FRONTRUNNER: CITY OF PIEDMONT

CITY OF PIEDMONT FOCUSES ON RESIDENTIAL RETROFITS IN ITS FIRST-EVER REACH CODE

OVERVIEW

The City of Piedmont, once known as ‘The City of Millionaires,’ today is a lively community located in the Oakland Hills overlooking the San Francisco Bay. Home to 11,000 residents, the City is highly residential with large, established single-family homes on quiet, tree-lined streets. When the City adopted the second version of its Climate Action Plan in 2018, it set an ambitious goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and culminating in an 80% reduction by 2050. Because the City and its residents already receive most of its electricity from renewable resources, the sustainability team began to seek out other approaches to continue progressing toward the CAP goals.

RESIDENTIAL RETROFITS BECOME THE FOCUS

Given the highly built out state of the City’s neighborhoods, as well as the fact that most homes are single-family and of older vintages, City staff began to explore opportunities to advance electrification of these existing homes. The team conducted extensive outreach with City residents over the course of several weeks in early 2020. A town hall forum in late January was followed by four additional workshops during which residents, business owners, contractors and other stakeholders provided feedback.



The City of Piedmont, located in the Oakland Hills, is home to 11,000 residents. Photo courtesy of City of Piedmont.

Additionally, City staff conducted a public survey, gathering responses via online forms. All the feedback was incorporated into the policy development process. Once proposed ordinances were developed, City staff engaged an opinion research firm to conduct a random-sample public survey in June 2020 to assess community opinion. This revealed strong support for the proposed measures. A second public survey conducted in late 2020 confirmed the same level of support.

Speaking of the widespread public support for the measures, Sustainability Manager Alyssa Dykman said, “We were committed to capturing a comprehensive reflection of perspectives from the community and were gratified at the strong support, consistently ranging around two-thirds of survey participants. The City of Piedmont is moving toward achieving its CAP goals with the community expressing its agreement.”

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE MEASURES

The Piedmont City Council adopted the proposed measures on February 1, 2021. These measures were comprised of the following requirements:

Ordinance 750 N.S.

- Newly constructed low-rise residential buildings, including new detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), must use all electric building appliances.
- Projects proposing an entire new upper level on a low-rise residential building, or that increase a low-rise residential building's total roof area by 30% or more, are required to install solar panels on the roof.
- A renovation project on a low-rise residential building that costs $25,000 or more, requires the applicant to choose one item from a menu of energy efficient insulation or heating system electrification improvements (see list below). A renovation project that costs $100,000 or more requires inclusion of two items.
- Electrical panel upgrades must include capacity in the panel to accommodate future electrification of all appliances in the residence.
- Kitchen or laundry area renovations must include electrical outlets for future appliance installation.

Ordinance 751 N.S.

- At point of listing for sale of a property, a report from a Home Energy Audit or Home Energy Score (homeowner's choice) must be provided to potential buyers and submitted to the City - unless the residential building was constructed in the past 10 years.

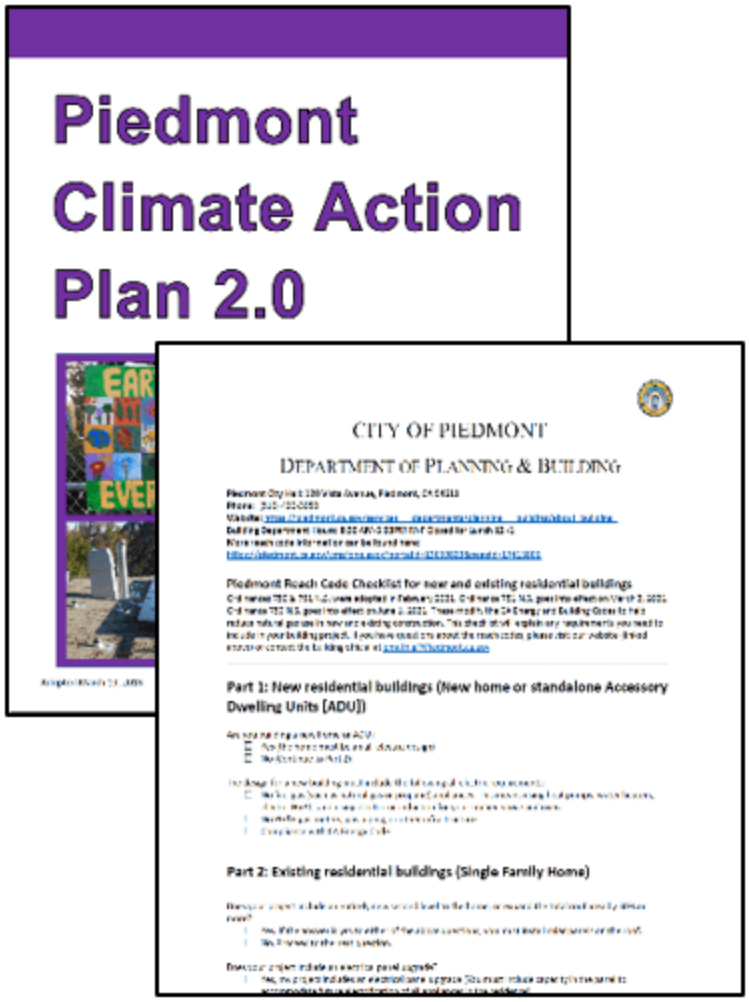
The menu of improvements includes a range of energy-efficient measures, including:

- Installation of R-38 attic insulation and air duct sealing practices
- Installation of R-19 insulation for raised floor assemblies
- Installation of R-3 insulation on all accessible hot water piping and low flow water fixtures
- Installation of LED lamps and vacancy sensors
- Replacement of gas furnace with electric heat pump system
- Replacement of gas water heater with heat pump water heater
- Implementation of one or more recommendations from a Home Energy Score or Home Energy Audit completed within the past five years

MOVING INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Ordinance 751 N.S. containing the requirement for a Home Energy Audit or Home Energy Score became effective in March 2021, while Ordinance 750 N.S. became effective in June. Dykman notes that while there is not too much data yet, the number of building permits is approximately equal to those before adoption. Similarly, the number of Home Energy Scores or Audits submitted to the city to date demonstrate the continued need for ongoing attention to energy efficiency practices.

The City maintains a robust webpage of resources for residents and contractors, including FAQs, checklists and information about rebates and other incentives.



RESOURCES

Comprehensive webpage containing ordinance adoption history, resources and information on financial incentives.

California Energy Commission Docket Log:

First Reading Staff Report

Second Reading Staff Report

Ordinance 750 N.S.

Ordinance 751 N.S.

Piedmont Climate Action Plan 2.0

OTHER FRONTRUNNERS

City of San Rafael Pursues Collaboration in its Development and Adoption of a Flex Path Residential Reach Code City of Cotati City of San Luis Obispo
Archives