



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## NEWS RELEASE



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### **BOARD APPROVES SALES TAX MEASURE FOR MARCH BALLOT**

On Tuesday, December 5th, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to place a half-cent sales tax measure on the 2024 March primary ballot.

At 9 percent, sales tax in the unincorporated area is currently tied for the lowest among jurisdictions within Santa Cruz County. While all eligible voters may vote on the measure, the tax would only apply in unincorporated areas of the county. As part of the proposed measure, the Board adopted funding priorities for essential services including:

- Wildfire, flood and other disaster response, prevention, and recovery services;
- Affordable housing to support working families and frontline workers;
- Critical community programs providing mental health crisis services for children, substance use disorder treatment, and homelessness services.
- Continuing ongoing work to enhance the local road network, maintain and improve parks and recreation programs, and deliver high-quality public safety services to the community.

In June, the Board passed a Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 that supports the County's strategic vision and goals through the implementation of department objectives in the 2023-25 Operational Plan. However, the budget was austere and did not forecast significant new investments in our priorities, staff or community, while maintaining minimum levels of budget reserves and projecting significant future deficits through Fiscal Year 2027-28.

Santa Cruz County provides municipal services to more than half of the County population living in the unincorporated area, and delivers public safety, health, human and other mandated services countywide. It also receives just 13 percent of local property tax dollars, making it significantly underfunded compared to peer counties throughout California.