



# Central Valley Communities of Practice: Parks as a Climate Solution: Environmental Justice & Community Resilience

March 18, 2026

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

# Welcome!

## Today's Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Presentation
- Q&A Session
- Small Groups Discussions
- Report Back to the Group
- Next Steps & Exit Survey

**GIVEAWAY!** Win a prize at each session or the grand prize at the end of the series!



# Partner Team



## Trust for Public Land

National nonprofit with the mission of protecting land and creating parks for people to ensure healthy, livable communities for generations to come.



## PlaceWorks

Planning and Design firm that thrives on working with communities to tackle complex problems and develop workable solutions, with extensive experience in Stockton.



## WRT

WRT is rooted in ecology, social equity, and community-based planning, with a parks and open space practice that works across scales. WRT works extensively in Fresno.



## MIG

Multidisciplinary firm specializing in participatory planning, design, and policy, with extensive experience in Bakersfield.

# Icebreaker Activity

## Introduce yourself in the chat:

- What is your name?
- What is your organization?
- How familiar are you with the term “environmental justice”?



# Session 2 Funding for Parks



## What we heard

- Need for grant funding for capital improvements and maintenance
- Maintenance and staffing capacity are major barriers to leveraging capital funding
- Interest in learning more about park districts and tax initiatives
- Support for collaborative partnerships with community organizations, agencies, and others working in the park space in Central Valley
- Interest in funding strategies for brownfields
- Collaborate with existing efforts that are being led by organizations throughout Central Valley
- Redefine project goals to encompass a broader scope

# Save the Date: In-Person Central Valley Funding Summits

## Summit Goals:

- Share timely, actionable information on what park and greenspace funding is available.
- Provide a space for parks practitioners from across the region to connect.
- Connect fund seekers directly with funders and technical assistance providers.

## Summit Dates:

- **Bakersfield – May 4**
- **Fresno – May 6**
- **Stockton – May 8**

# Collaborative Resource List

## Everyone can contribute!

- Participant sharing hub for resources.
- Share your contact information with your peers.
- Learn and share about resources.
- Link will be added to our TPL Central Valley COP site and shared in follow up emails!



# Today's Objectives

## Parks as a Climate Solution

- Understand links between parks, environmental justice, and climate resilience.
- Recognize open space's multiple benefits for aligning community goals.
- Share and learn policies, programs, and tools with peers.



# Environmental Justice



# What is Environmental Justice?

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

**California Government Code §65040.12(e)**



# California Law (Senate Bill 1000)

## Senate Bill 1000 requires counties and cities to:

- Create an environmental justice element, or incorporate environmental justice policies into the General Plan
- Identify “disadvantaged communities”
- Assess specific conditions and challenges in these communities



# Environmental Justice in Central Valley



Pollution Exposure



Community Health



Safe and Sanitary Housing



Access to Healthy Foods



Public Facilities



Civic Engagement

# Access to Parks and Open Space

Access to quality parks, open space, and other recreational areas promote physical activity and provide green spaces that help reduce the effects of air pollution and extreme heat

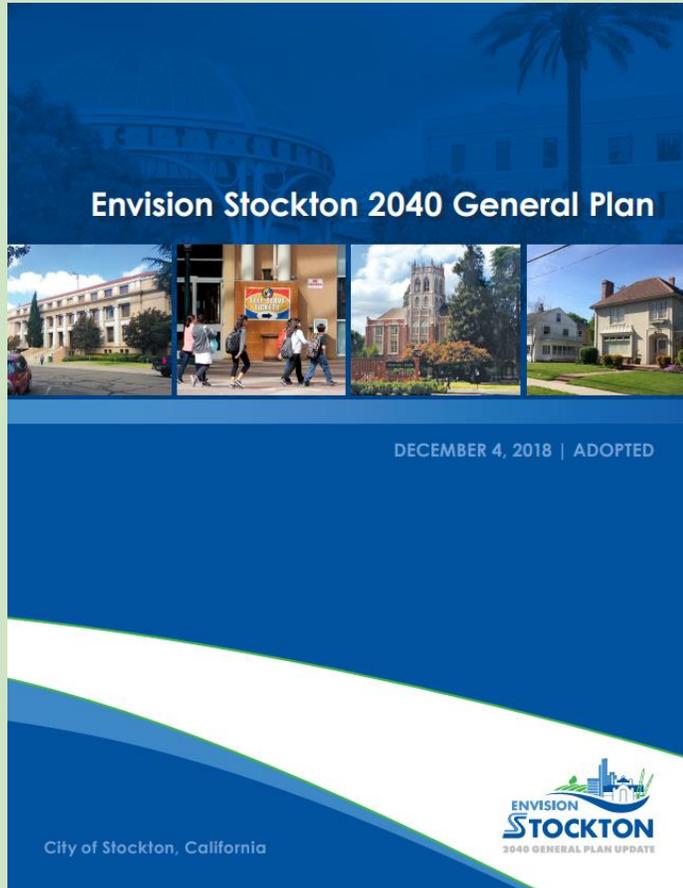
## Example Policy or Program

- **Parks Master Plan.** Prepare a parks master plan through an open and engaging process inclusive of community residents that assesses the quality and distribution of existing parks, facilities, and community centers throughout the city relative to the population served (i.e., within a set walking distance) and their needs (i.e., considering age, income, and abilities), and, based on this information, identifies and prioritizes new, renovation, and expansion park and community center projects and describes funding means and timelines

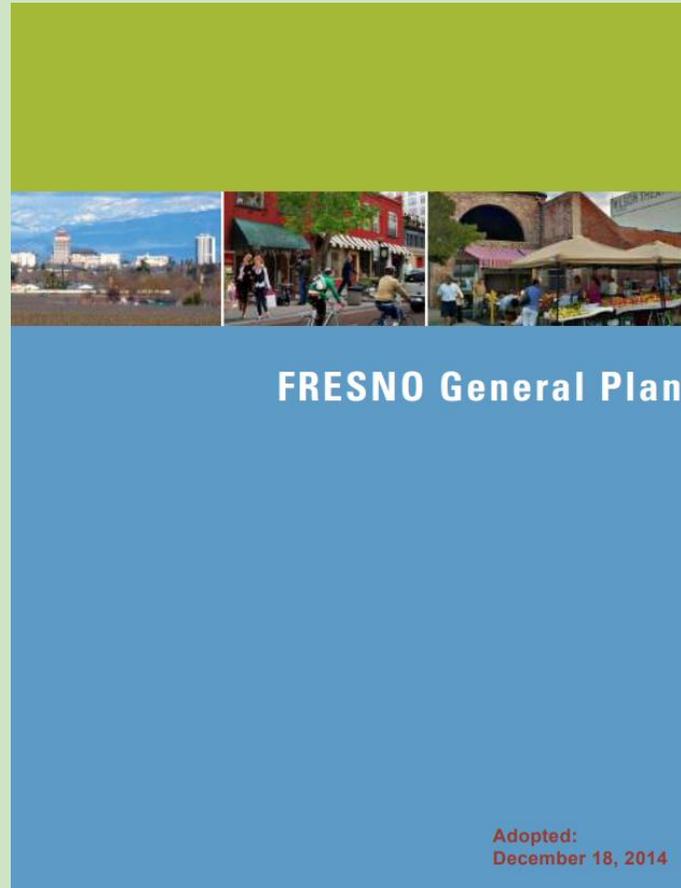
## Example Policy or Program

- **Park Improvements.** When considering parks and infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects, consider the following through an open and engaging process inclusive of community residents:
  - Whether the affected community is underserved or disadvantaged.
  - What the priority needs of the community are and whether the project would address those needs.
  - Whether the project would negatively impact the community, such as through increased exposure to pollutants or displacement of residents or local businesses.

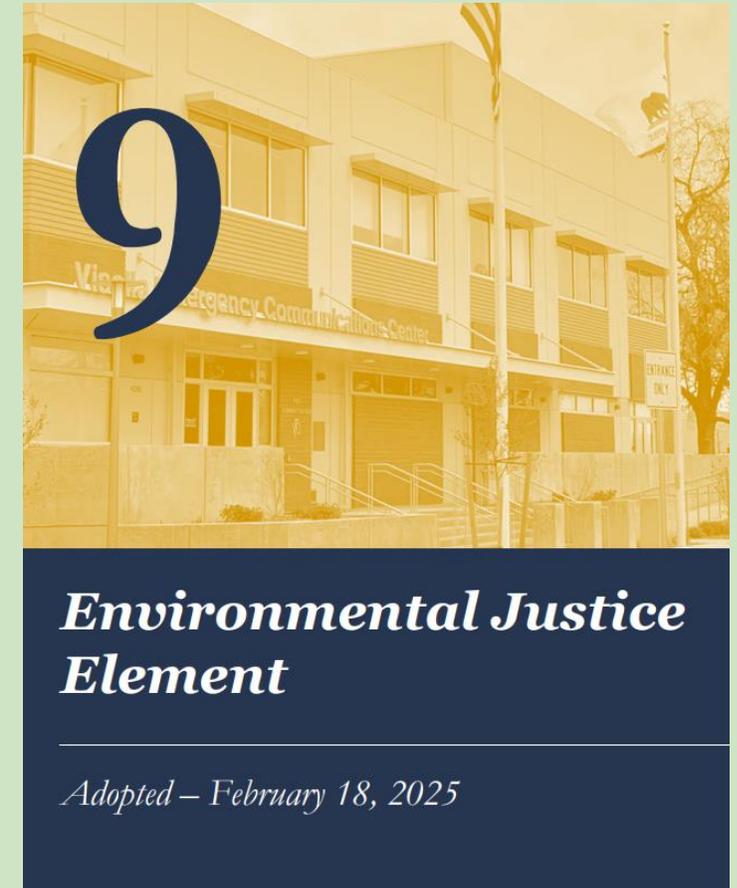
# Environmental Justice Elements in Local General Plans



**City of Stockton General Plan –  
Community Health Element**



**City of Fresno General Plan –  
Healthy Communities Element**



**City of Visalia General Plan –  
Environmental Justice Element**

# Climate Change



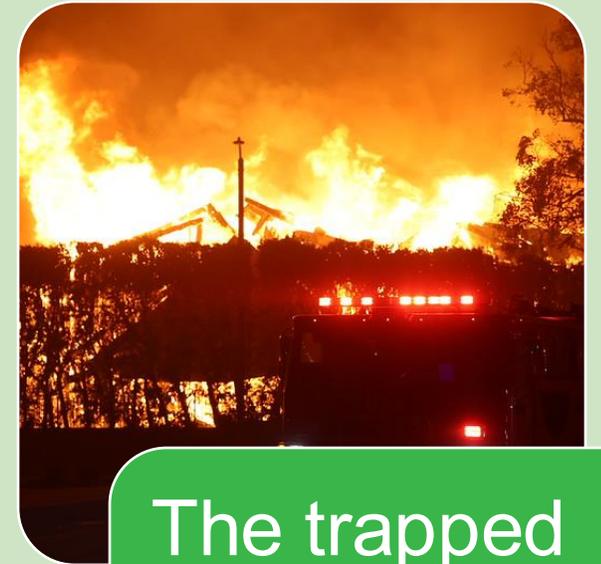
# Climate Change Overview



Human activities emit heat-trapping gases (GHGs)



GHG levels build up in the atmosphere, trapping more heat



The trapped heat triggers changes to the global climate system

# Impacts to the Central Valley

Drought



Extreme heat



Floods



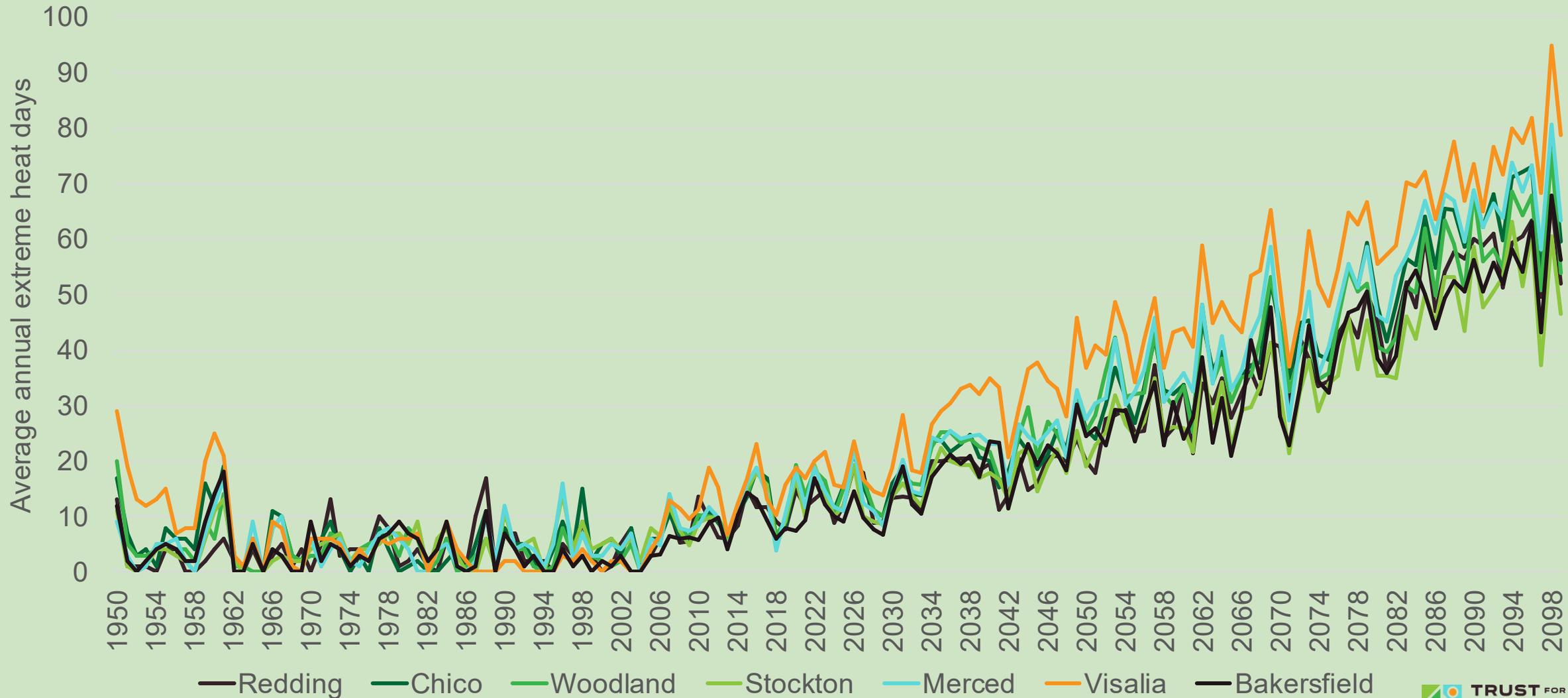
Poor air quality



Wildfire



# Extreme Heat Projections



# Climate Change Impacts

- **Climate change disproportionately affects frontline communities.**
  - Higher risk of health and safety impacts.
  - Decreases to community well-being.
- **Greater risk of infrastructure failure.**
  - Loss of power, reduced water supply, risk of transit breakdowns, stress on emergency responders.
- **Increased economic harm.**
  - Reduced agricultural productivity, impacts on construction and recreation.
- **Environmental threats.**
  - Increased evaporation and shifts in key ecosystems.
  - Stress on parks and open space.

# Climate Change Plans

## General Plan Safety Element

- Required by all cities and counties.
- Broad policies to guide long-term planning.
- Must identify safety issues and set policies to address them.
- Since 2017, must address climate change.
- Starting this year, explicitly includes extreme heat.

## Climate Action/Adaptation Plan

- Strategic plan to reduce GHG emissions and/or plan to build greater resilience to climate hazards.
- Often updated every 5-10 years.
- Can be broad or specific (or both).
- Often includes monitoring programs.

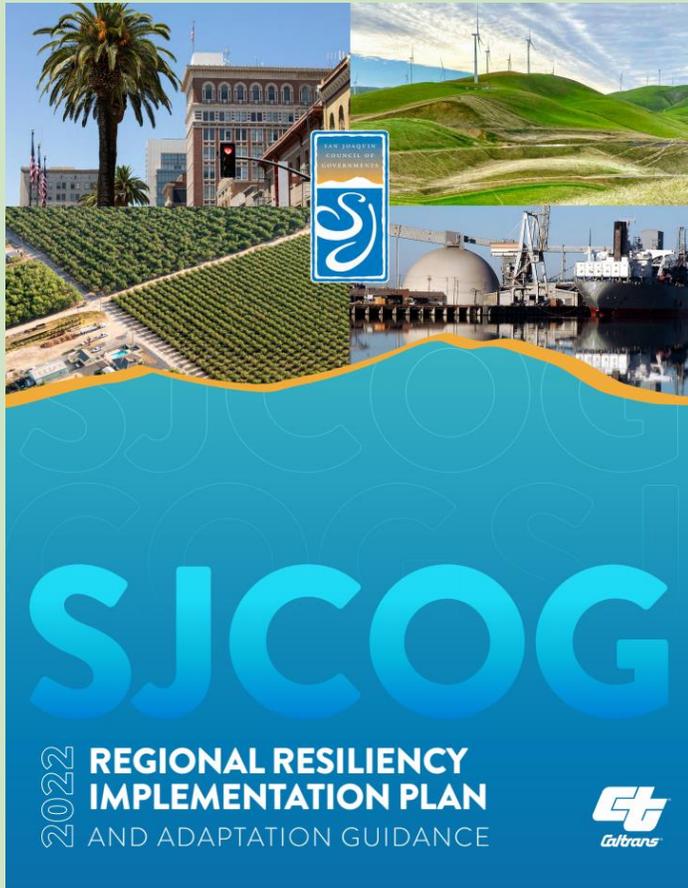
## Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Detailed, technical document to protect against natural hazards.
- Short-term focus (updated every 5 years)
- Contains very specific actions and programs.
- Often used for increased grant funding.

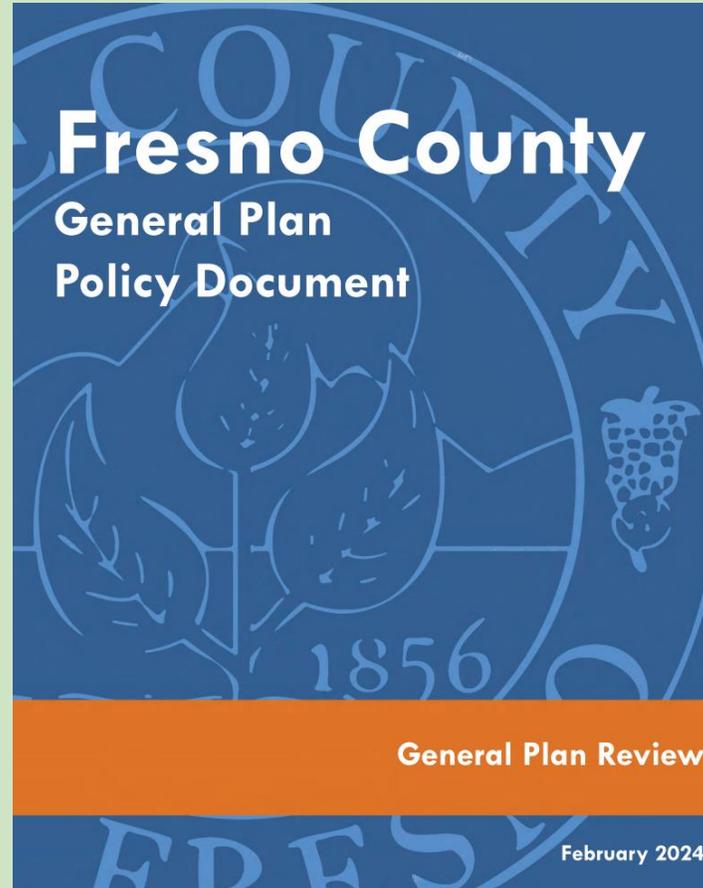
## Issue-specific plans

- Can address a particular issue or need.
- Community health plans, wildfire protection plans, extreme heat actions plans, etc.
- Allow for focused adaptation responses.
- Can lead to patchwork responses.

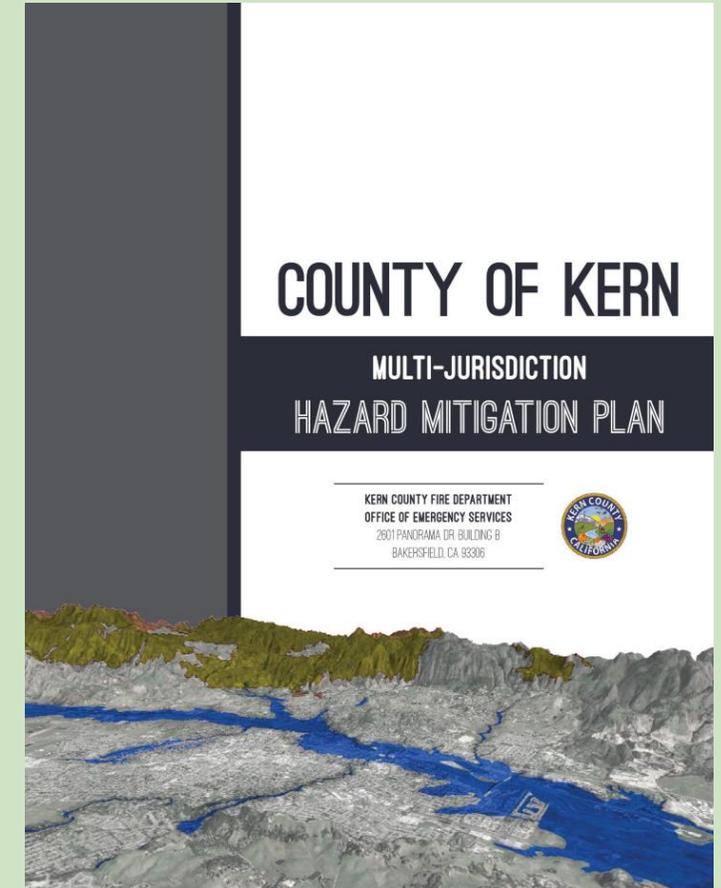
# Example Climate Change Plans



San Joaquin Council of Governments Regional Resiliency and Implementation Plan



Fresno County General Plan – Health and Safety Element



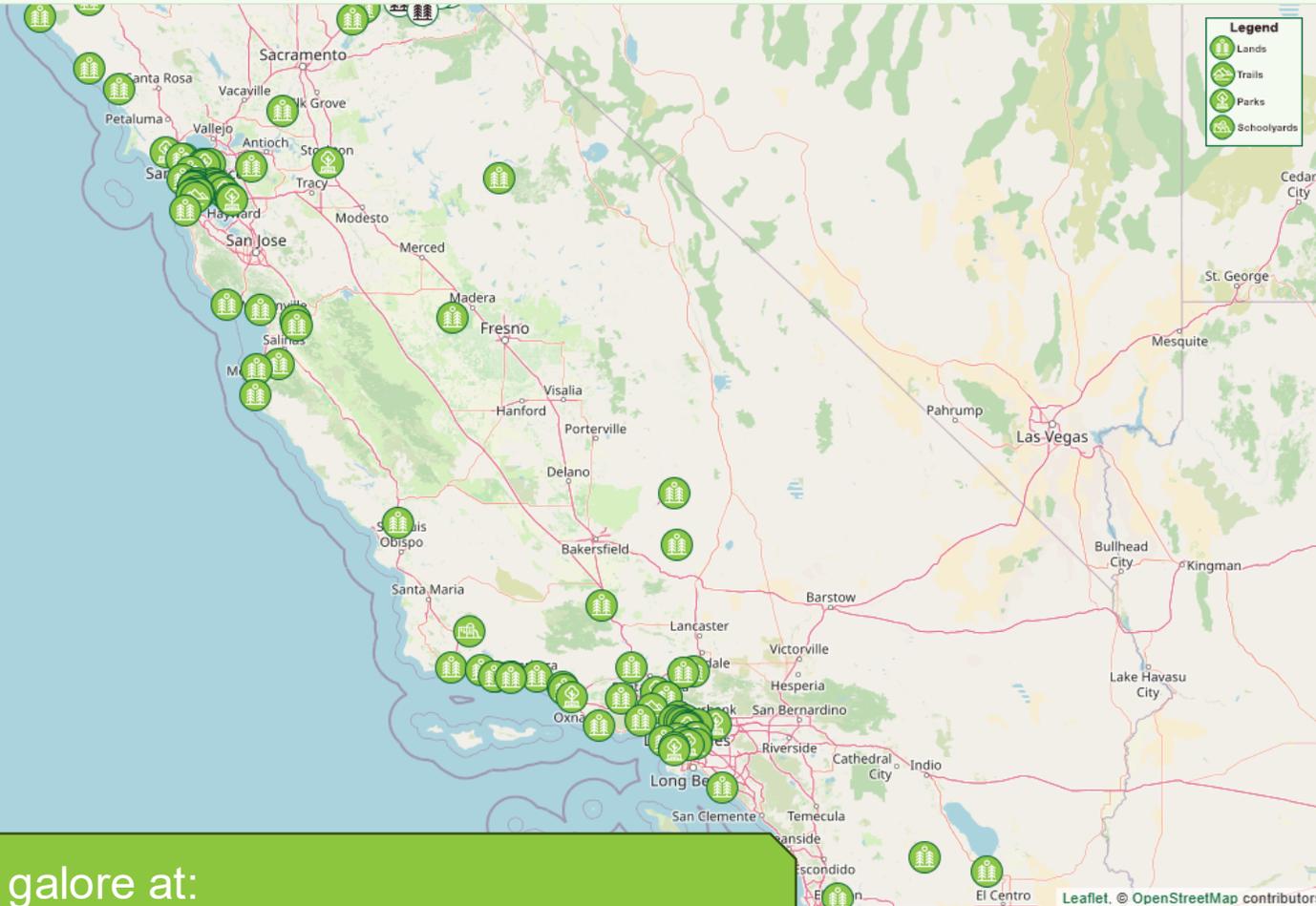
County of Kern Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan

# Case Studies in Nature-based Solutions

- One more rural and one more urban project.
- Highlighting community co-benefits in public health, economic development, etc.
- Highlighting design elements.
- Projects with that **WOW!** factor—ambitious but replicable.



# Explore All of Our Projects in California



All Complete Coming Soon Fundraising Showing 140 projects

COMPLETED  
Ashland Zócalo

Local Parks



COMING SOON  
Alphabet Farms

Lands



COMPLETED  
Huysink Lake

Lands



COMPLETED  
César E. Chávez Campus

Schoolyards



Case studies galore at:  
<https://www.tpl.org/state/california#statemap>

Urban Case Study

# Urban Orchard (2025)

City of South Gate, Los Angeles County, CA



7

ACRES  
RENOVATED FOR  
PUBLIC USE



30

LONG-TERM JOB  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR  
UNDERSERVED  
YOUTH



200

FRUIT TREES  
NOURISHING THE  
COMMUNITY



32M

GALLONS OF  
POLLUTED  
WATER CLEANED  
THROUGH  
WETLANDS AND  
REUSED ON-SITE

# Environmental & Community Context

**Environmental justice issues connect to air quality and noise pollution from...**

- Freeway
- Port authority
- Freight activity

## **Public health concerns**

- “We have a lot of residents who are in wheelchairs.” - Tina Varnes, community member
- “Young people and children, event adults, we have a sedentary life.” – Rosa Rodriguez, community member.

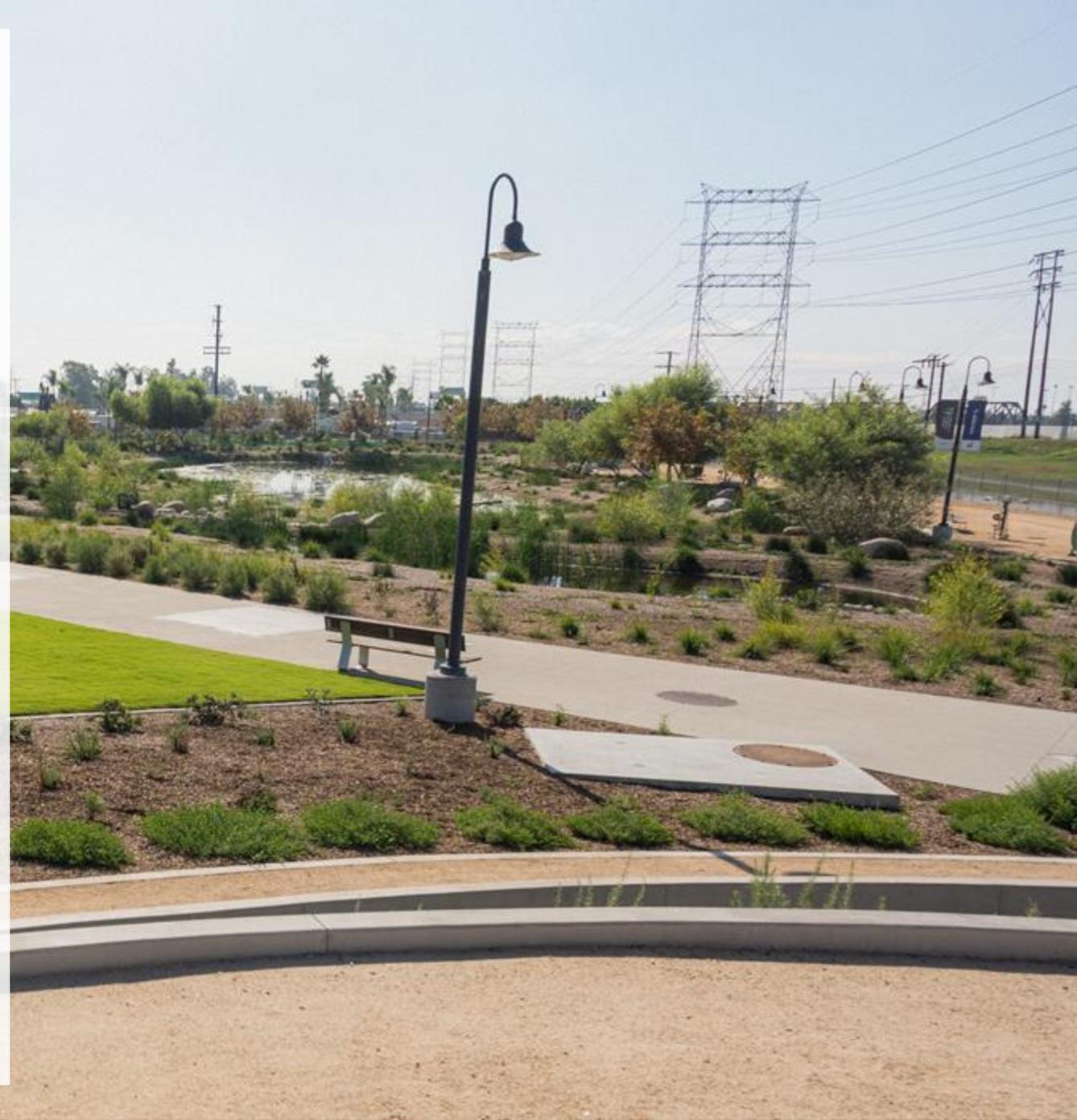
**Extreme heat, drought, and flooding** identified as hazards in the City’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.



# *Nature-Based* **Solutions**

To manage heat and stormwater...

- a community orchard with hundreds of fruit trees → sequester carbon, provide shade, food, purify the air, and absorb stormwater.
- a constructed wetland → filter and manage stormwater
- native landscaping → filter and manage stormwater, decrease surface temperature.



# Community-Centered Benefits

To advocate for more active lifestyles:

- Walking paths
- A mile-long extension of the Los Angeles River Trail.
- Increasing healthy food options through community gardening.

Other benefits:

- Job creation for younger residents in building the new park.
- Creating recommendations to guide the City to be proactive and handle the risk of gentrification and displacement.



# Story Mill Park (2025)

Bozeman, Montana



**60**

ACRE PARK IN  
THE MIDDLE OF  
BOZEMAN



**40**

ACRES OF  
AWARD-WINNING  
NATURE  
SANCTUARY



**4**

MILES OF TRAILS

# Environmental & Community Context

- During the late 19th century, wetlands were filled in to make way for emerging agricultural activity.
- Plans for intensive residential and commercial redevelopment fell through in the early 2000s.
- Located in a wildlife corridor between two mountain ranges.
- Sacajawea Audubon Society counted over 100 bird species as well as the site being home to many beavers, otters, and link.



# Nature-Based Solutions

- Wetland restoration at the intersection of two urban streams, East Gallatin River and Bozeman Creek.
- Outcomes: promoting water health and trout fishery, increasing the floodplain's ability to filter and capture stormwater.
- Restoring the naturally meandering stream\*

*\*(daylighting streams -uncovering buried waterways to address water pollution, address flash flooding concerns per research from American Rivers)*



# Community-Centered Benefits

- Hiking trails, public access points to the river, playgrounds, visitor facilities, and gathering spaces.
- Community gardening to address food insecurity.
- Local agencies planning for equitable housing on 8 acres of land adjacent of the park.



# Zoom Poll!

Do you need spanish interpretation?

- Yes/Sí
- No/No



# Zoom Poll!

Select the geography or context you are most interested in for the small group discussion

- San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced Counties
- Madera and Fresno Counties
- Kings, Tulare, Kern Counties
- Rural and/or Foothill Communities
- Central Valley Regionwide



# Q&A Session

## Questions?

- Send your questions to **Questions? Ask me!**
- Send zoom support questions to **Zoom Questions**

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting window with a dark background. At the top right, it says "Zoom Meeting ID:" and "Speaker View". On the right side, there is a "Participants (22)" list with names: Janet Chang (Me), Tammy Seale (Host), Grant R., Sloan Campi, and Mark Teague (Co-host). Below the participants is a "Zoom Group Chat" section with a "Type Message Here" prompt and a "To: Everyone" dropdown menu. At the bottom, there is a toolbar with icons for Unmute, Stop Video, Invite, Participants (22), Share Screen, Chat, Record, and Reactions. A red arrow points from the "Chat" icon in the toolbar to the "Zoom Group Chat" section. Another red arrow points from the "Type Message Here" prompt to the "Type message here..." input field. Text annotations are overlaid on the screen: "Access the chat window Chat with meeting Chat Hosts to ask questions" with an arrow pointing to the "Chat" icon; "Choose 'Project questions? Ask me!' or 'Zoom questions? Ask me!' in drop-down menu" with an arrow pointing to the "To: Everyone" dropdown; and "Type Message Here" with an arrow pointing to the input field.

**Access the chat window**  
Chat with meeting Chat Hosts  
to ask questions

Choose "Project questions? Ask me!" or "Zoom questions? Ask me!" in drop-down menu

Type Message Here

To: Everyone  
Type message here...



# Small Group Discussions

## Breakout Groups

### Question 1:

How do you define environmental justice and climate change? How do environmental justice and climate change factors influence how and when people in your community spend time outdoors?

### Question 2:

In your experience, what design strategies, tools, or programs/policies have been most effective in addressing climate change in your community? Are there any lessons that others could apply to their communities?



# Small Group Discussions

## Breakout Groups

### Question 3:

In your community, what priorities (such as public safety, infrastructure, or housing) sometimes compete with environmental justice, and have you explored approaches that address environmental justice while also advancing those other priorities?

### Question 4:

What topics or issues related to public health would you like to learn more about during our next virtual session?

# Report Back to the Group



# Next Sessions – Wednesdays at 12!

- **May 20** – Parks as a Driver to Improve Public Health
- **July 22** - Community Engagement in Action



# Session Survey

**Take our survey to join the giveaway!**

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat.





# Thank you!

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Since 1972, TPT has protected 6 million acres of public lands, streams, wetlands, trails, schoolyards, and local outdoor spaces to meet the needs of public lands and private lands, and to increase use of public lands.

To learn more, visit [tpt.org](http://tpt.org).