

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: February 4, 2026

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Kim Jordan, Planner III
Subject: General Plan Greenhouse Gas Policy Amendments and Greenhouse Gas Consistency Checklist

Recommendation to Council:

Adopt a Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Windsor Amending the Greenhouse Gas Policies in the 2040 General Plan Environmental Resources Element and Implementing General Plan Program ER-5 by Adopting a GHG Consistency Checklist.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Livability. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

On April 4, 2018, the Town Council adopted the 2040 General Plan (Resolution No. 3448-18). The General Plan's Environmental Resources Element includes a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Section containing policies to implement Goal ER-5: Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Improve the sustainability and resiliency of Windsor through compliance with local, State, and Federal policies and standards that aim to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the community. The original 2040 General Plan included 20 policies (Policies ER-5.1 through ER-20) and five (5) implementation programs in support of this goal (Programs ER-4 through ER-8) (Attachment 2). In November 2024, the GHG section of the General Plan was amended to add Policy ER-21: Windsor Municipal Climate Action Plan (Resolution No. 3982-24). The General Plan includes Policy ER-5.10: Energy Performance Standards and Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards. To date, the Town has not been able to implement Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5 due to funding constraints, limited in-house subject matter expertise, and the need for specialized greenhouse gas modeling and analytical capabilities that are not currently available to staff.

On April 4, 2018, the Town Council certified the 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (Resolution No. 3447-18), which includes specific findings for each impact area analyzed in the EIR, including GHG Emissions. The findings identify specific policies that reduce the impact of the development allowed under the 2040 General Plan to a less than significant level (Attachment 3).

On September 4, 2019, the Town Council adopted a Climate Emergency Resolution (Resolution No. 3548-19 (Attachment 4)). This resolution directed staff to develop an "internal structure to support ongoing climate action and accountability" in meeting the Town's plans, goals, and policies to address the reduction of GHG emissions and an initial list of actions toward achieving zero net emissions by 2030.

In 2022, Town staff attempted to update the General Plan GHG policies and create a GHG consistency checklist for development projects in order to implement General Plan Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5 (see discussion below). However, due to a lack of substantial evidence that the GHG consistency checklist would result in reductions in GHG emissions, the Town was not able to move forward. Since that time, Town staff have been looking for opportunities to complete this work by obtaining funding to hire a subject matter expert to assist with the Project.

On May 7, 2024, the Town submitted an application for a California Energy Commission (CEC) California Clean Energy Planning Program (CCEPP) grant. The purpose of the CCEPP grant is to provide funding to local agencies for the development of land use planning documents that support and advance the development of clean energy. The Town submitted a grant application for the purposes of updating the GHG policies included in the General Plan and creating a GHG consistency checklist for development projects in order to implement Policy ER-10 and Program ER-5.

On July 18, 2024, the CEC notified the Town that it had been awarded a \$100,000 grant. The grant allowed the Town to hire a consultant with subject matter expertise to assist in updating the General Plan GHG policies and create a GHG consistency checklist to streamline the environmental review process for development projects pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and to assist with community outreach and engagement.

In December 2024, the Town released a request for proposals for preparation of the General Plan GHG policy updates and the GHG consistency checklist. Six proposals were received. On February 6, 2025, Town staff selected LSA based on its proposal and interview. On February 19, 2025, the Town Council approved a professional services agreement (PSA) with LSA.

In August 2025, the community engagement for the Project began with the launch of the Project webpage: <https://www.townofwindsor.ca.gov/1597/GHG-Policies-Compliance-Checklist>. Community engagement also included distribution of project postcards, email blasts, social media posts, a survey, and two community meetings. The outreach included the Town's developer and design professional list, local businesses, and groups and organizations interested in environmental topics. A summary of the community outreach for the Project is included in Attachment 5. The purpose of the community outreach was to inform community members and interested parties of the Project and to gather input on the types of measures the community would support. There were 247 responses to the survey, which is a substantial number of responses for a community the size of Windsor and project of this type. A more typical number of responses would be 20 or fewer. A summary of the survey results is included as Attachment 6.

On January 13, 2026, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider the draft GHG policy amendments and GHG Consistency Checklist (Attachment 7, Planning Commission Staff Report). At the meeting, the Planning Commission received a presentation from staff, received public comment, asked questions of staff, and deliberated on the item. The Planning Commission voted (4-0) to adopt Resolution No. 786-26 recommending the Town Council amend GHG policies in the 2040 General Plan Environmental Resources Element and implement General Plan Program ER-5 by adopting a GHG Consistency Checklist (Attachment 8, Planning Commission Resolution No. 786-26).

Discussion:

This section provides a summary of the proposed General Plan text amendments and the GHG Consistency Checklist.

General Plan Text Amendments Summary

The proposed General Plan text amendments are provided in “track changes” format in Attachment 1, Exhibit A. Proposed new text is shown underlined (new), and text proposed to be deleted is shown with strikethrough (delete). The amendments fall into four general categories: deletions of outdated references, updates to provide greater clarity, updates to reflect best practices and to modernize the policy, and policy and program implementation.

Deletion of Outdated References. These amendments include removing outdated references, such as the AB 32 target of reducing GHG emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2020, which the Town achieved. These include:

- Narrative at the beginning of the GHG section
- Policy ER-5.1: Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.2: Municipal Services Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.5: Greenhouse Gas Assessment and Monitoring

Updates for Clarity. These amendments include minor changes to existing policies to provide greater clarity, including providing examples, and identifying monitoring and implementation. These include:

- Policy ER-5.1: Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.2: Municipal Services Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Policy ER-5.6: Coordinate with BAAQMD and NSCAPCD
- Policy ER-10: Energy Performance Standards
- Policy ER-5.12: Retrofitting Existing Buildings
- Policy ER-5.13: Update Energy Policies and Programs
- Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards
- Program ER-6: Review of Town GHG Emissions Inventory

Updates for Best Practices. These amendments include updating certain policies to reflect current best practices, changes in technology, and additional opportunities to reduce GHG. In some cases, the update resulted in a change to the title of the policy. These include:

- Policy ER-5.7: Reduce Mobile Source and Idling Emissions
- Policy ER-5.16: Address Heat Island Effect in Parking Lots
- Policy ER-5.17: Support Urban Forestry
- Policy ER-5.18: Preservation of Existing Trees
- Policy ER-5.19: Energy Conservation Measures and Education
- Policy ER-22: Enhance Biological Carbon Sequestration (new policy)
- Policy ER-23: Water Conservation and Recycled Water Use (new policy)

Updates for Policy and Program Implementation. This amendment includes updating Policy ER-5.3 to reflect the implementation of Policy ER-5.10 and Program ER-5, by developing the GHG Consistency Checklist, including the use of BAAQMD design elements (see discussion below).

- Policy ER-5.3: Greenhouse Gas Target

The language in this General Plan policy was supposed to be updated to use the language included in the certified General Plan EIR which included specific GHG thresholds for development projects in the years 2017-2030, 2030-2040, and 2040-2050. Not updating the policy was a technical error. When reviewing projects, Town staff relies on the language included in the General Plan EIR. The targets identified in the policy would be replaced with the use of the GHG Consistency Checklist and Bay Area Air Quality Management District design criteria (see GHG Consistency Checklist discussion below).

Greenhouse Gas Consistency Checklist Summary

The GHG Consistency Checklist (Attachment 1, Exhibit B) implements General Plan policies ER-5.3: Greenhouse Gas Target and ER-5.10: Energy Performance Standards and Program ER-5: Energy Conservation Performance Standards. In addition to policy and program implementation, the purpose of the GHG Consistency Checklist is to streamline environmental review for development projects related to potential GHG impacts. The GHG Consistency Checklist (“Checklist”) identifies three types of projects (Table A), which are described below. A GHG Consistency Checklist has been prepared to summarize the process (Attachment 9).

- *Category A:* These are projects that are consistent with the General Plan land use designation (e.g., land use, density, floor area ratio). These projects are required to complete the Checklist. If the project complies with the applicable requirements included in the Checklist, no further GHG analysis is required. If the project does not comply with the Checklist, the project would be required to follow the process for Category B projects and comply with the BAAQMD thresholds and project design elements as described below.
- *Category B:* These are projects that are not consistent with the General Plan land use designation. These projects are required to implement all applicable Checklist items and comply with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) project design thresholds (Attachment 1, Exhibit B, Pages 2-3). BAAQMD has provided substantial evidence, the standard required by California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), that if a project meets the BAAQMD design elements, the project would be consistent with State climate goals. Projects that cannot comply with all of BAAQMD’s design elements may still be able to utilize the process outlined in the Checklist, by using the alternative compliance approach included in the Checklist and summarized below, but must first document an attempt to comply with the BAAQMD design elements. In the event that a project is unable to comply with the design elements required by BAAQMD, the project can still utilize the Checklist if it can be demonstrated that the GHG emissions from the project would be equivalent to or less than the GHG emissions from the same project if it was consistent with the BAAQMD design elements. The basis of this approach is that since a project that meets the BAAQMD design elements has been shown to reduce GHG and to be consistent with State climate goals, a project that results in an equivalent or lower amount of GHG emissions would be expected to achieve the same. Projects that demonstrate compliance with BAAQMD’s design elements or demonstrate compliance using the alternative approach do not require further environmental review for GHG. Projects that cannot demonstrate compliance with BAAQMD’s design elements or compliance using the alternative approach would result in a potentially significant GHG impact and further environmental review is required.
- *By-Right Projects:* These are projects that do not require discretionary approval and are not subject to the Checklist. Instead, these projects are required to comply with the requirements included in the Town’s Building Code and Zoning Code. The Town’s Building Code requires projects to comply with CalGreen Tier 1, which exceeds the minimum mandatory requirements of the Building Code, and includes requirements for energy efficiency, water efficiency and conservation, material conservation and efficiency, and environmental quality.

Fiscal Impact:

This project is funded by a \$100,000 California Clean Energy Planning Program grant from the California Energy Commission. The revenue and expenditure for this project are included in the adopted budget.

Environmental Review:

The proposed General Plan amendments would: 1) update certain policies and add two new policies to

the GHG section of the Environmental Resources Element of the General Plan; and 2) modify General Plan implementation measures ER-5 Energy Conservation Performance Standards and ER-6 Review of Town GHG Emissions Inventory. The GHG Consistency Checklist is consistent with and implements General Plan Policy ER-5.10 Energy Performance Standards and implements General Plan Program ER-5 Energy Conservation Performance Standards.

The General Plan amendments and GHG Consistency Checklist are consistent with the General Plan and are intended to implement the General Plan. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15614 (Addendum to an EIR or Negative Declaration), an Addendum to the 2040 General Plan EIR was prepared to document why a Subsequent EIR is not required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15162 (Subsequent EIRs). The Addendum is included as Attachment 10.

Attachment(s):

1. [Town Council Resolution](#)
2. [Exhibit A General Plan Text Amendments](#)
3. [Exhibit B GHG Consistency Checklist.pdf](#)
4. [2040 General Plan GHG Section and GHG Implementation Programs](#)
5. [Resolution Certifying General Plan EIR GHG Findings Excerpt](#)
6. [Climate Emergency Resolution](#)
7. [Community Engagement Summary](#)
8. [Survey Summary](#)
9. [Planning Commission 1-13-2026 Staff Report without Attachments](#)
10. [PC Res. 786-26 GP Amendments and GHG Compliance Checklist](#)
11. [GHG Consistency Checklist Flow Chart](#)
12. [Addendum to 2040 General Plan EIR](#)
- 12.2 [PowerPoint - GHG \(Distributed 2026.02.03\)](#)

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