

Chapter V

Public Participation



Albany residents actively participated in the formulation of this Climate Action Plan (CAP) and were vital to its success. The objective for the community participation was to provide initial direction for the Plan, to provide comments on the draft, and to highlight local issues and opportunities that could enhance local community sustainability while also reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs). Community investment and support in the outcome of the CAP is critical to its success, and community members will continue to take an active role to both implement the Plan and monitor its effectiveness over time.

Outreach Methods

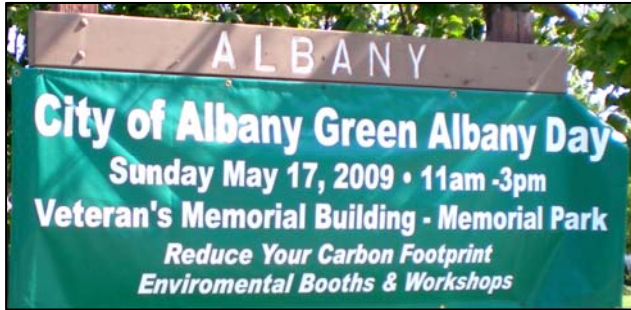
A variety of outreach tools allowed all who wished to participate to do so in a manner with which they felt comfortable. Outreach efforts included meetings with Albany's Sustainability Committee, an information-packed PowerPoint presentation available to organizations and individuals throughout the City, a web-based community survey, and workshops at Green Albany Day 2009. A brief summary of each

activity follows. Copies of various outreach materials are also provided in Appendix C.

Sustainability Committee

Leading the effort to prepare the CAP was the Sustainability Committee, which was established to advise the City Council on policies, programs, and issues promoting environmental sustainability.

The Sustainability Committee provides leadership, technical assistance, education and outreach to members of the public, schools, local businesses, and city agencies on innovative programs to promote environmental sustainability through energy conservation, solid waste reduction and recycling, water conservation, pollution prevention, transportation efficiency, and other means. The Committee is composed of seven members, one each appointed by City Council members, one at-large appointment, and one youth member appointed by the Albany Unified School District Board.



The Sustainability Committee was the principal body for identifying, confirming, and validating community concerns and desires, and functioned as a conduit between the City, residents, property owners, and the business community in the formulation and review of CAP strategies and measures. The group analyzed a full spectrum of community issues, opportunities, and challenges. Prior to release of the Administrative Draft CAP, the Sustainability Committee met four times to

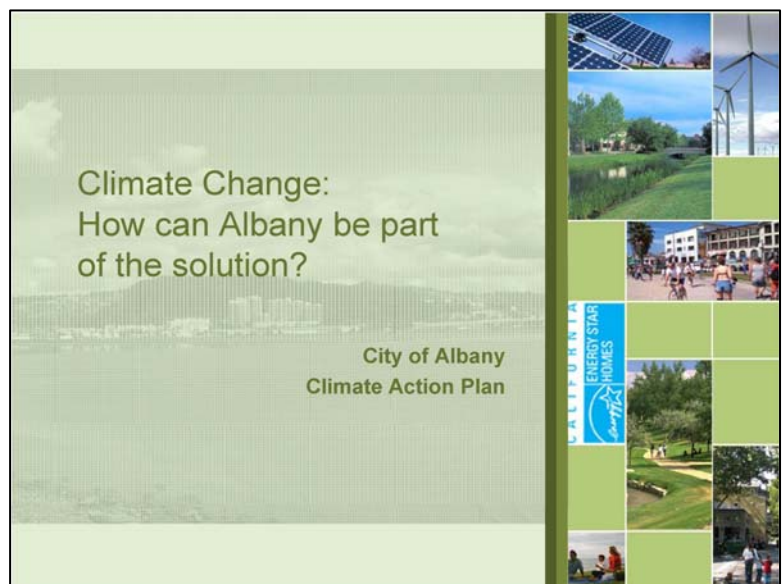
review and discuss: 1) the objectives of the CAP work program; 2) preliminary results of the community survey; 3) the GHG inventory, projections, and reduction targets; and 4) draft GHG reduction strategies and measures. Following release of the Administrative Draft CAP, the Sustainability Committee met twice to review the draft Plan. The committee provided valuable feedback that was incorporated into the Public Draft CAP. All Sustainability Committee meetings were advertised and open to the public. Many community members and organizations attended to offer meaningful input which was used to craft CAP strategies and measures. Copies of Sustainability Committee meeting minutes where the CAP was discussed are included as Appendix D.

Community PowerPoint Presentation

The City and consultants prepared a PowerPoint presentation that was used by City staff and Sustainability Committee members to describe the preparation of the CAP to groups and organizations throughout the community. The presentation defined the challenges and opportunities of climate action; described why taking action now matters both locally and globally; presented California's legislative framework for climate change planning; defined the proposed process for completing Albany's CAP; and reviewed best practices used in other jurisdictions to reduce GHGs associated with land use, transportation, green building, energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, recycling and waste, and public outreach. The presentation concluded by presenting actions individuals could take now to reduce their carbon footprint, and presenting information regarding how people could participate in formulating the CAP. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is provided as Appendix C.

Climate Action Survey

The City sponsored the first of two online climate action surveys between October 2008 and June 2009 to provide input for the CAP. City staff also sponsored info tables at the Senior Center and Community Center and a booth at the City's 4th of July celebration to distribute paper copies of the survey. Over 160 responses to the survey were received. The survey consisted of 21 questions regarding transportation choices, home and business energy use, community shopping and services, renewable energy, water conservation, waste reduction, and sea level rise. The survey also asked residents to identify the level of support they would offer



the City with regard to implementing mandatory requirements versus incentive-based programs to achieve GHG reductions and concluded with a series of demographic questions regarding each respondent’s age, whether they own or rent property within the City, and their annual income. A second online survey was released with the public review draft of the CAP to assess public support for specific measures included in the plan.

Key Findings

Although the number of responses received does not achieve statistical significance, responses to the survey still provide valuable insights into community opinion. Copies of the survey questionnaire and June 2009 results are provided as attachments to this chapter.

Following are some of the key survey findings.

Demographics

Few survey respondents were under 18 years of age or over 65 years of age. This suggests a need for additional outreach within these communities as the CAP is implemented. Both groups can play important roles in implementing the CAP through a youth/senior Green Corps programs.

Need for Climate Action

General consensus among the responses indicates that City policies should address climate change. Two-thirds of all respondents indicated support for City efforts to create mandatory requirements versus incentive-based approaches. More than half of those respondents also indicated a willingness to pay higher taxes to support these efforts.

Transportation

The private car was the predominant travel mode for most respondents, but other travel modes were also used (i.e., bike, walk, public transit). Working from home was a low-carbon option for about 20% of respondents.

Public transit played only a minor role in respondents’ transportation choices. More than 80% of respondents claimed to ride public transit “monthly”, “only a few times a year”, or “never.” Respondents generally found transit use inconvenient compared to private automobile use, citing that driving is faster, safer, and more accessible to a variety of locations. Shuttles to/from residential neighborhoods and job sites, car share programs, additional stops with more amenities, and additional shopping and employment centers near Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stops were all suggested as potential options to improve the appeal of public transit.

Roughly half of the respondents walked or biked to purchase daily goods and services. More respondents indicated they would walk/bike if the City helped to improve route (i.e., sidewalks, bike paths) quality and safety, and decrease distance to and increase the diversity of destination shops and service centers.

17. To what extent would you support City-led efforts to meet mandated greenhouse gas emissions targets? (select one)

	Response Percent	Response Count
I would not support the efforts at all.	2.9%	4
I would support voluntary incentive-based measures, but that is all.	30.2%	42
I would support the City in creating mandatory requirements in order to meet the targets.	31.7%	44
I would support mandatory requirements and increased taxes in order to meet the targets.	35.3%	49
<i>answered question</i>		139
<i>skipped question</i>		23



Building Energy

Respondents acknowledged the benefits of energy efficiency measures for GHG reductions, cost-savings, and quality of life improvements. Respondents provided strong support for new regulations that would require increased energy efficiency in new construction and major remodels, market-based incentives, and voluntary measures that produce co-benefits.

More than 60% of respondents indicated that the City should require that buildings be retrofitted to a higher level of energy efficiency at the time of resale, or major additions and remodels. More than 80% of respondents said that the City should provide low interest loans to property owners who want to retrofit their homes or businesses to be more energy-efficient. However, numerous respondents pointed out that current economic conditions should be taken into account, and that such programs should not tack on major expenses for those trying to buy, sell, or remodel a home.

With regard to their own potential home energy efficiency improvements, respondents favored low-cost measures (e.g., changing out traditional light bulbs with compact fluorescents). More expensive and slow-payback measures (e.g., insulation, solar hot water heaters, or solar panels) had lower levels of support. If these are important for achieving GHG reduction targets, then the City needs to work to: a) remove financial barriers, and b) provide public education to inform residents about potential financial benefits.

Water Conservation and Waste Reduction

Respondents offered very strong support for water conservation and waste reduction measures, even for mandatory regulations and behavior changing measures. Strong support was offered for credits on water bills if a household uses less than an established number of gallons per month; requirements for new construction and major remodels/additions should to use the lowest water consuming appliances available; and City goals to become a zero waste community.

Renewable Energy

More than 90% of respondents offered support for installing photovoltaic panels or wind turbines on municipal buildings/properties, so long as it is cost-effective. Respondents expressed some interest in photovoltaic panels or solar hot water heaters for homes or commercial buildings. Approximately 75% supported spending extra on monthly utility bills to offset GHG emissions associated with home energy use. Respondents also supported wind energy generation, provided that concerns about impacts to birds, bats, and aesthetics can be resolved.

Sea Level Rise

More than 80% of respondents supported adapting land uses in low-lying areas of the City to rising sea levels versus building levees.

Community Workshops

The City also conducted two community workshops in conjunction with Green Albany Day on May 17, 2009. The workshop focused on proposed GHG reduction strategies and measures to be contained in the Draft CAP. The workshop objective was to receive public comment and establish preliminary levels of support for each key strategy and measure. The workshop consisted of a PowerPoint presentation and several stations outlining proposed Climate Action Plan measures.

Discussions at Green Albany Day focused on exploring potential for creating an urban farm on the Gill Tract, concerns that the proposed bicycle infrastructure within the complete streets CAP measure was too expensive relative to the improvements called for in the Bicycle Master Plan, desires for San Pablo Avenue and Solano Avenue to be more pedestrian-friendly, concern regarding potential costs of a Residential Energy Conservation Ordinance to homeowners and its potential effect on low or moderate income households, and desires to facilitate high-density residential and mixed-use development in a way that is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Copies of the workshop posterboards and PowerPoint presentation are provided as an attachment to this chapter.



Attachments

The following materials are provided in Appendix D to document the public outreach process for the CAP. All materials associated with the outreach program are available for review at the Albany Environmental Resources Department.

- Sustainability Committee meeting minutes for September 17, 2008
- Sustainability Committee meeting minutes for December 17, 2008
- Sustainability Committee meeting minutes for March 18, 2009
- Sustainability Committee meeting minutes for April 15, 2009
- Sustainability Committee meeting minutes for June 15, 2009
- Community PowerPoint presentation, “Climate Change: How can Albany be part of the solution?”
- Climate action survey questionnaire
- Climate action survey results – June 11, 2009

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