

Sebastopol Climate Action Framework Community Engagement Strategy

Introduction

On December 3, 2019 the Sebastopol City Council adopted Resolution 6274-2019 declaring a climate emergency and committing to ongoing actions to restore a safe climate, including by reaching net zero emissions by 2030. In accordance with this resolution, Sebastopol's Climate Action Committee was created in January 2020 to focus on climate efforts and make recommendations to the City Council. One duty of the Climate Action Committee ("the Committee") is to create a Climate Action Framework to guide and prioritize Sebastopol's climate actions. Community engagement will be a key part of the development of the Framework in order to create a document that meets community needs, aligns with community values, and builds community support to address the climate emergency.

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Community Engagement Strategy is to outline and commit to efforts to meaningfully involve all members of the Sebastopol community in the development of the Climate Action Framework. This Strategy may be modified throughout the Framework process to respond to changing conditions (e.g., COVID-related) and community needs.

The Strategy has the following goals:

- Increase awareness and engagement of the Sebastopol community on climate issues, including awareness of and involvement with the Sebastopol Climate Action Committee,
- Create a Framework that reflects the needs and desires of the Sebastopol community and is centered in community knowledge and values while addressing the global reality of climate change,
- Lift up the voices and experiences of groups most vulnerable to the effects of climate change,
- Build relationships for long term engagement throughout implementation and beyond.

Key Audiences

Climate change is affecting all Sebastopol residents, but some are impacted more than others. According to the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, groups vulnerable to climate change include children, people of color, people lacking access to life-supporting resources, older adults, low-income people, and people with chronic health conditions, mental illness, or physical disabilities. This engagement strategy aims to reach these groups in particular along with other key stakeholders. The following list is not intended to be comprehensive and may be added to throughout the process.

- Sebastopol residents and residents of surrounding areas
- Sebastopol City Council and Departments

- Community-based organizations (e.g. West County Community Services, West County Community Health Centers, Ceres Community Project, DailyActs, Graton Day Labor Center, Sebastopol Community Cultural Center, Sebastopol Center for the Arts)
- Local and regional environmental organizations (e.g. Sebastopol Climate Action, 350 Sonoma, Sunrise Movement, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, Laguna Foundation, Sonoma County Conservation Action, Regional Climate Protection Authority)
- Faith-based organizations (e.g. Sebastopol United Methodist Church, Community Church of Sebastopol, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Hessel Church, St. Sebastopol Church)
- Local businesses and business groups (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association, North Bay Realtor’s Group)
- Agricultural groups
- Schools and universities
- Indigenous groups
- Other advocacy groups

Project Phases

Project Initiation (October - December 2021)

- Develop Community Engagement Strategy.
- Assess the current situation, existing networks and engagement, and resources needed.
- Connect with local organizations to inform development of Strategy and ensure that outreach is culturally appropriate for each target group.
- Prepare press releases, web page material, and determine social media process.

Visioning and Existing Conditions (January - February 2022)

- Hold a virtual town hall to launch the Framework process.
- Release a survey to assess resident concerns and priorities for the Framework.
- Conduct in person workshops/listening sessions at several locations to reach vulnerable groups.
- Attend community events to raise awareness of the process and promote the survey.

Alternatives and Draft (March - June 2022)

- Hold an open house to share a draft of Framework and ask for feedback.
- Develop a mechanism for online review and comment submission.
- Send and/or present draft to community groups and other stakeholders (City Departments, Planning Commission, etc.) for review.
- Attend community events to share draft and opportunities for input.
- Potentially hold focus groups on specific sections of the Framework to get in-depth input/feedback.

Presentation to Council and Adoption (June/July 2022)

- Develop a dashboard on the website to track progress.

Implementation

- Update web page and social media with progress to keep residents informed.
- Continue engaging with the community.¹

Methods of Engagement

The engagement process should leverage existing events and networks to inform as many people as possible about the Framework. This includes incorporating Framework engagement into planned Climate Action Committee events and utilizing Committee member networks to involve the community. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many outreach activities may need to occur virtually. In person activities should be conducted as local public health guidelines allow to provide a variety of ways to engage with the Framework development process.

Online engagement

Virtual Meetings

The City of Sebastopol is currently conducting public meetings on Zoom. This tool can be used for meetings of up to 100 participants, which should be sufficient for both large town hall style meetings and smaller focus groups if the public health situation does not allow these to be held in person. During meetings, other digital tools such as Jamboard and Mentimeter can be used to collect audience feedback in real time. Zoom's breakout room function allows small groups to discuss key questions.

Website

A web page should be created for the Framework with information about the process for developing the Framework and opportunities to get involved. This web page should be connected to the Climate Action Committee webpage and potentially also the Growth and Sustainability section of the City website. It should be publicized on all media releases, including via a QR code on physical flyers. When the Framework is complete, this web page could be home to a dashboard tracking implementation.

Survey

An online survey can be developed to assess resident concerns and priorities for the Framework using Typeform or another survey platform. Depending on the length of the survey, short and long versions could be offered. The survey should be distributed in Spanish and English, with print versions available at events.

¹ See USDN report (Yuen et al. 2017).

City Newsletter

The City of Sebastopol currently releases a weekly newsletter which is sent out by email. This newsletter should be used to publicize CAC meetings, announce the Framework process, and share information about upcoming events relating to the Framework.

Social Media

The City's Twitter and Facebook accounts can be used to announce events relating to the Framework and share progress and opportunities to provide feedback. The Committee may also consider creating an Instagram account and taking ownership of the City's LinkedIn page to reach a larger audience. The social media outreach for the Framework process should complement the plans of the Committee's Education and Outreach Working Group. If the Committee is able to operate its own social media accounts at any point, the City accounts should repost events to increase views.

Email and Mailing Lists

The Climate Action Committee email address (ClimateActionCommittee@cityofsebastopol.org) could be publicized and used as a way for people to provide input on the Framework. Alternatively, an email address specific to the Framework could be set up.

Existing City and Committee mailing lists can be utilized to share information about the Framework process with residents. These mailing lists may include the Map Your Neighborhood program, compost giveaway attendees, Carbon Conversations, and others.

Local Newspapers

Local and regional news organizations such as SoCoNews (Sonoma West Times & News), Sonoma County Gazette, North Bay Bohemian, La Voz, and the Press Democrat can be asked to share information about the Framework process. A press release should be distributed to announce the process in December or early January.

Community Calendars

Several organizations maintain calendars of community events that can be used to publicize events as well as identify relevant events to conduct outreach at. These community calendars are hosted by [SoCoNews](#), [CoMission](#), [Townsy Sebastopol](#), [Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce](#), and the [City of Sebastopol](#).

In person engagement

Informational Pop-ups

Pop-up information booths at farmer's markets, vaccination events, taco trucks, grocery stores, and other gathering locations can be used to reach community members not engaged through online methods. These booths could include print out versions of the survey for individuals without easy internet access. To gain interest, they may also include giveaways of items such as City-branded masks, Sebastopails, etc.. Art materials (paper, coloring sheets, markers, colored pencils, chalk, etc.) could be made available for children and others interested in expressing climate themes artistically. Flyers displayed at these booths could also be posted at the library, community center, local businesses, schools, and other locations.

Focus groups and workshops

Smaller groups are more likely to be permitted to meet in person and can provide more in-depth input on the Framework. These meetings should be held at locations accessible to vulnerable groups, particularly those who may be unable to provide input online. Partnering with community organizations to host focus groups/workshops can increase the credibility and cultural appropriateness of these events. Meetings should have Spanish translation available if possible. Ideally, participants who are not attending these meetings as part of their job (e.g. Sebastopol City employees) would be compensated for attending. Offering gift cards, food, and childcare to participants are other actions that can improve equitable access.

Community Events

Monitoring the community event calendars listed above will allow the Committee to identify appropriate events to conduct outreach at. Outreach could be an informational pop-up as described previously or a brief presentation at the beginning of a meeting. Ideally, at least one Committee member would be present at each event to publicize the Framework process.

Art Project

The Education and Outreach Working Group has developed a proposal for an upcycled art project that would raise community awareness of climate change. If possible, engagement for the Framework should be incorporated into the art project and vice versa.

Climate Walk and/or Bike Tour

Another idea from the Education and Outreach Working Group is a self-guided walking tour of Sebastopol that highlights green infrastructure such as solar panels. Each location of interest would have a QR code with associated information. A launch event (guided walk) for this concept could be a great outreach activity for the Framework, as participants could be informed about the Framework process and asked for their input. The tour could also include a QR code that takes participants to the Climate Action Framework web page. This idea could be extended to a bike tour to include locations further from downtown and engage with the biking community.

If the QR code concept is not able to launch during the outreach for the Framework, a guided walk could still be developed as a preview, following the [Sebastopol Walks](#) format to inform people about the Framework.

Cool Block Program

The Cool Block Program (<https://coolblock.org/>) is a community-based approach to climate action and preparedness. Volunteer block leaders organize with their neighbors to learn about carbon reduction, disaster resiliency, and other topics over several months and take actions relating to each topic. This program could be a useful tool to increase Sebastopol residents’ awareness of climate issues.

Implementation and resources needed

Phoebe Goulden, CivicSpark Fellow, will be primarily responsible for the implementation of this strategy. Assistance is requested from Climate Action Committee members in conducting events, providing input on outreach materials, and sharing information about the Framework process. Help from City staff will likely be needed to facilitate technical aspects of the Strategy, such as website updates, Zoom meetings, and social media postings.

Table 1. Budget scenarios. Each scenario builds on the one before.

Minimal	Medium	High
Use existing City “swag” as giveaways at pop-up events	Coloring sheets (can find online) + colored pencils (\$35 for 240) for pop-ups	Pay focus group participants @ \$15/hour
Assuming City has hand sanitizer, table + chairs for pop-ups	Chalk for farmer’s markets (\$25 for 160 pieces)	Provide food (\$60 for 2 large pizzas, which is 8-10 people) and childcare (\$~20/hr??) at focus groups/large meetings if in person
Print flyers, surveys, other documents at City Hall		
Use existing facilities, markers, large paper, whiteboards, etc.		
Request donations of food/gift cards/discounts from local businesses/restaurants for events		

Measuring Efficacy

In the short term, each activity should be evaluated afterwards by answering the following questions: Was the activity successful? (Did it make progress towards the goals of the engagement strategy?) What can we do better? What lessons were learned?² This evaluation will help the engagement strategy to improve over time.

Over the course of the project, several metrics may be considered to measure the effectiveness of the engagement activities. These include the number of groups reached, events attended, and individuals involved (at events, pop-ups, or through online means). Another potential metric is how closely the demographics of individuals reached matches census data for Sebastopol, though this may be difficult to measure except for in survey responses. These metrics, or whichever metrics are agreed upon by the Committee, should be tracked and included in the final version of the Framework.

² U.S. EPA 2017.

Resources

California Mobility Justice Advocates. 2021. Guiding Principles.

<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/mobility-justice-advocates-guiding-principles>

California Office of Planning and Research. 2018. Executive Order B-30-15 Resiliency Guidebook: Vulnerable Populations.

https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180312-Vulnerable_Communities_Descriptions.pdf

Gonzalez, R. 2020. The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. Facilitating Power.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/facilitatingpower/pages/53/attachments/original/1596746165/CE2O_SPECTRUM_2020.pdf?1596746165

MIG. 2020. Santa Rosa General Plan Update: Community Involvement Strategy.

https://www.santarosafoward.com/files/managed/Document/269/SRGPU_FINAL%20Community%20Involvement%20Strategy_06-16-2020.pdf

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2017. Community Engagement Strategy: Issues to Consider When Planning and Designing Community Engagement Approaches for Tribal Integrated Waste Management Programs.

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/documents/tribalswcommunityengagementstrategy508.pdf>

Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions. 2020. Public Outreach Strategy: City of Sebastopol Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

https://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/getattachment/88ef8c75-1f8f-4991-b155-e4b35109b07a/City-of-Sebastopol_LHMP_Draft-Public-Outreach-Strategy.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US&ext=.pdf

Yuen, T., E. Yurkovitch, L. Grabowski, and B. Altshuler. 2017. Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning. Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn_guide_to_equitable_community-driven_climate_preparedness-high_res.pdf

Related Planning Goals

General Plan:

- LU 1: Maintain Sebastopol as a Unique, Charming, and Environmentally Sensitive Small Town that Provides Residents, Businesses, and Visitors with Opportunities to Enjoy a High Quality of Life
- Goal CHW 1: Support a Comprehensive and Diverse Approach to Community Health and Wellness in Sebastopol
- CHW 5: Support Cultural Diversity as a Key Component of a Healthy Community
- COS 1: Make Proactive, Forward-Thinking Environmental Protection and Resource Management the Cornerstone of Sebastopol's Identity
- Goal COS 8: Reduce Emissions of Greenhouse Gases from City Operations and Community Sources

Strategic Plan:

- Goal 2: Maintain and enhance communication among staff, community, council and other agencies
- Goal 4: Protect, enhance and restore existing environmental quality
- Goal 5: Develop, implement and assess the success of long range plans for Sebastopol's future