



# County of Santa Cruz

## County Administrative Office

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**Meeting Date:** September 19, 2017  
**Date:** September 13, 2017  
**To:** The Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer  
**Subject:** Study Session on Strategic Planning

The County Administrative Officer (CAO) is initiating a countywide strategic planning effort in 2017-18. The purpose of this memo is to introduce Angela Antenore, M.ED, who will be facilitating a study session on strategic planning for the Board, and provide an overview of the strategic planning process, called "Vision Santa Cruz County," to develop the County Strategic Plan.

Staff with the County Administrative Office met Ms. Antenore through the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Institute where she developed and facilitated the course entitled, "Crafting and Implementing Effective Strategic Plans." She works for CSAC in Riverside, Martinez and Sacramento and with various California counties, including Santa Barbara (County and City), Ventura, Eureka, Madera and Alpine. She is also actively involved in work that supports collaboration and coordination related to issues such as homelessness, jail overcrowding and HIV/AIDS.

### **Purpose of Strategic Planning**

The purpose of strategic planning is to establish a long-term vision for the County and set a course of action through (1) overarching focus areas and (2) specific goals and objectives. This will require assessing the current landscape and trends, engaging internal and external stakeholders, and drafting and adopting a multi-year strategic plan and a shorter-term operational plan, which would inform County budget development.

Staff began preparing for this process by comparing existing models and formats in other counties and cities, reviewing community and department plans, and receiving input on strategic plan development. This work led to the identification of five key strategic plan elements:

- **Vision** - reflects the collective understanding of the ideal situation

- **Mission** - identifies the County's role in pursuing the vision
- **Values** - provide the foundation on which the strategic plan is constructed
- **Focus areas** - represent strategic initiatives, which organize the goals of an organization into a limited number of categories or themes
- **Goals** - provide generalized statements of what will be achieved consistent with the vision

Attached are examples of these elements for other counties and existing community and department plans.

As will be explained at the study session, there are a number of reasons to plan, including to provide strategic direction, prioritize use of limited resources, set standards of excellence, cope with environmental uncertainty and change, and provide an objective basis for control and evaluation. A good time to do strategic planning is when things are going well and/or the organization is in a state of transition. Both factors are currently present in Santa Cruz County.

### **The Strategic Planning Process**

In July, the CAO solicited the involvement of a diverse group of department heads and assistant department heads from each area of the County - General Government, Health & Human Services, Land Use & Community Services, and Public Safety & Justice - to participate in the Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC). The committee met for the first time at the end of August to review the attached project charter and will be meeting weekly for several months as the strategic planning process is finalized. While the SPSC will present a final framework and timeline to the Board in October, this memo provides a brief overview.

The strategic planning process will start with envisioning the County's vision, mission and values, conducting a scan of current realities, and engaging in analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/barriers (SWOT/B). As part of the scans, it will be important to seek out new information and identify the critical strategic issues and challenges facing the organization. This may include political, social, economic and other factors. In addition, the SWOT/B analyses will identify what is going on *internally* (strengths and weaknesses) and what is going on *externally* (opportunities and threats/barriers).

These activities will require providing robust internal and external engagement of the County's numerous stakeholders through a variety of in-person, electronic and other methods. Ms. Antenore along with one or more local facilitators will be used to assist with these efforts. For instance, a retreat focused primarily on strategic planning was held with department heads earlier this month, and the Learn, Engage, Apply and

Perform (LEAP) Program, the County's new leadership academy, launches this month with a similar training on strategic planning. Attached is an overview of the LEAP Program.

At the retreat, department heads were asked to write down key words that reflect their understanding of the County's vision and mission, and the results of that exercise are attached. Ms. Antenore also facilitated the first scans and SWOT/B analyses, generating a large amount of useful data that will be compiled in a meaningful way and combined with other information gathered through our engagement efforts.

We expect to engage stakeholders throughout the Fall, present the draft vision, mission, values and focus areas in the Winter, conduct goal setting in the Spring, and then draft and finalize the County Strategic Plan. The strategic planning process will be completed by the end of 2017-18.

Finally, the public is invited to sign up for updates on the strategic planning process at [www.santacruzcounty.us/sp](http://www.santacruzcounty.us/sp) or email us with questions or comments at [vision@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:vision@santacruzcounty.us).

### **Implementation in Future Years**

As was noted during budget hearings, one outcome of the County Strategic Plan is the possibility of initiating a performance measurement effort in the future to support data-driven decision-making and inform the budget process. One path forward to achieve this would be to implement a two-year budget combined with a two-year operational plan to carry out the County's strategic plan goals. The first two-year budget and operational plan would provide the County with a work plan comprised of objectives and tactics. The objectives would provide specificity to concepts identified in the County's goals and be measurable. The tactics would represent action steps that would be undertaken to achieve each objective's designated performance measures.

The second two-year budget and operational plan would implement performance measures, which would enable stakeholders to assess the strategic plan's effectiveness and managers to evaluate agency performance. This would be a multi-year process with the first step being to develop the County Strategic Plan. In 2018-19, we expect to develop the operational plan, assigning responsibility and accountability for strategic plan implementation. In 2019-20, we expect to launch a county-wide performance measurement initiative to measure the impact of objectives and tactics identified in the operational plan.

It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED**, that the Board accept and file this report on the strategic planning process, called "Vision Santa Cruz County," and direct staff to return on October 17, 2017 with the final framework and timeline.

**Submitted by:**



Carlos L. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

9/13/2017

**Attachments:**

- a County Strategic Plan Elements
- b Community Strategic Plan Elements
- c Department Strategic Plan Elements
- d Strategic Planning Project Charter
- e LEAP Program Overview
- f Vision Key Words
- g Mission Key Words