



# COUNCIL REPORT

**DATE:** May 10, 2022  
**CATEGORY:** Consent  
**DEPT.:** City Manager's Office  
**TITLE:** **Plant-Based Eating Resolution and Program**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Mountain View Supporting a Plant-Based Eating Program, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 1 to the Council report).

## **BACKGROUND**

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that the livestock sector contributes 14.5% of human-caused GHG emissions. Reducing these emissions is a critical step in meeting the reduction goals of the Paris Agreement and limiting global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

According to public health records, fewer than one in five adults in Santa Clara County ate three or more servings of vegetables the previous day, and only about one in four adults ate two servings of fruit the previous day, which are the recommended daily amounts from Federal guidelines. A plant-based diet includes not only fruits and vegetables, but also nuts, seeds, whole grains, and legumes. Plant-based diets offer all the necessary protein, vitamins, and minerals for optimal health.

On October 22, 2019, the City Council adopted the Sustainability Action Plan 4 (SAP-4), including Action S4.7, which directs the City to “[d]evelop a resolution and outreach in support of a plant-based diet” to reduce consumption-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the community.

On April 21, 2020, the City Council passed a resolution for Mountain View to become a carbon-neutral city by 2045. Research published in the peer-reviewed journal *Science* states that a plant-based diet can reduce food emissions by up to 73%.<sup>1</sup> The study also found that a plant-based diet can reduce freshwater withdrawals by one-quarter. In addition to the significant GHG

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<sup>1</sup> J. Poore, T. Nemecek (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science*, 360 (6th 392), 987-992. doi:10.1126/science.aag0216

emissions from livestock, data from the FAO shows that livestock take up nearly 80% of global agricultural land, yet produce less than 20% of the world's supply of calories.<sup>2</sup> The City of Mountain View has been a leader in climate change policy, and reducing emissions from food is a critical step toward reducing GHG emissions overall and conserving fresh water.

On May 11, 2021, Staff provided an update to the City Council on the status of SAP-4, noting that outreach to food establishments and the development of a plant-based eating (PBE) program had been delayed due to COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place orders and their impact on food establishments as well as on City operations. At that time, Councilmembers encouraged staff to undertake actions, as possible, to raise awareness about the importance of and ways to support plant-based eating.

To date, the City has held four PBE events in partnership with Soil and Water Garden, Vegan Outreach, the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, and the Food Empowerment Project. Each event has focused on a different aspect of plant-based eating. Recordings of the three virtual events are available on the City's YouTube channel. Staff has also published resources and tips for PBE through the City's monthly sustainability newsletter and Collaborate Mountain View website. Lastly, plant-based food trucks and a presentation on PBE were part of the City's Earth Day Celebration on April 23, 2022.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Research of Best Practices and Program Options**

Staff conducted research on programs to encourage plant-based eating. Numerous cities have taken action to encourage a shift toward a more plant-based diet. The Center for Environmental and Animal Protection developed a toolkit for local policymakers to shift cities toward a plant-based diet and provided the examples below:

- The New York City Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare produced newsletters with information on the benefits of limiting meat consumption and resources to help residents shift toward plant-forward diets.
- Austin, Texas, published "Tips for Sustainable Eating," which encourages residents to reduce meat consumption and prioritize plant-based foods as a means of improving health and reducing impacts on the environment.
- As part of a recent campaign to share information about sustainable and healthy eating, Dallas, Texas, developed a "Meat-Free Mondays" program aimed at partnering with local restaurants to encourage plant-based options. Portland, Oregon, proposed a similar

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/agricultural-land-by-global-diets>

outreach and education program in its 2015 Climate Action Plan, committing to “work with partners to support efforts to encourage plant-based diets, including Meatless Monday campaigns.”

- The Mayor of Minneapolis, Minnesota, partnered with a local restaurant to host a series of monthly vegan dinners. The “Climate Series Salon and Supper Club” brought together community members, policy stakeholders, and experts to discuss the environmental benefits of plant-based eating.
- Several municipalities, including Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, Cleveland, OH, Durham, NC, and New York City, NY, passed resolutions in support of plant-based eating in collaboration with programs like Green Monday and Meatless Monday.

In addition to the research on plant-based programs in other cities, staff received input from community members and community organizations to inform development of a plant-based eating program in Mountain View. Staff surveyed community members to collect feedback on program options. The top-ranked options included live and recorded plant-based cooking classes, an outreach campaign on the environmental and health benefits of a plant-based diet, free recipes, and encouragement of plant-based options at food establishments. As noted above, the City has begun implementation of several of these elements of a PBE program.

The proposed PBE program has been discussed internally within City departments and divisions, including Economic Vitality, Purchasing, Human Resources, Recreation, and Fire. Staff in these areas have provided feedback on how to promote PBE within City operations and how to engage food establishments within Mountain View.

### **Program Overview**

Based on the research and outreach to-date, staff has identified five goals for the City’s PBE program:

1. Increase awareness about PBE, and reduce meat, seafood, and dairy consumption.
2. Generate business for Mountain View food establishments.
3. Incorporate equity in all aspects of the program.
4. Provide clear guidelines and materials for City staff.
5. Minimize additional expenses for food establishments and the City through offering or procuring cost-effective plant-based eating options as well as participation in a low- or no-cost certification program.

The program will have three main components.

1. Information Campaign

A campaign will be launched to increase awareness of the program and why eating a plant-based diet is important. Staff from the Sustainability, Communications, and Outreach Divisions will work together to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate, informative, and engaging outreach materials and promote them through the City's communication channels. The campaign will also promote the City's ongoing quarterly events focused on different aspects of PBE. Internally, staff will share information and resources on PBE through the employee Sustainability newsletter, other internal Citywide communications, and a plant-based Lunch and Learn for City staff.

2. Food Establishment Opt-In Certification Program

The City is lucky to have many food establishments that serve a variety of cuisines and that already incorporate many plant-based options. The purpose of an opt-in certification program for food establishments is to help participating businesses showcase plant-based menu items, provide marketing materials these businesses can use, publicize the businesses to the community, and encourage more food establishments to offer plant-based menu options. Staff will develop the program based on participating establishments that provide a certain percentage or number of plant-based menu items, offer plant-based specials, and/or highlight plant-based menu items in some other way. The program may use a Gold, Silver, and Bronze type of rating system and could provide a sticker or sign to be displayed that shows the business is participating in the program.

The City has an opportunity to be an information source for people to locate and support participating businesses. Sustainability and Economic Vitality staff has discussed the program with the Chamber of Commerce and will partner with them to help encourage patronage of these establishments and promote all participants on the City's website.

3. Municipal Goals and Food Guide

The third component of the program will involve establishing PBE goals for City operations and developing a Green Food Guide to help inform staff of their options when purchasing food for City programs and events. For example, staff may set a goal to increase plant-based options and/or reduce meat consumption at City-sponsored events and meetings. Later, the City will develop a broader Green Event Guide that provides resources, strategies, vendor options, and templates for staff and other organizations to increase sustainability practices when planning and hosting events in Mountain View.

## **Implementation Plan**

Staff has created a three-phased implementation plan for the PBE program.

- **Phase 1: Research and Planning (fall 2021 to spring 2022)**
  - Meet with internal stakeholders to develop program components and outreach strategies for City operations, community awareness building and engagement, and support of local eating establishments.
  - Create content for the information campaign.
  - Solicit feedback from businesses, the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, and other community organizations on the development of the Opt-In Certification Program.
  - Adopt a resolution supporting a plant-based eating program.
- **Phase 2: Information Campaign (spring to fall 2022)**
  - Publish and disseminate PBE promotion materials through internal communication channels, the Chamber of Commerce, social media, paid online ads, the Sustainability newsletter, the Cool Block curriculum, and partnerships with the County and other organizations.
  - Promote the opt-in certification program with local restaurants and other food establishments.
  - Host quarterly community events.
  - Survey employees to gather feedback and host employee-focused events.
  - Publish Green Food Guide.
- **Phase 3: Program Launch (fall/winter 2022)**
  - Launch the food establishment opt-in certification program and collect data.
  - Gather feedback from participating establishments and adjust program accordingly.
  - Launch internal PBE goals for City operations.

- Publish Green Event Guide.
- Report on program results and progress on the City’s goals, and adjust program as needed.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Staff anticipates that the \$30,000 appropriated for this initiative in SAP-4 will be sufficient to support a robust program. Staff estimates that half of the allocated funds will be spent on the food establishment certification program and the other half will be used for internal and external PBE promotion, education, and events.

To support the program, staff plans to leverage resources from organizations, such as Green Monday, and other available volunteer support. Other programs in SAP-4, such as Cool Block, will also include PBE information, thus augmenting support for PBE implementation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Do not adopt the plant-based eating resolution and program.
2. Modify and adopt the plant-based eating resolution and program.
3. Provide other direction.

**PUBLIC NOTICING**

Agenda posting and emails sent to community members interested in sustainability.

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MS-SA-DL/6/CAM  
620-05-10-22CR  
201262

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Attachment: 1. Plant-Based Eating Resolution