defined structure to carry out successful sustainability initiatives. Within the sustainability commitments, some departments reported improving their own internal processes.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- **Clerk of the Board (COB):** established an internal committee to review internal policies, procedures, processes, and manuals to integrate sustainability practices. The committee provided recommendations to the department's executive team. Next steps are to implement at least 50% of the recommendations.
- **Department of General Services (DGS):** developed a green leasing toolkit, which includes green leasing principles, templates, and a tracker to integrate sustainability goals into contracts/leases between the County and tenants. For next steps, DGS is developing an implementation/training plan to roll out the program within the department and other land holding departments.
- **Housing and Community Development Services (HCDS):** made progress on a long-term commitment to reduce paper use through transition to electronic notifications and other transactions via online customer portal. To successfully make the transition, it is necessary for participant emails to be tracked within the HCDS database. As of July 2025, 80% of 11,270 Rental Assistance participants had provided emails. Moving forward, staff will be trained on the new communications database, with plans to roll out the paperless notifications process in late 2025. Once completed, the customer-facing portal will have campaigns to encourage self-serve and ability to complete transactions in a paperless environment.
- **Office of County Counsel (OCC):** coordinated with the County's vendor to reduce paper use by assessing one division's active and closed case files and establishing a scanning system of its active case files. OCC will continue this project based on the vendor's

Impact: On April 18, 2025, the County hosted an in-person Earth Day Fair at the County Operations Center³. The Fair was a celebration and a space to learn about how the County is working to create a more sustainable community. Community organizations joined in tabling to showcase their efforts – from green building to youth entrepreneurship. The fair was attended by over 300 individuals and included interactive and informational booths, games, a demonstration garden, wildlife demos, electric bike demos, and electric vehicles and equipment. For example, Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk, widely known for issuing marriage licenses and performing civil ceremonies, set up a ceremony arbor and participants were able to create their own "vow to the earth". There were also a variety of online activities for continual access to celebrate and learn.



County staff at the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk booth at 2025 County Earth Day Fair

recommendation to complete scanning the division's catalogue of closed case files to ensure an efficient system prior to adding active case files.

- Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ): continued development and refinement of the Commitment Tracker for departments to digitally track sustainability commitments and see commitments across departments and groups. OSEJ also created multiple internal webpages to support departments and staff in creating and tracking Departmental Sustainability Commitments, how to purchase environmentally responsible products, and resources for the Commitment Tracker.

Communication

Communication is an important part of any process, especially given the sheer volume of staff and ongoing sustainability initiatives.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Planning & Developing Services (PDS): communicated sustainability initiatives, practices, and improvements with staff through quarterly 'Coffee with Director' events, all staff meetings, internal PDS Pulse newsletter articles, and an online sustainability suggestion box for improving departmental sustainability. Suggestions inform future program ideas and highlighted areas for operational enhancement. PDS also continued to present sustainability onboarding materials on a quarterly basis during new employee onboarding sessions.
- Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk (ARCC): communicated with their staff about sustainability four times through email and through two virtual trainings on Blue Bin Recycling and Organics & Food Scraps Recycling.
- Health and Human Service Agency (HHS) Admin: maintains an Agency-wide task force that meets monthly, has established a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for ongoing communication, and routinely publishes the 'Agency of One' newsletter highlighting sustainability information.
- Medical Examiner (ME): communicated with staff on a quarterly basis about sustainability commitments as well as promoted use of the County's reutilization program. Through this, the ME was able to repurpose equipment to other departments that they no longer used. Rehousing the unnecessary equipment assisted in creating more space and allowed better traffic flow in the department.

PEOPLE

People are the backbone of any organization and are instrumental for structural transformation toward a more sustainable future. Our actions make a difference in society, our environments, and the workplace. Through engagement and by fostering a sense of purpose, all County departments can create a culture of sustainability that empowers people to contribute to positive change and drive sustainable outcomes.

Impact: County Library completed a mid-term commitment to achieve a Green Building Certification for 2-3 additional branch libraries to verify sustainability performance of libraries with globally recognized standards. As of June 2025, a total of five branch libraries have received this certification. Next steps are to develop a plan to certify an additional three branch libraries in future years.



Alpine County Library

Impact: Recognizing accomplishments is a motivating factor for continuing good work. To advance sustainability outcomes, the Chief Administrative Office developed the framework for a pilot "Sustainability Champion Award Program." The desired intent is that twice a year, the program will open for CAO Office staff to nominate an individual to recognize and celebrate their outstanding sustainability efforts, innovation, progress, and achievements. During the first pilot year, the Sustainability Champion program was open to CAO Office staff.

Engagement

Every process depends on people, and transforming an idea into a reality requires intention and a deep understanding of context. Through the departmental representatives, the County activated a base of engaged County team members to establish and activate sustainability at all levels of the organization. Many commitments include specific ways for County staff to participate in community events as well as trainings for continued learning.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- County Communications Office (CCO): through the creation and distribution of 42 County News Center Stories/news releases, shared clear and accessible information about the County and community sustainability efforts to encourage addressing climate change and protecting and enjoying the natural environment.
- OCC and County Technology Office (CTO): engaged more than 200 staff on Department Sustainability and “What You Can Do” trainings.
- Office of Emergency Services (OES): expanded the number of disaster service workers trained for the Advanced Recovery Initiative (ARI) by 3%, which improves the County’s ability to respond to emergencies and increases resiliency. ARI trains County staff to operate local assistance centers, shelters, emergency operation centers, translation services, and act as 2-1-1 operators during and after large scale disasters. Next, OES will evaluate the need to expand current ARI roles to further increase resiliency.

Social and Economic Impact

As climate change continues to impact our communities, many departments are embarking on sustainability efforts that create ripple effects throughout communities and the region, such as leveraging linkages between sustainability and disaster response to build resilience.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Aging & Independence Services (AIS): created an online Disaster Preparation Resource Guide⁴ to help the community, including older adults, people with disabilities, and anyone with access or functional needs better prepare for emergencies or disasters. Over the two years, AIS distributed more than 2,000 guides across the region, with plans to continue outreach.
- Self Sufficiency Services (SSS): continued to provide multiple ways to ensure equitable access to services, including electronic, telephonic, in-person, and via outreach with community partners. Over the two years, SSS received over 580,000 electronic submissions, which is more than a 500% increase from FY21-22, when SSS received over 95,000 electronic submissions.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): created and published a monthly Climate Action Plan e-newsletter to share accomplishments, news, and data-driven status reports on the implementation of County sustainability programs and the Climate Action Plan.

Impact: In April 2024, the County initiated a year-long exploration to enhance economic prosperity in contracting, which will reduce negative ecological impacts and increase County procurement opportunities for small, minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and LGBTQ+-owned businesses as well as Social Equity Enterprises. A core working group, with representatives from Office of Economic Development and Governmental Affairs (EDGA), Department of Purchasing and Contracting (DPC), Office of Equity and Racial Justice (OERJ), Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ), and Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE), implemented a phased engagement strategy that reached nearly 400 organizations and involved more than 1,500 touchpoints overall with County staff across departments. Input gathered from business owners, nonprofits, and community leaders informed a suite of policy and program updates that were presented to the Board on June 24, 2025 (12), with a second reading planned in August 2025.

This multifaceted approach strengthens the County’s role in supporting local economic development, promoting sustainability, and increasing equity and access in County procurement and contracting.



EDGA and OERJ-facilitated community event with small business representatives

Health and Wellbeing

The County specifically includes health and wellbeing in its definition of sustainability. For example, healthy, walkable communities can bolster pedestrian activities, reduce car accidents, and improve air quality due to reduced emissions.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Medical Care Services (MCS): collaborated with stakeholders to design a potential pilot study to increase equitable access to pharmacy services in County Public Health Centers using automated patient medication dispensing machine technology. This pilot could reduce transportation barriers by providing access to medications onsite, ensuring sustainability through low operating costs, and potentially increased adherence to prescribed treatment. Next steps are to purchase the automated patient medication dispensing machines, once funding is identified.
- Public Health Services (PHS): completed a long-term commitment to provide technical support to five community-based organizations, local coalitions, cities, and other jurisdictions to increase capacity for healthy and equitable planning, including active transportation and supporting local food systems to reduce emissions that exacerbate climate change.

BIODIVERSITY

Preservation of natural land and diverse species supports vital, healthy ecosystems that provide for fertile soils, pollination, erosion control, pest and disease control, and carbon sequestration. Biodiversity loss is primarily driven by habitat loss caused by climate change, ecosystem fragmentation, and land use changes that contribute to increased spread of pathogens, soil degradation, and other detrimental planetary issues.

Land Conservation

Land conservation protects biodiversity through habitat preservation that maintains ecological balance.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR): continued to implement the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), which preserves the region's native habitats and wildlife with large, connected areas. By the end of FY24-25, DPR increased the amount of conserved land by 997 acres to 59,456 parkland acres owned and effectively managed. This occurred through property acquisitions in all areas of the County that provide the most conservation value for sensitive species and habitats, as well as recreational opportunities, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): continued to lead the County's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program, which preserves agricultural land and has ongoing biodiversity co-benefits, and continues to pilot the Sustainable Operations in Land Stewardship (SOILS) Program to enhance carbon sequestration and soil health while delivering key co-benefits such as

Impact: To help ensure projects comply with necessary environmental regulations and to offset ecological losses, the Department of Public Works (DPW) made progress on a long-term commitment to develop a new North County Mitigation Site. This work is ongoing and in coordination with DGS, and various wildlife and resource agencies to ensure input is received and incorporated into the project. Next steps are to continue the design and regulatory process, with continued consultation with wildlife and resource agencies.

improved water retention, greater biodiversity, and increased agricultural productivity.

- San Diego County Fire (County Fire): completed comprehensive land vegetation treatment on 819-lane miles in accordance with California Environment Quality Act (CEQA) standards. This minimized wildfire risks and improved the ecological well-being of the service area. County Fire also held seven community chipping events. Next steps are to continue identifying areas with increased fire risk and provide appropriate vegetation treatments to reduce potential wildfire.

Native Plants

Native plants provide habitat, food, and shelter for a wide range of native species. The Board of Supervisors Policy, G-15 Design Standards for County Facilities and Property⁵, prioritizes native plants in all landscaping projects.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Library: continued the Seeds & Sustainability Project, which helps the community have a positive impact on the environment through gardening and composting. Eleven branches are stocked with a supply of starter seeds to promote gardening and access to homegrown food. Approximately 6,200 California native plant/vegetable garden seed packets were distributed, and 60 education programs were offered on the benefits of native plants and gardening.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): continued to work across County departments and with community partners to implement the Native Landscape Program to encourage the use of native plants in public and private landscaped areas across the region to support our region's unique biodiversity, increase drought tolerance and climate resiliency, improve soil and water retention, and reduce habitat fragmentation.

Tree Planting

Trees provide habitat for plant and animal species, which increases biodiversity. In addition, trees sequester roughly 120 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually as they mature, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Land Use and Environment Group Executive Office (LUEG EO): held a staff engagement activity in coordination with DPR to plant 25 oak trees at El Monte County Park in November 2023, which, once grown, will provide shade and cooling.
- Library: identified six County-owned libraries to receive new trees to provide added tree canopy and shading. Next, Library is working with a specialist to visit and plan the planting at the six libraries (Ramona, El Cajon, 4S, Bonita, Cardiff, and Fletcher Hills).
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): advanced the Equity-Driven Tree Planting Program, which will expand County tree planting

Impact: The Reentry Services Division of the Sheriff's Office teamed up with DPR to support the Comprehensive Tree Program, helping with the reforestation efforts in our local parks. The Community Involved Vocational Incarcerated Crew Services (CIVICS) program participants regularly contribute through weed abatement, fire prevention, and planting native oak trees they nurture from seedlings. The program provided over 600 trees to County parks, with a new goal of 2,000 trees per year, allowing students to gain hands on experience while fostering pride in their contribution to their community.



Reentry Services program nurturing seedlings

Impact: Over the two years and with the support of grants and partners, DPR planted nearly 8,000 trees. This planting success, along with various jurisdictions, partners, and stakeholders collectively reduced greenhouse gas emissions and lowered temperatures. DPR also expanded the tree planting program to include residential education to preserve and grow the tree canopy.



View of trees and mountains from El Monte County Park

efforts outside of the park system to other County-owned properties such as County facilities, rights of way, and easements, and within private property in the unincorporated area.

WATER

Water is limited in supply, and vital for maintaining healthy ecosystems, agricultural productivity, and access to safe drinking water. As water resources become increasingly scarce, it is essential to prioritize sustainable practices. Many departments can play a role in implementing water use best practices, such as water efficiency, stormwater collection, water recycling, and other ways to reduce consumption.

Saving Water

With its desert, semi-arid, mediterranean, oceanic, tundra, and dry climates, California is subject to extreme drought and relies heavily on imported water sources. Importing water requires energy and leaves communities at risk when infrastructure is damaged. Conservation and waste prevention (e.g. leak detection) are key actions to protect water resources.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR): worked with DGS to conduct water audits of County park facilities to identify potential plumbing and irrigation retrofits. In addition, DPR completed several projects that added smart irrigation controllers to better manage irrigation systems to conserve water including Adams Park in Valley Center and Heritage Park in Old Town. DPR will continue to use the water audit report to help prioritize locations for further assessment of plumbing and irrigation retrofits.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): continued to implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), monitor groundwater conditions through a network of 400+ wells, and review proposed projects to ensure long-term water availability in the unincorporated area.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater collection, infiltration, and use increase access to water and can reduce the amount that has to be imported. Infiltrating stormwater can also replenish aquifers, reduce flooding, and improve water quality.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- DPW: established baseline conditions for impervious surfaces and annual runoff volume for each watershed in the unincorporated area and created a standardized methodology for quantifying stormwater benefits from future projects.
- DPW: implemented green infrastructure projects that collect and treat stormwater runoff from a 250-acre drainage area in the unincorporated area. For example, the Los Coches Dry Weather Diversion Pilot Project in Lakeside treats runoff using an underground trash capture device and diverts dry weather runoff to the sanitary sewer for treatment. The San Marino Drive project in

Impact: To increase collaboration across the organization, DPW convenes a Water Roundtable with staff from PDS, DEHQ, DGS, AWM, and OSEJ to coordinate on water resources and ensure regular information-sharing between departments. The workgroup meets monthly to support holistic water management and strategize on enhancing and expanding outreach and educational offerings.



Natural stream in Los Penasquitos Canyon County Preserve

Impact: Department of Public Works (DPW) removed over 600,000 square feet of turf across the two years, in collaboration with landowners to reduce water use and improve water quality. An ongoing partnership agreement with the San Diego County Water Authority to administer a supplemental \$1/sf for turf removal projects has proven to be successful in motivating residential and commercial properties to remove turf. Additionally, the Waterscape Rebate Program's technical assistance in guiding property owners through turf replacement projects has proven to be successful in program retention and project completion.



Drought-tolerant landscaping that replaced turf at a private residence

Lake San Marcos installed biofiltration areas and a sub-surface trash capture device to remove pollutants from runoff before they are discharged to nearby Lake San Marcos. The Estrella County Park Biofiltration and Trash Capture Project in Casa de Oro uses two biofiltration basins and a trash capture device to treat runoff and included pedestrian safety and park improvements.

Water Reclamation

Treating and reusing water reduces the overall amount of water needed and the amount of water imported from other places. Ideally, water should not be used only once and then flushed away.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- DPW: continued as administrator and operator of the San Diego County Sanitation District, which is one of the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) members of the East County Advance Water Purification (ECAWP) program. This program is projected to treat 15 million gallons of sewage from east county communities into advance purified potable water source providing 30% of water locally with a cost-efficient, drought-proof water alternative that is not vulnerable to climate change. The Alpine, Lakeside, and Winter Gardens sewer service areas within the Sanitation District will directly benefit from ECAWP. DPW provides support to the program through technical guidance and investments. In addition, the San Diego County Sanitation District is a member agency of the Metropolitan Wastewater JPA which directly supports and provides planning oversight over the City of San Diego’s Pure Water Program. The program is projected to treat sewage into advance purified potable water source providing 85 million gallons or nearly one-half of San Diego’s water locally by 2035.
- Department of General Services (DGS): completed a site analysis for a water reclamation project at the County Operations Center. The final report is forthcoming, but it was determined to be feasible, and therefore, will be included in future funding requests.

ENERGY

Energy efficiency and renewable energy generation are sustainability strategies that limit the negative effects of fossil fuel consumption, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide reliable clean power supplies and fuel diversification. All departments can influence operational energy consumption through behavioral choices and the procurement of energy-efficient equipment.

New Construction and Retrofits

Energy Use Intensity (EUI) is a useful metric for benchmarking a building’s energy performance. It is a calculation of energy per square foot per year; a lower value is an indication of improved efficiency.⁶

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Agriculture, Weights and Measures (AWM): decommissioned under- or rarely used laboratory equipment, particularly the Plant Pest Diagnostics Lab fume hood machine, which could save an estimated

Impact: The new East Otay Mesa Fire Station opened in October 2023, and achieved LEED Gold. This state-of-the-art facility will reduce response times for the area, such as medical calls to construction workers, traffic accidents, warehouse workers, and incarcerated persons. It includes rooftop solar panels to support Zero Net Energy operations, meaning it will produce at least as much energy as it uses. It’s also the County’s first building to reduce its embodied carbon by 30%, meaning processes and materials with lower carbon emissions were used at each step of construction, like low-carbon concrete, steel from local sources, and Forest Stewardship Council certified mass timber structural frame⁸.



East Otay Mesa Fire Station during construction

Impact: In May 2025, the County held a ribbon cutting for the new, state-of-the-art Public Health Lab. Designed to be all-electric, the Public Health Lab maximizes onsite roof top solar panels and uses additional renewable energy from the solar panels atop the newly built parking structure nearby. The lab also achieved a Platinum LEED certification, the highest possible.



County team providing a tour of Public Health Lab for San Diego Architectural Foundation

30,000 kWh electricity per year, equivalent to energy use of three homes for one year⁷.

- Behavioral Health Services (BHS): collaborated with Department of General Services to review all job site renovations and new construction for the feasibility of converting gas appliances to high-efficiency, all-electric options.
- Department of Animal Services (DAS): determined options and costs for installation of solar panels, battery back-up, and potential for an all-electric building during construction of the new shelter facility in Santee, scheduled for completion in mid-May 2026. This has been part of the ongoing planning process, with LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold and Zero Net Energy certification goals for the facility.

Energy Efficiency

All departments can reduce energy use in buildings. Examples include turning off lights, purchasing energy-efficient equipment, and unplugging appliances when not in use. Plug loads account for approximately 30% of typical office electricity use and as much as 50% of electricity in an energy-efficient building⁹.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Land Use & Environment Group Executive Office (LUEG EO): inventoried equipment that can be unplugged after use and labeled accordingly.
- Registrar of Voters (ROV): replaced 17 high-capacity printers with more efficient equipment to reduce energy demand.
- Aging & Independence Services (AIS): replaced 9 desktop computers with more modern and energy efficient alternatives, as computer refreshes were planned.

Onsite Renewables

Renewable energy, such as solar photovoltaics (PV) and wind power, provides a clean local energy source without associated operational carbon emissions or air pollution. The County has more than 14 megawatts of onsite PV serving its facilities, which offsets nearly 20%, or 14,000 kW, of the total electricity used by the County annually. This equates to 6,906 metric tons of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the amount of electricity used to power 870 homes for one year¹⁰.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR): requested funding for an assessment to identify priority park sites for new PV installations, through the Capital Improvement Needs Assessment five-year plan. DPR continues to take steps in a long-term commitment to expand installation of PV for both new construction and retrofits of current park facilities. DPR already has twelve solar carports and ten facilities with PV, including Sweetwater Regional Park, Lakeside Community Center and Teen Center, and Santa Ysabel Nature Center, which is a Zero Net Energy facility.

Impact: Housing and Community Development Services (HCDS) has begun to upgrade aging appliances and fixtures across its four Public Housing developments in Chula Vista with more energy- and water-efficient options. As of June 2025, 31 ranges, 51 refrigerators, 15 water heaters, 87 shower heads, 88 kitchen/bath faucets and 1 water boiler that services 59 units have been replaced. Water conservation efforts include replacing existing showerheads with low-flow fixtures that will reduce consumption by 40%.



Water-saving showerhead

Impact: County Library made progress on a long-term commitment to design and construct a new Casa De Oro library in coordination with DGS, to earn Leadership in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification and achieve Zero Net Energy (ZNE). LEED is a widely used, voluntary green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council that provides a framework for designing, constructing, and operating healthier, more efficient, and environmentally responsible buildings and communities. The County broke ground on the new library in February 2025¹¹. The construction phase will begin in winter 2025, with the branch set to open in spring 2026. This includes a goal to achieve certification at the Gold level and reach zero net energy in 2027. Of the 33 County libraries, six are LEED Gold.

- Department of Public Works (DPW): collaborated with Department of General Services to perform energy efficiency analyses of all DPW road station facilities and to provide specific recommendations for upgrades. A consultant has drafted a report with recommendations covering all Road Stations.

EMISSIONS

Cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – produced by activities like fossil fuel extraction and use, industrial and agricultural operations, and deposits to landfill – slows climate change and reduces hazardous air pollutants. Most departments can integrate green fleet solutions to reduce operational emissions, and all departments can promote mobility options that decrease the necessity to drive.

Inventory and Planning

GHG emissions metrics start by establishing a baseline against which performance data over time can be compared. The County’s emissions data is included in the County’s Climate Action Plan (CAP). GHG’s associated with direct County organization operations come from buildings, vehicle fleets, and other sources within the County’s control.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Department of General Services (DGS): tracked and reported County facility GHG emissions data. This activity is performed annually, and third-party verification is completed every three years. The County’s goal is to reduce GHG emissions by 1% annually. From CY23 to CY24, County operations and facilities achieved reduction of 1,393 MT CO₂e, or a 1.4% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- DGS: coordinated with departments to consolidate, reduce, and collaborate on vehicle and workspace space requirements. In FY23-24, DGS reduced the County-wide underutilized vehicle count by 757 vehicles, or 43%. DGS and departments also reduced space requirements by 100,000 square feet, which made room to accommodate existing public health and human services staff and mitigated the need to construct or lease a new facility.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): concluded annual monitoring report efforts as part of 2018 CAP implementation and updated CAP GHG inventories for the 2024 CAP that include GHG emissions from County enterprise operations. This includes tracking GHG reductions from telework. Since telework tracking began in 2020, the County has reduced employee commutes by 29%.

Telework, Alternate Work Schedule, and Departmental Space

Telework reduces emissions by reducing employees’ commute to a central location. County departments offer telework and/or alternate work schedule opportunities for team members.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Organization-wide: reduced employee vehicle miles traveled due to the County’s teleworking and alternate work schedule allowances. In FY24-25, County employees saved 22.9 million miles of driving. This

Impact: Data centers are secure, physical facilities that house critical information technology (IT) infrastructure such as computer and software systems (i.e., servers) and data storage. Data centers are an operational emissions source because they use significant energy to power servers and equipment, as well as water to keep systems cool. Therefore, in alignment with County sustainability goals, the County Technology Office (CTO) set a commitment to transition a majority of the County’s server infrastructure to companies where energy usage is net zero by January 2029. Net zero is the goal, achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gases produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. CTO is building out their plan and, as the transition occurs, energy consumption data will be tracked based on a 2024 baseline.

reduced 6,655 metric tons of GHGs, which is equal to the amount of electricity used by 1,295 homes in one year.

- Agriculture, Weights, and Measures (AWM): conducted a cost and feasibility study for AWM floor plans to accommodate future growth while reducing the facility footprint.

Virtual Offerings

County services are typically available in-person, which requires travelling to a physical centralized location. This can generate emissions from personal vehicles or public transportation and can also be associated with other indirect impacts like excess paper usage. Impacts can be minimized with online services and/or the installation of satellite locations throughout the region.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Child Support Services (CSS): continued to promote and expand virtual customer interviews through social media campaigns and marketing flyers, provided webinars on child support and parenting topics, and offered other online customer service practices.
- Medical Examiner (ME): began the process of expanding virtual customer service by increasing use of mail, shipping decedent's personal effects to next-of-kin, and implementing an electronic payment option for family-requested autopsies.

Low Emission Vehicles

In a combustion engine, fossil fuels are burned to power the vehicle. This process releases harmful pollutants into the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter. In contrast, electric vehicles use electricity to power the vehicle, which produces few or no emissions at the tailpipe and can be charged with renewable energy sources. While hybrid vehicles reduce emissions, only Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-In Hybrid (PHEV) count toward state and County electrification goals. The terms BEV and EV are often used interchangeably. Department of General Services works with County departments to transition to low emission vehicles.

As of March 2025, the County has 289 plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles in service, an increase of 101 at the end of June 2024. Departments made progress toward their commitments, however, some timeframes have shifted due to manufacturing and purchasing delays, as well as funding constraints.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- AWM: developed a plan for all vehicles due for replacement to be hybrid or EV and is working toward a 37% conversion of fleet (77 of 118 vehicles) to PHEV/EV by end of FY27-28. As of June 2025, AWM has converted 14 hybrid/electric vehicles.
- CSS: made progress on a long-term commitment, and now 25 of their 48 existing fleet are hybrid/electric vehicles, and another eight hybrid/electric vehicles are expected to arrive prior to the end of 2025—making 69% of the department's fleet hybrid/electric.

Impact: Self Sufficiency Services (SSS) and the Department of Strategy and Community Engagement coordinate two mobile offices, known as Live Well on Wheels (Live WoW).¹² These buses increase equitable access to a variety of health and community services and reduce the need to travel to County brick-and-mortar locations. Over the two years, the Live WoW buses provided over 93,000 service interactions across the region at community events, grocery stores, schools, parks, and places of worship.



Live Well on Wheels at Love Your Heart blood pressure awareness event

Impact: The Department of Animal Services designed and announced Pet Health Express, a new mobile veterinary clinic designed to bring affordable pet care directly to unincorporated communities across the region. The mobile clinic will offer a full range of low-cost services, including spay/neuter services, microchipping, vaccinations, and other non-emergency services.



Pet Health Express parked at a community event

- County Communications Office (CCO): made plans to acquire an electric vehicle when its one gas-powered vehicle qualifies for replacement in FY25-26.
- Department of Animal Services (DAS): continued to evaluate their current fleet, and pursued hybrid/ electric options for new purchases and to replace existing vehicles at end of their useful life. Due to the specialized nature of DAS vehicles, EVs are not yet available that meet some of the Department’s needs; however, all other applicable fleet vehicles (SUVs, trucks) will be replaced with electric vehicles at the end of their useful life.
- Department of Environmental Health & Quality (DEHQ): received approval for four EVs due to replacement and are awaiting delivery. As part of their long-term commitment, DEHQ continues to evaluate market availability for medium- and heavy-duty EV options for specialized fleet vehicles, such as those used in hazardous materials emergency response and mosquito control to help protect public health from West Nile virus, dengue, and other diseases that can be spread by mosquitoes.
- DGS: balanced electrification goals with the cost of infrastructure and availability of vehicles through their Green Fleet Action Plan. DGS has 16 electric vehicles within their department fleet.
- Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR): continued to implement their five-year fleet conversion plan in coordination with the installation of EV charging stations. DPR has 19 electric vehicle conversions and installed nine EV charging stations, five of which are solar powered EV charging stations for hard to adapt locations.
- Department of Public Works (DPW): developed a five-year plan to convert 37% of their 375 existing gasoline/diesel vehicles to electric by FY26-27. As of June 2025, DPW has transitioned 65 vehicles.
- District Attorney (DA): ordered 11 PHEVs vehicles and created a plan to convert all fleet vehicles to either hybrid or electric within four years.
- Health & Human Services Agency (HHS) Admin: evaluated and developed a plan to convert shared HHS vehicles to hybrid or electric models. Currently, 81 of the 308 vehicles in operations are electric, hybrid, and/or plug-in. When vehicles are due for replacement, HHS collaborates with program department representatives to recommend transitioning from gas-powered to hybrid/electric vehicles.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): developed and began implementing a five-year plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the department’s fleet to hybrid/electrified vehicles to 71% (25 of 35 vehicles) by FY27–28. Additionally, PDS continues to manage the Electric Vehicle Consumer Guide, which provides online resources for purchasing an electric vehicle including benefits, incentives, charging options, and a vehicle search and comparison tool.
- Probation: continued converting their fleet by ordering 11 hybrid vehicles, three EVs, and nine plug-in hybrid electric replacements, while eliminating the purchase of gas-only vehicles.

Impact: In fall 2023, the County received four electric transit vans for the Library. These vans were outfitted to support Library staff in delivering community outreach services. In January 2025, the Library started testing the outreach vans to gather staff insights, test vehicle range, and set outreach effort goals, while also reducing emissions from staff travel. This contributes to their long-term commitment of converting 80% of fleet to be electric by FY27-28.



Library staff with an electric outreach van in community

- Public Defender (PD): implemented a plan for conversion of fleet to hybrid/electric vehicles to begin the process of replacing 24 older vehicles with hybrid vehicles.
- San Diego County Fire (County Fire): implemented the plan to replace fleet vehicles with hybrid/electric vehicles where possible. County Fire will continue to evaluate all future vehicle purchases for an electric vehicle option.
- Sheriff: maintained its buy-plan for fleet conversion to hybrid/electric vehicles. The department has received 62 vehicles out of the 365 in their hybrid/electric vehicle buy plan that was initiated in FY22-23.

Impact: County Fire transitioned 55% of station equipment to electric alternatives including leaf blowers, string trimmers, and hedge trimmers. County Fire researched costs and options for zero-emissions equipment and strategized on the distribution of replacements among their stations. As a next step, County Fire will determine the brands that will be purchased and develop an implementation plan that includes a contract for tools, batteries, maintenance, and repair.

Low Emissions Equipment

The volume of smog-forming emissions from landscaping equipment has surpassed emissions from light-duty passenger cars and is projected to be nearly twice those of passenger cars by 2031¹³. In December 2021, the California Air Resources Board approved a measure to require that most newly manufactured landscaping equipment have zero emissions starting in 2024. The measure encourages the development and adoption of cleaner technologies throughout the industry, and the use of low-emissions equipment to reduce negative effects on public health and the environment. Select County departments use leaf blowers for operations and services, and all are closely monitoring industry to ensure they use the most capable technology and maintain operational efficiency.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- AWM: converted all five-gasoline powered handheld equipment such as leaf blowers and chainsaws to zero emission equivalents.
- DPW: converted 72% of gas-powered equipment used for vegetation management, like weed trimmers and chainsaws. DPW achieved its 72% conversion goal, ahead of the FY27-28 target. DPW currently uses renewable (R99) and 100% biofuels for heavy equipment and is looking into electric replacement options.
- DPR: on track to convert at least 50% of their gas-powered tool inventory to battery power by FY25-26.

MATERIALS

Materials generally refer to the physical items to perform our work. The upfront impacts of materials can be considerable, from extraction of raw inputs through processing, manufacturing, and shipping, and installation (when applicable). Items tend to be disposed when they are no longer needed or valued. Items sent to the landfill create significant amounts of methane and carbon dioxide, two greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. The Department of Purchasing and Contracting (DPC) has central authority to make all purchases for the County and advises and supports County departments in establishing requirements, soliciting, and buying goods and services they need. With a total budget of \$8.6 billion for FY24-25, the County can leverage its purchasing power to improve sustainability locally, nationally, and globally.

Purchasing Trends and Procurement

Making purchasing decisions with sustainability in mind maximizes positive outcomes, minimizes negative impacts, and can expose otherwise hidden trade-offs. It is important to start the process by assessing purchasing trends, determining frequently purchased or impactful items, and developing criteria and sources for better options. Thoughtful product selection can reduce the use of natural resources, bolster a local economy, limit the emissions associated with shipping, and minimize negative environmental impacts of waste disposal in landfills.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Clerk of the Board (COB): created a new sustainability purchasing guide for purchases made through the County's contracted supply vendor, including preferred products for the most commonly purchased products. Completed trainings with all staff who select products or purchase for the department.
- Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR): identified the top eight most frequently purchased items that correlate with 12,000 transactions and is completing a prioritization of items with their more sustainable alternatives to meet the staff needs.
- Department of Purchasing & Contracting (DPC): executed two contracts with an expanded sustainability focus during July-December 2023 with Global for greater relevance of eco-friendly General Maintenance and Operations products; and with Xerox for more sustainable toner options and toner recycling program. Additionally, in January 2024, a contract was signed with Staples that includes prominence of eco-friendly supplies on their website and recycling reports.
- Public Defender (PD): finalized the review of office and cleaning supply protocols with procurement staff and contract managers and assessed which products can be replaced with sustainable alternatives.
- Sheriff: reviewed office practices and available options for preferable procurement and is working to prioritize purchase of alternatives that promote sustainable procurement.

Food Systems

A major subcategory of procurement relates to food systems. It includes considerations for the ways that food is produced, processed, and transported to minimize environmental impact, promote social responsibility, and support local and regional food systems. For example, the proper use of pesticides and fertilizers, animal welfare, fair labor practices, and carbon footprint are all important aspects of food systems.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Agriculture, Weights and Measures (AWM): certified Farmers Markets as part of day-to-day operations, allowing for locally produced foods to be locally consumed. During FY23-24, in

Impact: As part of the larger County team working to enhance economic prosperity in contracting, the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice (OSEJ) updated Board Policy B-67, Environmentally Preferable Procurement (EPP) to reinforce environmental stewardship, support human health and well-being, contribute to economic growth, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and advance social sustainability. To inform the policy update, OSEJ held 57 engagement and outreach activities, such as meetings with County staff, vendors, certification bodies, other jurisdictions, and subject matter experts. The updated policy includes guiding themes, general product and vendor selection guidance, specific guidance for four product categories that were selected based on historic County spend and departments voiced priorities, and nearly 30 definitions for key terms.

In addition, OSEJ facilitated the inclusion of at least one procurement-themed commitment by each County department in their annually updated Departmental Sustainability Commitments.

partnership with PHS, AWM used grant funds received the previous year to expand acceptance of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) and other nutritional benefits at Farmers Markets to make fresh, healthy foods more accessible.

- Aging & Independence Services (AIS): increased food accessibility amongst vulnerable populations through installation and cultivation of the nine community garden spaces, including Kinship Family Garden. The first harvest was held on January 28, 2023. Continuous planting and harvesting are ongoing to provide a sustainable opportunity for residents and families to enjoy and interact with their natural environment and have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Ongoing education on subjects like food waste reduction is planned and will be implemented over the next year.
- DPR: operated, in partnership with community organizations, eight community gardens at County parks, with three more planned as part of capital park projects expected to be completed in the next 2-5 years.
- Probation: partnered with the Master Gardeners of San Diego County to establish a community garden program at the Youth Transition Campus, where youth learn about the benefits of local food source, and the farm-to-table model. The program connects them to fresh, healthy produce while building their culinary skills. The program has also been expanded to the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility and is fully operational.
- Public Health Services (PHS): oversaw \$7 million in funding for the Community Food Production Projects (CFPP) to support the food system in increasing food sovereignty, sustainability, and resilience. CFPP supported 43 projects in partnership with the San Diego Foundation and six internal County-led projects in partnership with DPR, DPW, Probation, and Child and Family Wellbeing. Projects included developing community gardens, horticultural training, food distribution and farmer training among others.
- Office of Sustainability & Environmental Justice (OSEJ): hosted ten monthly “lunch and learns” with the Master Gardener Association of San Diego County at the County Operations Center (COC)¹⁴ community garden for gardening tips and tricks.
- Sheriff’s Office: Landscaping and Horticultural Program students at both East Mesa Reentry Facility (EMRF) and Las Colinas Detention and Reentry Facility (LCDRF), plant, grow, and harvest vegetables for the Culinary Arts Programs, including vegetables in hydroponic tower gardens. Students in the Culinary Arts Program are eager to learn how to prepare meals with fresh herbs, lettuce, and root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes; this onsite farm to table model minimizes food miles and reduces emissions.

Impact: PHS facilitated the development of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Board Policy B-75, which was approved unanimously by the Board in December 2023. This collaborative effort included DPC, LUEG EO, and County food service operators. The County serves approximately 8 million meals annually to vulnerable populations including youth and adults residing in public hospitals and detention facilities, older adults, foster youth, and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Through this values-based Program and Policy, the County is focusing public funds to positively impact the food system for local food producers, workers, and businesses owned and/or operated by systemically impacted communities. Sustainability and equity-focused institutional food purchasing can be an immediate and long-term strategy to reduce health disparities through improving quality of food served to vulnerable and under-resourced communities. All County food service operations have action plans and are actively implementing. Next steps are to track and assess progress in cost-neutral strategies to shifting food and beverage purchasing.

Moving to Zero Waste

Waste generation can occur when an item comes to the end of its useful life, but often takes place when that item is no longer seen as valuable. Items sent to the landfill create significant amounts of methane and carbon dioxide, two greenhouse gases. Mismanaged waste, such as

improper disposal of batteries, can also lead to environmental pollution by releasing harmful chemicals and toxic substances into the air, water, and soil. All County departments can make operational choices related to source reduction (i.e., using less or reusing items) and diversion from landfill (i.e., composting of organic waste and recycling).

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Registrar of Voters (ROV): replaced 100% of cardboard ballot boxes with reusable ones, which was a total of 235 ballot boxes across the region.
- Treasurer-Tax Collector (TTC), County Technology Office (CTO), Economic Development & Government Affairs (EDGA): conducted a waste assessment of portions of their offices to identify types and amounts of waste discarded, examine purchasing and management practices, and pinpoint areas for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Organics Recycling

As part of the Countywide effort, departments are working together to meet the new requirements for Senate Bill (SB) 1383¹⁵ for organics recycling in California. County facilities diverted 752 tons of food scraps and landscape trimmings from the landfill in calendar year 2023.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- DPR: used 100% locally produced organic compost and mulch in all landscaping maintenance and tree plantings. In addition, DPR partnered with DPW to host free mulch and compost giveaway events for residents at six County parks to support sustainable gardening and healthy food production in underserved areas and to meet SB 1383 goals to increase the use of compost and mulch.
- Department of Public Works (DPW): coordinated the County’s overall SB 1383 reporting to CalRecycle through their Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Program. In FY23-24, DPW diverted 407 pounds of food scraps through the COC onsite composting program. DPW collaborates with a landscaping contractor to bring the dry leaves, branches, etc. from the COC campus to the onsite compost area, which eliminates vehicle miles traveled of importing wood chips or leaves from offsite.

Reutilization

Similar to any other place of work, County departments have supplies and furniture that are no longer needed. To support departments and the broader community, DPC facilitates a reutilization program called “GovDeals”. This program and platform allow County departments that no longer have a need for items to post them for reuse instead of sending them to public auction, recycling, or landfill¹⁶. An exciting component of this program is that now school districts, local governments, County contractors, and California registered non-profits may also register on “GovDeals” and request items such as a whiteboard, filing cabinet, or desk for free. Efforts to increase the visibility of and participation in the program can help reduce

Impact: The Sheriff’s Office’s Landscaping and Horticultural Program teaches students at Las Colinas Detention and East Mesa Reentry Facility appropriate portions of nitrogen and carbon to compost approximately 200 pounds of food waste per week; they are earning college credits while creating a nutrient-rich product supporting the growth of organic vegetables on our farm. The students at East Mesa Reentry Facility created composting bins using repurposed wood and the bins average 60 pounds of food waste per week, providing a valuable lesson in sustainability practices while also nurturing vegetables grown onsite for the Culinary Arts Program.



East Mesa Reentry Facility (top and bottom)

procurement and disposal costs, conserve natural resources, support community partners, and cause less pollution than making new products from virgin materials or recycling¹⁷.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- DPC: processed 72,665 pounds of products through their reutilization program in FY23-24. Of that total, 70% was recycled or sold, 12% was donated for reuse, and 18% was sent to landfill.
- AWM: created a new inventory log and reuse system. This resulted in 47 office furniture units that were no longer in use to be repurposed and/or recovered and freed up an estimated 376 square feet of office floor space, or the equivalent of 10 workstations.

Water Bottle Refill Stations

Replacing single-use containers with reusable water bottles is a low-cost and relatively straightforward action that all departments can take to reduce waste.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Accessor/Recorder/County (ARCC): installed water bottle refill stations at each of the five ARCC branches: Chula Vista, Kearny Mesa, East County, Archives, and San Marcos. These refill stations have eliminated the need for more than 49,000 disposable bottles as of June 2024.
- DPR: incorporated refill stations into new park designs and completed an internal inventory to help prioritize retrofits starting in FY24–25.

Paper Use

Paper makes up approximately 23% of municipal solid waste in the United States. Manufacturing paper is water-intensive, relies heavily on natural resources, and contributes to GHG emissions, while printing uses energy and chemicals in the form of ink and toner. More than half of all departments have committed to paper recycling practices to reduce usage. Even so, additional processes are needed to reduce paper demand and reduce the potential of landfilled paper.

SELECTED EXAMPLE(S):

- Auditor & Controller (A&C): reduced paper consumption by nearly 50 thousand pages of paper since last year, which is a 30% reduction.
- Child and Family Wellbeing (CFWB): transitioned over 75% of case files to electronic records. This reduces paper use and continued printing needs.
- Department of Animal Services (DAS): transitioned to a cloud-based pet licensing provider. Implementing this reduced nearly 95% of all DAS's paper notifications.
- Department of Human Resources (DHR): assessed paper-based filing systems, evaluated suitable electronic solutions, and piloted an electronic filing system to gauge feasibility and identify potential challenges. Through this, DHR reduced paper consumption by 71%.

Impact: Registrar of Voters (ROV) replaced their water fountains with three filtered water bottle refill stations. As of June 2025, there have been more than 82,200 uses across three floors.

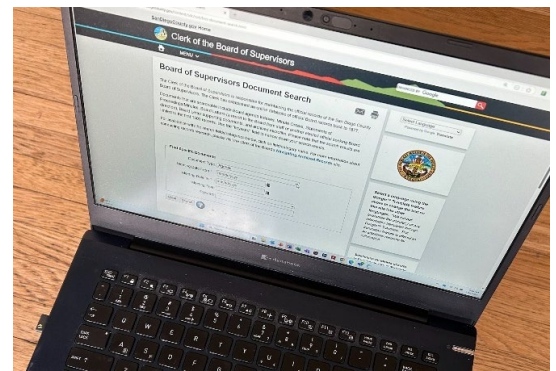


Water refill station at the County Operations Centers

Impact: As part of the County's Reutilization Program operated by the Department of Purchasing and Contracting, the San Diego Futures Foundation distributed 1,702 technology donations to 126 non-profits and agencies, including 221 desktop computers, 180 monitors, 261 laptops, and 117 printers.

- District Attorney (DA): continued to work with local law enforcement agencies to implement the e-Submission Portal, a system that allows for direct uploads of cases to the DA's office, which has allowed the office to make progress toward having paperless case files. Currently 80% of local agencies are participating in this process.
- DPR: identified 41 paper functions that are most commonly used throughout the department. Approximately 29 have been transitioned to paperless, and the remaining functions will be assessed for a future transition to paperless based on department needs.
- Land Use & Environment Group Executive Office (LUEG EO): implemented an internal process to conduct periodic paper use reviews.
- Office of Economic Development & Government Affairs (EDGA): limited paper consumption by setting printers for double-sided printing, as well as using electronic files for reviewing, editing, and scanning.
- Office of Emergency Services (OES): completed a transition to an all-electronic filing system in accordance with County retention policies.
- Planning & Development Services (PDS): made progress on their medium-term commitment by setting a structure to conduct an assessment and inventory to identify paperless operations.
- Medical Examiner (ME): working to implement an electronic filing system by the end of FY24-25 to reduce paper use in accordance with County's retention policies.

Impact: The Clerk of the Board eliminated the single use of 20,000 sheets of paper in a four-month monitoring period (July-Oct 2023) with changes in department processes with preparing for Board of Supervisors meetings. When paper rots in landfills without oxygen, it emits methane gas, which has a global warming potential 84-87 times¹⁸ than that of carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. This means that methane has a significantly higher heat trapping ability.¹⁹ The quickest way to affect the pace of climate change is cutting methane emissions.



Many County records are digitally indexed and publicly available online

NEXT STEPS ON THE HORIZON

Integrating Environmental Justice & Collaborating with the Office of Equity and Racial Justice

As the County enters the fourth year of Departmental Sustainability Commitments, the Office of Sustainability & Environmental Justice (OSEJ) will be streamlining categories and evolving commitments that reach sustainability outcomes through the lens of environmental justice. In addition, OSEJ will continue to collaborate with the Office of Equity and Racial Justice as they work on an equity evaluation framework to inform the County's approach to operationalizing equity, as outlined in the CAO administrative policy. As environmental justice, racial justice, and equity are interrelated – the two offices will continue to leverage each other's teams and efforts for intentional and collaborative work moving forward.

Working Toward a Digital Dashboard

With an internal digital tool soon to be implemented for streamlined reporting and tracking progress, the next step is to expand this platform into a user-friendly, public-facing dashboard that amplifies and aggregates the County's efforts. The dashboard is a centralized location to uplift achievements and progress, and lends well to establishing a new digital format for the Departmental Sustainability Annual Report, which aligns with the County's priorities for more data access and transparency, as well as fosters co-ownership and integration of environmental health, social equity, and economic vitality in County operations, programs, and policies.

Measuring with Intention

OSEJ will be working with all departments to ensure commitments are SMARTIE²⁰: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. Ensuring departments develop sustainability commitments that align with the SMARTIE acronym will improve sustainability outcomes over time. For example, commitments should be relevant to operations, achievable during identified timeframes, and represent actionable steps toward reaching stated sustainability outcomes. Setting milestones, particularly for long-term commitments, is an important way to track and report progress for ambitious and innovative approaches for sustainability. To support measurable commitments and easily report progress, OSEJ will continue to refine the standardization of reporting metrics that guide data collection and tracking. OSEJ will also provide guidance for integration of environmental justice in the commitment development process. In addition, OSEJ is working with the Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics on integrating commitment data with countywide performance measures.

Expanding Training and Resources

As it relates to advancing the County's vision for sustainability, County staff cited two topic areas to prioritize in future trainings: change management; and enhancing practical skills and topical knowledge. OSEJ is developing learning modules to ensure all County staff will be versed in the principles of sustainability and environmental justice, and ways that they can approach their work being mindful of positive outcomes and calculated trade-offs. OSEJ is also planning to develop a learning module that provides foundational knowledge of the history of the tribes of our region. These opportunities for continued learning will help shape future regional programs and policies.

Circular Economy Assessment

OSEJ will explore related impacts through a circular economy assessment, which will evaluate County and regionwide prospects to share, reuse, repair, remanufacture, and upcycle existing materials and products. Findings will help the County better understand ways to optimize products and materials, and increase opportunities for new markets, local jobs, and more affordable access to quality items.

Climate Action and Regional Decarbonization

Departmental sustainability dovetails with broader County efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and beyond, such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Regional Decarbonization Framework (RDF), as well as other County initiatives that will continue to inform ongoing sustainability efforts like the Zero Carbon Portfolio Plan²¹, Green Fleet Action Plan, and Airports Sustainability Management Plan. The commitments identified by every department/office will continue to be evaluated to ensure alignment with these efforts to show how increased sustainability within internal operations contributes to broader County climate goals. The County has been, and will remain, fully committed to the pursuit of sustainability.

ENDNOTES

1. GRI is an international independent standards organization that helps businesses, governments, and other organizations understand and communicate their impacts on issues such as climate change. The environmental categories include materials, energy, water, biodiversity, emissions, effluents, and waste.
<https://www.globalreporting.org>
2. <https://www.countynewscenter.com/county-library-first-in-california-to-be-certified-sustainable/>
3. <https://www.countynewscenter.com/county-hosts-earth-day-2025-fair/>
4. <https://www.alertsandiego.org/en-us/preparedness/make-a-plan.html>
5. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_diego/latest/sandiego_board/g_015_design_standards_for_county_facilities_and_property
6. https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/benchmark/understand_metrics/what_eui
7. <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>
8. <https://www.countynewscenter.com/community-to-be-served-by-new-east-otay-mesa-fire-station/>
9. <https://www.gsa.gov/governmentwide-initiatives/federal-highperformance-green-buildings/resource-library/energy-water/plug-loads/plug-load-nuggets>
10. <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>
11. <https://www.countynewscenter.com/county-breaks-ground-on-new-casa-de-oro-library/>
12. <https://www.livewellsd.org/i-want-to/find-resources/live-well-on-wheels-bus>
13. <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/news/carb-approves-updated-regulations-requiring-most-new-small-road-engines-be-zero-emission-2024>
14. <https://ucanr.edu/sites/sdmastergardeners/COCDemoGarden/>
15. <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp>
16. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_diego/latest/sandiego_board/a_94_disposal_of_personal_property
17. <https://www.govdeals.com/sandiegocounty>
18. <https://www.iea.org/reports/methane-tracker-2021/methane-and-climate-change>
19. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/understanding-global-warming-potentials>
20. <https://your.yale.edu/hit-mark-when-you-set-smart-goals>
21. https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/dgs/Doc/Energy_ZeroCarbonPP.pdf

Legend for Commitments Matrix

s	short-term commitment
m	mid-term commitment
l	long-term commitment

Note: In the case of multiple commitments reported for one commitment type and subcategory by a department, the number of commitments reported for that type and subcategory are included as a superscripted number (i.e., s^x).