



COUNTY CURRENTS

Santa Cruz County

www.santacruzcounty.us

Fall 2019

A publication of the County Administrative Office Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrator



A Vision Takes Shape

Chanticleer Park and LEO's Haven, the County's first all-inclusive playground, are speeding toward completion! The project is a public-private partnership between the County and a group of generous donors and dedicated supporters, led by the Potts family of Watsonville, whose three children, Lauren, Evelyn and Oliver, are the inspiration for the award-winning playground design. Completion is expected by the end of the year.



Since its inception in 1978, Santa Cruz County's inclusionary housing law, Measure J, has provided hundreds of units of affordable housing.

If you are a large family interested in the home at right, [click here](#) for income and other requirements. Applications due Oct. 7, 2019.



In This Issue

- Chanticleer Park Update
- Workforce Study
- County Nabs Awards
- Street Smarts Safety Campaign Launched
- Felton Library Progress
- ePlans Rollout
- Senior Tax Breaks

Roberts to helm Friends of SC County Parks

Mariah Roberts will take the helm of Friends of Santa Cruz County Parks as executive director, the non-profit organization has announced. Mariah is an educator and designer raising her children in Live Oak. She spent 12 years working throughout the South Bay and Central Coast counties as an education consultant designing, building and implementing unique play spaces and curricula for children with developmental and medical needs.



More recently, in her position as executive director of the Chanticleer Park Neighbors Association, she collaboratively created a unique and groundbreaking public-private partnership with the County of Santa Cruz and grassroots volunteer organizations to design, fund and build the County's first, fully-inclusive playground, LEO's Haven at Chanticleer Park, which is slated to open this winter.

"Mariah Roberts is one of those igniters in the community. She strives to make everyone around her better with her grit and determination. She is a true community organizer, and our department can't wait to start making a difference together with Friends of Santa Cruz County Parks in our mutual goal of bringing beauty and recreation to our community through vibrant county parks," said Jeff Gaffney, Director of Santa Cruz County Parks.

Friends of Santa Cruz County Parks is a long established non-profit with a mission to preserve, protect, improve and promote the use of Santa Cruz County parks and open spaces. For more go to countyparkfriends.org.

Friends of Santa Cruz County Parks is a long established non-profit with a mission to preserve, protect, improve and promote the use of Santa Cruz County parks and open spaces. For more go to countyparkfriends.org.

County programs take home three prestigious awards

The County of Santa Cruz is pleased to receive statewide recognition for innovative programs to address community behavioral health, the housing crisis and environmental protection. Each year, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) honors innovation and best practices in county government through their Challenge Awards program. This year, Santa Cruz County was honored with a Challenge Award for its Zero Waste Plan, a Merit Award for coordination of the HOPES Team, and a Merit Award for its ADU Toolkit.

"These awards are a validation of the work we've done, and continue to do, to improve the lives of our residents," Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chair Ryan Coonerty said.

The County's [Zero Waste Program](#) won a Challenge Award for its suite of environmental initiatives that has become a model for other counties and has led to statewide change. They include a groundbreaking franchise waste hauler agreement that serves as a foundation for increased waste diversion; expanded outreach and education including school partnerships; new illegal dumping prevention programs; a leadership role in stopping many problematic products at the source including bans on plastic bags and Styrofoam, the first plastic straw ban in the U.S., strict requirements for recyclable and compostable food service ware and a ban on small plastic bottles of personal care products in hotels and motels; and more.

The County's [Homeless Outreach, Proactive Engagement Services](#)

[\(HOPES\) Team](#) won a Merit Award for bringing together new and existing resources to serve homeless individuals using an integrated service model including health and behavioral health providers, crisis services, outreach specialists, veteran providers and criminal justice personnel.

The County's [ADU Toolkit](#) won a Merit Award for empowering residents to be part of the solution to the housing crisis by simplifying and incentivizing permitting processes, building on work by the Board of Su-



pervisors to dramatically expand the use of accessory dwelling units to meet community housing needs. The Toolkit includes a GIS tool for property owners to see if they are eligible to build ADUs; an online fee and construction cost estimator; a cash flow estimator tool; how-to guides; links to online resources and more. The program also includes a forgivable loan program to create more affordable units, and an elimination of building fees for smaller units to promote affordable-by-design housing.

 COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ DEPARTMENT OF **PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND CULTURAL SERVICES**



2019-20 PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Looking for something to do? Whether you're 8 or 85, the '19-'20 Parks Department's Activity Guide is a great place to start. [Check it out!](#)

Study documents local workforce

Santa Cruz County's 2019 State of the Workforce report shows strong potential for labor market and economic growth in established and emerging sectors, as well as continuing challenges including the housing crisis, workforce preparedness and geographic disparities.

According to the study by Beacon Economics, an independent research and consulting firm, wages are continuing to rise and post-secondary educational attainment exceeds other Central Coast counties. Local unemployment continues to hover near historic lows. However, Santa Cruz County remains a net exporter of workforce talent, with residents age 25 and above who commute out-of-county earning significantly higher wages than counterparts who work closer to home.

Despite some positive indicators, local conditions continue to impact the local labor market. The percentage of persons age 25 to 29 who remain living with parents or in-laws jumped from 17 percent in 2012 to 46 percent in 2017. And fewer than one-third of the County's high school graduates are deemed prepared according to the College/Career Indicator, far below the statewide average of 42 percent.

"Without action, the housing crisis will continue to pose significant challenges for Santa Cruz County's workforce, particularly younger workers and those in the earlier phases of their careers," said Adam Fowler, Beacon Economics' Director of Research.

My Santa Cruz County



We're always updating our award-winning My Santa Cruz County app to give you access to anytime, anywhere services. [Download My Santa Cruz County](#) for iTunes and Google Play.



Strawberries are king, but raspberries made huge strides in 2018.

2018 Crop Report Highlights Bounce-Back Year for Local Ag

Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commission Juan Hidalgo is pleased to release the 2019 Santa Cruz County Crop Report, showing a 17 percent increase in crop values over the previous year.

While strawberries remain the top crop in acres under production, yield and overall value, raspberries saw a 52 percent increase in the value over the previous year. Raspberries' total value of \$168,465,000 is the highest figure ever recorded in Santa Cruz County, and was second behind strawberries' overall value of \$220,653,000.

"Weather, low prices and oversupply impacted our local growers in 2017, making for a challenging year," Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commission Juan Hidalgo said. "We're happy to see significant rebound in 2018 to put us back in line with historic growth in crop values. It demonstrates how resilient our local industry is."

The County's overall 2018 crop value of \$683,012,000 represents a \$101,812,000 million increase over 2017.

In addition to the dramatic rise in raspberry values, nursery stock (plants including landscape and indoor) rose 85 percent over the prior year, to \$83,204,000. The value of apple stocks also rose significantly to \$23,705,000, a 74 percent increase, likely due to favorable weather patterns.

Santa Cruz County is also a key incubator of the organic farming movement, and organic farming continues playing a significant role in overall crop production. With 140 registered organic growers in Santa Cruz County, the total value of organic crops was \$126,376,000, a 16 percent increase over the prior year.

The mission of the Santa Cruz County Department of Agriculture is to serve the public's interest by ensuring equity in the marketplace, promoting and protecting agriculture, assuring environmental quality, and protecting the health, safety and welfare of Santa Cruz County's citizens. The department includes the agricultural division, weights and measures division, and mosquito and vector control division.



Looking for employment?
www.santacruzcountyjobs.com





On Sept. 24th, the Board of Supervisors heard an update on the Thrive by Three initiative, which included an audience with Kris Perry (left), deputy secretary for early childhood development of the California Health and Human Services Agency. Recognizing that the first three years of life provide the greatest opportunity to impact the lives of local youth, the Board established the Thrive by Three (TbT) initiative in 2017. In November, TbT will host its first graduating class for the Nurse Family Partnership, one of four TbT home-visiting programs.



The Felton Library and Nature Discovery Park, a first-of-its-kind project in California, is taking shape. The Board of Supervisors recently approved naming a bridge over Bull Creek the Bridge to Nature. Completion is expected early in 2020. Visit www.feltonlibraryfriends.org for more information.



THE 2020 CENSUS IS NEAR!

The Census guides billions of dollars in spending on hospitals, schools, emergency services, roads and more, and each person missed will cost our community thousands of dollars over the next decade. Participation helps your community! The Census is only a few questions long, and your answers are protected by federal law. The Census Bureau cannot share your information with anyone, including other federal agencies. [Click here for more.](#)

Street Smarts campaign launches countywide

City initiative joined by County, other cities in effort to increase road safety

Building on a successful public safety campaign established by the City of Santa Cruz, a coalition of educational and local government partners is pleased to announce the expansion of the Street Smarts campaign throughout Santa Cruz County.

By raising awareness and promoting safe practices among drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, the Street Smarts campaign aims to reduce the number of traffic-related crashes and injuries throughout Santa Cruz County. Joining the City of Santa Cruz in the 2019 campaign are the County of Santa Cruz, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and the cities of Watsonville, Scotts Valley and Capitola.

"The County is pleased to join this important effort to protect all users of our transportation network," said Matt Machado, Santa Cruz County Public Works Director. "Whether in cities or in rural parts of the county, distractions imperil pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike, and everyone deserve our respect and full attention."



Street Smarts

While alternative transportation modes are popular throughout Santa Cruz County, more needs to be done to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety according to data from the California Office of Traffic Safety, with the County experiencing a high number of cyclist- and pedestrian-involved traffic collisions.

Street Smarts public education efforts target traffic-related problems that include unsafe speed and distracted driving. Pertinent messages that also raise awareness of the most vulnerable road users are being posted on banners in front of City of Santa Cruz elementary and middle schools, followed by placement near Santa Cruz County schools.

The bilingual ad campaign includes awareness advertising within Santa Cruz Metro buses and on City of Santa Cruz vehicles. Street Smarts banners are also being installed on street poles in downtown Santa Cruz as well as along Water Street, Soquel Avenue and other locations.

Through a yearlong media campaign, messages are also being delivered in print and through radio broadcast and social media. UC Santa Cruz will continue delivering Street Smarts messaging to students, faculty and staff throughout their campus community.

For more information on the family bike ride and the regional campaign, visit www.cityofsantacruz.com/StreetSmarts.

Did you know? Low-income seniors can postpone property taxes, but must act quickly

Eligible low-income elderly, blind or disabled California homeowners can postpone property taxes under a new state-funded program, which for the first time now includes taxes on manufactured homes.

Between October 1 and February 10, eligible property owners may apply for property tax postponements, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, the State will fund \$13 million in loan postponement under the Property Tax Postponement Program (PTP Program).

To be eligible for this program, you must:

- Be at least 62 years of age or blind, or have a disability;
- Own and occupy the home as your primary place of residence;
- Have a total household income of \$35,500 or less;
- Have at least 40 percent equity in the home; and
- Meet other requirements.

Administered by the State Controller's Office, PTP Program allows eligible homeowners the option to postpone payment of property taxes on their primary residence. The program makes current-year property tax payments on behalf of approved applicants directly to the Santa Cruz County Tax Collector's Office.

Approved accounts accrue simple interest with the State at a rate of 7% per year, and a lien is recorded against the property until accounts are paid in full. Repayment becomes due when the homeowner moves, sells, transfers title, defaults, refinances, dies or obtains a reverse mortgage.

Additional information and eligibility requirements can be found on the California State Controller's website at sco.ca.gov/ardtax_prop_tax_postponement.html.

You may also contact the State Controller's team by phone at (800) 952-5661 or by e-mail to postponement@sco.ca.gov.

Meet Your Supervisor

[John Leopold](#)

District 1 includes Live Oak, Summit Road Soquel and parts of Capitola and Santa Cruz.



[Zach Friend](#)

District 2 includes Aptos, Corralitos, part of Capitola and the South County coast.



[Ryan Coonerty](#)

District 3 includes much of Santa Cruz and the North Coast.



[Greg Caput](#)

District 4 includes most of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley.



[Bruce McPherson](#)

District 5 includes the San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley and parts of Santa Cruz.



Click on each supervisor to learn more about them and their responsibilities, including how to reach them during constituent office hours.

Felton pedestrian signs to help keep local youth safe

Addressing longstanding community concerns, the County of Santa Cruz in conjunction with Caltrans installed new way-finding signs and crosswalk improvements in Felton designed to promote alternative routes to Highway 9 for pedestrians and cyclists.

The signs provide direction for pedestrians and cyclists, including students at the combined San Lorenzo Valley School District campus on the 7500 block of Highway 9, through residential neighborhoods and into downtown Felton while avoiding Highway 9, which has been the subject of ongoing community concerns due to high traffic volume and a lack of infrastructure. The County Public Works Department also recently completed improvements to the crosswalk at Felton Empire Road/Gushee Street/Cooper Street, including restriping and new signs.

"I'd like to thank Caltrans and the County Department of Public Works for working collaboratively to enhance safety for students and other residents," Santa Cruz



County 5th District Supervisor Bruce McPherson said. "This effort demonstrates we can work together to help create a transportation network that works for everyone."

The new signage directs pedestrians away from Highway 9 and over to Felton Empire Road, connecting them with Gushee Street, providing a lower-trafficked alternative to Highway 9, which does not have bike lanes or complete sidewalks.

Residential ePlans implemented

To help facilitate speedier project review and reduce the use of paper, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department has expanded its ePlan program to include residential projects.



Electronic ePlan submittal has been required for commercial projects since January 2018. Since inception, ePlan has been widely utilized

for all permit types large and small including residential, remodels, additions, garages, decks, and more.

Electronic ePlan submittal will now be required for all permits (though it remains optional for Express Plan

Check projects). It's fast, it's easy, it's simple. For additional information, [click here](#).

Quick Guide

Citizens rely on county government for many needed services. Use this handy guide to find who to call, or come find us on the web at: www.santacruzcounty.us.

Main Number
(831) 454-2000

Board of Supervisors
(831) 454-2200

Agricultural Commissioner
(831) 763-8080

Animal Services
(831) 454-7303

Assessor's Office
(831) 454-2002

Benefits
(888) 421-8080

County Clerk/Elections
(831) 454-2060

Economic Development
(831) 454-2728

Environmental Health
(831) 454-2022

Health Services Agency
(831) 454-4800

Parks and Recreation
(831) 454-7900

Planning Department
(831) 454-2580

Public Works
(831) 454-2160

Recycling Information
(831) 454-2333

Sheriff/Coroner
(831) 471-1121
(call 911 if emergency)

Superior Court
(831) 763-8060

Tax Collections
(831) 454-2510