



November 11, 2024

Mayor Arapostathis and Council  
City of La Mesa  
8130 Allison Avenue, La Mesa, CA 91942  
[Via Email](#)

**Re: Climate Action Campaign Recommendations for La Mesa's Climate Action Plan Update**

Dear Mayor Arapostathis and Council,

Climate Action Campaign (CAC) is a San Diego based nonprofit organization with a simple mission: create a zero carbon future through effective and equitable policy action. We have played an active role in the development of Climate Action Plans (CAPs) throughout the region since 2015.

Developing and implementing robust CAPs will secure our collective ability to build a resilient and sustainable future that keeps communities safe from climate impacts and improves overall quality of life for La Mesa families. Now, more than ever, we must center and uplift communities who are least responsible for climate change but face the worst of the impacts. Overall, the CAP Update effectively tackles carbon emissions, especially within the transportation measures. It can be strengthened by integrating implementation plans, equity, and robust building decarbonization actions. Below are our comments and recommendations:

**1. Develop an Implementation Plan**

We commend the City of La Mesa on your forward-thinking and holistic approach to reducing pollution. **The transportation measures in particular outline an impactful approach to transforming La Mesa by dramatically improving air quality.** As currently outlined in this CAP update, La Mesa is poised to significantly slash greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by almost 19% from the business as usual emissions projections. While the transportation measures are top-notch in theory, they will only become reality through dedicated implementation, which is necessary for all CAP measures.

We recognize and applaud that the City has committed to developing a CAP Update work plan and an Implementation Cost Analysis for the CAP. In addition, we recommend the City develop a specific CAP Implementation Plan that includes detailed timelines, benchmarking, and budgets identified for each measure. For reference, the City previously developed the Fiscal Year 19-21 CAP Implementation Plan.

**2. Add More Robust Building Decarbonization Measures**

The CAP establishes strong electrification and renewable energy actions, though there are gaps in addressing building decarbonization, one of the greatest opportunities for reducing pollution and

protecting public health. One in eight Californians has asthma, with higher asthma rates in working class Communities of Color, and 12 million Californians live in homes with a gas stove that harms indoor air quality to levels that would be illegal outdoors.

With building emissions being the primary source of premature deaths from air pollution statewide, accounting for more than 6,000 premature deaths every year, we encourage the City to integrate more robust building decarbonization policies with increased urgency. We also recommend the City engage with partners in labor to understand their needs and address concerns to ensure no worker is left behind in a decarbonized San Diego.

- BE-1 → Add **“Adopt a Building Performance Standard for existing buildings.”**
  - A Building Performance Standard (BPS) will drastically reduce pollution by requiring existing buildings to meet GHG emissions-based performance targets. Since it takes time to meaningfully engage stakeholders to develop an equitable BPS, this needs to be identified as a long-term goal with short-term actions to begin development.
- BE-2.1 → Change to **“Adopt a Performance-Based Standard for all new construction.”**
  - Commit to adopting a standard that covers all new construction, both residential and commercial, as feasible under the California Energy Commissions cost-effectiveness requirement.
- BE-2.2 → Change to **“Adopt a Performance-Based Standard for major renovations and new non-residential construction projects.”**
  - To improve air quality and protect current and future building occupants' health, the City should cover all new construction, as well as major renovations. This action should be a committed goal for adoption.
- BE-2 → Add **“Adopt a policy to electrify all new and existing municipal buildings.”**
  - The City has an opportunity to reduce pollution in the community through its own infrastructure. This policy can require all new municipal buildings be all-electric and require existing gas infrastructure be replaced at end of life by all-electric alternatives.

### **3. Integrate Equity and Traditional Ecological Knowledge Throughout Each Measure**

While we recognize and appreciate the mention of equity, community-centered tools, and community engagement efforts, we see limited examples of how each measure specifically uplifts underserved and historically marginalized communities, particularly within the transportation sector.

How might low-income residents have access to public transportation or EV options? We encourage La Mesa to include measures that provide vouchers, rebates, or community programs (such as community bicycle share programs or similar to the [Youth Opportunity Pass](#)) that enable low-income residents and historically underserved Communities of Color to participate in zero-emission transportation options.

**All CAP implementation should center and prioritize equity.** We urge the City to prioritize equity into all analyses, implementation, and funding (such as in the Implementation Cost Analysis and CAP Update Work Plan). Full funding should be allocated to projects and programs that benefit underserved communities, such as through the examples identified throughout this letter.

Additionally, there is no mention or integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous leadership within the current CAP update. Centering equity fundamentally means that we must honor and integrate the knowledge and wisdom of those whose lands were unceded to form what is now La Mesa. While we cannot undo the injustices of the past, we can take meaningful steps to include the Kumeyaay in positions of leadership and/or integrate their traditional knowledge more fully in measures throughout the CAP. Examples of Indigenous integration include but are not limited to:

- Measure U-1.1 | A-1 → **Hire Indigenous leaders who can advise on traditional and native tree planting and stewardship (maintenance) practices.**
- Wildfire Strategy → **Incorporate Indigenous leadership and traditional fire practices as resilience measures.**
- Equity → **Collaborate with Kumeyaay Nation tribes to develop partnerships on educational programs, environmental stewardship, and access to fossil fuel-free transportation and energy sources throughout the region.**

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the CAP Update, which will be a critical part of improving quality of life for the La Mesa community.

Sincerely,



Ali Mariko Dressel  
Climate Justice Policy Coordinator  
Climate Action Campaign