



# COUNTY of VENTURA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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September 12, 2023

Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT:** Receive and File a Presentation from the County Executive Office Regarding Two Proposals from the Ventura County Climate Emergency Council (CEC) Requesting that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors (1) Create a Policy to Reduce GHG Emissions from New and Existing County-owned Buildings and Facilities, and (2) Create a Program to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Residential and Nonresidential Buildings; and Provide Direction to Staff Regarding the CEC's Proposals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that your Board:

1. Receive and file a presentation by the County Executive Office regarding two proposals from the Ventura County Climate Emergency Council (CEC) requesting that the Board (1) create a policy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from new and existing County-owned buildings and facilities, and (2) create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings;
2. Provide direction to staff regarding the CEC's proposals and the related recommendations by the Planning Commission.

## **FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:**

None.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Background**

On October 20, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 2), which established the CEC. The CEC's purpose is to research, develop, and advise

your Board regarding potential programs and policies to implement the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the General Plan's GHG Reduction Strategy for unincorporated areas of Ventura County that would result in quantifiable GHG reductions that further progress toward achieving the 2030, 2040, and 2050 GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan. In establishing the CEC, your Board directed that:

- The CEC's recommended GHG reduction programs and policies for the unincorporated area of Ventura County shall, with the assistance of CEO staff, be presented to the Ventura County Planning Commission at a public meeting for its review, consideration, and formulation of a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.
- The CEC and Planning Commission recommendations shall be presented together to the Board of Supervisors at a public meeting for its review, consideration, and action no later than the end of 2022 and every two years thereafter until the CEC's work is completed.
- The Board of Supervisors shall have sole authority to approve or disapprove, in whole or in part, with or without modification, and to direct the County of Ventura's implementation of the programs and policies that are developed and recommended as set forth above. Any recommendation approved by the Board that requires amendments to the General Plan, County ordinances, policies, or regulations, or that otherwise requires implementing approval or action by the County, shall be directed by the Board to County agency(ies) as work plan items, which shall thereafter be processed and approved by the County in accordance with all applicable legal requirements and County procedures. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the CEC, acting through the CEO, may seek preliminary guidance and input directly from the Board during the CEC's process of researching and developing its recommendations.

On August 23, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that your Board create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County-owned buildings and facilities. On October 25, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that your Board create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings. Each of the CEC proposals was presented during a public meeting of the CEC and approved by a majority of the CEC to be considered by the Planning Commission and then your Board in accordance with Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 2) and the bylaws of the CEC. The public meeting materials for each proposal, including the CEC's internal evaluation criteria that were used to evaluate the proposals' anticipated impact, feasibility, and co-benefits, are available online at [ventura.org/vccec](https://ventura.org/vccec).

On June 1, 2023, the Planning Commission reviewed and provided comments on the CEC Proposals. The Planning Commission staff report (Exhibit 1), Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 2), selected General Plan references (Exhibit 3), and approved minutes from the Planning Commission hearing (Exhibit 4) are discussed later in this Board letter.

## **Ventura County General Plan and Climate Action Plan**

The County uses an integrated approach to address climate change in the General Plan by incorporating related goals, policies, and programs throughout the General Plan elements, such that the General Plan serves as the County's CAP.

The CEC was formed as one of the local efforts undertaken to fulfill policies and programs called for in the CAP portion of the General Plan. The proposals and activities of the CEC have a relationship to several goals, policies, and programs located in the General Plan; those with a direct nexus to CEC proposals are noted below, with full text provided in Exhibit 3 (Section A):

- Goal COS-10: to improve the long-term sustainability of the community through local efforts to reduce GHG emissions,
- Policy COS-10.1. Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy,
- Policy COS-10.2. Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target for 2030,
- Policy COS-10.3. Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Goals for 2040 and 2050,
- Program COS-CC. Climate Emergency Council, and
- Program COS-LL. Greenhouse Gas Reduction Policy Enhancement Program.

### **CEC Proposal No. 1- Create a Policy to Reduce GHG Emissions from New and Existing County of Ventura-owned Buildings and Facilities.**

On August 23, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that your Board create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities. The CEC Proposal requests that your Board amend the General Plan to add a new implementation program as noted below:

- Proposed Policy Name: Reduce GHG Emissions from New and Existing County of Ventura-owned Buildings and Facilities.
- Proposed Policy Description: The County shall develop a policy to support planning for moving towards electrification and decarbonization of new and existing County-owned Government buildings and facilities, where feasible, including:
  - a. Give conceptual support for electrification and decarbonization of County Government buildings and facilities, where feasible, and seeking grants and other financial incentives for this purpose, recognizing that reducing natural gas and propane use and reducing embodied carbon in building materials will help the County achieve its climate change goals.

- b. Direct County staff to proceed with the next steps in preparing for future electrification/decarbonization efforts, including building inventory and analysis, and identification of grants and other funding opportunities.
- c. Direct County staff to return to the Board with budget requests as necessary to implement this policy.
- d. Recognize that County policies regarding “cost effectiveness” should be updated to provide flexibility for incorporation of these measures.
- e. Express a willingness to consider having the General Fund cover the higher costs of electrification/decarbonization measures.

Additional discussion related to this proposal is provided in the Planning Commission staff report (Exhibit 1).

**I. Planning Commission Recommendation Regarding CEC Proposal No. 1.**

On June 1, 2023, the Planning Commission voted three to one (with one member absent) to recommend CEC Proposal No. 1 to your Board but for your Board to consider whether a General Plan Amendment would be necessary to effectuate the recommended policy or whether it could be implemented without a General Plan Amendment (Exhibit 4).

**II. Staff Recommendation Regarding CEC Proposal No. 1.**

Staff reviewed this proposed policy in the context of existing General Plan’s GHG-reducing policies and programs, existing County of Ventura Administrative Manual policies relating to capital planning and green building, current County activities, and the degree to which County agencies are able to implement the proposal using existing resources. The CEC proposal appears to be duplicative of existing General Plan Policy PFS-2.1 (Sustainable Plans and Operations), which states that the County shall encourage energy efficiency, GHG reduction features, and resiliency planning into County facility and service plans and operations. The CEC proposal also appears to repeat what is stated in the existing General Plan Program COS-T (Energy Consumption Performance), which states that the County should continue to review its energy consumption performance and implement programs designed to increase energy efficiency in County-owned buildings, including but not limited to the development of an energy audit and energy management programs and investigate new energy technologies such as solar and fuel cells among other activities listed in the Program description.

The CEC proposal covers several items addressed in the County of Ventura Administrative Manual, Policy No. Chapter II - 8. Capital Planning Policy (Policy No. 8) and Policy No. Chapter IV(A) – 24. Green Building Policy New Construction CALGreen Tier 1 (Policy No. 24). Policy No. 8 states that a Capital Planning Committee (Committee) is responsible for identifying capital assets, evaluation, and review of capital planning matters, and providing recommendations to your Board regarding capital assets. The Committee has several functions including identifying resources for funding capital

programs, evaluating opportunities for energy and water usage improvements and GHG reductions, and ensuring that policies and plans for capital assets receive appropriate consideration in the budget process. Policy No. 24 establishes a minimum requirement that all new non-residential construction performed by the County of Ventura complies with the California Building Standards Code, CALGreen Tier 1 measures with exceptions for healthcare buildings, existing buildings, and where compliance is not feasible.

Lastly, the CEC proposal reiterates ongoing activities by County agencies and departments currently working to address climate change and adaptation, including:

- County Executive Office, Sustainability Division: Investigates and applies for grants, incentives, and partnership opportunities for installing energy efficiency and electrification technologies, solar arrays, and battery storage at County-owned buildings and facilities.
- General Services Agency and Public Works Agency: Conducts energy audits in County-owned buildings and facilities to analyze potential opportunities for installation of energy efficiency measures, solar arrays, and battery storage. Installs energy efficiency technologies, onsite and offsite solar arrays at County-owned buildings and facilities, where feasible. Investigates and applies for grants, incentives, and partnership opportunities for installing energy efficiency and electrification measures, solar arrays, and battery storage at County-owned buildings and facilities, where feasible.

Moreover, staff believes it is likely that County agencies and departments will continue moving toward electrification and decarbonization of new and existing County-owned buildings and facilities, where feasible, with policies already in place. Staff therefore recommends that no new action be taken regarding this CEC proposal.

If your Board nonetheless supports the CEC proposal to create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities, staff recommends that your Board direct CEO to evaluate the existing policies included in the County of Ventura Administrative Manual, determine whether to prepare a new policy or amend an existing policy, and return to your Board for consideration of approving amending an existing policy or adding a new policy to the County Administrative Manual. General Services Agency staff have reviewed and agree with this staff recommendation. Amending or adding such a policy to the County Administrative Manual would be consistent with existing General Plan policies and programs, and would not require an amendment to the General Plan.

### **CEC Proposal No. 2 – Create a Program to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Residential and Nonresidential Buildings.**

On October 25, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that recommends your Board create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings. The CEC's proposal requests that your Board amend the General Plan to add a new program as noted below:

- Proposed Program Name: Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Residential and Nonresidential Buildings
- Proposed Program Description: This proposal recommends that the County develop and implement a program to promote the voluntary retrofit electrification of existing residential and nonresidential buildings in unincorporated Ventura County, strengthening and expanding the existing Tri-County Regional Energy Network (3C-REN) energy efficiency and electrification program in the CEO's Sustainability Division, and incorporating funding opportunities contained in the new Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The goals of the program are to reduce natural gas-related carbon dioxide emissions from existing buildings 41 percent below 2015 levels by 2030, 61 percent below 2015 levels by 2040, and 80 percent below 2015 levels by 2050. The program, which would strengthen and expand existing efforts, would be housed in the CEO's Sustainability Division, and additional staff (one additional full-time technical staff position) would be needed to support the program, particularly for educational, promotional, and outreach efforts. The program would continue to identify grants and other incentives to help finance the implementation of energy efficiency and electrification retrofits and would communicate those incentives and the County's climate goals to building owners and residents, to encourage voluntary electrification efforts.
- Lead (and Supporting) Department: CEO
- Timeframe: Ongoing

Additional discussion related to this proposal is provided in the Planning Commission staff report (Exhibit 1).

#### **I. Planning Commission Recommendation Regarding CEC Proposal No. 2.**

On June 1, 2023, the Planning Commission voted three to one (with one member absent) to recommend CEC Proposal No. 2 to your Board but for your Board to consider whether a General Plan Amendment would be necessary to effectuate the recommended program or whether it could be implemented without a General Plan Amendment (Exhibit 4).

#### **II. Staff Recommendation Regarding CEC Proposal No. 2.**

Staff reviewed this proposed program in the context of existing General Plan's GHG-reducing programs, current County activities, and the degree to which the County's CEO staff are able to implement the proposal using existing resources. The CEC proposal appears to possess a level of redundancy with General Plan Program COS-V (Improve Energy Conservation Awareness), which focuses on residential but not nonresidential buildings, in addition to ongoing educational, promotional, and outreach efforts conducted by CEO staff. Examples of County agencies and divisions which currently address climate change and/or climate adaption include, but are not limited to:

- County Executive Office, Sustainability Division: Through the Tri-County Regional Energy Network (3C-REN), delivers residential, but not nonresidential, energy-saving programs that help reduce energy use by offering contractors incentives

for energy-saving home improvements and supporting residential electrification by providing tools, support, and resources. Through the Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance (VCREA), identifies and promotes existing nonresidential and residential energy programs administered by the utilities. Investigates and applies for grants, incentives, and partnership opportunities for installing energy efficiency and electrification measures, solar arrays, and battery storage in residential and nonresidential buildings.

- Resources Management Agency: Adoption in fall 2022 for the 2023 Building Code, new provisions for all-electric residential and commercial buildings that require that new buildings be constructed with all electric appliances and equipment, with few exceptions.

It is unlikely that County agencies can create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing nonresidential buildings without additional resources. However, the California Public Utilities Commission recently approved 3C-REN's Business Plan to continue operating existing programs, including a residential program, and to launch three new programs to fill gaps in energy services for commercial and public sector buildings and the agricultural sector. CEO staff will return to your Board later this year with details about 3C-REN's approved Business Plan.

Staff believes that County agencies' and departments' existing efforts in addition to the proposed expansion of 3C-REN's program offerings will address the intent of the CEC's proposal, and therefore recommends that no new action be taken regarding this proposal.

If your Board nonetheless supports the CEC proposal to create a new General Plan program to encourage voluntary retrofitting of existing residential and nonresidential buildings to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, staff recommends the proposal be implemented by your Board directing CEO, in consultation with the Planning Division, to process a General Plan Amendment consistent with CEC's proposal. Given your Board's recent adoption of the Planning Division's Work Plan, your Board would also need to provide staff direction about how this new project would be prioritized with respect to the other pending projects.

This Board item was reviewed by the County Executive Office, County Counsel, Resource Management Agency, and General Services Agency. If you have any questions concerning the information presented above, please contact Heather Allen, Program Administrator in the County Executive Office's Sustainability Division, at 805-654-2871.

Sincerely,



Mike Pettit  
Assistant County Executive Officer



Sevet Johnson  
County Executive Officer

**EXHIBITS**

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| Exhibit 1 | Planning Commission Staff Report                    |
| Exhibit 2 | Resolution No. 20-124                               |
| Exhibit 3 | Selected General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs |
| Exhibit 4 | Planning Commission Minutes from July 1, 2023       |