



CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

To: California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Members
From: Erin Curtis, SGC Executive Director
Re: **Executive Director Report to the Council – Oct. 8, 2025**

Staffing Updates

- Nathan Lee (he/they) has been brought on as a Student Assistant to work with the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) team. Nathan is a graduate student in the Environmental Policy and Management program at UC Davis, where he also earned his undergraduate degree.
- Anya Rao has been brought on as a Student Assistant to work with the legal team to support both SGC and the California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI). Anya is in her final year of undergraduate studies at UC Davis, majoring in Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning.
- Alex Schweitzer Kroll has been brought on as a CivicSpark Fellow to support the Energy Investments portfolio. Alex is a recent graduate of the University of New Mexico, earning a bachelor's in economics in May 2025. During undergrad, Alex interned for the Albuquerque Mayor's Office, Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury's D.C. Office, and the nonprofit Think New Mexico. She also studied abroad in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for six months. Each of these experiences solidified a passion for public service and an appreciation for diverse perspectives.
- Jin Zhang (she/her) has joined the Factory-Built Housing Regional Pilot Program team as Program Manager. Jin is a longtime believer of systems-centered change-making. With a Bachelor in Economics from UC Davis and a Master of Urban & Regional Planning from UCLA, she has worked at the intersections of community-economic development and infrastructure recovery with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on its Green Cities Team and with various private/nonprofit entities tackling California's escalating wildfire crisis. Most recently, she was a Planner for SGC's Community Resilience Centers' team, where she helped to fund the planning and development of community-level resilience hubs.

Investment Program Updates

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Marc Caswell, Shep Wilbun, Justin DeWaele, Brianne Logasa, Ella Manashil and California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Staff

- On Aug. 20, the AHSC Program celebrated the groundbreaking of the Downtown Library & Affordable Housing Project in Santa Cruz, CA. The Round 7 project was awarded a total of \$33,502,820 from AHSC and to build 124 affordable homes, a new bus depot, and Santa Cruz Riverwalk pedestrian upgrades.
- On Aug. 26, Marc Caswell participated in a one-day summit hosted by the Nevada/California Indian Housing Association in Sparks, Nevada. Mr. Caswell presented

on the new SGC Tribal Housing Capacity Building Initiatives to more than 30 Tribal housing representatives and engaged in dialogue regarding the program's priorities and timelines.

- On Sept. 10, SGC Staff participated in the HCD Tribal Funding Workshop. Program staff shared how Tribal entities can access AHSC funding, as well as provided a preview on the SGC Tribal Housing Capacity Building Initiatives with more than two dozen Tribal representatives.
- AHSC Round 9 review is ongoing. Program staff sent out Initial Score Letters to applicants the week of Aug. 25. The Interagency Narrative Review wrapped up late September. Final scoring is scheduled to be completed in October. Awards for AHSC Round 9 are set to take place at the December 2025 SGC Council Meeting.

Transformative Climate Communities Program (TCC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Nicole Cartwright, Sarah Newsham, Jess Ison, Chynell Freeman, Noni Ifyefobi, Joyce Tse and Department of Conservation (DOC) Staff

- Staff continue to process advance pay requests and provide assistance to Round 4 and Round 5 grantees as authorized by AB 156 (2022), AB 590 (2023) and AB 3017 (2024). To date, staff have processed eight advance pay requests.
- Staff released Draft Program Guidelines and a Summary of Changes report in anticipation of Proposition 4 funding, including coordination with the Community Resilience Centers and Extreme Heat and Community Resilience programs. Public comment is open until Jan. 2, 2026, and staff will be hosting various engagement opportunities over the next three months in coordination with the Community Resilience Centers Program (CRC).
- Staff have attended several site visits including:
 - Noni Ifyefobi attended the CicLAvia press conference, a partner of the South LA EcoLab Round 4 TCC Implementation Grant. A 6.25-mile route along South Central Ave, marks the 62nd open streets event since 2010.
 - Chynell Freeman attended a partnership meeting with City of Richmond, Richmond Rising partners and the Federal Railroad Administration to discuss project design and implementation coordination.
 - TCC staff attended a site visit with Chicken Ranch Rancheria, and were led through the project area on Chicken Ranch Rancheria Tribal lands and historic Jamestown.
 - Noni Ifyefobi attended the Sovereign Day in Eureka, hosted by our Round 4 Planning Grantee the Hoopa Valley Tribe and Native American Environmental Protection Coalition (NAEPC). The three-day event included family and children's activities, culminating in a fireworks show.

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Shanna Atherton-Bauer DOC and DOC Staff

- The SALC team will present recommendations to award approximately \$124.5 million in funding to four planning grants, eight fee, and 39 easement acquisition grants at the

October Council meeting. SALC staff will also recommend that one additional fee acquisition project be awarded contingent on funds becoming available to cover the full project cost by November 26th. SALC staff will continue recommendations for capacity awards to the December Council.

- SALC Staff have been working on a proposal to change the solicitation process for the Agricultural Conservation Acquisition grant program (conservation easement and fee title purchases). Proposed changes break the required pre-proposal process into two stages and shift the annual application to semi-annual; approximately every six months. This will increase the speed with which applicants receive project eligibility feedback and provide flexibility to submit more fully developed applications. Staff anticipate this will improve readiness of conservation acquisition proposals and project alignment with SALC Program priorities. The public was provided two opportunities in August to review and provide input: at an online workshop and an online Office Hour. Draft materials are currently on SALC's website. These changes are permitted in the approved guidelines and facilitated by a technical amendment approved at the August SGC Council meeting.
- Staff reported one easement closing between Aug. 5 and Sept. 14. This project has conserved 428 acres of grazing land in Tuolumne County.
- Between Aug. 5 and Sept. 14, SALC staff submitted 19 invoices totaling \$2,272,193 to DOC Accounting for payment. This includes two acquisition invoices, payments for associated costs related to acquisition transactions, payments for capacity and project work, and payments for planning work.

Community Resilience Centers (CRC)

Staff: Amar Cid, Anna Jane Jones, Dora Monterroza, Jessica Cervantes and Jin Zhang

- Staff released Draft Round 2 Program Guidelines and a Summary of Changes report in anticipation of proposed Climate Bond (Proposition 4) funding, including coordination with the TCC Program and LCI's Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program. Public comment is open until Jan. 2, 2026, and staff will be hosting various engagement opportunities over the next three months in coordination with TCC.
- In response to grantee feedback collected from the May 2025 CRC Grantee Needs Assessment Survey, staff and the CRC Implementation Technical Assistance Provider team led capacity building trainings for grantees on partnership agreements. Staff continue to process advance pay requests and provide assistance for Round 1 grantees as authorized by AB 590 (2024). To date, staff have submitted three advance pay requests.
- On Sept. 28, Anna Jane Jones participated on a panel at the American Planning Association California Chapter's annual conference. The panel, titled "Ground Me in Resiliency: Community Driven Climate Planning," discussed community designed climate resiliency programs and community engagement best practices from the City of Los Angeles, Yolo County, SGC, and Rise South City.

- On Sept. 10, Dora Monterroza and Jessica Cervantes concluded their participation in the Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity Transformative Leadership Cohort (CCORE TLC), a capacity building training program for California State employees leading racial equity work. This cohort spanned seven months and included virtual and in-person learning sessions that supported staff capacity to continue working on the implementation of CRC's Racial Equity Action Plan.

Community Assistance for Climate Equity (CACE)

Staff: Hoi-Fei Mok, Ena Lupine, Blanca Escobedo, Markie Price and Nancy Cheng

- **Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) Program:** Staff is working with the RCC Implementation Technical Assistance contractor team to plan for the remaining peer learning sessions for RCC grantees and partners. Staff is also planning an in-person RCC Fall Convening Nov. 5-6 in Rancho Cucamonga. This event will bring the grantees together one last time before the end of their grant terms in 2026 to share how they have built capacity in their respective regions and identify strategies to keep the collaboratives active after their grant term ends.
- **Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program:** Grantees from Esselen Tribe of Monterey County and yak tityu tityu yak tilhini Northern Chumash Tribe of San Luis Obispo spoke on a SGC facilitated Tribal panel at the American Planning Association's annual conference in Monterey on Sept. 30. SGC Executive Director and staff joined for site visits to Confederated Villages of Lisjan on Sept. 29 and Esselen Tribe on Oct. 2. The remaining grantee site visits have been scheduled for the week of Oct. 27. All grantees will join for an in-person peer learning session with SGC staff and the Technical Assistance (TA) team in Pala on Nov. 4.
- **BOOST:** SGC sent out the first quarterly newsletter for the Imperial Valley Civic Ecosystem Initiative that will provide updates on state initiatives and their impact on the Imperial Valley and the broader Salton Sea region. This newsletter shared state agency programs, investments, and key milestones with local, state and philanthropic partners to raise awareness of the state's work in the region and opportunities for collaboration and alignment. The newsletter also highlighted program updates from the initiative's implementing partners – the Institute for Local Government and Latino Community Foundation – about their impact on the ground.
- **Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Program:** Staff conducted 10 key informant interviews to inform development of program guidelines and are preparing to start program guideline development. Staff included a "receiving item" in the October Council meeting, which provides an update on this work and a summary of the key informant interviews.
- **Interagency Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Work Group:** The CACE team facilitates a regular interagency work group to share best practices across agencies related to offering technical assistance and capacity building support to California communities. Staff are preparing for the next bimonthly work group meeting on Oct. 16.



Collaborative Policy Initiatives

Health and Equity Program (HEP)

Staff: Hoi-Fei Mok, Fabián Pérez-Gove, Michael Jimenez, Mahima Ali

Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Staff: SGC partners with California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the State of Equity to staff the HiAP Task Force. The Task Force brings together over 30 agencies, departments and commissions to integrate health into programs and policies that advance state priorities.

- **HiAP Task Force hosts quarterly interagency convening.** HEP and HiAP partners will host an in-person HiAP Task Force Quarterly Meeting on Dec. 10, in Sacramento. Planning has begun for this final quarterly convening of 2025, which will feature HiAP's 15-year Anniversary Report and a Recommendations Report for 2026.
- **HEP represents California HiAP Task Force at Pan American Health Organization's (PAHO) Second Meeting of the Expert Group for the Development of a Proposal for Monitoring and Evaluation of Intersectionality (Health in All Policies).** HEP Resilient Communities Program Associate attended a meeting of experts Sep. 10 – 11, 2025. While HEP attended this meeting virtually, the majority of experts convened in person in Bogotá, Colombia. The meeting brought together representatives from over 20 health agencies from around the world to contribute to the development of a framework for monitoring HiAP initiatives.

Natural and Working Lands

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Staff: Sean Kennedy, Camille Frazier, Tessa Salzman and Caleb Swanson

- The ninth California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force meeting occurred Aug. 13 and 14 at Blue Lake Rancheria. Task Force members reviewed and discussed their Draft Report and established subcommittees and working groups to continue refining their recommendations in advance of the October meeting. On Aug. 12, Agricultural Land Equity Initiative (ALEI) staff and Task Force members hosted a Tribal engagement session for regional Tribal leaders and members to provide input on the Draft Report.
- The newly established Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, and Restorative Land subcommittees met virtually in September. Members discussed new ideas and refined language for the Draft Report.
- With support from ALEI staff, the Task Force engaged in an extensive period of community engagement from June through August. Staff are currently synthesizing public comments and feedback from community engagement sessions for Task Force consideration at subcommittee and working group meetings. The Task Force will continue to review and integrate community feedback in future report drafts.
- The interagency review process closed on Aug. 28. ALEI staff are consolidating and anonymizing feedback to share with the Task Force for its consideration.

- The tenth Task Force meeting is scheduled for Oct. 15 and 16 at the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach. The Task Force members will review and discuss the revised draft report and plan final steps to meet the Jan. 1 deadline.

Federal Funding Initiatives

Connecting Communities

Staff: Adrienne Moretz

- **TA:** Connecting Communities is supporting previous SGC grant applicants and awardees to apply to and receive federal grants. The team is supporting communities with executed federal agreements to maintain grant compliance and is sharing available resources more broadly to communities who have submitted federal applications.
- **Catalyst Convenings:** SGC Connecting Communities team, with LCI, are planning for additional Catalyst Convenings across the state in the coming months. The events are a continuation of the commitments made at the 2023 and 2024 Catalyst Conferences. The goals of the Convenings are to:
 - Understand the bioregion and explore specific regional issues
 - Facilitate two-way conversations on climate, land use and energy
 - Enable regions to have space to inform and co-create policies with actionable recommendations
 - Create opportunities for state agencies and program teams to share funding, incentives, opportunities to engage, and other resources available to the region

Energy Investments

Factory-Built Housing (FBH) Pre-Development Pilot Program

Staff: Sean Kennedy and Jin Zhang

- The revised guidelines for the [SGC FBH Regional Pilot Program](#) were released for a 30-day public comment period on Sept. 10. This period will include two public webinars to collect comments and targeted outreach to regional entities to promote the program and collect additional feedback on the guidelines.
- From Sept. 22-26, Deputy Director of Energy Investments, Sean Kennedy, was invited to participate in an immersive social housing field study in Vienna, Austria, organized by the Global Policy Leadership Academy (GPLA). The Field Study is limited to a carefully selected cohort of leaders and professionals from across the country. The Field Study offered valuable insights into Vienna's globally renowned social housing system and the opportunity to connect with fellow leaders advancing innovative housing solutions internationally and across the United States.

Energy Investments

Staff: Sean Kennedy and Mel Moyce

- Energy Policy Specialist Mel Moyce attended the "Securing Funding for Southern California" energy and climate roundtable on Sept. 17 in Los Angeles. Hosted by ICF

International, this event brings together key stakeholders, including Southern California Edison, Southern California Regional Energy Network (SoCal REN), and community choice aggregators (CCAs), to strengthen regional coordination around energy, environmental, and climate initiatives. Participation in this roundtable supports our mission by fostering strategic partnerships, surfacing shared funding priorities, and positioning the organization to better navigate and secure state and federal resources.

News Media Clips

SGC

- [“Oakland starts to restore shuttered Tyrone Carney Park”](#) (Oaklandside, Sept. 29, 2025) The renovations are also being paid for with funding from the California Strategic Growth Council, a state agency that doles out grants to help communities address pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

AHSC

- [“Roundabouts, bike paths and more may be coming to Modesto’s Ninth Street”](#) (Modesto Bee, Sept. 9, 2025) Modesto’s Economic Development Committee approved a \$14.6 million contract on Monday to improve the Ninth Street corridor between Carpenter Road and L Street.

ALETF

- [“How California Is Building More, Faster and Staying Committed to Its Ambitious Climate and Conservation Goals”](#) (SGC, Sept. 23, 2025) Building much-needed homes and conserving more open space? California is leading the charge through its innovative programs and partnerships. As of September 2025, two California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) programs have supported the addition of more than 22,000 affordable homes in climate-friendly communities statewide and the process of conserving more than 240,000 acres of working agricultural land. California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force.
- [“CA Earthworkers Summit Sessions Explore Land Access and Equipment Sharing”](#) (CalCAN, Sept. 29, 2025) Nelson Hawkins, farmer and founder of We Grow Farm in West Sacramento and a founding member of the Ujamaa Farmer Collective, emphasized that land tenure arrangements directly inform on-farm practices. “Those that are leasing land don’t have any incentives to improve the soil health, unless they are there long term.” Doria Robinson, the founder of Urban Tilth, shared about how urban farms in Richmond grew out of relationships with local community members and elected officials. “Urban Tilth was part of a larger political movement. We advocated for an urban agriculture assessment, which led to an urban ag ordinance that made work like ours possible. What we did was political.” Both Hawkins and Robinson serve on the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force. The Task Force is an independent body with staffing support from the Strategic Growth Council that is drafting recommendations to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production



and traditional tribal agricultural uses. The task force has released its draft recommendations, with final recommendations to be released in January of next year.

SALC

- [“YTT Northern Chumash Tribe hopes to reclaim a plot of its ancestral land in Cayucos”](#) (New Times, Sept. 18, 2025) Janice Mackey, from the communications department for the California Department of Conservation, told New Times via email that YTT Northern Chumash has applied for a \$5 million grant through its Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation program that helps fund the purchase of lands to support the cultivation of culturally important foods, medicines, fibers, and dyes, as well as lands used for grazing and conventional agricultural cultivation.
- [“Final Cap-and-Invest Bills Pass with Important Climate Reforms and Secure Farmland Conservation Funding”](#) (CalCAN, Sept. 19, 2025) Senate Bill 840, by incoming Pro Tem Senator Monique Limón, requires a reevaluation of offsets in the Cap-and-Invest Program and establishes a framework for Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) appropriations that ensures stable funding of approximately \$80 million annually for the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) under the umbrella of the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program.
- [“‘Getting forever out of the impossible’: After generations of stewardship, Santa Cruz County ranch stays in Estrada family”](#) (SGC Blog, Sept. 23, 2025) With funding and support from the California Strategic Growth Council’s (SGC) Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (SALC), which is implemented in partnership with California Department of Conservation; the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST); the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust); CAL FIRE; and private donations, the acreage has been protected in perpetuity through a conservation easement(external link).

TCC

- [“CAPK to receive \\$4.6M to provide energy retrofits for low-income homes in SE Bakersfield”](#) (KGET-TV, Sept. 10, 2025) The Bakersfield City Council is slated to approve an agreement with the Community Action Partnership of Kern to help reduce energy costs for several homes in Southeast Bakersfield.
- [“Community Foundations Back a Model to Keep Housing Permanently Affordable”](#) (Inside Philanthropy, Sept. 25, 2025) Most of the funding for Tierras Indígenas comes from the state through California’s Strategic Growth Council’s \$22 million Transformative Climate Communities grant.