



MEMO

To: Bill King
City of Merced

From: Andrea Nelson, PMC

Cc: Scott Davidson, PMC
Jennifer Venema, PMC

Date: March 10, 2014

Re: Summary of City of Merced Resource Efficiency Fair

This memo summarizes the City of Merced Programmatic Climate Action Plan (PCAP) Resource Efficiency Fair that was hosted by the City on February 27, 2014, at the Senior Center. This summary provides key findings of the PCAP booth activities and a brief overview of the fair.

INTRODUCTION

The Merced PCAP is an implementation tool for the City's existing Climate Action Plan, which was adopted in 2012. The PCAP seeks to achieve Merced's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals in a way that streamlines development permitting and makes the development process easier to navigate. The PCAP will contain specific strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that is easy to track, and include cost-benefit analyses to help decision-makers prioritize strategy implementation.

PURPOSE OF THE RESOURCE EFFICIENCY FAIR

The Resource Efficiency Fair was the public kickoff event for the PCAP, as well as an educational event for Merced residents and business owners. The event was intended to inform members of the public as to what the PCAP project is (its purposes, components, timeline, etc.) and to invite individuals to join the project's ad hoc advisory focus group. Attendees also participated in a number of activities to determine support for various resource efficiency actions and barriers that exist toward implementing these items.

The Resource Efficiency Fair did not focus solely on the PCAP. In addition to staff from the Merced Planning Division and the project's consultants, representatives from 31 other organizations were in attendance to share information about resource efficiency with event attendees. These participants included other government agencies and departments (such as the City's Public Works Department and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District), various community groups (e.g., the Merced Bike Coalition and the Master Gardeners of Merced County), private companies that are key stakeholders in resource efficiency (e.g., PG&E), and community institutions (including multiple groups from UC Merced). Each organization was given its own table to display information, provide demonstrations, and conduct activities.

The event was held on February 27, 2014, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Merced Senior Center. Spanish-language interpreters assisted attendants.

OUTREACH OVERVIEW

Including the representatives from the various organizations, there were approximately 120 people in attendance. Attendees were welcomed upon arrival, asked to sign in, and asked to be seated for a 20-minute introductory period. John Bramble, the Merced city manager, discussed the City’s existing accomplishments around resource efficiency. Bill King, principal planner for Merced, and Scott Davidson, project manager for the project consultant PMC, talked about the existing Climate Action Plan and discussed the approach to develop the PCAP.

Following these presentations, attendees were invited to visit the organization tables that were set up around the room. Attendees were able to visit the tables at their own pace and in any order. The project consultant, Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC), hosted the “PCAP Activity Table.”

PCAP ACTIVITY TABLE

At the PCAP table, attendees were invited to participate in three activities intended to help draft the specific strategies in the PCAP. Summaries of these activities and their results are discussed here in greater detail.

ACTIVITY I: ISSUE BUCKETS

In this activity, participants were shown five buckets, each labeled with a resource efficiency-related issue (e.g., water resource protection) and example policies related to the issue. Participants were given three poker chips (red chips for residents, blue for business participants, and white for visitors) and asked to drop the chips in the buckets that represent the issues of greatest importance to them. Participants could choose to use the chips in any way, including placing all three in the same bucket. The number of chips in each bucket, by participant type, is given below.

Issue	Residents	Business	Visitors	Total	Percent
Water resource protection	50	5	4	59	34%
Bicycle and pedestrian enhancements	32	2	2	36	20%
Pedestrian and transit-friendly development	21	4	3	28	16%
Energy-efficient buildings	23	3	1	27	15%
Waste reduction	23	2	1	26	15%
Total	149	16	11	176	100%
Percent	85%	9%	6%	100%	-

Activity participants chose water resource protection as by far the most important issue for all three participant groups (59 total selections). Bicycle and pedestrian enhancements was the second-most important issue (36 total selections), with the remaining three issues all receiving approximately the same number of selections. Notably, while pedestrian and transit-friendly development received the lowest priority among residents (21 chips), it was the second-most popular item for business participants and visitors.

One respondent made an additional comment, expressing their support for incentivizing the installation of graywater systems in existing homes, and requiring that such systems be installed in new developments.

ACTIVITY 2: RENOVATION BARRIERS

In this activity, participants were asked to write on a sticky note what they perceived as a barrier to renovating their home (for residential participants) or their business (for commercial/industrial participants). The responses given and the number of participants who cited each response are given below.

Reason	Residential responses	Commercial/industrial responses	Total responses
Money	7		7
Live in a rental unit	3		3
Insufficient buy-in	2		2
Knowledge	1	1	2
Motivation	2		2
Time	1	1	2
Time and money	1		1
Disturbance	1		1
Location and knowledge		1	1
Money and credit score	1		1
Total	19	3	22

For residential participants, the cost of renovating their home was the most frequent barrier. Seven cited it as the primary barrier, while another two mentioned money in combination with another factor. Rental unit limitations, insufficient buy-in from other residents, insufficient motivation, and not enough time were all mentioned by multiple respondents.

Although only three commercial/industrial participants responded, money was not mentioned as a barrier to business renovation. Instead, lack of knowledge was the primary reason (cited by two of three respondents), with insufficient time and complications from business location being additional factors.

Two residential respondents offered additional comments, saying that the City needs to determine a way to reach renters, and that any resources should be made available to existing residents and not developers.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In this activity, participants were shown a large poster with a number of actions to reduce resource use. For each action, participants were asked to identify whether they already do the action or would be willing to try it, and whether the city should encourage, incentivize, or require the action. The numbers of participant responses for each item are given in the table below.

Individual Actions to Reduce Resource Use	I Already Do This	I Would Try This	The City should...		
			Encourage	Incentivize	Require
			...this Activity		
Transportation					
1. Carpool or ride the bus	9	8	9	12	3
2. Make your trips by bicycle	12	5	9	8	2
3. Walk between your home, school, work, or other destinations	10	3	13	5	0
4. Drive a hybrid or electric vehicle	3	7	4	10	1
Land Use					
5. Make housing decisions based on proximity to services and transportation options	10	5	4	4	11
Energy					
6. Replace older fixtures, bulbs, or appliances with more energy-efficient models	19	5	2	8	5
7. Upgrade heating and cooling efficiency of your home or business through insulation, new windows, etc.	12	6	1	10	3
8. Install alternative energy devices such as a solar water heater or solar systems	3	12	5	9	3
9. Participate in an energy audit or retrofit through City programs, utility-sponsored programs, or other energy efficiency programs	7	7	6	8	4
Water Conservation					
10. Replace old fixtures with more efficient models	10	7	1	9	3
11. Remove or replace water-intensive landscaping	8	7	4	4	8
Solid Waste					

Individual Actions to Reduce Resource Use	I Already Do This	I Would Try This	The City should...		
			Encourage	Incentivize	Require
			...this Activity		
12. Recycle common materials (office paper, cardboard, plastic, glass)	21	2	2	2	12
13. Compost organic materials or utilize green waste bins to recycle yard waste	13	5	2	4	9
14. Avoid use of Styrofoam products or plastic bags	13	5	6	2	12

The most common action that participants already do is recycling of common materials (21 respondents), followed closely by installing more energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances (19 respondents). By contrast, only three respondents had installed renewable energy devices or drive a hybrid/electric car.

The action that participants would be most willing to try was installation of renewable energy devices (12 respondents), while only two were willing to recycle common materials (this may be because so many respondents already do so) and only three would try walking as a commute choice.

Generally, incentivizing activities was most popular among participants, although more participants felt that activities should be required rather than encouraged. Key findings include:

- Strong support for the City to encourage walking (13 respondents), as well as bicycling and the use of public transit/carpools (9 respondents each).
- The most popular activity for incentives was the use of public transit/carpools (12 respondents), followed by incentives for using hybrid/electric vehicles and conducting home energy retrofits (10 respondents each).
- There was greatest support for the City to require recycling common materials and banning plastic bags/Styrofoam (12 respondents each), followed by support for requiring housing decisions to be made based on proximity to services and transportation (11 respondents).

Participants to this activity also made a number of additional comments. One participant noted the need for improved roadway safety and maintenance programs to promote bike use, while another expressed support for Bike to Work days. Similarly, a third participant mentioned a need to improve the roadways for both safety and aesthetic reasons. A participant stated the need for better education around waste issues, expressing concern that some people did not know how to properly use the recycling and trash bins at their home or business. Another participant suggested involving the Merced Irrigation District in energy retrofit efforts. Lastly, one participant simply declared “Bikes.”

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Three participants also filled out comment cards, independent of any activity.

- Commenter #1 called the event “a success,” “a great first fair,” and expressed a desire for the event to be an annual occurrence. This person noted that there were “great participants” and

that there was “much to learn or be reminded to do.” This individual also “loved having UCM students engaged with this event.”

- Commenter #2 declared that there was a “great wealth of info,” but observed that they “couldn’t hear the speakers very well.”
- Commenter #3 stated that “it’d be great for the City to share this information to residents speaking languages other than English,” specifically mentioning Spanish and Hmong. This person went on to state that “the city could outreach to these residents and provide education on climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, etc., and provide solutions for how they can improve their own homes” or offer alternatives if they rent. This individual also mentioned that “it’s important to outreach to more people to get a diverse and representative group of people to support this.”