

**Exhibit 1. June 1, 2023 Planning Commission Staff Report**

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

September 12, 2023



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County Executive Officer

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Assistant County Executive Officer/  
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June 1, 2023

Ventura County Planning Commission  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT    Review and Consider Proposals from the Ventura County Climate Emergency Council Requesting that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors Create a Policy to Reduce GHG Emissions from New and Existing County of Ventura-owned Buildings and Facilities and Create a Program to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Existing Residential and Nonresidential Buildings.**

## **A. PROJECT INFORMATION**

### **1. Applicant**

County Executive Office (CEO) staff acting as Program Administrator of the Ventura County Climate Emergency Council (CEC)

### **2. Location**

Countywide

### **3. Request**

Staff requests that the Planning Commission (Commission) review this staff report and all exhibits attached hereto in order to provide your Commission recommendations regarding two proposals of the CEC advising the Board of Supervisors on potential subprograms and policies to implement the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Strategy for the Climate Action Plan (CAP) portion of the Ventura County 2040 General Plan (General Plan) for the unincorporated areas of Ventura County that would result in quantifiable GHG reductions in order to further the County's progress toward achieving the 2030, 2040, and 2050 GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan.

Staff recommends that your Commission take the following actions:

1. **RECEIVE AND FILE** a report and presentation from staff regarding two CEC recommended proposals;
2. **PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION** by minute order to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors regarding a CEC request for the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities; and
3. **PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION** by minute order to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors regarding a CEC request for the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings.

#### 4. Review/Decision-Making Authority

On October 20, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1) which established the CEC. The resolution states that CEC recommendations to the Board of Supervisors shall 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. Following review, consideration, and formulation of a recommendation by the Planning Commission, the CEC and Planning Commission recommendations shall thereafter be presented 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.

On August 23, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that the Board of Supervisors create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities. On October 25, 2022, the CEC approved a proposal that the Board of Supervisors 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 the Board of Supervisors in accordance with Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1) and the bylaws of the CEC. The public meeting materials for each proposal, including the CEC's internal evaluation criteria which were used to evaluate the proposals' anticipated impact, feasibility, and co-benefits, are available online at [ventura.org/vcceec](https://ventura.org/vcceec).

The bylaws of the Planning Commission direct your Commission to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on matters related to the general plan, zoning, subdivisions, and other matters related to planning (Article VIII. Scope of Activity, Section 2(f)). The CEC proposals could create new general plan policies and programs and/or have implications related to implementation of several adopted General Plan policies and programs.

#### 5. Background

According to the County's General Plan, climate change is a global problem caused by the cumulative warming effects of GHG emissions. Governments at all levels, non-

governmental agencies, and private citizens and businesses are now acting to mitigate GHG emissions as quickly as possible to reduce or avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

The County uses an integrated approach to address climate change in the General Plan by incorporating related policies and programs throughout the General Plan elements, such that the General Plan serves as the County's CAP. Major components of the adopted CAP include a community GHG emissions inventory, GHG Reduction Strategy, and Climate Adaptation Strategy. The purpose of the GHG Reduction Strategy is to identify and reduce community GHG emissions from existing and future activities and sources within the unincorporated areas of Ventura County. The GHG Reduction Strategy also serves to identify the County's local fair-share contribution to meeting statewide GHG emission reduction goals pursuant to state legislation, policies, and guidance.

Throughout the General Plan's elements, CAP-related policies and programs are depicted with "CAP" icons. The General Plan's Appendix B. Climate Change is a technical appendix that includes:

- all CAP-related policies and programs of the General Plan in a single location,
- a summary of the results of key technical analyses,
- components of the County's GHG Reduction Strategy which includes measures to mitigate GHG emissions, and
- a Climate Adaptation Strategy which includes measures to address vulnerability to climate change impacts.



*The CAP icon depicts CAP-related policies and programs in Ventura County 2040 General Plan*

The CEC was formed as one of the local efforts undertaken by County agencies to fulfill policies and programs called for in the CAP portion of the General Plan. The CEC is a citizen advisory committee that advises the Board of Supervisors on potential programs and policies to implement the GHG Reduction Strategy for the CAP portion of the General Plan that would result in quantifiable GHG reductions in order to further the County's progress toward achieving the 2030, 2040, and 2050 GHG reduction targets. 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 2 (Section A):

- Goal COS-10,
- 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.

The following CEC proposals include several terms that refer to practices that reduce GHG emissions including decarbonization, which prevents emissions through the use of zero-carbon renewable energy sources such as solar and embodied carbon that represents the carbon emissions released during the lifecycle of building materials, including extraction, manufacturing, transport, construction, and disposal.

**6. CEC Proposal No. 1 - that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors 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 the Board of Supervisors create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities. The proposal as well as deliberative materials used during CEC discussion of the proposal are available at [ventura.org/vccece](https://ventura.org/vccece) along with other agenda packet materials for this previous CEC's public meeting.

The CEC's proposal requests that the Board of Supervisors amend the General Plan to add a new policy 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.

Rationale provided by the CEC in the evaluation criteria for their proposal noted that GHG emission reductions could be characterized as having a small but significant impact on

reducing GHG emissions in Ventura County. The proposal would lead to a reduction of GHG emissions over which the County of Ventura has direct control.

The CEC proposal is consistent with goals, policies, and programs found in the General Plan including Policies COS-10.1, COS-10.2, and COS-10.3, as well as Programs COS-CC and COS-LL (See Exhibit 2 for text of these policies and programs). Specifically, Program COS-LL and Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1) direct the CEC to advise the Board regarding potential subprograms and policies to implement the CAP and the General Plan's GHG reduction strategy for the unincorporated area of Ventura County that would result in quantifiable GHG reductions. It is important to note that new subprograms and policies are necessary in order to further the County's progress toward achieving the 2030, 2040, and 2050 GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan. Thus, the CEC proposal is consistent with the intent of General Plan Program COS-LL, as it would help to effectuate several existing General Plan policies that currently lack an implementation program including, but not limited to:

- LU-11.4 Sustainable Technologies,
- CTM-6.4 Facilities for Emerging Technologies,
- CTM-6.5 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations,
- PFS-2.2 Sustainable Facility Design,
- PFS-2.3 Energy Efficient Facility Construction, Purchases, Leases, Retrofits, and Expansions,
- COS-8.2 Incentives for Energy Efficiency,
- COS-8.4 Clean Power Alliance,
- COS-8.10 Battery Energy Storage Systems,
- HAZ-10.5 Air Pollution Impact Mitigation for Discretionary Development, and
- EV-4.4 Renewable Energy Facilities.

The CEC proposed policy language would contribute to implementation of Program COS-LL (Exhibit 2) and substantially fulfills direction from Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1). Since it can reasonably be expected that electrification and decarbonization of new and existing County-owned Government buildings and facilities will reduce the use of natural gas and propane as a source of energy and reducing embodied carbon in building materials will result in GHG emission reductions. However, the CEC proposed policy language does not provide specific direction with respect to moving towards electrification and decarbonization of new and existing County-owned Government buildings and facilities. Thus, the extent to which implementation of the policy would result in specific, quantifiable GHG emissions reduction or progress toward achieving the GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan is unclear.

Staff also reviewed this proposed policy in the context of existing General Plan's GHG-reducing policies and programs, 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, greenhouse

gas 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. 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 building 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 building and facilities, where feasible.

Moreover, staff believes it is likely that County agencies and departments will continue moving towards electrification and decarbonization of new and existing County-owned buildings and facilities, where feasible, with policies already in place.

### ***Staff Recommendation for CEC Proposal No. 1***

Staff finds the CEC proposal to create a policy is consistent with General Plan goal and policies as identified above and listed in Exhibit 2; however, as noted above, the proposal may be duplicative of existing General Plan policies, programs, and other ongoing efforts to combat climate change and adaptation. If the Board of Supervisors chooses to adopt 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 the Board direct County agencies to proceed with processing a General Plan Amendment.

If the Board of Supervisors chooses not to adopt 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 the Board reaffirm the County's commitment to address climate change and adaptation through existing General Plan Policy PFS-2.1 (Sustainable Plans and Operations), General Plan Program COS-T (Energy Consumption Performance), and the County's ongoing implementation activities described above.



**7. CEC Proposal No. 2 - that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors 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 the Board create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings. The proposal as well as deliberative materials used during CEC discussion of the proposal are available at [ventura.org/vccec](https://ventura.org/vccec) along with other agenda packet materials for this previous CEC public meeting.

The CEC's proposal requests that the Board of Supervisors 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

Rationale provided by the CEC in the evaluation criteria for their proposal noted that GHG emission reductions for existing residential and nonresidential buildings could be characterized as having a small but significant impact on reducing GHG emissions in Ventura County.

The CEC proposal is consistent with goals, policies, and programs found in the General Plan including Policies COS-10.1, COS-10.2, and COS-10.3, as well as Programs COS-CC and COS-LL (See Exhibit 2 for text of these policies and programs). Specifically, Program COS-LL and Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1) direct the CEC to advise the Board regarding potential subprograms and policies to implement the CAP and the General Plan's GHG reduction strategy that would result in quantifiable GHG reductions.



As previously noted, new subprograms and policies are necessary in order to further the County's progress toward achieving the 2030, 2040, and 2050 GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan. Thus, the CEC proposal will contribute to implementation of General Plan Program COS-LL if the proposed program to reduce GHG emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings incorporates subject matter from one or more of the General Plan's GHG-reducing policies which currently lack an implementation program including, but not limited to, General Plan Policies:

- LU-11.4 Sustainable Technologies,
- CTM-6.4 Facilities for Emerging Technologies,
- CTM-6.5 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations,
- PFS-2.2 Sustainable Facility Design,
- PFS-2.3 Energy Efficient Facility Construction, Purchases, Leases, Retrofits, and Expansions,
- COS-8.2 Incentives for Energy Efficiency,
- COS-8.4 Clean Power Alliance,
- COS-8.10 Battery Energy Storage Systems,
- HAZ-10.5 Air Pollution Impact Mitigation for Discretionary Development, and
- EV-4.4 Renewable Energy Facilities.

The CEC proposed program language does contribute to implementation of Program COS-LL (Exhibit 2) and substantially fulfills direction from Resolution No. 20-124 (Exhibit 1). Since it can reasonably be expected that by promoting the voluntary retrofit electrification of existing residential and nonresidential buildings, there may be a reduction in the use natural gas and propane as a source of energy that will result in GHG emission reductions. However, the CEC proposed program to promote the voluntary retrofit electrification of existing residential and nonresidential buildings is subject to choices made by building owners and operators to implement electrification and decarbonization efforts. Thus, it cannot be stated with certainty that the program outcome would result in GHG emissions reduction or progress toward achieving the GHG reduction targets and goals established in the General Plan.

Staff also 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. It is unlikely that County agencies can create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing nonresidential buildings without additional resources. 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 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 grant, 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 buildings that require that new buildings be constructed with all electric appliances and equipment, with few exceptions.

### ***Staff Recommendation for CEC Proposal No. 2***

Staff finds the CEC proposal to create a program is consistent with General Plan goal and policies as identified above and listed in Exhibit 2; however, as noted above, there may be some redundancy between the proposal and existing General Plan Program COS-V and ongoing County outreach efforts, and the proposal would likely require additional County resources. Staff recommends that, if the Board of Supervisors chooses to adopt the CEC proposal to create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings, it be done by directing County Agencies to proceed with conducting a General Plan Amendment.

If the Board of Supervisors chooses not to adopt the CEC proposal to create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings, staff recommends that the Board reaffirm the County's commitment to address climate change and adaptation through existing General Plan Program COS-V (Improve Energy Conservation Awareness) and the ongoing educational, promotional, and outreach efforts by CEO staff described above.

## **B. PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

A legal notice was not required for this item. However, public notification was provided Thursday, May 25, 2023, through:

- the Planning Division's weekly email notification regarding upcoming public meetings; and
- email notification to a Sustainability Division maintained interested parties list for the CEC.

As of Wednesday, May 24, 2023, no public comments were received for this agenda item.

## C. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

In consideration of staff recommendations regarding proposals of the CEC:

1. **RECEIVE AND FILE** a report and presentation from staff regarding two CEC recommended proposals;
2. **PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION** by minute order to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors regarding a CEC request for the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to create a policy to reduce GHG emissions from new and existing County of Ventura-owned buildings and facilities; and
3. **PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION** by minute order to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors regarding a CEC request for the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to create a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing residential and nonresidential buildings.

The Board of Supervisors hearing to consider the CEC proposals is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 12, 2023, in the Board of Supervisors hearing room. If you have any questions concerning the information presented above, please contact Heather Allen at 805-654-2871 or via email at [heather.allen@ventura.org](mailto:heather.allen@ventura.org).



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## EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1. Resolution No. 20-124

Exhibit 2. Selected General Plan Goals, Policies, and Programs