

County Green Economic Recovery Act

We are in an emergency. We are in an economic crisis. We are in a climate crisis.

County needs a bold Green jumpstart to our economy.

The pandemic has resulted in the loss of 2.4 million California jobs so far, the highest unemployment record in state history. In May 2019, County had an unemployment rate of 2.6 percent, which has now grown to 13.7 percent due to COVID-19. This has economically affected local businesses and the most vulnerable communities in the counties.

A Green Economic Recovery Act is the most viable strategy for long-term economic recovery. Top economists have shown in a recent [analysis](#) how Green and sustainable recovery policies offer powerful advantages in spurring growth during economic downturn - boosting the creation of jobs, delivering higher short-run fiscal multipliers and leading to higher long-run cost savings.

The County Green Economic Recovery Act prioritizes the integration of environmental, social, and economic justice policies that benefit low-income disadvantaged communities, as well as the business sector. These policies will focus on reducing pollution exposure, improving air quality, and promoting equitable access to public facilities, open green spaces, safe and sanitary homes, as well as local organic food markets.

This plan correctly identifies the urgency of climate change and economic recovery, which demands a reimagining of public works and market incentives. The County Green Economic Recovery Act will build a foundation for a healthier, more equitable clean energy future for all of us.

The County Green Economic Recovery Act consists of the following policy areas and action items:

1. **Clean Energy Generation, Storage and Distribution:** Investing in low carbon energy production and storage infrastructure. Extending and modernizing the grid to enable higher renewable penetration as well as electrification of heat and transport.
 - Forward an advocacy campaign for Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) programs to become the dominant energy provider model in to foster more locally controlled renewable energy services and provide affordable access to clean energy.

- Counties will provide incentives for the installation of energy storage technology in homes, commercial buildings, institutional buildings, and industrial facilities. Both to manage intermittent power grid energy loss and to provide on-site supplies of emergency power should the grid be compromised by climate events.
 - Install new types of wind and solar farms on underutilized land without endangering community valued open spaces. County leadership will collaborate closely with municipal leadership to implement renewable energy opportunities in underutilized spaces or land that is not viable for development or agriculture.
2. **Building Climate-Smart Infrastructure:** Investment in low and zero-carbon infrastructure projects.
- County and municipal governments will provide incentives to accelerate installation of renewable energy technologies, prioritizing community microgrids to build flexibility and resilience into the energy infrastructure. Microgrid cooperatives should be able to disconnect from the main power grid during or after climate events to share locally generated energy within their neighborhoods (e.g. hospitals, police stations, fire stations and K-12 schools).
 - The county will build resilient, affordable, publicly owned broadband infrastructure. Internet access and communications are crucial in the wake of climate emergencies. Infrastructure grants and technical assistance will be provided for communities to build democratically controlled, co-operative, or open access broadband networks.
 - Bicycle infrastructure improvements can help reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the viability of bicycling as a travel mode within the community. The County will amend the County Bicycle Master Plan to prioritize bicycle infrastructure improvements that enhance residents' access to key community activity areas. These include major transit stations, schools, employment centers, neighborhood commercial centers, and downtown business districts.
3. **Electric Vehicle Conversion:** Promote the uptake of electric cars through financial incentives, expand fast-charging stations, and improve bike lanes to encourage wider uptake of e-bikes.
- Tax credits provided for the purchase of electric vehicles, and graduated tax on the purchase of internal combustion vehicles. Vouchers should exceed the trade-in value of the internal combustion vehicles. The goal is to eliminate the sale and registration of all new internal combustion vehicles – cars, trucks, buses by 2035.

- Tax credits provided for installing electric charging stations in and around residential, commercial, and industrial building sites to power electric vehicles. Real estate companies and landlords owning dwellings with multiple occupants should be encouraged to install sufficient charging stations and should receive a tax credit for doing so, while escalating a tax over time for not providing the service.
 - Help school districts and transit agencies replace all school and transit buses with electric buses. The EPA classifies diesel exhaust as a human carcinogen, containing chemicals and air pollutants classified as hazardous under the Clean Air Act. Children on buses are exposed to concentrations of these substances that can be 5-15 times higher than background levels negatively impacting their health and performance in school. School districts will save in fuel and maintenance costs over the life cycle of the bus.
4. **Reducing Industrial Emissions:** Introduce financial incentives (e.g. wider carbon price floor) for industrial companies to reduce net carbon emissions and increase efficiency in production.
- Counties will aim at reducing industrial emissions 38% by 2035; and 82% by 2050. Reduce methane leak emissions by 54% by 2035; and 80% by 2050.
 - Partner with companies to help create world-class operations utilizing zero emissions and clean electric power generation. Implement the latest innovations in Green technologies -- When you cut emissions, you cut costs.
5. **Circular Economy -- Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost:** The county will move to zero waste by 2035 through the development of programs to prevent and divert waste of paper, cardboard, food, construction and demolition, glass, and plastic. Surplus produce will be diverted to food banks.
- Regional manufacturing of recycled content products. Support the development of new regional manufacturing companies that will make products from paper, cardboard, and plastic waste generated in the county and region.
 - Building deconstruction. Create municipal ordinances that require buildings to be deconstructed instead of demolished and provide grants for one year to cover the labor cost differential between the two.
 - Demand for recycled content products. Develop Environmentally Preferable Purchasing programs at city, county, and state government agencies that buy products manufactured in the region from the region's waste materials and plastic films made from agricultural waste.

6. **Affordable Sustainable Housing:** Efficiency spending for renovations and retrofits including improved insulation, heating, and domestic energy storage systems. Higher carbon standards for new homes. Financial support for households installing insulation and other energy efficient improvements.
- Prioritize efficient land use to house every resident ethically and affordably through new housing production, existing housing preservation, and tenant protection: (1) producing new market-rate and affordable homes; (2) preserving existing housing that is currently affordable; and (3) protecting tenants from unaffordable rent increases and unfair evictions. The county will lead and support campaigns to address these three targets.
 - Weatherize homes and businesses to perform energy efficiency upgrades and lower energy bills. County will provide sliding-scale grants for low- and moderate-income families and small businesses to invest in weatherizing and retrofitting homes and businesses.
 - Repair and modernize public housing including making all public housing accessible, conducting deep energy retrofits of all public housing, and providing high-speed broadband access. Public housing will have quality, shared community spaces to ensure every public complex has the capacity to serve as a community resiliency center.
7. **Nature-Based Solution Investments:** Investment in ecosystem resilience and regeneration by enhancing green spaces, planting trees, encouraging climate-friendly agriculture and restoring carbon-rich habitats.
- Promote sustainable land uses and development patterns. Pursue infill development opportunities and encourage the construction of higher-density, mixed-use projects around existing public transit infrastructure, schools, parks, neighborhood-serving retail and other critical services. Incorporate ecologically sustainable practices and materials into new development, building retrofits and streetscape improvements. In areas that are already built-up include affordable housing as a means to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Facilitate walking, bicycling, and public transit use, including through mixed-use corridors and activity centers.
 - Require all new construction to protect and restore natural features such as waterways, creeks & wetlands in urban areas as a means of connecting residents with nature and reversing damage to natural systems. Where feasible, restore creek corridors in urban areas. Creeks currently diverted in culverts or hardened channels should be restored to their natural state.

- Promote a Community Restoration Network for the county to provide practical knowledge, scientific understanding, and proven expertise to communities, while meeting restoration goals through volunteer-driven, community and science-based ecological restoration projects.
8. **Education and Training:** Funding skills and retraining initiatives, such as investment in education and digital training to address immediate unemployment from COVID-19 and structural decarbonization shifts.
- Create proactive education campaigns for residents and businesses about the importance of meeting or exceeding state requirements for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
 - County will leverage existing partnerships to make Green industries a central priority, partnering with local job training programs and collaborating with regional colleges to train and build a Green workforce.
 - Focus job training and local hiring to reflect the racial and gender diversity of the community receiving investments. Procurement will prioritize minority and women-owned businesses, cooperatives and employee-owned firms, and community-owned and municipal enterprises.
9. **Research and Development:** Invest in high impact sustainability technology research and development that includes start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises, and large companies.
- The county will give particular attention to funding research, development, and deployment to accelerate the transition from fossil fuel-based markets to renewable energy processes and products.
 - In order to ensure an affordable and complete transition away from fossil fuels in the transportation sector, the county will invest in research and development to decrease the cost of electric vehicles.
 - Plastic film made from agricultural waste - Support research, development and commercialization of plastic film from biodegradable agricultural waste to replace plastic film made from fossil fuels.
 - Coordinate the UC universities and community colleges to collaborate on creating the latest Green technology innovations.

With focused investments on the county level, counties will pioneer the economy of the future. The County Green Recovery Act will lead our region out of both the climate crisis and the economic crisis.

Preparing counties for the Green Revolution will maintain our leadership of innovation and prosperity.