



**CITY OF LARKSPUR  
Staff Report**

July 21, 2021, City Council Meeting

DATE: July 12, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor Haroff and the Larkspur City Council

FROM: Dan Schwarz, City Manager  
Neal Toft, Planning & Building Director

SUBJECT: PUBLIC WORKSHOP: CRAFTING A VISION STATEMENT FOR THE CITY'S  
CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2030

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**ACTION REQUESTED**

Direct staff with respect to a crafting a vision statement for the City's Climate Action Plan 2030.

**SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

The City is in the process of updating its climate action plan (CAP). The current draft of the plan incorporates amendments and edits approved by the City Council at its meeting of June 16, 2021 meeting and can be found at this location on the City's website: <http://www.cityoflarkspur.org/156/Climate-Action-Plan>. Among the comments about the CAP submitted by one group of residents was a request for the incorporation of their draft of a vision statement for the CAP (Attachment 1). During its discussion on June 16, the Council asked staff to comment on the submitted vision statement. Staff reported that the City is part of the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP), which created a uniform format for the CAPs adopted by its members and that format does not incorporate a vision statement. Staff did note that one jurisdiction, the Town of Fairfax, opted to include a vision "statement" in its CAP based on the request of an appointed committee that reviewed the document (Attachment 2). The Council directed staff to schedule a public workshop to engage the community in a discussion about a vision statement for the CAP.

As the Council will note, the Fairfax committee called this vision a "preface." The Larkspur residents who submitted the requested vision statement (Attachment 1) have since submitted an email (Attachment 3) suggesting their intent was more along the lines of the preface to the Fairfax document.

**DISCUSSION**

In response to legislation and various directives from the State of California, most state, local, and regional agencies in California have adopted documents that explain how they will comply with these laws and guidelines. Many agencies have chosen to call these documents “climate action plans.” Marin appears to be distinct from other counties in our region in that there has been a conscious effort to standardize the format of our climate action plans through coordination by MCEP. Because there is no statewide prescription for a climate action plan, staff focused its consideration of crafting a vision statement to Marin and nearby counties.

A review of the CAPs in Marin offers no example of a vision statement. The Fairfax CAP includes a preface drafted by the Town’s Climate Action Committee. In Larkspur, the City Council defines climate action policy. If it is desirable to do so, the task of crafting a vision statement or a preface that states a vision rests with the City Council. The Council called for this public workshop to afford the community an opportunity to provide input before the Council decides whether to add vision language to the CAP.

**ANALYSIS**

A conventional vision statement is a single sentence expressing intent and a look into the future. Staff reviewed a few dozen climate action documents and found no example of a document containing a conventional vision statement. Staff suspects that this lack of examples is due to the nature of the documents themselves. These documents were created to explain to the public how government agencies will comply with and promote state laws, guidelines, and directives, and in staff’s view, they do not particularly lend themselves to aspirational vision statements.

Because there is no statewide rule about the format of a CAP, the Council has the discretion to add a vision statement to the document. To facilitate the Council’s workshop, staff submits that a conventional vision statement for the CAP would be something like:

*Achieving a healthier and sustainable climate by meeting or exceeding the goals and requirements of state, regional, and local governments.*

Alternatively, this vision statement might be shortened to “achieving a healthier and sustainable climate.”

If the Council desires to move forward with the submission from the group of Larkspur residents, the Council may wish to discuss the last sentence of the document, which might be interpreted as a commitment to create a “climate action center” in the anticipated library and community center on the Community Facility Parcel.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Conducting this workshop and amending the draft CAP presents no fiscal impact beyond staff time and resources.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS**

Exempt from environmental review under Section 15307 of the California Environmental Quality Act (Guidelines), which exempts "Actions by regulatory agencies for protection of natural resources." In addition, adoption of the CAP is exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Council conduct a public workshop about crafting a vision statement for the CAP. Staff suggests that options available to the Council include:

1. Work on a vision statement for the CAP.
2. Work on a vision "preface" for the CAP.
3. Choose not to include any vision commentary in the CAP.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Schwarz, City Manager  
Neal Toft, Planning and Building Director

Attachments:

1. Vision statement submitted by David Moller on behalf of several residents
2. Vision preface from the Town of Fairfax CAP
3. E-Mail from David Moller clarifying position on vision for the CAP on behalf of several residents

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**A Vision of Larkspur in 2030**

This Climate Action Plan identifies scores of actions, some big and some small, to help us dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the worst consequences of climate change. But what does the future look like if we do these things? It's hard to get somewhere if you don't know where you're headed. To help us get there, this Vision of Larkspur in 2030 provides a glimpse of what Larkspur could look like in 2030.

Traffic is less than half of what it was back in 2021 with telecommuting now the norm and so many people walking, biking, using shared ebikes or taking the frequent and convenient autonomous electric transit to get around. Completion of the Bon Air Bridge, the North-South Bicycle Greenway and the pedestrian and bike bridge from Piper Park to South Eliseo and Bon Air Center combined with the many old and new separated bike paths make it convenient and safe to walk or bike everywhere – and most people do. Almost all students use bikes to get to and from school, and with their clear understanding of climate change most would be embarrassed to have a parent drive them. Many of the passenger vehicles still on the road are shared vehicles and about half are Electric Vehicles. Between the EV chargers now available at many public parking spaces and the numerous DC fast charging stations along 101 and other highways, getting a charge is as easy and certain as filling-up with gas used to be before so many gas stations closed due to decreased demand. Larkspur is quieter, the air is cleaner, and people love meeting each other as they move about.

All our electricity comes from renewable sources, with a good portion being generated locally on people's roofs and stored using a combination of the batteries in their Electric Vehicles and sometimes in-home batteries. We haven't had a Public Safety Power Shutoff for years as Larkspur can now operate as its own microgrid when needed. The 900 new residential units completed near the Larkspur ferry terminal to meet the Regional Housing Needs Allocation requirements are all-electric, thanks to that ordinance we passed back in 2022. And so many owners of existing homes have replaced their old polluting gas space and water heaters with super-efficient electric heat-pump models that now many folks are upgrading even before the old ones burn-out. Most people now cook on electric induction cooktops and would not even consider going back to polluting their indoor air with toxic combustion gasses from a gas cooktop. Our homes have gotten much more energy efficient with their heat-pumps, insulation and building envelope upgrades, LED lights and other energy conservation measures that even though we use more electricity than we used to our total energy bills are lower. These ongoing upgrades and numerous accessory dwelling unit improvements have sustained local green jobs and enabled a more diverse community including more tradespeople, teachers, and caregivers of all kinds to live in Larkspur.

We still recycle, of course, but the collection trucks are electric, as is Larkspur's municipal fleet, and a lot of the compost is now used locally in the community gardens that have sprung up on seemingly every unused lot. Total waste has dropped dramatically as people have focused more on rethinking their purchases, recycling, composting, reusing and waste reduction strategies. Water use has also dropped with people seeing and using water as the precious resource it is. Water conservation has become second nature rather than just a drought response. We're prepared for wildfires and relieved to see the wildland fire seasons starting to become less destructive due to fuel reduction and home hardening efforts.

Larkspur is much greener than it used to be, with the trees that were planted during the early days of the urban forest initiative now beginning to provide significant shade that helps cool the entire

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community. It's especially noticeable along Magnolia Avenue where the street trees are starting to arch-out over the roadway. And a good thing too, as ambient air temperatures keep getting hotter and hotter. Larkspur's relationship with Corte Madera Creek and the Bay wetlands has also changed as a result of the wetlands sea level rise and sequestration project it is doing jointly with Corte Madera.

Our collective progress on implementing our Climate Action Plan is well known, followed and discussed by most of Larkspur's residents. The way the City Council thoughtfully evaluates each decision on whether it helps us achieve our climate goals is often mentioned. A sense of possibility and excitement has replaced the denial and feeling of powerlessness so many of us used to have about climate change. People now know what they can do individually and with others, and how to do it. The Climate Action Center at the Larkspur Library and Community Center on Doherty is one of the most popular places in town!

# PREFACE: A Vision for Fairfax in 2030

Visualize what Fairfax could feel like in 2030, the year that our Climate Emergency Resolution says we will achieve carbon neutrality...

In 2030, Fairfax takes pride, as it always has, in leading by example. Our vibrant and beautiful town and surroundings are more the focus of people's lives than the personal consumption that drove the last century.

Almost every home in Fairfax, whether owner-occupied or rented, has been upgraded with insulation, efficient electric appliances, solar generation and storage of energy wherever possible. The Town government took the lead on this, creating a local microgrid, and running all its buildings and vehicles on renewable energy.

Meanwhile the state-wide electric grid has become 100% renewable, with storage so that fossil fueled generation is no longer required for nighttime or winter use. MCE, which Fairfax was so instrumental in creating, is an example for the world.

Transportation has taken a major and welcome shift away from the old paradigm of individually-owned fossil-fueled vehicles clogging the roads and parking in every available space. Now most everyone regularly uses shared electric transportation, transit, bicycles and electric bikes. The Town center no longer looks like a parking lot, our narrow streets are far more passable, the town is quieter, the air is cleaner, and people love meeting each other as they move about. We've reclaimed our community.

The town has done a great deal to become resilient – we eat locally grown food, we can keep our electricity on when the larger grid fails, and of course we're leaving fossil carbon in the ground. We're prepared for fires, and relieved to see the wildland fire seasons starting to become less destructive. Taking good care of our water, we can deal with the variability in rainfall that we're going to have to live with for decades to come as we draw down the carbon in the atmosphere.

Our collective progress on so many of these fronts is known, followed and discussed by all citizens. A sense of possibility and excitement has replaced the denial, fatalism and dread that was so sadly present back in 2020, the lowest point in our nation's history. We all know that it took far too long for society to wean itself off fossil fuels and rampant consumerism, but we're on a strong and joyous path of healing now.

## ATTACHMENT 3

### Dan Schwarz

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**From:** David Moller <david@mollers.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 9:45 AM  
**To:** Kevin Haroff; Dan Hillmer; Gabe Paulson; Catherine Way; Scot Candell  
**Cc:** Neal Toft; Dan Schwarz; 'Christine O'Rourke'; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Follow-up on Vision Statement for CAP

**CAUTION:**External Sender

**Dear Larkspur City Council and Staff,**

Thank you for supporting at the June 16 City Council meeting the comments submitted by the Larkspur Climate Group on June 14 for adoption in Larkspur's *Climate Action Plan 2030 (CAP)*.

Regarding the discussion during the meeting among Council members and staff about our proposed *A Vision of Larkspur in 2030*, we would like to offer further clarification of our intent. Our intent was to provide and engage Larkspur's residents with a fun and appealing image of "what it might look like" in 2030 if the actions described in the CAP were implemented. The idea was to aggregate the many incremental actions into a composite picture or story of a changed community—changed for the better in many ways specifically by implementing the actions described in the CAP.

We realize now that our use of the terms "Vision" and "Vision Statement" sent the discussion down an unintended path. It was not our intent that the story serve as the CAP's Vision Statement. To clear this up, we propose removing the term "Vision" from the title of our story, instead calling it *A Picture of Larkspur in 2030* or *A Picture of Larkspur's Low Emissions Future* or something along those lines.

While we think it would be helpful to provide the story with the CAP, we are open to further discussing the story separately from approval of the CAP, if necessary. However, we are concerned that separating the story from the CAP would diminish its value and likely broaden the story's scope to reflect subjects and actions beyond the specific greenhouse gas reduction actions described in the CAP. Broadening the scope would likely lead to a much longer story, and of course, the longer it gets, the less likely it gets read.

We continue to favor the concept of providing a short Larkspur in 2030 story in the CAP that reflects exclusively the actions described in the CAP. And we wonder if with this additional explanation of intent and proposed title change, the Council and staff can support that approach. If there remains any concern about an implied "endorsement" of the story by the City, we're happy to have the story attributed to the Larkspur Climate Group.

Regardless of the story's final title and location, we think providing residents with a composite snapshot of what Larkspur could look like in 2030 would be a helpful tool for engaging the community to take the actions described in the CAP. We think most folks will read a fun and stimulating one-page piece about what their community might look like in the future – especially one that paints a positive and appealing picture. We look forward to working with you to complete such a piece!

Sincerely,

**Larkspur Climate Group:**

**David Moller**, Larkspur  
**Ken Jones**, Greenbrae  
**Tom Flynn**, Larkspur

**Robin Moller**, Larkspur  
**Suhaila Sikand**, Larkspur  
**Ken Strong**, Greenbrae  
**Elise Semonian**, Larkspur  
**Carol Kerr**, Larkspur  
**Matt Hartzell**, Larkspur  
**Jeanette Thorson**, Larkspur  
**Katharine Hermann**, Larkspur  
**Carleen Cullen**, Greenbrae  
**Laura Anderson**, Larkspur