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Climate Change Action Plan

A Call to Action

Climate change is a reality. The only question before us is how well will we respond to limit its extent and prepare for the inevitability of warming temperatures? In accepting the 2007 Nobel Prize on behalf of the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, renowned engineer and economist Rajendra Pachauri stated, “If there’s no action before 2012, that’s too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment.”

The level of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere has increased by 36% since the dawn of the industrial age. If left unchecked, economist Sir Nicholas Stern predicts that the cost to adapt to climate change will require between 5 and 20% of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP). On a more positive note, the Stern report also concluded that concerted actions can minimize the worst effects of climate change at a cost of 1 percent of world GDP, while creating millions of new jobs in the process.

What is Sustainability?

“...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
- World Commission on the Environment and Development

“...this means living on the interest yielded by our natural systems rather than on the capital.”
- John T. Lyle, “Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development”

Responding to climate change and creating a more sustainable society will take concerted efforts by all levels of government, business, communities and individuals. San Rafael’s commitment to address these challenges was demonstrated by Mayor Al Boro being one of the initial signers of the US Conference of Mayors Climate Projection Agreement in 2005, pledging the city to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in accord with the Kyoto Protocols. And that is why the City Council appointed a Green Ribbon Committee in May, 2008 to prepare a plan to guide both the city organization and the entire community in responding to climate change. This Plan is the result of that community effort.

Climate change, which constitutes the most significant environmental, social and financial challenge of our time, is a global symptom of a lifestyle that is consuming at unsustainable rates the natural resources upon which economic prosperity and human development depend. Global oil supplies are declining, water supplies are not keeping up with demand, world fisheries are being depleted at alarming rates, and despite significant efforts to recycle, waste generation is increasing. These are all indicators of an unsustainable lifestyle.

Global atmospheric concentration of CO2

![Graph showing the increase in atmospheric concentration of CO2 from 1870 to 2000](image-url)
Our Vision

In the year 2020...

San Rafael is flourishing.

Our community continues to serve as our foundation; we are engaged citizens with strong neighborhood connections.

We value our natural setting among grassy, wooded hills that are protected open space, with shoreline vistas and wetlands rich with wildlife and vegetation.

Our communities are diverse, complete with mixed-use development, neighborhood markets and gardens. We have walkable communities and are invigorated by our renewed contact with our neighbors.

Many of us work close to home, in jobs that are good for us and good for the environment. We have created and encouraged local services, technologies and solutions that support and enhance our thriving neighborhoods. We encourage local and conscious consumption. Our businesses and homes are powered by renewable energy that continues to build our local economy.

We have created a transportation system that offers efficient, clean and affordable mobility for all residents and workers in San Rafael.

We are healthy and so is our environment – our children play outside and we swim in our creeks and waterways. We have continued to support our spectacular open space and derive great joy from its presence.

We are prepared for changes in our climate and the bay.

We have learned how to create a green and healthy future.
Climate Change Action Plan

Summary

A Sustainable Community

A sustainable community is one which wisely utilizes and replenishes its resources on three levels: its environmental resources (land, raw materials, ecology), its community resources (human well-being, social organizations) and its commerce (financial resources, businesses). This plan attempts to bolster all three forms of community resources by initiating some fundamental changes in how we relate to our natural setting, live our lives and generate financial capital. The goal is to achieve a balance such that our use of resources will be sustainable over the long term.

Part of the Solution

Local government can control its own operations, which should be exemplary, but cannot address or regulate all aspects of our lifestyles and business practices. We must also depend upon the federal and state government to a large extent to regulate energy production, transportation and air emissions. Technological innovation will also result in products and processes that use fewer resources and have fewer or no emissions. Local government can help by providing leadership, education, regulations and opportunities for public discourse that will lead to a more sustainable community.

Goal for Greenhouse Emission Reduction

The City of San Rafael will have to comply with recent and anticipated state and federal regulations on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as California’s landmark AB32 legislation. At present, local governments in California are being asked to reduce GHG emissions 15% from current levels by 2020, with an ultimate state-wide goal of 80% reductions by 2050.
San Rafael’s community-wide GHG emissions in 2005 amounted to 524,148 tons of CO$_2$e (equivalent carbon dioxide units, including nitrous oxides and methane). A 15% reduction from this level would actually constitute a 30% reduction by 2020, since the community’s GHG emissions are projected to continue to grow 21% over that time period if unchecked. To reverse this trend and achieve a 15% reduction from 2005 levels would require elimination of 190,500 metric tons of CO$_2$e.

**A Plan for Sustainability**

This Plan goes beyond seeking to reduce GHG emissions. To begin down a path towards greater community sustainability, this Plan addresses the environment, the local economy and community interactions. The following indicates how these recommendations affect the various facets of our community:

**Our Lifestyles:**
- Compact, Transit-Oriented Development
- Non-Auto Mobility
- Energy Efficient Vehicles
- Waste Reduction

**Our Buildings:**
- Resource and Energy Conservation
- Renewable Energy Production
- Water Conservation

**Our Environment:**
- Urban Forestry and Local Food Production,
- Habitat Protection and Restoration
- Adaptation to Climate Change

**Our Economy:**
- Green Businesses
- Social Equity

**Where do our GHG emissions come from?**

San Rafael’s GHG emissions inventory was prepared by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). The inventory identifies the community-level emissions in 2005. While some legislative targets for GHG reductions relate to the year 1990, accurate data for local energy use is not available for that time period. San Rafael’s inventory includes all GHG emissions which occur within the City’s boundaries plus emissions resulting from energy production from PG&E which occur outside the community. In the transportation sector, this includes emissions from all vehicles on Highway 101 within San Rafael as well as traffic on local streets. The inventory, which is available on the City’s website (www.cityofsanrafael.org), also differentiates between GHG emissions from the community versus that generated by City operations (City facilities, vehicles and employee commutes). GHG emissions attributable to City operations equal 1% of the total community GHG emissions.
Despite our environmental consciousness, per capita GHG emissions from Marinites are among the highest in the U.S. due to our affluence – we live in larger homes, own more vehicles and purchase more products. Transportation accounts for 61% of GHG emissions in San Rafael – our largest source of emissions. This is a very difficult area to address since local government has no control over traffic on our highways, fuel efficiency standards, gas taxes or technological breakthroughs. In 2000, almost two-thirds of San Rafael commuters drove alone to work, with an additional 12% carpooling, 12% using transit, 3% walking and 2% bicycling.

The best way that local governments can address emissions from transportation is to regulate how our cities are developed. Studies have shown that people who live near transit drive between 20 and 40% less. Other studies have found that low-density suburban development generates over twice as much GHG emissions per capita than a more urban development pattern. As urban centers, such as Downtown San Rafael, become more densely populated, transit, walking and biking become more attractive alternatives to auto use.

We can also provide better infrastructure to make alternate modes of mobility more convenient, such as additional bicycle lanes, more bicycle parking, better sidewalks and commuter rail. Every 1% shift of mileage from automobiles to non-motorized modes reduces energy consumption and GHG emissions by 2-4% due to less congestion and vehicle idling.

San Rafael’s GHG inventory attributes less than 5% of our emissions to generation of waste since “upstream” impacts, the manufacture and distribution of goods which occurs outside the boundaries of San Rafael, are not included. When upstream impacts are included, every ton of waste eliminated directly avoids two tons of GHG emissions.

Solid waste management uses a hierarchy of approaches:

- **Reduce** the amount of waste created through efficient use of resources, more durable products, less packaging and less overall purchasing.
- **Reuse** products and packaging as much as possible.
- **Recycle** discarded products and packaging, and turn organic materials into compost or energy production.

While Marin Sanitary Services has been a statewide leader in recycling, achieving a 62% diversion rate, the remaining waste from San Rafael deposited in the Redwood Landfill has increased by 20% over the past decade. In 2006 the Marin County Hazardous and Solid Waste Management Joint Powers Authority (JPA), with participation from all of the cities and the County, adopted a Zero Waste Goal by 2025, and have initiated a strategic planning process to achieve this goal. Another promising venture is a pilot program being conducted by Marin Sanitary, PG&E and the Central San Rafael Sanitation District to test anaerobic digestion of food waste from restaurants to produce electricity from biogases produced, and thereby eliminating the creation of methane from landfilling.

Debris from construction and demolition projects account for 22% of the waste stream in California, but can be reduced by at least half through recycling and reuse programs.
What the City Has Already Done

San Rafael’s General Plan 2020 is based on Smart Growth principles: creating compact residential and commercial development near transit and services. In 2006 the Greenbelt Alliance ranked San Rafael ninth out of 101 Bay Area cities in promoting Smart Growth land use policies.

The City adopted a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan in 2002 to retrofit our community with new bicycle lanes and sidewalk improvements. Since then, over 26 miles of new bicycle routes and sidewalk enhancements have resulted – a fourfold increase.

San Rafael was a consistent supporter of the SMART commuter rail, which was approved by the electorate in 2008 and will begin operations in 2014 with two stations in San Rafael.

The City has also implemented a preferred green purchasing program for fleet vehicles, adding several hybrid vehicles. The City has also converted all (?) diesel trucks to use biodiesel fuel.

Recommended Programs

**Decrease miles travelled in single-occupant vehicles:**

- **LF1:** Continue to encourage greater residential and commercial densities within walking distance of high frequency transit centers and corridors.
- **LF2:** Consider land use and transportation alternatives (better bicycle and pedestrian access and increased transit feeder service) to best utilize the future Civic Center SMART station.
- **LF3:** Identify neighborhood areas which do not have suitable pedestrian facilities convenience retail services and transit stops within walking distance. Determine if sidewalk improvements, land use changes or transit stop locations can be modified for underserved areas.
- **LF4:** Consider modifications (such as temporary or incremental closures or periodic one-way flow) to Fourth Street to give greater priority to non-automobile modes.
- **LF5:** Facilitate creation of a bike share program, particularly in the Downtown area.

- **LF6:** Coordinate with Marin Transit and the Transportation Authority of Marin to pursue funding opportunities to increase transit service and improve convenience to encourage greater ridership.
- **LF7:** Provide transit and carpool incentives to City employees, including alternate work schedules and telecommuting opportunities.

**Promote energy savings from transportation:**

- **LF8:** Encourage ownership of plug-in electric vehicles, as they become available and in use, by providing charging stations in City garages and parking lots and consider requirements in newly constructed private parking facilities.
- **LF9:** Adopt a policy to limit City vehicle idling where practical. Evaluate equipping trucks with an auxiliary electrical system for illumination and warning signs.

**Reduce material consumption and increase resource re-use:**

- **LF10:** Adopt a construction debris recycling and reuse ordinance.
- **LF11:** Adopt a Zero Waste Goal and develop a Zero Waste Strategic Plan for San Rafael.
- **LF12:** Encourage the Marin County Hazardous and Solid Waste JPA to establish a landfill “tipping fee” to fund waste reduction efforts.
- **LF13:** Encourage the creation of facilities to convert organic waste (e.g., vegetative or food waste) to energy to significantly reduce or eliminate landfill disposal.
- **LF14:** Work with the City’s waste franchisee (Marin Sanitary Services) to create additional incentives in the rate structure for waste reduction and recycling and expand the range of recycled products if resale markets exist.
- **LF15:** Assist in the establishment of additional reuse facilities (resale shops, refilling stations, repair shops and resource recovery yards).
- **LF16:** Investigate options for banning single use items, such as plastic bags and polystyrene takeout food containers.
- **LF17:** Modify the City’s purchasing practices and policies to become a model for other businesses and organizations.
Our Buildings

The Problem, the Solutions, the Benefits

The construction and occupancy of buildings consume much of our natural resources. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, construction and occupancy of buildings account for 39% of total annual energy use, 68% of total electricity consumption and 12% of total water consumption. In San Rafael, buildings account for about one-third of our GHG emissions for lighting, heating, cooling and cooking, split almost evenly between our residential and commercial sectors. The two fundamental means for reducing emissions from electricity and natural gas are decreasing consumption through efficiency and switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources.

Increasing the efficiency of existing buildings is the most cost-effective approach for reducing GHG emissions. Programs which require minimum energy efficiency upgrades for home remodeling, such as increasing insulation and sealing heating ducts, have demonstrated energy savings of up to 20%.

New construction techniques and building materials, known collectively as “green building,” have proven that we can significantly reduce the use of resources and creation of waste in our dwellings and commercial buildings. Renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, are ideally located on buildings for highest efficiency, and are becoming more cost effective through new financing techniques.

The largest single purpose use of electricity in Marin County is related to the pumping, treatment and disposal of water and wastewater. Water conservation not only minimizes the need to find new sources and expand infrastructure, but also saves energy to treat and convey water and wastewater. It has also been proven that employing water conservation techniques and using native plant materials is less expensive than securing and providing new water supplies.

What the City Has Already Done

San Rafael was among the first cities in the Bay Area to adopt a mandatory Green Building Ordinance in 2007. The ordinance requires that all new dwelling units be Green Point Rated using standards developed by Build It Green, and that new commercial or civic buildings meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards developed by the US Green Building Council. Although these requirements can add 1-5% on construction costs, a $100,000 investment can produce a return of $1 million in saved costs over the lifetime of a building. Green Point Rated homes use 53% less electricity and 34% less natural gas than comparably sized structures, and LEED commercial buildings are 18-30% more energy efficient. However, new construction constitutes only about 20% of San Rafael’s construction activity, while remodeling of existing buildings comprises 80% of construction work.

The City also has converted all its traffic signals to LED lights for significant energy savings, and is in the process of converting its signature Downtown “twinkle” lights to LED.

### Adding Energy Efficiency to Your Remodel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Added Cost</th>
<th>Savings</th>
<th>Payback</th>
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<tr>
<td>Insulate walls</td>
<td>$138</td>
<td>$132/yr</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seal air leaks</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$152/yr</td>
<td>1.3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seal duct leaks</td>
<td>$160</td>
<td>$108/yr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy Star clothes washer</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$55/yr</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
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Recommended Programs

**Increase resource conservation and energy efficiency:**

**BU1:** Apply green building requirements to residential, commercial and civic remodeling projects as well as new construction.

**BU2:** Require energy efficiency audits for both businesses and residences during major remodeling. Explore the feasibility of requiring audits at property resale or in conjunction with existing City inspection programs to assist owners in managing energy use. Consider requirements for minimum energy efficiency upgrades.

**BU3:** Require a water use audit for both businesses and residences during major remodeling. Explore the feasibility of requiring audits at property resale or in conjunction with existing City inspection programs to assist owners in managing water use. Consider requirements for minimum water efficiency upgrades.

**BU4:** Complete the energy audit of major City buildings and facilities to identify opportunities for efficiency measures and develop an implementation plan for upgrades.

**BU5:** Evaluate the replacement of incandescent and mercury vapor street and parking lot lighting with energy efficient LED lights.

**Increase the supply of renewable energy sources:**

**BU6:** Consider creation of an assessment district bond financing program to fund installation of renewable energy systems and other efficiency upgrades.

**BU7:** Support efforts of Marin Energy Authority to increase the proportion of renewable power offered to residents and businesses and to provide financial and technical assistance for energy efficiency upgrades.

**BU8:** Adopt zoning allowances for residential wind power generators and for location of solar collectors.

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**Our Environment**

**The problem, the Solutions, the Benefits**

The natural cycles and resource benefits provided by our natural environment have been utilized and modified without consideration of long term sustainability. Food production is increasingly dependent on petroleum for fertilization and transportation to markets. Deforestation accounts for between 25 and 30% of global GHG emissions. Fortunately, Marin has been a leader in open space preservation and organic farming.

On a local level, we can improve this situation by encouraging more local food production and sales and by increasing the carbon sequestration in our urban forests. Forests have the unique capacity to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as carbon in their wood, leaves and roots. In addition to encouraging more plantings of street trees and private landscaping, the City can better restore and manage its parks and open space lands, which comprise 42% of the City’s land area.

Our natural systems, as well as our built environment, will be affected by climate change in ways we are only beginning to understand. Concerns over rising sea levels are most obvious. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
Climate Change Action Plan

Change estimates that mean sea level will rise between one and three feet by the end of this century. A three-foot rise would inundate much of eastern and central San Rafael. Climate change is predicted to increase the risk of large wildfires in California by as much as 55% and to decrease the Sierra snowpack by 80% by the end of this century. Winter rains storms are predicted to be more concentrated but more sporadic.

What the City Has Already Done

San Rafael has among the highest proportions of dedicated public open space of any comparably sized city in the Bay Area. The City adopted stringent policies to preserve our wetlands in the late 1980’s and to limit the impacts of hillside development in the 1990’s.

San Rafael has been designated a Tree City for our tree planting and preservation efforts since 1981.

Recommended Programs

**Increase carbon sequestration through tree planting and maintenance:**

EN1: Inventory tree and vegetative cover to determine existing resources and carbon sequestration, and establish citywide goals and strategies to increase carbon sequestration.

EN2: Adopt ordinances to regulate the removal and replacement of significant trees and preclude sale of exotic and invasive plants.

EN3: Update zoning regulations for parking lot landscaping to increase shading and reduce thermal gain.

EN4: Consider establishing a local carbon offset program to support tree planting and maintenance.

**Increase local food production:**

EN5: Encourage the creation of community gardens, including possible use of surplus City properties.

EN6: Continue to promote local farmers markets.

**Monitor sea level rise and plan for shoreline defense:**

EN7: Develop a program of levee analysis, including inventorying heights, testing and maintaining public and private levees.

EN8: Install a sea level monitoring gauge to track changes over time.

**Increase understanding and preparation for the effects of climate change:**

EN9: Participate in Marin County’s regional vulnerability assessment, and prepare a local vulnerability assessment for San Rafael.

EN10: Continue to provide emergency planning and community awareness.
Our Economy

The problem, the Solutions, the Benefits

Addressing climate change will not be successful unless proposed solutions are economically viable and the business community is engaged. These recommended initiatives offer opportunities for both new business and job creation. Long-term economic growth will also occur through savings from reduced energy expenses.

Sustainability also means having a local workforce that lives locally. This includes developing higher wage jobs to be able to afford high local housing costs and creating affordable housing opportunities. These benefit GHG reduction efforts by decreasing emissions from commuting, the largest source of GHG emissions.

What the City Has Already Done

To promote the ability of employees to live within the community, the City established an affordable housing program in the 1980’s that requires the provision of lower-cost units in new housing developments. More recently, financial contributions towards affordable housing are required from commercial development. The City’s Redevelopment Agency also uses its resources to increase affordable housing opportunities. At present, there are 1,216 deed-restricted affordable units in the City’s program.

The City has an active Economic Development Department to assist in business recruitment and retention.

Recommended Programs

Support environmentally beneficial businesses and job creation:

EC1: Continue to promote new green business opportunities.
EC2: Support and encourage green businesses in conjunction with Marin County’s Green Business Program.

Enhance social equity among all segments of the community:

EC3: Continue to expand the supply of affordable housing.
EC4: Support the creation of environmentally beneficial jobs, particularly for lower income residents.

Community Outreach and Empowerment

The problem, the Solutions, the Benefits

Climate change is a challenge that requires innovation, commitment and collaboration among all members of the community. It will necessitate, in many ways, learning new ways of conducting our daily lives. We will need to investigate best practices, share information, monitor our progress and celebrate successes.

What the City Has Already Done

As the largest city in Marin, San Rafael provides leadership through our involvement with other agencies. One example is the recently formed Marin Climate and Energy Partnership which seeks to assess common problems and develop common solutions among all the cities, towns and county government in Marin. We also jointly employ a lobbyist to advocate for local issues in Sacramento.

The City also maintains close relationships with community organizations, including homeowners groups and business and non-profit associations.

Recommended Programs

Increase community education and commitment towards sustainability efforts:

CO1: Increase City employees’ awareness of climate protection issues, and develop internal committees (such as a green purchasing initiative or energy efficiency) to implement plans.
CO2: Utilize the City’s website and City publications and work with community organizations to promote sustainability efforts to both residents and businesses.
CO3: Partner with other agencies and organizations to hold an annual “Green Festival” to promote sustainability efforts.

Encourage other levels of government to work towards sustainability:

CO4: Advocate for state and federal legislation that advance sustainability efforts.
CO5: Continue to provide a leadership role with other local governmental agencies to share best practices and successes.
Implementation

The true test of our commitment and success towards addressing climate change will be the implementation of this Plan. While great community effort went into preparation of the Plan, implementing it will require a significantly greater level of involvement by the City and the community. Given the number of new programs proposed, City funding will be necessary to devote new staff resources to sustainability efforts, which will be difficult in a down economy and given other demands for City services.

To evaluate the success of our efforts over time, there is a companion Implementation matrix clarifying which City departments and community organizations will be responsible for implementing each of the proposed programs listed in this document, the anticipated timeframe and priority for implementation, the GHG emission reductions anticipated, and indicators that will allow us to monitor progress in achieving our objectives.

The following two charts illustrate how we expect to meet our reduction goal. The first diagram indicates the level of reduction we anticipate from the programs outlined in this Plan in addition to reductions from other efforts which are funded or underway such as initiation of the SMART commuter rail, completion of the Highway 101 HOV lane widening and the newly formed Marin Energy Authority. The second chart shows the reductions anticipated in each sector from the programs outlined in this Plan.
Climate Change Action Plan Participants

**Green Ribbon Committee:**
Kate Colin, Co-Chair, Planning Commissioner
Jennifer Islas, Co-Chair
Pauline Basaran
Christiennne de Tournay Birkhahn
Joe Bunker
Damon Connolly, City Council member
Paul Ferreri
Damien Hansen
Kay Karchevski
Klif Knoles
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Mario Lopez
Don Magdanz
Lisa Max
Cyr Miller, City Council member
Pam Reaves

**Green Teams:**
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  - Maika Llorens Gulati
  - Debbie Raphael
- Land Use/Transportation/Green Building/Urban Forest
  - Bill Carney
  - Chris Stephan
  - Phil Abey
  - Tad Jacobs
  - Sandra Sellinger
- Adaptation/Sea Level Rise
  - Jennifer Chapman
  - Robert Karfiol
  - Ellen Obstler

**City Council:**
- Al Boro, Mayor
- Barbara Heller
- Cyr Miller
- Greg Brockbank
- Damon Connolly

**City Staff:**
- Ken Nordhoff, City Manager
- Bob Brown, Community Development Director
- Linda Jackson, Principal Planner
- Miya Kitahara, Planning Intern
- Isis Spinola-Schwartz, Planning Intern
- Carol Simonson, Planning Intern

**Consultant:**
Jeff Baird, Baird+Driskell Community Planning

**City Advisory Team:**
- Cory Bytof, Volunteer Program Coordinator
- Esther Beirne, City Clerk
- Steve Castaldo, Public Works
- Art Gibney, Public Works
- Stephanie Lovette, Economic Development
- Patti Brennan, Economic Development
- Jim Correa, Police

**Resource Team:**
- Steve Goldbeck, Bay Conservation and Development Commission
- James Scheid, CA State Department of Forestry & Fire Protection
- Nathan Brennan, Central Marin Sanitation Agency
- Robert Marical, Dixie School District
- Sarah Diefendorf, Dominican University
- Sandy Baker, Dominican University
- Kellee Hopper, GG Bridge and Transportation District
- Michele Rodriguez, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Marin
- Mark Williams, Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District
- Abby Young, Bay Area Air Quality Management Control District
- Mark Essman, Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Dawn Weisz, Marin County Community Development Agency
- Amy Van Doren, Marin County Transit District
- Susan Witt, Marin Sanitary Service
- Josh Townsend, PG&E
- Christine Thomas, San Rafael City School District
- John Nemeth, Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit
- Bill Whitney, Transportation Authority of Marin
- Time Rosenfeld, Marin Energy Management Team
- David Hoffman, Marin County Bicycle Coalition
- Omar Pena & Dana Armanino, Marin County Climate Change Action Plan Participants