

2023 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS

Adopted Dec 6, 2022

HOUSING

The County seeks ongoing, reliable funding to support the development of affordable housing, including but not limited to funding for permanent supportive housing for persons experiencing homelessness, housing for individuals involved in CARE Court and other justice-related programs, full funding for construction of student housing to meet UCSC needs and protect local rental market, additional Assisted Living Waivers allowing eligible seniors to remain in their communities, increased Permanent Local Housing Allocation funding, pilot Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools funds, funding to meet the County's Housing Element obligations through affordable and workforce housing developments, and more.

CRISIS STABILIZATION STEP-DOWN FACILITIES

To ensure the effective delivery of mental health and substance use disorder services, the County seeks ongoing funding for Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP) and Transitional Housing to provide patients and service providers a safe, stable environment to facilitate follow-up care and successfully transition clients back into the community.

FEMA REIMBURSEMENT

The County is still recovering from the twin crisis of the CZU Fire and the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect public safety, support rebuilding, assure the health and welfare of the community and eliminate disparities in health care outcomes, the County experienced substantial financial outlays. Under State and federal disaster declarations, the County is statutorily entitled to reimbursement for those costs. However, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is yet to reimburse the County for substantial portions of those expenses, placing a financial hardship on the County and potentially impacting the delivery of other needed community services. The County supports full statutory reimbursement to the County for disaster-related costs associated with the CZU Fire and COVID-19 pandemic.

SHADED FUEL BREAKS

To protect local communities and natural resources from the threat of wildfire, the County supports increases in one-time and ongoing funding be made available to communities through regular grants or allocations to implement shaded fuel breaks and other fuel reduction projects, including funding for neighborhood outreach and coordination, permitting approvals, contracting and ongoing maintenance funding. While the State issued \$118 million in Wildfire Prevention Grants to 144 projects around the state in FY 2021-22 – including \$870,000 for two projects

within Santa Cruz County – and the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County has been a local leader in securing funding from CAL FIRE and other sources to reduce fuels, fire suppression and old logging practices have made local forests more prone to catastrophic wildfire. Increased investment is necessary to protect lives and property from the threat of wildfire.

REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT

To improve outcomes for justice-involved individuals, reduce recidivism, and protect the health and welfare of inmates and staff, the County seeks planning funding to provide modern local detention facilities including updated spaces for medical, dental and recreation, mental health and substance use treatment, programming and reentry, family connections, and a dedicated women’s wing. While the County will continue to focus on increasing treatment and diversion, increasing pretrial release and on capacity building for in-facility programs and services, enhanced facilities will help improve living conditions for justice-involved clients, working conditions for detention staff, and help meet federal, State and local regulatory requirements.

SLV WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS

The County seeks funding to pursue an environmental, economic and disaster recovery project in the San Lorenzo Valley that would provide a new wastewater system to serve neighborhoods impacted by the CZU Lightning Complex fire, downtown Boulder Creek and environs, including funding for design and planning services, permitting, site acquisition and other needed services. The project would protect the watershed through improved wastewater disposal while supporting CZU Fire survivors engaged in the rebuilding process and local business looking to better serve customers, and has the support of local environmentalists, business organizations and members of the County’s legislative delegation.

SOUTH COUNTY PARK

The County seeks funding for site acquisition, design, permitting and other needed services for a new South County park facility. Options for the possible park include outdoor nature trails, watershed protection, outdoor recreational options, agricultural heritage demonstrations, examples of climate resilient agriculture, improvement of natural areas/resources, habitat restoration, neighborhood connectivity, and more.

SOQUEL DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS

The County seeks funding to extend planned Soquel Drive improvements from State Park Drive to Freedom Boulevard, including buffered and separated bike lanes and other bicycle infrastructure, signal prioritization for public transit, pedestrian and American with Disabilities Act improvements and new roadway resurfacing and striping.