



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DATE: MARCH 19, 2020

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER RONALDO FIERRO

WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF METHODS OF BRINGING AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT AND ACTION TOWARDS THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE - DIRECT SUBMITTAL

ISSUE:

Discuss and recommend methods of bringing awareness, engagement and action towards the threat of human-imposed climate change, such as declaring a "Climate Emergency," involving residents through a citizen committee on climate change, and further identifying and clarifying Council priorities in regards to the City of Riverside's climate mobilization efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Development Committee:

1. Discuss methods of bringing awareness towards the threat of human-imposed climate change; by recommending the City Council
 - a. To adopt a resolution formally recognizing the existential threat of climate change and declaring a Climate Emergency in the City of Riverside; and
 - b. To discuss the creation of a Citizen Climate Committee to advise the City Council on community-wide climate priorities; and
2. Request the City Attorney to help prepare an official resolution declaring a climate emergency, utilizing the language of the attached draft resolution.

BACKGROUND:

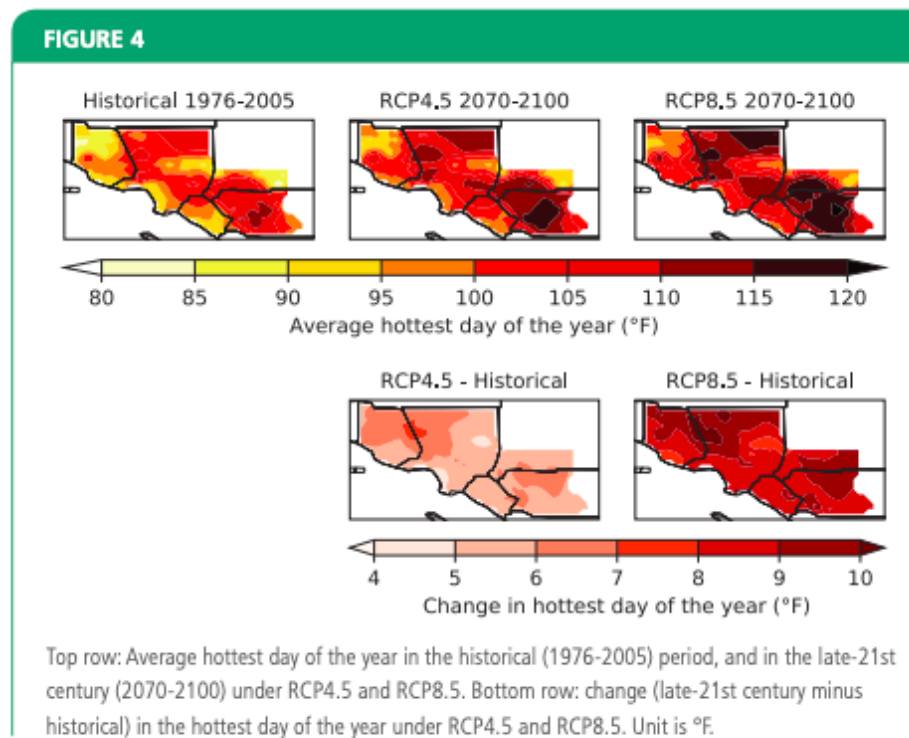
Climate Change Impacts On Our Region:

In just the past decade, the State of California has experienced several of the most extreme natural events recorded in history; including intense, widespread destructive wildfires close to home, damaging floods, a devastating five-year drought, and a tree mortality crisis.

According to California's Fourth Climate Change Region Report,

“Hot, dry weather in Southern California’s inland desert region is projected to become more extreme over the 21st century ... we are going to see more extreme daily high temperatures and more days with extreme heat, *with increases of 8-14 degrees Fahrenheit projected by 2100.*”

These heightening temperatures exacerbate a limited water supply and further increase our risk to wildfires.



Fifteen of California’s twenty largest wildfires have occurred in the past 20 years. According to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) – climate change is a primary cause behind the increased frequency and severity of wildfires. CARB’s 2000-2018 Wildfire Emissions and Burn Area Estimates Assessment reports:

“Since 1950, the area burned by California wildfires each year has been increasing, as spring and summer temperatures have warmed and spring snowmelt has occurred earlier”

Additionally, unhealthy air quality remains a large factor of climate change that regional stakeholders have struggled to mitigate. In April 2019, the County of Riverside received an “F” rating for air quality by the American Lung Association’s annual State of the Air Report.

The analysis noted that the trend in the County steadily trends down in “high particle days” the region still suffers from elevated pollution and unhealthy air quality. According to the report, 38,245 children and 142,916 adults have asthma in Riverside County and suffer from exacerbated conditions due to the air quality. Additionally, according to the U.S. Census, 15.6 percent of Riverside’s population live in poverty and are disproportionately effected by these conditions.

Despite the steady improvement of our air quality, the report aims at climate change as the leading obstacle towards greater progress in reducing harmful air pollution. Warmer weather and differing rain patterns have skewed long-term progress.

While Riverside does not have a beach, many of our residents utilize our coastlines that are only an hour or two away during the weekends or on vacations. According to the assessment, sea levels are projected to continue to rise, with extreme projections leading to a 8-10 feet sea level rise by the end of the century.

Climate Change Effects on Marginalized Populations

The effects of climate change disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as homeless individuals and those living in poverty. This largely has to do with systematic policies and socioeconomic inequalities that increase poverty and often leave the marginalized behind.

According to the U.S Census, 15.6 percent of the City of Riverside's population lives below the federal poverty line.

Those living in poverty or those that are homeless systematically occupy undesirable areas that are often the most effected by climate hazards such as water contamination and are the first to suffer when extreme weather occurs.

In the greater Riverside area, this has come to fruition with the approval of massive warehouse projects near largely low socio-economic areas, increasing truck traffic and worsening air quality.

Those affected most acutely by climate change are the homeless. The 2019 Point in Time Count (PIT) recorded 439 people living on the streets in the City of Riverside. Record-breaking heat, unhealthy air quality and extreme weather hurts those with nowhere else to go the most.

A proper response to climate change and related sustainability efforts should include and work in tandem with efforts to tackle our homelessness crisis and decrease poverty in the region.

DISCUSSION:

Why a Climate Emergency Declaration is important:

Due to the lack of attention and urgency from the federal government, many U.S. cities have taken it upon themselves to mobilize against the effects of climate change.

Close to 400 cities, districts and counties across the world representing over 35 million people collectively, have recently declared or officially acknowledged the existence of a global climate emergency.

Riverside will be joining 30 cities and counties in California that have declared a climate emergency including Sacramento, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Jose, San Diego and San Francisco.

Climate emergency declarations are a way for cities to bring awareness to the reality of human-imposed climate change and mobilize city and community resources to properly combat the crisis.

By declaring a climate emergency, we will be sending a clear commitment to the community on this issue, elevating local urgency and bringing further awareness to the climate emergency.

The declaration provides many reasons for the need for immediate action and includes calls for:

- An urgent citywide climate mobilization effort to reverse global warming.
- Reduction of citywide GHG emissions as quickly as possible towards zero net emissions
- A commitment to educate the community about the climate emergency and work to catalyze an urgent climate mobilization effort at the local, state, national, and global levels.
- A commitment to engage with marginalized communities during climate mobilization efforts.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

International Policy:

In 1970, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned that carbon dioxide emissions can lead to serious warming of the atmosphere. In 1988, the United Nations established the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to research scientific evidence of climate change and investigate possible responses from world governments.

In 1991, the IPCC published the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change, signed by 166 world governments. The framework did not lay out specific targets for GHG reduction, but set out an objective of preventing “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” and called for world nations to monitor and limit GHG emissions.

In 1997, The culminating principles of the Framework subsequently led to the negotiations of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Kyoto, Japan; resulting in the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol.

The Protocol, which was finally adopted in 2005, set specific targets that average a five percent emissions reduction compared to 1990 levels in the first commitment period from 2008-2012.

The protocol sets binding emission reduction targets for 36 industrialized countries and the European Union. The United States, however, which is responsible for roughly one fourth of world GHG emissions, opted out of the protocol.

In 2012, the Kyoto Protocol was extended to 2020 with the establishment of the Doha Amendment. However, ratification of the amendment required 166 countries to sign on. This goal was not accomplished.

In 2015, world leaders came together for the 21st meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) and effectively extended the Kyoto Protocol and charted a new course toward combatting climate change with the Paris Agreement.

The Agreement built off of the Kyoto Protocol and called on developing and industrialized countries to commit to climate action goals and emission targets in order to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels at the minimum, and more ambitiously limit the temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The Agreement aimed for industrialized countries to reach peak GHG emissions and begin to remove anthropogenic emissions. It also established binding commitments known as “Nationally Determined Contributions” (NDCs) for all parties signed onto the agreement.

The Agreement required all parties to report on their emissions and implementation efforts regularly and to partake in a global inventory every five years to assess global progress.

The United States NDC, established in 2016, created a goal of reducing economy-wide GHG emissions by 26-28 percent below the 2005 level by 2025 and to make best efforts to reach 28% reduction.

However, on June 1st, 2017, President Donald Trump formally notified the United Nations the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement and announced the U.S. would cease all participation in the established NDCs and climate change mitigation efforts.

State Legislation:

The State of California has been a trailblazer in ..

In 2000, the California Legislature adopted SB 1771, introduced by Senator Sherr which established a State Climate Registry that cataloged reductions in GHG emission and set goals and standards for measurement and verification.

In 2002, the Legislature adopted AB 1493, introduced by Assemblymember Pavley, which recognized global warming as a public health concern and established the first emission standards on the automobile industry for passenger vehicles.

In 2006, the Legislature adopted AB 32, known as the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. The adoption of the bill is heralded as a watershed moment in California history, requiring an acute reduction in GHG emissions. The bill requires California to reduce emission by close to 15% and reach 1990 levels by 2020.

The Bill reads:

Global warming poses a serious threat to the economic well-being, public health, natural resources, and the environment of California. The potential adverse impacts of global warming include the exacerbation of air quality problems, a reduction in the quality and supply of water to the state from the Sierra snowpack, a rise in sea levels resulting in the displacement of thousands of coastal businesses and residences, damage to marine ecosystems and the natural environment, and an increase in the incidences of infectious diseases, asthma, and other human health-related problems.

Global warming will have detrimental effects on some of California's largest industries, including agriculture, wine, tourism, skiing, recreational and commercial fishing, and forestry. It will also increase the strain on electricity supplies necessary to meet the demand for summer air-conditioning in the hottest parts of the state.

In 2008, the Legislature adopted SB 375, which called on local governments to help implement regional planning and land use decisions that establish sustainable communities and streamline planning for sustainable development. The bill also set regional GHG reduction targets for automobiles.

In 2010, the Legislature adopted AB 2514, requiring electric utilities to install minimum levels of grid-scale energy storage infrastructure.

In 2015, multiple state bills were introduced in preparation for state climate adaptation strategies. The Legislature adopted AB 1482, which established the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program, and SB 379 which required local governments to include adaptation and resiliency efforts into subsequent general plans.

Also adopted in 2015 was the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act which was later amended by SB 100 in 2018 signalled a watershed moment, requiring renewable energy and zero-carbon resources to supply 100% of all retail sales by 2045.

Sustainability Efforts in the City of Riverside:

The community of Riverside has a long history of recognizing the importance of preserving open spaces, improving our air quality, reducing traffic congestion and pushing sustainability efforts.

In 2009, Riverside was recognized by the California Department of Conservation as California's first "Emerald City" for "extraordinary efforts in sustainable activities." In 2012, the US Chamber of Commerce recognized the City with the "Siemens Sustainability Community Award." In 2015, the City was recognized as a 3-STAR community by STAR Communities, a national non-profit that rates municipal sustainability efforts.

Much of our sustainability efforts have been through proactive efforts of city staff or at the policy direction of the Mayor's Office. However, little direction has been brought forth by the City Council in regards to sustainability and climate change mobilization.

During his tenure, Mayor Ron Loveridge championed sustainability efforts and was the architect behind many of our current policy initiatives, with the goal of improving air quality, reducing traffic congestion, utilizing parks and open space and encouraging Riverside's advancement as a sustainable urban community.

In 2009, Mayor Loveridge introduced the 38 point Clean and Green Sustainable Riverside Action Plan (Green Action Plan) to the City Council.

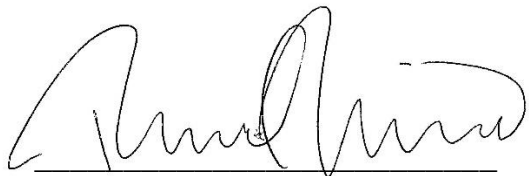
In 2016, city staff published the Riverside Restorative Growthprint Climate Action Plan, which gave an exhaustive inventory of GHG (Green-House Gas) Emissions, including communitywide and government operations baseline emissions.

The Green Action Plan (2009) and Riverside Restorative Growthprint Climate Action Plan (2016) set goals to establish a GHG emissions baseline and to reduce emissions to 7% below Riverside's 1990 baseline.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no anticipated immediate fiscal impact of this item.

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronaldo Fierro', written over a horizontal line.

RONALDO FIERRO
Councilmember, Ward 3

Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. DRAFT Resolution (climate emergency declaration)
2. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment
3. 'United in Science' High Level Synthesis Report (United Nations/World Meteorological Organization)