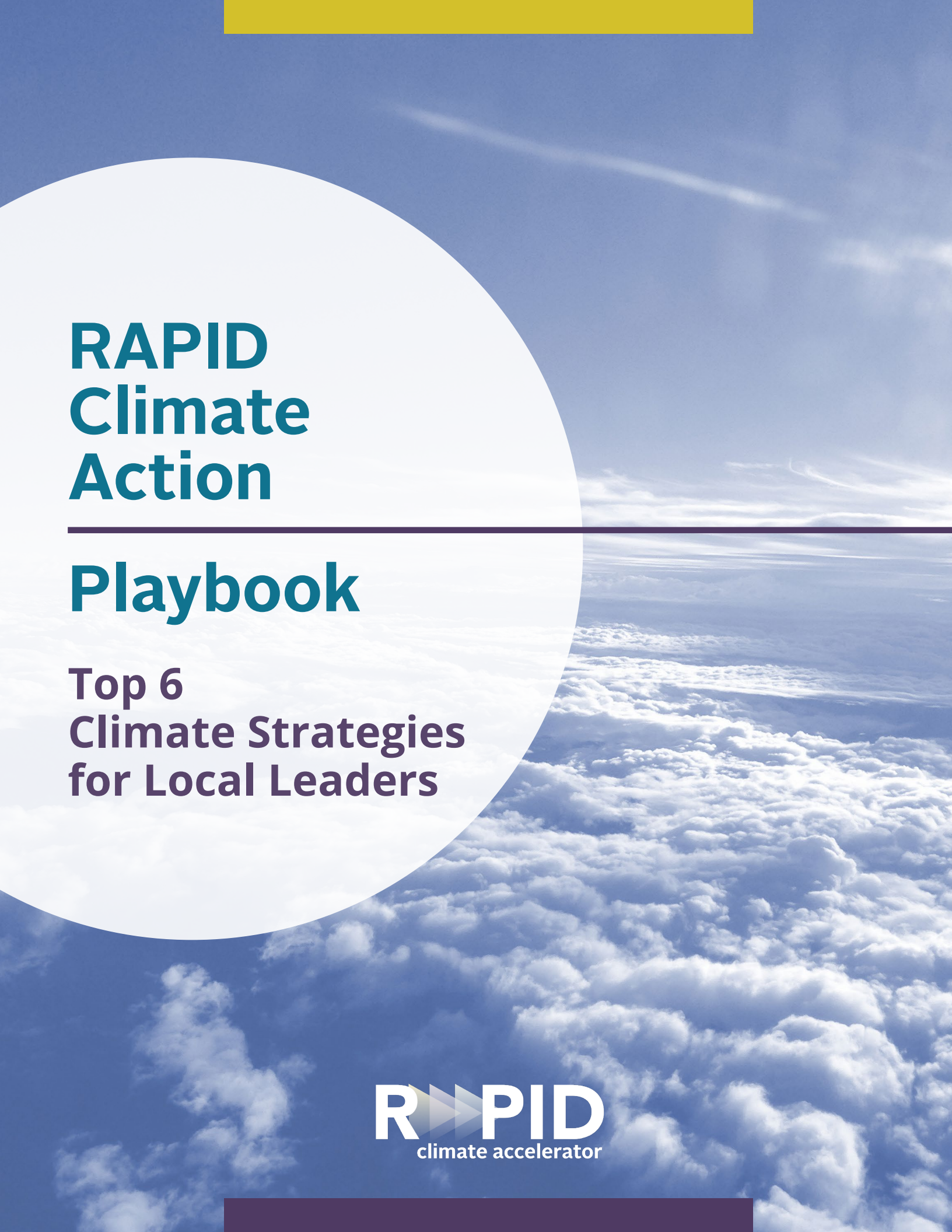


An aerial photograph of a vast expanse of white, fluffy clouds against a deep blue sky. A large, white, semi-transparent circle is positioned on the left side of the image, serving as a background for the text. A solid yellow horizontal bar is at the top, and a solid dark purple horizontal bar is at the bottom.

RAPID Climate Action

Playbook

**Top 6
Climate Strategies
for Local Leaders**



“Sustainable community strategies encompass efforts to build walkable neighborhoods close to jobs and to diversify mobility choices, thus shortening commutes and reducing the need for car travel... **large carbon mitigation potential and well-established co-benefits** related to health, traffic congestion, and quality of life. Nonetheless, state-level efforts thus far have been hampered by lack of direct authority. **Land use and transportation decisions are mostly under local control...**”

- Insights From the California Energy Policy Simulator, Energy Innovations, 2020

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Introduction

Climate action plans, to date, have been characterized by long lists of unprioritized actions that have limited support, champions, and urgency associated with them. The result is that **California Cities are not achieving their goals; many are simply adopting more aggressive targets.**

This Playbook was developed by a group professionals who work daily with local governments and recognize the lack of action and frustration in trying to make a difference. **The strategies are based on best practices, science and countless studies that detail what local leaders need to do today.** While it is clear that each jurisdiction is unique and will need to go about implementation and prioritization somewhat differently, these strategies apply to everyone.

Under each strategy, there are key actions and highlights of the essential requirements for success. Taken together, they offer local government leaders, **a fast track to moving their communities forward in addressing climate change.** By focusing on a smaller number of higher impact actions — and doing so on a regionally coordinated basis — **limited resources and time can be used to greatest effect.** It will take time to build political and social will and to establish the resources to implement these strategies. To activate these strategies, the following are recommended:

- ✓ Establish **partnerships** across city departments, involve the City Council and key stakeholders
- ✓ Start actions now - develop 2 to 5 year **implementation work plans** using a sprint model
- ✓ Use **an “equity lens”** to ensure your priority actions can effectively serve low-income and disadvantaged residents
- ✓ Be **laser focused** on activities that will result in impact and system change
- ✓ **Integrate climate thinking in everything the city does** - this will help to leverage funding opportunities, uncover unexpected synergies, and highlight the importance of the work



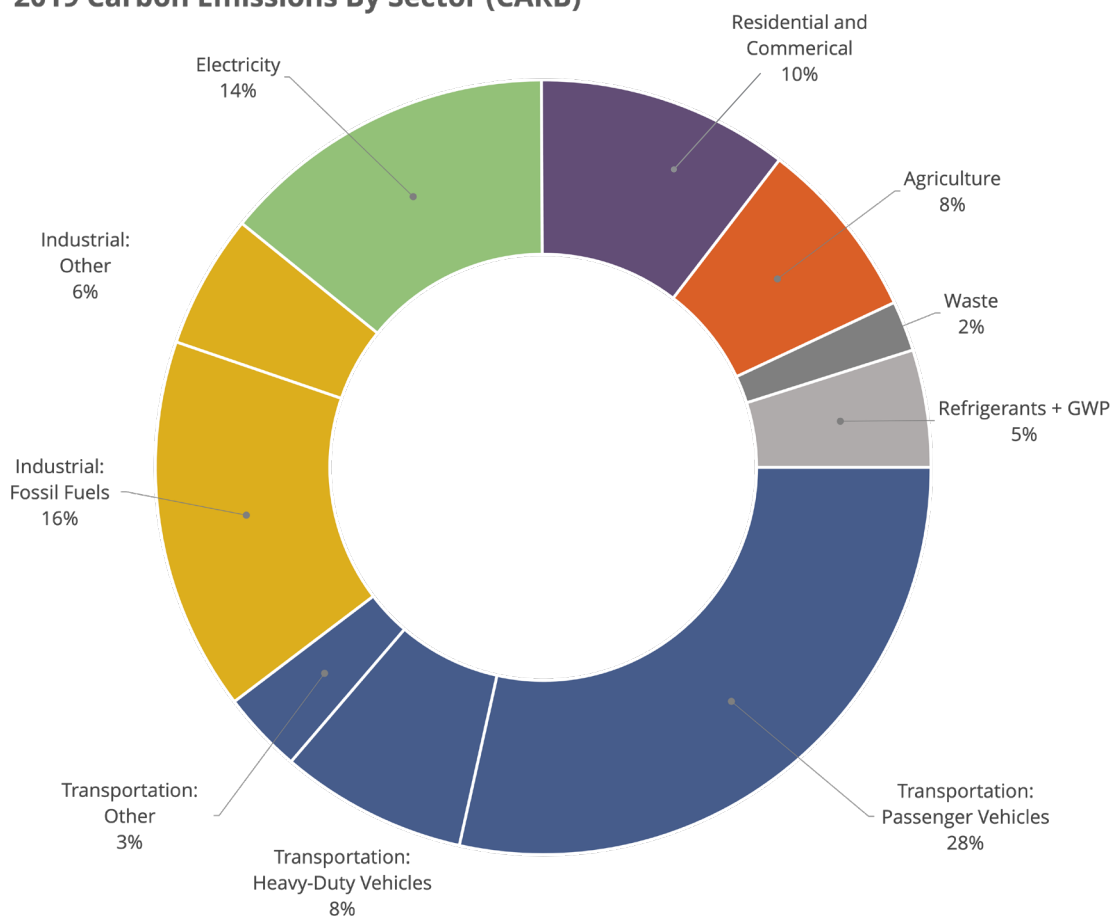
The Problem is Clear.

According to the 2021 California Air Resources Board's report, "Trends of Emissions and Other Indicators" all but one of the sectors that contribute most to carbon emissions in California have remained steady, at very high levels, since the State began measuring them in 2000. (The major exception is electric power emissions, which has been substantially reduced with the increase in renewable power).

While the State is leading on some policies related to electricity, transportation, and industrial emissions, the big areas that still need to be addressed by Local Government remain the same...

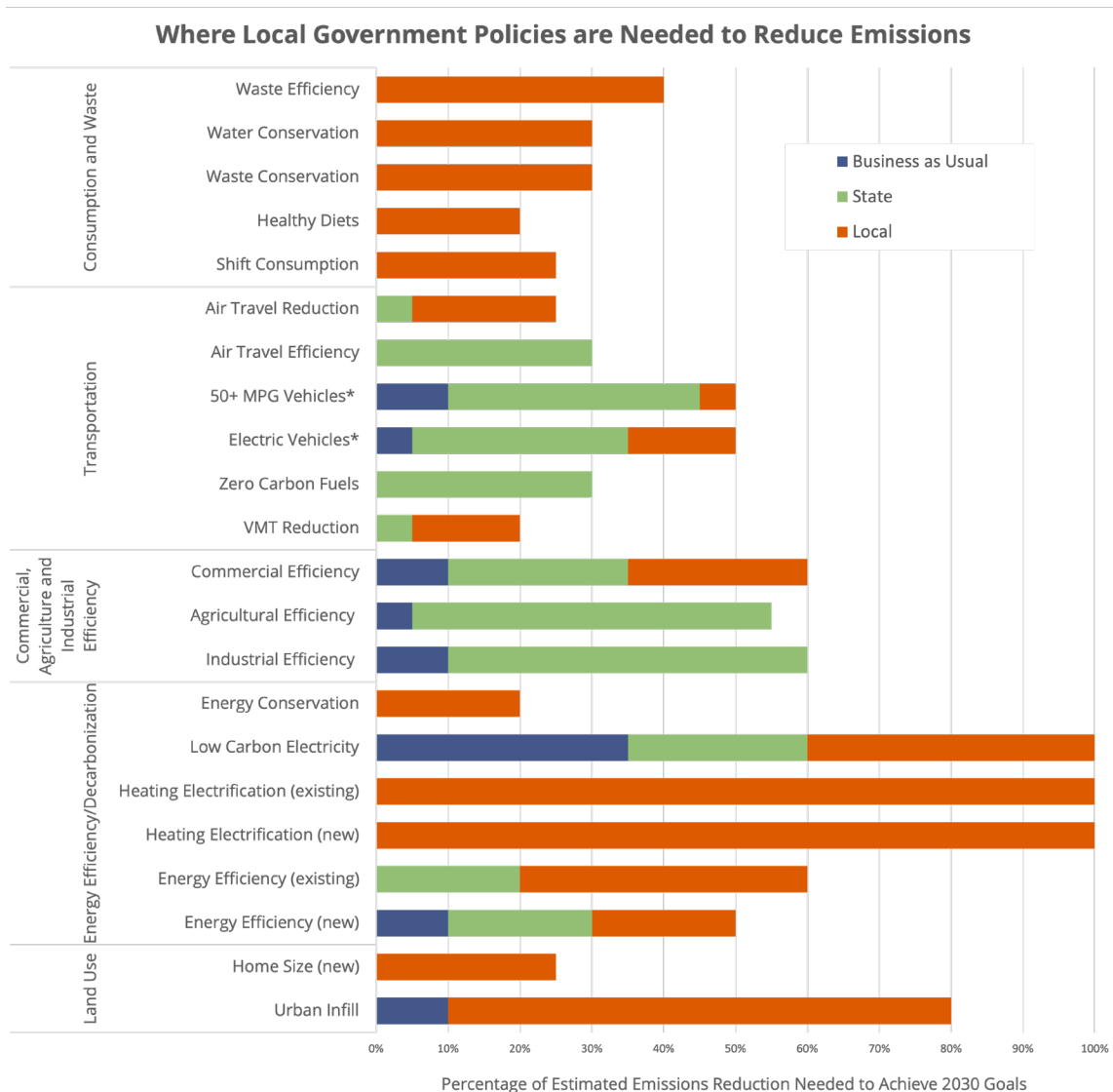
Local Transportation Existing & New Buildings Agriculture & Land Management

2019 Carbon Emissions By Sector (CARB)



Local Action Is Critical!

The State and national stakeholders have a big role in system-wide changes effecting greenhouse gases, especially related to energy, agriculture, and manufacturing. However, **approximately 35% of all emissions are wholly or are least partially under local jurisdiction's control**¹. These include key areas of land use, local roads, housing and jobs, and availability of transit and alternative mobility options, to name a few. Enacting targeted local climate policies are critical to lowering carbon emissions and reaching the State's carbon neutrality goal by 2045.



The graphic indicates the percentage of carbon emissions reduction need to achieve 2030 goals by category. The orange bars are the areas where local governments have (or could have) primary control of emissions.

¹ Jones, C., Wheeler, S., & Kammen, D. (2018). Carbon Footprint Planning: Quantifying Local and State Mitigation Opportunities for 700 California Cities. *Urban Planning*, 3(2), 35-51. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i2.1218>, Accessed January 2022, <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/scenarios>

Local Leadership Means...

“Leadership is about choices, especially hard choices and setting new directions. It is about vision and political will—the ability to see ahead to what we must do, and to force the pace of change.”

- UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, September 2007

Making hard choices

Given that the emissions reduction goals shown in the previous graphic are just for an interim 2030 benchmark, local government policy **will need to be more aggressive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045**. The policy changes that local leaders must make are challenging because they are often highly visible and any changes to the status quo invites opposition. For example, increasing housing density or prioritizing transit and active transportation over personal cars in a downtown location may provide lasting benefits over time, but may provoke local business and community opposition today.

Building political and social will

The solutions provided in the “top 6 strategies” playbook are all technically and economically feasible today. **The greatest barriers to achieving change is due to a lack of political and social will.** Each strategy has multiple co-benefits that can be framed to build political and social will to enable rapid implementation. COVID-19 has given us a vision of how quickly some previously inconceivable changes can be made. “Zoom commuting” may have permanently reduced commuter traffic and business travel. Closing down traffic lanes to expand outdoor dining has given many Americans a taste for European-style pedestrian oriented streets and cafe culture. The importance of natural open spaces and parks for recreation has become more obvious — and precious — than ever before. Leveraging these and other co-benefits to build a strong story for change is essential.

Acting now

Putting off climate action is not an option. Everyone in every walk of life has a role to play, because what is at stake is literally the sustainability of human life and the natural world. Local leaders need to prioritize climate action, build the capacity, and gather the resources to make the changes we need today. Countless studies, reports, and conferences have indicated that we are close to running out of time to limit a climate catastrophe. While local conditions differ to a certain extent, local leaders do not have to wait for the latest greenhouse gas inventory to prioritize meaningful climate action immediately. They can begin the work of implementing the actions identified in this playbook.

Top 6 Climate Strategies

1. **Shift into “Climate Emergency” Mode.**
2. **Accelerate 100% local renewable and resilient electricity generation.**
3. **Eliminate fossil fuels in buildings.**
4. **Promote active transportation and streets for people.**
5. **Drive the zero emission vehicle transition.**
6. **Support carbon drawdown and sustainable local food systems.**





Shift into “Climate Emergency Mode”

- 1.1. Pass a government resolution declaring a climate emergency
- 1.2. Commit to annual zero emissions and fossil fuel phase-out goals (2022-2030)
- 1.3. Deploy a Climate Emergency Action Plan addressing key emissions areas
- 1.4. Align government operations with near-term emissions reduction goals
- 1.5. Advocate for comprehensive state-wide action towards near-zero emissions by 2030

Requirements for Success

1. Dedicated climate- and sustainability focused staff to lead the effort
2. A “climate emergency partnership” that includes elected leaders, staff, and community membership
3. Stakeholder and community commitment to action
4. Feasible but accelerated timeline
5. Integration of climate goals into all relevant policies and plans with milestones
6. Commitment to equity



2

Accelerate 100% local renewable & resilient electricity generation.

- 2.1. Commit to 100% local renewable energy provision by 2030 or sooner
- 2.2. Establish a community utility (as needed) to accelerate 100% renewable energy
- 2.3. Support deployment of local renewable energy generation, including community-scale microgrids for critical loads

Requirements for Success

- 1. Enabling local solar and battery storage policies
- 2. Establish microgrid and alternative community scale renewable energy policies
- 3. Establish productive relationship with Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), municipal utility to advance 100% renewable and resilient energy goals



3

Eliminate fossil fuels in buildings.

- 3.1. Ban fossil fuel (methane/natural gas, compressed natural gas (CNG), and propane) connections and appliances in new residential and commercial buildings
- 3.2. Ban new fossil fuel distribution infrastructure while incentivizing neighborhood electrification
- 3.3. Phase out methane use from existing residential and commercial buildings
- 3.4. Adopt greenhouse gas-linked performance building standards for existing buildings

Requirements for Success

- 1. Adopt “reach codes” that require all electric residential and commercial buildings
- 2. Clear implementation path to elimination of gas infrastructure in existing buildings
- 3. Equity-focused impact evaluation of proposed policies and mitigations
- 4. Community support services and tools to transition to all electric



4

Promote active transportation and streets for people.

- 4.1. Create robust active transportation networks and transform key travel corridors to prioritize zero emissions transit and pedestrian/bike access
- 4.2. Focus urban transit design on electric and zero emissions micro-mobility solutions
- 4.3. Increase housing density in proximity of transit and eliminate parking minimums
- 4.4. Develop an active transportation culture and safe routes to work, school, and community centers

Requirements for Success

- 1. Eliminate or substantially reduce funding for roadway and parking expansion for personal vehicles
- 2. Prioritize active transportation (bike/pedestrian) and transit infrastructure development
- 3. Adopt policies that enable and accelerate transition of “streets for people” and people-powered transportation

SPEED
LIMIT
10

IN REG OF STREETCAR
STOPPED AT JAM CITY DOOR



5

Drive the zero emission vehicle transition.

- 5.1. Pass moratorium on public agency fleet internal combustion engine vehicle purchases
- 5.2. Require zero emissions transit buses, school buses, and other public fleets
- 5.3. Mandate electric vehicles charging infrastructure in multi-unit residential buildings and workplaces
- 5.4. Promote use of shared electric vehicles as alternatives to personal vehicle ownership

Requirements for Success

- 1. Establish robust electric vehicle (EV) charging network
- 2. Support EV-to-grid and EV-to-Building integration across all pertinent local policies
- 3. Ensure that infrastructure and electric vehicles policies are equitably implemented





Support carbon drawdown and sustainable local food systems.

- 6.1. Halt urban deforestation and wetland development
- 6.2. Establish large-scale urban greening initiatives to reduce heat island effect and increase urban biodiversity
- 6.3. Optimize natural carbon sequestration through regenerative land and water management
- 6.4. Establish regional food systems and promote low-carbon diets
- 6.5. Advance zero waste goals and implement local food waste composting at scale

Requirements for Success

- 1. Enabling policies for community gardens, public land gardens, and home kitchen businesses
- 2. Engaged business and retail community to build and strengthen sustainable “farm to fork” market
- 3. Aligned policies to incentivize greening, composting and regenerative practices for housing and commercial development



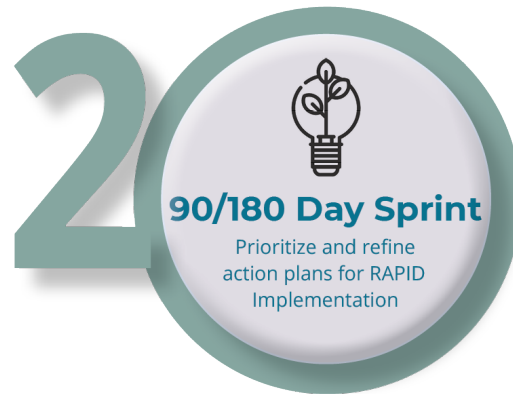
RAPID Climate Accelerator

The RAPID Climate Accelerator is a network of dedicated climate professionals, organizations, and local government leaders who want to see greater climate impact, faster. RAPID's activities are designed to catalyze multi-sector and multi-jurisdiction climate efforts to create a shift from the siloed and incremental longer-term climate solutions to a "no excuses" approach with a prioritized set of the most effective, near-term actions.

The number of climate organizations and activities is substantial, especially in California. However, research and experience indicate that there is limited cross-pollination and large gaps between thinking and action among the diverse entities involved in climate initiatives. The RAPID Climate Accelerator provides a backbone organization to better align collective resources and activities within region; leading to a clarification of priorities, greater effectiveness of efforts, and better communication of benefits within the broader community.

As illustrated in the adjacent graphic, the RAPID Climate Accelerator approach is to accelerate regional climate emergency mobilization through the following:

- ✓ Catalyze the shift to "Climate Emergency mode" throughout the region
- ✓ Prioritizing the most relevant and highest-impact Emergency Climate Action Strategies that can be adopted by cities and counties to drive accelerated climate action
- ✓ Provide technical assistance and support to enable successful implementation of the Climate Emergency Actions
- ✓ Develop regional cross-sector partnerships in support of a unified Regional Emergency Climate Action Mobilization
- ✓ Launch a regional climate ballot measure to capture robust regional funding for action along with a communication campaign designed to build political and social will to adopt rapid changes.



Authors & Contributors

The RAPID Climate Action Playbook was developed in partnership and consultation with the following climate leaders:

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