

San Diego Commits To Slashing Greenhouse Gases The City Council unanimously approved a Climate Action Plan backed by the mayor

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

By [Claire Trageser](#)



Photo by [Claire Trageser](#)

Environmental leader Nicole Capretz speaks at a rally in advance of the San Diego City Council's Climate Action Plan vote, Dec. 15, 2015.

San Diego now has a legal commitment to cut its greenhouse gases in half in 20 years.

The City Council unanimously approved a [Climate Action Plan](#) on Tuesday that has been in the works for five years and was introduced in its final version by [Mayor Kevin Faulconer](#) in September 2014.

Document

[San Diego Climate Action Plan Final](#)

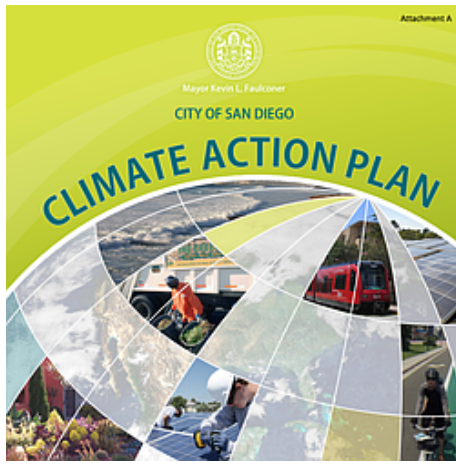
"Approving this plan today creates a map for charting San Diego's future by striking the right balance between protecting our environment, which we hold so precious, and growing our economy," Faulconer said. "San Diego can support clean technology, renewable energy and economic growth."

The plan received broad support — from environmentalists to business leaders. In advance of its passage, the [San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Environmental Health Coalition](#), the [San Diego County Taxpayers Association](#) and the [Climate Action Campaign](#) praised it.

Now the question is how to make its goals actually happen. Cody Hooven, the city's sustainability manager, said staff will prepare an annual monitoring report to be shared with the City Council each year, and that staff will bring an implementation plan to the council in April.

Councilman Todd Gloria acknowledged the difficulty of putting the plan into action.

"The plan is very aggressive, and it's going to be difficult in many ways to implement. But we



The final draft of San Diego's Climate Action Plan.

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choice will stay in the second phase.

Community choice, which would take the energy-buying power away from San Diego Gas & Electric and give it to the city, has been one of the most controversial parts of the plan. Environmental leaders say it would be the only way to reach the objective of using only renewable energy by 2035.

SDG&E [released a statement](#) last week saying it fully supports the climate plan.

"We're also working aggressively to increase the amount of renewable energy used by San Diego and southern Orange County homes and businesses," the letter said. "Today, SDG&E is the only utility in California to deliver 33 percent of its energy from renewable sources and is committed to increasing this amount to 50 percent by 2030."

The utility has filed a petition with the state that would allow it [to lobby on community choice](#), drawing [protests from environmentalists and San Diego County political leaders](#).

The utility's paid lobbyists [have also met with each council member and the mayor](#) at least once in the past year.

The Climate Action Plan calls for cutting the number of San Diegans who commute by car from 87 percent to 50 percent by 2035. That goal applies to people who live within a half mile of existing or planned transit stops, which is [predicted to be about 60 percent of the population by 2035](#).

To accomplish this goal, the plan calls for increasing the number of people who commute by public transit from 10 percent to 25 percent, by bike from 1 percent to 18 percent and by foot from 1 percent to 7 percent by 2035.

Recent census data showed [83.1 percent of San Diegans commuted to work by car](#) in 2014.

The plan also calls for [redirecting 90 percent of the city's garbage](#) away from landfills in 25 years by boosting recycling and composting.

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are game to do it because it's so worth doing," Gloria said. "It's what's going to preserve what we love as San Diegans."

He spoke in front of environmental groups before the council's vote and told their members to hold the city responsible if it doesn't meet the plan's objectives. Because the city has passed the plan, those groups could sue it if it falls short.

The plan says the city will do an analysis of the costs and benefits of each item required to meet a goal in the plan. Some environmentalists worry those studies will give the City Council reason to vote down policies, but Gloria said he doesn't fear that.

"The cost of inaction is enormous, and the benefits of a healthy planet are obvious," he said. "So I think it's fine to go ahead and do that."

The [City Council's Environment Committee approved the Climate Action Plan last month](#) — with one additional request.

Councilwoman Marti Emerald asked that the deadline for bringing an alternative energy program called [community choice aggregation](#) to the City Council for consideration be pushed up by two years, moving it from the second to first phase of the plan.

Emerald's idea was not included in what the City Council approved Tuesday, so community

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