77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Item #: 26-102 **Meeting Date:** 02/03/2026

TITLE: CLIMATE ACTION AND ADAPTATION PLAN (CAAP) STATUS AND OUTREACH UPDATE

DEPARTMENT: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT/PLANNING DIVISION

PRESENTED BY: AMBER GREGG, PLANNING CONSULTANT, AND ANNA MCGILL, PLANNING MANAGER (ADVANCE PLANNING)

CONTACT INFORMATION: AMBER GREGG, PLANNING CONSULTANT, AMBER.GREGG@COSTAMESACA.GOV

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council receive the presentation, provide feedback, and file this report.

BACKGROUND:

Purpose of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

The City is developing a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) to establish a comprehensive, long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and prepare Costa Mesa for the impacts of climate change. The CAAP supports the City Council's goal to Advance Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resiliency and aligns with state mandates and best practices for local climate planning.

The CAAP will provide multiple community benefits, including:

- *Environmental sustainability:* Establishing measurable GHG reduction targets and actions aligned with State climate goals.
- *Public health benefits:* Improving air quality, reducing extreme heat impacts, and supporting active and healthy communities.
- *Emergency preparedness and resilience:* Identifying climate-related vulnerabilities and strategies to reduce risk from extreme heat, drought, flooding, wildfire smoke, and other climate hazards.
- *Economic benefits:* Supporting cost savings, energy efficiency, workforce development, and economic competitiveness.
- *Grant readiness:* An adopted CAAP strengthens the City's competitiveness for state and federal sustainability and resilience grants by demonstrating clear climate goals, documented need, and readiness to implement projects. Many funding programs prioritize or require consistency with an adopted climate or sustainability plan, allowing Costa Mesa to respond more quickly and

competitively to grant opportunities. Cities across California have used grant funding to advance sustainability-related capital projects and policy initiatives aligned with climate plans, including energy efficiency upgrades, building and fleet electrification, active transportation improvements, EV charging infrastructure, urban greening, and climate resilience projects.

- *Strategic Roadmap for Decision-Making:* The CAAP provides City decision-makers with a clear roadmap of sustainability initiatives and investment opportunities, allowing actions to be prioritized, coordinated, and implemented in an organized and cost-effective manner. This approach helps align policy decisions, capital investments, and funding opportunities while maximizing fiscal efficiency.

Project Timeline

Environmental sustainability and climate resilience was identified as a City Council core value and goal as part of the City Council's Goals and Objectives Strategic Plan. Development of a CAAP was included in the five-year Capital Improvement Project (CIP) in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Following this direction, the City released a Request for Proposals in August 2023 and selected Dudek as the consultant team to assist with development of Costa Mesa's first Climate Action and Adaptation Plan. The proposal was approved by the City Council on October 15, 2024, and project work formally commenced following City Council approval of the professional services agreement in December 2024. Links to the October 15, 2024, staff report are provided below:

City Council Staff Report, October 15, 2024:
https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6891884&GUID=23ED8B9D-86C9-460B-B0C6-0C976B6B7B60

City Council Meeting Minutes, October 15, 2024:
https://costamesa.legistar.com/View.ashx?WillM=M&ID=1213774&GUID=7D61BBF0-8744-45F4-9F19-62970E201108

The project is currently progressing through the technical analysis and stakeholder engagement phases, consistent with the approved scope of work and schedule, with completion happening later this year.

PROJECT PROGRESSION

Tasks Overview

The CAAP is being developed through a structured, multi-phase process that includes technical analysis, policy evaluation, and extensive community and stakeholder engagement. Key tasks completed, or near completion, to date include:

- *Data Collection* - Collection and organization of extensive data from multiple sources, including utilities, City departments, regional agencies, and external partners, to establish a defensible technical foundation for the CAAP. This effort includes reviewing data availability over a two-year time period from 2022 to 2023, coordinating data requests, and resolving gaps or privacy limitations.

- *Review of Existing Plans, Policies, and Programs* - Comprehensive review of the City's General Plan, Municipal Code, sustainability reports, transportation plans, hazard mitigation documents, and other relevant local and regional plans to ensure the CAAP aligns with existing policy direction and identifies opportunities for integration and updates.

- *GHG Emissions Inventory and Future Projections* - Development of a detailed greenhouse gas emissions inventory for both community-wide activities and municipal operations, using utility, transportation, waste, water, and fleet data. This analysis establishes a baseline and evaluates future emissions scenarios, including density increases from Neighborhoods Where We All Belong and FDC, to inform reduction targets and policy decisions.

- *Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment* - Evaluation of climate-related risks such as extreme heat, drought, air quality, flooding, and other hazards using GIS data, regional studies, and local plans. This task identifies vulnerable populations, critical facilities, and infrastructure to inform targeted adaptation and resilience strategies.

- *Interdepartmental Coordination Across City Departments* - Ongoing coordination with multiple City departments to gather data, validate assumptions, align policies, and identify feasible implementation actions. This collaboration supports shared ownership of the CAAP and integration into City operations and long-term planning efforts.

- *Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement* - Design and implementation of a robust engagement program, including working group meetings, community events, surveys, and coordination with existing City activities. This effort ensures community perspectives, equity considerations, and stakeholder input are meaningfully incorporated into the CAAP.

Public Outreach and Input

Public engagement is a central component of the CAAP process. Outreach efforts to date have focused on raising awareness, gathering early input, and ensuring representation from a diverse range of community voices. Engagement activities include project website updates, targeted outreach, social media posts, surveys, and facilitated discussions designed to inform future policy development.

Public outreach kicked off at the City's 2025 Earth Day event with interactive activities to help residents of all ages share ideas and priorities for a sustainable Costa Mesa. A second event was held at the City's Concerts in the Park, and staff also provided information at several pop-up events, including back to school night and coffee chats.

Stakeholder Engagement

For purposes of the CAAP, external stakeholders include organizations and entities outside of City government that help shape, implement, or are affected by climate-related policies and actions. These stakeholders provide valuable insight into real-world conditions, operational considerations, and community priorities. Outreach efforts have included representatives from existing businesses and operations, land use and new development interests, local organizations and advocacy groups, and utility providers.

The City has convened both group and individual meetings with external stakeholders to gather targeted input throughout the CAAP development process. These meetings create opportunities to share perspectives, identify opportunities, and help shape climate strategies that are feasible, locally appropriate, and responsive to community needs.

For example, staff met with representatives of the Building Industry Association (BIA) to discuss how the development community can support climate strategies in a practical and cost-effective manner. These discussions informed the feasibility of potential measures related to building energy efficiency, electrification, and construction practices, while also providing insight into market conditions, implementation challenges, and alignment with state building standards and industry best practices. This collaborative approach helps ensure the CAAP's recommendations are realistic, implementable, and supportive of both environmental goals and economic vitality.

In addition, staff will present the CAAP to students enrolled in the Coastline ROP Climate Sustainability Program in February, providing an opportunity to engage students who are actively studying climate change, renewable energy, and urban sustainability, and to incorporate youth perspectives while building awareness and long-term community stewardship around the City's climate goals.

NEXT STEPS:

Policy Development

Based on completed technical analysis and stakeholder input, the CAAP is now transitioning into the policy development phase. This phase focuses on identifying the actions and strategies that will drive the majority of greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions while remaining feasible, equitable, and aligned with Costa Mesa's operational and regulatory framework.

The table below summarizes the key policy topic areas and representative objectives that are anticipated to account for the majority of GHG reductions in the CAAP. These policy areas represent the most impactful opportunities for emissions reduction across sectors such as transportation, energy, buildings, waste, water, and urban lands. While these key objectives are expected to account for a significant portion of anticipated emissions reductions, the full CAAP will also include a broader suite of complementary policies and best practices that support long-term sustainability, resilience, and climate preparedness.

Staff is presenting these draft policy areas to the City Council at this stage for informational purposes and to solicit early feedback on overall policy direction, implementation considerations, and the City's long-term ability to support and carry out these actions. City Council input will help staff and the

consultant refine policy approaches, calibrate levels of commitment, and ensure that recommended actions are realistic and aligned with community and City priorities.

TABLE 1 – Potential CAAP Key Policy Objectives

Sector	Primary Objective	What This Means
Transportation	Cleaner Transportation	Increase electric vehicle use, expand charging infrastructure, and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicle trips.
	Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	Support walking, biking, transit, and land use patterns that shorten daily trips.
Energy & Buildings	Electrify Buildings	Transition buildings away from natural gas toward electric appliances and systems over time.
	Improve Energy Efficiency	Lower energy use in new and existing buildings through efficiency upgrades and performance improvements.
	Decarbonize Energy Supply	Increase use of renewable energy, such as solar and clean electricity options.
Off-Road Equipment	Electrify Equipment	Transition landscaping, maintenance, and construction equipment to zero-emission alternatives.
Water & Wastewater	Reduce Water & Energy Demand	Promote water efficiency, reuse, and conservation to reduce energy use associated with water systems.
Solid Waste	Reduce Landfill Waste	Expand waste reduction, recycling, composting, and material reuse programs.
Natural & Urban Lands	Enhance Carbon Sequestration	Expand urban greening, tree canopy, and nature-based solutions that reduce heat and absorb carbon.

Policy and Implementation Framework

The CAAP is intended to function as a policy and implementation framework that identifies clear objectives for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improving climate resilience, while allowing flexibility in how those objectives are achieved. Rather than relying on a single implementation model, the CAAP will include a range of policy tools, recognizing that different actions may warrant different levels of commitment and enforcement.

Climate policies within the CAAP may be implemented through a spectrum of approaches, including:

- *Regulatory or mandated actions*, particularly for municipal operations or future development;
- *Incentive-based or encouraging policies* that promote desired outcomes through programs, funding, or partnerships;
- *Voluntary and educational initiatives* that support behavior change and community participation; and
- *Hybrid approach* that combines regulatory, programmatic, and educational tools.

As part of policy development, staff and the consultant will evaluate how different policy approaches affect accountability, administrative effort, monitoring needs, and long-term effectiveness. Some

policies may include clearly defined performance standards and reporting mechanisms, while others may prioritize flexibility and adaptability as technologies, funding sources, and best practices evolve.

The table below provides a comparison of different policy implementation approaches based on level of prescriptiveness, flexibility, and administrative commitment. While the types of actions may appear similar, more prescriptive or enforceable mechanisms ensure accountability and sustained emissions reductions, whereas flexible policies rely more heavily on incentives, voluntary participation, and programmatic support.

TABLE 2 – Policy Implementation Approaches in the CAAP

Topic	More Prescriptive Policy Approaches	More Flexible Policy Approaches
Primary Role	Establishes clear requirements to ensure consistent GHG reductions	Provides a strategic roadmap supported by programs and incentives
Implementation Tools	Ordinances, standards, formal requirements	Incentives, voluntary programs, partnerships, education
Up-Front Effort	Higher level of analysis, documentation, and coordination	Lower initial effort with phased implementation
Flexibility Over Time	Less flexible; updates may require formal amendments	More adaptable to evolving technology and policy conditions
Monitoring & Reporting	Defined tracking, reporting, and accountability mechanisms	Monitoring may be scaled or program-based
Consistency Across Projects	Creates uniform expectations and outcomes	Allows tailored approaches based on context
Administrative Commitment	Greater ongoing staffing and oversight requirements	More manageable within existing City capacity
Risk Management	Higher accountability tied to measurable commitments	Lower exposure tied to programmatic and voluntary actions
Grant & Funding Alignment	Strong alignment with certain state and regional funding programs	Continues to support grant competitiveness and coordination

For additional information, Dudek, the City's consultant, has developed a list of broad sample policies to reduce GHG in Costa Mesa, which are provided under Attachment 1. The examples show potential policies under prescriptive versus flexible approaches.

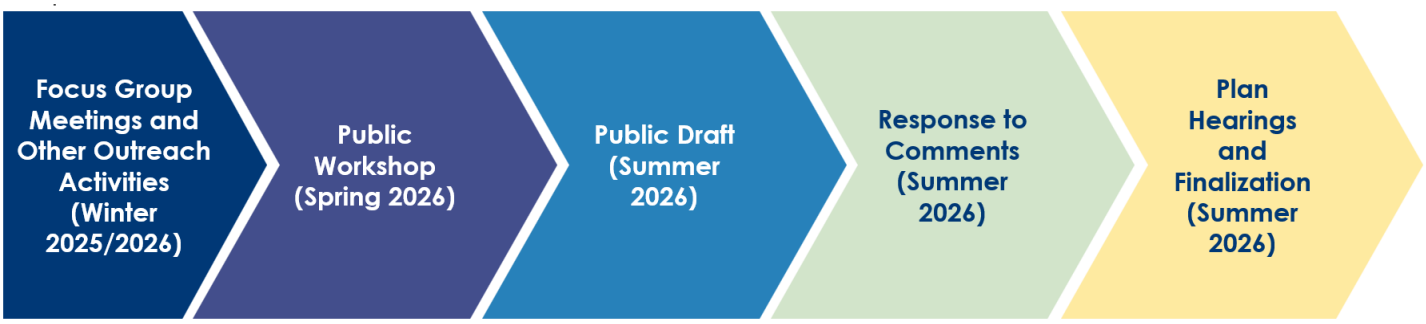
Relationship to Ongoing Environmental Review Efforts

Since the CAAP RFP was released, the City has also advanced two major environmental review efforts that include comprehensive GHG analysis: 1) the Neighborhoods Where We All Belong (NWWAB) rezoning initiative and 2) the Fairview Development Center (FDC) project. Both Environmental Impact Reports include detailed GHG inventories, reduction measures, and mitigation strategies that may provide opportunities for tiering or streamlined environmental review for future projects.

Staff is evaluating how these existing and ongoing environmental review efforts align with the CAAP, and whether they may already provide similar CEQA streamlining benefits without the additional administrative requirements associated with maintaining a CEQA-qualified CAAP.

Public Workshop and Public Review

Draft CAAP objectives and strategies will be vetted/reviewed with our internal stakeholder group and once refined, will be presented at a public workshop in Spring 2026. Additional opportunities for public review and comment will be provided prior to finalizing the plan for City Council consideration.



PUBLIC NOTICE:

There is no public notice requirement for the CAAP status and outreach update. However, the City provided the following informal notice:

- The date and time of the update was posted on the project website.
- Information about the update was emailed to the effort's interest list.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There is no fiscal impact with this action. The project has a budget of $500,000, of which $335,168 remains in the project balance at the time of the City Council hearing date. There is an available budget of $112,051 in the General Fund (Fund 101) and $223,117 in the Capital Improvement Fund (Fund 401).

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This effort supports the City Council's goal to advance environmental sustainability and climate resiliency by developing a long-term framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance climate preparedness, and protect community health and economic vitality.

CONCLUSION:

The Climate Action and Adaptation Plan is progressing as planned and continues to benefit from technical analysis, stakeholder collaboration, and community engagement. Staff welcomes City Council feedback on the project and looks forward to continued collaboration as the CAAP advances toward public review and adoption.