Greenhouse Gas (GHG) General Plan Amendments & Consistency Checklist

File No.: 24-11

Town Council

Public Hearing

February 4, 2026

Town of Windsor
CALIFORNIA

Presentation Overview

- Background
- General Plan Amendments
- GHG Consistency Checklist
- Environmental Review
- Recommended Action

Background

Background

April 4, 2018: Adoption of the 2040 General Plan, included Goal ER-5: Greenhouse Gas Emissions: *Improve the sustainability and resiliency of Windsor through compliance with local, State, and Federal policies and standards that aim to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the community.*

- 20 policies and 5 programs in support of this goal.
- Policy ER-5-10: Energy Performance Standards
- Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards
- Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5 called for the creation of energy conservation performance standards for new development that would allow the project applicant to choose from a menu of options.

April 4, 2018: Certification of the 2040 General Plan EIR, including specific findings for GHG emissions.

September 4, 2019: Town Council adoption of a Climate Emergency Resolution.

- Directed staff to develop an "internal structure to support ongoing climate action and accountability" in meeting the Town's plans, goals, and policies to address the reduction of GHG emissions and a list of actions toward achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

Background Continued

2022: Town staff attempted to create a GHG consistency checklist to implement Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5. The Town was not able to move forward and looked for opportunities to complete this work.

May 7, 2024: Town submitted an application for a California Energy Commission (CEC) California Clean Energy Planning Program (CCEPP) grant for the purposes of updating the General Plan GHG policies and creating a GHG consistency checklist to implement Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5.

July 18, 2024: The Town was awarded a $100,000 CCEPP grant, which allowed the Town to hire a consultant with subject matter expertise to assist in updating the General Plan GHG policies and creating the GHG consistency checklist to streamline the environmental review process for development projects pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

February 19, 2025: The Town Council approved a professional services agreement with LSA.

Background Continued

August 2025: Community engagement for the project began, which included a project webpage, project postcards, email blasts, social media posts, a survey with 247 responses, and two community meetings.

Planning Commission:

- Public hearing to consider amendments General Plan to GHG policies and a GHG Consistency Checklist.
- Adopted resolution recommending the Town Council adopt the General Plan amendments and GHG Checklist being considered this evening.
- Suggested that the format of the GHG Checklist be modified to be easier for applicants and staff to use.
- Suggested that Sonoma County Energy Independence Program and Property Assessed Clean Energy be revised to cover the cost of planting street trees and acknowledged this is separate from the scope of the Checklist.

General Plan Amendments

General Plan Amendments by Category

Delete Outdated References

- Narrative at the beginning of the GHG Section
- Policy ER-5.1: Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.2: Municipal Services Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.5: Greenhouse Gas Assessment and Monitoring

Removed references to the 2020 AB 32 target of 25% below 1990 levels. The Town achieved this target.

Updates for Clarity

- Policy ER-5.1: Community ER-5.1
- Policy ER-5.2: Municipal Services Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.6: Coordinate with BAAQMD and NSCAPCD
- Policy ER-5.10: Energy Performance Standards
- Policy ER-5.12: Retrofitting Existing Buildings
- Policy ER-5.13: Update Energy Policies and Programs
- Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards
- Program ER-6: Review of Town GHG Emissions Inventory

Updated to provide examples and identify monitoring timing and implementation responsibilities.

General Plan Amendments by Category

Updates for Best Practices

- Policy ER-5.7: Reduce Mobile Source and Idling Emissions
- Policy ER-5.16: Address Heat Island Effect in Parking Lots
- Policy ER-5.17: Support Urban Forestry
- Policy ER-5.18: Preservation of Existing Trees
- Policy ER-5.19: Energy Conservation Measures and Education
- Policy ER-5.22: Enhance Biological Carbon Sequestration (new policy)
- Policy ER-5.23: Water Conservation and Recycled Water Use (new policy)

Updated to reflect current best practices, changes in technology, and additional opportunities to reduce GHG.

Updates for Policy and Program Implementation

- Policy ER-5.3: Greenhouse Gas Target

Updated to implement Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5. Replaced the targets with the GHG Consistency Checklist and the BAAQMD Design Elements.

GHG Consistency Checklist

GHG Consistency Checklist

Applicability and Purpose

Purpose

- Implement Policy ER-5.10: Energy Performance Standards and Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards by creating a GHG consistency checklist.
- Checklist identifies the General Plan policies that reduce GHG (Appendix C).

Applicability

- Applies to Discretionary Projects (e.g., projects that require a Planning entitlement).
  - Category A Projects: Projects that are consistent with the General Plan land use designation (e.g., allowed uses, density, floor area ratio (FAR)).
  - Category B Projects: Projects that are not consistent with the General Plan land use designation.
- Does not apply to By-Right (e.g., ministerial) projects, such as projects that require only a building permit.

Category A Steps

Projects Consistent with General Plan Land Use Designation

Applicant completes the Consistency Checklist and submits to the Town for staff review and approval.

- Checklist documents how the project is consistent with applicable General Plan policies that reduce GHG.
- Checklist documents Energy Efficiency measures that are based on Cal Green Tier 1 requirements, General Plan policies and programs, and the Town's Climate Emergency Resolution.
- Checklist categories include Construction, Land Use and Site Design, Water, Energy Efficiency.
  - Energy Efficiency includes:
    - ✓Enhanced Building Efficiency
    - ✓Renewable Energy, Storage, and Grid Support
    - ✓Voluntary Electrification and Load Reduction
    - ✓Low Emissions Construction and Building Materials
    - ✓Additional High Performance Enhancements

Project must be consistent with all Checklist items to qualify for GHG streamlining.

Category B Steps

BAAQMD Design Elements

Applicant completes the GHG Consistency Checklist and submits to Town staff for review and approval.

Applicant submits documentation that the project is consistent with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's (BAAQMD) design elements.

Building Design Elements

- Project does not include natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing.
- Project will not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary energy usage as determined by CEQA Guidelines Sections 21100(b)(3) and 15126.2(b).

Transportation Design Elements

- Achieve a reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) consistent with SB743.
- Achieve compliance with off-street electric vehicle requirements in the most recently adopted version of Cal Green Tier 2.

BAAQMDs design elements have been shown to result in a less than significant impact related to GHG emissions, are considered consistent with State and local climate goals and are supported by substantial evidence.

Category B Steps

Alternative to BAAQMD Design Elements

Alternative for projects that cannot fully comply with BAAQMD design elements.

- Submit an explanation to the Town as to why the project cannot comply with the BAAQMD design elements.
- Subject to Town approval, the project applicant may demonstrate that alternative project features or strategies would achieve GHG reductions equivalent to those that would result from implementation of the BAAQMD design elements.
- Submit documentation describing the alternative GHG reduction strategies that would be implemented.
- Submit quantitative analysis or modeling that demonstrates that the proposed alternative results in equivalent or less GHG emissions than the BAAQMD design elements.

Projects that cannot comply with the Checklist and the BAAQMD Design Elements or the Alternative would result in a potentially significant GHG impact and further environmental review is required.

Public Correspondence

No correspondence received in response to the public notice.

Environmental Review

An Addendum to the 2040 General Plan EIR was prepared consistent with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15164 (Addendum to EIR or Negative Declaration).

- Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Land Use and Planning, Transportation

The Addendum documents why a Subsequent EIR is not required pursuant to the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 (Subsequent EIRs).

- No substantial changes that require major revisions to the General Plan EIR.
- No substantial changes with respect to the circumstances under which the General Plan was undertaken.
- No new information of substantial importance has been identified.

Recommended Actions



HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING



RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT



ADOPT A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE GENERAL PLAN GHG POLICIES AND ADOPTING THE GHG CONSISTENCY CHECKLIST

Resolution Title

A Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Windsor Amending the Greenhouse Gas Policies in the 2040 General Plan Environmental Resources Element and Implementing General Plan Program ER-5 by Adopting a GHG Consistency Checklist

Questions of Staff?