

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 27, 2009

TO: City Council

FROM: Donna Silva, Director Parks and General Services Department
Mitch Sears, Sustainability Program Manager

SUBJECT: Greenhouse gas emissions workshop: Strategy for scaling a community engagement program to reduce community GHG emissions

Recommendations

1. Receive the information report and presentation.
2. Provide direction on proceeding with the strategy for scaling a community engagement program to reduce community GHG emissions program as outlined in this report.

Overview

This report provides a framework for Council discussion on an early action that has potential for significant community greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. This workshop is a continuation of the discussion the Council began in November and the information report the Council received on the results of the Davis Low Carbon Diet pilot program. The purpose of the workshop is to provide the Council with an opportunity to discuss the application of the GHG reduction targets it adopted in November and provide staff with guidance on next steps for this early action to reduce local GHG emissions.

Council Goals

The discussion items and potential actions outlined in this report address the Council goal of conserving natural resources and protecting the environment. Specifically, the actions partially implement the Council objective of addressing global warming and reducing the carbon footprint of Davis.

Fiscal Impact

No direct costs associated with this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the potential actions discussed in this report will be included in future reports that recommend action.

Background

In April 2007, the City Council adopted a strategy to reduce local GHG emissions. To achieve this objective, the City joined the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program along with hundreds of other communities across the globe working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local level. The CCP is a performance-oriented campaign that offers a framework for local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve livability within their municipalities. The framework includes the following 5 steps:

1. Conduct a baseline emissions inventory and forecast.
2. Adopt an emissions reduction target for the forecast year.
3. Develop a Local Action Plan.
4. Implement policies and measures.
5. Monitor and verify results.

The action taken by the Council in November to set local GHG reduction targets addresses the second step of the CCP framework process. The targets are consistent with current accepted climate science and the state of California reduction goals. As noted in the November staff presentation, the Council has directed staff to pursue early actions to reduce local GHG emissions in parallel with the development of a local action plan (Step 3). Staff, the Climate Action Team, the Science Advisory Team, and the Natural Resources Commission continue to work on the development of the local action plan (Davis Climate Action Plan).

The workshop will address a fundamental issue: How can the City facilitate community wide action on GHG emissions at the household level such that it is possible to achieve the established GHG reduction targets. The City's GHG inventory shows that more than 75% of the community's GHG emissions are generated by the daily activities of Davis residents (residential energy use 33% and personal transportation associated with residential uses 53% are the two largest residential sectors). What role the City can play in bringing this information to the community and providing tools that citizens can use to take action is the focus of this workshop.

Many other potential GHG reduction actions will be assessed in time as part of the development of the Davis Climate Action Plan. In addition, staff are developing GHG reduction standards for new residential development projects which were previewed at the November Council meeting. These standards will be presented to the Council when finalized.

Workshop outline

The workshop will focus on implementation strategies for expansion of the Davis Low Carbon Diet program to address GHG emissions from existing housing.

The objective of the workshop is to:

- Provide background information
- Introduce issues related to scaling up a community engagement program
- Gather input and direction from Council on next steps. to proceed with a

Staff will make a background presentation that builds on the information the Council received in November and December on the Davis Low Carbon Diet Pilot Program. The November 18th staff report is located at:

http://cityofdavis.org/meetings/councilpackets/20081118/05_Greenhouse_Gas_Emissions_Targets.pdf

A detailed discussion will follow the background presentation. Staff has developed the background information and strategy outline below for Council's consideration.

Staff is seeking Council guidance to help plan and execute the steps necessary to proceed, reconsider, or suspend efforts to expand the community engagement program.

Davis Low Carbon Diet

As noted in the November staff report, the majority of local GHG emissions are produced by the daily activities of existing residents. In recognition of this fact, the City initiated the Davis Low Carbon Diet pilot program in October. The pilot was intended to test the viability of a large scale community engagement program and, in particular, to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the Low Carbon Diet program. As participants in the pilot program, Council members are aware that the first 100 households completed the program in November and that Council received an informational report summarizing the results of the pilot program on December 16th. The report can be found at:

http://cityofdavis.org/meetings/councilpackets/20081216/03M_Low_Carbon_Diet_Program_Summary.pdf

Participants in the pilot program reported that they were able to meet their GHG reduction targets and that the program was a valuable educational tool that offers practical solutions for reducing GHG emissions at the household level. Based on the reported results and feedback on the pilot program, staff believes that the Low Carbon Diet offers an opportunity to create an effective community scale program that produces cost effective, near term GHG emissions savings while enhancing important community ties.

Staff is seeking Council guidance on the following strategy to scale the program up:

Set a goal of 75% participation by Davis households over the next 3 years (18,750 households).

Year 1 (2009)

1. In process. Continue to contact community groups and organizations to introduce the program and develop interest.
2. January – Feb. Engage leaders within these groups to provide input and refine the strategy.
3. Feb.-March . Recruit and have groups and organization commit to the program and participation goals.
4. April (Earth Day?). Host a media event to announce the program.
5. May-June. Capacity building/program training workshops for participating organizations.
6. Early Fall (after students return). Ecoteam training by organizations of their members, supported by the City.
7. Fall 2009. Roll out of community scale program.

Years 2 & 3

1. Repeat steps 5-7 to meet participation target.

While acknowledging the steep challenge of the participation goal, staff (and the program author) believe that with strong leadership by the Council and employing the basic strategy of utilizing existing community groups and organizations, this goal can be met. Staff also notes that this is the scale of community engagement that is necessary to achieve the City's GHG

reduction targets. As a past example, the Davis community accepted a challenge from PG&E and achieved a 22% reduction in peak energy use through the “Prime Time” program in the summer of 1980. While the scale is different, this example shows that large scale community involvement in conservation related programs is possible in Davis. With a compelling, underlying purpose and strong leadership, the Davis community has shown it is capable of rising to the challenge.

If the Council provides direction to proceed, next steps for staff would be to identify funding for consultant support, refine the strategy outlined above, and put it into motion.

Note: In studying numerous GHG reduction actions for development of a draft Davis Climate Action Plan, staff has not identified any action that has the potential to reduce community GHG emissions more quickly or at a comparable cost.

Conclusion

Success in reducing the City’s GHG emissions will require vision, action, and resolve. Staff considers some type of large scale community engagement program as a cornerstone in the developing draft Davis Climate Action Plan. Staff also believes it is important to place these actions (and the draft Action Plan), in a broader context to better understand how Davis’ actions fit into the overall effort to create a more sustainable society. To this end, staff will be developing a set of sustainability principles for consideration by the Council in early 2009. The intent of the principles will be to help guide City decisions and align them with Davis’ partner communities who are striving to achieve similar goals.