

Santa Cruz County Park Equity = Health & Racial Equity

Why We Must Invest in Healthy Futures *Mariah Roberts MEd - County Park Friends 2023*

3 GIVENS - Healthy environments are essential to community wellbeing:

1. Social Determinants

The County of Santa Cruz defines access to a Healthy Environment as an established social determinant of health and a [core condition](#) for health and wellbeing. Analysis of Santa Cruz County's CORE social determinants model (and the Prevention Institute's Thrive model) assesses the value of a healthy environment at about 12.5% of whole health.

2. Operational & Strategic Plans

The County of [Santa Cruz Operational Plan for Health Equity](#) aims to advance services that promote community wellness, and reduce barriers/increase access to services and is aligned with the [County Parks Strategic Plan](#).

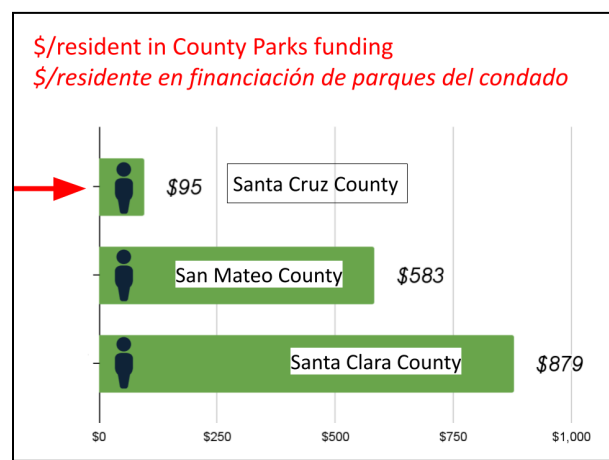
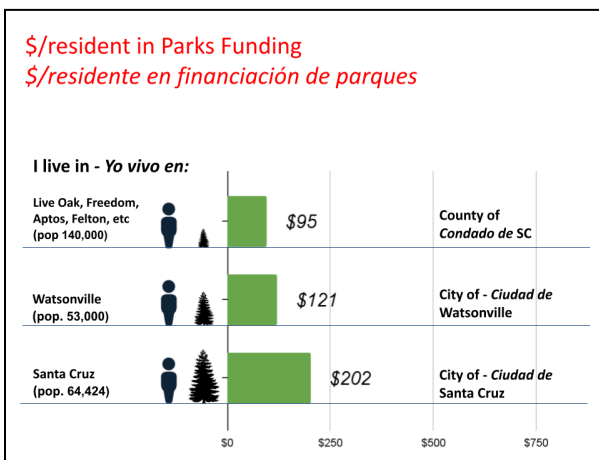
3. Unanimous Resolution

The County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted the 2020 Resolution [Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis](#) stating, "communities of color are disproportionately affected by social determinants of health...such as lack of places to walk, bike, run and live."

4 PROBLEMS - Our Current State is not healthy nor equitable:

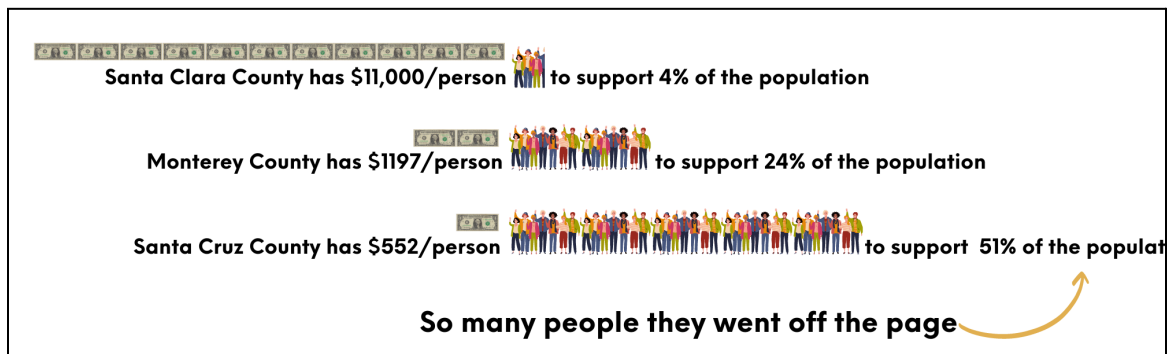
1. Extremely low funding levels

Our Public Parks and Open Space Districts do not have funds that match their assessed value to health
When compared to neighboring Counties, our County Parks Department is extremely underfunded/resident.



2. 51% of Countywide population lives in unincorporated areas

[Santa Cruz County does MORE with LESS](#) - We are very unusual to have dense residential areas outside cities, meaning city-like services are demanded of the County government and the County Parks Department. This makes the low levels of funding for County Parks even more urgent to address.



Inequitable Park Acreage Distribution

Park and green space acreage across Santa Cruz County is distributed inequitably. For example, there are 2.25 acres/1000 residents in Watsonville vs 27 acres/1000 residents in Santa Cruz, and that distribution disproportionately affects communities of color.



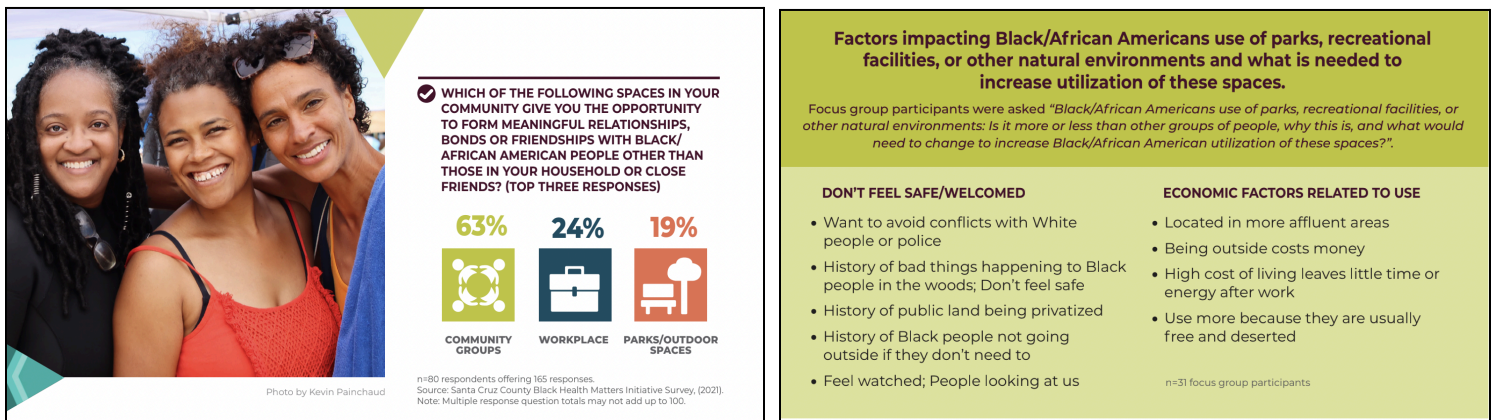
25% of land for 75% majority white
Santa Cruz City (incorporated City)



8% of land for 80% majority Latinx
Watsonville (incorporated City)

3. Systemic and Historic Racism

In the 2021 [Santa Cruz Black Health Matters Community Snapshot](#), 52% of respondents reported visiting a public park, but only 19% reported that Parks offered “the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with Black/African-American people...” (p.33-35) and identified specific factors impacting usage.

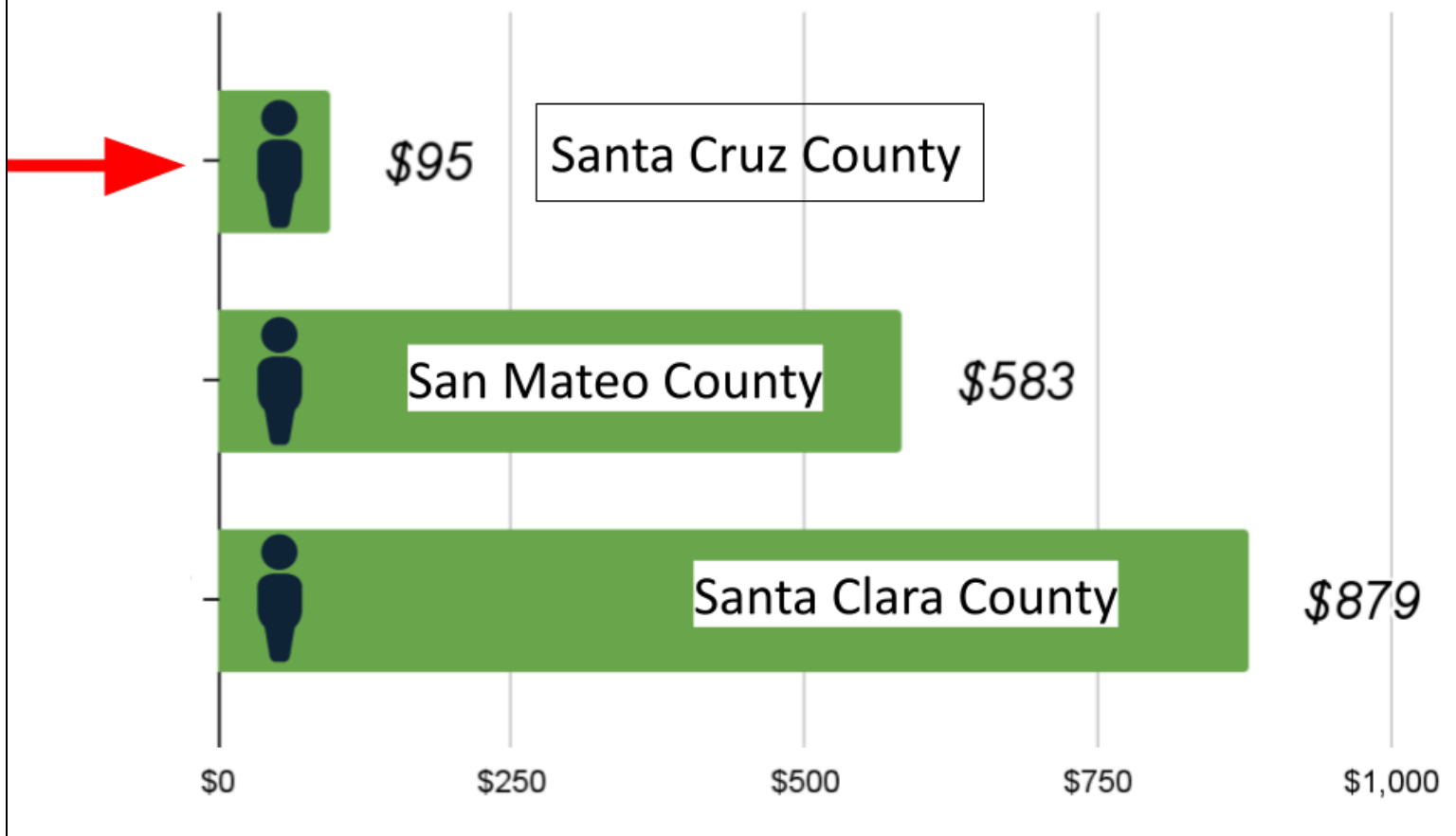


3 SUGGESTED ACTIONS

- 1. Improve Measurement of Value** - Recognize and celebrate the vast natural resources in our community and their potential to support health and equity. Improve data collection and reporting on Healthy Environments indicators at the [Datashare Santa Cruz County](#).
- 2. Fund according to value** - Prioritize prevention, wellness, joy and connection with upstream prevention by funding our Parks Systems for equity.
- 3. Increase Collective Impact** - Convene Public and nonprofit leaders to continue alignment on public funding + targeted collaboration for the common good and increased impact.

\$/resident in County Parks funding

\$/residente en financiación de parques del condado



\$/resident in Parks Funding

\$/residente en financiación de parques

I live in - Yo vivo en:

