Gilroy, California Pilot: Vision to Implementation Plan

A Vision to Implementation Plan developed with community partners in Gilroy, California

Project Partners

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

Engagement Partners

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

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Overview

The Gilroy Vision to Implementation Plan lays out a funding-ready flooding resilience project using nature-based solutions. It was created through a series of four pilot community workshops and shows priority locations in Gilroy that community members identified as priority flooding intervention areas. The Plan was developed with community partners in Gilroy, including Climate Resilient Communities (CRC) and the Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy, and Services (CARAS). The County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability and Resilience and BluePoint Planning helped strategize and build the project deliverables.

The Gilroy Pilot Project was developed in conjunction with the Vision to Implementation Guide described below. The Pilot workshops informed the development of the Guide and so do not match exactly with the format of the Guide. Nonetheless, this Pilot demonstrates how robust, community-led engagement can serve as a vital pathway for integrating technical data and mapping tools into the real concerns and priorities of residents.

To learn more about the Gilroy Pilot or the Vision to Implementation Guide, please visit the Guide webpage on the Santa Clara Climate Collaborative website. Direct further questions to the Santa Clara County Sustainability Office, sustainability@ceo.sccgov.org.

Vision to Implementation Guide (5 Steps)

The Vision to Implementation Guide ensures that technical expertise, community priorities, and equitable engagement are prioritized throughout the five key steps:

- **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.

Step 1: Scope

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

During this step, the Gilroy Pilot Project team scoped a specific problem and initial resilience project goals. The team incorporated data from the online Resilience Project Mapping Tool to scope vulnerable neighborhoods and public spaces most impacted by climate hazards. Additionally, the team engaged with the Gilroy community through workshops in partnership with CARAS, described below, to understand the lived experiences of residents. These workshops helped refine the scale and location of local flood risk identified in the mapping tool.

Community Engagement Details:

Climate Resilient Communities (CRC) led equity-centered community engagement workshops that ensured Gilroy residents were thoughtfully engaged, trusted, and tapped into with an organization that has provided for them before: CARAS. Each workshop included an opportunity for participants to receive childcare, a meal, and a $50 stipend to respect their time and sacrifice to be in these meetings, sharing their experiences with us. The CRC team ensured that all engagement materials and risk summaries were available in both English and Spanish, and that workshops were accessible to all, regardless of income or background.

During Step 1, CRC and CARAS held two community workshops. The first workshop focused on understanding the community's concerns, priorities, and desired outcomes for a flood resilience project. This workshop also introduced the project overview, objectives, and session flow for the following workshops. The second workshop further refined the scope of the project by reviewing and gathering community feedback on the High-Value Intervention Areas for resilience projects identified in the Resilience Project Mapping Tool.

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

Project Goals and Vision: Reduce the frequency and impact of flooding, enhance public safety, increase biodiversity, and ensure that all solutions reflect the unique needs and values of the community in a flood resilience project incorporating nature-based solutions.

Step 2: Identify

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

During Step 2, the Pilot Project team worked closely with Gilroy residents to identify a comprehensive set of nature-based solutions. To explore solution options, the team incorporated information from the Resilience Solutions Catalog webpage, the Resilience Project Mapping Tool, and community priorities from Step 1. The team also recognized the value of practical hybrid approaches, integrating these green solutions with traditional "gray" infrastructure, such as improved drainage systems, maintenance teams, and enhanced lighting and safety features. Additionally, the team worked with the community during workshops to identify opportunity areas in Gilroy for implementing the nature-based and hybrid solutions.

Community Engagement Details:

Community workshops were central to Step 2, providing a forum for residents to voice their experiences and priorities. Specifically, CRC and CARAS led a community workshop focused on developing community understanding of nature-based solutions and assessing opportunity areas. The team used educational tools, such as the Nature-based Solutions Vision Cards and the Solutions Catalog on the Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative website, to inform community members on the types of solutions for addressing the identified issues. Residents then highlighted potential locations to use nature-based solutions to make spaces safer and more resilient.

Identified Nature-based Solutions:

- Rain gardens
- Bioswales
- Green streets
- Drought-tolerant landscaping
- Cisterns for water capture
- Extensive tree planting

Potential Solution Locations:

- Christmas Hill Park
- Streets 6 - 10 (Downtown area)
- Animas Park
- El Cerrito Way
- San Isidro Park
- Monterey & Luchessa Intersection
- Miller Park

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.

In this step, the team evaluated each potential solution, considering factors such as flood mitigation capacity, contributions to biodiversity, improvements in safety and accessibility, and the degree of community use and benefit. In the Vision to Implementation Guide, this evaluation is conducted with the Multi-Benefit Assessment Tool. The team also used the Resilience Project Mapping Tool to assess the High-Value Intervention Areas for implementing resilience projects. This data helped refined the opportunity areas list from Step 2.

Assessment was robust and deeply informed by the variety of experiences that residents brought to the table during the workshop series. Each participate offered detailed insights that illuminated the nuance vulnerabilities and strengths specific to Gilroy. The project team's understanding of the local landscape was greatly enriched by resident's dedication to sharing their stories, perspectives, and knowledge in depth.

Community Engagement Details:

Through a Co-Design and Project Prioritization workshop, the team gathered community feedback on priorities, needs, and available resources. This process integrated workshop input with technical and data-driven findings to prioritize locations and project solutions for the Pilot Project. During this four-part workshop series, residents expressed a strong attachment to specific projects and called for clear next steps and timelines toward actualization. This indicates community buy-in that becomes invaluable to project successes.

Priority Locations:

- Christmas Park and San Isidro Park emerged as the top priorities for immediate action, as they are heavily used by families and require major updates to enhance safety and usability.

Priority Solutions:

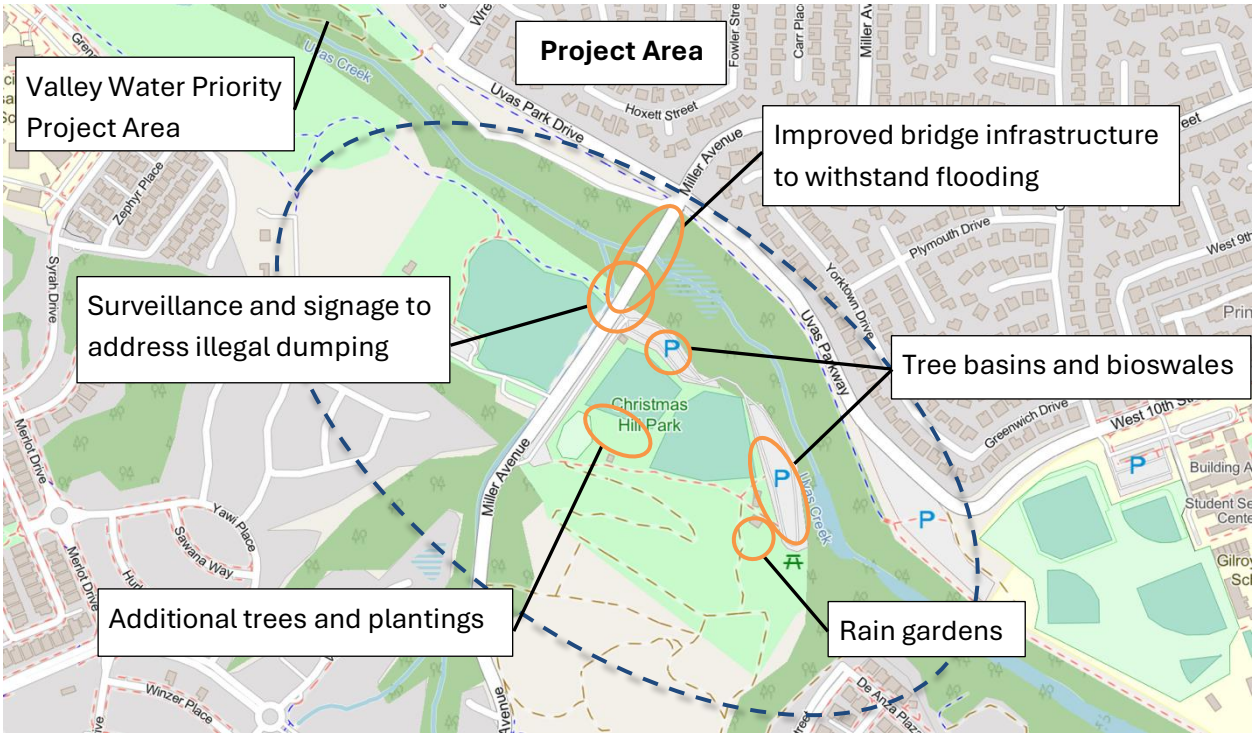
- Rain gardens
- Increased tree planting
- Bioswales
- Recycled water infrastructure and education
- "Sponge park" features for nature discovery
- Improved maintenance and cleaning
- Improved safety and kid-friendly spaces

Step 4: Conceptualize

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

During Step 4, the Pilot Project team conceptualized how to implement the solutions from the nature-based solutions priority list in the different project areas identified in Step 3. By synthesizing technical data and community lived experiences, the team ensured that each concept was tailored to the unique needs and assets of each location. The team developed a concept map of the project area and general locations of the nature-based solutions. This map helps formalize the project concept to use in future proposals and collaboration with jurisdictions.

Project Map, Christmas Hill Park:



Solution Table:

Strategy/solution	Category of Solutions	Effort	Details
Rain garden	Green	Low	By playground and picnic area
Trees & plantings	Green	Medium	
Tree basins & bioswales	Green	Medium	In parking lots
Improved bridge infrastructure	Gray	High	Help withstand creek flooding
Surveillance & signage	Gray	Low-Medium	Help address illegal dumping in area

Step 5: Execute

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

The Gilroy Pilot Project did not provide a comprehensive scope or funding to support Step 5 in its ideal function of identifying project partners and funding. However, community members engaged in this Pilot Project are commitment to moving it forward and collaborating with the City and other jurisdictional to support tangible flooding solutions in Gilroy. The tables below for identifying funding and partners are initial drafts; further engagement and research is needed to finalize the lists.

Identifying Project Funding

Fund	Category	Type(s) of Projects Funded	Amount Available	Considerations
Prop 4	Bond	Infrastructure for Climate Vulnerabilities, capital projects	TBD	
SC4 Resilience Fund	Fund	SC4 projects, NBS	TBD	

Identifying Project Partners

Partner Name	Partner Type	Project Role	Considerations
City of Gilroy	City Government	Permitting	Might have current or planned resilience projects to align with.
Other CBOs who work directly with residents based on niche demographics	CBO	Community engagement	
Santa Clara Valley Water	Regional Agency	Project management	Already has identified area as a priority
San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI)	Consultant / Research	Technical expertise	Might have current or planned resilience projects to align with.

The project concept developed in Step 4 needs city buy-in and local resources for implementation that combines community priorities, data-driven research and design feasibility. Therefore, the next step is to further engage with the City of Gilroy to learn if there are existing efforts that this flood resilience project concept could inform or align with to lead to.