



Impact Report 2023

2023 IMPACT

We inspire, equip, connect, and cultivate civic leadership for local innovation and community change.

19
RESOURCES



New reports, tools, webinars, and guides created

600
HOURS

of programming provided to support and inspire local leaders

32

MILLION+ RESIDENTS

live in areas where CivicWell is building local capacity

37K
LEADERS

connected through coalition work, projects, events, and communications

MEETINGS & EVENTS

184

organized to engage communities and move priorities forward

\$126
MILLION AWARDED

Provided outreach and technical assistance to under-resourced communities, with \$126.7M awarded for clean and shared mobility, GHG emissions reduction, local revitalization, and water sustainability projects

NEW
PARTNERSHIPS



We are expanding our technical assistance services and CivicSpark program nationally by partnering with new agencies as a trusted provider

\$65
MILLION

Our advocacy contributed to \$65 million included in the state budget to advance projects that support SGMA implementation

134,262
HOURS

CivicSpark Fellows served over 134k hours in 2023, a value of \$4.98 million

16
BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

We supported 42 bills, 16 of which became law

185
CIVICSPARK FELLOWS

across our 22-23 and 23-24 service years are building local capacity to address resilience issues in CA, CO, and WA

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



Dear CivicWell partners and supporters,

In On the Origin of Species, Charles Darwin famously asserted that it is neither the strongest nor the smartest of the species that survives, but those most adaptable to the changing environment in which they find themselves. As I reflect back on CivicWell's work throughout 2023, I am struck by the many ways the people of CivicWell and our partners have responded to change by evolving.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we see increased demand to bring people together in communities of practice. The California Adaptation Forum convened in person for the first time in five years, the California Climate and Energy Forum reached more leaders than ever before in its 14-year history, and we co-hosted the inaugural Clean Mobility Forum. Collectively, these three conferences alone drew together over 1,350 attendees. Our coalition programs—ARCCA, CRCRC, and LGSEC—gathered new partners to develop strategies for advancing adaptation and sustainable energy priorities. And through Community Design charrettes and workshops, we engaged thousands of residents and elected officials throughout the state.

While we are bringing people together, we are also expanding out. For its tenth cohort, our CivicSpark AmeriCorps program has to date placed 120 Fellows in communities throughout California, Washington, and Colorado. The program itself has evolved, as we anticipate expanding to additional states starting in 2024. The CivicSpark team has grown to include staff with new skill sets and strategically based in states that we plan to grow into in the coming years.

As we look forward to new opportunities, we recommit ourselves to the work we have done for more than 40 years at the vanguard of promoting livability, sustainability, and equity. We continue to provide technical assistance and policy guidance for local leaders and policymakers who are creating more climate-resilient communities in California and beyond. We are partnering with state and federal agencies providing historic levels of community investment through programs like the U.S. Department of Transportation's Thriving Communities and California's Clean Mobility Options.

It continues to be my honor to serve the CivicWell members, staff, Board Members, and partners who provide such dynamic leadership in this field. I look forward to guiding our continued evolution in 2024.

Bernadette Austin

Bernadette Austin
CivicWell CEO

CIVICSPARK



22-23 Colorado Fellows Oceana Haaland and Rachel Ellis during the Cesar Chavez Volunteer Service Day



MOBILIZING CLIMATE LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE NATION

Eighty-seven CivicSpark Fellows completed projects as part of our 9th cohort that ran from September 2022 to August 2023. In September 2023, we launched our 10th service year—our largest cohort yet—with 98 Fellows joining us across California, Colorado, and Washington.

CivicSpark Fellows are working on a variety of projects at local government agencies and nonprofits across these states including climate action plans, energy efficiency projects, transportation analyses, and housing policies.

We are seeing increased demand for Fellows, reflecting the significant capacity challenges our communities face as they address the impacts of climate change. CivicSpark also received a national planning grant this year to explore expansion to new communities. Through our outreach, we are finding incredible value and interest in our program, and hope to launch an expanded program in additional states in the fall of 2024!

[Learn more about our national expansion.](#)

“
We saw a substantial improvement in the scale/reach of Energize Olympia due our Fellow's work to conduct community outreach, coordinate volunteers, and share information about the program. More than 500 community members were engaged on this project due to the efforts of the Fellow.

*Pamela Braff
Director of Climate Programs
City of Olympia, WA*



Jack Anderson

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

City of Redmond, WA

CivicSpark Fellow Jack Anderson supported the City of Redmond with implementation of the City's 2020 Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. Jack implemented the City's sustainability communications strategy, ensuring consistent outreach and creating outreach materials to educate and engage the community and City staff on the City's sustainability efforts.

Jack also spearheaded multiple energy related projects, including establishing equitable rates for City EV chargers and advancing efforts to comply with the Washington State Clean Building Performance Standard.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

Lauren Estrella supported South Bay Cities Council of Governments by conducting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventories for their 15 member cities. This involved relationship building with local governments and communities, creating internal processes for requesting information, and learning methodologies like the ICLEI ClearPath Tool to collect and analyze data.

Lauren continues to serve SBCCOG by building a solid GHG emissions inventory, and will begin comparing the data to the baseline inventory. She is anticipating city reductions in GHG emissions which should inspire local leaders to continue advancing sustainability initiatives.



Lauren Estrella



CivicSpark's support of the Fellow provided perspective and room for knowledge expansion that the Fellow needed in order to effectively complete this work. The scale and reach of sustainability efforts within the County government has grown substantially due to this work.

*Heidi Pruess
Climate and Sustainability Manager, County of Larimer*



CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY



*Hundreds of leaders gathered in Pomona
for the 2023 California Adaptation Forum*



The CivicWell team at the California Adaptation Forum

2023 AT A GLANCE

CivicWell's Climate Change & Energy team was in full swing this year, welcoming three new staff (Julianna DeNike, John Reid, and Tiela Combs), deepening our engagement with California's growing ecosystem of climate and energy practitioners, and expanding technical assistance services to support under-resourced community leaders. Over 3,250 climate leaders from across the state directly participated in CivicWell convenings focused on collective learning, peer knowledge exchange, and coalition building, including the annual CCEC Forum and the 2023 California Adaptation Forum.

Supporting local communities and jurisdictions in navigating and accessing historic State and federal climate investments emerged as a key theme. We provided technical assistance through the Justice40 Initiative, Greenlining the Block, and our [coalition programs](#). We also submitted 11 comment letters to elevate local and regional needs in the State Budget and various state grant programs.

We celebrated the completion of the [San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap](#) and [Empower Procurement](#) projects, as well as the launch of a new project with UC Berkeley and StopWaste focused on accelerating adoption of equitable climate solutions across CA.

NEW RESOURCES

2023 Energy and Climate Adaptation Legislative Fact Sheets

2023 Legislative Update
California's New Energy-Related Laws
Visit leginfo.ca.gov for full legislative information.

2023 Climate Adaptation Legislative Update
Please visit leginfo.ca.gov for additional information.

San Diego Region Coastal Resilience Roadmap



ARCCA Member Meeting - December 1, 2023



ARCCA
Alliance of Regional Collaboratives
for Climate Adaptation

In 2023, ARCCA became an implementing partner with the California Resilience Partnership, which has been critical to building institutional capacity and deepening engagement in California's climate policy and regulatory matters. ARCCA submitted seven comment letters to urge the consideration of local and regional adaptation needs in State policies, programs, and investments while also producing a summary of the Governor's January Proposed Budget and a 2023 Legislative Update to keep adaptation practitioners informed. In addition to organizing learning sessions and monthly Adaptation Policy Working Group meetings, ARCCA convened two member meetings to discuss climate investments, capacity building, policy implementation, and more.

The value of being an ARCCA Affiliate Member is the significant network of collaborators and leaders for climate resilience planning. Access to this network in an intentional and direct environment provides CSU with opportunities to learn from state leadership on upcoming legislation and initiatives, activate local and regional partnerships for innovative solutions, and drive awareness of opportunities for external funding to support climate adaptation investments.

Tamara Wallace, California State University, Office of the Chancellor



In addition to hosting another successful annual CCEC Forum, bringing a record 400 participants together from across the state, CCEC focused on enhancing coordination

between key state agencies and local governments.

The new State & Local Energy and Climate Coordination (SLECC) meeting series launched at the CCEC Forum, bringing together dozens of local government staff with representatives from the California Air Resources Board (CARB), California Energy Commission (CEC), and the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to discuss local barriers to climate action. SLECC's September Meeting continued this conversation with CARB, and also featured a discussion on Grid Modernization with CEC followed by an in-person regional meeting in San Diego co-hosted by CCEC and SGC.

"The CCEC Forum fills a crucial need for local governments, community organizations and local leaders of all kinds to share experience and wisdom toward creating a more just, resilient and sustainable future."

Lorenzo Kristov
Electric System Policy

"[The CCEC Forum] is a well organized and extremely informative event. 2023 was my second time attending and the workshops I attended and connections I was able to make were priceless."

Shanette Anderson
Emerald Cities Collaborative



*Join us for the 15th annual CCEC Forum!
June 25-26, 2024 in Palm Springs*



COMMUNITY DESIGN

A community charrette at the Senior and Veterans Center in Pico Rivera in October



Community members engaged in the Pico Rivera revitalization efforts

TRANSFORMING LOCAL VISION INTO ACTION

We partnered with communities around the state to conduct local visioning, planning and implementation of solutions for equitable and sustainable transportation, shared mobility, housing, neighborhood revitalization, and placemaking. We provided intensive technical assistance to help underserved and marginalized communities develop proposals and access funding.

We worked with 14 jurisdictions to conduct collaborative community engagement and planning projects with the support of \$1.7 million we helped raise from Caltrans and other sources. We also wrote proposals in partnership with jurisdictions, raising \$1.62 million with 6 communities for active transportation, complete streets, and regional bus rapid transit plans to launch in 2024.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Clean Mobility Options Forum

CivicWell, Shared-Use Mobility Center, and CALSTART organized and hosted the Clean Mobility Options (CMO) Forum on October 3 in Los Angeles. Funded by the California Air Resources Board, CMO is a statewide public program that empowers under-resourced communities across California to better understand and overcome mobility obstacles with vouchers for funding community needs assessments and clean, shared, zero-emission transportation projects.

Over 250 agency, community-based organization, tribal, nonprofit, and service provider representatives attended the daylong event; connecting with awardees, experts in the field and other potential partners; and sharing challenges and successes.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Historic Whittier Blvd Revitalization City of Pico Rivera

CivicWell has partnered with the City of Pico Rivera to transform Historic Whittier Boulevard into a vibrant district. CivicWell helped the City secure a \$332,000 Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant focused on multimodal improvements for walking, bicycling, and innovative transit. The City added leverage funds, expanding the project to produce a specific plan aimed at converting the Boulevard from a strip commercial arterial to a walkable, mixed-use destination corridor.

The project partners, led by Pico Rivera Director of Innovation and Communications Javier Hernandez, with CivicWell, Day One, and MIG consultant team, completed a yearlong series of charrettes, pop ups, surveys, technical studies, and design sessions that engaged over 5,000 stakeholders.

As a trusted partner for federal and state agencies, we build local capacity and translate ideas for change into successful plans, proposals, and awards for implementation.

PROGRAM	WHAT IT DOES	OUR ROLE	2023 IMPACT
SGC Transformative Climate Communities	Helps disadvantaged rural and urban communities, and tribes apply for planning and implementation projects that reduce emissions, improve health, support local revitalization, and expand economic opportunity	Part of the technical assistance team led by Estolano Advisors helping communities develop proposals and apply for grants	\$98,106,868 in grants to 11 communities for multi-benefit implementation projects, planning and implementation, or planing for future implementation
CARB Clean Mobility Options	Empowers under-resourced communities to understand and overcome mobility obstacles	Part of Clean Mobility Options administrative team with CALSTART and the Shared-Use Mobility Center	\$24.5 million to underserved communities and tribes for needs assessments, and implementing clean and shared mobility projects
US DOT Thriving Communities	Advances community-driven, transformative investments in underserved and overburdened communities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law	Part of a multidisciplinary team led by RMI	15 communities around the country received planning, capacity building, and technical assistance support
Justice40 Accelerator	Helps grassroots organizations grow their climate projects so they can access government funding dedicated to empowering communities most impacted by the climate crisis	The technical assistance provider for Regeneración Pajaro Valley	49 organizations across 20 states received expert guidance, resources, and an expansive community to help secure government funding
Greenlining the Block	Supports the expertise of communities of color to prepare for and maximize federal, state and local infrastructure investments to drive effective climate action	Facilitating presentations for cohort sessions and providing leadership coaching support	24 community-based organizations across CA, CO, IL, MI, and NC received direct capacity building grants, tailored technical assistance, and peer-to-peer learning

POLICY



Members of CivicWell's Board at the
2023 CivicWell Polymakers Conference

2023 WINS AND LOSSES

With the state facing a \$30 billion budget gap, 2023 yielded mixed results legislatively.

On one hand, budget cuts were imposed on previously agreed expenditures for climate-related investments.

On the other, \$30 million was preserved for groundwater recharge, \$30 million was appropriated for the Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program so important to the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, and key housing bills were signed.

KEY HOUSING BILLS

[SB 4 and SB 423 \(Wiener\)](#)

Streamline housing approvals on property held by religious institutions (4) and in jurisdictions that are not meeting their state goals (423).

[AB 529 \(Gabriel\)](#)

Encourages adaptive reuse.

[AB 1287 \(Alvarez\)](#)

Increases density bonuses for low and moderate income housing.

[AB 1633 \(Ting\) and AB 1114 \(Haney\)](#)

Reduce delays in project permitting.

OUR SPONSORED BILLS

[SB 511 \(Blakespear\)](#)

Would have required the California Air Resources Board to prepare and provide GHG inventories to local governments for their use in developing and developing Climate Action Plans, but the bill fell victim to budget concerns.

[AB 930 \(Friedman\)](#)

Would allow local governments to establish financing districts around transit stations. The bill will carry over to 2024.

BILL SPOTLIGHT

AB 6 and AB 7 by Asm. Laura Friedman

Transportation accounts for more than 40% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in California. Without prioritizing transportation projects that will substantially reduce such emissions in the next decade, the state will have no chance of meeting its goals of reducing GHG emissions overall by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and net zero emissions no later than 2045.

While the continuing transition to electric vehicles will make a difference, that alone will not come close to producing the level of emission reductions needed.

Assemblymember Laura Friedman introduced AB 6 and AB 7 to ensure that local and state transportation investment decisions fully reflect the necessity to reduce GHG emissions. CivicWell worked intensively with other stakeholders on the legislation.

The two bills passed the Assembly and are currently in the Senate, where stakeholder differences remain to be reconciled. Nonetheless, significant progress has been made in achieving the critical goal of the legislation.

“With such a diverse range of interests, the effort to find common ground that harmonizes our transportation and climate priorities presents an enormous challenge. The contribution of CivicWell in this endeavor has been crucial to making meaningful progress.”

Laura Friedman
State Assemblymember



WATER

US Senator Alex Padilla's staff traveled to Madera County to meet with Fairmead Groundwater Resilience Project team stakeholders

CONVENINGS AND COLLABORATIONS

We continue to convene the NGO Groundwater Collaborative, which works to ensure community engagement in the development and implementation of Groundwater Sustainability Plans around California, and also participate in the California Department of Water Resources' Drought Resilience Inter-agency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative.

As a partner in Growing Water Smart, a joint program of the Sonoran Institute and the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, we hosted a workshop that brought together local government and community leaders for water resource and land use development planning and collaboration. These workshops lead to tailored action plans, and participants are eligible for technical assistance to implement them.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Westlands GSA Land Repurposing

CivicWell is part of the team—along with Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Linguistica Interpreting and Translation, the Leap Institute, and Vista Consulting—supporting the Westlands Water District Groundwater Sustainability Agency (Westlands GSA) on expanding land repurposing efforts in the Westside Subbasin in Fresno and Kings Counties made possible through a Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program (MLRP) grant from the California Department of Conservation.

Over the next 3 years, this project team will bring together local voices to develop and commence implementation of a multi-benefit land repurposing plan while simultaneously mitigating the effects of agricultural job loss through job training.

The program will assist the Westlands GSA to identify and put into practice long-term opportunities to repurpose agricultural lands, cut groundwater use, reduce subsidence, improve groundwater supply, and provide benefits to disadvantaged communities.



Investing in priority populations on the west side of the Valley is critical in the advancement of climate resiliency and equity. The opportunity to train and certify local farmworkers, under-employed and unemployed residents will create jobs, save homeowners money, reduce greenhouse gasses, sequester carbon, and empower the local economy.

Rey León

Mayor of Huron

CEO, The Leap Institute



The Fairmead Groundwater Resilience Project team presents updates during Self-Help Enterprises' Northern Valley Water Tour in May 2023. Photo courtesy of Self-Help Enterprises.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Fairmead Groundwater Resilience Project

Fairmead, an unincorporated community in the San Joaquin Valley, faces significant concerns about its drinking water supply. Many residents have experienced their wells drying up, and drilling deeper wells is cost-prohibitive for most.

CivicWell is part of the Fairmead Groundwater Resilience Project, a collaborative planning effort led by Madera County in partnership with Sustainable Conservation, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, and CivicWell that has focused on enhancing groundwater resilience in Fairmead by developing a plan for groundwater recharge and land repurposing to benefit community wells, improve drinking water supply, and stabilize groundwater levels in the surrounding area.

Working directly with Fairmead residents, environmental experts, local agencies, and technical consultants, the Fairmead Groundwater Resilience Project team has evaluated land repurposing opportunities in the Fairmead area, and assessed groundwater recharge potential at specific sites.

As part of the relationship building efforts, the team hosted three community meetings and is pursuing funding to implement the potential groundwater resiliency projects identified and considered by the Fairmead community. A key outcome has been the empowerment of the Fairmead Community & Friends community group to partner on future proposals and lead engagement events on those projects.

Business Partner Program



"Becoming a Business Partner with CivicWell was an easy decision for us. No other organization has the depth of experience advocating for transformational policies and working with communities to enact real change. As a Business Partner, we get the opportunity to engage with and be thought partners to communities and policy makers that are looking for real solutions to big challenges."

Josh Brock
Vice President of CCA Commercial Operations
Calpine Energy Solutions

CREATING COMMUNITY IMPACT

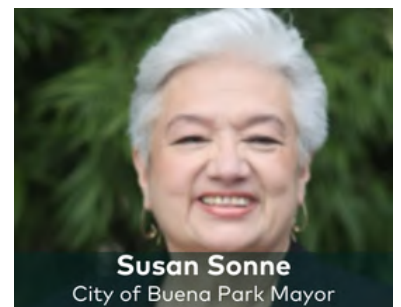
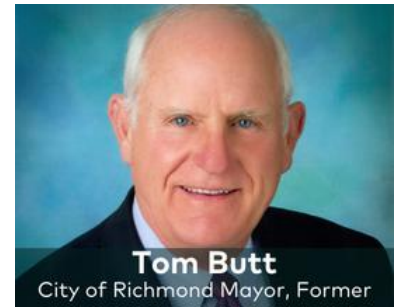
CivicWell works to advance sustainable community solutions throughout California and the nation. Through our Community Matters Business Partner Program, we connect our network of local elected officials with strategic private sector leaders who provide a range of support.

With your help, we can create a strong pipeline of transformative smart growth and community resilience projects. You can expand your impact through cutting-edge initiatives advancing sustainable, equitable community solutions and build strong relationships with policymakers. Visit civicwell.org/partner for more information.

THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS:



2023 Board of Directors



CIVICWELL IN THE MEDIA



Maven's Notebook

Small Legal Change Has Big Implications for California's Climate Preparedness



Chronicle of Philanthropy

With Philanthropic Dollars, Five States Will Recruit Young Adults to Fight Climate Change



Sacramento Business Journal

Insights From New CEOs



KVPR-Fresno

In the San Joaquin Valley, Addressing Inequities in Urban Planning Is Tough



Times-Standard

Humboldt County Walkability Audit Presentation Well-Attended



Capital Public Radio

A Look at New Laws

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