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March 14, 2019

The Honorable City Council  
City of Los Angeles  
City Hall, Room 395  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Honorable Members:

**REPORT BACK REGARDING EFFORTS AND ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF  
CLIMATE CHANGE; CF 18-0600-S55**

The Budget and Finance Committee requested a report back at its May 2018 budget hearing regarding the Department of City Planning's (Department) efforts and activities to reduce the impacts of climate change and this report back is presented in anticipation of the Energy, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice Committee meeting on March 19, 2019.

**Background**

Climate change is considered a major global challenge for the 21st century and is requiring communities to adapt to the potential consequence of a changing environment. Driven primarily by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from human activities, the global climate is changing as evidenced by higher air and ocean temperatures, reduction in the extent of sea ice, and rising sea levels. These changes in the global climate also have local impacts, such as increased occurrence of heat waves, drought, and wildfire.

In 2006, California became the first State to adopt a GHG reduction target and has amended it over time to include more specific interim target reductions. California's overall target establishes statewide GHG emission reduction target goals of 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 to achieve long-term climate stabilization. In addition to these state mandates, the City of Los Angeles has adopted even more ambitious targets for reducing its own GHG emissions.

Various City departments are individually leading efforts that address preparing for and responding to Climate Change. The Department of City Planning's mission is to plan for a healthy and sustainable future, and as such, most of its activities and efforts are geared toward the goals of reducing emissions, more efficient land use planning, multimodal transportation policies, and at its core, preparing the city for changing conditions. Additionally the Department supports many of the City's efforts with staff expertise and consultation as needed or requested.

The efforts below represent the Department's primary activities related to long range planning for Climate Change:

### **Department of City Planning's Climate Change Efforts**

The Department is engaged in several activities that will reduce the impact of climate change through development of citywide policy and code amendments, regulations and neighborhood plans:

**General Plan Update.** The City is currently undertaking a comprehensive update to the General Plan. The General Plan Update, proposed in this year's FY 2019-20 budget, will lay the foundation for addressing climate change by including sustainability, resilience and equity as guiding principles of the General Plan. The General Plan Update will incorporate sustainability and climate change policies throughout the various General Plan Elements including Urban Form, Open Space, Economy and Environmental Justice. Long range policies will reflect the city's goals for more efficient use of water resources, energy infrastructure and attaining zero emission goals. The General Plan update process will consider opportunities to incorporate climate adaptation, hazard mitigation and recovery as well as efforts to increase equity in the city's most vulnerable communities.

**Community plans.** The Community Plan update program is underway with roughly 1/5 of the city's 35 Community Plans updated and another 1/3 in progress; the remaining plans are scheduled to be completed following those in progress. The Community Plans apply citywide goals and policies at the community and neighborhood levels, refining those for the wide diversity of geographies found in the city. Specific policies and programs developed for Community Plans include but are not limited to applying new zoning code regulations that better address sustainability goals, reduce vehicle trips and GHG production, integrating urban design to achieve long term sustainability goals such as reduced energy consumption, water efficiency, and improved health.

**Zoning Code Update (Re:Code).** The comprehensive revision of the City's Zoning Code is underway marking a significant commitment to modernizing the city's development regulations in a way that simplifies the development process and allows the city to more readily achieve objectives for better design, sustainability, and responsiveness to rapid changes in technology and climate related needs. Recent code improvements have included streamlining regulations for solar compatibility and renewable energy generation. Improvements proposed for incorporation into the new code include regulations to address landscaping, permeable paving, groundwater recharge and LID (Low Impact Development) requirements among others. Additionally, coordination with other Departments has resulted in recommendations that require new developments to be consistent with the Green Building Code Update, underway by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. The re:code effort is a primary mechanism for implementing the policies of the General and Community Plans and zoning updates will be applied and adopted by community plan area as the Community Plan Program progresses.

**Wildlife and Hillside Protections.** Two Pilot Studies and a code amendment to existing Hillside Construction Regulations are underway. The Wildlife Pilot Study will recommend specific regulations for the city's hillside areas. These unique landscapes provide an opportunity to plan for improved habitat preservation and mobility connections for wildlife in support of the city's goals of sustainability and biodiversity. The Ridgeline Study will similarly offer protections for preserving the aesthetic and ecosystem benefits of prominent ridgelines in the hillsides. The amendments to the Hillside Construction Regulations will further support limitations on grading, hillside erosion and bulk of structures developed in the hillsides. Together these regulations offer protection for

hillside areas directly related to watershed functions, wildlife and biodiversity preservation and ecosystem health.

**Trees, Shrubs, and Bee Keeping Ordinances.** Department staff are expanding the list of protected trees to include additional native shrub species, the Toyon and Elderberry shrubs; this ordinance has been prepared and is pending adoption by City Council. Protection of native vegetation provide multiple local benefits including habitat for wildlife, erosion control of hillsides, and support of ecosystems. Another effort to protect the local ecosystem involves backyard beekeeping. The Beekeeping Ordinance will help support the health of bees and the food system, as well as support local economic goals.

**Transit Neighborhood Planning.** The Department is working on several Transit Neighborhood Plans along the Expo, Purple and Orange lines that facilitate the location of housing and jobs near transit infrastructure. Several of the City's latest Community Plan Updates include tools to promote equitable transit development that enables communities to live closer to jobs and services. In addition, several of the City's recent housing programs such as the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) program and the Permanent Supportive Housing ordinance promote the creation of new affordable housing opportunities near transit, further reducing auto trips and GHG emissions.

**Adaptation Planning.** While the City has not yet prepared a formal citywide vulnerability risk assessment, there have been several efforts to date to address this issue. The Department is preparing an update to its Local Coastal Program that addresses sea level rise in the Venice community. In addition, the City adopted an Earthquake Hazard Reduction ordinance requiring mandatory retrofit of pre-1978 wood-frame soft-story buildings and non-ductile concrete buildings.

**Climate Action Plan.** The Department has been asked to explore the preparation of a Climate Action Plan (CAP), which could be another important tool to implement the policies identified in the General Plan Update and to meet the City's ambitious GHG reduction goals. A CAP would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of GHG reduction efforts, both currently underway and planned, and ultimately reduce the City's carbon footprint. The Mayor's Office has prepared portions of the CAP retaining a consultant to provide technical expertise for an existing GHG inventory, identification of initial reduction targets and projected GHG emissions. The Department would potentially be responsible for completing the remainder of the CAP including identification of reduction measures, risk assessment, monitoring and environmental review.

**CEQA.** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has undergone recent changes to environmental thresholds, which aid in the identification of potential impacts to the environment. The State thresholds have been incorporated into the Department's CEQA review process to include additional considerations for wildfire, energy consumption, and hydrology and water quality among other clarifications to noise, biology, aesthetics, land use, utilities, hazards and transportation.

**Vehicle Miles Traveled Reduction.** Shifting the City's transportation metric from Level of Service (LOS), measurement of auto delay, to Vehicle Miles Traveled, per state law is one such effort currently underway. Utilizing VMT will encourage other modes of travel such as biking and walking over vehicle travel. Reducing vehicle travel and VMT will support overall emissions reductions goals in support of the Mayor's Zero Emissions goal by 2050.

**Conclusion**

As previously stated, much of the Department's work can be categorized as working to address the impacts of climate change. For example, the General Plan Update addresses climate change along with housing, economic development, transportation, environmental justice, among other topics. The budget for this effort for FY 2018-19 is approximately \$300,000. The requested budget for FY 2019-20 is approximately \$1,500,000. The request includes four staff comprised of two Senior Planners, one City Planning Associate, and one Senior Administrative Clerk.

The Department can provide any additional information including specific contacts, staffing, or work programs related to efforts and activities to reduce the impacts of climate change. For additional information, please contact Conni Pallini-Tipton at (213) 978-1179.

Sincerely,

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP  
Director of Planning

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. J. Keller', written over a horizontal line.

KEVIN J. KELLER, AICP  
Executive Officer

VPB:KJK:AV:cpt

cc: Richard H. Llewellyn, Jr., City Administrative Officer  
Claudia Aguilar, Senior Administrative Analyst II