



SIERRA CLUB

LOMA PRIETA CHAPTER

SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES

June 28th, 2021

Los Altos City Council
1 North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

cc: City Manager Kilger, Environmental Commission via Sustainability Coordinator Emiko Ancheta

RE: Los Altos Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update

Dear Mayor Fligor and Los Altos City Councilmembers,

We represent the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter's Climate Action Leadership Team and residents of Los Altos, and we submit the following for the development of an effective Los Altos Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. We recommend the following considerations when developing the plan:

- **Climate Action Plan Assessment Form:** In order to support your development of a strong CAP, we invite you to complete and return the attached form, which lists the elements that we consider most critical for an effective CAP.
- **Focus on a few impactful actions with trackable metrics:** We recommend that Los Altos streamline its CAP to focus on the measures that will achieve the largest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Also, consider adopting an abbreviated format¹ that is more accessible to all readers, including decision makers and the public. We strongly encourage you to create a clear plan for tracking the actions in your CAP, measuring progress publicly at least quarterly.
- **Citizen Advisory Body:** We have also found that the most effective CAPs are often produced, not by consultants, but by knowledgeable citizen advisory bodies, as both Mountain View and Menlo Park have done. Because residents often recognize there is so much at risk in the City from climate change, they bring a high level of motivation, focus and skill. Please consider empowering the Environmental Commission or other citizen advisory committee to draft and guide your climate action plan.

We live in a climate crisis that threatens the survival of organized human life on Earth. The federal government has been unreliable in its commitment to environmental regulations and an equitable transition away from fossil fuels. However, strong climate policies from Bay Area cities are influencing state level policy, and federal money may soon be available for key infrastructure projects that align with actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Time is running out, and our best opportunity for climate action is for cities to lead the way with strong local policies.

¹ For an example of an abbreviated Climate Action Plan, see City of Menlo Park 2030 Climate Action Plan, July 2020, <https://menlopark.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/11486>

The Silicon Valley 2.0 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment tool shows that by mid-century 4.5 million sq ft of buildings, and 57 acres of land in Los Altos are classified as having High or Moderate Vulnerability to riverine flooding or wildfire. By 2050, economic impact in Los Altos from replacement costs, and interruption of economic activity, is predicted at \$421 million due to riverine flooding and wildfire destruction of buildings.²

The only certain way to mitigate climate change and delay and minimize the impacts such as flooding, wildfire, drought, extreme heat, and sea level rise, is to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). This will be a collective effort in which every city has a critical role to play, including Los Altos. To this end, we recommend that Los Altos set GHG reduction goals well beyond the current state targets and focus its Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) on feasible mitigation policies that are, as advised by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented." In addition, by including an Adaptation Plan as part of the CAAP, Los Altos can strengthen itself against climate impacts of flooding, wildfires, extreme heat, and drought.

We appreciate the opportunity to present Los Altos with recommendations for climate action and are available for further clarification. We look forward to working with Los Altos to create the strongest Climate Action Plan possible.

Respectfully Submitted,



Gladwyn d'Souza, Co-Chair, Conservation Committee, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club



Gita Dev, Co-Chair, Sustainable Land Use Committee, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club



Kristel Wickham, Climate Action Leadership Team, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

Lauren Weston, Executive Director, Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet

Jared Johnson, Senior Manager of Policy & External Relations, Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet

Kim Hunter, Los Altos resident

Carl van Reis, Los Altos resident

Melissa Pocek, Los Altos resident

Athena Tiet, Los Altos resident

Cc: James Eggers, Executive Director, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

² Silicon Valley 2.0 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool using inputs of: Geography: Los Altos / Climate Variables: Sea Level Rise, Riverine Flooding, Wildfire and Extreme Heat / Horizon Year: Mid-century- 2050 / Emissions Scenario: B1-Low / Sea Level Rise Scenario: zero cm and no storm surge / Assets: All assets selected (parcels, buildings, transportation, energy, wastewater, communications, hazardous materials and coastal protection). <https://siliconvalleytwopointzero.org/home>

Climate Action Plan Assessment Form

Please use the form below as a guideline for your City's proposed Climate Action Plan and send it to the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter's Climate Action Leadership Team dashiell.leeds@sierraclub.org for additional resources.

Action #	Description	Included in CAP?	Comments
1	Adopt a bold goal to reduce community-wide GHGs by at least 80% by 2030, given that scientific findings now show California's goal of a 40% reduction is no longer sufficient to address the speed and severity of the crisis. ³	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Specify all resources required to implement each action in the plan, including dollar amounts, staff hours and task owners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	For each CAP measure, include easy-to-track metrics to help Council members and the public gauge success of the plan. Define a reporting frequency for those metrics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Electrify All New Buildings: consider an ordinance that builds upon the existing reach code and prohibits natural gas infrastructure in new buildings. Reference Morgan Hill's ordinance ⁴ and the Sunnyvale Reach Code ⁵ . Design buildings that benefit the local wildlife and habitat. ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Electrify Existing Buildings: Develop a set of policies paired with financial options, if feasible, to encourage and/or require building owners to convert from gas to electric when appliances are retired - with an eye to equity protections. ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Reduce vehicle miles traveled by 25% , which can be accomplished by a) rezoning to encourage higher density near transit and b) creating a Green Streets network ⁸ that makes the City easier and safer to navigate without a car. ⁹	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Increase access to electric vehicle (EV) charging , especially for those living in multi-family housing and where charging can be done during the day, using abundant clean solar energy from California's electric grid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Replace 100% of the City's municipal assets that currently use gasoline, diesel or natural gas with efficient electric alternatives, including but not limited to: fleet vehicles, furnaces, water heaters, landscaping equipment, and pool heating equipment. Withdraw investments in companies that engage in fossil fuel extraction, refining or distribution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Include a climate adaptation plan focused on protecting areas of the community vulnerable to wildfires, extreme heat events, and flooding.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	Empower the Environmental Commission or a separate citizen's advisory committee to support the development and implementation of a CAP, and then to monitor progress. Encourage youth membership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

³ Palo Alto has adopted a goal of 80% GHG reduction by 2030 and Menlo Park's adopted goal is 90% GHG reduction by 2030.

⁴ Morgan Hill ordinance prohibiting natural gas infrastructure in new buildings:

https://library.municode.com/ca/morgan_hill/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT15BUCO_CH15.63PRNAGAINNEBU

⁵ Sunnyvale requires all-electric new construction in all building types with minimal exceptions.

<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/GetDocument.aspx?tn=235920-2&DocumentContentId=68906>

⁶ Implement Bird-Safe Design and reduce light pollution: (See Cupertino's draft ordinance as an example):

<http://cupertino.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=5fc6b30b-ad27-4970-9ba0-58501a8d208d.pdf>

⁷ Reference the proposed 'burn-out ordinance' in Menlo Park's CAP. City of Menlo Park 2030 Climate Action Plan, July 2020,

<https://www.menlopark.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/11486>

⁸ Sierra Club Guidelines for a Green Streets Network: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce-authors/u4142/Sierra%20Club%20Loma%20Prieta%20Open%20Streets%2005-1-20.pdf>

⁹ For an example of a City that has implemented Green Streets, see Oakland's Slow Streets Program,

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets>