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POLITICS

PRAISE FOR SAN DIEGO'S FORWARD THINKING BUDGET

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By Roy L Hales

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There were few criticisms when Mayor Kevin Falconer announced that San Diego will spend \$127.3 million to carry out the city's Climate Action Plan during the fiscal year 2017. \$32.7 million of this is for projects tackling the city's emissions and another \$94 million for items indirectly supporting the plan. The largest single item, \$65.7 million, is for the city's water recycling program which is to supply up to a third of the city's need by 2035. Some wanted more detail, but there was mostly

praise for San Diego's forward thinking budget.

Prioritizing Neighbourhood development

San Diego's goal is to eliminate half of its' greenhouse gas emissions and obtain 100% of its' from renewable resources by 2035.

"We're building the foundation for a better and cleaner future in San Diego," said Mayor Falconer in a [press release](#). "My budget proposal prioritizes neighborhood improvements and will more than double infrastructure funding. These investments, along with other sustainability initiatives, will help us as we work to reach the goals in the climate action plan."

"Climate resiliency, in addition to infrastructure improvements, will be critical to ensure that our city is prepared to handle predicted, and potentially unforeseen, climate change impacts such as heat waves, drought and sea level rise," added City Council President Sherri Lightner.

"The impacts of a changing climate are most detrimental in neighbourhoods such as Barrio Logan, City Heights, Sherman Heights, Logan Heights and San Isidro that suffer from damaging air quality, burdensome energy bills and inaccessible public transit," responded Diane Takvorian, Executive Director of the Environmental Health Coalition.

"The climate action plan recognized these challenges and included a mandate to prioritize the most impacted communities for mitigation and investment. The implementation plan does not, but should, incorporate specific equity strategies in each element. For example, the 'Energy Conservation and Disclosure Ordinance' should include specific actions for communities south of the I-8, such as providing assistance to low-income households for energy reduction and access to renewable energy.

"In addition, an Equity Specialist should be included in the budget allocation to ensure compliance with this important element of the climate action plan."¹

Though the wording is vague, One of the items on the Mayor's agenda is "reviewing capital improvement program to prioritize underserved communities and transit priority areas"

The City's Transportation Infrastructure

There are numerous references to improving the city's transportation infrastructure:

- *Beginning implementation of the Downtown Mobility Plan*
- *Constructing new and improved sidewalks*
- *Constructing mobility improvements at high-volume intersections, such as Friars Road and State Route 163*
- *Installing 17 cameras in transit priority areas to facilitate improved bicycle commute data with funding for more cameras over next three years*
- *Installing and modifying traffic signal systems to reduce congestion*
- *Installing new energy efficiency and “smart” streetlights*
- *Installing 50 miles of new or improved bicycle lanes and implementing the Bike Master Plan*
- *Implementing highest priority bicycle lanes as recommended by the Bicycle Advisory Committee’s draft plan that aligns with “Vision Zero” goals of increasing pedestrian and cyclist safety, and focusing on disadvantaged communities*
- *Installing 17 cameras in transit priority areas to facilitate improved bicycle commute data with funding for more cameras over next three years*
- *a majority of the City’s fleet should be electric vehicles by 2035.*

Praise for San Diego’s forward Thinking Budget

“We still have a lot of work to do to figure out how we are going to model success, especially in building more compact, likeable and walkable urban neighbourhoods with functional transit, but the Mayor today has singled that he is committed to identifying and implementing solutions and we applaud his efforts,” said Nicole Capretz, Executive Director, Climate Action Campaign.

Andy Henshaw, Executive Director, San Diego County Bicycle Coalition sounded more enthusiastic:

“We are encouraged by the Mayor’s message today that San Diego should be a leader in climate action in this country and we are encouraged by the implementation strategy and city’s commitment to achieve the climate action plan goals and the investment they require.

“We know bicycling and providing safe infrastructure in order to get more people out of their cars is a major component to this plan and the health and well being of the citizens of San Diego. We are looking forward to working with this plan as it applies funding toward high priority projects in the city’s Bike Master Plan and other necessary projects, particularly in disadvantaged communities.”²

Locally Produced Energy

Several items on the Mayor's agenda refer to locally produced energy:

- *a community choice feasibility study, which will investigate the possibility of San Diego operating as its' own utility.*
- *Approximately 6 megawatts of solar panels are to be installed on City facilities "at no cost to taxpayers."*
- *"Creating a Resource Recovery Centre at the Miramar Landfill to separate organic materials for renewable energy production"*
- *"Purchasing 20 new compressed natural gas trash and recycle trucks that will run on landfill gas"*

Planting 2,000 Trees

Another key component is increasing the city's by planting 2,000 trees. The city's **Draft Urban Forest Management Plan** states, "Cities are often 5 to 10 degrees F hotter than undeveloped areas because hot pavement and buildings have replaced cool vegetated land."

"... A 20 percent tree canopy over a house results in annual cooling savings of 8 to 18 percent and annual heating savings of 2 to 8 percent. By planting shade trees on sunny exposures, residents and businesses can save up to 50 percent on hot day energy bills."

".. A study from University of California at Davis found that 20 percent shade cover on a street improves pavement condition by 11 percent, which is a 60 percent savings for resurfacing over 30 years."³

The World Is Watching

"San Diego's landmark Climate Action Plan has the world watching and learning from our region's pursuit of environmental change alongside economic leadership," said Jason Anderson, President, Cleantech San Diego.

San Diego has 1.3 inhabitants and is the second largest city in California. The city's total operating budget for the fiscal year 2017 is \$3.3 billion.

Photo Credit: **Mayor Kevin Falconer's press release**

Footnotes

1. press release from Diane Takvorian, Executive Director of the Environmental Health Coalition [↗](#)
2. press release from Andy Henshaw, Executive Director, San Diego County Bicycle Coalition [↗](#)
3. Inland Urban Forest Group, [The City of San Diego Draft Forest Management Plan](#), February 18, 2015, pp 4,5 [↗](#)

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