

BEACON
SPOTLIGHT
AWARD
WINNER
BEST PRACTICE
ACTIVITIES



County of Alameda

Sustainability Best Practice Activities








ILG INSTITUTE FOR
LOCAL GOVERNMENTSM
Promoting Good Government at the Local Level

County of Alameda

California communities are leading the fight against climate change. From small projects to large-scale programs, cities and counties are making great strides to create healthy, sustainable and economically prosperous communities. Participants in ILG's Beacon Program serve as leaders in this effort, making measureable contributions to reducing energy and greenhouse gas emissions, and sharing their sustainability best practices.

This document represents a collection of activities your agency has completed in 10 areas of sustainability. While local governments have a wide range of choices available to address climate change, these activities represent the unique opportunities and values in your community. These voluntary actions are essential to achieving California's goals to save energy, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and create more sustainable communities.

SPOTLIGHT AWARD

Areas of Accomplishment		SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL	PLATINUM LEVEL
	Agency GHG Reductions		2017 (14%)	
	Community GHG Reductions		2019 (14%)	
	Agency Energy Savings		2018 (13%)	
	Natural Gas Savings	2018 (5%)		
	Sustainability Best Practice Activities			2019
	Beacon Award	2019		

Cities and counties throughout the Golden State should be proud of the accomplishments made through the hard work, innovation and collective community action. The Institute for Local Government applauds your achievements and thanks you for your continued participation in the Beacon Program.

The Beacon Program is sponsored by the Institute for Local Government and the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC). SEEC is an alliance between three statewide non-profit organizations and California's four Investor-Owned Utilities. The Beacon Program is funded by California utility ratepayers and administered by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Diego Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison and Southern California Gas Company under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.



Energy Efficiency and Conservation Activities

Silver

1. Energy efficiency retrofits in county buildings save millions each year while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For example, Alameda County completed a \$1.7 million countywide lighting retrofit in 2009 of 26,000 fixtures in over three million square feet at 52 owned and leased buildings.

Gold

2. The county adopted green IT guidelines in 2012 that require computers to be EPEAT certified. The EPEAT criteria address all lifecycle impacts of a product and take into account factors including energy efficiency, longevity, and carbon footprint. The county has developed model contract language for purchasing computers and other equipment that meet this standard. This effort is connected to a larger green IT initiative which developed computer and printer energy efficiency guidelines for all county agencies.
3. The nation's first advanced smart grid system was installed at the county's Santa Rita Jail in 2012. It integrates solar, wind, and a fuel cell with battery storage to provide clean power to this 113-acre facility. The smart grid allows the jail to run off-grid if needed and purchases energy from the utility at off-peak hours, saving money and increasing efficiency.

Platinum

4. In partnership with Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and local partners, Alameda County tested new software to make electric vehicle use even more efficient through "smart charging" during periods of high energy demand. This project reduced utility bills, allowing the city to reinvest in fleet electrification.
5. The Neighborhood Preservation and Sustainability Department was awarded a grant in 2011 to implement a countywide Weatherization Assistance Program. The program provided a housing inspection, repair work, and a repair inspection to increase efficiency and weatherproofing. All energy efficiency measures were provided at no cost to income-qualified applicants.
6. Alameda County supports and directs residents to Energy Upgrade California to help local homeowners and renters make home improvements that can improve energy efficiency. The county also hosts related resources for residents on the county website.





Water & Wastewater Systems Activities

Silver

1. The General Services Agency has trained staff and shifted operational practices to embrace water conservation. For example, county gardeners were trained on how to create drought resistant landscapes and take measures to prevent pollution. Additionally, the county set up monthly water bill audits, as well as leak detection strategies to identify irrigation line leakage. The county's comprehensive \$2.6 million water efficiency project at Santa Rita Jail, completed in 2010, included low-flow toilets, urinals, showers and faucets, water smart irrigation, and new flush valve controllers to minimize excessive flushing. This project saves an estimated 77 million gallons of water and \$405,000 taxpayer dollars annually.

Gold

2. The county reduced domestic water usage in a country club in the unincorporated county by mandating installation of meters, setting a standard allocation per connection, and charging for water above the allocated amount. These measures accounted for a 29% reduction of water usage between 2013-2014.
3. The county reduced irrigation of landscaping in the Five Canyons county service area and Hayward area parks. Water use decreased 52% from 2012-2014. Reduction was accomplished through the repair and replacement of all valves and limiting days and times for irrigation.

Platinum

4. Alameda County passed the country's first drug take-back ordinance in 2012 to keep harmful medications out of our waterways.
5. A measure in the Community Climate Action Plan calling for adopting an ordinance that allows the installation of greywater systems has been completed through the adoption of an ordinance in the state code.
6. The county adopted a Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance for unincorporated areas. To minimize the inefficient use of water in new and rehabilitated landscapes, this ordinance prescribes the use of drought tolerant and low water use plants for the largest landscaped areas. Additionally, the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program educates the public on how to keep businesses and homes from contributing to stormwater pollution.





Green Building Activities

Silver

1. The Board of Supervisors adopted a Green Building Ordinance for county buildings in 2003, specifying that all county facilities must be built to meet LEED Silver standard at a minimum. Five county buildings are certified LEED Gold or Platinum, and five have been certified LEED Silver. These facilities, including a hospital, youth center, and libraries provide healthy places for the community to gather.

Gold

2. County-specific sustainability goals for green buildings go above and beyond what LEED requires, such as ensuring adequate space and access to meet local recycling and compost mandates and that dispensers for janitorial supplies meet our green cleaning program specifications. They also include electric vehicle readiness.
3. The county's construction & demolition (C&D) requirements include the goal of diverting from landfills 75% of waste created in construction and demolition through recycling and reuse.

Platinum

4. The Office of Sustainability developed template lease language and other tools to help the county's leasing managers negotiate green leases. The office conducted stakeholder outreach to develop materials to best meet stakeholder needs during different stages of the lease negotiation process.
5. The county provides expedited building permits and inspection processing for green building projects that qualify under a third party certification program. Projects must achieve a specific number of Build It Green points or a LEED for Homes certification for residential and LEED Silver for non-residential.
6. The county building department adopted and renewed the Green Building Ordinance for unincorporated communities through CALGreen. The ordinance promotes practices that will reduce water and resource usage, reduce waste, and increase energy efficiency in the construction or remodeling of residential and nonresidential structures.





Waste Reduction and Recycling Activities

Silver

1. Paper and cardboard recycling, containers recycling, and composting are available to employees and visitors to 79 county owned or leased buildings, diverting organic materials from landfill to compost and reducing waste costs. Buildings with the expanded recycling and composting program have reduced waste service by 48% as of 2018.

Gold

2. The county's Climate Executive Committee, with input from a cross-agency team, set an office paper reduction target of 20% by 2020. That goal was achieved four years early through employee engagement, technology upgrades, and policy revisions. Efforts included shifting from personal printers to multifunction devices and using electronic signatures. The committee has set a new goal of 35% reduction by 2020. Each agency receives an annual report on its paper purchases.
3. The county has been purchasing primarily recycled content paper for its everyday business needs since 2004 and transitioned to primarily 100% post-consumer recycled content in 2014.

Platinum

4. The Green Child Care Program partners with preschools and child care centers across the county to educate students and teachers about the 4 Rs of waste reduction: reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot. The program also undertakes waste audits and assessments and has diverted over 650 tons of waste from landfills.
5. Green/organics compost collection is available to homes, apartments, and businesses across Alameda County. Outreach and education events have been conducted to promote composting in unincorporated areas, such as incentive programs for food waste diversion.
6. The county partnered with StopWaste.org and the Northern California Recycling Association to produce a study on opportunities for preventing and recovering food waste from businesses and institutions across the county, including unincorporated areas. StopWaste has developed a grant program that funds projects that prevent food waste and recover edible surplus food.





Climate-friendly Purchasing Activities

Silver

1. The Board of Supervisors adopted an Environmentally Preferable Resolution and Purchasing Policy (EPP) in 2011. In 2018, green bid EPP specifications were applied to county contracts valued at \$22 million, including printing services, graffiti abatement services, janitorial supplies, office supplies, and inmate food services. In 2019, the county completed a supply-chain carbon assessment of its annual procurement of goods and services.

Gold

2. The Office of Sustainability developed a green buying guide, accessible to employees on the county intranet, to help employees who do purchasing for their departments to select more environmentally friendly products, from carpets to printer ink.
3. The Office of Sustainability developed a “green favorites list” on the online catalog provided by the county’s office supplies vendor, allowing employees to easily identify pre-approved greener products made with recycled content or nontoxic materials.

Platinum

4. The Office of Sustainability developed a training module on sustainable purchasing for inclusion in the procurement training program for staff across the county involved in purchasing, which has reached over 140 staff.
5. The county’s property and salvage warehouse provides gently used office furniture and supplies to county employees to reduce the amount of office equipment and supplies that must be bought new.
6. Each year, the Office of Sustainability hosts several regional peer roundtables on environmentally preferable purchasing. The roundtables share green buying strategies and cooperative contract opportunities for common product categories with over 35 local agencies since 2012. The resulting purchases have created markets for recycled content and lower toxicity products and reduced waste by promoting remanufactured, reusable, and durable products.





Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Fuels Activities

Silver

1. Recognized for nine years in a row as one of the greenest government fleets in the country, the county's fleet includes many alternative and fuel-efficient vehicles. Employees have access to 396 EVs and hybrids for on-the-job travel. The county aims to replace retired vehicles with 25 EVs each year until the fleet is 30% EV by 2030.

Gold

2. EV drivers can charge their vehicles at county-owned parking garages and lots in Alameda, Hayward, Oakland, and San Leandro. The county encourages the public to use EVs by providing convenient charging ports (106 available to the public). The county took regional leadership by leading a partnership of ten local governments in a project that purchased 90 EVs for government fleets and set up more than 50 charging stations, collectively saving \$350,000 on EV purchases alone.
3. Large-scale solar has been installed on 11 county buildings for a total of 4.7 megawatts of on-site production.

Platinum

4. To encourage biking to county facilities, 430 bike racks have been installed across 36 buildings since 2015. In addition, an employee bike fleet is available at two locations to incentivize biking for job-related travel.
5. The county has enrolled in the Brilliant 100 energy option with East Bay Community Energy. The county's purchased electricity is now 100% carbon free: at least 40% renewable from solar or wind, with the remainder from large hydropower.
6. The building code for Alameda County unincorporated areas requires the installation of solar PV in all newly constructed single-family and low-rise multi-family buildings. The ordinance supports the state goal for all new residential buildings to be net zero energy by 2020.
7. The Planning Department developed a community governed regional energy authority to give cleaner and more affordable options to residents and businesses. East Bay Community Energy offers three power mixes of renewable and carbon-free energy. Residents and businesses in 11 Alameda County cities and unincorporated areas have access to cleaner power at lower rates.





Efficient Transportation Activities

Silver

1. The county's Clean Commute Program for employees provides and promotes many incentives to encourage employees not to drive to work alone, including carpool parking, and rideshare matching. The program also promotes incentives, such as guaranteed ride home programs and pre-tax transit benefits. An annual survey has demonstrated increases in clean commuting. New initiatives include a pilot parking cash-out program to encourage 300 monthly parking pass holders to clean commute by allowing them to be reimbursed for days they do not use their pass.

Gold

2. The county offers free shuttle service to employees that includes three routes in Oakland, one route in Hayward, and one route in San Leandro. The shuttles run on weekdays to provide employees with a convenient and safe way to get from BART stations to their workplaces. Three of the routes are free and available to the public to improve accessibility to county facilities.
3. The county has reduced parking requirements for projects in unincorporated areas that link to transit or emphasize alternative types of travel.

Platinum

4. The county has prepared a Bicycle Master Plan to guide development standards to include bicycle infrastructure in the unincorporated areas.
5. The county has developed a school alternative transportation plan. Public Works conducted a comprehensive assessment of all schools in the unincorporated area to review opportunities to reduce ped/bike accidents in the vicinity of schools. The project also included ped/bike safety education to promote bicycling and walking as viable transportation modes to school.
6. The county has had an ongoing traffic calming program in the unincorporated areas since the mid-1990s. Where feasible, the county includes narrower roads, wider sidewalk areas, street trees, and bay-friendly landscaping in road design. The program encourages neighborhood connectivity, walking, public transportation, and crime reduction through the presence of people.





Land Use and Community Design Activities

Silver

1. The new headquarters building for the county's Information Technology Department redeveloped an underutilized former bank near a BART station in Oakland. This new location encourages clean commuting for the entire department by providing easy access by public transit to a downtown location. In addition, a bike room and access to employee fleet bicycles were included to encourage biking.

Gold

2. Alameda County adopted a Community Climate Action Plan in 2014 to include greenhouse gas reduction and adaptation policies for the unincorporated areas of the county. The plan includes a commitment to reduce GHG emissions to 15% below 2005 levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.
3. The county has adopted policies in the Community Climate Action Plan and General Plan to address the effects of climate change through potential land use solutions in categories, such as green infrastructure, waste, water, building energy, and transportation.

Platinum

4. The county has reduced parking requirements for secondary dwellings and transit-oriented development.
5. The county has developed and adopted a community-wide unincorporated pedestrian and bicycle plan.
6. The county has taken a positive policy stance to farmers' markets proposals, encouraging their establishment and partnering with organizations to determine potential locations. This has facilitated the establishment of farmers' markets such as the Castro Valley Farmers Market.





Open Space and Offsetting Carbon Emission Activities

Silver

1. Landscape elements in unincorporated streetscapes are designed in accordance with bay-friendly practices. Sample water conservation practices include planting native, drought-tolerant plants, using alternative watering methods, and placing mulch to reduce water loss from plants.

Gold

2. Climate change causes sea levels to rise, leading to coastal flooding. The county is designing regional solutions to this problem that will minimize damage to infrastructure, ecosystems, and the economy. To help buffer the shoreline, Alameda County is a partner in one of the most ambitious wetlands restorations projects in the country; it aims to restore 15,100 acres of former salt ponds on the south shores of San Francisco Bay.
3. The county's 2014 Community Climate Action Plan includes strategies to reduce carbon emissions through open space, such as including carbon sequestrations as an objective in county-led natural area restoration projects and establishing local community gardens.

Platinum

4. Alameda County created a grant funded tree planting program that is providing over 300 free shade trees to residents of unincorporated areas of Ashland and Cherryland, which have very low tree cover. Tree planting has been paired with community forums to discuss heat preparation strategies.
5. The Resource Conservation District conducts the day-to-day management of the Sunol AgPark. This AgPark makes use of public lands for sustainable farming. Within the AgPark, six small scale organic farms receive technical assistance to produce fresh foods and flowers for diverse Bay Area communities. By providing educational opportunities for Bay Area school children, the project promotes an urban-rural connection for sustainable food systems.
6. Dig Deep Farms was founded in 2010 by residents of the Ashland and Cherryland unincorporated communities. It is now a network of integrated food businesses that provide access to healthy food and jobs in a community where access to both has historically been limited. It provides a weekly assortment of vibrant, locally produced fruits and vegetables with the support of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office.





Promoting Community and Individual Action Activities

Silver

1. Since 2010, the county has hosted 49 recent graduates for ten-month service learning fellowships in climate protection. The county supported the development of the Climate Corps Program by a local nonprofit and has hosted the largest number of fellows of any host site. This effort has helped young people break into public service and sustainability careers, while saving thousands of dollars and reaching hundreds of employees through their climate action projects.

Gold

2. The county hosts events to showcase clean community options for employees. For example, in 2017, over 700 employees participated in Community Commutes Day, in which 35 building-based teams tried new clean commutes and educated their colleagues. The county has participated in and promoted Bike to Work Day since 2006. Volunteer employee clean commute champions help get the word out about clean commute opportunities.
3. The county's Green Business Program helps local businesses find cost savings and gain marketing edge by obtaining California Green Business certification. As of spring 2017, over 550 county businesses and organizations were green certified, more than any other county.

Platinum

4. A cross-agency team developed a certification process to encourage county employees to plan green and healthy meetings and events. Guidance is provided for meeting hosts, such as how to provide healthy food options and how to reduce waste from food and packaging.
5. The Office of Sustainability, Clean Commute Program, and Public Health Nutrition Services develop and staff booths at the annual County Employee Health Expos. The county also piloted a Green Ambassadors program where employees shared information about green purchasing, office paper reduction, and clean commuting with their peers.
6. The county is working with community-based groups to engage non-English speaking groups in the development of programs such as Cooling Our Communities and the Ashland Cherryland Healthy Communities Collaborative.





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