

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: January 19, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Sara Lillevand, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Presentation Regarding Public Outreach Efforts and Results Regarding the Proposed Implementation of Reach Codes

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an informational update on public engagement related to the proposed Reach Codes (Ordinance 750 N.S. and Ordinance 751 N.S.), including a presentation of the results of a random-sample survey conducted in November and December 2020.

BACKGROUND

At the July 20, 2020 City Council meeting, the City Council approved the first reading of Ordinances 750 N.S. and 751 N.S., to adopt Reach Codes through local amendments to the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Parts 2.5, 3, and 6. The goal of these amendments is to reduce natural gas use in residential buildings so that the Piedmont community can achieve its 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The code amendments are also intended to help make Piedmont homes healthier and more comfortable, and create opportunities for residents to save money.

This report provides information on the City's public engagement efforts related to the proposed Ordinances since the July 20th City Council meeting.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Development and Posting of Frequently Asked Questions

Following the first reading of the ordinances in July, City staff continued public engagement to publicize and describe the proposed Code amendments. An effort was made to further understand public response, and to generate comments for Council's consideration. In August, City staff generated a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers to those questions to provide clarity and dispel misconceptions related to the proposed Reach Codes. The FAQs address areas pertaining to the ordinances such as new housing units, roofing and solar panels, furnace and space heaters, kitchen and bathrooms, and landscape improvements, which have been mentioned by residents and the City Council throughout the code drafting and public engagement process. Since the end of August, the FAQs have been posted on the City's website

and have been periodically updated to incorporate additional questions and answers (last updated September 25, 2020). The City encourages residents to remain engaged in the Reach Code process by contacting staff with any further questions. A link to the FAQ can be found in the Supplemental and Referenced Documents section.

Town Hall Meeting

On September 3, 2020, the City hosted a virtual Town Hall Meeting over Zoom to provide an opportunity for Piedmont residents to ask questions and learn more about the proposed Reach Codes. A presentation on the Reach Codes proposal consisted of questions submitted by the public after the first reading of the Reach Code ordinances followed by answers from City staff; additional questions from Town Hall attendees were answered by staff. The Town Hall Meeting was recorded and is available on the City website (see list of supplemental documents). Following the Town Hall Meeting, staff updated the Reach Code FAQs on the City website to clarify questions raised by attendees.

November-December 2020 Survey

Staff commissioned FM3, a public policy-oriented opinion research firm, to design and implement a random sample representative survey of Piedmont registered voters (n=384, margin of error $\pm 5\%$) to evaluate residents' opinions about the draft Reach Codes. Overall, the survey shows strong support for the City's proposed building code revisions to reduce natural gas in buildings. Even after being presented with oppositional arguments to the Reach Codes, 66% of respondents continued to support their adoption. Interestingly, the opposing opinions resonated highly with respondents and were viewed as concerning but did not change the level of support for adoption.

Dave Metz, principal at FM3, will provide a thorough presentation and analysis of the survey results, but the following are key takeaways:

- After reading a brief list of example improvements that would meet the Reach Code requirements, 64% of respondents supported requiring these improvements in order to reduce natural gas use; 32% opposed the idea.
- Respondents were asked about the specific proposed building code amendments (Reach Codes). Depending on the measure, between 55 and 71% of respondents supported each measure; only 24 to 41% opposed each measure.
- About seven in ten respondents said reduced greenhouse gas emissions (70%) and preventing climate change by reducing fossil fuel consumption (69%) are an extremely or very important benefit of establishing Reach Codes.
- Three in four respondents noted the most convincing reason to support adopting Reach Codes is the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated by homes, and the consequences for not doing so.
- When presented messages opposing the Reach Codes, 87% of Piedmonters noted relying on electric appliances could leave homeowners vulnerable to power outage as a concern, including 39% who said this is a major concern. About eight in ten were concerned the proposal is unfair to residents who have already taken energy efficiency improvements

(81%) and that it may be costly for some homeowners (79%). Fewer respondents said they are concerned that the proposal is confusing for homeowners (68%) and an example of government overreach (51%).

- In a separate open-ended question, the most frequently mentioned concerns about establishing the Reach Codes included the restriction of gas (11%), cost (10%), and government overreach (10%). In another open-ended question, the most commonly suggested changes to the Reach Codes included providing financial incentives for homeowners to implement proposed changes (12%), allowing the use of gas in new construction (11%), and providing opportunities for exceptions (10%).

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Ongoing public engagement in various formats—FAQ page on the City’s website, a Town Hall Meeting, an additional public opinion survey—allowed the City to further publicize and describe the proposed Code amendments following the first reading of the Ordinances. Public engagement also enabled the City to provide clarity and dispel misconceptions related to the proposed Reach Codes.

As the survey was administered to a random representative sample of Piedmont’s registered voters, the survey results suggest that an appreciable majority of residents support both the overall idea of revising building codes to transition off of natural gas appliances and the specific code amendments included in the ordinances. A more detailed summary of survey results can be found in the Supplemental and Referenced Documents section.

Unless otherwise directed by the Council, Staff intends to bring forward the second reading of the Reach Codes at the February 1st City Council meeting. The agenda report for the second reading of the ordinances will address lingering concerns and will include additional clarification about requirements and exemptions of the proposed Building Code amendments.

By: Kevin Jackson, Director of Planning & Building
Craig Griffin, Chief Building Official
Alyssa Dykman, Sustainability Program Manager
Nate Redinbo, Climate Action Fellow

Supplemental and Referenced Documents

Public Engagement Summaries

- [Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Proposed Reach Codes](#)
- [Recording of the September 3, 2020 Reach Codes Town Hall Meeting](#)
- [Piedmont Resident Views of the City’s Emissions Reduction Strategies: Key Findings from a Citywide Voter Survey Conducted November 21-December 3, 2020](#)