

01-27-2021 Town Council Meeting Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #10: Receive and Provide Guidance on the Draft Climate Action and Response Plan

Council Question:

Between November and December, in what ways did you get broader demographic representation than in the summer survey, as referred to on p. 184 of the packet?

Council Question:

On slide 184, it says there was broader demographic representation. What was the number of responses received with the summer survey? And what are the demographic data breakdowns associated with each survey?

Staff Response:

The total number of responses received for the spring/summer survey was 450. The interactive analysis tool and demographic breakdowns for the summer survey can be found [here](#)¹. The demographic breakdowns for the more recent survey about the draft plan are linked within the Staff Report (p.194) and can also be found [here](#)² (see pages 36-41).

We can appreciate how the referenced slide, without context, can be misleading, and that was not our intention. To clarify ahead of our remarks on Wednesday, while the number of responses for the recent survey (52) is fewer than the summer opinion survey (450), when we compare the two sets of demographic data we do see a broader range of categories represented across age, race, educational attainment and income. We were particularly pleased to see a higher percentage of respondents from the youngest age categories.

Additionally, the feedback [summary](#)³ linked within the Staff Report (p. 194) provides a list of respondents and organizations that we reached out to about the draft plan. Contacts were encouraged to submit feedback through the online feedback survey (above), which was anonymous. We also received feedback via email and virtual office hours, and this information is [summarized here](#)⁴ and linked on in the Staff Report (p. 194).

¹ <https://townofchapelhill.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/ed58e22545cc4cea8ef4fd64418f20d7>

² <https://townofchapelhill.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/ed58e22545cc4cea8ef4fd64418f20d7>

³ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=48000>

⁴ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=48004>

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Council Question:

Would the introduction by “leadership” referenced in the first bullet note under the “Communication” sub-header of the draft plan mean this would be an introduction by the Manager, Mayor and the Town Council?

Staff Response:

From the plans we’ve reviewed, messages from leadership are often from the Mayor and/or elected body. It would be helpful for us to know if the Council has a preference about the message from leadership.

Council Question:

Will there be a glossary of terms of art used in the plan?

Staff Response:

This is a topic that came up in project team discussions and is something we incorporated into our survey work for this project. For this reason, it would be helpful for us to know if the Council has a preference about including a glossary of terms.

Council Question:

On page 4 of the draft climate action response plan, where it lists the top five emissions reduction categories, under “Targets” for Sustainable Development, do we have a sense of the number of walkable, transit-served areas we have now, where they are and the number we want to get to by 2050?

Staff Response:

Today, we see these characteristics in places like Glen Lennox, Meadowmont, Southern Village and our Downtown. By 2050, we see the potential for other areas like Weaver Dairy/MLK, Estes/MLK, Blue Hill and University Place. If there are major transit investments along our east-west corridors, we also see the potential for additional walkable, transit-served places along 15-501 and Highway 54 (e.g., Woodmont, Eastowne/Gateway areas).

Council Question:

Under “Electric vehicles” emissions reduction category (p. 4), what percentage of the total motor vehicle fleet, would electrifying 48 Town passenger and light duty vehicles represent?

Staff Response:

Electrifying 48 passenger and light duty vehicles would represent 12.5% of our current fleet. This is an important question because the minimum target year for the 48 should be no later than 2025 (not 2040), and the plan should also reflect additional, higher targets for different vehicle types. This is something we plan to address within the revision.

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Council Question:

Under the “Green building retrofits” emissions reduction category (p. 4) do we have a sense of the number buildings we have in Town currently?

Staff Response:

We estimate that there are approximately 15,729 buildings in Chapel Hill. The modeling data for a conversion to all-electric used an estimate for housing units (over 21,000), and these two would be reconciled as part of additional implementation planning.

Council Question:

Is there a sense of the year by which UNC is working to eliminate coal use in the cogeneration facility?

Staff Response:

We do not have those details, but we are told that UNC is working on an update to their Climate Action Plan and we anticipate learning more later in the year.

Council Question:

What kinds of racial inequities have been identified in the effects of climate change in Chapel Hill?

Staff Response:

The Town was part of the [Triangle Regional Resilience Assessment](#)⁵, which served as a key data-gathering step ahead of our work on the Climate Action Plan. The Assessment describes the major climate impacts for our area as:

- *Increased extreme precipitation events that lead to more frequent local flooding*
- *Increased temperatures and temperature variability*
- *Increased frequency and duration of drought conditions*

The Assessment was developed using geographical data and analysis, including the [CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index](#)⁶ (SVI). The SVI was used to identify the sensitivity of certain populations to climate-related threats as depicted by the “hatched” overlay on several of the maps within the document. Through a variety of projects that are described within the draft Plan, we are now working to operationalize what we have learned. This work includes actions such as tree planting, stormwater management/green infrastructure, and the LUMO rewrite—as guided by the Future Land Use Map and the associated resiliency map series. As listed within the Staff

⁵ https://www.tjcog.org/sites/default/files/uploads/trrp_report_technicalreport_102418.pdf

⁶ <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>

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Report (p. 194), we recommend that the draft plan be revised to better explain some of the work described above and the connections between racial equity and climate adaptation.

Council Question:

Which organizational community stakeholders were engaged or helped to inform the formation of this plan?

Staff Response:

The feedback [summary](#)⁷ linked within the Staff Report (p. 194) provides a list of respondents and organizations that we contacted about the draft Plan. Prior to the creation of the draft, we held a Climate Action Summit and conducted a Climate Action Opinion Survey. The list of stakeholder organizations that attended the Summit are below:

Bicycle Alliance of Chapel Hill

Citizens Climate Lobby

Clean Air Carolina

Climate Action NC

Duke Energy

Hartfield Foundation

NAACP – Environmental Justice Task Force

NC DEQ

NC Sierra Club

Orange County Climate Council

Orange County Commission for the Environment

Orange County Health Department

Orange County Solid Waste

Southeast Regional Climate

Sunrise Movement

The Conservation Fund

⁷ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=48000>

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Town of Carrboro

The Nature Conservancy

Triangle Community Foundation

UNC – Chapel Hill

UNC Coastal Resilience Center

UNC – Institute for the Environment

UNC Undergraduate Student Government

Council Question:

Do we have any feedback and buy-in from the private sector and other aspects of the public sector in Chapel Hill, such as the school system and the county, on this plan? If so, what has been the feedback from the private sector and other aspects of the public sector?

Staff Response:

While approximately 9% of all respondents to the summer Climate Action Opinion Survey reported that they “own a business or organization in Chapel Hill”, the percentage of respondents reporting the same information in the most recent survey was only about 2%. We shared both the summer survey and the draft plan with contacts at Orange County, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, the Chapel Hill Youth Council, and multiple student organizations within the schools. The feedback [summary](#)⁸ linked within the Staff Report (p. 194) provides a list of respondents and organizations that we reached out to about the draft plan. Generally speaking, respondents appear to be supportive of the draft and have pointed to a variety of specific improvements that are listed within the Staff Report (pp. 194-198). Additional targeted outreach and data analysis would be needed to provide a more specific response.

Council Question:

Has an East-West BRT been contemplated as a possibility sometime in the next 30 years? If so, what is the chance of this happening?

Staff Response:

An east-west BRT concept is part of Chapel Hill Transit’s adopted Short Range Transit Plan. There is significant interest in the 15-501 corridor, which is a critical piece of the transportation network for both Durham and Orange counties. This corridor is currently underserved by

⁸ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=48000>

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coordinated transit service. Both ridership and land use patterns would indicate that the 15-501 corridor is a candidate for high capacity transit service between Durham and Carrboro.

Council Question:

Will staff be addressing any of the issues raised in the Sunrise Movement letter to Council, especially around timing of reviews (reducing to 3 years from 5) and more accountability measures?

Staff Response:

We have provided preliminary responses to each of the points, below. It would be helpful for us to know if the Council has specific ways it would like to address these topics.

- **Duke Energy:** *Town government does not have the resources or authority to solve this problem by itself, so we've created a draft plan that is broader reaching and intentionally collaborative. At the same time, we agree that advocacy and strategy are also important for addressing the largest sources of emissions. As one example of the approach outlined in the draft plan, on Wednesday evening the Council will consider submitting comments to the North Carolina Utilities Commission regarding Duke Energy's 2020 Integrated Resource Plan.*
- **Affordable Housing:** *We agree and recommend that the draft plan be revised to better clarify the relationship between green building and affordable housing.*
- **Plan Update Cycle:** *Because plan updates can be time intensive and sometimes require outside expertise, we recommend a five-year cycle with regular updates to Council.*
- **Accountability Measures:** *We recommend that the draft plan be revised to clarify the Town's near-term priorities for action. While we recognize that this information can be clearer and strengthened, we also want to note that there are targets listed for several actions and a timeline on page 67.*
- **Responsibility:** *Our staff team believes the theme of "working together" is important for the reasons provided in the first bullet above. At the same time, we recognize that the contributions to and the impacts from climate change are not the same for everyone. We recommend that the draft plan be revised to better explain the relationship between racial equity and adaptation, the incentives that can drive positive change, and the importance of targeted collaboration with the largest emitters.*