

Attachment 3
Progress Update: CAR Goal 2
Community Resiliency & Carbon Neutrality

Climate Action and Resiliency Goal 2 “Invest in the community to enhance resiliency and become carbon neutral by 2030” has three objectives:

1. Support carbon eliminating microgrid technology in communities and energy grid resiliency to reduce impact of power loss during power shutdowns and natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes) through education and legislative advocacy, prioritizing critical infrastructure and vulnerable populations.
2. Provide \$20 million in financing by 2026 that incentivizes property managers and renters to retrofit existing multi-family housing towards achieving carbon neutral buildings.
3. Partner with educational institutions, trade associations, businesses and non-profit organizations to establish workforce development programs that focus on carbon neutral and resilient building technologies by 2023.

Objective 1: Support carbon eliminating microgrid technology in communities and energy grid resiliency to reduce impact of power loss during power shutdowns and natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes) through education and legislative advocacy, prioritizing critical infrastructure and vulnerable populations.

In 2023, your Board awarded \$941,760 in Climate Resilience Funds to purchase deployable solar-powered charging stations with battery storage that can support emergency responders during events when power is unavailable. When not being used to support emergency response, these charging stations will be deployed to support underserved residents (for example, at Andy’s Unity Park in Santa Rosa). The EV ARC is a rapidly deployable and highly transportable solar-powered Level 2 EV charging infrastructure product that also has the capability of providing a reliable source of backup power to first responders during an emergency. EV ARCs are planned for immediate implementation in each district at the following Regional Parks: Helen Putnam Park, Andy’s Unity Park, Spring Lake, Schopflin Fields, Ragle Ranch, and Spud Point Marina. Andy’s Unity Park is located in South Santa Rosa in a disadvantaged census tract (tract: 6097153200), based on data from CalEnviroScreen. Staff also sought congressional appropriation for this project and Congressman Mike Thompson secured \$710,000 for the project; the funds have not yet been made available.

Your Board also awarded \$100,000 to initiate a public-private partnership to deploy EV charging stations in Park’n’Ride lots. Subject to an RFP, the Park and Ride lots, maintained and operated by Sonoma County Transit, in Cloverdale, Geyserville, Windsor, Guerneville, Occidental, and Boyes Hot Springs will seek a qualified vendor to construct, install, operate, maintain, and secure Level 3 chargers at each location with minimal or no cost to the County. The vendor would be responsible for leasing a portion of each lot at fair market value, paying for all electricity usage, and establishing a free or reduced rate option for qualified low-income individuals and Fleet users. Additional points on the RFP would be given to Park and Ride location that are in underfunded communities or in areas with high density multifamily homes. The Park and Ride locations are highly desirable locations for both the vendor and the County as

there are very few Level 3 charging options in the area. The implementation of new charging infrastructure in these locations will help fill a service gap to reach the outlying areas of the County.

The Climate Action and Resiliency Division represents the County in policy discourse surrounding Community Microgrids at the state level through engagement with the Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition, and provides input on the formulation of policy and regulation surrounding Community Microgrids. On the national level, our Congressional Representatives, the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities, as well as many individual cities and counties, non-profit organizations, and even local individuals sent letters to the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau urging them to exempt from a rulemaking the Sonoma County Energy Independence Program (SCEIP) and other government-operated property-assessed financing programs.

The Division serves on behalf of the County as the Utility's Local Government Partner in Sonoma County, promoting and providing access to the Utility's Community Microgrid Enablement Program and Microgrid Incentive Program. These programs allow the County to highlight financial support (in the way of incentives available for project engineering and development costs) for parties pursuing the installation of community microgrids.

Additionally, the County is currently engaged as a co-applicant for to secure funding through the Regional Resilience Planning and Implementation Grant, offered by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research. This work is being completed in collaboration with local jurisdictions as well as the Regional Climate Protection Authority and its goal is to identify areas throughout the county most in need of resiliency support in the event of power outages and/or emergencies.

Objective 2: Provide \$20 million in financing by 2026 that incentivizes property managers and renters to retrofit existing multi-family housing towards achieving carbon neutral buildings.

The Sonoma County Energy Independence Program (SCEIP) allows property owners to retrofit existing multi-family properties using SCEIP property tax assessment financing. Climate Action and Resiliency Division staff work with partners and County resources to identify viable multi-family housing owners and property managers. Outreach is conducted via email and direct mail to multi-family housing owners and property managers to provide resources related to achieving carbon neutral buildings.

In 2022, your Board awarded \$132,000 from the 2021-22 in Strategic Plan funding to the Energy and Sustainability program (then under General Services, now part of Climate Action and Resiliency) to promote energy upgrades at multi-family residential properties.

Progress to date includes:

- Staff launched an 18-month marketing campaign, creating print, radio, digital, and television ads, each with a focus on engaging renters to talk with their landlords-property owners, and to appeal to local investors who hold commercial and multi-family residential properties.
 - Print ads were distributed in business offices for medical, dental, and non-profit community-facing organizations, with an estimated reach to 50,498 readers.
 - An extensive radio marketing campaign was launched with 10 radio stations in Sonoma County, focused on both tenants and owners of multi-family and commercial properties. Radio ad campaigns ran January 1-June 30, with total listenership of 136,570 individuals – the campaign had 7,784,000 airtime spots during that 6-month period.

- Digital Advertising focused on families that rent and want to make their landlords aware of SCEIP financing for improvements, with an emphasis on the value to the landlords themselves when they make energy, wildfire hardening, seismic, and water conservation improvements. Facebook ads resulted in 4,024 users clicking on the ad to learn more about the Sonoma County Energy Independence Program. The digital targeting results for the campaign show 1,112 website visits tracked with an average click-through rate (CTR) of .1% which is better than the national average. For example, in May 2023, 255 users clicked on the SCEIP website for additional information.
- Streaming Television ads just began August 11th, 2023, and were served 14,062 times. Streaming ads viewed on small screens (desktop, tablet, and mobile devices) had an 82% completion rate, meaning people watched the entire ad without skipping (national average completion rate is 65% - 75%).

Outcomes to date include:

The media campaign increased foot and telephone traffic to the SCEIP office, an indication of increased community awareness of SCEIP financing, as well as and the other resources and information offered by the Climate Action and Resiliency Division.

SCEIP applications for multi-family are increasing. As a side benefit, the campaign is also bringing in new applications for improvements at single family properties. Consultations with investors that are purchasing properties for multi-family use are resulting in new applications for SCEIP financing for their energy improvements. The average dollar amount of requested SCEIP improvements ranges from \$500,000 to \$3,600,000.

- One financing project is installing solar generation to serve 53 mobile home units. The property owner for this multi-family residential project has previously used SCEIP for residential and commercial projects.
- Staff is working with two investors who propose to create 17 multi-family units by remodeling existing unoccupied commercial space and the complete application is expected in the coming weeks.

The SCEIP media campaign is implemented in partnership with outreach campaigns for the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) to make the community aware of incentives and rebates that are available for multi-family residential energy improvements, leveraging resources and increasing reach.

Objective 3: Partner with educational institutions, trade associations, businesses and non-profit organizations to establish workforce development programs that focus on carbon neutral and resilient building technologies by 2023.

In 2022, your Board approved a requirement that all County-funded electric vehicle charging infrastructure be installed by electricians certified by the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP). The EVITP program was designed to provide qualified electricians with the most comprehensive training available in the market today. All EVITP Certified Electricians must pass a certification exam for proof of knowledge and skill. The cost of the training is \$275; staff is seeking grant funds and partnerships to provide access to EVITP certification to electricians from underserved communities.