



# City of Palo Alto

## City Council Staff Report

(ID # 6109)

---

**Report Type:** Consent Calendar

**Meeting Date:** 9/15/2015

**Summary Title:** Mayors Climate Letters

**Title:** Authorize the Mayor to Sign, on Behalf of the City, Letters to the "Compact of Mayors" (Global) and the "Mayor's National Climate Action Agenda" (Domestic), Committing to Climate-Related Actions the City has Already Undertaken or Set in Motion, and Calling on the President of the United States to Pursue the Strongest Possible Climate Agreement at the Upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris

**From:** City Manager

**Lead Department:** City Manager

### **Recommended Motion**

Staff recommends that Council consider the following motion:

Council authorizes the mayor to sign, on behalf of the City, the attached letters to the global Compact of Mayors (Global), committing to climate-related actions the City has already undertaken or set in motion, and to the Mayor's National Climate Action Agenda (Domestic), calling on the President of the United States to pursue the strongest possible climate agreement at the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the City of Palo Alto, by September 30, sign onto both the global Compact of Mayors (Global) and the Mayor's National Climate Action Agenda (Domestic), committing to actions the City has already undertaken or set in motion, and adding the City's voice to this important international dialog, and that Council authorize the mayor to sign letters to that effect.

### **Summary:**

Cities are responsible for producing 70% of climate-changing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions world-wide, and have emerged as leaders in advance climate strategies. Palo Alto is an acknowledged leader, with more than 33% GHG Reductions since 1990, and is currently developing a new sustainability and climate action plan (S/CAP).

In addition to their own efforts, cities are calling on national governments to adopt binding GHG emissions reductions targets that address both short-term (i.e., 2020 or sooner) and long-term commitments (e.g., 80 percent reduction in GHGs by 2050) at COP 21 in (the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) happening in December 2015 in Paris.

## Discussion

### 1. Domestic:

The **Mayors National Climate Action Agenda** is the U.S. complement of the Compact of Mayors<sup>1</sup>, a global cooperative effort among mayors and city officials committed to reducing local greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience to climate change, and tracking progress transparently.

The COM has drafted a letter to President Obama, calling on him to “to act in the best interests of the American people and fight for the strongest possible climate agreement at the upcoming 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, and for federal action to establish binding national greenhouse gas emissions reductions here at home”. See final document draft for White House here. See mayors who have signed on here.

President Obama has issued a challenge to all U.S. mayors to publicly commit to a climate action plan ahead of the COP21 climate negotiations in Paris, and set a goal of having at least 100 U.S. cities sign onto the Compact of Mayors by then. The White House also released a fact sheet<sup>2</sup> announcing a number of initiatives to increase energy efficiency measures in cities across the United States, and specifically called out the Compact of Mayors as a key effort to achieve President Obama’s goals.

A planned letter to White House announced June 2015 at San Francisco US Conference of Mayor’s) commits mayors to:

- work toward November 2015 as the target date to sign on the greatest numbers of mayors;
- create standards for reporting emissions and tracking reductions;
- identify offset projects, strategies to tunnel through any barriers, and commence the offset projects; and
- conclude a year-long communications campaign of mayors on the need for binding emission reductions.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Compact of Mayors was launched at the 2014 United Nations Climate Summit by: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Michael R. Bloomberg, U.N. Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), United Nations Human Settlements Programme UN-Habitat

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/24/fact-sheet-president-obama-announces-new-actions-bring-renewable-energy>

Palo Alto has been invited to sign on to this letter—*which must be submitted by 9/30 to be in the process for Paris.*

## **2. International**

The global **Compact of Mayors** is a **global cooperative effort** among mayors and city officials committed to reducing local greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience to climate change, and tracking progress transparently.

The Compact establishes a common platform to capture the impact of cities' collective actions through standardized measurement of emissions and climate risk, and consistent, public reporting of their efforts.

A mayor/City Manager may register on either of the Compact's standard reporting platforms—the "carbon" Climate Registry or CDP—or **email a letter of intent to [info@compactofmayors.org](mailto:info@compactofmayors.org)**. The letter of intent (see Attachment A) includes commitments to:

1. Reduce local GHG emissions (but does not require specific targets as part of the letter).
2. Measure community emissions inventory using a consistent and robust standard.
3. Identify climate-related hazards.
4. Set data-based targets for the future.
5. Develop climate action plans to deliver on city targets.

All these steps are either in progress or already completed for Palo Alto.

Through the Compact, cities are:

- Increasing their visibility as leaders responding to climate change;
- Demonstrating their commitment to an ambitious global climate solution, particularly as nations convene around a new climate agreement in Paris in December 2015;
- Encouraging direct public and private sector investments in cities by meeting transparent standards that are similar to those followed by national governments;
- Building a consistent and robust body of data on the impact of city action; and
- Accelerating more ambitious, collaborative, and sustainable local climate action.

## Participating Cities



### 3. Benefits

- Increasing our visibility as leaders responding to climate change;
- Demonstrating our commitment to an ambitious global climate solution, particularly as nations convene around a new climate agreement in Paris in December 2015;
- Encouraging direct public and private sector investments in cities by meeting transparent standards that are similar to those followed by national governments;
- Building a consistent and robust body of data on the impact of city action; and
- Accelerating more ambitious, collaborative, and sustainable local climate action.
- Entitles us to apply for the C40 and C100 awards.

### Timeline

Letters must be submitted by September 30 in order to be included in materials being put together for the COP21 conference in Paris in December.

### Resource Impact

None

### Policy Implications

These letters commit the City publically to do things it is already doing, and lend the City's voice to a multi-city call for US leadership at COP21 later this year.

## **Environmental Review**

Not Applicable

### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Mayors National Climate Action Agenda (DOCX)
- Attachment B: Compact of Mayors (DOCX)

## Letter to Mayors National Climate Action Agenda

September 15, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Mayors of 27 cities representing almost 20 million people, we write to thank you for your leadership on climate mitigation and resilience. As you said in your State of the Union speech, "No challenge poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change."

We are writing to call on you to act in the best interests of the American people and fight for the strongest possible climate agreement at the upcoming 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, and for federal action to establish binding national greenhouse gas emissions reductions here at home. The United States can and should be the leader in the transition to a clean energy economy.

To support your leadership and assist you and the U.S. delegation in reaching the strongest possible agreement, we are launching a campaign today to engage with our constituents, elected officials and other stakeholders to help achieve these strong outcomes at the national and international levels, while building on municipal leadership on climate change.

As Mayors, we understand that we are stronger working together. That is why we have come together and created the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda (MNCAA) to help lead the way to a solution to global climate change. A changing and variable climate has tremendous implications for the livability, competitiveness and resilience of communities across the country. The extreme weather events we have all increasingly experienced in recent years and the future projections we face make it clear that we all share a common risk and commitment to safeguarding our communities.

The MNCAA is a mayor-to-mayor initiative to raise the collective voice of leading mayors, demonstrate the essential role of cities in working towards climate solutions, and build political will for U.S. leadership. This initiative, established by the Mayors of Houston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, includes the undersigned, and will continue to grow. The negotiations in Paris will be as challenging as they are critical to our cities' environmental health and economic prosperity.

Cities across the country are already taking the lead. The cities we represent are working to take responsible steps to curb emissions and plan for the changing climate. Many of our cities have reached Kyoto commitments far ahead of states and the national government, and cities across the country are committing to binding targets, creating standardized inventories and climate action plans and laying the ground work for a municipal offset protocol. But we cannot act alone. We need the federal government to provide a path forward to making meaningful reductions in carbon pollution while preparing for the impacts of climate change.

Despite the dangerous/irresponsible stalemate in Congress, climate change is not a policy debate in communities all across the United States. The effects of a changing climate are presenting a clear and present threat. Extreme weather is presenting itself more regularly, though it takes many forms—from droughts in the west, wildfires in the intermountain states, to flooding and snow storms in the east and coastal erosion in the Gulf states.

Momentum is building for international coordination. COP21 represents a prime opportunity for American leadership. We recognize that local governments have a major role to play in reducing greenhouse gas levels. We are encouraged that there is interest on the part of COP 21 for having language in the final agreement that specifically pertains to cities.

The time for strong U.S. action is now. We look forward to standing with you here at home and in Paris to bring leadership and focus to the reality of climate change and to urge national dialogue and action.

Sincerely,

<<Signature>>

Karen Holman  
Mayor  
City of Palo Alto

## Letter of Commitment to Compact of Mayors

September 15, 2015

Dear Compact of Mayors Secretariat,

I hereby declare the intent of the city of Palo Alto to comply with the Compact of Mayors, the world's largest cooperative effort among mayors and city leaders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, track progress, and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

The Compact of Mayors has defined a series of requirements that cities are expected to meet over time, recognizing that each city may be at a different stage of development on the pathway to compliance with the Compact.

I commit to advancing the city of Palo Alto along the stages of the Compact, with the goal of becoming fully compliant with all the requirements within three years. Specifically, I pledge to publicly report on the following within the next three years:

- The greenhouse gas emissions inventory for our city consistent with the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC), within one year or less
- The climate hazards faced by our city, within one year or less
- Our target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, within two years or less
- The climate vulnerabilities faced by our city, within two years or less
- Our plans to address climate change mitigation and adaptation within three years or less

Yours Faithfully,

<<Signature>>

Karen Holman  
Mayor  
City of Palo Alto