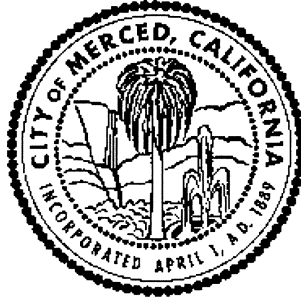


Agenda Item:H.5
Meeting Date:9/2/2014



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

 Print

TO: City Manager
FROM: Bill King, Principal Planner
DATE: 07/15/2014
SUBJECT: Programmatic Climate Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

No action is requested. This is an informational item and opportunity for the City Council to track Staff's progress in crafting the City's Programmatic Climate Action Plan.

ALTERNATIVES:

Not applicable.

History and Past Actions:

The City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) was adopted in 2012, and provides guidance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. The CAP is grounded in four community values, each with related goal areas. These are listed below:

1. Healthy Communities
 - Enhance Mobility of all Transportation Modes
 - Sustainable Community Design
2. Quality Natural Resources
 - Water Conservation and Technology
 - Protect Air Resources
 - Waste Reduction
3. Clean Energy Resources
 - Increase the Use of Renewable Energy Resources
 - Building Energy Conservation

4. Leaders and Partners
 - Public Outreach and Involvement

Description:

In September 2013, the City Council authorized City Staff to hire PMC as the project consultant to help City Staff and the community create a Programmatic Climate Action Plan (PCAP). The PCAP will be crafted: 1) to enable the City to qualify for permit streamlining as provided for in CEQA statutes; 2) to be consistent with the values and goals of the 2012 CAP; and 3) to emphasize incentives and encouragement versus regulations and requirements, to the extent possible. To qualify as a permit streamlining tool, the recommended actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will need to be implemented and monitored. The PCAP will include government and community based projects and programs to implement between now and 2020.

Sample Actions

There are numerous examples of programs and projects that can be implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the community. A sampling of the 150 ideas listed in the City's 2012 CAP include:

- Install drought-tolerant gardens
- Coordinate traffic signal timing
- Compost organic materials
- Install functional bikeways, sidewalks and transit
- Install solar panels
- Enable a local "Property Assessed Clean Energy" (PACE) Program

Permit Streamlining

Permit-streamlining, as it applies to CEQA-based assessment of greenhouse gas emissions, will be an outcome of the PCAP project. Studies to assess a project's impact on global warming add costs, time and uncertainty to the CEQA review process. With an adopted PCAP, those steps are not needed. Addressing greenhouse gas reductions in this programmatic manner is encouraged and supported by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project does not circumvent CEQA, but rather front-loads the required assessment in a manner that benefits the community, creating efficient government operations, early community member involvement, and lessening a regulatory impediment for businesses, industry, and homes to locate in the City of Merced.

Components of the PCAP

The PCAP is being crafted to include the following components: 1) a recommended list of projects and programs to achieve the City's adopted greenhouse gas reduction target; 2) monitoring protocols and worksheets; and, 3) development-related codes grounded in City General Plan policies and mitigation measures, together with a user-friendly design manual to provide a more predictable development review process. Objectives for the PCAP components are described below:

Programmatic Climate Action Plan

- Enable permit streamlining

- Identify cost-effective actions and programs
- Provide tracking and monitoring tools

Development Code

- Include a limited selection of code changes
- Include previously committed actions from the City's General Plan EIR
- Dovetail new codes with existing requirements of other agencies
- Emphasize a performance-based approach
- Set bar for new codes to be no less than currently required
- Apply to discretionary projects only

Urban Design Manual

- Compile relevant codes and policies
- Craft the UDM to be user-friendly for use by the general public, staff and development community
- Focus on site planning and urban expansion

Public Outreach

The components of the PCAP (described above) will be developed from input of the local community through a variety of methods, including, five public workshops, six Focus Group meetings; two local development community stakeholder meetings; community meetings; and three City Council Meetings. The PCAP Focus Group members are listed below:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Member</u>
Builders	Adam Cox
Engineers and Surveyors	Dena Traina
Local Chambers of Commerce	Jennifer Krumm
Real-Estate Brokers and/or agents	Robert Dylina
Mobility, Air Health Advocate	Michelle Xiong
Conservation	Erin Stacy
Local "green-jobs"	Dan Caris (Mr. Ink Pro)
Local "green-jobs"	Brent Jerner (APG Solar)
City Council Representative / Mayor	Stan Thurston
City Planning Commissioner	Peter Padilla

The Project Focus Group, which includes staff from many City Departments, in coordination with the guidance and assistance of the consultant, will work to identify, select and prioritize a set of recommended actions to include in the PCAP. These, along with cost-benefit information, will be included in the PCAP, and if adopted will play an important role in setting Department work programs and selection of capital improvement projects. Current with this future work, emission reductions will be monitored and recorded. These follow-up actions are essential to the ability of the City to utilize the permit-streamlining function of the PCAP. Permit streamlining will be able to occur as long as the City is on-track in meeting its greenhouse gas reduction target. The Focus Group will also guide the drafting of the development code component of the project.

Project Timeline

All draft PCAP components are scheduled to be completed by July 2015, with City Council review and potential adoption to occur soon after.

Budget/Appropriate Action:

There is no budget action connected to this study session about the PCAP Project.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill King, Principal Planner

Reviewed,
David Gonzalves Director of Development Services

Approved By,
John M. Bramble, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

No Attachments Available