



December 19, 2006

Honorable Mayor Matthews and Council members:

On behalf of San Mateo Climate Action, we write to request that the council undertake a systematic effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the city of San Mateo. There is an urgent need and a diminishing window of opportunity to act at every level to both protect the community and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. While California as a state has initiated important steps forward it is clear that solutions will take action at every level: persona, institutional, municipal, state and federal. At the same time, San Mateo has an opportunity to benefit from taking a leadership role by stimulating the technologies and businesses associated with energy efficiency and renewable energy.

San Mateo Climate Action is a coalition effort. We are residents of San Mateo concerned about the consequences our community faces unless this problem is addressed. The Sierra Club and Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo are initial partners. We believe that others in the community will be interested in supporting this proposal and we will be approaching them.

As you are likely aware, there is a strong scientific consensus that human caused climate change is accelerating and will result in severe human and economic impacts in the absence of concerted action. Analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists of the most authoritative data suggests significant impacts to California even under the most conservative scenarios including:

Reduced Water Supplies: 30–60% loss in Sierra snowpack and up to 1.5 times more critically dry years under the conservative scenarios. San Mateo's overwhelming dependence on water from Hetch Hetchy makes this an especially notable risk.

Increased Flooding: 6–14 inches of sea level rise on the low end and 22–30 inches on the upper end. San Mateo has recently invested heavily in levee reinforcements and is preparing additional multi-million dollar investments for additional work. Nevertheless, water level increases will likely result in property losses across the bay front areas in addition to substantial additional costs.

Health Impacts: 2–3 times as many heat-related deaths for major urban centers and 25–35% increase in days conducive to ozone formation in the conservative estimates. Increases in tropical diseases such as West Nile virus can also be expected.

These impacts are already leading insurers to increase costs and even cancel insurance for locations likely to be impacted by extreme weather events. But they are also offering incentives for better performance. As recently reported, Travelers offers owners of hybrid cars in California a 10 percent discount. Fireman's Fund is cutting premiums for "green" buildings that save energy and emit fewer greenhouse gases. When Fireman's Fund pays off claims, it will direct customers to environmentally friendly products to replace roofs, windows, and water heaters.

The emerging shift among insurers reflects some of the benefits that can be tapped from taking action. Other important benefits can also be realized:

Cost Savings Through Efficiency and Renewables: Even with the good steps San Mateo has taken, there are significant opportunities for cost savings. Other cities are realizing such savings through lighting, HVAC retrofits, hybrid vehicles and renewable power. A recent energy efficiency retro-fit of the City Administration Building Complex in San Diego yields an annual savings of \$500,000; Antioch, Illinois' landfill methane recovery for power provides \$100,000 a year in cost benefit; Denver, Colorado's 55 hybrids and use of biodiesel generates \$40,000; Palo Alto's retrofit of lighting systems in 60 city buildings yields \$117,625 per year.

Stimulating Businesses in the Region: The Bay Area is a vital source of key technologies relevant to greenhouse gas reduction. Energy monitoring and efficiency systems rely heavily on computer technology. Three of the world leading companies in solar technology are based nearby (SunPower in Mountain View, Nanosolar in Palo Alto, and Miasole in Santa Clara). And the region has become a major hub of investment into alternative technologies which can in turn benefit our financial services.

Developing Local Know-How: There is a rapidly emerging awareness that environmental sustainability is essential to both our quality of life and financial well-being. According to Jeffrey Immelt, CEO of General Electric: *"We think green means green. This is a time period where environmental improvement is going to lead toward profitability. This is not a hobby to make people feel good."* Developing local expertise on this key skill is essential.

In recognition of these and many other reasons, we urge the city council to act assertively to reduce greenhouse gasses and improve efficiency city-wide. Specifically we recommend that the council adopt into its annual plan the following two elements:

First, implementation of near-term steps such as:

- Accelerating the development sustainability guidelines
- Undertaking energy audit of existing city buildings
- Implementing a low flow toilets replacement program
- Installing solar panels on library

Second, initiate a substantive and integrated city-wide efficiency and emissions reduction effort starting with the establishment of a "Green Ribbon Advisory Task Force." The task force would be responsible for identifying best practices, tapping the many inexpensive support resources and guiding execution of a climate action plan. Its composition would be a diverse set of community stakeholders including business, builders, and advocates. Such a task force would be appointed by the city council for a fixed time frame for the execution of its task. Many cities both in the region and across the country are establishing such "green ribbon" committees for this purpose including Palo Alto and Portola Valley. A sample charter is attached.

We appreciate your attention to this issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

<signed>

Michael Duncheon
Social Action Committee
San Mateo Unitarian Universalists



Rafael Reyes
Team Leader
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Sample Green Ribbon Advisory charter

The Green Ribbon Advisory Board shall prepare *An Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Action Plan)* and submit such plan to the City Council by designated date.

The *Action Plan* shall contain three elements:

1. A set of recommended policies and measures that the City of San Mateo can undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from municipal facilities, operations and services.
2. Recommendations for monitoring and verifying progress on the implementation of the set of recommended policies and measures to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Recommendations for the conduct of a Phase II analysis of how the community at large can take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Composition:

- Neighborhood and Business Associations
- Environmental Community
- Builder familiar with “green” construction
- Power Industry
- Fleet Manager from the private sector
- Education community representative