



Local
Government
Commission

Leaders for Livable Communities

2021 MID- YEAR IMPACT REPORT



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1

THE LGC CONNECTION.....2

THE LGC APPROACH.....3

LGC'S IMPACT.....4

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY.....5 - 8

HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN.....9 - 12

NATIONAL SERVICE.....13 - 14

WATER.....15 - 17

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....18

CONTACT.....19

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Local Government Commission (LGC) is on the cusp of commemorating four decades of inspiring, connecting, and cultivating local elected officials in the field of smart growth, and despite an ongoing global pandemic, LGC has expanded our programs to support leaders for livable communities. In 2021 we, like so many businesses and families, adapted to the economic and public health changes to support local leaders and position communities to be more resilient coming out of the crisis.

LGC produced 7 fact sheets to guide local governments towards a more resilient recovery, supported 15 cities with community design solutions, connected more than 10,000 leaders, provided over 400 hours of implementation support for the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and contributed 187,602 hours in capacity building support for communities through our CivicSpark AmeriCorps program.



"Equity has been a core focus for LGC this year"

Equity has been a core focus for LGC this year— we are implementing an “Embedding Equity in Adaptation Initiative” through the Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation creating a space for practitioners to discuss challenges and share promising practices for centering adaptation efforts in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are training a cohort of 21 community leaders to build foundational skills for advancing climate equity initiatives through the Partners Advancing Climate Equity pilot program, and we used a Racial Equity Planning Grant to assess and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in our CivicSpark program.

We have also spent the year advocating for and supporting a resilient recovery through projects that:

- Prioritize equity and environmental justice.
- Support climate protection, public health, and wellness by investing in equitable infill housing; transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure; and urban greening.
- Invest in resilient, modern communications and energy infrastructure.
- Advance green economic development initiatives.
- Support natural and working lands.
- Stop investment in maladaptive projects and programs.



Additionally, LGC is looking at the next chapter and assessing how we can best support our members. Recognizing the unique role LGC can play in advancing ambitious policies that support transformative leadership across housing, transportation, climate change, resource conservation, and equity— we’ve hired a policy director to give a stronger voice to our members and keep our network better informed of legislative changes.

We’ve also added a Director of Development and Communications and we hired a marketing firm to update our branding and help us connect with and serve more communities. Finally, we are working with a diversity equity and inclusion firm to help us improve our internal processes and external programs. These investments will strengthen the foundation of LGC and improve how we inspire, cultivate, and create meaningful change for livable communities.

Kate Meis Wright, Executive Director

THE LGC CONNECTION



“They have the reputation of being the go-to entity and they attract a lot of folks that have clout and reach.”

“LGC’s gift is to bring a community’s vision to life and help counties find resources to make them happen.”



“They give birth to change agents.”



LGC APPROACH

With roots in California and a national reputation, LGC offers inspiration, information, and partnership for local and regional champions dedicated to building thriving communities that integrate civic engagement with environmental, social and economic priorities. We affect change through:

Implementing Solutions

LGC has an extensive track record partnering with local communities as a technical assistance provider to design projects, engage stakeholders, and implement solutions that advance community livability and resiliency.



Connecting Leaders

LGC is a unique forum for local leaders to share experiences, build their network, and learn new strategies for creating livable communities. LGC offers conferences, training forums, and resources that grow local knowledge for creating livable communities and help build a cadre of leaders throughout the state with a local presence and state and national influence.

Advancing Policy

LGC works on behalf of local leaders to advance regulatory and legislative actions that address key community design, climate change, energy, water, and national service imperatives. LGC maintains partnerships with key regional, state, and federal agencies and is called upon regularly to provide livable communities expertise.

LGC'S IMPACT

Implementing Solutions



13

MILLION+ RESIDENTS

live in areas of California where Civic Spark's 93 placements are building local government capacity

Connecting Leaders



10K

+ LEADERS

connected through coalition work, projects, community events & LGC's resources



187K

HOURS = \$6 MILLION

Civic Spark fellows contributed over \$6 million to local government capacity building with more than 187,600 hours of service.



\$1.2 MILLION

5 CITIES = 114,529 RESIDENTS

Caltrans planning grant funding raised for 5 communities will impact 114,529 CA residents



15 CITIES

382,239 RESIDENTS

impacted by Community Design projects LGC is implementing

Advancing Policy

37




LETTERS WRITTEN

Including 33 support letters, 1 opposition letter, and 3 budget letters

400+

HOURS



of technical assistance and educational resources to help implement the CA Sustainable Groundwater Management Act



\$20 MILLION

provided outreach and technical assistance to under-resourced communities, with 20 million awarded to 21 nonprofits, local governments, transit agencies, and Native American tribal governments to develop shared mobility projects through the Clean Mobility Options Voucher Pilot Program (CMO)

BILLS TRACKED



103

Through the CA Assembly & Senate




NEW PANDEMIC FACT SHEETS

7

to guide communities towards a resilient recovery

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY



[The Embedding Equity in Adaptation Initiative](#), implemented through the [Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation](#) (ARCCA), launched a series of three peer learning circles, organized by different scales of action (organization, network, community), to create space for practitioners to discuss challenges and share promising practices for centering adaptation efforts in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY

LGC's climate change and energy team have focused the beginning of 2021 on capacity building to help California communities meet the converging crises of worsening climate change impacts, historic and ongoing inequities, and pandemic recovery. Extreme heatwaves, severe drought conditions, and wildfires have already begun to impact communities this year and local jurisdictions are being pushed to the limit, without adequate resources to adapt to these impacts, address community needs, advance climate and energy goals related to building and transportation electrification, and more. By providing educational opportunities, skills-focused training, and platforms for knowledge exchange, LGC is helping local jurisdictions and organizations build capacity to rise to these challenges.

LGC's climate change and energy capacity-building programs and initiatives reached over 1,100 participants in the first half of 2021.

The [Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative](#) (CRC) is one of LGC'S climate change and energy capacity-building programs. In 2021 they began forming working groups to leverage the collective knowledge of its membership and unite around two priority themes - Extreme Heat and Building Electrification - to achieve shared goals for the region

Partners Advancing Climate Equity

Through the [Partners Advancing Climate Equity](#) pilot program, LGC is training a cohort of 21 community leaders to build foundational skills for advancing climate equity initiatives. LGC is providing targeted guidance and mentorship to community leaders to create comprehensive community needs assessments that explore their community's vision for social equity and climate resilience, community assets, relationships, power dynamics, and more.



"This has been a great experience; awesome peers and excellent trainers and facilitators have expanded my way of thinking outside of my community to all of the other communities like mine. I will be taking all these skills into practice in my future projects and community work."
- PACE Cohort Member

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY (CONTINUED...)

The [California Climate & Energy Collaborative](#), a new program modeled after the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative, began planning for the 12th Annual California Climate and Energy Forum, which will be held virtually August 3-19 and focus on Transforming Tomorrow Together: Weaving recovery, equity, and public health into local energy and climate work.

The 2021 [California Adaptation Forum](#) launched in June with a kickoff plenary on A Reason for Hope. The overall forum will be focused on The Grand Adaptation Challenge featuring a series of interactive workshops through October on Advancing Equitable Adaptation, Integrated Planning for Holistic Solutions, and Catalyzing Meaningful Adaptation Action.

As part of [Resilient SLO](#), LGC hosted two community events that centered on building capacity for local resilience and reached over 80 community members - Stories of a Resilient SLO on January 28th and Re-Energizing SLO: Building an Energy Resilient Future on May 13th. LGC also conducted a comprehensive, in-depth policy audit for local staff to support future capacity building and coordination efforts.

Story of Resilience

“ *Some lessons are harsher than others, but we learn to pick-up the pieces and put them back together again.* ”

In 1995 San Luis Obispo County experienced one of the largest storms and flood events in its history. At the time, my mom and dad owned the concessions (store and boat rentals) at the Santa Margarita Lake Marina. The flood waters rose so high the entire building was under water. The cables that held the dock with all of the boats snapped. As the boats drifted and disappeared from view, I watched my dad in the pouring rain - with no help and just his two hands - hold on to the cables and try to secure them so the dock wouldn't float away. After the flooding, we assessed the damage and everything in the store was destroyed.

All of the food, equipment, and hundreds of polaroids that my dad displayed of people with their prize catches over the years swirled around the store like a tsunami in a fish bowl. Everything was soaked and littered on the floor. When it was safe to go back out on the water he went fishing for his boats (20 aluminum boats and one pontoon boat) and was able to bring them all back in after a very long and arduous day.

Nature is the ultimate teacher. Some lessons are harsher than others, but we learn to pick-up the pieces and put them back together again. After we opened for business again, I remember helping my dad pin up new polaroids of people grinning from ear to ear with their catches of the day - huge catfish, bass, trout and occasionally the elusive striped bass. My dad would always say work smarter not harder. This philosophy served him well and his story is one of many that demonstrates the power of resiliency. ”

Submitted by: Jessica, SLO Non-profit Advisor

<https://www.lgc.org/resilient-slo/>

Numerous additional member forums, webinars, and working group meetings were hosted by LGC's coalition programs - ARCCA, CRC, and the [Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition](#) (LGSEC) to foster knowledge exchange, relationship building, and collaboration with over 350 participants.

LGC also developed new resources to increase and streamline access to information that can support communities in advancing their climate and energy efforts.

- Two research briefs as a part of a Coping with Crises series. The first on [Maintaining Sustainability Staff](#) and the second on [Transitioning Tomorrow's Buildings](#).
- A [database of local best practices and case studies](#) to help local jurisdictions pursue their community's energy and climate goals.
- A [funding resource library](#) that features funding opportunities, as well as best practices for leveraging both internal and external funding sources, to help communities identify active grants and solicitations for climate and energy projects.
- A [legislative tracker](#) for adaptation bills was introduced in the 2020-2021 legislative session to help practitioners track legislative updates.

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY (CONTINUED...)



State policy engagement was another area of focus in the first half of 2021. LGC's climate change and energy team engaged in AB-897 developments, which would require regional climate networks to develop regional climate adaptation action plans, and the state budgeting process to advocate for strategic and necessary investments in local adaptation planning, coordination, and implementation. LGC worked with ARCCA members to develop a set of [Legislative Principles for Climate Adaptation](#) and organized [a group of support letters](#) to advocate for climate adaptation funding, signed by a broad coalition of 91 public agencies and organizations.

The team also engaged in various regulatory proceedings through LGSEC. CPUC staff reached out to LGSEC representatives to provide input on the "Value of Resiliency" as part of the Microgrid Proceeding (R.19-09-009). As a result, LGSEC responded by sending an informal letter and held a call with LGSEC's Microgrid Working Group and CPUC staff to discuss how local governments define resiliency. LGSEC has filed additional comments on the Transportation Electrification Proceeding (R. 18-12-006) and the Energy Efficiency Proceeding (R.13-11-005).

PARTNERS



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY COALITION**



HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN



\$1.2 Million was raised for five jurisdictions – Colfax, Pico Rivera, Corcoran, Reedley, and Dunsmuir – that LGC will begin assisting in early 2022.

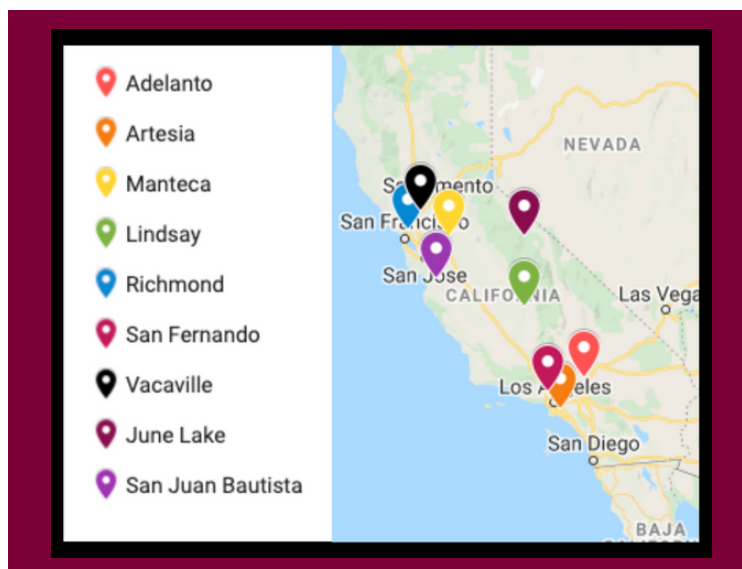
HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN

Local Plan Development

In 2021 thus far, LGC's Community Design Team has partnered with communities around the state to conduct local visioning, planning, and implementation of solutions for equitable and sustainable transportation, housing, placemaking, downtown, and neighborhood revitalization.

Communities and planning efforts our team is leading or supporting include:

- City of Adelanto Safe Routes to School Plan
- City of Artesia Active Transportation Plan
- City of Manteca Downtown Transit Center Connectivity and Enhancement Plan
- City of Lindsay West Hermosa Street Corridor and Neighborhood Enhancement Plan
- City of Richmond Greenway Gap Closure and Connectivity Study
- City of San Fernando Safe and Active Streets Implementation Plan
- City of San Juan Bautista Active Transportation and Community Connectivity Plan
- City of Vacaville Downtown Specific Plan
- Town of June Lake (Mono County) Loop Active Transportation Plan



The team raised over \$1.7 Million in Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants for these projects, enabling us to fund local community-based organizations to assist with outreach and engagement and to procure multi-disciplinary consultant teams to produce the plans.

Additionally, \$1.2 Million was raised for five jurisdictions – Colfax, Pico Rivera, Corcoran, Reedley, and Dunsmuir – that LGC will begin assisting in early 2022.

Technical Assistance

For the last 20 years, the Community Design Team has helped underserved communities identify and access funding for local planning and infrastructure improvements that better community health and sustainability.

In the last five years, the team has provided support to over 40 communities to apply for \$138 million in funding, with \$78 million awarded to date. This type of support is now more critical than ever as localities grapple with the crippling health disparities and the economic and social equity impacts of the global Coronavirus pandemic.

With support from the state, regional, and foundation grants, LGC is helping communities conduct visioning, build capacity, and develop projects and partnerships to pursue strategies and dollars for implementation. Highlights include:

Clean Mobility Options Voucher Pilot Program

LGC is in the second year of implementing the California Air Resources Board's Clean Mobility Options Voucher Pilot Program that funds shared mobility projects serving under-resourced communities. As part of a team led by CALSTART that includes the Shared-Use Mobility Center, LGC supports the program's design, conducts outreach and engagement, and provides technical assistance to help communities develop and implement projects. Twenty million dollars was awarded in 2021 to nonprofits, local governments, transit agencies, and Native American tribal governments (up to \$1 million each) to develop and launch zero-emission mobility projects, such as on-demand shuttles and micro transit, electric vehicle carsharing, bike-sharing, scooter-sharing, carpooling, vanpooling, and ride-on-demand services. There will be a second funding cycle in 2022.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN (CONTINUED...)



total of 454 submitted, but more dollars are being added to the program this summer to fund additional projects). We are continuing to provide capacity-building support to communities to gear up for the next round of ATP grants and other funding opportunities.

[Fundingresource.org](http://www.fundingresource.org)

LGC's funding navigation and technical assistance program (www.fundingresource.org) provides another avenue through which the Community Design Team and staff from the Water and Energy and Climate teams help under-served communities engage stakeholders and residents, assess project readiness, interpret grant guidelines and understand requirements, and identify steps needed to define, frame and clarify proposals for competitive applications. Our funding platform and direct assistance support local leaders in navigating the complex landscape of sustainable transportation, affordable housing, urban greening, and water resources management to identify viable funding sources best suited for their local needs and develop projects to achieve the greatest community benefit. To date in 2021, we've prepared successful Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grants for five jurisdictions totaling \$1.2 million. We're working with four others on a variety of efforts such as safe routes to school walk audits and follow-up reports in Madera to help the City identify projects for the next round of ATP grants and other funding resources.

SACOG Rural Main Streets Technical Assistance Program

LGC worked with seven communities on behalf of the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Rural Main Street Technical Assistance Program to develop strategies and pursue funding to transform downtowns and key corridors in the region into more livable, walkable, and economically successful environments. In 2021 we led a pop-up temporary conversion of an intersection to help Placer County staff, elected leaders, and residents identify strategies and resources to calm traffic and create a pedestrian-friendly environment in the unincorporated community of Meadow Vista. We also conducted a workshop on complete streets and an interactive presentation on housing types and densities to inform strategies and changes as part of the town's general plan update. Finally, following our Main Street visioning workshop for the town of Colfax, we wrote a successful \$211,000 Caltrans Sustainable Communities Planning grant to develop the initial design concepts into a full-fledged plan for implementation.

Active Transportation Program Technical Assistance

LGC has been an Active Transportation Program (ATP) technical assistance provider on behalf of Caltrans since 2015. ATP awards hundreds of millions of dollars every two years for projects that improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, connectivity, access, and comfort. We are leading a team that includes Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Fehr and Peers. We assisted eleven cities, counties, and tribes with training webinars, project scoping, and application development support, which resulted in the submission of 7 grant applications in the most recent cycle. Two have been awarded so far for a total of \$10.6 million (only 50 applications were initially funded out of a



LGC, CivicSpark, County staff, and community volunteers at Meadow Vista pop-up demonstration

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND FACT SHEETS

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

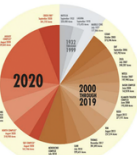
Resilient Watersheds and Fire Management



California is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic during the second-worst megadrought in the past 1,200 years.¹ Simultaneously, 2020 was named the largest wildfire season recorded in California's modern history and included the first "big fire" – the August Complex fire which burned more than 1 million acres.²

The drought-fire-flood cycle. Drought and fire intensification are intrinsically linked (see graphic on page 2). Drought increases the risk while wildfires limit and impair our water supplies. Drying of vegetation from drought creates more fuel for fires. Fire reduces forest carbon sequestration, therefore releasing more greenhouse gases, causing an increase in temperatures. With increased temperatures, more moisture evaporates from land and lakes, rivers and other bodies of water. These watersheds are additionally impaired because fire erodes the landscape, allowing more runoff and debris into our water supplies. In a post-fire landscape, vegetation crucial for groundwater recharge can take years to regrow.

With the pandemic complicating and stressing resource management and emergency response, capacity and priorities, a pause in forest-management approaches, particularly controlled burns, increases our current vulnerability and leaves Californians in a heightened state of risk. Agencies at all levels of government must develop strategies to contend with the multi-threat challenges that Californians are experiencing now and will continue to experience in the years to come.



In 2020, five of California's six largest fires in modern history burned simultaneously.



April 2021

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

Water Accessibility and COVID Lessons for Resilience



Shutoff moratorium: Helping customers keep the water on after the pandemic

In recent decades a dire combination of environmental, economic, and social forces have eroded California – drought, fire and flood, insufficient affordable housing, inequality and racial unrest. A global health pandemic and the economic instability that followed. Address these is another looming crisis that may restrict access to water for millions of California households, many who have never faced shutoffs before. This crisis does not stem from water scarcity but from missed wastewater bills that customers struggle to pay.

The pandemic exacerbated many already existing problems about inequity in education, housing and income. The difficulty for water providers to cover costs associated with delivering water to customers in the effort to prevent public health during the pandemic demonstrates how California's water delivery system is "locally brittle." This means that many water agencies have difficulty generating enough revenue to cover their operating expenses during economic downturns. That, plus a problem where drought restrictions are in place, is expected later this year.

Furthermore, the pandemic has exacerbated financial problems for small water systems long before the pandemic.

To understand how and why our water-delivery system is brittle, we must first understand how water is paid for and provided in California. Water is defined as a "public good" so households don't pay for water treatment and delivery.

Even under the best circumstances, water agencies – especially the smaller ones who purchase water from other agencies – have a thin profit margin. As a result, it is a monumental task for the average water provider to build up large financial reserves, especially as costs increase due to aging infrastructure and climate-change impacts. This leaves water providers vulnerable when customers can't make cash pay for their water service.



May 2021

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

Reimagining Our Streets

"The streets and cities we see on the other side of the pandemic will be different from the ones we knew a few short months ago. As city and transportation leaders, our job is not to return to the inequitable, dangerous, unsustainable patterns of the past, but to help shape a better future. The streets we create today will provide the foundation for our recovery for years to come."

— "Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery," National Association of City Officials and Global Designing Cities Initiative



The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us of the centrality and potential of streets to create safe, healthy and vital places for active transportation, commercial and social activity and community expression.

In this transition and beyond, local governments can calm streets and increase the amount of outdoor space available to help businesses and neighborhoods recover and prosper.

Cities and counties can help lead the way:

- Rearrange streets to slow traffic and create more space for walking, biking and outdoor activity.
- Allow flexibility with clear, simple procedures for the use of public streets and sidewalks for physically distanced commercial activity and services.
- Allow flexibility and relax rules governing the use of private outdoor spaces for physically distanced commercial activity and services.
- Provide resources and services to facilitate and support these outdoor activities for individual businesses, neighborhoods and commercial districts.



June 2021

With funding from The California Endowment, LGC is providing best practices, technical assistance and policy advocacy to support low-income communities across California and achieve health equity and resilience through COVID-19 recovery.

We've created the [Pandemic Recovery and Beyond](#) factsheet series on local government responses, lessons learned and innovative practices to inform the "new normal" and future resiliency strategies. Topics include reimagining our streets and public spaces, invigorating public transit and shared mobility, capitalizing on opportunities and addressing challenges with telework and access to broadband, advancing resilient watershed and fire smart planning, sustaining access to affordable, clean drinking water, and the critical value of maintaining local government staff devoted to energy, environmental and climate-focused sustainability.

LGC developed resilient recovery principles and is working with a coalition, including former state secretaries and nonprofit leaders, to encourage state leaders to invest stimulus and infrastructure dollars in projects that support a resilient and equitable recovery. We also submitted letters to legislators encouraging more investment in housing, infill infrastructure grants, SGMA implementation and climate adaptation work.

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

Building Broadband Access for Stronger Communities



In today's world, broadband access is critical to strengthening a community's resilience against COVID impacts, and creating post-pandemic prosperity. It is not, however, fully developed nor equally available and affordable to everybody. Residents in rural areas, for example, are less likely than their urban counterparts to have access to sufficient Internet service providers, Internet-accessible devices, and online services and functions for government, banking, education, healthcare and transportation.

Even in tech-pioneering California, the digital divide persists for both rural communities and low-income neighborhoods. Less than one-half (47%) of the state's total population has the same Internet access as urban areas, according to a California Public Utilities Commission report. Moreover, while about 57% of Californians use broadband, only 57% have access to broadband that operates at the benchmark speed of 100 Mbps. Almost one-half of rural households and over 20% of that household lack broadband that meets that benchmark.

More than 118,000 households were estimated to be unmet or underserved (connected to the Internet at home only with a maximum speed of 10 Mbps). These "underserved" residents don't have access to the full range of digital technologies and therefore have fewer opportunities to benefit from California's economic prosperity.

The pandemic has made even more clear the need for reliable, fast and affordable Internet connectivity is crucial for a community's ability to provide education, business, health and governmental services.

Approximately 19 million Americans – 6% of the population – still lack access to fixed broadband services at threshold speeds.

In rural areas, nearly 1/4th of the population – 14.5 million people – lack access to this service.

See LGC's Broadband Deployment Report for more data on broadband services nationally. Click for more info about California broadband demographics.



June 2021

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

Telework and the Future of Economic and Social Prosperity



Benefits of Maintaining Telework Policies

Amid statewide shelter-in-place orders during the pandemic, businesses and organizations have significantly changed their operations, including implementing telework policies at an unprecedented scale. Telework measures have driven economic, equity and environmental benefits for organizations, employees and local governments.

A survey by Global Workplace Analytics found 71% of office-based workers were working from home for 4-6 weeks in the early months of the pandemic, compared to only 5% before the start of the crisis. Theoretically, based on their job responsibilities, work tasks, customer relationships and necessary on-site interactions, it is possible that as many as nearly 75 million U.S. employees could work from home – more than half of the on-site employed workforce.

Along with this economic shift, increased telework promises to be instrumental in the fight against climate change. Although not all of which relies on telework (100% would require the end of the COVID-19 shutdown are directly tied to teleworking policies), researchers at the UK Davis Institute for Future Energy Consumer Needs and Behavior found that, after California's statewide stay-at-home order in March and mid-April 2020, residential electricity demand fell 7.9% with a corresponding drop in greenhouse levels. The annual environmental impact of half-time remote work for those who both work remotely and have a comparable job would be the greenhouse-gas equivalent of taking the entire New York state workforce off the road. There is a massive upside and cheaper way to reduce your carbon footprint than by reducing consumer travel.

As the economy re-emerges, 25-30% of the workforce will be working at home multiple days a week by the end of 2021.

Before the crisis, surveys repeatedly showed 80% of employees want to work from home at least some of the time.



June 2021

PANDEMIC RECOVERY AND BEYOND

Resilient Transit, Shared Mobility



Transit and the Future of Resilient, Equitable Communities

Transit systems are essential for many people's health, and a cornerstone to sustainable and equitable communities. Public transit often serves as the main mode of transportation for the study area in low-income households that do not own a car, a need that is comparable whether located in a predominantly urban or rural county.

Even for residents who do have a car, high-quality transit can serve as a convenient, affordable or simply preferable way to get around.

In California, all of these different modes take a total of approximately 1.27 billion passenger trips a year (pre-pandemic), supported by more than 200 transit service providers statewide. In addition to providing work, the strength of a transit system can be measured by their financial capacity. California's annual budget for public transit prior to the pandemic was several billion dollars, with the majority of funding for operations coming from fare revenues – which were reportedly hit by the pandemic's shutdown. Local cities and local riders will ultimately be crucial for transit's future as we move into this period of recovery and beyond.

As the pandemic has made all too clear our transportation networks and our community's health are inextricably intertwined. Policies and investments are needed at all levels to ensure that critical transit and shared-mobility services are maintained and enhanced to support economic opportunities, affordable and equitable mobility systems, and California's push for improving air quality and reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.



June 2021



Maintaining Sustainability Staff
Considerations for Local Governments Managing Concomitant Crises



Part of the "Coping with Local Crises" Series



We must take steps to preserve transit systems, provide safe and healthy systems, and improve the reach, quality and reliability of these mobility services.

Strong public transit is key to building healthier, more resilient cities and cannot be more equitable urban economies.

NATIONAL SERVICE



Jennifer (Jenny) Solis is one of 59 Fellows serving in the first Climate Action Corps cohort. She is serving alongside University of Redlands students and children in local elementary schools, whose very future depends on the success of the direct climate action taken today. California has the lowest urban tree canopy in the nation and many Redlands communities have less than 10% coverage. The trees Jennifer and the youth she serves plant today will be the clean air they breathe tomorrow, the protection they need from rising temperatures, and the beauty and health their communities deserve. Jennifer's work to educate the next generation of changemakers will be felt long after her service year ends.

NATIONAL SERVICE

It is an exciting time to be addressing California's pressing climate and resilience needs through National Service. Momentum is building for a more focused and equitable approach to these critical issues and CivicSpark is playing a key role in driving the conversation forward. Governor Newsom recently proposed a historic state-level investment of over \$4 million for climate action service. On the federal level, anticipation continues to grow about plans for a national Civilian Climate Corps. These big picture initiatives carry with them the promise of helping local governments to tackle the issues they have lacked the capacity to address for years.

As the 20-21 service year winds down, 137 Fellows are wrapping up 235 projects serving 93 California communities from as far south as the City of Encinitas to as far north as Humboldt County. These projects represent 187,602 total hours served at a value of over \$6 million to local governments.*



Second-year Fellow Annie Merritt, served the city of West Sacramento through her placement with the Delta Stewardship Council. Annie supported the Council's Delta Adapts Initiative, which includes a climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy for the Delta and Suisun Marsh. Her work has been critical in supporting the city's effort to implement SB 379, which requires an updated general plan to incorporate climate change vulnerability. Annie's work was instrumental in the development of climate change vulnerability assessments and strategies, which impact a significant source of water, food and habitat for California.

In partnership with Bay Area Community Resources and California Volunteers, LGC launched the inaugural Governor's Initiative California Climate Action Corps. This program expands the current CivicSpark capacity-building model by providing direct climate action such as urban greening, food waste recovery, and wildfire resilience to five frontline California communities - Los Angeles, Fresno, Stockton, San Jose and Redlands. With the program completing on August 26th, we have already seen 8,106 pounds of food waste diverted and 6,035 trees planted, with more wildfire prevention and mitigation impact numbers expected soon.

Preparations for the 21-22 service year are well underway and excitement is building. Our eighth CivicSpark cohort will be our largest yet and we will begin to see the implementation of outcomes from this year's Racial Equity Planning Grant funded by California Volunteers. The lessons learned from this process, combined with the programmatic expertise developed since the program began in 2014, will inform the planned expansion of our program outside of California for the future. Finishing touches are being put on a planning grant with Serve Washington and conversations with other states are well underway.

WATER

An aerial photograph of a valley. In the foreground, there is a town with various buildings and roads. The middle ground shows a wide, flat valley floor. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a clear blue sky. A large, dark grey circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

In partnership with the Groundwater Exchange and the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Roundtable of Regions, we launched an educational webinar series to bring vital information, data, tools, resources, and best practices to groundwater and IRWM practitioners and empower them to better manage California's water resources. Topics included coordinated project development, groundwater recharge, water quality management, collaboration, and GSP review. Many of the webinars reached over 200 individuals.

WATER


LGC's water team is focused on advancing sustainability and equity and on how California's water policies are implemented and how its watersheds are managed. This is even more pressing as we enter the most severe drought in California history. This year has been centered on implementing the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As local governments grapple with how to ensure their groundwater supplies meet the needs of their community and sustain their local economy, LGC has provided nearly 400 professional hours of technical assistance and educational resources to help them do so.

We continue to work with the unincorporated disadvantaged community of [Borrego Springs](#) to ensure better community representation of their ~2,000 year-round and ~4,000 part-time residents. Thanks in part to our engagement, the Watermaster Board created a community representative position. We are also assisting the Solano GSA Collaborative with environmental justice elements of their Groundwater Sustainability Plan. We worked with the Solano Resources Conservation District to create an [educational video](#) to inform the basin's nearly 450,000 community members about the region's groundwater.

This year, we convened four topic-specific working groups of the NGO Groundwater Collaborative's and engaged nearly 80 members on the following subjects: Environmental Flows, Bulletin 118, (the state's official publication on groundwater conditions and basin boundaries), Small and BIPOC Farmers, and Water/Land-Use Integration group.

Through the Environmental Flows group, we are connecting concerned citizens and local activists with experts across the state so they can better understand what to advocate for in local Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to ensure local rivers and streams don't run dry and ecosystems survive. We worked with the Bulletin 118 group to inform the Department of Water Resources statewide groundwater report and ensure Tribal and community concerns are addressed. The Small and BIPOC Farmers group is analyzing GSPs to identify where plans can improve protections for small farmers, and how we can advocate for greater engagement of small-scale farmers in GSP development.

The Water/Land-Use group is focussing on Madera County as a pilot study of land repurposing incentives and groundwater recharge to prevent drinking water wells from going dry and farms from going out of business. This year the Collaborative hosted 7 Stanford students to support data collection, mapping, GSP analysis, and research to advance the working group efforts. These workgroups are helping us reach a broader and more diverse audience of community members impacted by groundwater management decisions.



"The webinar this afternoon was great! Lots of really good information...Great group of panelists too... I was thinking about the fact that the future of these important water and societal issues is in the hands of diverse groups of young women (and men too of course) like all of you - with the leadership skills, knowledge, and passion to help solve all the challenges we face!"

In partnership with the Groundwater Exchange and the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Roundtable of Regions, we launched an educational webinar series to bring vital information, data, tools, resources, and best practices to groundwater and IRWM practitioners and empower them to better manage California's water resources. Topics included coordinated project development, groundwater recharge, water quality management, collaboration, and GSP review. Many of the webinars reached over 200 individuals.

WATER (CONTINUED...)

As part of our Pandemic Recovery and Beyond series, the water team developed two factsheets. “Resilient Watershed & Fire Management” helps local governments understand the socio-economic and environmental implications of California’s natural drought/fire/flood cycle; the challenges of fire resilience; the importance of fuel load reduction; and the need for intentional coordination across jurisdictions and government levels. “Water Accessibility & COVID Lessons for Resilience” addresses the effects of water utility shutoffs on California households as well as the impacts of unpaid water bills on water agencies. It also highlights state actions to address water challenges exacerbated by the pandemic and provides a series of Legislative recommendations.



Mock-up of the Crawford Park Rain Garden
in Woodland, CA

Worsening drought conditions require local communities to more effectively manage their stormwater. In many cases, drought conditions actually exacerbate flooding and contamination from stormwater runoff. LGC’s water team has been helping communities in Elk Grove and Woodland design and construct multi-benefit stormwater features in local parks. The Elk Grove Nature Park will not only treat stormwater flowing into Laguna Creek but will also provide outdoor recreation opportunities for community members with developmental and physical disabilities. The rain garden at Crawford Park in Woodland will not only prevent stormwater pollution from entering Willow Slough or nearby irrigation canals used by local farmers but also create important pollinator habitat to benefit local farms and improve the property values of homes surrounding the park.

In addition to our groundwater work in Borrego Springs, we are helping the Borrego Valley Stewardship Council (BVSC) develop its organizational structure, governance, bylaws, and incorporation. LGC developed a new partnership with SEED Consulting to provide additional pro-bono capacity-building services to the group. In the absence of any local governing authority, the BVSC has emerged as a local convener and problem-solver for the community. During the pandemic, we supported the BVSC in transitioning to virtual community engagement by co-hosting virtual community forums on topics of concern, launching an email newsletter, and updating the BVSC website with relevant local information. Now, we are assisting the BVSC to coordinate with the Community Sponsor Group and Watermaster Board to develop a shared vision for the community’s future and ensure this vision is incorporated into upcoming revisions to the county general plan and community plan.

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