

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: May 6, 2026

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Kim Voge, Planner III
Subject: Gas Station Ordinance Review

Recommendation to Council:

Provide input to staff on potential revisions to the Town's gas station ordinance.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports all four goals: Fiscal Health, Infrastructure, Livability and Organizational Effectiveness. Goal Statement: Ensure the economic health and long-term financial viability of the Town. Goal Statement: Through a lens of sustainability and innovation, invest in the Town's infrastructure and public facilities to meet the needs of future generations. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all. Goal Statement: Achieve a high performing organization by nurturing an engaged workforce committed to a shared vision of public service.

Background:

In 2009, the Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) was formed to coordinate climate protection efforts among the County of Sonoma, the nine local municipalities, and multiple partner agencies. The Town Council is responsible for designating a sitting Council member to represent the Town as a voting member of the RCPA Board of Directors; Council member JB Leep is currently assigned.

On April 4, 2018, the Town Council adopted the 2040 General Plan, which states that the Town places a high value on environmental resources. The General Plan includes numerous policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote energy efficiency to curtail the impacts of climate change.

On September 4, 2019, the Town Council declared a Climate Emergency and directed staff to update and prioritize implementation of the General Plan and GHG Emissions Reduction Action Plan to attain GHG emissions reductions and zero net carbon emissions by the year 2030 pursuant to Resolution No. 3548-19 (Attachment 2).

On September 23, 2020, the Governor of California signed Executive Order N-79-20, initiating a phase-out of gas-powered vehicles, and setting a target for all new passenger cars and trucks sold in California to be zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) by the year 2035.

On March 1, 2021, the City of Petaluma became the first municipal government in the country to adopt a prohibition on new gas station land uses within the city's boundaries.

On September 13, 2021, RCPA recommended that all local jurisdictions in Sonoma County stop

accepting applications for new gas stations and expansion of existing fossil fuel infrastructure at existing gas stations, pursuant to RCPA Resolution No. 2021-003 (Attachment 3).

On November 3, 2021, the Town Council considered RCPA's recommendations and directed staff to bring forward policy amendments for a Town-wide ban on the construction of new gas stations and expansion of fossil-fuel infrastructure at existing gas stations.

On September 7, 2022, the Town Council adopted Ordinance 2022-366 (Attachment 1), banning the construction of new gas stations and the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure at existing gas stations within the Town of Windsor.

In the years from 2021-2025, most jurisdictions within Sonoma County adopted gas station ban ordinances, including Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Cotati, Sebastopol, and the County of Sonoma. All jurisdictions in Napa County have adopted gas station ban ordinances, including Napa, Calistoga, Yountville, St. Helena, and American Canyon. Other North Bay jurisdictions with gas station bans include Novato, San Anselmo, and Fairfax.

On February 4, 2026, the Town Council amended the 2040 General Plan Environmental Resources Element and adopted a GHG Consistency Checklist to streamline the environmental review process, pursuant to Resolution No. 4060-26 (Attachment 4). The General Plan policy amendments included deleting outdated references; updates for clarification (providing examples and identifying monitoring timelines and implementation responsibilities); updates to reflect current best practices, changes in technology, and additional opportunities to reduce GHG; and updates to the GHG targets for implementation.

At the April 1, 2026, meeting of the Town Council, during the Requests for Future Agenda Items portion of the meeting, there was support from a majority of Council members to bring the gas station ban back before the Council for reconsideration and discussion.

Discussion:

There are four existing gas stations in Windsor, including Chevron and Shell gas stations in downtown Windsor, and Shell and Valero gas stations at the south end of Windsor. Renovations were recently approved for three of the four existing gas stations. Because gas stations are not currently listed as a permitted land use in any zoning district, all existing and permitted gas stations are regulated as legal non-conforming gas stations pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.70.070 (Attachment 5). These regulations allow modifications to existing gas stations for the following reasons:

- Soil, groundwater, and stormwater quality improvements
- Traffic safety improvements
- Zero emission vehicle battery charging station improvements

The Town's adoption of a gas station ban ordinance was considered an important part of a regional strategy to combat climate change. The gas station ban aligned with the Town's GHG reduction policies, while showing solidarity with the Town's RCPA partners. The basis of the gas station ban included the following considerations:

1. There was no demonstrated need for additional gas stations in Windsor.
2. There was a growing need for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, because state and federal policies, as well as market forces (i.e., sustained high gas prices), were aligning to encourage electric vehicle purchases.
3. Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) would be prioritized, because the installation of battery charging infrastructure and related improvements would still be permitted, consistent with General Plan Policy

ER-5.1 and State law.

4. The gas station ban was consistent with policies for Town-centered development and enhanced alternative transportation options.

The rationale for the Town's gas station ban may be reconsidered in light of evolving market conditions related to vehicle electrification, uncertainty in incentive programs, and recent Council direction to evaluate potential revenue sources. Any potential revisions would need to be reviewed for consistency with the 2040 General Plan.

Options

Following deliberation and consideration of public input, the Council may wish to consider the following options:

1. Direct staff to return with more information, specifying the Council's areas of interest, for further discussion.
2. Direct staff to return with a draft Zoning Code text amendment, highlighting the Council's initial direction for amendments.
3. Direct staff to return with a draft ordinance to fully rescind the gas station ban ordinance, restoring the Town's previous gas station regulations.
4. Decline to request further action.
5. Other.

Fiscal Impact:

Gas station sales taxes typically make up approximately 7-8% of the Town's sales tax revenues, with fluctuations predominantly driven by the price of gas. For the years 2020 through 2024, the Town's annual sales tax revenues from gas stations were in the range of approximately \$292,000 to \$442,000. Any additional sales from new or expanded gas stations may be expected to increase sales tax revenues. However, it is important to note that an increase in gas station infrastructure may not directly correlate with an increase in sales tax, because there may be a redistribution of sales within Town limits without necessarily increasing sales.

Environmental Review:

Environmental review is not required, because no action will be taken. An informational report is not a "project" that is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Any direction for changes to the Town's gas station ban ordinance would be analyzed for CEQA compliance prior to a future decision.

Attachment(s):

1. Ordinance 2022-366 Gas Station Ban
2. Reso 3548-19 Climate Emergency Resolution
3. RCPA Reso 2021-003 Gas Station Ban
4. Reso 4060-26 General Plan GHG Policy Amendments and GHG Consistency Checklist
5. Zoning Code Section 17.70.070 - Nonconforming Gas Stations
- 13.1, 14.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2026.05.05)
- 14.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2026.05.05)
- 14.1 Correspondence (Distributed 2026.05.06)
- 14.1 PowerPoint (Distributed 2026.05.06)

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