



September 1, 2023

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San Rafael City Council  
1400 Fifth Avenue  
San Rafael, CA 94901

**RE: GHG Emissions and Climate Priorities (item 6.a)**

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,  
Sustainable San Rafael is pleased to see that the most recent estimates of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions show that San Rafael is half way to the City's goal of cutting emissions in half by 2030, and continues on a trajectory to meet that goal, and the 2045 goal of net zero emissions, if the yearly rate of reductions since 2005 can be sustained.

Sustaining the necessary rate of reductions will not be easy, and we appreciate that the City's proposed two-year Climate Action Priorities are focused on redoubling efforts to reduce the largest and most intractable remaining sources of climate pollution. First and foremost, these include:

- **Gas cars and trucks**, accounting for 66% of climate pollution. Speeding the adoption of electric vehicles is essential to reach the City's climate goals and help people prepare for the State's 2035 ban on gas cars.
- **Gas furnaces, water heaters and other appliances**, accounting for 25% of fossil fuel use. Electrifying existing buildings with heat-pump replacement appliances will significantly cut GHG, and help people prepare for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District bans on gas water heaters and furnaces later this decade and the State's 2030 ban.

In addition to these key climate priorities, we welcome the inclusion of others with benefits throughout San Rafael:

- **Green cart use** for composting organics, which addresses 3% of emissions, per SB 1383.
- **Equitable Low Carbon Economy** programs to grow local businesses serving the clean energy transition.
- **Cross-departmental coordination** to help integrate climate action into all local government decisions, as called for in the City's Climate Emergency Resolution.
- **Climate Financing District** as a possible source of funds, in coordination with the County and MarinCAN.
- **Canal sea level rise** and citywide resilience plan to prepare for climate impacts that are already baked in.

As these well-formed two-year priorities are implemented, we also urge the City to consider two additional action strategies in support of its 2030 and 2045 climate goals:

- **MCE 100% renewable electricity systemwide**, which would greatly reduce San Rafael's remaining 6% of GHG emissions attributable to electricity.
- **Carbon sequestration in the city's urban forest** could be greatly increased with implementation of the tree programs in General Plan 2040 and Climate Change Action Plan 2030 (CCAP). Trees are a primary way in which San Rafael can grow the sequestration needed to 'net out' the 15% of GHG emissions anticipated to remain in 2045. But we need to start soon: as the California Urban Forests Council advises, "It takes 40 years to plant a tree."

San Rafael's 2030 and 2045 climate goals are not only City goals. They align with countywide CAP and MarinCAN targets, as well as regional, state, national, and global goals. Most importantly, the scientific consensus is that we must cut GHG emissions in half this decade and to zero net emissions by midcentury to rebalance the climate and begin to slow the increasingly deadly impacts of uncontrolled climate change.

Thank you for your leadership in helping us to do our part in our community.

Sincerely,

William Carney,  
President