VISION TO IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Developing Community Resilience Projects from Local to Watershed Scale

A guide for community-based organizations and jurisdictions to develop community-informed, funding-ready projects for addressing community resilience to climate hazards using nature-based solutions.

Project Partners

County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability and Resilience
BluePoint Planning
Climate Resilient Communities (CRC)

Community Engagement Partners

Climate Resilient Communities (CRC)
Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy, and Services (CARAS)

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Overview

The Vision to Implementation Guide is intended to help jurisdictions and community-based organizations (CBOs) collaboratively develop funding-ready resilience projects. The Guide outlines five key steps to conceptualize a project with the knowledge and lived experiences of residents in the community where it will be implemented. Projects developed with the Guide will prioritize nature-based solutions in concert with more conventional "gray" solutions, which typically rely on built or engineered infrastructure like concrete seawalls or levees.

The County of Santa Clara, in partnership with BluePoint Planning and Climate Resilient Communities (CRC), created this Guide and the associated resources listed below to address climate-related flooding and extreme heat. The project's watershed-level approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of natural systems as well as communities within the County. This approach helps focus investments in the most vulnerable communities, while building capacity to address climate hazards at the local- and County-wide scale. The engagement approach was piloted in the City of Gilroy and the resulting Vision to Implementation Plan and Engagement Summary are available on the [Climate Collaborative website](#).

Who should use this?

This document provides guidance for how jurisdictions and CBOs can effectively partner to improve transparency, collaboration, and engagement. Specific considerations for jurisdictions and CBOs are included in the instructions for each step.

- **Jurisdictions** should use this as guidance for engaging with CBOs and to ensure that projects are developed with community input.

- **CBOs** should use this Guide to identify community priorities and concerns, resulting in community-led development of potential project concepts.
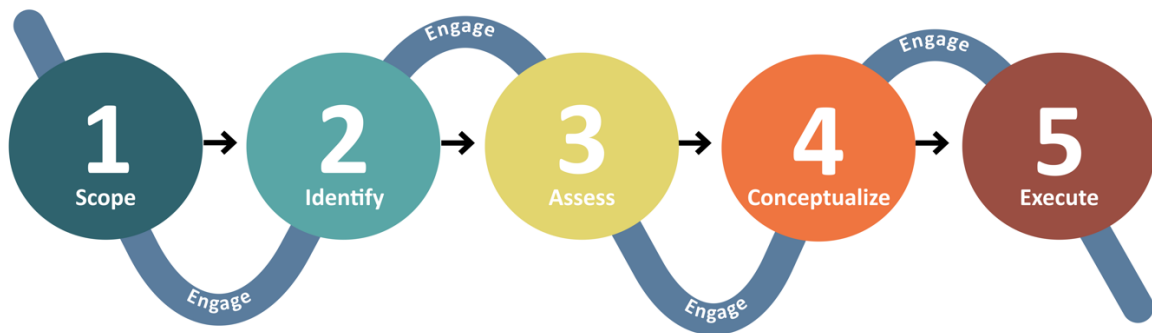
Resources

This Guide utilizes several unique resources to identify the best locations to implement nature-based solutions and educate community members about potential solutions.

- The **Resilience Project Mapping Tool** is an online hazard and vulnerability mapping tool created in tandem with the Vision to Implementation Guide that shows priority areas for resilience projects, called "High-Value Intervention Areas" (HVIAs). HVIAs combine social vulnerability data and climate hazard risk data. The mapping tool shows HVIAs across Santa Clara County, as well as community assets, such as schools and community centers, that teams can harness when developing a nature-based solution project.

- The **Nature-based Solutions Cards** are accessible, bilingual educational cards that give a high-level overview of eight nature-based solutions relevant to climate hazards in Santa Clara County. Use the cards throughout your engagement process to help community members build an understanding of possible nature-based solutions for the project areas.

Implementation Guide (5 Steps)

The Vision to Implementation Guide

The Guide will assist you through a five-step process for developing a community-informed, funding-ready climate resilience project using nature-based solutions.

1 Scope → **2** Identify → **3** Assess → **4** Conceptualize → **5** Execute

Engage

Overview

The Vision to Implementation Guide ensures that technical expertise, community priorities, and equitable engagement are prioritized throughout the five key steps for project implementation: Scope, Identify, Assess, Conceptualize, and Execute.

- **Step 1: Scope**: Establish clear project boundaries by identifying the places most impacted by hazards and social vulnerabilities, using the [Resilience Project Mapping Tool](#) and community input. Develop an understanding of the problems that the community faces and set the project goals and purpose.

- **Step 2: Identify**: Determine an initial set of nature-based and hybrid solutions, combining green infrastructure with traditional "gray" interventions to address both immediate and long-term hazards. Identify possible locations for projects in the community using the Resilience Project Mapping Tool.

- **Step 3: Assess**: Integrate technical data with community feedback to prioritize projects and nature-based solutions from your initial set that would deliver the greatest impact for the community's most at-risk populations. Assess the project areas and solutions using the [Multi-Benefit Criteria](#) to ensure the project goals are met.

- **Step 4: Conceptualize**: Combine the data and feedback gathered in the first three steps of the project to facilitate the co-design of site-specific concepts, ensuring that each intervention is tailored to the unique needs and assets of each location.

- **Step 5: Execute:** Identify a diverse array of potential funding sources and solidify the collaborative team structure necessary to finalize the project plan and construct the project.

The Community Engagement Process

Community engagement is embedded in the five-step process through a series of workshops. Community engagement workshops should be led by a CBO or community partner and aligned with the first three steps of the Guide. The community engagement workshop structures are a guide and are not prescriptive. Thus, adapt the workshop structures outlined in Steps 1–3 to best meet your community's needs.

The workshops are multi-purpose:

- Engage and inform community members in the resilience planning process.
- Build an understanding of community priorities to incorporate into the final project concept.
- Facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and partnership between public agencies, local governments, and communities.

Coordinate your community engagement with relevant public agencies to ensure workshops are not conducted in isolation. Typical stakeholders to consider including in the process are city and county departments, regional agencies, utilities, school districts, and faith- and community-based organizations. Coordination and collaboration with local governments is critical to identifying solutions, building trust, and succeeding in the Guide's process.

More details on the community engagement structure can be found beneath each step.

Best Practices

To ensure that the engagement process is effective and grounded in equity and accessibility, follow the best practices below in your engagement activities:

- **Language**: Make all engagement events and materials available in English and any other widely spoken languages in the community being engaged.
- **Outreach**: Coordinate with existing outreach channels, both across the jurisdiction's various departments and with other public agencies and organizations serving the community, to increase reach and impact.
- **Tools**: Utilize all tools and resources available, in addition to the outreach and data tools within the Vision to Implementation Guide (Resilience Project Mapping Tool, Nature Based Solutions Catalog & Vision Cards, Multi-Benefit Assessment Tool). Use other resources, like [Cal-Adapt](#) or localized data sources, to increase accuracy and community understanding.
- **Inclusivity of Ideas**: Be inclusive of all ideas and concerns from the community. The community may prioritize topics not directly related to the engagement focus. Include these ideas in the final implementation plan, as there is often funding available for multiple different project types and topics.
- **Public Agency Involvement**: Inform public agencies of upcoming engagement events. Invite representatives from public agencies to attend engagement events to build community trust.

Review the Engagement Summary to learn more about CRC's engagement process, outcomes, and lessons learned from the Gilroy Pilot Project.

Step 1: Scope

Understand the problem, scope the project scale and location, and set project goals.

Begin your project by engaging with community members to understand their lived experiences with climate impacts. To better understand these experiences, conduct research on local environmental justice history and issues, including redlining, development policies, and other aspects of relevant cultural contexts and historical inequities. This process will start to identify areas where the community is most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Next, create a clear, specific problem statement, incorporating community and stakeholder input and technical data from the Resilience Project Mapping Tool. Use this tool to explore the project area, as shown in Figure 1, identifying the areas in the community that are both socially vulnerable and impacted by climate hazards (called High Value Intervention Areas on the mapping tool).

- **Example Problem Statement**: Gilroy's most flood-prone neighborhoods and public spaces adversely impact the local community.

Then, set the goals for the project to narrow the scope of possible locations and identify the community's priorities and values. Review the project goals periodically to ensure they are being met and included in the project planning.

- **Jurisdictions**: Use the mapping tool to identify jurisdictional boundaries and potential areas of overlap that will require additional coordination and collaboration.
- **CBOs**: Use this step to identify communities' top concerns, priorities, and questions that will guide the development of the project plan.
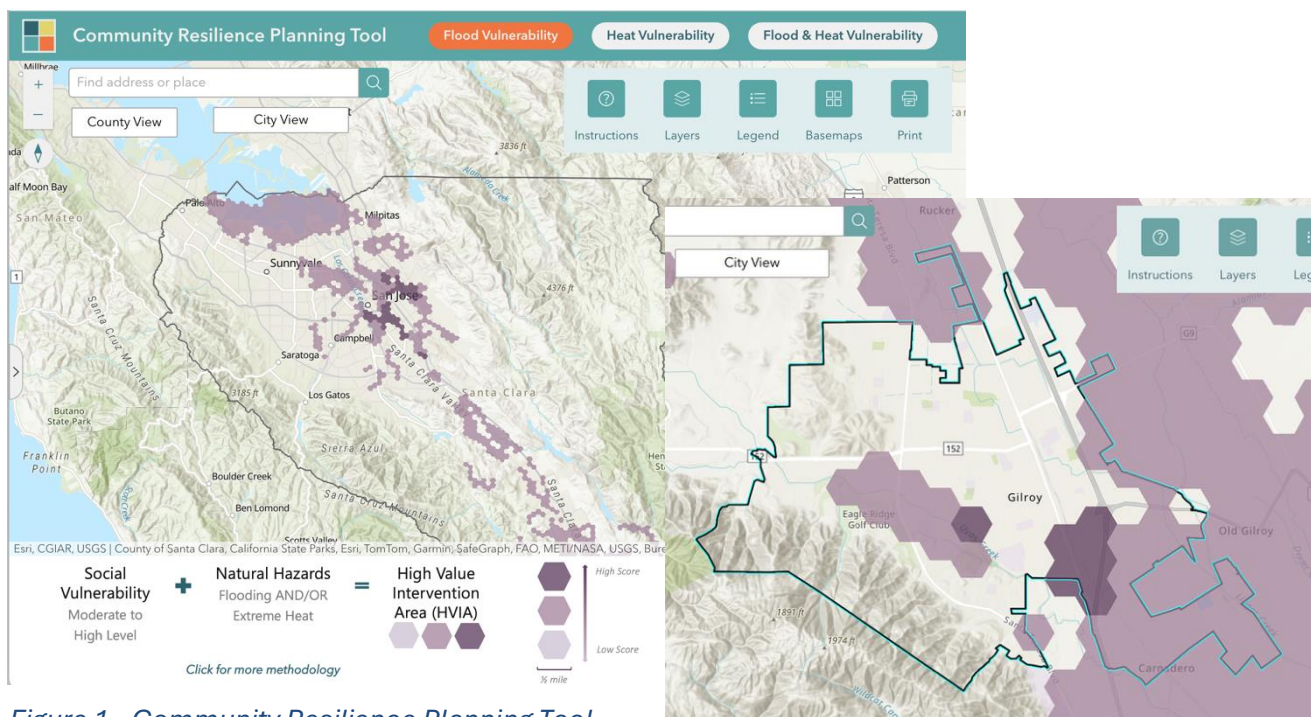

Figure 1 - Community Resilience Planning Tool

Step 1 Community Engagement Structure

1. Introduction to Community Vulnerability Workshop Series (Concerns, Priorities, and Goals).
   Objectives include:

   a) Introduce project overview, objectives, and session flow.

   b) Understand community concerns, priorities, and goals.

   c) Gather feedback on the proposed approach.

2. Identify Areas of High Priority (Data and Maps) and Gather Community Feedback.
   Objectives include:

   a) Present data on relevant high-value priority areas.

   b) Gather community feedback on the data.

   c) Identify missing information and data gaps.

   d) Refine priority areas based on feedback.

Step 1 Outcomes

- Community-informed problem statement
- Project scale and general location
- Project goals and vision

Step 2: Identify

Identify specific locations and opportunities for implementing nature-based solutions.

First, explore potential nature-based and hybrid solutions in the scoped project areas, combining green infrastructure with traditional "gray" interventions to address both immediate and long-term climate hazard risks. Use educational tools, such as the Nature-Based Solutions Vision Cards (Figure 2) and the Resilience Solutions Catalog on the Climate Collaborative website (Figure 3), to inform community members on the types of solutions for addressing the identified issues.
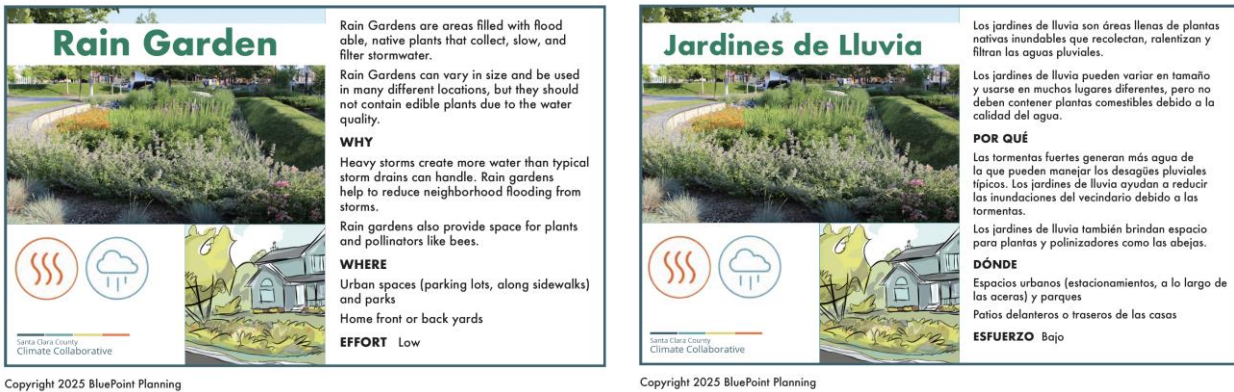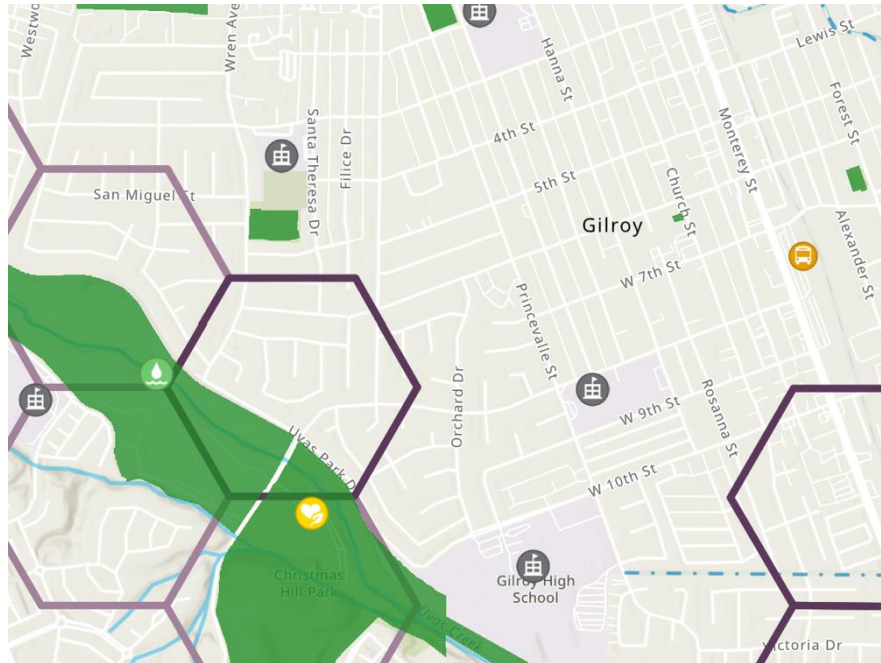

Figure 2 - Nature-based Solutions Cards in English and Spanish

Figure 3 - Nature-based Solutions Catalog

Next, identify key opportunity areas in the scoped project areas using the Resilience Project Mapping Tool that can be harnessed to ensure projects have community support. Opportunity areas include schools, community centers, transit stations, parks, and existing and planned resilience projects from regional agencies where multiple community benefits can be achieved by leveraging existing natural and built infrastructure (Figure 4).

Finally, identify potential locations within the general project area where nature-based solutions would be the most impactful, incorporating information from the Solutions Catalog and opportunity areas from the mapping tool, as well as community priorities from Step 1.

Figure 4 - Zoomed in view of Gilroy, CA, with opportunity areas identified with icons

- **Jurisdictions**: Use this step to identify current and planned projects that could impact or inform the planning process.

- **CBOs**: Work with the community to identify existing relationships and community-supported locations to leverage to support the project.

Step 2 Community Engagement Structure

This is a key engagement step, where community members can further weigh in on their lived experiences and priorities for addressing climate hazards in their community.

1. Roundtable Discussion for Nature-based Solutions.
   Objectives include:
   a) Develop an understanding of nature-based solutions.
   b) Explore opportunity areas and leveraging natural and built infrastructure.
   c) Potential locations for solutions identified.

Step 2 Outcomes

- A set of nature-based solutions for addressing the climate hazards.
- Community members informed about nature-based solutions options.
- Potential locations for nature-based solutions identified.

Step 3: Assess

Assess solutions with the Multi-Benefit Assessment Tool, technical data, and community feedback to determine how well they meet project goals and maximize impact.

Use the [Resilience Project Mapping Tool](#) to identify the High-Value Intervention Areas to prioritize within your project area, as identified in Step 1, and to analyze social vulnerability and hazard risk data. This will ensure that the highest priority is given to projects serving the most at-risk populations and that the strategies and solutions identified in Step 2 will effectively address the hazards.

- **Jurisdictions**: Work with your community members and/or CBOs to identify a list of priority locations in the broader project area to develop into project concepts in Step 4.

- **CBOs**: As you work with community members to identify potential priority locations, make sure to connect with property owners and project implementers, such as the city or regional agencies, to get buy-in and ensure that everyone is aligned with the desired vision.

Next, refine your nature-based solutions list from Step 2. Prioritize solutions that best address the issues and hazards affecting the priority project areas. This should include both community priorities and natural hazards identified through the Resilience Project Mapping Tool.

Then, use the [Multi-Benefit Assessment Worksheet](#) to assess the project areas and potential nature-based solutions for how well they meet multi-benefit criteria, identified on the [Climate Collaborative website](#). An example of this assessment is shown in Figure 5. Meeting the multi-benefit criteria ensures that community-specific considerations and equity are incorporated into the project.

Criteria	Impact (+, 0, –)	Mitigations or changes needed?
Community Benefit. The strategy creates community benefits that improve human health and well-being, community resilience, quality of life, and supports a prosperous and just economy.		
Does the proposed action benefit all residents, and/or does it prioritize the most marginalized or climate-burdened communities?	0	Add additional strategy that benefits elderly residents
Does the proposed action expand access to resources or opportunities that improve community resilience or quality of life?	+	
Does the proposed action remove any barriers that prevent marginalized communities from fully benefitting from the strategy?	+	
Is the community engaged and involved in a culturally responsive manner that builds capacity and provides resources for inclusive decision making?	0	Coordinate with nearby school to engage students and families
Does the strategy directly improve or mitigate issues related to human health and wellness?	-	Consider additional beautification solutions

Figure 5 - Example completed Multi-Benefit Assessment Worksheet

Step 3 Community Engagement Structure

1. Solution Co-Design and Project Prioritization.
   Objectives include:

   a) Ensure solutions align with community needs and resources.

   b) Gather feedback and refine priorities for the project.

Step 3 Outcomes

- Priority areas for the project, vetted by community and relevant stakeholders
- Priority nature-based solutions list
- Completed Multi-Benefit Assessment Worksheet

Step 4: Conceptualize

Develop an overall project concept indicating what types of solutions to employ, any unique needs, and where to site solutions.

Conceptualize how to apply the solutions from your nature-based solutions priority list to the priority project areas, ensuring that each solution is tailored to the unique needs and assets of each location. Complete the project solutions table and map out the project elements on a project concept map. A completed project concept map, as shown in Figure 6, should include a general map of the project area and general locations for implementing the nature-based solutions.

Use the Resilience Solutions Catalog to identify and prioritize project solutions and complete the table below to better understand the resources required for implementation. In the table, classify the solutions according to whether they involve green or gray infrastructure, which will help inform the level of effort needed to implement the solution and the necessary project partners. The greenest solutions consist of vegetation within an ecosystem, while gray solutions are human-built systems like concrete infrastructure. Completing this table will assist you in the completion of Step 5: Execute.

- **Jurisdictions:** Use this step to better understand the feasibility of the potential solutions, determine the best locations, and identify potential costs and resources needed to fully implement the project.

- **CBOs**: Use this step to formalize needs and priorities and create a presentable proposal for future collaboration with jurisdictions and other relevant stakeholders.

Overall, this step involves collaboration between the CBO, community and the relevant jurisdiction to ensure effective project conceptualization.

Strategy/solution	Class of Solutions	Effort	Details
Rain Garden	*Green*	*Low*	*By playground and picnic area*

Step 4 Outcomes
- Project concept map with project border and specific locations for implementing nature-based solutions.

- Completed table with each project element, the category, level of effort, and other relevant details.

Figure 6 - Project Concept Plan at Christmas Hill Park, Gilroy, CA

Step 5: Execute

Identify potential funding sources and determine project partners and team members to execute the project.

The Execute step is a two-fold approach to identify a diverse array of potential funding sources and the technical and public partners necessary to implement the identified project(s). This step will solidify the collaborative structure to ensure project partners effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully work together to finalize the project plan and construct the project.

First, research and identify possible funding sources, including grants, local government partnerships, and opportunities for in-kind and community-driven support, to combine to implement the project.

Once the broad types of stakeholders are identified, complete the Project Partner table (see below) with the specific names and considerations for each potential partner.

- **Jurisdictions**: Include community members and CBOs on the project team, at minimum as co-designers and outreach ambassadors, but potentially as contractors or other types of paid practitioners.
- **CBOs**: Identify the types of stakeholders needed to execute the project, including jurisdictional staff, regional and county agencies, and technical experts.

Next, perform a scan of current and future projects in the area to identify overlap, both internally and at neighboring or otherwise relevant jurisdictions and agencies (especially if there is overlap in jurisdictional boundaries within the scoped project area). Also, identify jurisdictional ownership of each geographic area of the project, such as who the landowner is and who is responsible for streets, utilities, parks, and other elements. By evaluating existing projects and resources, you can ensure your project is both unique and strategically aligned with nearby, relevant efforts.

Identifying Project Funding

Resources to identify funding include the [BayCAN Funding Tracker](#). Potential funding categories:

- Grants (State agency, philanthropic, local)
- Direct funding (State agency, philanthropic, local)
- Matching funds
- Fundraising
- Canvassing
- Individual donor recruitment
- Private/ corporate donations
- Rebates

Fund	Category	Type(s) of Projects Funded	Amount Available	Considerations
Ex: Valley Water Creekside Neighbor Rebate Program	*Rebate*	*Creek Maintenance Projects*	*$150,000 for construction and permit costs*	*For private landowners*

Identifying Project Partners

Potential partner types:

- Jurisdictions

- Cities, counties, regional agencies, special districts, school districts

- Professional Contractors

- Water, civil, and other engineers, construction firms, landscape architects

- Community & Organizations

- CBOs, community members, local non-profits, faith-based institutions, direct service providers, etc.

Partner Name	Partner Type	Project Role	Considerations
Ex: Valley Water	*Regional Agency*	*Project management*	*Already has identified area as a priority*

Step 5 Outcomes

- Completed table of possible funding sources for each element of the project.

- Completed table of team members and special considerations needed for each type.

Moving Forward

After completing the five steps, you will have a completed Vision to Implementation Plan. Use the information in your Plan to solicit funding and involve partners to move to the next step of designing and building the project.

For questions on the Vision to Implementation Guide, please visit the [Guide webpage](#) on the Santa Clara Climate Collaborative website. Direct further questions to the County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability and Resilience, sustainability@ceo.sccgov.org.