

STAFF MEMO

DATE OF COUNCIL MEETING: SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 / AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Jonathan Wachtel, Planning Manager - Sustainability, 303-987-7510
Travis Parker, Planning Director, 303-987-7908

Subject: **SUSTAINABILITY UPDATES**

SUMMARY STATEMENT: At the September 13, 2021 City Council Regular Meeting, staff will provide an update on the implementation of the City of Lakewood Sustainability Plan. The update will include:

1. Overview of the 2020-2021 Sustainability Plan Annual Report including highlighted projects from the past year and the status of key 2025 sustainability targets.
2. Summary of current and future areas of focus including 2022 budget exception requests for projects advancing the city's sustainability goals.

No formal action is needed by City Council at this meeting, though staff is seeking general direction from City Council on four budget exception requests.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: 2020-21 Sustainability Plan Annual Report: In 2015, City Council adopted the City of Lakewood Sustainability Plan. The Sustainability Plan is a policy document that includes goals, targets, and strategies to guide the community in strengthening and integrating its social fabric, local economy, and natural environment, while reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses. The Plan was developed through an 18-month community engagement process.

At the time of adoption, staff from the city's Sustainability Division made a commitment to City Council and the community to provide regular updates on the status of plan implementation along with emerging issues and opportunities related to sustainability. The Sustainability Division has prepared the 2020-2021 Sustainability Plan Annual Report to highlight key implementation efforts undertaken in 2020 and projects currently underway in 2021. The report also includes three appendices which provide a compilation of data in support of the Sustainability Plan's 35 measurable targets and 90 sustainability indicators, a progress report on the status of the plan's primary implementation strategies, and an overview of completed Sustainable Neighborhood projects.

Current and future areas of focus and funding opportunities: In the six years since the implementation of the Sustainability Plan, staff has made significant progress on 29 of the Plan's 63 primary implementation strategies. The 2021/22 Sustainability Division Work Plan and associated budget requests were developed with the following considerations:

1. The resource demands required to maintain existing programs and implement adopted policies
2. High impact opportunities as identified in the Sustainability Plan
3. Projects that align with City Council directives and support other organization-wide work plans

A summary of current and past Sustainability Division work plan highlights is included in **Attachment B**. The Sustainability Division, with support from other departments, is requesting City Council's consideration of the following 2022 project-specific budget exception requests:

Budget Exception Request #1: Sustainability Plan update with additional climate vulnerability and resiliency planning elements

Amount Requested: \$200,000

Several factors make an update to the Sustainability Plan with additional focus on climate vulnerability and resiliency planning a high priority. These include:

- ✓ Climate science and technology have progressed to a point that the targets adopted in the 2015 plan are insufficient, both in terms of meaningful impact to climate change mitigation, and keeping pace with federal and state guidance and other leading jurisdictions in sustainability
- ✓ The 2015 Sustainability Plan and the soon-to-be-adopted update to the Jefferson County Hazard Mitigation Plan both call for assessments of climate change hazards and the adoption Lakewood-specific climate adaptation strategies
- ✓ Builds upon City Council directives and discussion of priorities from September 21, 2020 study session with Sustainability Division.

This funding would provide planning support in the form of data collection, inclusive and multi-lingual community engagement, technical assistance in developing a Lakewood-specific climate vulnerability assessment, an updated communitywide GHG emissions inventory, and cost/benefit analysis of proposed strategies and investments.

Budget Exception Request #2: Funding for implementation of energy and water efficiency programs for existing buildings and landscapes

Amount Requested: \$300,000

The city is not on track to achieve the 2015 Sustainability Plan targets for energy and water efficiency. This project is intended to address this shortfall while supporting five different Sustainability Plan goals with a focus on serving low to moderate income residents.

- ✓ Advances City Council priorities for energy and water efficiency programs including leveraging the expertise of the new staff position funded by City Council in 2020 to focus on sustainability plan implementation for energy, water, and built environment.
- ✓ High impact opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce residential utility bills, and protect limited natural resources, particularly increasingly scarce water resources.

This funding would support a wide range of implementation actions including funding for audits and equipment, technical support, performance standards, and outreach and educational campaigns while also providing grant-matching funds to leveraging existing partnerships with local utilities and funding from state agencies.

Budget Exception Request #3: Grant matching and installation funds for public electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Amount Requested: \$275,000

The Colorado Electric Vehicle Plan 2020 has a target of increasing the number of light-duty passenger electric vehicles (EVs) to 940,000 by 2030. In order to meet the needs of this anticipated growth, EV charging infrastructure needs to be expanded, including in Lakewood. While some charging stations are located at private sites, currently, there is only one publicly-available Level 2 EV charging station available at a community facility (Civic Center parking lot). The State is currently providing matching grants to subsidize both Level 2 and DC Fast charging stations.

- ✓ Advances adopted goals related to sustainable transportation infrastructure, air quality, and transition to renewable energy.
- ✓ High impact opportunity leveraging state and federal grant funds and reducing future costs for the city.
- ✓ Supports equitable access for electric vehicle ownership and charging by providing charging opportunities for multi-family households and renters.

Budget Exception Request #4: Residential tree assistance/tree canopy preservation and planting program

Amount Requested: \$250,000

Tree canopy preservation and planting with a focus on residential tree assistance programs will provide numerous benefits to the community including:

- ✓ Assisting the citizens of the City of Lakewood with the mitigation of the upcoming infestation of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)
- ✓ Aligning with City Council's goals to "Protect and enhance the character of neighborhoods" and "Identify strategies to pay for community needs."
- ✓ Providing the city with an opportunity to achieve Lakewood's adopted target of 30% tree canopy coverage in the city by 2025. The current canopy is estimated at 14%.
- ✓ Leveraging important ecosystem services from Lakewood's urban forests including heat mitigation, support of biological diversity, and increase carbon sequestration

Funding will provide resources for protecting existing trees while also reducing costs for residents of planting new trees. The Community Resources Department does not currently have existing funds budgeted to support expansion of tree assistance for private property owners, which is necessary to increase and protect the city's existing tree canopy.

BUDGETARY IMPACTS: Staff will present Council with four 2022 budget-exception requests totaling \$1.025 million. Additionally, staff is actively working to prioritize low cost or grant funded projects given current budget constraints.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Continue to support implementation of the 2015 City of Lakewood Sustainability Plan including approval of four 2022 budget-exception requests.

PUBLIC OUTREACH: Following the study session, the Sustainability Division will share the 2020-2021 Sustainability Plan Annual Report with the community through a variety of outreach mechanisms including:

- Special edition of the Sustainability Division newsletter (848 subscribers)
- First look email to members of the Lakewood Sustainability Cooperative
- Special edition of the Sustainable Neighborhoods monthly newsletter update
- Social media posts including Facebook and Instagram (1,876 followers)

Additionally, the Sustainability Division will host a virtual community workshop this fall to share highlights from the Sustainability Plan Annual Report and to provide opportunities for residents and stakeholders to meet staff, ask questions and share their implementation priorities.

The report is available online along with all previous versions at www.Lakewood.org/SustainabilityPlan.

NEXT STEPS: Staff will continue to conduct outreach with the community and work with other city departments in support of Plan implementation. This includes the ongoing expansion of sustainability resources for residents and businesses on Lakewood.org, outreach through the division's numerous communication networks, special events, and strategic virtual engagement strategies to support open and accessible communication during the current pandemic.

Staff is also currently developing a proposal, as assigned by City Council, in response to the recommendation of the Lakewood Advisory Commission to explore options for a Renewable Energy Mitigation Program. This type of program is intended to incentivize sustainable development while also generating funds to support communitywide emission reduction projects and to fund energy and water efficiency retrofits for low and moderate income households. Staff anticipates presenting program recommendations to City Council in March 2022.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Sustainability Plan Annual Report 2020-2021
- Sustainability Division work plan highlights 2015-21

REVIEWED BY: Kathleen E. Hodgson, City Manager
Benjamin B. Goldstein, Deputy City Manager
Alison McKinney Brown, City Attorney