

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

DATE: JUNE 18, 2007 CMR:260:07

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Council approve revisions to the City's sustainability policy to reflect Palo Alto's impact on global ecosystems and to expand social equity considerations.

BACKGROUND

The City of Palo Alto adopted a policy reflecting the City's commitment to sustainability in April 2001 (CMR:175:01). This policy focused primarily on the environmental aspects of sustainability and so was revised in June 2002 (CMR:271:02) to reflect the economic and social equity components of sustainability. In April 2007 (CMR:211:07), Council directed staff to recommend revisions to the City Sustainability Policy to incorporate climate protection.

DISCUSSION

The Environmental Stewardship Steering Committee developed recommended revisions to the Sustainability Policy that would incorporate considerations relevant to climate protection.

Several committee members felt that the policy was already sufficient and did not necessarily require revision, or at least that it should not be changed to call out any particular initiative such as climate protection, as there are numerous other important sustainability issues that should not necessarily be perceived as a secondary priority. That calling out particular initiatives might set a precedent that if one area is not mentioned in the policy, then it is not covered by or relevant to the policy. Staff feels that an attempt to make the policy inclusive may, in fact, make it exclusive, because inevitably something may be left out or forgotten.

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Staff identified five main areas that deserve revision:

- 1. Add City operations to programs and services as a key mechanism for supporting the policy.
- 2. Modify the social equity portion of the policy because it is vague and only specifies Palo Alto. The decisions the City and its citizens make have implications beyond Palo Alto.
- 3. Revise the environment section to emphasize positive actions.
- 4. Add "global" to the description of ecosystems, not just local and regional ecosystems.
- 5. Highlight neighboring communities as another key category of partners with whom to work.

The modification to the word "comprise" is merely a grammatical refinement.

The proposed revised policy with changes from the existing policy highlighted is as follows:

It is the intent of the City of Palo Alto to be a sustainable community - one which meets its current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In adopting this policy, the City of Palo Alto accepts its responsibility, through its <u>operations</u>, programs and services, to:

Economy: Maintain a healthy, thriving and well-balanced economy comprised of comprising a blend of large and small business, which encourages the development of independent businesses and is resilient to the economic changes common to California's economy.

Social Equity: Continuously improve the quality of life for all Palo Alto community members without adversely affecting others.

Environment: Reduce resource use and pollution in a cost effective manner while striving to protect and enhance Enhance the quality of the air, water, land and other natural resources by minimizing human impacts on local, regional and global ecosystems through greater conservancy, reduced pollution, increased efficiency, and protection of; promote and support the conservation of native vegetation, fish, wildlife habitat and other ecosystems.; and minimize human impacts on local and regional ecosystems.

In working toward these goals, the City will, when appropriate, align and partner with community groups, businesses, <u>and</u> non-profits, <u>and neighboring communities</u>.

RESOURCE IMPACT

Adoption of the proposed revisions to the City Sustainability Policy does not have a direct financial impact. Economic impacts of recommended specific actions in support of the policy will be addressed as they are brought to Council.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The proposed revisions address Climate Protection, identified a one of the Top 4 Priorities for 2007 (CMR:163:07), and build on the existing Sustainability Policy Statement (CMR:271:02). The policy supports the Green Government Pledge adopted July 19, 1999 (CMR 284:99), and

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elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection Campaign milestones (CMR:426:06) and the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, and is consistent with the California Publicly Owned Electric Utilities' Principles Addressing Greenhouse Reduction Goals endorsed by Council in August 2006 (CMR:315:06). The Sustainability Policy serves as an umbrella policy statement what provides direction for other policies and plans such as the Comprehensive Plan, various land use Master Plans, Green Building Policies, Utilities long-term resource plans, the Ahwahnee Principles, and other policy statements.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Existing City Sustainability Policy (adopted June 2006)
- B. Recommended Revised City Sustainability Policy

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