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“A new data center goes up every six months”

FYI- The community of Alviso borders with the City of Santa Clara and the children belong to the Santa Clara Unified School District.

<https://sanjosespotlight.com/santa-clara-wants-to-be-carbon-neutral-by-2045-greenhouse-gas-emissions-electric-vehicles/>

Santa Clara wants to be carbon neutral by 2045
by Kate Bradshaw
MARCH 18, 2022

Santa Clara is proposing a bevy of policies aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions over the next couple decades.

The city is updating its Climate Action Plan, with goals to curb greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2035 and for the city to be carbon neutral by 2045. The plan calls for carbon-neutral data centers and helping hotels, campuses and corporate cafeterias reduce food waste, as well as establishing electric vehicle infrastructure and supporting teleworking options to curb commute trips. Consultant firm Cascadia Consulting Group is leading the update.

To accomplish these goals, Santa Clara needs to reach no net new carbon levels or halt carbon emissions entirely.

Vice Mayor Suds Jain, who represents Santa Clara’s District 5, told San Jose’s Spotlight he initially got involved with city politics while the city was developing its initial Climate Action Plan in 2013. He’s been involved with sustainability-related policymaking in Santa Clara ever since, and has advocated for hiring a sustainability manager, banning plastic bags and most recently passing “reach” building codes that require all-electric power in new buildings.

Sustainability is an area where Santa Clara has lagged compared to other cities, Jain said. While the city’s proposed new climate action aims for the city to be carbon neutral by 2045, neighboring San Jose is working toward a carbon neutral goal by 2030.

“The council historically in Santa Clara has not been nearly as green as other cities,” he said.

A key priority for Jain in this upcoming plan is to promote policies that require employers and developers to follow so-called “transportation demand management” practices that restrict the number of solo car trips a new development or business can generate.

Heâ€™s submitted a list of suggestions for the update, including offering city employees public transit subsidies, giving rebates through Silicon Valley Power for low-income households to buy used electric vehicles and starting to charge for parking in the city.

Transportation and data centers

Betsy Megas, a member of Santa Claraâ€™s Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, provided comments on the draft plan regarding transportation reform. Transportation represents about 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in California, she said.

â€œElectric cars are still cars, and while they do reduce emissions and provide an attractive easy option, weâ€™re missing big opportunities if we donâ€™t work harder on the changing the land use decisions that make so much driving necessary,â€ she said, noting electric vehicles still contribute to traffic and road safety problems.

The city has made steps toward going green since 2013, installing 450 electric vehicle chargers in public spaces and cutting coal from the energy utility provider Silicon Valley Power.

Santa Clara also has a uniquely Silicon Valley challenge on its road toward environmental sustainability, with its wealth of data centers. The city has 54 data centers, Jain said.

â€œA new data center goes up every six months,â€ he told San JosÃ© Spotlight. â€œHistorically, we havenâ€™t required data centers to be that environmentally friendly, but my goal is to require data centers to purchase 100% carbon free electricity.â€

Kristel Wickham and Gladwyn dâ€™Souza, representatives from the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club, also submitted suggestions for Santa Claraâ€™s Climate Action Plan. Theyâ€™re pushing for the city to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% to 2030, instead of 2035, noting other cities such as Palo Alto and Menlo Park have set that goal along with zero carbon goals by 2030.

Dâ€™Souza said the Sierra Club is recommending the city consider requiring data centers to â€œmaximize their use of energy efficient technology in the design and operation and that they seek to procure the cleanest possible power from Silicon Valley Power.â€

In addition, they urged Santa Clara to adopt an all-electric â€œreachâ€ code for new construction without options that involve the use of gas power. They said the city should transition Silicon Valley Power to 100% renewable energy by 2030 for all customers instead of its current goal of 60% during the same time period.

Santa Clara County's Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Climate Action Plan on April 13.

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