



Office of the City Manager

05

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 10, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Interim Director, Department of Planning & Development
Subject: Referral Response: Including Climate Impacts in City Council Reports

RECOMMENDATION

Request that the City Manager update the templates and associated training materials to add “Climate Impacts” in the “Environmental Sustainability” section of reports to the City Council, and codify the changes in Appendix B in the next update to the Berkeley City Council Rules of Procedure. This recommendation is a partial response to a January 21, 2020 referral, sponsored by Councilmembers Davila and Bartlett, to require that all City Council items and staff reports include “climate impacts” in addition to environmental sustainability.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

There is no direct fiscal impact for this recommendation. Required tasks such as developing guidance documents and conducting staff training will be conducted with existing staff resources.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The addition of “Climate Impacts” to the current “Environmental Sustainability” section of City Council reports will enhance efforts began in 2014 to consider sustainability impacts in all city policies and actions. Expanding the section heading to “Environmental Sustainability and Climate Impacts” reflects the urgency of the climate crises and will create a greater focus on climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience issues for Council consideration. Revision of the council report template requires updating council report writing guidance and training materials, as well as additional assistance to staff on how to analyze and document potential climate mitigation and adaptation impacts in City Council reports.

This recommendation builds on the momentum of the Climate Emergency Declaration, adopted by the City Council on June 12, 2018, to raise awareness of the urgency of climate change and ensure that City programs, policies and purchases are aligned with the City’s sustainability and climate action goals. Adding climate impacts advances the City’s Strategic Plan goal of being a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, and protecting the environment.

BACKGROUND

The inclusion of an Environmental Sustainability section in City Council reports went into effect on March 11, 2014. The intent of the new section was to integrate environmental sustainability considerations throughout City operations and raise awareness of City sustainability goals. The addition of the new section was implemented with the development of guidelines, instructional materials, staff training, and a six-month period of review of all City Council reports by staff in the Office of Energy & Sustainable Development. These guidelines and training are now integrated into the Council Report Writing Training provided to staff by the City Clerk's Office.

On January 21, 2020, City Council approved a referral, sponsored by Councilmembers Davila and Bartlett, to require that all City Council items and staff reports include "Climate Impacts" in addition to environmental sustainability.

At the July 21, 2020 City Council Special Session, staff recommended that Council refer to the Agenda and Rules Policy Committee a recommendation to revise the Council Rules of Procedures to update the Environmental Sustainability section of City Council items and staff reports with the addition of climate impacts and refer to the new section as "Environmental Sustainability and Climate Impacts."

On September 8, 2020 the City Council Agenda and Rules Committee unanimously approved a qualified positive recommendation to 1) request that the City Manager update the training materials and templates to include climate impacts in the Environmental Sustainability section of staff and council reports; and 2) codify the changes in Appendix B in the next update to the Council Rules of Procedures.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Including climate impacts in the environmental sustainability section furthers the reach and goals of this section and raises awareness on the consequences of climate change. Its inclusion encourages staff and the City Council to consider how programs, policies, and purchases not only align with current sustainability policies but also how they may affect climate adaptation and community resilience.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Adding climate impacts to City Council reports emphasizes the understanding that climate change is already happening and is having direct impacts to natural and human systems while often exacerbating inequities in frontline communities.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Council could choose to not add an analysis of climate impacts to City Council reports.

CONTACT PERSON

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