

2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Sustainability Speaker Series Proposal

*Prepared by the Sustainability Commission*

March 2026

This year's Sustainability Speaker Series will pivot to a range of interactive, in-person events to increase community engagement.

The topics proposed in Table 1 below are relevant to residents and businesses in Sunnyvale and are meant to both educate and motivate action. The Sustainability Commission Subcommittee has proposed topics for ranking in the following table. The table also lists potential event titles, speakers, and a brief description of the topics to be covered.

COSTS

The first five years of the Sustainability Speaker Series were funded through a project's budget, set up specifically for the series. From Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22 forward, the Sustainability Speaker Series is funded through the operating budget for Environmental Sustainability Program in the Environmental Services Department. Costs for the series vary depending on whether the series is held virtually or in person. It remains to be determined if these events will be held in a virtual or in-person setting which could result in differences in how the budget is spent. Typical costs incurred for in-person events include fees for travel costs, refreshments and staff time for set up and take down of event space. Virtual events accrue costs from staff time and speaker fees. Publicity and advertising costs are incurred regardless of setting.

Table 1: Proposed Events and Topics

Commission Rank	Topic	Event Type	Target Audience	Description
	Sustainability and Climate Messaging	Workshop	Climate-interested folks and media-interested creators	This workshop would address the lack of positive, motivating climate and sustainability oriented stories in media (fiction, nonfiction, comedy, drama). Attendees should span those with sustainability stories to tell, and people who like to tell stories. Whether you're starting a community group to speak to city council about an issue you care about, or are an (aspiring) podcaster or youtuber who wants to do some meaningful influencing, this event will help participants learn which messaging works, so we can all work towards a more broad awareness of sustainability.
	Waste Reduction	Fair	Community-wide, general public	This fair will highlight how adopting a circular mindset can turn discarded materials into useful resources through reuse, repair, repurposing, and recycling. Featuring booths on upcycling, clothing and material swaps, repair cafés, composting, reusable alternatives, and more, the event will educate residents on practical ways to reduce waste, support local zero-waste businesses, and save money.
	Resilience Hubs	Workshop	Existing community (neighborhood, affinity) groups, individuals looking to connect	Resilience hubs are community centers and sites which are specifically prepared to help after an emergency or natural disaster, and are specifically called out in Sunnyvale's CAP Move 6.F. In this workshop, community members would come prepared to work through how to use their existing resources and infrastructure to further promote climate and community resiliency in climate-induced hardships (heat waves, AQ events, floods) and its intersections with those working on other challenges (e.g. housing or financial insecurity groups, mutual aid networks). It would also be an opportunity to network with others in the community and with city staff to work through the most effective ways to implement resilience hubs and other resilience measures.

Commission Rank	Topic	Event Type	Target Audience	Description
	Cross-generational Climate Roundtable	Discussion Roundtable	Youth groups, concerned elders, and anyone in between	This roundtable will focus on building cross-generational climate partnerships by bringing together youth, elders, city staff, and community members to collaborate on climate advocacy. Participants will explore shared priorities, exchange lessons learned, and identify opportunities for joint action, drawing on the strengths and perspectives of different age groups. By connecting organizations that mobilize both younger and older climate leaders, the session aims to strengthen long-term collaboration and support more effective, inclusive climate action.
	Food Fair	Fair	Community-wide, general public	This community fair will focus on how our food choices impact the climate and how residents and businesses can adopt more sustainable practices. Through interactive stations, cooking demonstrations, and activities for all ages, attendees will learn about sustainable cooking, food waste reduction, composting, community gardening, and reusable foodware programs. The event could also highlight local chefs, cooking demonstrations, and resources for restaurants and residents to help build a more sustainable food system in Sunnyvale.
	All About Plastic	Fair	Community-wide, general public	This fair will focus on raising awareness about the environmental and health impacts of plastic and exploring practical ways to reduce plastic use. Through interactive booths, youth-led demonstrations, and a keynote on current and emerging plastic reduction policies in California, attendees will learn about alternatives to single-use plastics. The event could also feature a fashion show highlighting clothing made from natural fibers while educating participants about the impacts of synthetic fabrics and microplastics.

## **SCHEDULING**

Up to three events over a two-year period, coordinated by staff in consideration of speaker availability, staff time, budget, venue, and other City events.

## **VENUE**

Since January 2020, events have been held in a virtual online format. While this approach was initially successful, attendance has recently declined. As a result, reintroducing in-person events, which were the primary format prior to 2020, is the proposed venue format of the FY 2026/27 and 27/28 series. Staff will prioritize hosting events in person events when presentations include hands-on components or demonstrations. The in-person events can be held in the Bay Conference Room (Room 145) at City Hall, (the first choice of venues because it allows for live broadcast on K-SUN TV as well as recording for later viewing). Other venues including the Sunnyvale Community Theater (capacity 200) and the Community Center Ballroom (capacity 300) are considered when a larger audience is expected. Refreshments will be provided at in-person events with a zero-waste goal.

## **PUBLICITY**

The promotion and marketing of events will be similar to past series. It will include social media, email blasts, Sunnyvale Sun ads, and flyers posted at community businesses. With longer advance notice, the event notices could be printed in the Horizon. Additional avenues for outreach to local schools, colleges and universities as well as the business/tech community should also be used.

## **VIDEO RECORDINGS**

Each event will be videotaped and made available on the Community TV channel as well as on the City's Sustainability website. If the venue is other than online or City Hall, some funding and coordination is needed for video recording services. If a particular speaker does not allow recording/posting of their talk, or the venue or logistics of the hands-on activities do not allow for recording, a summary of the key points will be written and posted online.

## **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

Evaluation surveys will be administered, as done in past series, to collect feedback from attendees on the event experience, identify improvements, and gather suggestions for future topics and speakers.

## **HISTORY**

For context, Table 2. below summarizes the history of prior Sustainability Speaker's Series events. The 2018-2019 series marks the shift between calendar year and fiscal year planning to align with Sunnyvale's budgeting fiscal year.

Table 2: Sustainability Speaker Series Event History since inception

Series Year	Title	Speaker	Date	General Topic
2017	Electrifying! Beyond Fossil Fuels in Homes and Businesses	Pierre Delforge	May 31, 2017	Buildings
	Electrifying Our Transportation System	Rod Diridon, Sr.	Aug. 2, 2017	Transportation
	Zero Waste Home	Bea Johnson	Aug. 30, 2017	Waste
2018	Drawdown: 100 Substantive Solutions to Global Warming	Chad Frischmann	Jan. 31, 2018	Climate Solutions
	Hidden in Plain Bite	Katie Cantrell	May 16, 2018	Food
	The Power of Stuff	Annie Leonard	Sept. 26, 2018	Consumption of Resources
	Home Energy: Taking Charge! Panel Discussion	Tom Kabat, Doug Kunz, Dave Edwards, Steve Schmidt, Marianna Grossman	Oct. 25, 2018	Home Energy
2019 (added to 2018 series)	Climate, Energy & Food: A Recipe for Action	Dr. Eugene Cordero	May 22, 2019	Carbon Footprint
FY 2019-2020	Electric Cars Demystified	Jane Rosten, Marc Geller, Jim Barbera	Nov. 9, 2019	EV Transportation
	California's Rise to Water Resilience: What will it take?	Felicia Marcus	Jan. 29, 2020	Water
	Less Traffic, Better Places: How do we get there?	Patrick Siegman	Mar. 11, 2020	Transportation
FY 2020-2021	California's Equitable Carbon Neutral Future	Jarod Blumenfeld Secretary of California EPA	Dec. 3, 2020	Adaptation and CA Climate Policy
	Sustainability goes to School	Nik Kaestner, Director of Sustainability at San Francisco	Jan. 30, 2021	Decarbonizing Buildings

		Unified School District		
	What Moves You - Active, Shared and Electric Transportation	Terra Curtis & Meghan Weir Principals at <a href="#">Nelson/Nygaard</a>	March 17, 2021	Decarbonizing Transportation
	Recycling – Beyond the Triangle	Mark Bowers Former Sunnyvale Solid Waste Programs Division Manager	May 19, 2021	Managing Resources Sustainably
FY 2021-2022	This Old Zero-Emission House: Climate Retrofits on a Limited Budget	Sean Armstrong, Zero Net Energy Designer and Managing Principal, Redwood Energy	February 2, 2022	Decarbonizing Buildings
	The Emissions that You Purchase: Reducing Your Carbon Footprint	Chris Jones, Director of CoolClimate Network, UC Berkeley	March 16, 2022	Consumption-based emissions
	A Changing Climate: Through the Lens of Equity and Resiliency	Violet Saena, Founder & Executive Director, Climate Resilient Communities	June 8, 2022	Climate Change and Health
FY 2022-2023	Sustainable Food Gardening in Our Own Backyards	Trinity Tomsic	December 14, 2022	Food
	Farm to Table: Busting the Myths of our Food System	Dr. Sarah Taber	January 25, 2023	Food
	An Electric Dinner Party: Induction Cooking	Chef Rachelle Boucher	May 30, 2023	Decarbonizing Buildings
FY 2023-2024	Drought, Atmospheric Rivers and Floods, Oh My!	Christine Shields Erik Porse	January 24, 2024	Water
	Microplastics? Macro Problems	Dr. Imari Walker-Franklin	February 7, 2024	Water
	Make Every Drop Count: Grey Water Reuse	Shreya Ramachandran	April 17, 2024	Water
	Restoring Wetlands for Climate Resilience	Christina Toms & Judy Nam	January 29, 2025	Water

FY 2024-2025	Waves of Change: Ensuring Equity in Coastal Access	Seraph White	March 19, 2025	Water
	Cleaner Stormwater, Cleaner Bay	Joshua Quigley	June 18, 2025	Water
FY 2025-2026	United for Disability and Climate Justice	Daphne Frias	October 27, 2025	Climate Justice and Equity
	The Buzz on Multifamily Electrification	Nick Dirr	January 21, 2026	Building Electrification
	SMaRT Steps Towards Zero Waste	Jeff Doherty	March 18, 2026	Managing Resources Sustainably