

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE OUTREACH PROJECT

The Albany City Council adopted the Climate Action Plan (CAP) in April 2010. The CAP is comprised of polices and measures that, when implemented, will enable the City to meet its target for greenhouse gas emission reductions. Albany's adopted target requires the city's GHG emissions to be reduced 25% below 2004 levels by 2020 (Figure 1). Several climate protection measures and policies are either in place or in the planning stages.

While this is a very important target for the city to support and meet, it is important to step back for a moment to reflect on the larger picture:

- Nine of the ten hottest years on record have been in the last decade.¹
- Extreme weather events such as droughts, heat waves, and hurricanes are increasing in intensity as well as frequency.² "Once-a-century" or "once-a-millennia" events are becoming more commonplace.
- Climate change is leading to accelerating ecosystem damage both on land and in the seas, including widespread extinction for many animal species, which simply cannot keep pace with the rate of climate change.³
- Locally, California and the Western U.S. face increased water supply issues from increased drought conditions and higher temperatures.⁴

Moreover, it is critical to emphasize the cumulative nature and harm from continued CO₂ emissions. Meeting a budget or a target does not solve the issues above unless that target is zero net-carbon emissions, and even then the stock of CO₂ in the atmosphere will continue to alter the climate for many years. Climate scientist Ken Caldeira of Stanford University has stated: "There are no such things as 'allowable CO₂ emissions.' There are only 'damaging CO₂ emissions' or 'dangerous CO₂ emissions.'"⁵

Ultimately, what kind of world do we want to leave our children?

Historically, several California city-led actions and measures have led to California state-level statutes and regulations (e.g., recycling and waste management). This type of bottom-up, citizen-led, volunteer action and activity is more critical than ever given the legislative paralysis at the federal level. At the same time it is quite clear that cities such as Albany, Berkeley, and Davis simply do not have the resources, staffing, or budget to champion or implement all of the changes outlined in city Climate Action Plans,⁶ much less reach the goal of zero carbon emissions in the future.

Fortunately, Albany is blessed with many community groups that trying to help tackle this problem in various ways (e.g., ~~Rollers and Strollers~~ Strollers and Rollers, Carbon Zero-Neutral Albany, and Nature Village), and several city council members have actively campaigned in support of the Albany Climate Action Plan.

¹ https://na.unep.net/geas/getUNEPPageWithArticleIDScript.php?article_id=53keep in mind the

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/11/science/earth/extreme-weather-grows-in-frequency-and-intensity-around-world.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

³ <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/83/1/thomascd1.pdf>; <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/30/12377.full>;
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/jul/14/climate-change-evolution-species-adapt>

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/06/us/colorado-river-drought-forces-a-painful-reckoning-for-states.html?pagewanted=all>

⁵ <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2013/09/30/2699121/real-budget-crisis-co2/>

⁶ We would like to give a special "~~shout-out~~" recognition to city staff member Claire Griffing, who spearheads City staff outreach work on a very limited budget. Claire works closely with Middle School and High School students, and also posts on a Facebook page and this foundational work can be the basis for future work to inspire and energize Albany's younger generation.

The Outreach Subcommittee of the Albany Sustainability Committee has met several times to brainstorm outreach/education opportunities and gaps for continued Climate Action Plan implementation throughout Albany. As a first step, we propose to convene an “Albany Green Coalition” to coordinate various group efforts and to empower and energize local residents to take actions to reduce their carbon footprint.

Committee Findings

CAP areas with largest behavior change opportunities are

- Reduced auto trips (especially local for shopping, errands, and school transport)
- Energy Conservation (home and business)
- Energy Efficiency Improvements (home and business)

Albany has many interested, organized outreach/education groups which together, represent a great network to leverage for outreach. These include (partial list, more to be added):

- ~~Rollers and Strollers~~ Strollers and Rollers
- Transition Albany
- Carbon ~~Zero-Neutral~~ Albany (COA)
- Nature Village (UC Village Sustainability group)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Parks & Rec Green Team (may be dormant)
- Senior Center users
- AUSD management, faculty, and parents
- AUSD students
- Lion’s Club
- Rotary Club

Together, these groups would be a great help in advancing CAP implementation. Thus, we propose to lead and convene a meeting of all interested parties to explore forming the Albany Green Coalition.

Proposed Meeting to Form of Albany Green Coalition

We propose to convene a meeting with invited representatives from above and other groups to explore the formation of the Albany Green Coalition (AGC). We would discuss how to organize through all these groups, to implement the three goals of the CAP best suited to outreach and individual behavior change: reduced auto trips, increased home and work energy conservation, and increased home and work energy efficiency improvements.

The meeting would also be announced and open to the general public, but the focus of this meeting is an organizing convocation. Our Sustainability Committee will serve as the convener.

Invitation Process

The above groups provide a starting list of invitees. With Claire’s and Sustainability Committee member additions, we should be able to develop a good list of leadership for each organization to

invite. We propose to invite representatives from each group via email, explaining the purpose and providing the agenda (see below).

Need for Professional Facilitator (Pro Bono)

Due to the diverse array of groups envisioned above, we will seek to engage a professional facilitator for the event on a pro bono basis. The SC Subcommittee can work with the facilitator to plan the meeting, subject to review and approval by full SC.

Preliminary Agenda

The following is a preliminary agenda:

Meeting Objective: Form the Albany Green Coalition to conduct citywide outreach and education campaigns to implement these CAP measures:

- Reduced auto trips
- Increase energy conservation at home and work [particularly natural gas-based heating](#)
- Increase energy efficiency at home and work [particularly natural gas-based heating](#)

Part 1: Introduction (1 hour)

- A. Sustainability Committee Chair Tom Cooper and Vice Chair Max Wei would give a brief summary of the Climate Action Plan and our most recent inventory update to highlight the need to do “more” in the areas of VMT reduction, energy conservation, and energy efficiency projects.
- B. Each represented group would be asked to provide a brief introduction to its history, mission, and work, especially regarding outreach and education work to promote sustainability.

Part 2: Discuss Outreach/Education Campaign(s) (1 hour)

The facilitator would manage this process, and highlight areas of common interest and willingness to implement the following.

Campaign Strategies and Methods (for discussion)

1. Identify best mechanism(s) to reach Albany residents and businesses
 - a. Coalition Working Group
 - b. Community Champions
 - c. Other
2. Create Community Experts’ Info Exchange Series
 - a. Short “how to” seminars (e.g. Solar Water Heater, Heat pump based water heating, smart thermostats) from local community members
3. Organize Block-by-Block Energy Day (similar to earthquake preparedness)
4. Develop incentives to reduce local auto trips
 - a. Human ‘school bus” network to walk to school
 - b. Incentives to bike to high school
 - c. Electric carts for shopping locally
5. Participation in Cool California Challenge

Part 3: Next Steps

This part would involve step to go back to each organization and get agreement to form the Albany Green Coalition. This part would also involve a brief outlining of next steps (e.g., agenda for 2nd meeting).

Potential Agenda for 2nd AGC Meeting:

- Define level of City staff and financial support. (This is expected to be limited in nature and scope).
- Develop implementation plan with commitments from participant groups
- Formulate progress tracking and reporting mechanisms
- Set up meeting schedules, campaign milestones, etc.

Figure 1. Albany GHG emissions projection with flat VMT (vehicle miles driven). Note that in this projection, the share of natural gas emissions (primarily from space heating and water heating but excluding natural gas for electricity) surpass transportation emissions as the highest source of emissions.

