

Healdsburg 2040

Priorities for the City Council Goal Setting Session on March 10, 2023

For the 2023 Council goal-setting, Healdsburg 2040 has identified three priorities that we urge the Council to adopt.

- **Ensure full funding for and launch the General Plan update in 2024.** The existing General Plan from 2009 is outdated and doesn't address the burning questions of our time. More than ever we are faced with a severe climate crisis, a lack of affordable housing, growing economic and social inequity, an exodus of young families and children, an aging population, and the specter of much more traffic from large new developments.

The City already initiated the update of the housing policy, the core element of the General Plan. Additionally, the ongoing climate mobilization program will lead to a climate action plan, which should serve as the guide for all ongoing and future projects. These are two important cornerstones. Now we ask the City Council to recognise the need for a total overhaul of the General Plan with a vision towards the year 2050.

Since the process could take three years and cost up to \$2M, it's crucial that the funding is secured this year. This would allow the update to start in 2024 and finish in 2026/2027. It will be crucial to involve the residents early on, also in selecting the outside advisors, as was done so successfully for the Arts & Culture Master Plan and the Parks Design Team.

- **Immediately adopt and execute a policy to minimize greenhouse gas emissions from all transportation infrastructure projects.** More than 60% of our greenhouse gas emissions are caused by motorized traffic. At the same time, the vast majority of all car trips are under five miles. To drastically reduce these emissions, we need to adopt new transportation strategies with three goals in mind: 1) reduce vehicle miles traveled, 2) shift from individual car trips to active modes of transportation (walking, biking) and shared electric transit and 3) electrify transportation.

The climate crisis demands that we cease making sunk investments in business-as-usual transportation infrastructure and speed the transition to carbon-free mobility. Going forward, every transportation infrastructure project should be designed with a view to minimizing greenhouse gas emissions. The City Council should require that all transportation infrastructure projects adopt the three strategies listed above, including current projects. Specifically, we want to see the timeline for the Healdsburg Avenue North project expedited (with interim measures to make the road bicycle and pedestrian safe, as needed), and the Grove Street project should be designed to prioritize active transportation and shared electric transit modes.

- **Direct the Utilities Department to develop an investment plan for carbon-free electricity by 2030.** Shifting from relying on electricity that has been generated by natural gas and coal is essential if we are to reach carbon neutrality, while meeting the energy needs of our community. It is anticipated that many of the actions developed in the Climate Mobilization Strategy will depend on cleaner sources of energy, so we must be fully prepared. Sonoma County already has a goal of reducing carbon emissions and achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Most of Sonoma County is powered by renewable or carbon-free electricity through Sonoma Clean Power, and recent studies have shown that carbon neutrality – on an hourly basis – by 2030 is feasible.

These three priorities do not preempt the ongoing work under the Climate Mobilization Strategy. They draw on best practices and in-depth understanding of climate mitigation strategies. They are critical to respond to the climate emergency in a timely fashion.

In February 2023, development of the City’s Climate Mobilization Strategy is now in progress but the Action Plan will not be completed until at least August 2023. The threat from the climate emergency increases with each passing day and we believe that it is imperative that the City Council recognize this as an emergency and consider our recommended priorities during its goal setting. This will move our community toward a just transition to carbon neutrality by 2030.

Background

In 2019, the City of Healdsburg declared a climate emergency. Excerpts from the City's [Climate Emergency Resolution](#) include:

“WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency mobilization to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, to rapidly and safely draw down or remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, and to implement measures to protect all people and species; and

WHEREAS, a just transition away from fossil fuels requires the development of a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable, and just for all its members; and

WHEREAS, marginalized communities worldwide—including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income people, those with disabilities, and the unhoused—are already disproportionately affected by climate change and must benefit from a just transition to a sustainable and equitable economy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Healdsburg can take leadership in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change through regional jurisdiction over policy areas such as air quality, land use planning, transportation, zoning, forest preservation, energy efficiency, water conservation, wastewater and solid waste management;

BE IT RESOLVED, that an urgent global climate mobilization effort to reverse global warming is needed to achieve zero net emissions as quickly as possible and that full community participation, inclusion and support is integral to our efforts to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere and accelerate adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying climate impacts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Healdsburg acknowledges that successful climate action and a just transition at scale requires that we work both within and outside of the City's borders and across sectors to accelerate the necessary systems change required to address the climate emergency.”