

MEMO

To: Bill King
CITY OF Merced

From: Jennifer Venema

Cc: Pam Johns, Tammy Seale, Eli Krispi, and Jeanine Cavalli

Date: September 15, 2015

Re: Merced Programmatic CAP Focus Group Meeting #7 Summary

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the seventh Focus Group meeting, held on September 10, 2015. The Michael Baker International team facilitated the meeting for the City's Programmatic Climate Action Plan (PCAP) project.

The City of Merced PCAP project implements the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP), adopted by the City Council in 2012. The project's goal is to provide tools to support and implement the CAP. Key objectives include achieving the City's adopted greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets while streamlining and simplifying the review of new development. The project will result in: 1) an action plan; 2) tools to track and analyze urban growth, the cost benefit of strategies, and emissions reductions; and 3) design guidance. The primary purpose of the seventh Focus Group meeting was to review the draft documents.

FOCUS GROUP

The Focus Group for the PCAP project is an ad hoc committee of key stakeholders representing different organizations and interests in the community. Members of the Focus Group include representatives from businesses, the local green industry, the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce, and community groups, along with representatives from the Planning Commission, City Council, and City departments. The Focus Group convenes on a regular basis to offer recommendations and feedback to City staff and decision-makers during the development of project materials. Prior to the seventh Focus Group meeting, Focus Group committee members received the first public complete drafts of the PCAP and Unified Design Manual (UDM).

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP MEETING #7

The seventh Focus Group meeting was held from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the Sam Pipes Room in the Merced Civic Center on September 10. In attendance were five members of the Focus Group, three members of the public, and City staff. The purpose of the meeting was to review and provide input on the draft PCAP (including the project options checklists), draft UDM, and draft Zoning Code Index.

Although the Focus Group reviewed the Zoning Code Index at a previous meeting, the September 10 meeting was the first opportunity for Focus Group members to review the draft PCAP and UDM.

City staff and Michael Baker staff presented a summary of the documents to the Focus Group and facilitated a discussion with Focus Group members. The following issues were addressed:

- **Project Overview.** Michael Baker staff reviewed the purpose of the project and objectives of the effort. The project team reviewed the benefits of the PCAP and its relationship to the adopted CAP. This discussion included a recap of the project approach. The project team integrated direction from the Focus Group and decision-makers on an ongoing basis, throughout all phases of project development. Michael Baker staff summarized how this approach resulted in nearly complete draft documents that reflected input and priorities identified to date. The project team also addressed questions raised by the Planning Commission regarding the project's approach to account for pending state action and allow the City to track changes in progress to targets over time. The presentation also included a review of the project schedule, with completion of the draft documents planned for late fall 2015.
- **Presentation of Documents.** Michael Baker staff summarized the contents and purpose of each key PCAP document: the PCAP (including the Project Options checklist), UDM, and Zoning Code Index. The presentation outlined the dynamic relationship of these tools. A separate monitoring tool prepared as part of the project further supports the City's ability to track progress and monitor attainment of CAP targets. Discussion included a review of the capabilities and methods used in the monitoring tool. The project team also addressed questions regarding the PCAP's approach to account for General Plan growth, updates to the Project Options checklist since the previous meeting, and the provision of cross-references to external codes. Focus Group members requested through the end of September 2015 to provide comments on the documents. Initial comments provided by the Focus Group at the meeting include the following:
 - The PCAP is a significant step forward for Merced to address the challenge of GHG emissions.
 - The monitoring tool tracks changes in growth and provides a way to track changes in progress to the target. A member of the public requested more information on the methods and assumptions in the tool. Other members of the Focus Group recapped the previous demonstration of the monitoring tool at Focus Group meeting #6, noting the purpose of the tool to track change in emissions over time.
 - The new options for compliance in the Project Options checklist provide greater flexibility to new projects, allowing for compliance without on-site renewable energy installations.
 - Consider reviewing the urban forestry guidelines from the City of Fresno, and identify if the UDM should provide a cross-reference to this or other similar resources.
 - Discussion covered relationship of the UDM to external codes and regulations. For instance, a question centered on integration of the building code. Michael Baker staff

noted that the separate Project Options checklist accounts for external regulations and presents additional criteria that a project must attain for PCAP consistency. The UDM next provides additional support for the visual design of projects, compiling relevant visual concepts with existing policies, new design guidance, and external regulations that further achieve GHG emissions reductions and simplify compliance with existing regulations. From this perspective, the UDM consolidates and seeks to simplify the development framework. By comparison, the Project Options checklist in the PCAP focuses on the more technical aspects of PCAP compliance.

- Focus Group members noted that providing these cross-references to external codes and policies would be useful to the reader. Although not included in the draft UDM, the UDM will include an appendix with cross-references to external policies and codes.
- A Focus Group member requested whether the UDM would include a sample site plan to illustrate ways a project could meet UDM guidance. The project team noted that this was an idea to explore.
- Focus Group members and the public discussed the PCAP monitoring process and frequency of reports to Council and the public. City staff discussed options, including the PCAP's recommendation of annual reports to Council with regular monitoring over time.
- **Discussion and recommendations.** Following presentation and discussion, Focus Group members voted on a motion to recommend the PCAP and UDM to City Council upon integration of any outstanding comments or edits requested by the Focus Group. Although Focus Group members requested additional time to complete review of the documents, members vocalized consensus that the documents appeared to be ready for recommendation to the City Council. Focus Group members also vocalized agreement that an additional meeting of the Focus Group is most likely unnecessary, but members requested the right to request a meeting as needed, following document review.

The meeting concluded with the 5-0 vote from the Focus Group to recommend the PCAP to City Council for approval. The project team requested all additional comments on the draft documents by the end of September 2015 for incorporation prior to providing documents to the Planning Commission and City Council. The project team reiterated the overall commitment to take materials to decision-makers by early 2016, after incorporating for additional Focus Group input.