



April 29, 2019

Mayor Minto and Council  
City of Santee  
10601 Magnolia Ave.  
Santee, CA 92071

**RE: Comments on the Sustainable Santee Plan and Draft PEIR**

Dear Mayor Minto and Council:

Climate Action Campaign is a nonprofit organization with a mission to stop climate change. We have played an active role in the development of every Climate Action Plan (CAP) in the region since 2015, and we release an [annual Report Card](#) evaluating the strength of cities' CAPs and how effective their implementation has been.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Sustainable Santee Plan. While we support the inclusion of a 100% clean energy target with Community Choice as the key strategy to reach that target, there are numerous and significant gaps between what the law and the best available climate science demands and what the Draft CAP presents.

As a Qualified GHG Reduction Plan under CEQA, the CAP is a legally binding document and must include enforceable measures that are specific, unambiguous, and contain clear requirements. Unfortunately, many of the measures in this Draft CAP do not pass legal muster and must be revised to be sufficiently enforceable. Further, the Screening Tables used to evaluate whether proposed projects are consistent with the CAP fail to define a clear relationship between the criteria and point values assigned in the Tables, and the requirements of the CAP. Finally, the CAP fails to commit to actionable strategies to pursue smart growth and avoid the GHG emissions and air quality impacts associated with urban sprawl.

We recommend that Santee re-establish the city's targets to align with the carbon neutrality goal in Executive Order B-55-18, with a horizon year of 2045, and develop a new set of enforceable strategies with a clear focus on emissions reductions through land use and transportation measures, 100% clean energy, building electrification to phase out consumption of natural gas, zero waste, conservation of open space to sequester carbon, urban forestry, and social equity.

Please find our specific comments on measures in the CAP and on the Screening Tables below.

**Chapter 1**

*Introduction*

p. 1: The introduction must acknowledge the role of land use in reducing GHG emissions, along with energy efficiency, renewable energy, increasing waste diversion from landfills, and enhancing access to biking, walking, and transit.

### *Regulatory Setting*

p. 4: The CAP must include Executive Order B-55-18 calling for Carbon Neutrality by 2045. Recent climate science such as the UN IPCC Special Report on Global Warming 1.5°C, and the 2018 Executive Order setting a statewide carbon neutrality goal, make it clear that at the local level we must plan for deep decarbonization.

p. 7: In the section “California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 6,” the CAP should describe the changes made in the 2019 update, which will go into effect on January 1, 2020.

### *City Setting*

p. 8: The CAP states, “Approximately half of the City’s land is undeveloped, with opportunity for growth.” It would be equally accurate, and in line with state climate goals, to note the opportunity for carbon sequestration through preservation of undeveloped land in Santee.

## **Chapter 2**

### *GHG Emissions Inventory*

p. 9: The baseline against which emissions reductions are measured should be a reflection of the best available data on current existing conditions. Other cities in the region are using baseline years much closer to the current year, which are a more accurate reflection of current conditions. Further, methodologies for inventorying GHG emissions have changed since 2005. Was the 2005 inventory done with a methodology consistent with the methodology used currently for inventories, in particular for VMT?

p. 12: The CAP states that emissions from energy use accounted for 54 percent of total community emissions in 2013. This should be corrected; the actual amount is 32%.

p. 14: Please explain further why it is appropriate to include a 2,000 household buffer above the build out accommodated by the City’s currently adopted General Plan and explain how adding that buffer affected projections of emissions, especially from VMT. What assumptions were used about where those households would be located and how they would travel, and why were those assumptions used?

### *Community Targets*

p. 19: The CAP horizon of 2035 falls ten years short of Executive Order B-55-18, which sets a statewide goal of carbon neutrality by 2045. In light of the unfolding planetary emergency we are facing as the climate crisis intensifies, Santee should extend its CAP horizon to at least 2045 and align with the state carbon neutrality target. In addition, the CAP is unclear as to whether the city’s targets are calculated on a mass emissions basis or a per capita basis. This, too, should be clarified.

## **Chapter 3: GHG Reduction Measures**

### *Technical Appendix*

The CAP must provide substantial evidence for each strategy that its implementation will lead to the GHG reductions identified for that strategy, and that cumulatively the strategies will achieve the target

GHG reductions. The final CAP must include a technical appendix that shows the assumptions and calculations used to calculate the reduction potential of each measure.

The footnotes below each measure stating the assumptions used do not draw a clear line from action to emissions reduction. In other words, they are not sufficient to demonstrate that the actions, if implemented, would result in the projected reductions. Further, the footnotes often express the GHG reduction potential from a measure that includes numerous actions, some of which are voluntary, some mandatory. It is not possible to discern from these footnotes which actions lead to which amount of GHG reduction potential. The technical appendix must specify the GHG reduction potential for each action.

### *Enforceability*

The measures in CEQA-Qualified GHG Reduction Plans (CAPs) must be enforceable; the language on page 23 saying, “Within each measure, one or more actions are presented that indicate the City *may* take in achieving the measure” should be revised to state clearly that the City *will* take the actions listed. Similarly, the statement that actions may be added or removed over time needs to be clarified. Actions may not be added or removed without demonstrating, with substantial evidence, that the remaining measures will still meet the CAP reduction targets. It would be appropriate to state, “Measures may be added or removed over time during regularly scheduled CAP updates and with substantial evidence to demonstrate that the revisions allow the city to meet its legally binding targets.”

### *GHG Reduction Measures*

Measure 1.2: Education and outreach measures that express good intentions but lack meaningful enforceability violate CEQA. They may serve as supporting measures, but the city may not count on GHG reductions from voluntary measures such as this one, which depends on voluntary action undertaken based on outreach and education.

Measure 1.3: This measure includes two ordinances whose GHG reduction impacts should be quantified.

Measure 1.4: The CAP needs to clarify which of the four actions in this measure are being used to quantify potential GHG reductions. Two of the four are purely voluntary (promote existing incentivized programs and promote participation in Green Building Program), and no reductions should be assumed. The action, “Establish or promote financing programs for home upgrades such as HERO” must be clarified: will the city establish a financing program or promote it? Depending on the action, presumably the GHG reduction potential will vary. If the action is simply to “promote” a financing program, no reductions should be assumed.

Measures 2.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2: These should be supporting measures, as none of the actions listed are meaningfully enforceable.

Measure 6.1: The action, “Propose a change to landscaping ordinance to require more trees on site during project review and plan check” needs more specificity in order to quantify GHG reduction potential.

Measure 7.2: As with all measures, detailed information about the assumptions and calculations used to arrive at GHG reduction potential is needed. This measure in particular projects huge reductions from the development of bike infrastructure compared with other plans in the region. For example, the City of San Diego's CAP sets a target of 18% of commutes made by bike by 2035, which would make San Diego arguably the most bike-friendly city in the country, and the GHG reduction potential for that measure is 50,574 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e. San Diego's population is approximately 1.4 million. Meanwhile, Santee projects 12,600 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e reduced, with a population of just 65,000. On a per capita basis, San Diego expects to reduce emissions .036 MT per person, whereas Santee expects to reduce by .19 MT per person. That means Santee is expecting to achieve emissions reductions at 5.4 times the rate, per capita, of San Diego. That is a significant claim and needs to be backed up with substantial evidence that implementation of the Bike Master Plan can actually be expected to achieve the ridership necessary to avoid those emissions.

Measure 7.3: More detailed information is needed about assumptions and calculations used to arrive at the GHG reduction projections for this measure. Further, the measure lacks the specificity required of measures in plans used for streamlining under CEQA. The only requirement in the measure is for businesses 'of a certain size' to provide 'facilities.' Neither the size of the businesses that would be subject to the requirement, nor the specific facilities required, are defined. This lack of detail makes the measure unenforceable, which violates CEQA. It is not possible to discern whether the GHG reduction potential assumes reductions just from the transportation demand management policy sketched out in this measure, or whether the CAP also assumes that reductions will be achieved through the action that reads, "Promote ridesharing and facilitate air district incentives for ridesharing through Mobility Element Objective 9.0." Because this action depends on voluntary action alone, it is not enforceable and no reductions should be assumed.

Measure 7.4: This measure appears to count EV ownership, based on state policies and programs, as a local action. If the city is depending on state policies and programs for these reductions, then they should not be counted as part of this measure.

The only action in this measure that approaches enforceability is "Require or incentivize new residential and commercial developers to install e-chargers"; however, the lack of specificity ("require *or* incentivize") makes the measure unenforceable. Because the action the city will take is unclear, it is unclear whether the GHG reduction potential assumes a requirement or an incentive. The measure needs to clarify exactly what actions are called for.

Measure 7.5: The actions in this measure are not sufficiently actionable, quantifiable, or enforceable to function as valid GHG reduction measures for streamlining under CEQA.

- The Complete Streets Program outlined in Objective 1.0 of the Mobility Element is a set of broad statements of good intention, not a series of specific actions the city will take. Implementation of this objective could result in a wide range of highly varied outcomes. Statements such as "design streets in a manner that is sensitive to local context," and "ensure the entire right-of-way is designed to accommodate appropriate modes of transportation," provide no assurance that implementation of these policies would result in more biking, walking, or transit in Santee.

- Establishing a safe routes to school program is a laudable goal, but the outcomes that such a program would deliver are uncertain and unspecified, so the reduction potential from this action is not quantifiable.
- Mobility element Policy 1.4 expresses a broad, general direction to develop multi-modal corridors to encourage walking, biking, and transit. The action does not refer to any specific plans to improve biking, walking, or transit. It is not sufficiently designed to be enforceable. Finally, what is the difference between the intention to create a connected system of multi-modal corridors and implementation of the Bicycle Master Plan? The CAP needs to demonstrate that the same emissions reductions are not being counted twice.

Measure 7.6: Please clarify whether the city has the authority to require that the school district expand the school bus program. If not, the city may not claim emissions reductions from this action, as the school bus program is outside its jurisdiction. If the city *does* have the authority to require an expansion of school bus service, the CAP must clarify by how much service would need to increase to achieve the emissions reductions projected in this measure.

Measure 8.1: While we commend Santee’s setting a target of 90% waste diversion by 2035, it is not clear that the actions listed in this measure are sufficient to meet that target or achieve the GHG reduction potential projected. Two of the four actions are voluntary measures expressing an intent to educate the community and encourage partnerships, and the action, “Add additional recycling containers in public places” lacks specificity. How many recycling containers would be added, and where? How much will those additional containers increase the rate of diversion from the landfill? The city needs to articulate precisely how Santee will reach the 90% target identified in the CAP.

Measure 9.2: We support Santee’s intent to join a regional Community Choice program and to reach 100% clean energy by 2035. This measure states that electricity accounts for 54% of the City’s baseline emissions inventory, while the actual percent is 32%. Were the calculations estimating GHG reduction potential from Community Choice developed using the 54% or the 32% figure?

The CAP states that because developing and implementing a Community Choice program will take time, the program and its associated reductions are listed separately from the other measures in the plan. The CAP is by nature a long-term plan to reduce emissions, and most of the measures will take significant time to implement fully. For example, fully building out the projects in the Bicycle Master Plan will likely require at least several years, even on an aggressive schedule. Similarly, achieving a 90% waste diversion target will take years. Please clarify in what way the timeline for implementation of Community Choice is meaningfully different from all other local reduction measures.

### **CEQA Screening Tables**

The CAP states that the screening tables will allow Santee to avoid 1,308 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e from new development. Other cities in the region have developed CAP Consistency Checklists to ensure that projects that wish to tier from the CAP are in fact implementing measures consistent with what is required in the CAP. Santee, by contrast, uses Screening Tables, which are set apart from other CAP measures as a

separate measure with its own estimated reductions. There is no apparent relationship between points earned using the Screening Tables and consistency with the requirements of the CAP.

Projects relying on the CAP to streamline environmental review must demonstrate that they will be built in a way that is consistent with the requirements of the CAP. The CAP fails to demonstrate any clear connection between earning 100 points or more through the screening tables and demonstrating consistency with the requirements of the CAP.

Furthermore, the screening tables leave so much to the discretion of city staff as to be meaningless. For example, the point values associated actions to reduce VMT are “TBD” and would be determined on a case by case basis depending on traffic studies. No criteria are established that define the amount of VMT avoided that would be associated with a particular number of points. The effect of leaving multiple point categories “TBD” is that consistency with the CAP has no effect on whether projects earn 100 points; everything is left to the discretion of city staff.

Finally, the Screening Tables include “off-site renewable energy project” as an option for project applicants to earn an assigned point value “TBD.” This could allow a project that meets none or very few of the requirements of the CAP to build renewable energy facilities or invest in energy retrofits off-site and still earn the 100 points required to be deemed consistent with the CAP. There are no geographical boundaries set limiting where the investment can be made, meaning there is no assurance that the benefits would be realized in Santee. Projects that cannot meet the requirements of the CAP through on-site actions, including smart land use, are not consistent with the CAP. The CEQA process, not a loophole in the consistency checklist or screening table, is the appropriate place to propose and discuss mitigation measures such as off-site renewable energy.

### **Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations**

The CAP as written contains numerous unenforceable measures, violating the requirements of CEQA, includes calculations for emissions reductions from transportation that merit close examination and likely revision, and the Screening Tables presented as a way for projects to tier from the CAP raise serious questions about their value as a tool to evaluate CAP consistency.

In order to facilitate moving forward with a plan that satisfies the requirements of CEQA and fulfills the moral obligation to leave a planet that is habitable for kids growing up today, we recommend that the city go back to the drawing board to develop a CAP that relies solely on enforceable measures, includes a technical appendix that clearly defines the assumptions and calculations used to project GHG reduction potential, meaningfully addresses emissions from land use and transportation, and sets out clear requirements for projects seeking to establish consistency with the CAP.

In the interim, we encourage the city to continue pursuing development of a Community Choice program to achieve 100% clean energy, design and construction of the network envisioned in the Bicycle Master Plan, and implementation of other actions to reduce emissions and improve quality of life. Santee can and should work in the public interest toward clean air, safe streets, and a livable climate, while

simultaneously revamping the CAP to put forward a plan that would enable the city to do its fair share to combat the most dire threat facing humanity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Wolfram".

Sophie Wolfram  
Director of Programs  
Climate Action Campaign