



2024 Legislative Budget Goals

Each year, the Legislative Policy Committee reviews the top legislative goals that the County is currently monitoring and/or advocating for specific State/ Federal funding consideration. While there are many legislative issues that staff are tracking, monitoring and responding to, these are the top goals we would like to achieve this fiscal year that have significant budgetary impacts to the County:

Goal 1) Advocate for Long Term Funding/ Sustainability for Homelessness Programs

Homeless Housing Services is a critical need for the County of Santa Barbara moving forward. A number of homelessness programs have been funded through one-time funding allocations (estimated at a budget of \$5 million annually in our County), such as ARPA, but the County lacks the resources to maintain long-term funding for the development of housing, critical services and operations funding. We request that legislation address the housing crisis in the County of Santa Barbara by providing stable and sufficient funding that supports critical services and operations that reduce barriers to interim and long-term safe and affordable housing. In order to create housing units with high retention rates, stable and sufficient on-going funding for housing development and increased service capacity is crucial. By providing continuous and sufficient funding for housing and supportive service operations, the Administration and Legislature would mitigate harm to those experiencing homelessness (or at risk of homelessness) which includes the most vulnerable and often marginalized individuals in our community. The goal is to promote housing stability immediately, address the individual's well-being on an as-needed and voluntary basis using a focused services approach, while allowing these critical housing and service options to remain viable for the foreseeable future.

Goal 2) Affordable and Clean Energy Infrastructure/ Initiatives to Combat Climate Change

The County set a goal to reduce GHG emissions 50% by 2030. While the County has since accelerated sustainability initiatives, including implementing energy efficiency projects at County owned and operated facilities, making clean energy upgrades to public facilities, and beginning our transition to a zero-emission vehicle fleet, it lacks the staffing and financial resources necessary to move GHG emission reduction activities forward at the pace required to meet local and state climate goals. While the County has a Zero-Net Energy Policy for newly constructed buildings, it lacks sufficient financial resources to retrofit existing buildings with clean energy technologies such as heat pumps, LED lighting, building energy management systems, solar photovoltaics, and battery energy storage. Many County buildings are considered critical facilities and need to

operate in the case of power outages and continue to provide services. Additionally, the County has goals and is mandated by CARB's Advanced Clean Fleet Regulations to electrify its fleets but needs assistance with building out the needed charging infrastructure to support that transition for our own fleet and address community charging needs from transit operators, schools and the general public. While rebates, incentives and tax credits are an essential component to move these types of projects forward, ongoing funding to support staff working on GHG emission reduction activities is also an essential component. The County prioritizes funding that would expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services and funding that furthers initiatives that would help combat climate change. Recently, the California Public Utilities Commission instituted new rules, tariffs and rates that are countering efforts to increase solar access for renters, electrification of buildings and vehicles, and implement customer and community microgrids (e.g. Net Energy Metering Rulemaking (R.)14-07-002). To ensure a shift to electrification is achievable and affordable, future legislation should focus on reducing electric rates, while prioritizing customer owned assets over costly utility infrastructure.

Goal 3) Broadband Access, Infrastructure and Deployment

The need for increased capacity for broadband infrastructure was heightened by the COVID 19 pandemic which exposed the growing digital divide and an increased demand for access to affordable and reliable broadband. As outlined in our Legislative Platform, increased funding for broadband deployment and infrastructure will increase resident and business access to high speed internet in the County. This will bring the County closer to achieving broadband access for all, aligning with the California Broadband for All Initiative. Increased funding will also lend to digital inclusion and greater connectivity throughout the region. In order to align with the State's Broadband Network Implementation of the statewide middle mile, the County prioritizes funding for broadband infrastructure through increased middle mile funding, as well as for last mile infrastructure grants.