Santa Cruz County
Community Development & Infrastructure Department
Planning Division
Public Participation Plan

This plan describes the public outreach and participation program for policy and long-range planning projects, as well as large-scale discretionary application projects.

Purpose

Public involvement and community support are key to the success of County planning and large development projects. This program addresses steps in community outreach for important policy projects such as General Plan amendments, new county ordinances, housing projects, and other large-scale discretionary projects.

Public Participation Guiding Principles

To be successful, the outreach strategy will:

- Value public participation and promote broad-based involvement by members of the community.
- Employ a multi-faceted approach with a variety of outreach, communication, and participation strategies to ensure that underserved community members and groups have the opportunity to participate in the process.
- Match appropriate public outreach tools to public participation goals.
- Engage stakeholder groups to build a network for two-way information sharing, dialogue and collaboration.
- Use the County website and email to communicate with the public, as well as social media and, where appropriate, traditional print media to target residents who may not have access to computers.
- Provide communications and reports to the public that are clear, timely, and broadly distributed.
- Design public meetings and participation platforms to be as inclusive and open as possible, providing a variety of ways in which all residents and stakeholders can participate and contribute ideas.

- Emphasize outreach to disadvantaged communities and minority populations who may not typically engage in the public process, especially for policy projects and discretionary projects located within those communities.

Public Outreach Elements

The following sections describe elements of a comprehensive outreach strategy. A project may use all or some of the elements, as fits the need considering the duration of the project and level of outreach desired.

1. Branding

The County has developed Branding Guidelines, which should be used for font ("Poppins"), color palette, and other design elements. The Branding Guidelines are located on the County Intranet site: [County Branding (santa-cruz.ca.us)](santa-cruz.ca.us)

2. Project Website

A webpage developed for the project functions as the public clearinghouse for all information related to the project. Websites should be clear, contain graphics and pictures, use buttons to highlight important links, and not be overcrowded with information. The Branding Guidelines also contain page designs to assist with layout.

The websites developed for both the Sustainability Update and the Housing Element Update used the GIS "Hub" application, which allows for a modular website design that can easily embed items such as story maps, surveys, and calendars. This user-friendly website design is intended to help the public with multiple ways to navigate and understand what is proposed and allow members of the public to provide comments. A direct link to the website should be used often and provided in all correspondence and written materials for the project. Also ensure that there is a link from the Planning Department main webpage that is easily located.

Websites should be clean and streamlined; they may have one main "homepage" or additional pages as necessary. For the Sustainability Update and the Housing Element Update, the following pages were useful:

- **"Home":** The home page draws users in with a streamlined and graphically interesting format. There is a brief project description, as well as a drop-down menu of questions where users can "Learn More" about project components.

- **"Project News":** This maybe an area of the main page or a sub-page, but can keep users apprised of project-status, which is particularly helpful for projects with long timelines.

- **"What's Included":** This tab provides a brief overview of the project scope and lists each component of the project. This tab provides an alternative pathway to the project information.

- **"Get Involved":** On this tab, users can learn about participation opportunities and make a comment about the draft documents or answer a survey. As the project moves forward, staff may present or summarize survey results in the "News" section of the website. A link to this survey can be provided on all printed and electronic materials for the project.

  The "Get Involved" tab also provides a calendar of past and upcoming community outreach events and public hearings, as well as a project overview timeline and contact information for Planning staff and decision makers.

- **"Project Documents":** This tab includes all publicly available documents, with the most recent versions at the top, as well as an expandable list of previous document versions organized by hearing date. Users will also be able to review relevant existing County documents.

The website should have buttons to connect to the County's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and to link back to the County Planning website.

Project website examples: [2023 Housing Element (sccoplanning.com)](https://www.sccoplanning.com/sustainabilityupdate), https://www.sccoplanning.com/sustainabilityupdate

3. Focus Groups

Focus groups can take many forms but generally involve the selection of a small group of participants to engage in a series of meetings to consider elements of the project. Generally, the make-up of any focus group should be organized to collect information and opinions from a broad range of outlooks and backgrounds to bring a depth of a variety of input to the process.

A. Stakeholders. Stakeholders generally have some sort of interest in the success of the project—they may be users of the final product generated by the project or affected by the outcome of the project. Stakeholders may include citizens, businesses professionals, developers, builders, scientists, non-profit organizations, other service providers, county departments, etc.

For the Housing Element Update, a contact list of approximately 150 potential business and non-profit organization representatives was compiled. This list is maintained in the Policy section, and may be useful for future outreach.

B. Residents. In its typical public meetings, CDI will often hear from the same people who follow and know about the regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors and County commissions. Pro-active outreach to residents who don't typically participate in the public process can be beneficial and better represent opinions across all segments of the county, rather than representing one viewpoint.

For the Housing Element Update, a consultant was brought on-board to assist in the identification of residents who would participate in focus group meetings and outreach to those individuals. A countywide demographic analysis was completed to determine a representative mix of representatives. The demographic analysis studied percentages of race, language spoken, income, location, age, gender identification, among other factors. The demographic analysis established goals for the make-up of the residents focus group, such that there would be a similar make-up in the group and therefore the group would be "representative" of county residents as a whole.

Outreach to invite residents was initiated through the stakeholders group and posted on the Housing Element website. A mix of residents was then selected based on the demographic matrix established for the focus group. Other methods of outreach include mailers and a lottery system, although this method requires more lead time.

4. Outreach to Community Partners and Interested Members of the Public

There is an emailing list maintained via the Division's mail chimp account of approximately 3,500 unique contacts that has been developed over time and recently updated. These contacts encompass stakeholders from local governments, housing,

economic development and community planning agencies, airports, and neighborhood and community groups, organizations representing specific causes such as environment, affordable housing, transportation, property development, business development, education, tourism, agriculture, and other key topics. Review the email list for updates and additional contacts to ensure equity prior to using.

A public participation plan for any project should establish the appropriate milestones for communicating with the public via email blasts and other methods. Keep email blasts simple and strategically timed to avoid burn-out from too many emails.

New visitors to the project website should be able to sign up for project update emails using a sign-up form on the project website. These new contacts should automatically be added to the MailChimp contact list.

Staff can also include other county staff on these email updates to ensure that other divisions of the department and key staff from the CAO's office and other departments are aware of the project and have an opportunity to be engaged.

5. Coordination with County PIO: Press Releases, Traditional Media and Social Media

Staff should work with the County's or Department's Public Information Officer (PIO) to provide press releases to notify the media about (1) project kick-off, (2) release of the draft documents for comment, (3) public meetings, and (4) final approval of the project. Additional press releases may be prepared as needed. Press releases should be a maximum of one page in length. The County's PIO may assist staff in coordinating with local radio and/or television to spread the word on these media platforms in addition to print media. For projects in South County, Spanish radio ads are an effective method of outreach to the Latinx community.

Staff should also coordinate with the PIO to make periodic announcements on the County's social media (Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor). In addition, staff should create ad(s) on social media platforms that provide links to the project website and/or online comment form.

Traditional media outreach includes legal noticing for public hearings in the Sentinel, Pajaronian and Goodtimes papers; digital ads for community meetings in these same

papers; and limited print ads. Staff should also include radio, TV and other local publication contacts in the periodic Mailchimp emails.

Media contacts for advertisements include:

Newspaper	Contact	Services Purchased	Notes
Sentinel: display ads in regular paper	Sheri Ducharme sducharme@santacruzsentinel.com Cell: 757-407-8268	Print ad 1/8 page: $400 for 4 days: 3/27, 3/28, 4/11, 4/12 Digital ad 3/27-4/20, $700 for up to 100K impressions	Limited digital ad reach to Santa Cruz County zip codes.
Sentinel: legal notices in classifieds	scslegals@santacruzsentinel.com		
Pajaronian: display ads in regular paper	Alanna Anderson aanderson@pajaronian.com	Print ad: $246 1/8 page 4/1/22 Digital ad $325 for 1 month starting 3/30/22	Digital ad 300x250 pixels. Graphic designer preferred blue text for this ad, so there are two versions: blue and white text. Alanna usually works on legal notices, so perhaps better to work with Debra on future ads for this paper.
Pajaronian: legal notices in classifieds	Alanna Anderson aanderson@pajaronian.com		
Goodtimes: display ads in regular paper	Debra Whizen debra@goodtimes.sc 831-761-7325 Cell: 831-419-8442 Can also call 831-458-1100 x204	Print ad 1/6 page: $322/one weekly issue (3/30/22) Digital ad: 1 month (3/30/22-4/30/22)	Digital ad needs to be formatted as a picture at 300x250 pixels Debra can also set up print ads for the Pajaronian and Scotts Valley Press Banner and can offer a discounted rate (52x rate) for the County, so coordinate with her

Newspaper	Contact	Services Purchased	Notes
			for future ads in any of those papers.
Goodtimes: legal notices in classifieds	Call 831.458.1100 x 200		

6. Public Meetings

All major projects should include one or more community meetings in advance of hearings at the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors. Study sessions at those bodies may also be helpful prior to public hearings. Community meetings can be in-person, virtual, or a hybrid format. Public meeting notices, agendas and materials are posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting time. Community meetings should be posted several weeks in advance.

7. Additional Outreach Materials and Activities

Additional outreach materials and activities can be conducted as needed, as described below.

- **Fact Sheets/Brochure** – Staff may develop 8.5" x 11" one-page fact sheet(s) describing project scope and key topics. These sheets can be combined into a longer brochure or printed and distributed individually, but all should have the same design and will be branded with county logos. Fact sheets should be available at the Planning Division front desk as well as on the website, and should be translated into Spanish.

- **Flyers Advertising Public Meetings** – Staff may develop postcards or flyers to advertise the community meetings, study sessions and public hearings, to be emailed to the contact list. Staff may also take printed postcards or flyers to community events to advertise upcoming events. The postcards or flyers can be available at the Planning Division front desk and may also be distributed to key locations within each district where community meetings will take place.

  For meetings where map amendments will be discussed, staff should also mail postcards directly to property owners and residents within a 300-ft buffer distance of the proposed rezone sites.

- **Poster** – Staff may also design an 11" x 17" poster to advertise the Sustainability Update generally and indicate ways that the public can comment. The poster can be printed and distributed by the County to key businesses, libraries, and community centers within the county. The poster can include QR codes and urls to connect with the online forum.

- **Mobile Outreach Events** – Planning staff may also coordinate with Supervisors' staff to identify community events in each district where Planning and/or Supervisor staff may set up a table, bring project outreach materials and printed comment forms, and be present to answer questions from the public. Example events are Supervisor events, farmer's markets, and community events at key locations such as the Simkins Swim Center. Special consideration should be given to events that target Spanish speakers, working parents, people with disabilities, and other segments of the population that may not be as likely to follow typical outreach.

8. Spanish Translation

For public outreach to be successful, it is essential to provide materials in Spanish. The project website should include a button for Spanish translation (available through Google Translate), and be double-checked by one of the Division's bilingual staff. All public notices and press releases should be translated into Spanish. Postcards and fact sheets/brochures should also be translated. Translation services should be available at all community meetings, particularly for projects located in South County. All community meeting presentation slides should be translated into Spanish as well. There are staff in the Planning Division who are bilingual and can Spanish translation services.

9. Tribal Consultation

Native American tribal representatives provide a unique perspective and knowledge of the history of this place that is an essential part of the development of any long-range land use plan. In particular, tribal representatives play a key role in preserving or mitigating impacts to places, features, and objects described in Sections 5097.9 and 5097.993 of the Public Resources Code that are located within the jurisdiction (Gov. Code § 65352.3, 65562.5). Tribal outreach should be, at a minimum, conducted per Senate Bill 18 for General Plan Amendments, and per Assembly Bill 52

for discretionary projects during the CEQA process. Additional outreach may be appropriate depending on location.