2024 Annual Report





MISSION STATEMENT

To improve customer service, streamline projects, and align public infrastructure and private development to further the County of Santa Cruz's goals in attainable housing, reliable transportation and sustainable environment.

Department Overview

The departments of Public Works and Planning were integrated in 2022-23 to form the Department of Community Development & Infrastructure (CDI). The integration will result in the opening of a Unified Permitting Center (UPC), which will co-locate all County agencies involved in land use permits at one public counter to provide coordinated, customer-focused service and more efficient permitting.

The CDI budget represents a commitment to providing a built environment that is affordable, equitable, resilient and safe through stewardship of the County General Plan, an efficient Unified Permit Center, administering vital affordable housing funds, maintaining over 600 miles of roads, addressing buildings and public infrastructure impacted by climate change, and making strategic investments in the built environment for future generations. By integrating community planning and public works functions as a unified department and budget, services and projects are better aligned to deliver results.











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MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR MATT MACHADO

As I look back on 2024, it's clear that the Community Development & Infrastructure Department (CDI) continues to rise above challenges — both expected and unexpected. Another round of atmospheric river storms hit Santa Cruz County, reinforcing that these intense weather events are becoming the norm. Despite these hurdles, CDI remained dedicated to serving our community with transparency, integrity and a commitment to truly listening.

Our teams responded effectively to storm damage, leading major projects such as the construction of a temporary road on Mountain Charlie Road, restoring critical access for residents in that area. At the same time, we maintained momentum on long-term infrastructure improvements, including the Soquel Drive Buffered Bike Lane & Congestion Mitigation Project and the Green Valley Road Multi-Use Trail Project, aimed at improving local infrastructure for multi-modal travel.

Beyond storm recovery and transportation improvements, we advanced significant housing and planning initiatives. We worked to implement key rezonings as part of the Housing Element, opening the door for more housing opportunities while balancing community housing needs. Our Unified Permit Center continued to provide better service and efficiency for residents and businesses navigating development projects as our department completed the absorption of the Recovery Permit Center.

Public engagement remained central to our work. We launched a new Fats, Oils, & Grease ad campaign for our Santa Cruz County Sanitation District and collaborated traffic safety efforts with the County's Community Traffic Safety Coalition to advance messaging about the importance of

traffic safety. We also improved our efforts to encourage proper waste sorting and recycling practices in our community by striving to reduce contamination and foster environmental responsibility through the Earth Day Santa Cruz festival and engaging digital promotional videos.

I want to express my deep appreciation for our dedicated staff, who have worked diligently to navigate these challenges with professionalism and perseverance. Whether repairing roads, improving public spaces, streamlining permitting processes or tackling climate resilience efforts, their commitment to our mission has ensured that we continue delivering for the residents of Santa Cruz County.

Looking ahead, CDI remains committed to building a stronger, more resilient future. The challenges will persist, but so will our resolve to meet them with innovation, collaboration and a shared vision for a thriving Santa Cruz County.

Thank you for your continued support.



Matt Machado

Deputy County Executive Officer

Director, Department of Community Development & Infrastructure



DIRECTORS AND ASSISTANT DIRECTORS



Matt Machado

Deputy County
Executive Officer,
Director of CDI



Kim MooreDirector of
Administration Services



Steve Wiesner

Assistant Director of Transportation



Carolyn Burke

Assistant Director of Special Services



Stephanie Hansen

Assistant Director of Policy, Housing & Code Compliance

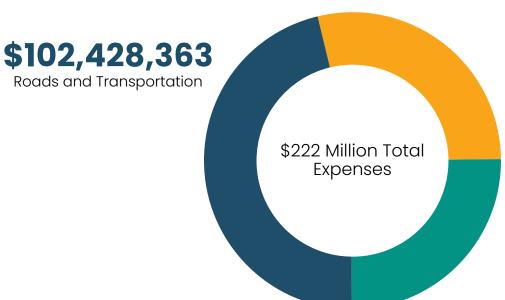


Jocelyn Drake

Assistant Director of
Unified Permit Center



DEPARTMENT EXPENSES



\$63,652,723

Special Services (including Sanitation Districts)

\$56,610,508Public Works Administration







ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

Public Works Division

In 2024, Santa Cruz County faced significant challenges in its roads and transportation infrastructure due to severe weather events. Our Public Works Division undertook numerous projects to repair storm damages, enhance road safety and improve transportation facilities throughout the county.

OTHER STATISTICS

Throughout 2024, the county repaired 122 storm-damaged roads. However, over 100 additional projects awaited funding, highlighting the ongoing need for infrastructure investment.



122 repairs		over 220 damaged sites

2024 METRICS:

Mowing	470.41 linear miles	Guardrail Repair	571 linear feet
Ditching	83.54 linear miles	Curb Painting	3,527.5 linear feet
Potholes	10,133 count	Large Paving Projects	959 tons of asphalt
Culvert Replacement	773 linear feet	Storm Debris Removal	4,520.24 cubic yards
Sweeping	1,506 linear miles (1,113 cubic yards of debris recovered)	CCTV Inspections	4,138.3 linear feet
Illegal Dump	83,983.97 cubic yards of debris recovered	Road Closures	168
Striping	15.4 linear miles	Service Requests	2,390

ROAD PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTS

Mountain Charlie Road Temporary Road Repair

In late February 2024, County engineers monitoring Mountain Charlie Road identified troubling early signs of a deep-seated landslide beneath 23580 Mountain Charlie Road. The shifting ground signaled progressive road failure, raising immediate concerns about safety and accessibility for residents in the area.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the County contacted affected residents. Those whose driveway was affected by the unstable section of the road, along with other residents living on Mountain Charlie Road, were contacted through multiple channels—including email, voice calls and text messages—via the CruzAware notification system. Residents were first alerted on Wednesday, Feb. 28, and updates continued the following day as conditions deteriorated.

At first, a soft closure was implemented, allowing limited one-lane access. However, as the road's structural integrity worsened, officials made the difficult decision to fully close Mountain Charlie Road on Thursday, Feb. 29. This decision proved crucial when weekend storms further degraded the roadway, rendering it unsafe for travel. What began as a precautionary closure quickly evolved into a long-term shutdown, requiring extensive winterization efforts to stabilize the site and prevent additional damage. Due to the uncertainty of funding to repair the road and community concerns, the Public Works Division developed a webpage for updates and held multiple virtual community meetings with residents to inform them of any project updates and progress from staff. Mountain Charlie Road was added to the County's list of emergency projects.

With the support of then Supervisor Bruce McPherson, a funding source was developed to build a temporary road using 2016 Measure D funds as the County waits for a permanent funding solution. Discussions for long-term funding for permanent repairs are ongoing, with efforts to secure state and federal support.



Visit the Mountain Charlie Road webpage











Soquel Drive

Buffered Bike Lane and Congestion Mitigation Project

The Soquel Drive Buffered Bike Lane and Congestion Mitigation Project is a multi-phase infrastructure improvement project designed to enhance safety, accessibility and traffic flow along Soquel Drive from State Park Drive to La Fonda Avenue. The project includes upgrades for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists by improving sidewalks, crosswalks, drainage and traffic signals while integrating adaptive traffic technology.



By the end of 2024, the project made significant progress, with the following milestones achieved:



Improved Accessibility

98% of ADA ramps and sidewalks were completed, enhancing mobility for all pedestrians, including those with disabilities.



Infrastructure Enhancements

Seven out of eight retaining walls were constructed to support roadway stability and adjacent properties.



Safer Crossings

95% of rectangular flashing beacon crossings were installed, improving pedestrian safety at key intersections.



Drainage Upgrades

Approximately 565 linear feet of new drainage system was installed to improve stormwater management.



Pavement Improvements

60% of paving work was completed, including conforms and dugouts to ensure a smoother roadway.



Traffic Signal Upgrades

4.25 miles of fiber optic conduit were installed for Adaptive Traffic Signals, along with 12 new traffic signal controllers to enhance traffic flow and reduce congestion.

With these milestones reached, the project is well-positioned to enter its final phase, bringing further improvements to Soquel Drive in 2025.

Green Valley Road

Mixed-Use Path Project

The Green Valley Road Multi-Use Path Project continued its construction in 2024, making significant progress. This project is a transformative effort aimed at improving pedestrian and bicycle safety along one of Santa Cruz County's key corridors—Green Valley Road in unincorporated Watsonville.

Spanning approximately two miles, the project will upgrade an aging roadside walking trail into a dedicated 8- to 10-foot-wide protected multi-use path. Additional improvements include upgraded road crossings, enhanced bus stops with shelters and trash cans, landscaping features and public art installations. Funded through the Clean California Grant and Measure D, this project is part of a broader initiative to create safer and more accessible infrastructure for all community members.

As 2024 came to a close, one of the major focus areas has been the intersection of Amesti Road and Green Valley Road, where ongoing construction temporarily combined left and right turn lanes to facilitate work. This was a necessary step in the construction process, and both lanes will be restored as the project nears completion.

With completion expected in Spring 2025, the Green Valley Road Multi-Use Path Project continues to move forward, bringing the community closer to a safer, more walkable, and bike-friendly environment.



Visit the Green Valley Road Project webpage





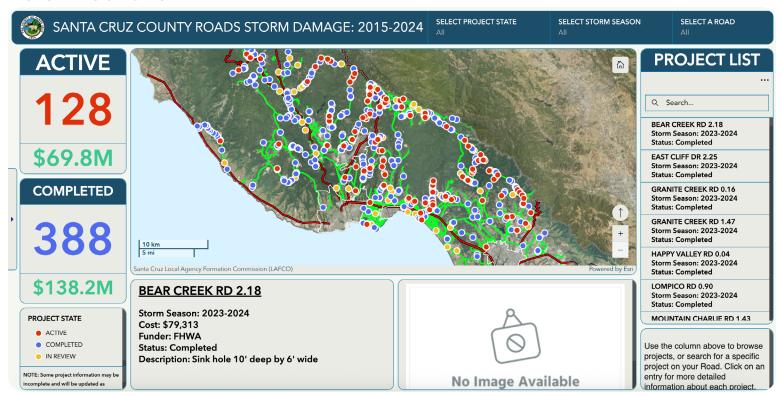


Beach Drive

Fence

New fencing on Beach Drive next to Rio del Mar State Beach. The metal fence along Beach Drive was damaged from Winter Storms that brought high surf.

GIS PROJECTS



Storm Damage GIS

Public Works Division introduced a new tool to help residents keep tabs on storm-damaged roads. The Geographic Information System (GIS) Roads Storm Damage Dashboard allows folks to track repair progress on County-maintained roadways that have been affected by storms since 2015.

With an interactive map at its core, the dashboard brings together a wealth of information. It displays historical storm damage data, making it easier for the community to grasp the long-term effects of storm events on local roads. Users can pinpoint damage locations, check project costs, view photos of the sites and see repair timelines—all in one place.





Visit the Storm Damage GIS

TRANSPORTATION EVENTS

BCycle Bikes Expansion

In April 2024, the department had the privilege of celebrating the launch of BCycle bikes in Capitola, Live Oak, Pleasure Point and Twin Lakes. The launch was celebrated with the City of Capitola, and this event marked a milestone in the effort to promote sustainable transportation within our community. The department's role only includes the expansion of BCycle bikes in unincorporated areas in Santa Cruz County.

The celebration featured speeches from local leaders and advocates, including CDI Director Matt Machado. This event highlighted the positive impact of BCycle bikes on the environment and daily lives. Following the speeches, participants had the opportunity to join a group bike ride, experiencing firsthand the convenience and joy of cycling through town!

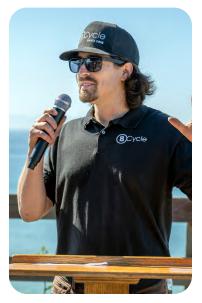
BCycle bikes are rapidly expanding across the county, providing a viable and eco-friendly alternative for residents and visitors alike without relying on cars. BCycle bikes will not only reduce traffic congestion but are also a fun way to see the beautiful parts of the county.













Storm Damage Tour

In November 2024, the department held a media tour to showcase storm-damaged sites and recovery efforts. Media was invited to document progress and ongoing challenges, coordinating with local leaders to advocate for additional funding.

In summary, 2024 was a year of significant challenges and resilience for Santa Cruz County's transportation infrastructure. The combined efforts of the Public Works Department, community members and local leaders were pivotal in addressing the damages and planning for a more resilient future.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Public Works Division

The Special Services Section of the Santa Cruz County Community Development & Infrastructure Department oversees key areas such as environmental compliance, recycling and solid waste management programs, stormwater management, illegal dumping enforcement and the county landfills and flood control.

SANITATION DISTRICTS

Santa Cruz Sanitation District

The Santa Cruz County Sanitation District is responsible for providing wastewater collection, treatment and disposal services to several unincorporated areas of the county, including Live Oak, Capitola, Soquel and Aptos. The district maintains an extensive system of sewer lines, pump stations and wastewater treatment facilities to ensure the safe and efficient transport of sewage to the regional treatment plant operated by the City of Santa Cruz.



Budget – this amount includes salaries for admin staff, engineers, computers, public outreach, etc.

\$23 Million

Average daily flow to the Santa Cruz Treatment Plant for FY 2024/25

3,350,021

Total wastewater sent to the Santa Cruz Treatment Plant for FY 2024/25

1,016,076,000 Gallons

Projects

On Dec. 5, 2024, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 24-10, which rescinded the previous declaration of the Rodeo Gulch sewer trunkline being overcapacity. This decision was based on the completion and planned completion of several key projects.

Since 2005, development in the Rodeo Gulch Basin was restricted due to limited sewer capacity, allowing only a small number of new connections per lot. To address this issue, the district initiated three major projects to improve the system:

- Lower Rodeo Trunkline Replacement Completed, increasing capacity in the lower portion of the sewer system.
- **Upper Rodeo Gulch Sewer Rehabilitation** Currently underway, installing cast-in-place-pipes to prevent groundwater infiltration and reduce wet weather flow impacts.
- Rodeo Pump Station Capacity Upgrade Set to begin construction in Spring 2025, adding an auxiliary wet well to better manage high flows.

With these upgrades, recent flow monitoring and sewer modeling indicate that the system now has the capacity to support an estimated 7,000 additional single-family homes. This expansion is crucial for meeting the County's housing goals outlined in the 2023 Housing Element.

Lifting the development restrictions allows developers to obtain the sewer availability

letters needed to secure funding and advance new housing projects.

With these upgrades, the district can now support new housing, business development and infrastructure growth while continuing to protect public health and the environment.



View the Rodeo Gulch Trunkline Basin Recommendation to Remove Overcapacity Declaration

Community Meetings

CSA 5 - Canon del Sol Public Meeting

On April 16, 2024, CDI organized a public meeting to discuss proposed sewer charge increases for residents of County Service Area (CSA) 5 – Canon del Sol. To accommodate broader participation, a virtual attendance option was provided via Zoom.

The primary objective was to engage with the Canon del Sol community regarding the proposed adjustments to sewer service charges. The county emphasized transparency and sought to involve residents in the decision-making process, recognizing the importance of community input on matters directly affecting them.

Key Points Discussed:

Proposed Rate Increases: Details of the proposed adjustments to sewer charges were presented, including the rationale behind the increases and how the additional funds would be utilized to maintain and improve the sewer infrastructure within CSA 5.

Community Feedback: Residents were encouraged to express their opinions, ask questions, and provide both verbal and written feedback on the proposed changes. The County outlined the process for submitting written protests, specifying that to be counted, protests needed to be in writing and include certain required information.



Invitations for this meeting were sent virtually to CSA 5 – Canon del Sol residents.



CSA, Zone 1 - Big Basin Wastewater System Public Meetings

In 2024, two key community meetings were held to discuss the future of the Big Basin Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), which serves residents near Boulder Creek. These meetings focused on plans to transfer ownership and operation of the plant to the County of Santa Cruz to ensure stable operations and compliance with environmental standards. Postcards were sent out to neighbors serviced by the Big Basin Wastewater System to invite them to attend the meetings.

March 4, 2024: Hybrid Community Meeting

Attendees:

- Residents of the Fallen Leaf community
- Representatives from the County of Santa Cruz
- Officials from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Court-appointed receiver managing the WWTP

This meeting provided residents with information about the potential transfer of the WWTP to County control and addressed community questions and concerns.



Dec. 3, 2024: Virtual Community Meeting

Co-Hosts:

- Santa Cruz County Supervisor Bruce McPherson
- Serviam by Wright LLP, the court-appointed receiver for Big Basin Water Company

Attendees:

- Nicolas L. Jaber, Attorney and Project Manager for the Court Receiver
- Members of the Big Basin Water community



During this virtual town hall, there was a six-month update on the receivership, discussing progress and next steps, and engaged with community members to address their questions.

These meetings were crucial in keeping the community informed and involved in decisions regarding the future management of their wastewater services.

Freedom County Sanitation District

The Freedom County Sanitation District (FCSD) provides wastewater services to the residents of the Freedom area in Santa Cruz County. The district is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the sewer infrastructure to ensure safe and reliable service for the community. The FCSD works to address the growing needs of the area and maintain compliance with environmental standards.

Davenport County Sanitation District

The Davenport County Sanitation District (DCSD) serves the small coastal community of Davenport in Santa Cruz County. Like the FCSD, the DCSD is responsible for providing wastewater treatment and maintenance of the sewer system, ensuring that wastewater is managed safely and efficiently. The district also addresses local challenges, such as system upgrades and environmental compliance, to support the community's needs.

Average amount of wastewater treated daily	24,236 Gallons
Amount of wastewater treated in 2024	8,846,194 Gallons
Average amount of drinking water supplied daily	9 47,894 Gallons
Amount of drinking water supplied in 2024	17,481,200 Gallons
Amount of recycled water sold	\$1,983.96

SANITATION SECTION OUTREACH/ADVERTISING



2024 Holiday Fats, Oils, & Grease Holiday Ad

Each year, the Sanitation District runs its Holiday Fats, Oils, & Grease (F.O.G) holiday campaign from November through December to encourage people not to dispose of grease down the drain and instead learn how to properly dispose of F.O.G. This message is especially important during the holidays when cooking and grease disposal are at their peak. Although we created a new ad in 2023, we recognized the need for a Spanish version that better captured the holiday theme. The goal of this advertisement video is to educate the public about the potential damage to sewer laterals and expensive repairs caused by improper disposal. The ad was created in both English and Spanish and aired on KSBW.

A big thanks to County staff who starred in the video and participated in the English and Spanish voiceovers!







Watch the English F.O.G Ad

Watch the Spanish F.O.G Ad





Santa Cruz City Water Treatment Plant Tour

In September 2024, the County went on a tour of the City of Santa Cruz Water Treatment Plant to learn how to better improve our messaging for Santa Cruz County Sanitation District customers. This valuable opportunity allowed us to gain deeper insight into the processes involved in water treatment at the city and the challenges they face.

By visiting the plant, we were able to see firsthand the importance of proper waste disposal and how it impacts the overall system. This experience will help us enhance our communication efforts, ensuring we deliver more effective messages to our community about proper grease disposal and the importance of protecting our local sewer systems.

RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

The Future of Recycling and Solid Waste in Unincorporated Santa Cruz County

Waste disposal in Unincorporated Santa Cruz County will look different in the future. The County is filling its last module at the Buena Vista Landfill. Once the last module is full, the County will begin exporting all waste from the unincorporated county once the landfill closes.

The County will continue to receive waste, recycling and organics (food and yard waste) for preprocessing at the Buena Vista Waste Site and the Ben Lomond Transfer Station but will have less control over transportation and disposal costs as the future unfolds. These costs are likely to increase, not just with annual inflation, but with the growing scarcity of regionally available landfill space. Recently, landfill disposal costs have gone from \$55/ton to \$77/ton and next year will be \$81/ton. As waste disposal costs continue to increase, it is important to understand the personal agency that county residents have to reduce waste, conserve valuable resources, and control county disposal costs.

Between 2013 and 2023, waste generation rates in the unincorporated parts of the county have nearly doubled from 2.6 pounds per person per day (PPD) to 4.3 PPD. Waste diversion rates (recycling and composting) have remained flat at between 50–55% for that same timeframe. Disposing of twice as much waste, even if we divert more than half of that waste for reuse, is costly. A cost that is borne by the County and its residents.

To reduce the cost of waste disposal, we must reduce the amount of waste we throw out, whether as waste sent to landfills or diverted for reuse as recycling and compost. You can do your part by focusing your purchasing power on buying less (saves money and reduces waste), using quality durable items rather than disposable ones (reduces single use waste), sourcing good secondhand items locally rather than always buying new (reduces packaging waste), and using online tools to find the items you need locally (reduces transportation costs). If we all stop and think before we buy and when we dispose of good durable items, we can cut our waste generation rates by at least half, if not more.







Buena Vista Landfill

1231 Buena Vista Drive, Watsonville, CA

350

Tons of refuse processed daily

Ben Lomond Transfer Station

9835 Newell Creek Road, Ben Lomond, CA

100

Tons of refuse processed daily

Buena Vista Landfill

After more than 20 years of analyzing potential waste disposal alternatives with county residents, Santa Cruz County officials determined that the only acceptable site for ongoing waste management in the unincorporated south county area is the Buena Vista Waste Site. The County studied more than 30 potential new waste sites and each was eliminated either by failure to meet the exact development and transportation standards required of a new waste site, or failure to receive public support to enable ongoing local control over waste management in the unincorporated parts of the county.

The county is currently working on an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to analyze the development of waste transfer facilities, organics preprocessing and composting facilities, the reuse of existing recycling facilities, and the necessary equipment maintenance and support facilities needed to operate the Buena Vista waste management operation into the future. If all goes well, the EIR will be available for public review in 2025. If the project and permits are approved, construction is expected to begin in 2028, about the time that the earliest projections indicate landfill closure.

The Buena Vista Redevelopment Project will build essential waste management infrastructure to continue handling about two-thirds of unincorporated Santa Cruz County's solid waste, recycling and organic waste after the landfill closes. The County is in the process of obtaining an updated cost estimate for the project, which is expected to substantially exceed the original 2018 engineer's estimate of \$58 million. Project construction costs will be paid for with a combination of landfill closure funds reserved from County Recycling and Solid Waste Services disposal fees, bond funds, and the County's waste management infrastructure charge.

Ben Lomond Transfer Station

The County is also making facility upgrades to Ben Lomond Transfer Station. The existing facility, built in the early 1990s, handles about one-third of unincorporated Santa Cruz County's solid waste, recycling and organic waste. The Ben Lomond Transfer Station will receive electrical upgrades, roofing and canopy replacements to better control stormwater, operational improvements to the Household Hazardous Waste facility, and equipment updates to bring the transfer station and its supporting organics processing and recycling areas up to the stringent environmental standards required of modern waste management facilities.

These necessary upgrades at the Ben Lomond facility are scheduled to start in the summer of 2025 and be complete within the next year. The Ben Lomond facility will remain open during most construction activities, but temporary closures are expected during the canopy installation. These upgrades to the Ben Lomond Transfer Station are anticipated to cost \$8.56 million, will be bond financed, and paid for from the County's Recycling and Solid Waste Services budget revenue.

EVENTS AND OUTREACH





Earth Day Santa Cruz Event

Every year, The County of Santa Cruz partners with the City of Santa Cruz to host the highly anticipated Earth Day Santa Cruz event, celebrating environmental stewardship and raising awareness about sustainability in our community. This

collaborative effort brings together local organizations, businesses and residents to promote eco-friendly practices, raise environmental consciousness, and engage in hands-on activities that help protect and preserve our local natural resources.

The County and city work together to organize a variety of educational activities, including workshops on recycling,





composting, water conservation and sustainable living throughout the event. The event also features local green businesses and organizations showcasing their environmental initiatives, giving residents the opportunity to learn more about sustainable solutions they can incorporate into their everyday lives.

This partnership highlights the importance of working together to achieve shared sustainability goals and fosters a sense of pride in our community's commitment to a greener future.





September 2024

Santa Cruz County Fair

Recycling & Solid Waste services played an integral role in promoting sustainability at the annual Santa Cruz County Fair. Through a collaborative effort, the County provided education and resources aimed at increasing awareness about waste reduction, recycling, and composting. At the fair, visitors were introduced to the importance of responsible waste management, with interactive displays, fun games, and staff on hand to answer questions and share best

practices for sorting recyclables and organics.

One of the key highlights was the "Zero Waste" initiative, where Recycling & Solid Waste set up waste diversion stations throughout the fairgrounds to help attendees properly dispose of recyclables, compostables and trash.

In addition to waste diversion efforts, the Recycling & Solid Waste team provided materials on how to participate in local programs like curbside recycling and green waste collection. By engaging with the community at such a high-profile event, the County reinforced its ongoing commitment to reducing waste, promoting recycling and fostering a culture of sustainability across Santa Cruz County.



CAMPAIGNS





"Don't Let the Cost Add Up, Bring Your Cup" Campaign

In partnership with Santa Cruz Vibes Magazine, the "Don't Let the Cost Add Up" advertisement campaign video was created to remind people to bring their own mug when they go to their favorite cafe during the summer. This creative and engaging video highlights how simple actions—like bringing your favorite mug—can help lower long-term costs for residents by saving on the \$.25 cup charge and reducing waste that will end up in the landfill.

This video leveraged the wide reach of Santa Cruz Vibes Magazine and its strong visual storytelling to connect with local residents and businesses, motivating them to participate in the county's waste reduction initiatives. It serves as a reminder that every action counts in building a more sustainable and cost-effective future for the entire community.



View the video!



Flood Control and Storm Water

Flood control and stormwater management are vital to protecting communities and infrastructure in Santa Cruz County. Efforts in this area focus on maintaining and improving levees, drainage systems and flood protection structures to reduce the risk of flooding and manage stormwater runoff, which can lead to significant environmental and economic impacts.



Maintenance Contract with PRFMA for Pajaro River Levee

Santa Cruz County has a maintenance contract with the Pajaro River Flood Management Agency (PRFMA) to ensure the proper upkeep of the Pajaro River Levee system. The levee serves as a critical flood protection structure for the Pajaro Valley, which is prone to flooding, particularly during heavy rains and storms. Under this contract, PRFMA works on regularly maintaining the levee to ensure its integrity, addressing any erosion, sedimentation and vegetation issues that could undermine its effectiveness. This helps protect local communities, agriculture and infrastructure from flood damage.



Measure Q Funding Highlight

Measure Q is a local funding measure that aims to improve flood control and stormwater management efforts. Measure Q funds are allocated to projects that improve flood protection, support levee maintenance, and enhance the county's stormwater management infrastructure. This funding has been crucial for maintaining flood control structures like the Pajaro River Levee, ensuring that these systems remain resilient against extreme weather events. Measure Q supports the continued development of comprehensive flood management strategies that benefit both residents and the local economy by safeguarding against potential flood disasters.





ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION/ SPECIAL PROJECTS: CONSTRUCTION

The Construction Management Unit oversees capital improvement project construction, primarily for Roads and Sanitation. This group also oversees emergency projects that arise over the course of the year. Additionally, the Construction Management Unit inspects commercial projects for storm water compliance and oversees sub-division improvements. 2024 was a particularly busy year for both capital improvement projects and emergency projects.

	EMERGENCY	BID	TOTAL
# of projects on roads, sanitation, and levee in construction	25	21	46
# of Sanitation projects	4	10	14
# of Road Design projects (storm damage & drainage)	19	10	29

# of Road Operations (2023 & 2024 Pavement Management)	2
# of Traffic Operations/Capital Improvement (Crosswalk Upgrade Project)	1

No Zone 6/7 projects in 2024

24



ADMINISTRATION

Public Works Division

The Public Works division of the Community Development & Infrastructure Department plays a vital role in ensuring the County of Santa Cruz's infrastructure runs smoothly and efficiently. Led by Kim Moore, Public Works is responsible for managing the construction, maintenance and improvement of roads, bridges, public buildings, and other essential infrastructure. In 2024, Public Works continued to deliver exceptional service, overseeing numerous high-priority projects that directly impacted the county's residents.

Kim Moore
Director of Administration
Services

Throughout the year, the division completed various large-scale projects, including significant road repaving and resurfacing, drainage

improvements, and bridge inspections. Notably, Public Works successfully addressed long-standing maintenance needs, enhancing safety and convenience for residents and visitors alike. The department's commitment to maintaining the county's infrastructure at a high standard ensured that the public could continue to rely on safe and accessible roads and facilities.

FRONT DESK STAFF AND PERSONNEL

The front desk staff is the first point of contact for the public when interacting with CDI's Public Work's Division. This team plays a crucial role in providing customer service, answering inquiries, assisting with permit applications and scheduling appointments for various services. The staff's professionalism and dedication to customer satisfaction are key to maintaining a positive relationship with the community.

Budget

The budget for 2024 reflects the department's ongoing commitment to improving public infrastructure and providing essential services to the community.

Significant portions of the budget were dedicated to maintaining and upgrading county roads, bridges and drainage systems, which are integral to ensuring public safety and promoting economic growth.



PERSONNEL

Personnel management within the Community Development & Infrastructure Department remained a top priority in 2024. Under the leadership of Carrie Barnett, the department placed a strong emphasis on recruitment, retention and professional development to meet the demands of a growing community.

One of the most notable initiatives in 2024 was the department's recruitment strategy, which included the creation of informative hiring videos and participation in career fairs. These efforts were designed to attract highly qualified candidates and ensure that the department could continue to provide top-tier service to the community. The hiring videos featured staff testimonials, highlighting the department's values



and the unique opportunities it offers to potential employees. Additionally, CDI participated in several job fairs throughout the year, showcasing the diverse career paths available within the department.









Throughout 2024, the department experienced significant growth, with a number of new hires and promotions across various divisions. A total of 34 hires and 34 promotions were made in the department, which included key positions in Public Works, the front desk and communications. These new staff members brought a wealth of experience and fresh perspectives, further strengthening the department's ability to serve the community.

TOTAL HIRES AND PROMOTIONS FOR 2024

34 Promotions

34

4 Extra Help —
3 Student —
Workers

34 New Hires —



COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Effective communication is a cornerstone of the Community Development & Infrastructure Department's strategy in 2024. Under the direction of Tiffany Martinez, the department worked to engage with the public through various media channels and outreach efforts. The goal has been to ensure transparency, provide critical information during emergencies and highlight ongoing projects that benefit the community.

In 2024, CDI was featured prominently in local media outlets, with coverage of key infrastructure projects, public meetings, and community events. The media coverage helped raise awareness of the department's ongoing work, such as road maintenance projects and public safety initiatives. In addition to traditional media coverage, CDI also made strides in digital media, with a continued



presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Social media campaigns around storm preparation and road closures kept the community informed and safe during times of inclement weather.

Social Media Stats (Jan. 1, 2024 – Dec. 31, 2024)

Facebook

565,407
Reach

15,000
Page Visits

526
Follows

A 1,300%
compared to previous year

A 160,000%
compared to previous year

A 97%
compared to previous year

Instagram

28,000
Reach

2,300
Page Visits

152
Follows

Reach: This metric tracks how many people see your Facebook content, including posts, stories and ads. It also counts reach from things like tags, check-ins and visits to your Page or profile. If a post or story was boosted (paid), it's included too. Reach is counted only once, even if it comes from both organic (free) and paid distribution.

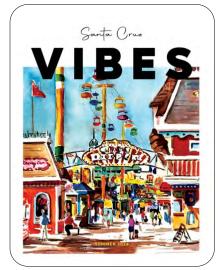
Page visits: This metric tracks the number of profile visits.

Follows: This metric tracks the amount of followers gained in 2024.

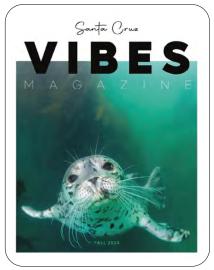


Advertisement

A key component of the department's public outreach strategy in 2024 was its partnership with Santa Cruz Vibes Magazine, a popular local publication with strong readership among both residents and visitors. The department placed prominent advertorials in both the summer and winter editions, using the platform to spotlight the important work happening across the Community Development & Infrastructure Department, including initiatives led by the Public Works and Planning Divisions. These thoughtfully crafted pieces highlighted major projects, introduced dedicated staff members, and emphasized the vital services CDI provides to the community. By combining storytelling with visuals in a relaxed, engaging format, the advertorial was designed to meet community members where they are—flipping through local magazines at coffee shops, in waiting rooms or at home—and communicate the department's work in a way that's both accessible and genuinely interesting. This approach helped expand public awareness and foster a stronger connection between the county and the community we serve.









Newsletter

The department also switched from quarterly to bi-monthly newsletters that provide residents with updates on key projects, road closures and community events. These newsletters have become an important tool for keeping the public informed and engaged in the department's initiatives.

Road impact notifications were another key communication effort in 2024. Through a combination of online platforms and email, CDI provided timely updates on road closures and detours, helping residents plan their commutes and navigate changes in the local infrastructure.

16,962

Total Sends in 2024

Total Sends refers to the total number of emails that have been successfully sent from your account, across all campaigns, over a specific period. 55.2%

Open Rate

Open Rate is a metric that measures the percentage of recipients who open your email compared to the total number of emails delivered to their inbox. 1.6%

Click-Through Rate

Click-Through Rate measures the percentage of recipients who click on at least one link in your email, compared to the total number of emails that were successfully delivered.

Throughout the year, CDI also facilitated numerous community meetings to engage with residents and gather feedback on projects and services. These meetings were conducted both in-person and virtually, ensuring that all members of the community had the opportunity to participate. The department also hosted several events designed to promote community involvement, including volunteer days and educational workshops on infrastructure topics.

Press Releases and News Page

CDI uses press releases to keep Santa Cruz County residents informed about major projects. By regularly sending press releases to the media, the department ensures that key information reaches the public. These updates highlight important departmental milestones, major projects and initiatives that have a significant impact on Santa Cruz County and beyond. All press releases can be found on the newly developed News page, launched in 2024.



News Page

CDI Website

Another major milestone in 2024 was the successful redesign of the Community Development & Infrastructure's website—a significant undertaking led by Julie Newbold. The updated site was thoughtfully reimagined to improve usability, enhance access to information, and better reflect the department's commitment to transparency and service. With a clean, modern design and streamlined navigation, the new website makes it significantly easier for residents to find what they need—whether it's reporting a problem on our roadways, details on infrastructure and planning projects, or information on how to apply for permits—it's all now easily accessible.

Beyond aesthetics and organization, the redesign prioritized functionality that supports stronger community engagement. New features such as online forms, interactive tools and an improved layout to more easily empower users to connect with the department and shape the services that affect their daily lives. The project represents a meaningful step forward in digital accessibility and demonstrates CDI's ongoing effort to meet the community where they are—online, informed and ready to engage.

Public Works (old website)



Public Works (NEW website)



Planning (old website)



Planning (NEW website)

CDI Outreach Highlights







Earth Day Santa Cruz (April 2024) Earth Day Santa Cruz celebration in collaboration with the City of

Santa Cruz.

Midtown Fridays (Summer 2024)

During the Summer of 2024, CDI tabled at Midtown Fridays to share information about the department, address any questions from the public and recruit employees.









Stroll to Aptos Village (August 2024)

In August 2024, CDI participated in the Stroll to Aptos Village, an event focused on pedestrian safety awareness. CDI met with community members, addressed concerns regarding local infrastructure and shared information about projects.

Marketplace on the Green (September 2024)

In September 2024, we tabled at the Marketplace on the Green event at the Seascape Golf Club. This offered a prime opportunity to meet, greet, and showcase our department to our community.





STRENGTHENING SAFETY, COMPLIANCE AND TRAINING AT CDI

At the Department of Community Development & Infrastructure, safety is a top priority. Through ongoing collaboration with Public Works supervisors and managers across Sanitation, Roads, Fleet, Solid Waste and Planning, the department identifies section–specific needs and provide essential safety training to ensure a well–equipped workforce. Working closely with the DPW Equipment Trainer, the department delivers hands–on instruction for heavy equipment and vehicle operation while broader safety sessions educate employees on best practices, emergency procedures and equipment use.

Compliance monitoring is a critical aspect of our efforts, ensuring that all Public Works operations meet OSHA standards, local safety regulations and environmental guidelines. Through close coordination with supervisors and management staff, the department proactively



addresses workplace hazards and maintain safe job sites. Additionally, the department conducts ergonomic assessments to support employee well-being and prevent workplace injuries.

To improve workplace safety, the department investigates work-related incidents, near-misses and accidents, documenting findings to determine root causes and recommend corrective actions. As the chair of the Vehicle Accident Review Committees, we help shape safer driving practices and mitigate risks. We also oversee CDI's commercial driver program, ensuring all drivers remain compliant and eligible.

By leveraging data analytics, we track accident trends and training effectiveness, identifying opportunities for improvement. Our records retention efforts maintain comprehensive documentation of safety inspections, incidents, training sessions and corrective actions, contributing to a well-documented and continuously improving safety program.

In collaboration with agencies such as PG&E, the County Sheriff, CHP, Fire Department and other county departments, we provide advanced training and enhance emergency preparedness. We also manage CDI-PW's Disaster Service Worker lists on a quarterly basis, ensuring readiness in the event of countywide emergencies or disasters.

Additionally, we support the development and implementation of safety policies and emergency response plans, working alongside the County Safety Officer to align with countywide protocols. By receiving, investigating and resolving safety-related concerns, we foster a proactive and responsive safety culture within CDI.

Through these efforts, CDI remains dedicated to creating a safer work environment, reducing risks and ensuring that all employees have the knowledge and resources they need to work safely and effectively.



POLICY, HOUSING & CODE COMPLIANCE

Planning Division

In 2024, the Planning Division made measurable strides in aligning housing development with community needs and state regulations. The team advanced policy reforms to streamline permitting, supported housing stability, and enforced code compliance to maintain safe and livable neighborhoods.

Housing Element and Parcel Rezones

In April 2024, the County of Santa Cruz achieved a significant milestone with the California Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) certification of its 6th Cycle Housing Element, covering the 2023-2031 planning period. This certification underscores



the County's dedication to addressing housing needs across all income levels, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive future for our community.

The journey to this achievement began a robust public involvement campaign, culminating in the Board of Supervisors adopting the Housing Element on Nov. 14, 2023. Following this, the County engaged in a collaborative process with HCD, incorporating feedback and making necessary revisions to meet state requirements. This iterative process resulted in the successful certification in April 2024.

A key component of the certified Housing Element is the Housing Element Rezone Program. This initiative addresses the shortfall in the County's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) by identifying 75 parcels



for rezoning, thereby increasing housing capacity in unincorporated areas. The program exemplifies the County's proactive approach to creating opportunities for housing development that aligns with community needs and sustainability goals.

The certification also aligns with broader county initiatives, such as the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update, which received final endorsement by the Coastal Commission in March 2024. Together, these efforts represent the most significant improvements to land use and housing policy in the unincorporated areas of Santa Cruz County in decades.

Looking ahead, the County remains committed to implementing the strategies outlined in the Housing Element, fostering community engagement, and ensuring that housing development progresses in a manner that benefits all residents. This certification marks not just a culmination of past efforts but a forward-looking commitment to a more inclusive and sustainable Santa Cruz County.

Housing Element's Team Recognition



During the March 13, 2024, Board of Supervisor's Meeting the Housing Element team earned recognition for its comprehensive and community-rooted approach to long-range planning. Their work on the 6th Cycle Housing Element demonstrated an innovative blend of data-driven policy and inclusive engagement, earning accolades from the County. Their dedication ensured compliance while also prioritizing equity, affordability and sustainability.



Learn More about the Housing Element

Short-Term Rentals

With the continued impact of short-term rentals on housing availability, the Planning Division developed and implemented a targeted compliance program. This included new strategic enforcement measures to track down unpermitted short-term vacation and hosted rentals in Santa Cruz County, which have continuously exacerbated the housing supply, limits available parking, and increases noise levels, impacting neighborhoods. The enforcement process, previously reliant on complaints, now involves actively identifying unpermitted and non-compliant properties on vacation rental platforms in collaboration with the County Sheriff and Auditor-Controller departments.

The initiative not only works to improve compliance rates but also preserves neighborhood character and ensures a more balanced housing market.

Affordable Housing Projects

In partnership with local developers and nonprofit organizations, the division facilitated the approval and groundbreaking of several affordable housing developments. These projects addressed a range of housing needs, from transitional housing to senior living. Through a mix of public-private funding strategies, the County of Santa Cruz continues to close the affordability gap and expand access to stable housing.

Bienestar Plaza in Live Oak

Bienestar Plaza, located at 1520 Capitola Road in Live Oak, celebrated its grand opening in May 2024. This development offers 57 affordable one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments for families and individuals earning between 30% and 80% of the Area Median Income. Notably, the project integrates housing with healthcare services, featuring on-site clinics like Dientes Community Dental Care and Santa Cruz Community Health Center.

Certification of the Sustainability Updates

After more than a decade of planning and community input, Santa Cruz County has officially adopted a major policy milestone: the **Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update**. Certified by the California Coastal Commission on **March 15, 2024**, this update modernizes the County's approach to growth, environmental protection and community resilience.

The update includes:

- A full revision of the General Plan and Local Coastal Program (GP/LCP)
- Modernization of the Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC)
- All-new **Design Guidelines** for unincorporated areas
- Revised Land Use Designations and Zoning Maps

Together, these updates form a comprehensive policy framework designed to guide land use, development and sustainability initiatives across unincorporated Santa Cruz County. This is the County's most significant policy overhaul in a generation—and it's now officially in effect.



Want to know what this means for your neighborhood, property, or project?

Explore the **final documents** and browse the **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** section below.

Learn More



Events & Outreach

The Planning Division expanded its public outreach efforts in 2024, emphasizing transparency, equity and collaboration. These engagements strengthened community trust and brought valuable feedback into the decision-making process.

Wheelie Good Time Family Ride

To promote alternative transportation, the division participated in the Wheelie Good Time event at Felt Street Park in Live Oak. This family-friendly event drew participants and highlighted the county's growing bike infrastructure. It served as a fun, interactive way to raise awareness about safe streets and sustainable travel options for residents of all ages.

CDI staff was also there to share information about the Santa Cruz County's efforts in creating a Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program, aimed at making travel more efficient. As a key part of this process, we encourage everyone to share their travel habits and preferences with us. Participants' feedback will help shape future projects and improve local travel options.



Equity in Public Outreach

Ensuring every voice is heard remains a core priority. In 2024, the Planning Division deepened its commitment to equity by launching its Objective 355 meetings to incorporate multilingual outreach campaigns and working together on how to expand equity by creating promotional materials, documents and public meetings that consider all audiences. These inclusive strategies significantly increased participation from underrepresented communities and set a new standard for equitable engagement.



UNIFIED PERMIT CENTER

Planning Division

The Unified Permit Center (UPC) continued its mission in 2024 to simplify, streamline, and modernize the review process for all permits.

Recovery Permit Center

To maintain service continuity and strengthen technical capacity, the County Board of Supervisors voted to extend CDI's contract with 4Leaf, Inc., a key partner in plan review and inspection services that was established after the CZU Complex Fire. The extension was timed strategically to allow for cross training between 4Leaf and UPC staff, allowing the county to benefit from learning from 4Leaf staff in anticipation of the UPC absorbing the Recovery Permit Center in early 2025.



This collaboration has proven invaluable in maintaining permit processing times during periods of high demand, and it continues to support the county's commitment to building safety, quality assurance, and professional service delivery.

Efficiency Improvements

A major focus of the UPC is improving the plan check review times. By strategically using consultant plan check support and filling two plan check positions, the percentage of overdue plan checks dropped from 89% in early 2023 to just 8% by August 2024.

UPC staff continues to focus on improving the permit center's efficiency with projects ranging from automating staff aging reports and digitizing the school fee payment process, to providing plan check comments digitally and streamlining the discretionary intake process.



Improved Customer Service

Improved Access for Spanish-speakers – In addition to allowing customers to request a translator at their counter appointments, staff translated the most common building permit application forms into Spanish. In addition, old paper brochures were converted to webpages so that customers can use Google translate to access content.

Pre-Designed ADU Plans – The County launched its pre-designed ADU program in early 2024. The program provides architectural plans for ADUs free of charge to county residents. Plans come in three architectural styles, and a webpage provides a "How To" guide.

Records Room Kiosk – UPC staff collaborated with IT to create a public-facing records kiosk to allow the public to securely access our digitized records.

Afternoon Appointments – The building section enhanced customer service by offering afternoon appointments to customers unable to attend morning appointments.

SB 13 and AB 2533 – ADU Legalization Program – This program allows our applicants to begin the legalization process for ADUs and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units originally constructed without a permit.

Commissions Webpages – UPC staff standardized our commissions' webpages, to provide improved customer access to by-laws, contact information and agendas.

Permit Dashboard – The Building Permit Dashboard for Santa Cruz County was developed as part of the UPC initiative, which was first presented to the Board of Supervisors on June 29, 2021. The UPC aimed to integrate and streamline land use permitting with a customer-centered service model. By Jan. 9, 2024, significant progress had been made, including the development of the Building Permit Dashboard to facilitate metrics-based management of building permit applications. The redesigned website, integrating the Public Works Division, Planning Division and the UPC, was launched on May 30, 2024. Therefore, the Building Permit Dashboard was likely created between mid-2021 and early 2024, with its public availability coinciding with the website's launch in May 2024.



View the Camino Permit Guide



ADMINISTRATION

Planning Division

The administration team serves as the backbone of the Planning Division, ensuring smooth operations across various departments. Their work spans financial oversight, personnel support, records management, technology enhancements, and interdepartmental collaboration. From handling recruitment and hiring processes to managing budgets, contracts and grants, the team plays a crucial role in maintaining efficiency. The team also oversees the permitting system, processes public records requests and implements statemandated regulatory changes to ensure compliance with new legislation.



Technology remains a major focus, with continuous improvements to the division's permit tracking software, Infor. The team has implemented automated reporting for permits in flood zones, developed email notifications for permit updates, and introduced dashboards for enhanced data visualization. Collaboration with various county departments, including IT, the Auditor's Office, the Assessor's Office and Public Works, further strengthens operational effectiveness.

Budget and Permitting Activity

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Planning Division has proposed a budget with projected revenues of \$9,295,774 and expenses totaling \$17,773,920. In the past year, the division processed a significant number of permits, demonstrating its essential role in facilitating development within the county.

2,920Over-the-counter

permits

2,921

Building permits

23

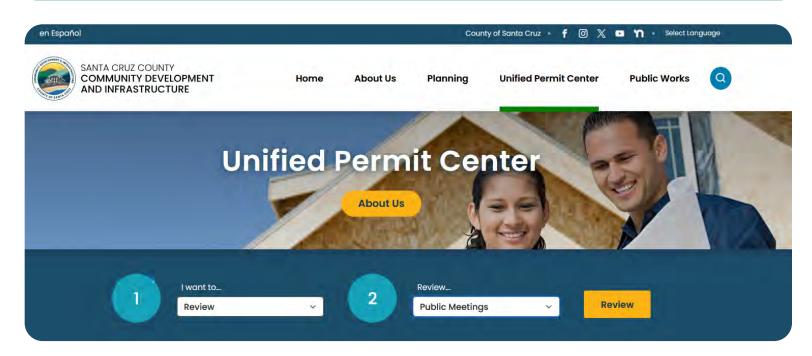
Grading permits

285

Discretionary permits

205

Vacation & hosted rental permits



Accomplishments

The past year has been marked by significant advancements in process efficiency and public engagement. A major milestone was the launch of a new website that centralizes permit-related activities under the Unified Permit Center, offering the public an easier way to access information and services.

Enhancing digital accessibility, the division expanded its online appointment scheduler to accommodate Code Enforcement, Geologic Hazards and the Recovery Permit Center. Additional web forms were introduced to assist with public requests, making information more readily available. The website was also updated to include a "Get Involved" section, an events calendar and important announcements.

Efforts to digitize records have greatly improved efficiency and access to historical data. Key documents, including 1989 earthquake files, quarry reports, development review files and code enforcement cases, were scanned and digitized. Incoming mail is now processed electronically, reducing paper use and expediting response times. Additionally, a secure transfer site was created to protect the confidentiality of affordable home loan applicants.

Further expanding the County's data capabilities, new GIS layers were added to track code enforcement cases, vacation rentals, and hosted rentals. These enhancements provide better visualization and analysis of permitting activities across the region.

Looking Ahead

The Planning Division remains dedicated to innovation and continuous improvement. By embracing technology, refining workflows and enhancing public engagement, the division is positioned to provide even greater service to the residents of Santa Cruz County. With a focus on efficiency and accessibility, the division will continue to adapt and evolve, ensuring a streamlined and transparent planning process for all.



CAPITAL PROJECTS

2024 was a big year for capital investment across the county. Through careful planning, stakeholder engagement and sustainable building practices, the County brought vital infrastructure to life—all while staying focused on equity, access, and efficiency.

South County Government Center

One of the most ambitious projects completed in 2024, the South County Government Center in Watsonville, represents a major investment in service equity and community access. This beautiful, state-of-the-art facility co-locates multiple county departments under one roof—making it easier for South County residents to access health, human services and housing support in a single visit.

This project embodies what capital development is all about: building spaces that serve the public with dignity, efficiency and compassion.

To mark the completion of the South County Government Center, we hosted a festive Grand Opening Celebration in June 2024. The event brought together community leaders, County staff and residents to tour the new facility, meet service providers, and celebrate a shared vision brought to life.

The day was filled with music, food, ribbon-cutting and gratitude—a powerful reminder of how meaningful infrastructure projects can truly be when grounded in community values.





Though this offers just a glimpse into the wide-ranging work of Capital Projects, it's worth noting that as of mid-2024, the team transitioned to the General Services Department and is no longer part of the Department of Community Development & Infrastructure.







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