



## **Item No. 1 Town of Atherton**

### **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: RACHAEL LONDER, MANAGEMENT ANALYST II**

**DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2023**

**SUBJECT: ADOPT A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN UPDATE AND CEQA NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a Resolution to Approve the 2023 Climate Action Plan Update and CEQA Notice of Exemption

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2016, Atherton adopted its first-ever Climate Action Plan (CAP) setting a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy and water, transportation, and waste by 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 49 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Plan includes 25 actions to take to support the town in reaching the targets aligned with the State's requirements established by AB 32 and SB 32 which respectively aimed to reduce the State's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. In 2017, the Council prioritized 16 of the 25 CAP actions acknowledging that the CAP would need to be updated to reach the 2030 targets.

On November 3, 2021, during the City Council's Study Session, staff shared a five-year update on the Climate Action Plan highlighting actions that helped the Town reduce emissions by 20.4% exceeding its first target of a 15 percent reduction by 2020. Staff recommended updating the Climate Action Plan to refine and add measures that would support the Town in achieving the second target of a 49 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 and aligning with the State's updated goals of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 (Executive Order B-55-18). With direction from Council, Staff began working with the County of San Mateo's Office of Sustainability in 2022 to quantify the Town's progress towards GHG reduction targets and update the GHG targets for 2030 and 2045 to stay consistent with State regulations.

On June 21, 2023, during the City Council's Regular Meeting, staff presented a high-level overview of the CAP including updated goals and objectives. The Council gave direction to staff

to return for a study session to provide more time for an in-depth discussion covering each of the proposed actions included in the CAP.

## **ANALYSIS**

Using the Town's first CAP (2016) as a foundation, the 2023 update includes prioritized strategies for the Town to take in four focus areas: **energy and water, transportation, solid waste, and carbon sequestration & water conservation**. Each focus area has goals, objectives, and supporting strategies. The CAP's goals state the quantitative targets for emissions reductions, the objectives provide measurable steps for achieving goals, and the strategies include concrete tasks needed to achieve the objectives that can be taken by both the Town and the community. This structure enables the Town to implement, measure, and track GHG emission reduction targets in accordance with the State's legislation:

- 2030: Reduce emissions to 49 percent below 2005 baseline or 4.9 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per-capita
- 2045: Reduce emissions to 100 percent below 2005 baseline or 0 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e per-capita

The 61 strategies in the 2023 CAP Update include priority actions from the 2016 Plan and new strategies that reflect emerging technologies, updated state targets, and community-centered approaches. The strategies span across each of the focus areas:

- Building Energy: utilizing technological advances to support building electrification, renewable energy, and energy storage in the community and in Town operations.
- Transportation: shifting to electric powered vehicles and zero-emission off-road equipment in addition to increasing community adoption of public transit, walking, and biking.
- Waste and Materials Management: eliminating single-use plastics, creating organic compost from curbside collection, and promoting reducing, reusing, and recycling.
- Carbon Sequestration and Water Use: sequestering carbon through tree planting, compost application, and building materials.

Town staff evaluated and selected CAP strategies based on GHG emission reduction potential, return on investment, feasibility, priority from the Town's 2016 CAP, and feedback from the Environmental Programs Committee. The strategies included in this report are critical to reducing the Town's carbon footprint and are intended to guide future sustainability program planning. Each strategy can be reviewed on the Town's Climate Dashboard (Attachment 1) at <https://tinyurl.com/AthertonCAP>.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Town staff will work with the County Office of Sustainability to confirm the GHG emissions inventory for 2021 and 2022. 2020 inventories will be skipped due to short-term changes that occurred as a result of the pandemic but are not indicative of CAP implementation progress. The updated 2021 and 2022 inventories will help staff to track progress on actions already taken. Through 2023 and 2024, CAP implementation will be focused on building electrification, zero-emission vehicles, compost procurement, and education and community engagement. Town Staff

will return to Council in 2024 with an update on progress towards achieving the emissions reductions including the status of each of the 61 actions.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Implementation of the 2023 CAP will have a budgetary impact on the Town that is uncertain at this time. A portion of the implementation will be covered by the Sustainability Program operating budget within the City Manager's Office. Specific funding needs for each recommended action will be determined as part of the implementation process and will be requested as part of the approval process for each proposed action.

### **GOAL ALIGNMENT**

This report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal E – Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency
- Goal F – Be Forward-Thinking, Well-Managed, and Well-Planned

### **POLICY FOCUS**

The 2016 Climate Action Plan set a policy precedent for aligning with the State's emissions reductions requirements. In 2016, the Council acknowledged that an update would be needed after the 2020 goals were achieved to meet the State-mandated 49% reduction by 2030. This 2023 update provides a clear policy pathway to achieve the 2030 goals and further aligns with the State's Executive Order B-55-18 which aims to achieve carbon neutrality across all jurisdictions in California. Adoption of the 2023 Climate Action Plan establishes a new policy framework to reduce emissions to create a carbon-neutral future for Atherton thus future policies will be presented to the Council as a part of the Climate Action Plan's implementation.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,400 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

### **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL**

This item   X   has or    has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

- Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- X   Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)

## Climate Action Plan Update

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- \_\_\_\_\_ Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Planning Commission (meets each month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation Committee (meets every other month)

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Resolution No. 23 – XX Climate Action Plan Update
2. 2023 Climate Action Plan: Pathway to Carbon Neutrality
3. Background, Supplementary Findings and Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories
4. CEQA Notice of Exemption
5. Atherton's Climate Dashboard – Access Online at <https://tinyurl.com/AthertonCAP>