May 21, 2026

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May 2026 Spotlight

The Blue Skies Initiative: Planning Gilroy's Future Together

The Blue Skies Initiative is a city-led planning effort currently underway in Gilroy focused on improving air quality, transportation options, and sustainability in our community. The initiative is designed to help Gilroy consider how we grow and protect our quality of life and includes an extensive outreach process to help ensure that any future policies reflect the values and priorities of our community.

The initiative is funded through a grant from the California Department of Transportation. Its goal is to explore strategies that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) while also strengthening the city's economic vitality and environmental resilience.
The Blue Skies Initiative focuses on long-term approaches to improve several important areas, including air quality, transportation choices, energy efficiency, community health, economic opportunity and hazard response measures.

Gilroy Blue Skies Initiative and Our Community

It is important to understand that the Blue Skies Initiative is not a single project or a set of new regulations. Rather, it is a planning process. The city is currently gathering input from residents, businesses, and community organizations to better understand priorities and concerns. This feedback will help shape recommendations that may guide future policies or projects. At this stage, no specific policies have been adopted.

The initiative has generated both interest and concern within the community. Some residents worry that participation in a program tied to state climate goals and transportation grants could eventually lead to new regulations affecting development, transportation, or land use. Critics have raised questions about whether the effort could lead to changes such as restrictions on development patterns, incentives to reduce driving, zoning policies that encourage higher-density housing, or strategies designed to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Gilroy Blue Skies Presentation

Gilroy Blue Skies Web Page

These concerns are understandable, especially in a community like Gilroy that has long valued its agricultural heritage and open spaces. Residents have often debated how the city should grow and how to protect our surrounding farmland. Some worry that sustainability initiatives could encourage development patterns that change our character. Others, however, believe that thoughtful planning could help prevent uncontrolled sprawl and better protect agricultural land by encouraging smarter development.

Take the Gilroy Blue Skies Survey

Email the Blue Skies Project Team

Transportation is another area where perspectives differ. The Blue Skies Initiative is examining ways to reduce car dependence, including the possibility of expanded public transit, improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and development patterns that shorten commutes. Supporters believe these approaches could improve air quality, public health, and mobility. Critics note that Gilroy's geography and rural connections make driving an essential part of daily life for many residents.

Some community members also question whether planning efforts like this will produce tangible results. Planning studies can require staff time and consultant resources, and residents understandably want to see meaningful improvements rather than lengthy reports. Supporters of the initiative argue that careful planning is often necessary to position cities for future funding opportunities that support infrastructure improvements and climate resilience projects.

Our Priorities

Ultimately, the debate is not about a single decision or project, but about the broader direction the city may take in the years ahead. By continuing to listen to residents and maintaining transparency throughout the process, Gilroy can ensure that any future policies reflect the values and priorities of the community it serves.

For a brief overview of the Gilroy Blue Skies Initiative, view this presentation.

To learn more about the Initiative, visit the Blue Skies Initiative Project page.

To provide your input on opportunities that you feel are important for the city to address climate change, please take the Gilroy Blue Skies Survey.

For questions about the Blue Skies Initiative, please reach out to the project team at gilroyblueskies@cityofgilroy.org.

Personal Responsibility and Community Culture

Illegal fireworks continue to be a serious challenge in Gilroy, one we simply cannot solve without the support of our community. Making a real difference will require each of us to take responsibility and encourage our friends and neighbors to prioritize safety and look out for one another.

Illegal fireworks pose serious risks to public safety, neighborhoods, and the environment throughout many cities in California, including our community of Gilroy. During dry summer conditions, a single aerial firework can ignite grasslands, rooftops, or open space areas, placing entire communities at risk. Illegal fireworks also create major noise disturbances that affect veterans, pets, livestock, young children, working families, and residents sensitive to loud explosions. Nearly everyone is affected negatively, yet the situation continues to persist.

Many of the illegal fireworks found in California are legal to purchase in parts of Nevada, making them easy to smuggle in. Reducing illegal fireworks is extremely difficult for police and fire agencies, as they cannot monitor every car, garage, neighborhood, backyard, or gathering. Even with drone technology, enforcement is difficult. Resources are limited. While police and fire have a role in reducing illegal fireworks, I believe we'll have to look beyond our government agencies if we are to finally curb this problem in Gilroy.

The community, at large, must play a role in prevention. Towns and cities throughout our fire prone Sierra Mountains could be a guide. While government plays a role in outreach, prevention, and enforcement, it is personal responsibility and community culture that suppresses the use of illegal fireworks. The messaging about the dangers and problems with illegal fireworks doesn't just come from fire and police. They are repeated in schools, churches, civic organizations, youth sports, businesses, and most importantly, from neighbor to neighbor. With intentional, widespread community support, and public awareness, combined with our governmental agencies, I am hopeful that we'll one day put this era of illegal fireworks behind us. Please join us this year, in helping to spread the word about the dangers of illegal fireworks and encourage your friends, neighbors, and church and school communities to be part of the solution by avoiding the use of illegal fireworks. It will take all of us to make a difference, but I'm hopeful that our community is ready to rise to the challenge.

To discuss these topics and more, join me for **Coffee with the Mayor** on **Saturday, June 6th at 9:30 AM** in **Council Chambers**.

A video recording of Coffee with the Mayor will be posted shortly after the meeting on the City of Gilroy YouTube channel.

I hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Mayor Greg Bozzo

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