



Mayor Ritter and Council
City of Vista
200 Civic Center Drive
Vista, CA 92084

November 4, 2019

Re: Recommendations for Vista's Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Dear Mayor Ritter and Council,

Climate Action Campaign is a San Diego-based nonprofit organization with a simple mission: stop the climate crisis.

Vista's Climate Action Plan is an opportunity to develop a comprehensive climate strategy and implementation plan that meets the scale of the challenge the climate crisis poses and helps bring clean air, safe streets, affordable clean energy, and economic benefits to families and businesses in Vista.

Since 2018, Climate Action Campaign has offered recommendations and best practices in letters and at workshops to help ensure that Vista's CAP will deliver a safe and healthy future for families in Vista. This letter summarizes CAC's previous recommendations, as well as new recommendations. These new recommendations are in response to the increasing urgency of fighting the climate crisis as stated in recent climate science reports including the UN IPCC Report *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the State of California's new Executive Order, B-55-18, and new emerging best practices around the region and the state.

Today, we saw that a new draft of the Climate Action Plan was released. We will follow up with a letter that includes our specific comments on the draft shortly.

Adopt a Legally Binding Plan

A legally binding plan is not subject to the vagaries of political whim or will. Rather, it is a stated commitment to the public that the City of Vista will do everything in its power to protect and preserve the future for Vista residents. Currently, eight cities in San Diego County have legally binding CAPs: the City of San Diego, San Marcos, Carlsbad, National City, La Mesa, Vista, Encinitas, and Escondido. Climate Action Planning throughout the region has shifted to favor legally binding plans that signal bold leadership on climate change. We urge the City of Vista to make a similarly strong statement of support for current and future generations of Vista residents by making the updated CAP legally binding.

Plan for Carbon Neutrality by 2045 in Line With State Targets



As a long-range planning document, we recommend that Vista’s CAP planning horizon extend until at least 2045, and the target for that year should align with Executive Order B-55-18 to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The UN IPCC *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C* and other recent climate science findings show that, at every level of government, we must plan for and fully execute a total transition away from fossil fuels. To achieve that transition, we need all of our cities to establish the roadmap and begin deep decarbonization today. In recognition of the importance of planning for deep carbonization, over 77 countries, 10 regions, and over 100 cities have committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 or sooner. For strong examples of plans to achieve net zero emissions, we recommend referring to the [City of Santa Monica](#), the [City of Los Angeles](#), and the [County of Los Angeles](#) sustainability plans.

Set a 100% Clean Energy Target By 2030 and Commit to Community Choice

Seven cities in the San Diego region (San Diego, Del Mar, Solana Beach, Chula Vista, Encinitas, La Mesa, and Imperial Beach) have set 100% clean energy targets by either 2030 or 2035, with a commitment to pursue Community Choice as the means to that end.

There are three clear reasons for this: 1) Achieving 100% clean energy is the single most powerful strategy a city can adopt to reduce GHG emissions, 2) Community Choice is the only feasible strategy to achieve 100% clean energy, since cities do not have control or jurisdiction over our monopoly utilities; and 2) Community Choice delivers a myriad of benefits to cities, including choice, lower rates for families, local decision-making, and the opportunity to keep revenues in the community.

We recommend that Vista include a 100% clean energy target by 2035 at the latest in its CAP, with a commitment to Community Choice in order to achieve significant emissions reductions and community benefits and to keep stride with other cities across the region.

Now that the San Diego Regional Community Choice Energy program is set to launch, the path to 100% clean energy has never been clearer or more straightforward. We strongly urge the City of Vista to join the many jurisdictions in the San Diego region that have decided to move forward with Community Choice Energy.

Eliminate Building Emissions by 2045 Through Building Electrification

Even as our cities achieve 100% clean electricity, natural gas remains the third most significant source of emissions in our cities, so to fully transition away from fossil fuels, we must identify strategies to reduce and ultimately eliminate natural gas consumption. [Cities in California](#) are leading the transition from gas to clean-energy buildings, with San José, Santa Monica, Carlsbad, Berkeley, Windsor, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, and Menlo Park passing building electrification ordinances.

We urge Vista to include in its CAP targets and associated strategies to electrify municipal, commercial, and residential buildings. These targets and strategies should include:



- *Reducing GHG emissions from buildings by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and eliminating building emissions by 2045 through widespread building electrification.*
- *Requiring all newly constructed or renovated buildings to be all-electric.* For reference, the City of San José, Menlo Park, and Berkeley have all passed ordinances requiring all new residential and commercial construction to be all-electric effective January 2020. Windsor has also passed an ordinance requiring all newly constructed low-rise residential buildings to be all-electric.
- *Adopting a plan to electrify municipal buildings.* For example, the City of San José intends to adopt a plan to electrify municipal buildings.
- *Streamlining permitting to make electrifying existing buildings easier.*
- *Developing financial incentives to lower purchase and installation costs for electric appliances.* For reference, San Luis Obispo currently adds a small fee for new mixed-fuel buildings based on expected gas consumption and plans to use the revenue to help people retrofit their homes with all electric appliances in the future.
- *Creating public outreach and education campaigns to promote building electrification.*
- *Support workforce development and training programs that promote good-paying careers for technicians that install and service electric appliances.*

In addition to reducing emissions, building electrification provides numerous co-benefits including lower energy bills and lower costs for new construction, improved indoor and outdoor air quality, safer energy infrastructure, and the creation of good-paying green jobs.

Energy Efficiency

The CAP should set targets for water conservation and energy efficiency for single-family, multifamily, commercial, and municipal buildings, as well as plan for ordinances to help reach those targets. These ordinances should include a Residential Energy Disclosure Ordinance similar to the one adopted in Portland, Oregon (and called for in the City of San Diego's CAP), which requires sellers of single-family homes to obtain and disclose a Home Energy Report estimating the energy-related use, associated costs, and cost-effective solutions to improve the home's efficiency.¹

In addition to reducing emissions, energy efficiency promotes lower energy bills and creates good-paying green jobs.²

Set Mode Share Targets for Biking, Walking, and Transit

In order to hit the state climate targets, Vista will need to continue shifting people away from driving and towards biking, walking, and transit. We recommend setting ambitious targets for the percentage of commute trips that will be made by biking, walking, and transit (known as mode share targets) and identifying strategies to meet those targets.

¹ City of Portland Home Energy Score, City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, <https://www.pdxhes.com/>

² Ettenson, Lara. "Good News for Good Jobs: Clean Energy Soars." NRDC.org, NRDC, 30 May 2018, <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/lara-ettenson/good-news-good-jobs-clean-energy-outpaces-fossil-fuels>.



Walking: To increase pedestrian mode share targets and improve safety, the CAP should commit not only to developing a complete pedestrian network with comfortable, safe sidewalks, but also to innovative strategies to make walking as safe and convenient as possible. Examples of strategies to increase pedestrian mode share include piloting left-turn traffic calming to reduce turn speeds, restricting right turns at red lights, updating walk signals to extend time for pedestrians to cross the street, introducing leading pedestrian intervals, and adding new diagonal pedestrian crossings at busy intersections. We recommend referring to the Mayor of San Francisco, London Breed’s [Vision Zero announcement](#), August 2019.

Biking: Research and experience have shown that Class II bike facilities, which are striped bike lanes without a physical barrier, do not increase ridership as much as physically protected bike lanes. To increase bike ridership and secure safer streets for all, we recommend prioritizing protected bike facilities, not painted bike lanes.

Transit: To support transit ridership, we recommend adding an action that reads, “Support planning and policy decisions at SANDAG to reduce GHG emissions and VMT and increase transit ridership.” In addition, Vista can increase transit ridership through implementation of land use policies that support the development of dense affordable housing near transit, and can reallocate public space to support bus-only lanes on key transit corridors.

Include Strategies to Ensure Equitable Implementation of the CAP

Climate change hits hardest in communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and face health and socioeconomic challenges. We recommend that Vista’s CAP include a Social Equity section that explicitly defines how Vista will ensure that communities most impacted by climate change and environmental pollution are prioritized in the implementation of GHG reduction strategies, including investments in urban forestry, active transportation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency measures.

The development and implementation of this section should take place in consultation with a diverse set of stakeholders from the most impacted of the city’s communities.

Commit to Zero Waste

Waste decaying in landfills emits methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The CAP should achieve zero waste through strategies such as eliminating single-use materials, composting, and capturing landfill gas. We recommend adopting a Zero Waste policy that commits to 100% waste diversion by 2035.

Fully Electrify the City’s Municipal Vehicle Fleet

The CAP should include strategies to promote zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs) and a plan to convert the municipal fleet to ZEVs.



Adopt Green Infrastructure Strategies & Urban Tree Canopy Coverage Target

The CAP should include green infrastructure strategies to sequester carbon and deliver environmental, social, and economic benefits to the city. Green infrastructure is an approach to stormwater management that mimics or protects natural water systems. The CAP should also commit to a quantifiable target for an increase in tree canopy coverage by planting and caring for drought-tolerant trees.

Hire a CAP Administrator, Commit to Annual Monitoring Reports, Specific Date for CAP Update, Greenhouse Gas Inventory

In order to ensure timely and transparent progress, we recommend amending the Implementation and Monitoring Section of the CAP to commit to the following:

- Hire a CAP administrator to coordinate and oversee CAP implementation strategies.
- Require annual monitoring reports on implementation progress.
- Commit to a specific year for the CAP update.
- Require a greenhouse gas inventory every three years.

Recommend Inclusion of Best Practices As Described in the 3rd Edition CAP Report Card

In addition to the previous strategies, we recommend that Vista include the following best practices adopted by numerous cities across the San Diego region. For more detail on the strategies and which cities have incorporated each into their CAPs, please consult CAC's [3rd Edition CAP Report Card](#).

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the development of this critically important document. Vista's CAP presents an opportunity to help protect the health and safety of current and future generations from the worst impacts of climate change and to deliver economic, safety, and health benefits. We are available as a resource and a partner as you continue to develop the CAP and implement strategies.

Sincerely,

Maleeka Marsden
Climate Justice Advocate and Organizer
Climate Action Campaign