



DATE: October 8, 2024

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Heather Hines, Special Project Manager
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SUBJECT: Recommendation to Conduct a Joint Public Hearing of the Planning Commission and the Climate Action Commission to Receive a Staff Presentation and Project Information, Receive Public Comment, and Consider the Blueprint for Climate Action for Recommendation to the City Council for Adoption

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Climate Action Commission and Planning Commission conduct a joint public hearing to receive a staff presentation, receive public comment, and consider the Blueprint for Climate Action for Recommendation to the City Council for adoption. More specifically it is recommended that the Climate Action Commission make a recommendation by motion and that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending City Council adoption of the Blueprint.

The proposed project has been reviewed consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act and determined a categorical exemption under Class 7 as an action by a regulatory agency for protection of natural resources and under Class 8 as an action by a regulatory agency for protection of the environment.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the City of Petaluma officially recognized the Climate Emergency and formed a Climate Action Commission (CAC) with the aim of guiding the city towards climate neutrality. Throughout 2020, the Commission, in collaboration with City staff, drafted the Climate Emergency Framework (CEF). This framework, endorsed by the Petaluma City Council on January 11, 2021, outlines the city's commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2030. It presents a vision for Petaluma's future and establishes fundamental values to steer the city's initiatives in climate planning.

In 2020, the City of Petaluma also launched a General Plan Update, which was scoped to include the development of a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. Through a competitive Request for

Proposal and selection process, Raimi and Associates was selected as the primary consultant for both the General Plan Update and the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. Recognizing the urgent timeline for achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, the City opted to expedite the creation of a standalone climate action plan, which has been named the "Blueprint for Climate Action" to address greenhouse gas reduction specifically. The drafting and adoption of this plan will precede the comprehensive General Plan update. The formulation of climate adaptation and resiliency policies and actions are being integrated into the broader General Plan through the applicable policy frameworks, which have been available for public review since Spring of 2024.

As the appointed advisory body focused on climate action, the CAC was crucial in developing the draft Blueprint. CAC ad-hoc committees provided feedback on each action plan area to support the drafting of the Blueprint. The initial draft of the Blueprint was shared with the Climate Action Commission during their meeting on October 12, 2023, to solicit initial questions and comments. The CAC formed a separate ad-hoc subcommittee to conduct an in-depth review of the draft Blueprint and to make recommendations to the larger CAC. That feedback was integral in the revisions and development of the final Draft Blueprint before the CAC and Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation to the City Council.

As part of the community engagement around the draft Blueprint, many of the City's CCBs provided feedback specific to their areas of focus, including the Planning Commission, the Recreation, Music, and Parks Commission, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Tree Advisory Committee, the Senior Advisory Committee, and the Transit Committee.

In addition, a robust public engagement effort was undertaken with community partners like Cool Petaluma and Daily Acts to solicit input on the Draft Blueprint. The City also received over 1,000 public comments through a variety of engagement efforts and in a variety of formats.

The Draft Blueprint before the Planning Commission and Climate Action Commission was refined by Raimi and Associates and City staff to incorporate feedback received and provide an aggressive policy direction toward carbon neutrality.

DISCUSSION

Document Overview

The purpose of the Blueprint for Climate Action is to provide a roadmap toward the City's goal of carbon neutrality. While implementing the Blueprint does not achieve total carbon neutrality by 2030, it does lay out an ambitious action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the City by 61%. The plan's effectiveness relies on aggressive action on the part of the City, partnerships with agencies and community organizations, and widespread changes to the activities and behaviors of the community.

The Blueprint is a short-range implementation-focused plan spanning approximately 5 to 10 years. It is organized into cornerstone actions and topical action plans, as discussed below.

Cornerstone Actions

Thirty-three cornerstone actions are identified as critical foundational actions to jumpstart emission reduction in the city, and they are embedded in the seven action plans listed below that address different strategy areas. These strategies align with City Council priorities, generate significant emission reductions and co-benefits, and/or are foundational actions that prepare the city for the implementation of additional actions. Significant modifications to the cornerstone actions were fundamental to the updated draft for adoption, as discussed below and as recommended by the Climate Action Commission during feedback on the initial public review draft of the Blueprint.

Action Plans

To reduce emissions, the Blueprint includes seven action plans that address the following strategy areas:

- Clean Energy
- Buildings
- Transportation and Land Use
- Resource Consumption
- Water
- Sequestration
- Municipal Operations

Within each action plan there are a number of actions for the City to undertake to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change. Each action plan discusses equity considerations and performance and equity metrics. Additionally, each action plan includes indicators of the level of greenhouse gas emissions reduction potential, relative costs, co-benefits, and responsible departments to assist in evaluation and prioritization to implement. While some actions will result in a more significant reduction than others, all actions are necessary to reduce emissions to the greatest extent feasible. For example, community members and the City purchasing clean energy, electrifying existing buildings, and vehicle electrification will result in the largest reductions in carbon emissions. However, some of these strategies are also the highest in cost, including the electrification of existing buildings and vehicle electrification.

Community Engagement

Between October 2023 and April 2024, the City of Petaluma solicited feedback on the Public Review Draft of the Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality, now called the Blueprint for Climate Action (Blueprint). A number of options were made available to solicit public input, including a community open house on October 12, 2023, an online feedback form, and a series of CCB meetings. Additionally, staff coordinated with Cool Petaluma and Daily Acts to conduct targeted outreach efforts to solicit additional comments on the Blueprint.

Approximately a thousand comments were received on the Blueprint. The following summarizes high-level themes discussed during the outreach process categorized by topic:

General Themes

- Program implementation needs to be equity-focused.
- Ensure disadvantaged communities have resources to participate in the transition through direct install programs, new funding sources, etc., and starting program implementation in identified neighborhoods.
- General caution about making housing more expensive.
- Emphasis on multi-benefit strategies, e.g., complete, multimodal streets with improved tree canopy and stormwater improvements.
- Need to ensure that there are adequate sources of funding for program implementation.
- More community engagement as programs are implemented.
- Recognize that technology in transportation, batteries, charging, and mode are rapidly changing.

City Operations

- The City needs to align resources and staff, organization structure and work plans, training, and management of facilities and assets to drive implementation toward carbon neutrality.
- The speed of delivery is essential; actions should be started sooner and be completed more quickly.
- Staff should receive the appropriate training to foster a culture of climate action.
- There is a need for political support to devote capital and staffing to City programs.
- The City needs to accelerate its greenhouse gas reductions from its operations to affirm and illustrate its leadership.
- The City needs to measure Blueprint implementation and provide transparency and information through monitoring and reporting to increase accountability.
- Define metrics to support tracking and monitoring, e.g., miles of connected active mobility corridors and reduction in tree-isolated communities.

Examples of Specific Recommendations

- Incorporate more measures related to non-residential building decarbonization.
- Better coordination with architects, contractors, and trades to implement building strategies.
- Prioritize a ban on gas-powered lawn and garden equipment, including leaf blowers.
- Better coordination with the school district to implement climate change programs, education, and safe routes to school.
- Fare-free transit and trolleys.
- More transit service.
- Focus on Level 1 and Level 2 EV charging, both play an important role.
- Strengthen the tree ordinances.
- Focus sequestration on regional projects, including wetlands and compost application on agricultural and rangeland.
- Make Petaluma a Sponge City.

General Blueprint Organization

- Recognizing limited time and resources, more clearly articulate the short-term priorities.
- Create one section with Partnerships and Engagement, rather than including under each implementation strategy.
- Consider more graphic approaches to the Blueprint to spur local action. Create a graphic executive summary.

Revisions to the Blueprint

The Draft Blueprint was updated in response to community feedback, including a refined set of cornerstone actions. Staff across a variety of departments reviewed the revised draft to further refine prior to publication of the Blueprint for Climate Action that is currently before the Planning Commission and Climate Action Commission for recommendation to the City Council.

Substantive changes that were made to the Blueprint include the following:

- Based on CAC feedback, the original 22 cornerstone actions have been modified, added to, and expanded to 33 cornerstone actions included in the current draft of the Blueprint. Each cornerstone is also identified separately in the corresponding action plan.
- Changes in wording associated with new building stock in response to the 9th Circuit Court decision (“Berkeley Decision”).
- Strategies in all of the Action Plans were updated in response to public feedback and direction from the City’s Committees, Commissions, and Boards.
- To reduce duplication, the Partnerships and Engagement Section was redistributed into the implementation actions to clarify the engagement activities.
- While staff will continue to achieve significant climate actions as soon as feasible, given the amount of time elapsed and the number of climate actions included in the Blueprint and including the increase in the number of cornerstone actions, many timelines have been extended.

Recommendation

As discussed above, the Blueprint has gone through a robust public engagement process, and feedback has been incorporated into the final draft before the Commission’s for review and recommendation. As the City’s appointed climate-focused advisory body, the CAC has played an integral role in each step of the development and refinement of the Blueprint. While it is assumed that substantive comments on approach and organization from the CAC have already been discussed and appropriately addressed in the revised draft, additional feedback can be incorporated into the Commission’s motion to recommend adoption by the City Council.

In addition to the CAC’s involvement in the development of the Blueprint, the Planning Commission has also been an integral review body providing feedback as part of their review of the draft Blueprint as well as feedback on each of the General Plan Policy Frameworks which in turn reinforce actions in the Blueprint. Both the CAC and the Planning Commission play an important advisory role to the City Council on policy issues, including a policy document like the Blueprint. To provide an efficient discussion and informed exchange of ideas on the Blueprint, the CAC and PC are being convened at a joint meeting. It is recommended that the

CAC, by motion, make a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of the Blueprint, while it is recommended that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending the City Council adopt the Blueprint. Consensus feedback of either Commission can be incorporated into the recommendation that is forwarded to the City Council.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The development of the Blueprint for Climate Action is the outcome of a collaborative effort involving community members, the Climate Action Commission, and other Committees and Commissions, City staff, and consultants. Aligned with the Climate Emergency Framework, the Blueprint is designed to advance the implementation of the Framework. The Climate Action Commission, through extensive community engagement, played a pivotal role in drafting the Climate Emergency Framework, and this valuable input has significantly shaped the Blueprint. Additionally, ad hoc committees of the Climate Action Commission were solicited to review and offer feedback on early draft sections relevant to their respective focuses.

To ensure community awareness and participation during development and throughout the release, review, and revision of the Blueprint, the City conducted a robust outreach effort, including the following activities and public meetings:

- **May 2021:** Initiated process with CAC, discussed General Plan integration, and reviewed approach
- **November 2021:** Overview presentation on climate hazards. Discussed climate hazard mitigation and adaptation strategies
- **January 2022:** Overview presentation of community inventory and forecast, municipal inventory, emissions reduction pathways, and draft GHG reduction measures
- **September 2022:** Received “Theory of Change” diagrams from the Ad Hoc Committee with their priorities and recommended actions for buildings, natural systems, transportation, and consumption
- **March 2023:** 5 meetings with CAC Ad Hoc Committees to discuss comments and priorities on the GHG Action Plans
- **October 2, 2023:** All community newsletter emails with a release announcement that the Blueprint will soon be published
- **October 4, 2023:** Boosted social media post and email that contains a link to the feedback form
- **October 10, 2023:** Social media post to remind the community about the feedback form and to attend the open house/CAC meeting on October 12th
- **October 12, 2023:** Community Open House, CAC meeting; reminder to submit feedback through the community update
- **October 23, 2023:** Planned email reminder about the opportunity to provide feedback in the community newsletter
- **December 5, 2023:** Community Feedback Complete
- **December 14, 2023:** Climate Action Commission discussed individual feedback
- **January 3, 2023:** Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee provided feedback

- **January 11, 2023:** Senior Advisory Committee provided feedback
- **January 11, 2023:** Climate Action Commission prepared draft feedback
- **January 17, 2023:** Recreation, Music, and Parks Committee provided feedback
- **February 7, 2024:** Tree Advisory Committee provided feedback
- **February 8, 2024:** Climate Action Commission provided recommendation
- **February 22, 2024:** Transit Advisory Committee provided feedback
- **February 27, 2024:** Planning Commission provided feedback
- **April 29, 2024:** City Council provided feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The adoption of the Blueprint has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its Guidelines and found to be categorically exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15307 (Class 7) regarding Protection of Natural Resources and Guidelines Section 15308 (Class 8) regarding Protection of the Environment as it involves programs and policies that when implemented will protect the environment and its natural resources (Attachment 3). For example, the Blueprint protects natural resources and the environment by:

- Prioritizing climate action and implementation
- Educating City staff and the public about GHG reduction and climate adaptation programs
- Monitoring GHG emissions
- Decarbonizing City facilities and replacing gas-fueled equipment
- Implementing climate awareness and action programs
- Expanding EV infrastructure
- Expanding use of renewable energy
- Developing an electrification strategy
- Creating a resilient water supply
- Adopting an Urban Forestry Management Plan
- Prioritizing local and regional carbon sequestration partnerships
- Creating a carbon gardening campaign
- Adopting an open space management framework
- Requiring zero waste for events
- Implementing an edible food recovery program
- Prioritizing nature-based systems
- Phasing out gas-powered lawn and garden equipment

The above bullet list identifies cornerstone actions of the Blueprint, all of which directly and indirectly relate to the protection and enhancement of natural resources and the environment. There are no exceptions pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 that would make the Blueprint ineligible for an exemption in accordance with 15307 and 15308; therefore, adoption of the proposed Blueprint is eligible under CEQA for a Categorical Exemption in accordance with Class 7 and Class 8.

While the Blueprint will serve as a critical policy document for the City to reach carbon neutrality, it does not meet the criteria of a qualified climate action plan for the purposes of tiering and streamlining future projects subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b) provides guidance on how public agencies may choose to analyze and mitigate significant greenhouse gas emissions. The Guidelines identify the following elements that should be included in a qualified plan for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions:

- Quantify greenhouse gas emissions, both existing and projected over a specified time period, resulting from activities within a defined geographic area.
- Establish a level, based on substantial evidence, below which the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions from activities covered by the plan would not be cumulatively considerable.
- Identify and analyze the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from specific actions or categories of actions anticipated within the geographic area.
- Specify measures or a group of measures, including performance standards, that substantial evidence demonstrates, if implemented on a project-by-project basis, would collectively achieve the specified emissions level.
- Establish a mechanism to monitor the plan's progress toward achieving the level and to require amendment if the plan is not achieving specified levels.
- Be adopted in a public process following environmental review.

A qualified Climate Action Plan that meets the above criteria can be used to determine whether a project will have significant impacts to greenhouse gas emissions under CEQA. As the team prepares the General Plan Update, aspects of the Blueprint will be incorporated and amendments to the Blueprint may be necessary to ensure consistency with the above requirements to meet the criteria to become a qualified plan. The General Plan Environmental Impact Report will also incorporate the Blueprint as part of that coordinated analysis to ensure that the Blueprint is eligible as a qualified plan.

CITYWIDE GOALS & PRIORITIES

The proposed actions within the Blueprint support the following FY 24/25 and 25/26 City Council Goals and Priorities:

- Citywide Electrification Plan
- Integrated Pest Management Plan
- Tree Preservation Ordinance

- Active Transportation Plan
- Implementation of the Blueprint

Full implementation of the Blueprint to ensure a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will require that the actions in the Blueprint continue to be incorporated into the City's goals and priorities each year, including the allocation of necessary resources.

CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

The Blueprint for Climate Action sets forth a plan of action for the city and municipality of Petaluma to work towards climate neutrality through greenhouse gas emission reductions. Additional aspects of citywide sustainability and climate resilience will be addressed as part of the ongoing General Plan update process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution

Attachment 2. The Blueprint for Climate Action is available at https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/petalumaca/2024/09/Blueprint_FinalDraft_Combined_2024_0925.pdf

Attachment 3. CEQA Exemption Memo