

## 2. SUSTAINABILITY



### VISION

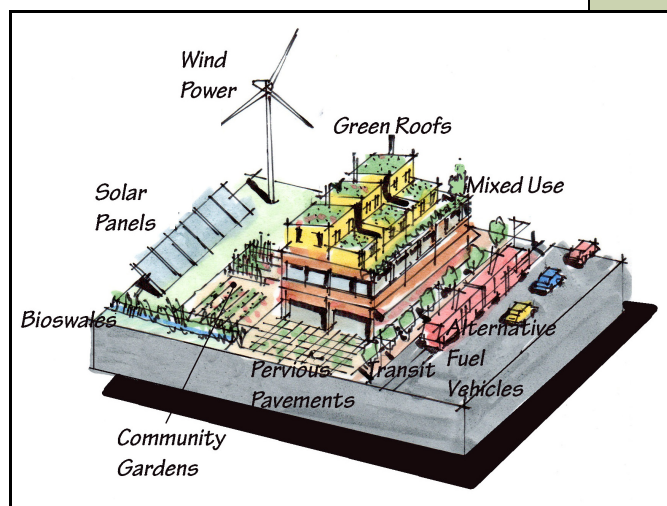
In 2030, Chico is a sustainable community that maintains a balanced environment and economy, and an equitable society. Chico's compact land use pattern, transportation and energy choices, green building practices, technological advancements, and sustainability policies have reduced environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions. Chico's economy is thriving with an ample supply of jobs, including those in green businesses. Citizens of Chico enjoy healthy lifestyles and strong social bonds through community food systems, support of local businesses, open and responsive government, and a network of local activities, gathering places, and community organizations. The City is a recognized sustainability leader through partnerships and innovation.

### INTRODUCTION

The Sustainability Element explains the City's commitment to sustainability through goals, policies, and actions that support the General Plan's Strategy of Sustainability.

Sustainability in Chico means maintaining a culture of stewardship to enhance our natural environment, economic interests, and quality of life for present and future generations. Chico is well poised to be a leader as a sustainable community. Members of the community actively support a healthy environment, participate in local government, and work to strengthen the local economy. Existing infrastructure fosters walking and bicycling, and there are organizations actively promoting social equity. Chico is performing well on its journey towards sustainability, but there is more to do in order to meet the City's vision of being "The Green City of the North State."

The General Plan's guiding strategy is to create and sustain a community that is environmentally responsible, economically robust, and socially equitable. Policies and actions in every element of the General Plan support this overarching theme. The Sustainability Element addresses aspects of sustainability that are not covered in other elements and describes how the City defines and incorporates sustainability at the local level.



Examples of Sustainable Design




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### SUSTAINABILITY COMPONENTS

#### BALANCING ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL EQUITY COMPONENTS



Sustainability entails aligning the built environment and socioeconomic activities with nature's constraints and opportunities. Central to this concept is meeting both present and future needs through a balance of three components: maintenance of a healthy and equitable society, protection of the environment, and ongoing prosperity of the local economy. These components are interrelated and equally important in achieving a sustainable community. Ultimately, one component should not succeed at the expense of another, so a key issue is how to balance these components over the life of the General Plan. The three components of sustainability, and how they are addressed in this General Plan, are defined below:

- **Environment.** Environmental sustainability is accomplished by reducing the impact of human activities on the natural systems that support the community. A major component of protecting the environment is the wise utilization of land. Focusing Chico's growth within the Sphere of Influence will reduce pressure to develop at the community's edges where it would impact agricultural lands and foothills. Growth consistent with the Land Use Diagram and policies in the General Plan will result in reduced impacts on the environment, reduced contributions to global climate change, reduced reliance on oil and other fossil-fuel sources, and decreased consumption of natural resources. Strategies in this General Plan for protecting the environment include promoting compact, walkable, infill and mixed-use development; focusing redevelopment along transit corridors and at other central locations; protecting sensitive habitat, open space and agricultural lands; promoting the efficient use of energy and resources; improving local air and water quality; directing waste diversion and reduction; and establishing energy and water conservation measures in building, landscaping, and municipal operations.
- 
- **Economy.** A sustainable economy is strong and resilient, environmentally conscientious, and accessible to the entire community. To be sustainable, Chico's economy must be diverse in order to provide stability through economic cycles. There must be jobs for a skilled local workforce in traditional, as well as green,

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business sectors. It must generate tax revenue to fund quality public services for the community and must continue to grow base-level businesses that export products and import revenue. Strategies in the General Plan that promote a sustainable economy reside primarily in the Economic Development Element and include fostering a positive climate for economic development, providing an adequate supply of land, ensuring the readiness of physical conditions to support development, targeting public investment to help attract investment and support local prosperity, promoting local goods and services; creating partnerships within the region to generate jobs, and ensuring a quality of life that makes Chico a desirable place to invest.

- **Social Equity.** For the purposes of this General Plan, social equity means fair access to housing, transportation, jobs, education, and recreation, and access for all residents to fully participate in the political and cultural life of the community. Social equity is closely connected to the other two sustainability components of economic vitality and environmental protection. It both depends on and supports a local, diverse economy that provides a wide range of work and volunteer opportunities for people of all ages and skills and a healthy environment with clean air and water, open spaces to recreate, and protection from potential hazards. Strategies in this General Plan that promote social equity include ensuring adequate housing for all age and income levels; providing an open government that values public participation; celebrating arts and cultures; assisting the more vulnerable members of the community; supporting the development and preservation of complete neighborhoods, promoting public health through protection from hazards and the provision of a safe multimodal circulation system; and providing parks and quality public services to all members of the community.



To gauge progress toward reaching its sustainability goals, the City will develop and annually evaluate sustainability indicators. The indicators will be selected for their ability to be both easily understood and quantifiable. Maintenance of the indicators will be adaptive, so adjustments can be made if their monitoring reveals the need.

### SUSTAINABILITY IN DECISION-MAKING

Creating and maintaining a sustainable community will require incorporating sustainable principles into the City's everyday actions and decisions, monitoring progress, and adapting to changing conditions and new information. The General Plan has incorporated sustainable principles into every element; therefore, decisions that are consistent with the goals and policies of the Plan will advance the overarching goal of sustainability. Individual decisions and actions that the City takes are not expected to equally balance the three components of sustainability. Instead, the combination of decision-making consistent with the General Plan



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and implementing actions identified in the General Plan will, through time, result in a balanced and sustainable Chico.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS

All of the General Plan's elements address sustainability in varying ways, several of which are listed below.

- The **Land Use Element** includes policies that promote compact, walkable, mixed-use development, infill development and redevelopment, protect open space and agricultural lands, encourage a jobs and housing balance, and ensure a fair and predictable land use planning process.
- The **Circulation Element** calls for improved connectivity between neighborhoods, jobs, and services; street design that accommodates all modes of transportation and reduces idling time; reduced parking requirements; and promotes sustainable transportation modes.
- The **Community Design Element** considers Chico's unique characteristics and history, and seeks to create design compatibility for new and infill development and redevelopment.



- The **Downtown Element** encourages higher density and intensity of development in the City's core to enhance economic development and social interaction, and to solidify Downtown as the heart of the community. The Downtown Element supports all modes of transportation with an emphasis on a quality pedestrian environment, promotes civic engagement and community events, and encourages mixed-use buildings.
- The **Economic Development Element** includes policies to strengthen the local and regional economy, promote employment opportunities for all segments of the community, and encourage a balanced jobs-to-housing ratio.
- The **Housing Element** supports social equity through the promotion of adequate housing for all income levels and age groups, including those with special needs.
- The **Parks, Public Facilities, and Services Element** includes goals and policies to make parks and recreation areas accessible to the whole community, to reduce water and energy use on public lands and in municipal facilities, and to protect the environment while providing City services equitably to the community.



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- The **Open Space and Environment Element** contains goals and policies to protect and enhance natural resources, sensitive habitat, and agricultural land, as well as policies to protect air and water quality.
- The **Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Element** guides the preservation of archaeological, historical and cultural resources that define Chico's history, reinforce our community and provide economic opportunities through tourism.
- The **Safety Element** directs the equal protection for all members of the community from fire, crime and other threats or emergencies.
- The **Noise Element** sets noise level standards to protect members of the community from excessive noise.

## ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

This section of the element identifies and addresses primary sustainability issues raised during the outreach efforts for the General Plan Update. Policy guidance is found in the goals, policies, and actions section of this element. An explanation of specialized terms can be found in the General Plan Glossary (**Appendix A**).

## GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The concept of sustainability is associated with state laws that focus on the need to reduce California's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and, therefore, to global climate change. Executive Order S-3-05, signed in 2005, proclaims that California is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and sets greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Assembly Bill 32, also known as the California Climate Solutions Act of 2006, requires that statewide greenhouse gas emissions be reduced to 1990 levels by the year 2020 and reduced 80 percent further by the year 2050. Senate Bill 97, enacted in 2007, amended the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute to establish that greenhouse gas emissions and their effects are appropriate subjects for CEQA analysis. Senate Bill 375, signed in 2008, is intended to link regional transportation plans with state greenhouse gas reduction goals. Under Bill 375, state agencies and local metropolitan planning organizations (such as the Butte County Association of Governments) are required to develop Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) to cut greenhouse gas emissions. These state actions are intended to build upon each other with a shared focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.





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The City of Chico has not been waiting for State directives or programs to address greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Below are early steps the City has undertaken on its own accord:

- **Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement (2006)** - In 2006, Chico's Mayor signed the U.S. Conference of Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, adding Chico to a group of over 600 cities united in pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This milestone led to the creation of the Sustainability Task Force, a committee that provides input to the City Council on sustainability issues. An early effort of the Task Force was to conduct an inventory of greenhouse gases.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (2008)** - The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory measured the amount of heat-trapping gases that the community released to the atmosphere in the baseline year 2005. By quantifying emissions, this inventory established a benchmark against which emissions reductions can be measured. The inventory will be updated to measure emission changes over time, which helps guide the management of reduction strategies and policies. Also in 2008, the City Council approved a specific greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 25 percent below 2005 levels by the year 2020.
- **Chico Climate Action Plan (2011)** - The City will maintain a Climate Action Plan (CAP) that identifies programs and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet the Council's greenhouse gas reduction goal. Specifically, the CAP identifies the sources of greenhouse gas emissions and the sectors such as transportation, energy, and waste to be targeted for emissions reductions, and it provides emission reduction goals and strategies with an associated timeline and budget.

The Sustainability Element provides goals, policies, and actions that address the City's role in statewide climate change mitigation efforts and that confirm the City's ongoing commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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### ENERGY SAVINGS

The City of Chico supports energy conservation, and this element calls for additional programs to further reduce the energy needed for municipal operations. A successful municipal energy reduction program will help serve as an example to encourage community-wide action. Municipal operations, however, represent only a small percentage of the total electricity and natural gas used throughout the City. Therefore, community-wide efforts are essential to achieving overall reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Although the City has less direct control over behavior than municipal operations, it does have regulatory authority in important areas like land use, building and transportation policy. Also, it has the ability to provide incentives and facilitate initiatives that promote energy conservation.



The City's ability to influence energy efficiency in existing buildings will be critical to achieving its sustainability goals. This element identifies several actions for increasing energy efficiency, including increased coordination with PG&E to provide education about energy consumption and methods for reducing energy use, and consideration of a City-sponsored low-interest loan program for property owners interested in installing energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy devices.

### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Local government performs best with informed citizen participation. A high level of citizen participation is a distinctive characteristic of Chico, where residents serve on boards and commissions and regularly attend meetings and hearings to provide input on decisions. Chico also has many active neighborhood associations, business groups, and advocacy groups that participate in local issues. The General Plan supports continued neighborhood outreach programs that seek to increase participation in neighborhood issues. To ensure that residents are well-represented, Council, committee and commission meetings will continue to be structured to recognize citizens' input. In addition to timely and clear notification of meetings, the City will seek new opportunities to increase public involvement in local government. Advances in communication technology offer new ways for residents to participate in local government, and the City will explore using these options as they become available.



Many issues relevant to Chico residents such as transit, parks, schools, and air quality are regulated by agencies other than the City of Chico. Public agencies such as California State University Chico, Chico Unified School District, Butte County Association of Governments, Butte County



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Air Quality Management District, and Chico Area Recreation District also make important decisions affecting Chico residents. The General Plan seeks to increase participation in all local decision-making processes.

### FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE CHICO

Partnerships and ongoing communication are critical tools for achieving a sustainable Chico. Residents, businesses, community groups, schools, and other organizations all need to be engaged and actively participating in the effort to create a socially, environmentally, and economically healthy community. The City must be an effective leader and partner in sustainability efforts. Participation in larger scale sustainability efforts is critical because local environmental, economic, and social issues are a part of a broader regional, national, and global context. The General Plan promotes the development of strong working relationships between the City and other entities, such as Butte County, CSU Chico, Butte College, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and other government agencies to accomplish Chico's sustainability goals.



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### GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

- Goal SUS-1: Balance the environment, economy and social equity, as defined in the General Plan, to create a sustainable Chico.**
- Goal SUS-2: Increase effective citizen participation in local government.**
- Goal SUS-3: Lead the way to a sustainable Chico by reducing the environmental impacts of City operations.**
- Goal SUS-4: Promote green development.**
- Goal SUS-5: Increase energy efficiency and reduce non-renewable energy and resource consumption Citywide.**
- Goal SUS-6: Reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions Citywide.**
- Goal SUS-7: Support local food systems in Chico.**

- **Goal SUS-1: Balance the environment, economy and social equity, as defined in the General Plan, to create a sustainable Chico.**
  - **Policy SUS-1.1 (General Plan Consistency) – Ensure proposed development projects, policies, and programs are consistent with the General Plan.**
  - **Policy SUS-1.2 (Sustainability Assessment) – Assess the City’s progress toward meeting its sustainability goals.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-1.2.1 (Sustainability Indicators Report) – Update and report on the City’s adopted sustainability indicators for the economy, environment, and social equity as part of the General Plan Annual Reports and Five Year Reviews as a measure of the City’s progress toward sustainability.**
  - **Policy SUS-1.3 (Sustainable City) – Coordinate the City’s sustainability efforts.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-1.3.1 (Sustainability Programs) – Identify and develop programs and initiatives that advance Chico’s sustainability goals.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-1.3.2 (Sustainability Materials) – Develop sustainability training materials to educate City staff and the community on the City’s sustainability goals and efforts.**

Cross  
reference  
ED-1.1,  
LU-2.7.1, and  
CD-6.2

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reference  
PPFS-5.1.5  
and  
OS-4.1



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Cross  
reference  
CRPH-2.4.2  
and  
CRPH-2.4.3

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reference  
DT-1.5

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CRPH-2.4.3

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reference  
CIRC-1.8.2

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reference  
CD-2.1.1,  
DT-6.1 and  
CIRC-2.2.1

- **Policy SUS-1.4 (Support Diversity) – Strengthen ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity by supporting programs that celebrate cultural differences and similarities and promote tolerance.**
  - ▲ **Action SUS-1.4.1 (Community Building Programs)** – Continue to support and promote special community events and programs at City and public facilities that foster community pride, celebrate local culture and history, and promote social equity and tolerance.
  - ▲ **Action SUS-1.4.2 (Diversity Action Plan)** – Maintain the City’s Diversity Action Plan as necessary.
- **Policy SUS-1.5 (Sustainability Partnerships) – Participate in local, regional, and statewide sustainability efforts.**
  - ▲ **Action SUS-1.5.1 (Sustainability Webpage)** – Maintain the City’s Sustainability webpage that describes the City’s sustainability efforts, identifies partnerships, and provides educational resources and opportunities for community members.
  - ▲ **Action SUS-1.5.2 (Sustainable Partnerships)** – Participate in conferences and meetings that promote sustainability.
  - ▲ **Action SUS-1.5.3 (Green Business Program)** – Support local partners to develop a Chico Green Business certification program to recognize local businesses that implement measures to conserve energy and water, minimize waste, and prevent pollution.
- **Policy SUS-1.6 (Public Health) - Emphasize the importance of public health in land use planning, infrastructure planning, and implementing City policies and programs.**
- **Goal SUS-2: Increase effective citizen participation in local government.**
  - **Policy SUS-2.1 (Public Participation) – Continue to encourage public participation in municipal decision-making.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-2.1.1 (Communication Technology)** – Utilize new technology, as available, to improve communication with residents, including alternative ways to share information, notice hearings, and solicit or receive public input on local issues.
    - ▲ **Action SUS-2.1.2 (Neighborhoods and Planning)** – Facilitate participation by neighborhood organizations in local decision-making.

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reference  
LU-1.1.2

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reference  
PPFS-8.1.3  
and S-8.2

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reference  
PPFS-8.1.2

- **Policy SUS-2.2 (Outside Agencies) – Increase awareness and encourage community participation in local decisions made by entities other than the City, such as Butte County, Butte County Association of Governments, Chico Area Recreation District, and CSU Chico.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-2.2.1 (Agency Website Links) – Maintain links from the City website to other agencies that make decisions about local matters.**

- **Goal SUS-3: Lead the way to a sustainable Chico by reducing the environmental impacts of City operations.**

- **Policy SUS-3.1 (Sustainable Products and Services) – Promote the use of environmentally-friendly and local products and services.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.1.1 (Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program) – Develop and implement an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program that directs the purchase of products and services for municipal operations that are environmentally preferable (e.g., renewable, recyclable, non-toxic) and sold locally to the maximum extent economically and legally feasible.**

- **Policy SUS-3.2 (Municipal Energy Use) – Reduce energy and water use in municipal operations.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.2.1 (Municipal Operations) – Perform energy audits of existing City operations and maintenance practices to identify and implement energy savings measures.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.2.2 (Energy Generation) – Continue to explore opportunities to generate energy on City properties.**

- **Policy SUS-3.3 (Municipal Waste Reduction) – Reduce consumption and increase recycling and reuse of materials in City operations.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.3.1 (Municipal Recycling) – Promote the use of recycling bins at municipal facilities, public parks, and recreational spaces, and as necessary, increase the size, durability, and number of recycling bins as well as the range of materials accepted.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.3.2 (Materials Reduction and Reuse) - Explore opportunities to reduce consumption and increase reuse of materials, vehicles and equipment in City operations.**



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reference  
CIRC-9.1.1

- **Policy SUS-3.4 (Sustainable Fleet) – Support sustainable City vehicles and equipment.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-3.4.1 (Fuel-Efficient Fleet)** – As needed, purchase new municipal fleet vehicles and equipment that are highly fuel-efficient, use alternative-fuel, or electricity, allowing flexibility for maintenance, safety, and other special use vehicles.

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reference  
OS-4.1.4

- **Goal SUS-4: Promote green development.**

- **Policy SUS-4.1 (Green Public Facilities) – Incorporate green building techniques in the site design, construction, and renovation of public projects.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.1.1 (Green Facilities)** – Construct new significant municipal facilities to at least the baseline certification level of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), or its equivalent.

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.1.2 (City-Funded Green Projects)** – Incorporate green building materials and techniques in projects financed by the City, allowing flexibility for costs including long-term operating costs.

- **Policy SUS-4.2 (Water Efficient Landscaping) – Promote drought tolerant landscaping.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.2.1 (Public Landscaping)** – Install drought tolerant landscaping and water conserving irrigation systems at City facilities, medians, and parkway strips to reduce water use and maintenance costs.

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reference  
OS-3.3.2

- **Policy SUS-4.3 (Green Development Practices) – Promote green development practices in private projects.**

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.3.1 (Green Development Checklist)** – Include a Green Development Checklist and supporting materials with City planning and building applications and permits highlighting ways to incorporate green development principles into project design.

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.3.2 (Green Staff Training)** – Provide regular training to ensure that City employees are able to implement the State's Green Building Code, conduct energy audits, and review or rate green building projects.

- ▲ **Action SUS-4.3.3 (Reduce Heat Gain)** – Establish standards for new non-residential structures, such as reflective roofing or light colored pavement to reduce the heat gain associated with traditional urban development.

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reference  
PPFS-8.1.5

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- **Goal SUS-5: Increase energy efficiency and reduce non-renewable energy resource consumption citywide.**
  - **Policy SUS-5.1 (Energy Efficient Retrofits) – Promote energy efficient retrofit improvements in existing buildings.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.1.1 (Clean Energy Loan Program)** – Continue the City’s Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs that provide low-interest loans to property owners for the installation of energy efficiency improvements or renewable energy devices.
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.1.2 (PG&E and Education)** – Coordinate with PG&E to promote public education about energy efficiency and conservation methods, and encourage them to continue providing more energy from renewable sources.
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.1.3 (Energy Efficiency Upgrades)** – Continue to require energy conservation upgrades upon resale of homes and improve public awareness of City requirements.
  - **Policy SUS-5.2 (Energy Efficient Design) – Support the inclusion of energy efficient design and renewable energy technologies in public and private projects.**
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.2.1 (Integration of Energy Efficiency Technology)** – Utilize City incentives identified in Action LU-2.3.1 to encourage the integration of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy devices, in addition to those required by the state, during early project review.
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.2.2 (Educational Material)** – Provide builders and homeowners with resources and information about energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies at the Municipal Hall Planning and Building counters and on the City’s Sustainability website.
    - ▲ **Action SUS-5.2.3 (Passive Solar)** – Incorporate passive solar design principles (e.g., building materials, high-albedo roofs, eaves, window placement, landscaping, and building orientation) into the Design Guidelines Manual.
  - **Policy SUS-5.3 (Facilities for Emerging Technologies) – Support the construction of facilities for emerging transportation technologies such as alternative fueling stations.**
- **Goal SUS-6: Reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions Citywide.**





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reference  
OS-4.3 and  
CIRC-9.1

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reference  
OS-4.3

- **Policy SUS-6.1 (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Efforts) – Support local, regional, and statewide efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases linked to climate change.**
- **Policy SUS-6.2 (Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Climate Action Plan) – Maintain a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and implement the Climate Action Plan to make progress toward meeting the City’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal.**
  - ▲ **Action SUS-6.2.1 (Emission Reduction Actions) –** Use the Climate Action Plan to guide the City’s actions to meet the City’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal.
  - ▲ **Action SUS-6.2.2 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory) –** Update the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, and compare the results with previous inventories to evaluate progress towards the City’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal.
  - ▲ **Action SUS-6.2.3 (Climate Action Plan) –** Review and revise as necessary the Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the City’s 2020 emission reduction goal, and revisit the need for new goals beyond 2020.

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reference  
OS-4.1.2

- **Policy SUS-6.3 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions and CEQA) – Analyze and mitigate potentially significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions during project review, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.**
- **Policy SUS-6.4 (Community Trees) – Continue to support the planting and maintenance of trees in the community to increase carbon sequestration.**

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reference  
OS-6.1 and  
CD-4.1.2

■ **Goal SUS-7: Support local food systems in Chico.**

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reference  
OS-5.3

- **Policy SUS-7.1 (Community Food System) – Support a community food system that bolsters the economy, supports local agriculture, promotes healthy lifestyles, and connects Chico residents to local food sources.**

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reference  
DT 1.5.2 and  
ED 2.3.1

- ▲ **Action SUS-7.1.1 (Farmers Markets) –** Allow farmers markets to operate on City-owned properties, where consistent with other municipal uses.

- **Policy SUS-7.2 (Support Community Gardens) – Support community gardens in appropriate locations in the City.**

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- ▲ **Action SUS-7.2.1 (Gardening as Recreation)** – Support the Chico Area Recreation and Parks District and other local gardening or agricultural organizations that promote community gardens by offering classes such as gardening and composting and by allowing community gardens at their facilities.