



MEMORANDUM

To: Climate Action Subcommittee

From: Nancy Woltering, AICP CEP, Senior Planner

CC: Gabe Osburn, Planning and Economic Development Director
Jessica Jones, Deputy Director – Planning
Amy Nicholson, Supervising Planner

Subject: City of Santa Rosa Community-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Strategy

Date: June 5, 2024

Introduction

The City has been a climate leader, taking action as early as the mid-1990s to implement energy efficient upgrades to municipal operations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also instituted water conservation programs citywide, including a ‘cash for grass’ program, to further reduce emissions. The State, as part of the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32), set a target for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 15% below 1990 levels by 2020. Through implementation of a series of programs, and as a result of greater vehicle efficiency standards, by 2020 the City had reduced GHG emissions by 29%, nearly double the State target.

State Mandate (2022)

At this time, the City is addressing a new State mandate as part of the California Climate Crisis Act of 2022 (Assembly Bill 1279); the State mandates that all jurisdictions, and the State as a whole, reduce GHG emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, by 85% below 1990 levels by 2045, and reach carbon neutrality on this timeline.

Community-wide GHG Reduction Strategy

The City, working with its consultant, PlaceWorks, has prepared a Community-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Strategy that provides a path for the City to achieve these mandates and to reach carbon neutrality. Carbon neutrality refers to balancing emissions, so that emissions from all sectors identified as part of the City’s GHG Inventory are less than the emissions that are sequestered (removed from the atmosphere) through programs such as tree planting and agricultural practices that enhance the soil and/or landscape’s ability to store carbon.

Integration of the GHG Reduction Strategy with the 2050 General Plan and review as part of the General Plan 2050 Program EIR

The GHG Reduction Strategy is being proposed at this time because the City is preparing its new General Plan 2050. Addressing climate change is woven into all parts of the General Plan: The General Plan identifies goals, policies, actions in all its chapters that address reducing GHGs and enhancing the City's resilience to wildfires, droughts, floods, period of extreme heat, and other climate conditions that have worsened with climate change. Therefore, implementing the General Plan 2050 will support the City's efforts to reduce GHGs. The GHG Reduction Strategy will be included as an Appendix to the General Plan and will therefore be evaluated as part of the General Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which is being prepared for the Project. The GHG Reduction Strategy will replace the City's Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) that was adopted in 2012. It also includes some measures from the City's Municipal Climate Action Plan (MCAP) that was adopted in 2013 but does not fully replace it.

CEQA Qualified GHG Reduction Plan

The GHG Reduction Strategy complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It is being prepared as a "CEQA Qualified Plan", which means that it is consistent with the requirements of the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15183.5(b), and the Bay Area Air Quality Management Department's (BAAQMD) Guidelines. The Program EIR being developed for the General Plan will incorporate a cumulative impact analysis that can be used for subsequent projects. Projects that rely on this analysis must prepare a checklist that shows consistency with the GHG Reduction Strategy and identify the specific GHG reduction measures that are applicable to the project.

Structure of the GHG Reduction Plan

The GHG Reduction Strategy identifies five objectives and 17 associated measures, each with implementing programs, supportive General Plan policies, performance standards, and implementation details. The performance standards are quantified, enabling the City to track its progress in reducing emissions.

City's Commitment to Implementation

The GHG Reduction Strategy includes a position of Climate Action Manager, a City employee who will be tasked with coordinating ongoing implementation of the GHG Reduction Strategy. It also assumes the support of the City Council on an ongoing basis to ensure the City maintains its commitment to implement the GHG Reduction Strategy to meet the 2030 and 2045 State mandates.

Attachments

- Draft Community-wide Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy
- Public Comments received on the Preliminary Objectives and Measures to Reduce Greenhouse Gases, shared on Earth Day, 2024