



North Bay Forward

Systemic, Place-Based Planning for a Sustainable, Resilient Future

The North Bay fires provided a stark reminder that we live, work and play in a fire ecology. As our neighbors, colleagues and friends struggle to rebuild their lives, we must pause to rethink how we live in this region and envision a healthier, happier and more prosperous future for all. Following fourteen years of annually convening sustainability leaders, Sustainable North Bay and Sonoma State have launched North Bay Forward: a collaborative initiative to harness the collective talent, vision, and experience of a range of business, community, public sector and academic leaders to envision this future and engage in the systemic change and collaboration needed to usher in a sustainable, resilient North Bay community. From our inaugural visioning charrette, we identified the four interconnected systems, upon whose health the future we envision depends:

- 1) Natural Systems: connections between the ecosystems upon which we rely: water, energy, food, land, waste, fire and climate. A resilient natural, interlinking system requires us to rethink our relationship to nature and design our relationship to it based on the strength of unique fire ecology of the North Bay. We will engage public sector decision makers, private landowners and the nonprofit organizations, which protect these sub-systems, across county lines to map interrelationships between natural systems, identify how our unique ecosystem could operate and strategically fill policy gaps to realize that optimized system. In our uniquely abundant ecosystems, for example, softening hard borders around agriculture could be expanding our notions of foodshed and reap the kind of harvests, which feed all members of our community.
- 2) Structural Systems: connections between the physical structure we build upon our ecosystem to live, work and play. Developing infrastructure that connects diverse living, working, learning & social communities for all citizens, transit that provides mobility and connection and common spaces to meet can provide a long term roadmap for Rebuild North Bay planning. By connecting decision makers across housing, transportation, employment and economic development with local investors, business and land owners, we can incorporate systemic sustainability and equity into public and private development.
- 3) Human Capital Systems: connections between our human capital: both intellectual and financial. Tying local investment - and their benefit and returns - with workforces development and innovation spaces creates the fulfilled, educated and healthy workforce, which is attractive for companies and travelers, and transforms the community from passive receptacle to active investor building trust instead of charity. We start by mapping our incredible resources at a hyper local, local and regional level, combining efforts with the web of nonprofits, institutions and enterprises we've worked with for the past decade.
- 4) Cultural Systems: connections between these natural, structural and resource systems via the stories we tell about ourselves about our relationship to this unique place. Capturing the stories of the rich diversity of other inhabitants of our community, including students and those typically underrepresented, and the public sector who represents us will shape a through shared, visual story: 'The Story of This Place' and create a vision and policy that reflects the vision. The leadership center we foresee housed at Sonoma State would build cultural and media literacy, nurture constructive debate and engage key stakeholders as we transition to this bright new future.