

Discussion name: Austin Community Climate Plan - Net Zero GHG by 2050					
Discussion close date: 2014-10-03					
Electricity and Natural Gas	Answer	User ID	Agrees	Replies	Time Posted
	<p>Hi, Will--</p> <p>Thanks for your participation. Please be mindful of our Terms and Conditions (http://speakupaustin.org/terms) and remain focused on the topic of this discussion board.</p> <p>- Moderator</p>	Coapublic Information	0	0	2014-09-12 17:37:56 UTC
	<p>time of use metering = government control over PRIVATE PROPERTY. Sounds like more smart meters without business/home owner's consent. Reminds me of North Korea. Maybe I ought to send the North Korean dictator a statue of Shelly Lee Leffingwell.</p>	Will Will	0	1	2014-09-11 17:03:13 UTC
	<p>For starters....</p> <p>There should be a county-wide mandate that ANY new commercial construction in Austin includes solar arrays. The city could help by subsidizing or offering tax incentives for this. I am continually distressed to see new commercial construction taking place all over our sun-drenched city that does not include solar on its rooftops. Incentivizing this would get us to zero GHG in a couple decades.</p> <p>Then, provide incentives for residential solar installations. The current incentives, both local and federal, are not economically attractive to entice the middle class. People need to see that they are saving money every month, if not, they won't participate.</p> <p>Rebates for energy savings should be processed at the retailer level. In other words if I buy an energy-saving appliance at a local retailer THEY should be responsible for issuing the rebate at the time of purchase and they can be responsible for dealing with the city. I should receive the rebate credit when I am at the cash register. This makes it much easier for the consumer since they don't have to deal with the rebate process.</p> <p>Encourage and promote small footprint. Reward small footprint users with rebates or other incentives.</p>	Greg Geisler	3	1	2014-09-10 23:52:32 UTC
	<p>Completely agree with Greg. To provide a baseline for the greater topic, there is a lot of valuable existing information at the national level in terms of carbon neutrality in buildings. See the 2030 Challenge, adopted by most national government sectors for all of their new construction; even army barracks have stringent standards for air leakage rates through the building's enclosure, much lower than code and ASHRAE. By now, most people have heard that buildings consume about 40% of the total energy in the US- this can be addressed locally by implementing goals and milestones similar to those within the 2030 Challenge, and including specific local amendments to the building code. I'm in the construction industry dealing with new and rehab design, and I don't think there is nearly enough being done to address the greater issue of building energy use. LEED is too easy to achieve if you want to pay for the certification, and these building's aren't tested to verify that they're performing better. We need to strive for more. Building enclosure commissioning is one piece, but overall energy use per square foot (for different types of construction) should be prescribed an upper limit and new buildings held to those standards.</p>	Erika Xxxx	0	0	2014-09-11 14:07:40 UTC
	<p>Sounds to me like the never ending war on coal. Coal is a clean source of energy. A lot of power plants meet or exceed EPA standards. This is nothing but a limousine liberal pet project. In the end, it will accomplish one thing, to make Austin as unaffordable as San Francisco. That is what the current so called city leaders want. The cities electric bills went up as well.</p> <p>Austin, Texas = Business not welcome.</p> <p>If you force these "luxuries" down business owners they will move out to the suburbs like Cedar Park, where regulation is minimal, and is a business friendly atmosphere. We have too much government in our lives already. This isn't North Korea, this is the United States of America.</p> <p>Oh, one more thing, while we are at it, let's rename the City of Austin to Detroit.</p> <p>This ordinance should be scrapped. And I CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEW 10-1 COUNCIL COMES ON BOARD. WE WILL ACTUALLY HAVE CONSERVATIVES ON THE DIAS!!!!</p>	Will Will	0	0	2014-09-11 17:00:41 UTC

	<p>As Greg said - current incentives for residential solar systems are simply not affordable to the average family. Even if the vendor offers a deal, and then the government offers a tax rebate, the end result is still too expensive for an average budget - especially if you take the amount of cost vs savings divided monthly to figure how long it would actually take you to recoup the starting costs and then begin actually saving. Which, I believe, the solar system still relies on an electrical system to kick in when the solar system is not providing enough power, which is another indirect cost to having the solar system. So, the system needs to be attractive to the average household budget, the power requirements of the average household need to be lowered to better support the system, and it would help if the cost of energy needed to supplement a solar system was lowered as well. The first to start off would be to "push" a program educating homeowners on ways to lower electric bills (without becoming discouraged by negativity such as above and focusing on the positive outcome of a healthier future of Austin residents). "Push" meaning mass marketing showing the cost differences of an energy-efficient building. The next would be to make the solar system more affordable at retail cost, and with a tax rebate. One way to consider lowering the cost would be to allow vendors to bid for government-funded installation on government buildings (and to inspect and revamp all old government building to be more energy efficient) and then create an incentive program that piggyback off those vendors on a government-funded/incentive program. I'm sure that there are solar vendors who would rather have mass orders at a lower cost, rather than few orders at a higher cost. Another idea might be to get Austin Energy the training, people, and tools needed to install solar systems themselves. This would offset the loss from solar systems enough that they could offer a low-cost installation fee, perhaps a payment plan, and lowered energy fees for those homes who run mainly off solar systems. And yes - again as Greg mentioned - this poor fast construction using weak inexpensive products and building standards need to STOP.</p>	Shari Farrell	1	1	2014-09-11 17:52:29 UTC
	<p>rooftop/distributed solar should be encouraged and/or required for all construction. rates should be heavily tiered to encourage low energy use and reward those who have installed solar or efficiency upgrades while tier 3+ should be excessively expensive. people never react to anything until it hits them in the pocketbook.</p>	Garret Nick	1	0	2014-09-11 16:51:04 UTC
	<p>Shari's ideas regarding incentives are spot-on. This is similar to what what James Hansen has been promoting with the fee-and-dividend carbon tax. It is a progressive tax that puts money into citizens' pockets. The citizen is put in the position of choosing between carbon-heavy or carbon-light expenditures. If they choose carbon-light (e.g. less driving, fewer products that are carbon-intensive, conserving energy) then they reap the awards of those decisions. If someone chooses to drive the same amount or purchases other carbon-heavy products then they don't profit as much. This ultimately encourages non-carbon spending and drives down the use of fossil fuels while putting money in American's pockets. google fee and dividend.</p>	Greg Geisler	0	0	2014-09-11 23:53:27 UTC
	<p>To get more people adopting alternative energy sources such as solar you need to ensure Austin Energy (AE) supports the initiative with incentive plans that promote instead of deter new adopters. When I installed my solar system AE agreed to repay me at a rate equal to the costs of production and that any average (when I produce more than I need) would be credited to my entire City of Austin Utility account. The rules then changed about a year later when AE decided to separate the electric credit from our utility accounts and lowered the reimbursement to less than the cost of generation. Now even if I generate all of my own electricity from my own panels I pay for energy at the increased tiered rates while I get reimbursed at the much lower base rate. Then AE started adding extra fees to the accounts that weren't related to use or production. Finally anyone who engages in consumption reduction activities gets punished at the end of the year. If I reduce my consumption and produce more electricity than I use in a year AE will simply zero out my account at year end with no compensation for the additional electricity I produced or that which I didn't consume.</p>	Dr T	0	0	2014-09-12 00:03:48 UTC
	<p>Getting to Net-zero by 2050 will need all these programs previously mentioned like more stringent building codes, consumer education, and near term efficiency and solar incentives, but it ultimately requires a change in both mind set and business model within Austin Energy. The energy landscape in the next 25 years will look a lot different than it does now with a lot more distributed energy sources and distributed storage on the grid. The utility has to reinvent itself so that it stops seeing efficiency and distributed solar as a threat to its revenue stream. We need some more thought leadership on this inevitable transformation that will occur.</p>	David Dixon	1	0	2014-09-12 04:41:08 UTC
	<p>David is right. The utility sector is going to be further transformed by the same economic and technological processes that have transformed other industries. Justin Gillis of the New York Times wrote a great piece on this yesterday. I highly commend it to city planners and our staff at AE. What's been obvious to sector insiders, and is now getting mainstream press, is that new technologies, like solar, combined with demand management systems plus immanent technologies like storage, are combining with new systems models spun out of the digital revolution. The practical result for us in Texas is that we're seeing a rapid reversal of fortune for traditional fuels, coal and nuclear, as wind and solar out-compete them in the day-ahead and real time ERCOT marketplace. How fast this is happening was driven home by the eye-popping contract Austin Energy secured last spring, locking in a long-term contract for 150MW of West Texas solar at under .05 cents a kWh. That price, a "holy grail" for solar, the Department of Energy predicted would not happen until around 2020. Another harbinger of the shifting landscape, the just completed 22 MW Barilla solar project in Pecos county that was entirely financed without a pre-committed customer. The solar generation was built purely for the marketplace, not for environmental or other policy concerns. We should on the one hand welcome all this, because reducing carbon emissions rapidly is essential in order to avoid the worst, catastrophic, effects of climate shifts. However, setting emissions reductions aside, our city and city utility's best interests are in staying ahead of this change. The European utility sector was devalued by \$800 billion, as of one estimate, in just a few years because it failed to see that the old system of mammoth, centralized coal and nuclear power plants, was being made obsolete by a host of cultural, economic, and most of all, technological changes. The same will happen to any US utility that refuses to make the attempt to stay ahead of the curve. Think not? Look up the reports issued by Barclays, Goldman Sachs, CitiBank by searching for those names and "utility death spiral."</p>	Jeffrey Fritz Crunk	0	0	2014-09-15 15:39:02 UTC

	walkable nodes and mass transit connections. dense multi-use developments and public open space and water quality features. 1st floor retail, 2nd floor office/retail, 3rd floor office, 4+ residential. capture HVAC condensation for landscaping and simply to release back into the land. my single family home can create 5 gallons of HVAC drip a day. a 6 story multi-use building must create thousands of gallons of water EVERY DAY. why are we washing that down the drain???	Garret Nick	0	0	2014-09-11 17:06:26 UTC
	<p>I think the issue of incentivizing non-auto transportation is essential to achieving this goal. We need to provide incentives for people to: use rail, use the bus, carpool, bike, walk or telecommute. To change mindsets about transportation there needs to be economic incentives. Sadly, most people won't sacrifice for egalitarian or environmental reasons. But when there is potential for money being saved/earned people will get on board. Some suggestions are: reward people who bike, walk, bus, train or carpool to work. Perhaps there are fed/city/state/county funds that could be offered to businesses or other institutions to reward those who do not drive cars in Austin. EV vehicles are great, but that is still more vehicles on the road and we don't need one more car on the road in Austin.</p> <p>If an individual received say \$50-100 a month for using transportation other than a car I think you'd find much enthusiasm for that. Or it could be tied into salary- a \$1K/year raise if you use alternative transportation. The greatest challenge is changing the way people think about alternative transportation. And money goes a long way toward influencing minds.</p> <p>The other initiative (that is no less important) is encouraging businesses and academic institutions to promote telecommuting. In this day and age we could probably reduce by a significant percentage the amount of people driving into work if we allowed more individuals to work from home. Many people might reject this idea because they think that productivity would suffer but I think that we would find that those individuals who exploit the work-from-home scenario would be few. It's a huge privilege to not have to commute to a job and if someone doesn't appreciate that privilege there is someone else who will gladly take their position. We should be urging all businesses to promote this. It could have a huge impact on Austin's congested traffic system.</p> <p>Obviously we need to improve cycling infrastructure and make it as safe as possible but we also need to cater to cyclists in other way with showers and economic incentives. We need more rail but it is expensive. EV vehicles are great but their footprint is simply paid elsewhere and we don't need the added congestion. Start by making it attractive for people to stay out of their cars.</p>	Greg Geisler	0	1	2014-09-11 23:10:11 UTC
	<p>City controlled actions</p> <p>Here is a nice example of a utility that is aiding the EV adoption in the market with a range of policy instruments, some of which we can learn from, for example time-of-use rates to stimulate off peak charging.</p> <p>That would be an element that we currently do not have in the Austin market and would help leverage the full potential of demand response and EV programs. http://chargedevs.com/newswire/nevada-utility-finds-evs-offer-lower-costs-cleaner-air/</p> <p>Two-way charging would be an additional option as to allow the utility to pay for use of the electricity stored for use during peak hours. The workshop from CleanTX sent last week gets into that topic. We could recommend a pilot program that would cover say 25% of the current EV drivers that charge at home.</p> <p>The city can do more as well by buying EV only passenger cars, electric motors and hybrid trucks, looking at all types of transportation, there is a lot of innovation happening, reading up on news from http://chargedevs.com/ is a good resource. The city is already working on that, but it seems that there is more potential than is currently put in practice.</p> <p>Market invitation</p> <p>Promoting installation of chargers at work with employers and a higher adoption of EV-company cars would be part of voluntary asks to the community</p>	Joep Meijer	2	0	2014-09-09 15:33:33 UTC
	More development density in the central core makes public transit more effective. Continue to build up transit nodes around light rail stops, and add more of them. Allow, and give property tax incentives to, a variety of garage apartment and micro-housing typologies to increase density in existing single-family neighborhoods in Central Austin. Zone and promote retail business nodes in all of Austin's central neighborhoods to give people better access to goods and services without the need to get in the car.	Darcy Nuffer	0	0	2014-09-12 19:29:37 UTC
	<p>I didn't say electric cars aren't "green". Ultimately we'll all likely be driving them and that is a good thing. Creating an electric car has a footprint though. http://www.wired.com/2008/05/the-ultimate-pr/</p> <p>I'm all for electric cars. My point was that we have options in front of us that can have far more impact than trying to get everyone into an electric vehicle (that will take probably 40 years). The place to start is in offering incentives to NOT drive. And while I realize this particular discussion is about GHG, we all are aware of the problem of congestion in Austin and any car, electric or not, is a negative if there are alternative means of travel available.</p>	Greg Geisler	0	0	2014-09-12 20:12:23 UTC

	<p>We need a bike system that will be safe for people ages 8 to 80. This includes separated bike lanes (cycletracks) and multi-use paths (urban trails). More people would bike if they perceived it to be more safe. It is more convenient to bike on a segregated path especially if it is grade separated from major streets and highways. It is amazing how fast one can traverse the South Walnut Creek Trail since there are no major street crossings or barriers. Incentives should be given for showers at places of employment, and shared shower facilities should be encouraged for people who don't have easy access to showers. More frequent bus service and separate bus lanes are also needed if we are really serious about getting people out of their cars. If you have to take more than one bus right now, it can double your trip time. Convenience and speed of biking and public transit must be increased before a large number of people will use their cars less. There should be tax credits for people who bike, walk, or take public transportation to work. Build HOV lanes instead of toll lanes.</p>	Tom Thayer	0	0	2014-09-27 06:10:49 UTC
Materials Management - Reuse, R	Answer	User ID	Agrees	Replies	Time Posted
	<p>While traveling recently, I noticed that I couldn't find recycling containers at ABIA. I could easily find them at other metro's airports. Recycling containers should be right next to trash containers to encourage people to use them.</p>	Dawn Miller	0	0	2014-09-12 19:04:09 UTC
	<p>I agree with your comment , there is far to much waste. Why can't it be used by people trying to make improvements on their own homes? Why is it waste when put in a separate container or taken to a separate place it could be used by the lower income people?</p>	Altha Morgan	0	1	2014-09-13 18:41:13 UTC
	<p>construction waste is HUGE. developments and construction permits should get discounts for signing on to be zero waste or charged more fees for being wasteful. all that material could be used by other people but instead goes to the dump. thousands of board feet of 2x4s thrown in the landfill every day.</p> <p>i don't know what to do to make people recycle correctly. it's very frustrating.</p>	Garret Nick	0	1	2014-09-11 17:09:29 UTC
	<p>There are many great solutions to this that are not very complex. Two very low-tech technologies that can have a significant impact are: Biochar Black Soldier Fly larvae</p> <p>Biochar is going to be one of the most important technologies on this century. We can take biomass and lumber refuse and convert it into carbon-negative char that can then be used/sold as a soil enhancement product. When the city does their bulk yard pickup that biomass can be converted into char and the resulting product could be sold as soil amendment to help finance the project. Go to cool planet.com to learn about one of the first large bio-refineries in the US that was built in Louisiana.</p> <p>I personally have been making my own biochar from our and other neighborhood tree waste and lumber and putting it into my gardens.</p> <p>Black Soldier Fly larvae has the potential to remove the need for most solid waste removal. This is another natural technology that we employ at our household. The soldier fly larvae consume all of our kitchen waste and efficiently convert it into compost and the mature fly larvae an amazing source of protein for our chickens (I am in the city close to downtown, yes it can be done). Unlike thermophilic compost in the BSF can also consume meat and dairy waste and they do it in a fraction of the time. The soldier fly is native to our area and it is incredibly easy to attract them. The city could offer incentives much in the same way that they do for rainwater harvesting to people who compost all their kitchen waste in this manner. Perhaps the city could set up a BSF education program and offer rebates for people who purchased a BioPod for farming the larvae.</p> <p>Construction debris needs to be more carefully managed and some alternatives to disposal would be having more materials taken to ReStore or the city having a Give-Away every so often where the public would be invited to come pick through free materials. The city could even charge an admission fee to cover costs. I use a good deal of salvaged materials from my neighborhood in East Austin. These materials are as good or better than materials at Home Depot. Garrett Nicks's idea of incentives to builders is a great one. Demolition businesses could be given incentives for trying to remove materials carefully so that there is more reusable material instead of just bulldozing and sledgehammering everything.</p>	Greg Geisler	0	0	2014-09-11 23:37:59 UTC
	<p>I think an educational awareness is needed in area where new residents come. A lot come from countries where they are used to throwing a debris in one place. Most do not try as they do not know what or where to recycle. I live in an area where it is littered and hardly recycling. There is a lot of the area that it is cleaned everyday but if there were more awareness I think it would help. Also remember we have a big jail and prison system that can help do the recycling sorting, cleaning and readying. It takes a City.</p>	Altha Morgan	0	0	2014-09-13 18:49:22 UTC
	<p>Great comment. Austin Creative Reuse is currently raising money for a community center that will store/sell reclaimed materials and offer workshops. Visit http://austincreativereuse.org for more info.</p>	Greg Geisler	0	0	2014-09-30 13:51:25 UTC
	<p>Regarding the potential of biochar here is a Stockholm Sweden proposal to implement a city-wide biochar system. File can be viewed here: http://raytracer.com/AnsokanChallenge.pdf</p> <p>Here is a snippet: "The city of Stockholm will be the first city ever to combine the usage of under-utilized waste streams to promote city plant growth and ecosystem services while at the same time sequestering carbon and closely engaging citizens throughout the process. The circularity of the system is unique, a characteristic that is well in line with the recognized models for resilient and productive systems, referred to as "circular economy". By giving biochar back to engaged citizens, they for themselves can experience the simplicity of this way of sequestering carbon and see the benefits of the biochar in their own gardens, balconies and urban allotments."</p>	Greg Geisler	0	0	2014-09-29 18:47:55 UTC