



PART 3: Capacity Assessment

Capacity to Implement Merced's Climate Action Plan

PART 3: CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

PART 3 of the City of Merced Climate Action Plan describes the capacity of the local community and government to implement a Climate Action Plan. It identifies the obstacles to achievement, as well as the routes upon which subsequent steps should be taken to implement the recommended GHG emission reduction strategies and actions that are listed in PART 4 of the CAP.

PART 3 includes the following topics:

- Local Opportunities and Challenges
- Leadership Models
- Financing and Budgeting
- Community Partners / Agents of Change

“The leadership model used to deploy the Climate Action Plan will drive which strategies and actions can be implemented.”

– **Lisa Kayser-Grant**

Member of the City of Merced Climate Action Plan Advisory Ad-Hoc Committee

LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities

Opportunities to implement the CAP abound in Merced, and range from education, physical geography, and long-range planning efforts already in progress, and include:

- UC Merced provides educational, research, innovation, and leadership avenues about creating sustainable communities, and will be a valuable partner in planning and implementing the CAP;
- The “Urban-Village” policies of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* are representative of the direction the State of California is beginning to direct local planning through drivers such as SB 375 and AB 32. Merced is currently ahead of the curve and positioned to benefit from financial resources, such as the recently awarded grant for preparation of the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan, a required precursor plan to development in Northwest Merced;
- The “High-Speed Rail Station” will be an impetus for redevelopment projects in Merced’s Downtown area. Redevelopment in the Downtown area will be a boon for the area’s quality of life and business climate. At the same time, it will become a hub of regional transportation-oriented development;
- A re-tooled construction industry can find work rehabilitating and constructing energy-efficient buildings;
- Merced’s geography is conducive to some sustainability efforts. For example, its flat terrain is suitable to use of bicycle transportation and its sunny climate is suited to use of solar power;
- Merced’s water source has traditionally been groundwater, which requires pumping and associated pumping costs, the Merced River gravity-feed surface water provides an alternative source of water for some uses;
- Merced has numerous existing Community Partners for Sustainability; and,
- Changes in the housing market open up opportunities to dialog with members of the development community about sustainable approaches to development.

Challenges

While challenges may initially pose obstacles to implementation of a plan, once solutions are presented and progress is made to reverse the negative effect, these challenges have the potential to become key opportunities leading to successful implementation. For example, though public support for a Plan may initially be low, strategic public outreach has the potential to result in a positive and supportive public perception of the Plan. Facing challenges positively is a strategy that can easily become another opportunity for the plan.

Other challenges include the following:

- The local economy and associated unemployment and low wages become strong reasons to implement measures that will reduce utility bills. The long-term savings and reduction of cost-of-living will have dramatic positive effects on the quality of life for many Mercedians.
- The large growth boundary of the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* necessitates the Planning Commission and City Council to balance unchecked growth by its equally compelling policies of infill development, formation of a compact urban form, and application of urban expansion policies.
- City Staff and financial resources are limited; there is little room for new or expanded programs. However, the strain on resources is precisely the reason why sustainability programs should be supported. Sustainable methods of growth and associated provision of services are economically sound methods of development.
- While language barriers can limit the success of public outreach efforts, deploying methods to communicate with underrepresented groups involves greater numbers of citizens and a correlative increase in ideas, solutions, and potential for success of the plan.
- The majority of Merced's housing stock was constructed prior to building codes that required high levels of energy efficiency. Though a great amount of GHG emissions come from this housing stock, it also provides a mother-lode of emission reduction potential. A similar "challenge-opportunity" relationship exists with commercial and Industrial buildings.



LEADERSHIP MODELS

Introduction

Successful implementation of the CAP and associated GHG reduction target hinges upon community engagement, government leadership, and their support of the plan. The style of local governance and leadership mechanisms take various forms, and range from simple government-focused programs to multi-faceted community-wide programs, and may include the following tasks:¹⁵

- Apply for rebates for energy-related projects
- Track energy usage
- Facilitate energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in local government facilities
- Implement programs to comply with state mandates
- Provide leadership and support practical solutions of sustainability
- Work with City Departments to jointly implement projects
- Monitor greenhouse gas reduction progress
- Promote and provide information to the community

Types of Leadership Models

Leadership models can be modified and/or used in concert with each other to craft a program that is suited to the City of Merced. One possible way to enhance limited City resources is to use volunteers or interns. Interns could either operate a well-defined program or support internal City Staff efforts to implement Department programs.

FOCUSED PROGRAMS

This model describes the approach currently deployed by the majority of local governments, including Merced, which typically involves staff members that implement a focused program, for example, a water conservation or recycling specialist, without benefit of a coordinated effort. While there may be public outreach components, there is limited coordination between programs and the staff member may have other unrelated duties. Existing focused programs in Merced include:

Water Conservation Specialist, City of Merced, Public Works Department

This position is responsible for coordinating water conservation activities as well as issuing informational handouts, notices, and citations to customers for violating the City's water conservation ordinances.⁸

Recycling Information Specialist, Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG)

This position includes the following duties: participates in public education events/presentations throughout the County; Secretary of the Integrated Waste Management Local Task Force; Zone Administrator for the Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) Program, which encourages manufacturing of new products from otherwise disposed of materials; and conducts public outreach.

Commute Connection Website, MCAG Contracted Service

Commute Connection is a regional rideshare program operated by the San Joaquin Council of Governments, designed to help commuters make the transition from driving alone to a convenient ridesharing option such as carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling/walking, or riding transit. It has a database of over 8,000 commuters interested in sharing the ride to work.

Community Energy Manager, Pacific Gas and Electric

This position works with local communities whose programs complement the service programs of the utility.

COORDINATED DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS

Through the City's existing goal setting program, annual sustainability goals for City Departments could be established, whether for internal operations or by requirements or incentives that affect the community at-large. This expands and formalizes the *Focused Program* approach.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER

This model is defined by a distinct sustainability program with a dedicated budget and staff that coordinates efforts between City Departments. A Coordinator adds value through establishing a comprehensive plan, which eliminates redundancy and maximizes productivity through teamwork and attainment of larger goals and projects. For example, one of the central roles of the Sustainability Manager in Davis, and the Green Team in Citrus Heights, is to coordinate and communicate across City Departments to focus on common sustainability goals. Capabilities unique to a sustainability coordinator include: implementation of shared programs, a single City representative for community partners, and a designated leader responsible for implementing the CAP. The funding of sustainability coordinators in other jurisdictions has been funded in part or in whole, through grant programs, partnerships with private utilities, and by utilizing the financial savings realized through implemented energy efficiency programs. Some cities have also included a citizen-based Commission as part of this model.

COMMUNITY-BASED LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

There are numerous community-based models, such as the *Philadelphia Livable Neighborhood Program* and the *Portland Low Carbon Diet Program* whose strategies focus work at the block level in neighborhoods to encourage individual commitments related to sustainable living. Such programs are bottom-up instead of top-down and have yielded high levels of participation.¹⁹



PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMMUNITY GREEN TEAM

This model integrates the *Local Government Sustainability Manager* and the *Community-Based Leadership Program* models under one umbrella program, establishing a comprehensive team-based approach that includes independently engaged public and private entities. This model supports and encourages independent focused programs, but also includes a comprehensive team-based committee of City Staff and Community organizations to share information and to collaborate on program design and operation, to combine efforts thereby enhancing existing programs and to create new opportunities. Merging public and private efforts magnifies the strength and outcomes of sustainability efforts.

California Public Utilities Commission Study

In 2010, the California Public Utilities Commission prepared a comprehensive study involving more than 100 local governments in California to determine what local governments could do to improve energy efficiency. In regards to the topic of leadership, the study concluded that because financial and staffing constraints limit the ability of cities and counties to perform energy planning, many communities assign energy issues to a single department, such as the planning department. This approach makes energy management appear secondary, does not give the effort the comprehensive stature needed, and can significantly limit the success of a Climate Action Plan. Having a dedicated “energy champion” to plan and implement energy efficiency projects is essential. Successful community energy programs have a top-down commitment to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions. They use a strong stakeholder process, drawing on people within the community who have energy expertise.²⁵

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Recommendation

The purpose of the CAP is not to identify which leadership program to implement. Rather, the CAP identifies various models, and emphasizes the need to match the local leadership model with the City’s GHG reduction target. The current “Focused Program” model will only be able to attain part of the GHG reduction goals through implementation of a limited number of strategies and actions. The Climate Action Plan Committee recommends that the City’s first Climate Action Plan-related action, following adoption of the Climate Action Plan, is to examine alternative approaches to implement the CAP’s goals and institute modifications, as appropriate. The assessment of deciding which leadership mechanisms to select should involve a broad cross-section of City departments and Community partners.

Financing and Budgeting

Introduction

Due to the large collection of greenhouse gas reduction-related legislation, everyone from state officials to environmental organizations are beginning to recognize the need to help cities and counties fund the proactive planning that is required to make walkable projects happen. In this context, proactive planning means zoning code reform and transit planning. For example, the newly amended California Transportation Commission guidelines will favor transportation funding investments that significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions as compared to “business-as-usual.” Tracking such trends and funding sources will be essential for the City to attain its sustainability goals.⁴⁰

This Section catalogs and describes many local, state, and federal sustainability programs of probable future funding sources to implement the recommended emission reduction measures.

Local Funding and Program Opportunities

Recognizing existing budgetary constraints, the funding plan considers all sources of funding opportunities, including local sources. These funding sources are used to cover operational costs and project costs. Throughout California, local governments have instituted sustainability programs that range in financial support from modest part-time positions to expansive multi-million dollar programs. Various funding sources are utilized and include:



- Energy-saving community measures could be funded via fees assessed through utility bills, building permits, or vehicle license fees.
- Incentives may be available from local utilities and regional, state, or federal agencies.
- As the City realizes cost-savings from the implementation of energy and water efficiency programs at City Facilities, the City could use these funds to fund additional sustainable projects or to support a staff engaged in sustainability-related project or programs.
- Operational funding can also be supplemented with funds from General Funds, City Enterprise Funds, City Department utility billing surcharges, rebates and savings from energy efficiency projects, and through partnership with local utilities, or a combination thereof.¹⁵

SEED FUNDING FOR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS

In order to reach the higher value “coordinator-based” leadership models, a stable annual source of funding will be needed. Based on the success of other communities, the likely sources of this funding are 1) roll-over energy savings from projects; 2) partnership with a local utilities that provides incentive funds for such activity; and, 3) wise use and selection of grant funds, for example, a second round of EECBG funds aimed at assisting communities to establish long-term sustainability programs.

Revolving Funds

The cities of San Jose, Long Beach, and Visalia, and the county of San Bernardino are moving toward or are already maintaining revolving loan funds for energy efficiency projects. With revolving funds, capital is applied to projects that produce a stream of dollar savings from energy efficiency cost savings and/or rebate and incentives, which are then used to replenish the fund. These communities approve energy projects either as part of their capital improvement processes or within annual budgets.

PACE

The counties of Sonoma and Placer, the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, and the City and County of San Francisco were chosen as PACE pilot communities. They will receive help from the CA Energy Commission to identify alternative methods of financing in response to challenges brought on by FHWA. They will provide technical assistance to other regions and create models for commercial and residential PACE programs that can be replicated.¹¹

SB 83

It allows countywide transportation planning agencies to impose an annual fee of up to \$10 on motor vehicles registered within the country. The funds must be spent on measures that reduce traffic congestion, including public transit service expansions. The MCAG has not elected to pursue this funding source.

State of California and Local Funding and Program Opportunities

Financial incentives from the State of California and local agencies are available to assist local governments and communities to implement greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts. The form of the incentives are varied, and include rebates, reduced upfront costs, tax exempt status, subsidies, low interest loans, and funding sources.

State of California and Local Green Funding & Program Opportunities					
Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
Hybrid Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project	Assembly Bill 118	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Voucher	
Zero-Emission Vehicle and Plug-In Hybrid Light-Duty (Clean Vehicle) Rebate Project	Assembly Bill 118	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Rebate	
Lawn and Garden Equipment Replacement Project	Assembly Bill 118	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Voucher or Rebate	
Zero-Emission Agricultural UTB Rebate Project	Assembly Bill 118	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Rebate	

State of California and Local Green Funding & Program Opportunities

Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
Advanced Technology Demonstration Projects	Assembly Bill 118	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Grant	
Goods Movement Emissions Reduction Program	Proposition 1B	Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Grants/ Incentives	
Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program		Voluntary	California Air Resources Board	Grants	
Sales Tax Exemption for Alternative Energy Manufacturing Equipment	Senate Bill 71	Voluntary	California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority (CAEATFA)	Tax Exemption	
Property Tax Exclusion for Solar Energy Systems	California Revenue and Taxation Code/Assembly Bill 1451	Voluntary	California State Board of Equalization	Tax Exclusion	
REMOVE II Program		Voluntary	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District	Grants/ Incentives	
Savings By Design		Voluntary	California Public Utilities Commission	Grants/ Incentives	Design services, project consultation

State of California and Local Green Funding & Program Opportunities

Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
California Communities Lease Finance Program (CaLease)	Joint Exercise of Powers Act	Voluntary	California Statewide Communities Development Authority	Low-Cost, Tax-Exempt Financing	
California First		Voluntary	California Statewide Communities Development Authority	Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing (Renewable Funding)	
Commercial/Industrial Lighting Program		Voluntary	Merced Irrigation District	Rebate	
Solar Incentive Program		Voluntary	Merced Irrigation District	Rebate/Incentives	
Commercial New Construction Program		Voluntary	Merced Irrigation District	Rebate	
Customized Commercial/Light Industrial Retrofit Program		Voluntary	Merced Irrigation District	Incentives	

State of California and Local Green Funding & Program Opportunities

Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
Urban Greening for Sustainable Communities Program	Proposition 84	Voluntary	California Strategic Growth Council	Bond	25% of funds can be used for preparation of comprehensive greening plan
Urban Greening Plans	Proposition 84	Voluntary	California Strategic Growth Council	Bond	
Energy Partnership Program		Voluntary	California Energy Commission	Low Interest Loans	Max. \$20,000 grant for project consultant fees
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program		Voluntary	California Energy Commission	Grant	

Federal-Related Funding and Program Opportunities

The Federal Government provides many opportunities for states and local governments to engage in sustainable energy practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While many federal agencies are involved in this effort, the following agencies are engaged in notable programs: Environmental Protection Agency, The Department of Energy, The Department of Agriculture, and The Department of Transportation.

Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act (Senate Bill 1733)

This is the Senate's climate change bill that seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emission through a nation-wide cap-and-trade program. Emissions would be reduced 20% by 2020 and 83% by 2050. It also contains investments in clean energy technology and provisions to encourage the creation of new "green" jobs. States and municipalities would receive 2.4% of the revenues generated by the act to support expansion of public transit, and for grants for transportation and smart growth planning.¹³

Federal Green Funding & Program Opportunities

Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
Home Start Energy Retrofit Act of 2010		Voluntary	House of Reps.	Rebate	\$23 per American, over 2010-2015 year
Water System Adaptation Partnership Act of 2009	HR 2969	Voluntary	House of Reps.	Grants	

Federal Green Funding & Program Opportunities

Program Name	Originating Regulation	Status	Agency	Funding	Other Resources
Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant	American Reinvestment and Recovery Act	Voluntary	IRS	Grants	
The State and Action Climate Partner Network		Voluntary	EPA	No Funding	
It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air		Voluntary	US Dept. of Transportation	No Funding	Offers free material: commercials, brochures, billboards
Energy and Climate Change: Programs, Tools & Resources...	Clean Air Act	Voluntary	EPA	No Funding	EMS: Environmental Management System
Partnership for Sustainable Communities		Voluntary	EPA, USDOH & UD, USDOT	No Funding	
Climate Leaders		Voluntary	EPA	No Funding	
Environmentally Preferable Purchase		Voluntary	EPA	No Funding	Small Businesses
Green Communities		Voluntary	EPA	No Funding	
Cap and Trade Program(s)	Clean Air Act	Voluntary	EPA	Grants	
Lugar Practical Energy and Climate Plan	Cap and Trade	Voluntary	Senator Dick Lugar	No Funding	

Community Partners/Agents of Change

Introduction

Effective implementation of the Climate Action Plan will require the participation and cooperation of an array of federal, state, and local government agencies. While the City of Merced, Merced County, THE BUS and Joint Powers Authorities for transit and waste management will be engaged, many other local agencies, quasi-public and non-profit organizations, and individuals play an important role too. The Climate Action Plan Ad-hoc Advisory Committee identified many of Merced's community partners that may potentially offer incentives and/or resources to implement a Climate Action Plan. Many of these organizations, for reasons other than climate change (for example: budgets, operation efficiencies or social needs), have already made important contributions toward reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This section describes the extent to which the community of Merced is already involved in issues and programs that are directly or indirectly related to climate change.

Community Challenge

The Community Challenge calls upon residents, businesses, employees, and City staff to mobilize and achieve the targeted GHG reductions. This can be achieved through high levels of community participation in the proposed strategies and actions. The challenge facing the Community is to mobilize high levels of voluntary participation in GHG reduction efforts.

Utilities

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)

PG&E provides customers with a portfolio of options to help reduce their carbon footprint, including rebates and incentives for customers to use energy more efficiently, incentives to make customer-owned rooftop solar more affordable and the opportunity for customers to offset the greenhouse gas emissions from their energy use by voluntarily signing up for the *ClimateSmart* program. In total, PG&E has connected more than 40,000 customer-owned solar systems, far more than any other utility in the nation.

PG&E delivers some of the nation's cleanest energy, with a carbon dioxide emissions rate that is about half the national average for utilities. PG&E provides more than 20 percent of its future power deliveries from renewables.

PG&E's *Green Communities Program* provides free training, data, and tools to help city and county governments achieve their greenhouse gas reduction goals related to energy usage.

Merced Irrigation District (MID)

The California Public Utilities Commission mandates that public utilities collect a 2.85% public benefits charge from their customers in their electric bills for energy efficiency and other public benefit programs. Merced Irrigation District electric services allocates a significant portion of its collected public benefit program funds toward energy efficiency programs to their commercial and industrial customers. These programs are provided to qualifying commercial and industrial customers in the form of financial rebates and incentives for the retrofit of existing electrical equipment with more energy efficient equipment.

MID offers several financial incentives for commercial and residential customers to conserve energy.

Local Business and Industry

Local businesses and industry can play a key role to achieve the City's GHG reduction goals. Potential partners include the chambers of commerce, green businesses and industries, the local real estate industry, the medical community, hotel associations, home improvement stores, and those engaged in the production or sale of energy savings products. A description of some local efforts are described below.

Building Industry Association of Central California

The Building Industry Association of Central California (BIACC) is a nonprofit trade association representing 300 member companies who are engaged in all aspects of the home building industry. These companies play a key role in the design and building of communities and can provide extensive knowledge of the industry and innovative capacity to find solutions to the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The understanding and ability of the BIACC to comply with applicable laws, such as SB 375 and codes such as the California Green Code are essential to achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Greater Merced Chamber REACON and "Green Team"

The REACON Team (Recycling, Energy, Air Conservation) is a collaboration between the Greater Merced Chamber, private businesses, municipal and public agencies, economic development professionals, and the communities of Merced County. Its purpose is to promote environmental stewardship solutions, to address environmental and economic development issues, and to create a nexus to enhance the delivery of Chamber services in Merced and all of Merced County.



The REACON Team offers a free business-to-business service, which is an overall assessment of how a chamber member can implement cost-saving measures on disposal services, energy usage, indoor air quality, and other services.

Additionally, the Chamber plans to create a sub-committee, called the “Green Team,” that will consist of other chamber members and the REACON Program.

Land Developers

In most communities, there are proactive developers and other stakeholders who realize the value of efficiency and renewable energy. These individuals can be of great help in developing advanced codes, because they understand the value of showing leadership on green issues and branding the community as interested in sustainability.

Educational Institutions

UC Merced

UC Merced has a comprehensive approach to achieving sustainability, which involves the administration and students, who both sit on the Campus Sustainability Committee. The overall goal is to pilot a replicable sustainable energy strategy focus areas: 1) water; 2) waste & recycling; 3) transportation; 4) building; and, 5) generating renewable power.

UC Merced seeks to maximize energy efficiency in building design and operations - with an initial goal to consume half the energy and demand of other university buildings in California and exceed Title 24 by 30% in all buildings by 2010.

The student-led *Alliance to Save Energy - Green Campus* Program at UC Merced is on the cutting edge of sustainability. UC Merced students have 4 primary pillars of focus: energy efficiency, water conservation, green work force development, and academic infusion.

Other Local Educational Institutions

- Merced College
- Local School Districts
- Merced County Office of Education

Non-Profits and Non-Government Organizations

Merced has a wealth of community organizations that provide strong communication pathways to local residents and offer networking and education services for members. These groups include service clubs; the Lao Community; the Hispanic Network; Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Advocates; and the Sierra Club, among others. Some are described below:

Merced County Community Action Agency

The Merced County Community Action Agency operates a weatherization program that helps families control their energy costs, thereby freeing income for other essential expenditures. Their goal is to help 400 families move to a more self-reliant position each year, eventually solving the home energy-related problems for low-income families. A typical household saves \$193 a year on energy costs after weatherization is completed.

Building Healthy Communities

The California Endowment's founding mission to improve the health of Californians is focused in pursuit of a single vision: *Building Healthy Communities* in the state of California. The California Endowment recognizes that the Merced area has the potential to make meaningful changes that will result in improved community health. *Building Healthy Communities* Outcome Four states, "Residents Live In Communities with Health-Promoting Land Use, Transportation, and Community Development;" this is based on the conclusion that conditions in our physical surroundings (environment) where we live, work, play, learn, and shop; how we travel and transport goods; and even where our food comes from; all impact our health and well-being.

Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition (MMCAC)

The Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition's vision is to fight asthma through education and medical and environmental techniques. In the spirit of a true partnership, the Coalition strives to improve the quality of life of people who have asthma. This diverse, broad, and collaborative partnership aims to affect initiatives through the sharing of information, the commitment of time, and the voice of advocacy.

GRID Alternatives - Central Valley

Central Valley GRID Alternatives' territory includes the following counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Mono, Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Inyo, and Kern. Their goal is to serve as many qualified home-owners who reside in these counties, save thousands of dollars in electricity bills through solar installations and energy efficiency, while keeping thousands of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere, and providing thousands of hands-on experiences to eager volunteers and job-trainees.

Bike Tourism

Bicycle enthusiasts from non bike-friendly communities are attracted to Merced's bicycle transportation network. These visitors book hotel rooms and use other services while pedaling about the City. As such, bike-tourism is yet another benefit of Climate Action Planning, as well as an opportunity to establish local community partnerships around this activity.

CALPIRG's Energy Service Corps (ESC) at UC Merced

CALPIRG's Energy Service Corps (ESC) is a joint project between the California Public Interest Research Group Foundation (CALPIRG) and AmeriCorps that works with local communities to achieve greater energy efficiency. The ESC Chapter at UC Merced is working to reduce energy use, save money, and curb carbon emissions for homeowners, renters, and businesses in the City and County of Merced. In doing so, they are a leader in local energy efficiency efforts, and act as a catalyst in the community for greater energy efficiency.

ESC has three central divisions - Home Energy Assessments and Weatherization, Education, and Community Coalitions. These branches function independently and collaboratively to achieve their goal to reduce energy use. ESC takes the mystery out of energy efficiency by giving people the tools and knowledge they need to stop energy and associated monetary loss from their homes and businesses. ESC, with the aid of numerous volunteers from UC Merced, also hosted weatherization projects of community buildings, such as the Rescue Mission and the Merced Elks Lodge. Thus far, the group has performed 253 home assessments, outreached to local groups and individuals, and is seeking to form future partnerships with the Merced Community.



Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing

The Central Valley Coalition for Affordable Housing was established in 1989 by the Housing Authority of the County of Merced, due to a need for a local non-governmental organization to bring together the available funding programs within the community with the goal of providing more affordable housing. To date, the Coalition has completed over 5,270 units of low income housing, and has started to expand more into social services. The coalition can be a key partner in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by being a leader in the areas of energy efficiency and conservation of buildings and appropriate siting of new high-density housing developments within the urban core, near transit, and within Merced's urban villages.

Media and Other Public Outreach Outlets

A Climate Action Plan can be more effective if the community is aware of local reduction measures. If we are to achieve the predicted emissions reductions, resident participation in many of the GHG reduction actions of this plan is essential. For example, in partnership with developers and neighborhood associations, town hall meetings with local neighborhoods can be held to discuss the benefits of infill development, and to give citizens a venue to voice their concerns. Other communication outlets include: the Merced County Times, the Merced Sun-Star, Channel 30 public leaders outlook, internet/social networking sites, newspapers, City Newsletter, utility bills, Website, theater commercials, Merced County Fair displays, schools (science classes), and entertainment venues.

State Partners

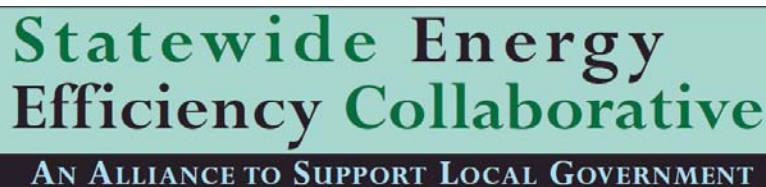
Strategic Growth Council (SB 732, 2008)—The SGC was established to provide guidance and incentives to local and regional agencies implementing sustainability strategies, including planning and urban greening grants to support the development of sustainable communities and to make recommendations for better coordination of State planning and sustainability activities and programs.⁶

Caltrans Smart Mobility Framework (2010)—“Smart Mobility 2010—A Call to Action for the New Decade” incorporates smart growth and land use/transportation integration concepts into transportation systems for California (Caltrans).⁶

Public – Private Collaborations

Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC)

The SEEC is a collaboration between three statewide non-profit organizations and California’s four Investor Owned Utilities to help



cities and counties reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save energy. SEEC members are: 1) ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA; 2) Institute for Local Government; 3) Local Government Commission; 4) Pacific Gas and Electric Company; 5) San Diego Gas and Electric Company; 6) Southern California Edison Company; and, 7) Southern California Gas Company.

SEEC provides education and tools for climate action planning, venues for peer-to-peer networking, technical assistance, and recognition for local agencies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use. The collaborative effort is designed to build upon the unique resources, expertise, and local agency relationships of each non-profit organization, as well as those of the four investor owned utilities.²⁶

Energy Upgrade California

Energy Upgrade California is an unprecedented collaboration between the California Energy Commission, the Public Utilities Commission, utilities, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to promote and finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects for homes and businesses, reduce energy use and help train contractors and building professionals. More than \$1.2 billion from a variety of funding sources will be leveraged through Energy Upgrade California including, \$146 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) State Energy Program and Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants awards administered by the Energy Commission, \$13 million from Employment Development Department Workforce Investment, and more than \$1 billion from investor-owned utilities for residential and commercial building upgrades. The Energy Upgrade web portal is a one-stop clearinghouse for information, incentives, scholarships, and rebates including alternative financing for residential and commercial building improvements and financial incentives by lenders. All 58 counties have their own page that highlights the services and energy efficiency opportunities available for their residents.¹⁰

Solar America Communities:

In April 2010, ICLEI was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to help bring the benefits of clean solar power generation



to communities throughout the United States. Along with the International City-County Management Association (ICMA), ICLEI will expand DOE's Solar America Communities program, conducting outreach to thousands of local governments across the United States, and sharing the valuable lessons learned by DOE's original Solar America Cities. ICLEI and ICMA will provide timely and actionable information to local governments to accelerate solar energy adoption, utilizing a mix of educational workshops, peer-to-peer sharing opportunities, and web-based resources, building off of DOE's compilation of best practices titled "Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments."²³

Statewide and Regional Groups Engaged in Climate Planning and Related Issues

There is a deep and broad network of groups (academic, economic, research, advocate, and all levels of government) at the local, state, federal, and international stages focused on Climate Action Planning and associated issues and programs. As a whole, these groups offer a wide range of services including financing, education, research, and community collaboration. Climate Action issues exist at all levels of government and non-governmental organizations; to simply list the organizations would fill pages, and a volume of text could be written about their programs. A list of just some of these groups is listed in the *City of Merced Climate Action Plan Background Report*.