



BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLÍN
DISTRICT 2

CONSENT CALENDAR

XXXXX

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Terry Taplin (Author), Councilmember Ben Bartlett, Councilmember Sophie Hahn, and Mayor Jesse Arreguín (Co-Sponsors)

Subject: Commit the City of Berkeley to a Just Transition from the Fossil Fuel Economy

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution committing the City of Berkeley to a Just Transition from the fossil fuel economy and establishing a Just Transition Working Group~~Task Force~~ convened by the author and including but not limited to 2 other members of the City Council, representatives from the Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC), Energy Commission, Zero Waste, ~~the~~ Labor Commission, the Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission, the Community Health Commission, the Youth Commission, and Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), the Ecology Center, as well as labor allies and community partners at the UC and in the City of Berkeley.

BACKGROUND

Climate Change is Here

At this moment, our atmosphere has a higher concentration of carbon dioxide than ever before in human history. This concentration, and the fossil fuel emissions that have caused it, is rapidly making our planet into a hotter and more volatile place for all of its inhabitants. Estimates of the degree of warming that we can expect over the course of the next century vary and are contingent on how policymakers respond to the growing threat in the next decade. Still, there is enormous consensus that a certain amount of warming is inevitable and that rising sea levels, higher frequency of extreme weather events, declining public health, and economic volatility will certainly follow. With estimates ranging from increases in temperature between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2100, global warming will have severe impacts at even the most modest of estimates.¹

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature04188>

Here in the Bay Area, we are already seeing a wide range of impacts including more extreme El Niño seasons some years, dramatic droughts in other years, a decline in coastal fog, 8 inches of sea-level rise, and more intense fire seasons in the rest of the state which have regularly brought smoke and ash to Berkeley.² These effects, which are already impossible to ignore, are just the beginning. The future will bring deeper and longer droughts, unreliable precipitation, an overall increase in temperature, and as much as 3 meters of sea-level rise by 2100.³ On top of the weather and climate-related impacts, projections paint a grim picture for national economies under extreme warming scenarios. The reach of global warming will leave no stone unturned, with consequences for agriculture, trade, and industry internationally and at the national and local levels. At the national level, estimates currently project -0.1 to 1.7% GDP loss at 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming, 1.5 to 5.6% loss at 4 degrees, and 6.4 to 15.7% loss at 8 degrees.⁴ All who call Berkeley and the Bay Area home are feeling the early impacts of climate change and will continue to be affected as warming intensifies, but not all effects are felt equally across demographic groups.

Unequal Impacts: Environmental Racism and Economic Dangers

Poor Americans and people of color have always had a relationship with their environments characterized by poor health and unique exposures to environmental hazards and extreme weather conditions, often in ways designed and perpetuated by government policies that seek to segregate and discriminate against people of color. As the effects of climate change intensify in the coming decades, this relationship will only be exacerbated as extreme weather, declining public health, and economic devastation disproportionately harm poor Americans and drag more and more into poverty. As the economy takes on damage, the unemployment rate will rise and bring the poverty rate up with it.⁵ Economic damage at the scale of climate change will subject millions more to the poor health, extreme weather vulnerabilities, and general ruin that is all but guaranteed for those who enter the coming decades already in impoverished conditions. The fight against climate change

The disparate impacts of extreme weather between racial and economic groups have been repeatedly demonstrated in recent history, with dire warnings for Berkeley's approach to climate resilience. In the summer of 1995, a year when global temperatures had already increased by nearly half a degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels,

²https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Reg_Report-SUM-CCCA4-2018-005_SanFranciscoBayArea_ADA.pdf

³https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Reg_Report-SUM-CCCA4-2018-005_SanFranciscoBayArea_ADA.pdf

⁴ <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/356/6345/1362>

⁵ <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/089533006776526102>

Chicago, Illinois was hit by a record-breaking heat wave.⁶ “Temperatures reached 106 degrees; the heat index, or experienced heat, climbed to 120 degrees; uncommonly ‘high lows’ (daily low temperatures that were themselves dangerously high), sparse cloud cover, and a dearth of cooling winds kept the city broiling, without relief, for a full week”⁷. After a week of intense heat, “medical examiners confirmed that over five-hundred Chicagoans had died directly from the heat, public health workers reported over seven-hundred deaths in excess of the weekly average, and hospitals registered thousands of visits for weather-related problems”⁸. The entire Chicago area felt the 1995 heat wave, but the effects of this extreme weather event were not leveled evenly across the entire area of the event. It was reported very quickly during and after the event that the victims of the heat wave were mostly elderly, poor, and Black⁹. The more fragile health of the elderly makes the raised vulnerability of older residents of Chicago less of a surprise, but the disproportionately poor and Black victimhood during this disaster further demonstrates the incredible exposure these groups have during extreme weather events.

The unequal effects of the 1995 heat wave in Chicago were neither wholly natural nor apolitical despite occurring in the early years of global climate change. The disproportionate victimhood of poor people of color in this case occurred as a result of political decisions. On top of the financial conditions that limit healthcare access and quality air-conditioning in the homes of the groups that ended up most vulnerable to the heat wave, the Chicago and Illinois government also acted in ways that led to an excess of deaths among elderly, poor, and Black residents during the heat crisis. The Chicago Police Department’s own senior assistance unit was neglected to be activated at all and the Department of Human Services failed to contact isolated seniors or transport them to any of the few public cooling centers that the city erected.¹⁰ State and local governments have demonstrated both a lack of preparedness for extreme weather events and a bias against poor people and people of color in the few preparation policies they do have. Governments can learn from their mistakes, but they must do so in a way that moves faster than escalating global warming. The impacts of environmental racism and the unique relationship between poverty and ecological hazards has continued to this day and will continue under more and more extreme climate change. Chicago’s 1995 heat wave is just one example among many demonstrating the ways in which climate change has already begun to exacerbate poverty and racism in the United States.

⁶ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1006995507723>

⁷ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1006995507723>

⁸ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1006995507723>

⁹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/000312240607100407?>

¹⁰ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1006995507723>

Beyond the unique vulnerability of people of color and the poor to climate change, the deeply embedded nature of fossil fuels in our economy means that the jobs of many in Berkeley are dependent on carbon-emitting industries. While Berkeley may not be home to any coal mines, oil refineries, or other industries widely associated with climate change, Berkeley's economy is no less reliant on fossil fuel extraction and combustion. Transitioning off of fossil fuels will inevitably mean existing jobs and businesses will have to radically change or cease to exist at all. Berkeley's transition must take into account the economic consequences of all of its climate initiatives, not to stifle what the City must do to curb climate change, but to ensure that the workers most proximate to those economic consequences are supported as we rework our economy for a carbon neutral world. The transition off of fossil fuels can ignore the economic realities of the dramatic changes that are necessary to fight warming no more than it can ignore the unequal threat that climate change poses to the poor and people of color.

On a broader scale, studies indicate that a national transition to a 100%-renewable energy sector would likely result in the loss of around 3.9 million jobs while creating 5.9 million jobs.¹¹ Exact job loss and gain forecasts in Berkeley are unknown, but it stands to reason that the job impacts will be comparable to the national figures if the transition is done proactively. The net gain in employment opportunities from the fossil fuel transition provides an optimistic vision for the transition, but does not mean that the road to net-zero will be easy. Not every lost job will be immediately accompanied by the creation of a new job, nor is it guaranteed that those who lose their job will automatically be offered employment in newly created industries or that those new jobs will offer the same wages and benefits as the jobs that are lost. Governments, including the City of Berkeley, must play an active role in ensuring that their transitions provide a net-gain in quality, good-paying jobs and that those who lose their job to the transition are prioritized for newly created jobs. Job losses are not a reason not to transition off of fossil fuels. To secure a prosperous future and save millions of lives, the transition must continue at an aggressive pace. Reckoning with future job losses, however, will help ensure that those losses are overshadowed by the benefits of the transition and that an ample supply of new jobs are available for all.

Governments have a small window that they can and should take advantage of to justly transition their economies, industries, and infrastructures to net-zero carbon emissions. This is the bare minimum, and will only stop the most extreme levels of climate change towards the end of this century. A properly planned and justly executed transition should stand to be an economic opportunity for Berkeley rather than an economic downturn. Berkeley must recognize what is coming, and the unique vulnerabilities of

¹¹ <http://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/USStatesWWS.pdf>

people of color and the poor, and enact policies to mitigate damages to these communities from warming and the transition to carbon neutrality.

What is a Just Transition?

At varying levels, the consumption of fossil fuels is immersed in every aspect of daily life in modern society. Shifting our entire way of life towards carbon-neutrality will require significantly more than changing our energy sources to renewables. The truly comprehensive embeddedness of fossil fuels in our lives means that achieving net-zero fossil fuel emissions within just a few decades will be difficult, but not necessarily equally difficult for everyone.

Due to historic discrimination, impoverishment, and proximity to environmental hazards, people of color and poor people are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In rebuilding our economy, policymakers at every level must be intentional in ensuring that the fossil-free economy of the future does not reproduce the same inequities and societal harms of today. There are wrong ways to fight the climate crisis. Governments can achieve net-zero emissions in such a way that enriches those who profited off of fossil fuel extraction and consumption and protects the already well-off from warming while abandoning the historically disadvantaged to the ravages of extreme weather and economic chaos. The transition away from fossil fuels must ensure that the vulnerable in our society are protected from both the turbulence of restructuring our entire economy and the effects of global warming that are already set in stone. “After centuries of global plunder, the profit-driven industrial economy rooted in patriarchy and white supremacy is severely undermining the life support systems of the planet. Transition is inevitable. Justice is not.”¹² The environmental justice movement calls this approach to the climate crisis a “Just Transition.”

The Climate Justice Alliance, a climate organization at the forefront of the fight for a Just Transition, lays out the following Just Transition principles:

A Just Transition moves us toward Buen Vivir

Buen Vivir means that we can live well without living better at the expense of others. Workers, community residents, women and Indigenous Peoples around the world have a fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education and shelter. We must have just relationships with each other and with the natural world, of which we are a part. The rights of peoples, communities and nature must supersede the rights of the individual.

A Just Transition creates Meaningful Work

A Just Transition centers on the development of human potential, creating opportunities for people to learn, grow, and develop to their full capacities and interests. We are all born leaders,

¹² https://climatejusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CJA_JustTransition_Principles_final_hi-rez.pdf

and a regenerative economy supports and nurtures that leadership. In the process, we are transforming ourselves, each other, our communities, and our society as a whole. Meaningful work is life-affirming.

A Just Transition upholds Self Determination

All peoples have the right to participate in decisions that impact their lives. This requires democratic governance in our communities, including our workplaces. Communities must have the power to shape their economies, as producers, as consumers, and in our relationships with each other. Not only do we have the right to self determination, but self determination is one of our greatest tools to realize the world we need. The people who are most affected by the extractive economy — the frontline workers and the fenceline communities — have the resilience and expertise to be in the leadership of crafting solutions.

A Just Transition equitably redistributes Resources and Power

We must work to build new systems that are good for all people, and not just a few. Just Transition must actively work against and transform current and historic social inequities based on race, class, gender, immigrant status and other forms of oppression. Just Transition fights to reclaim capital and resources for the regeneration of geographies and sectors of the economy where these inequities are most pervasive.

A Just Transition requires Regenerative Ecological Economics

Just Transition must advance ecological resilience, reduce resource consumption, restore biodiversity and traditional ways of life, and undermine extractive economies, including capitalism, that erode the ecological basis of our collective well-being. This requires a re-localization and democratization of primary production and consumption by building up local food systems, local clean energy, and smallscale production that are sustainable economically and ecologically. This also means producing to live well without living better at the expense of others.

A Just Transition retains Culture and Tradition

Capitalism has forced many communities to sacrifice culture and tradition for economic survival. It has also defaced and destroyed land held as sacred. Just Transition must create inclusionary spaces for all traditions and cultures, recognizing them as integral to a healthy and vibrant economy. It should also make reparations for land that has been stolen and/or destroyed by capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, genocide and slavery.

A Just Transition embodies Local, Regional, National and International Solidarity

A Just Transition must be liberatory and transformative. The impacts of the extractive economy knows no borders. We recognize the interconnectedness of our communities as well as our issues. Therefore, our solutions call for local, regional, national and global solidarity that confronts imperialism and militarism.

A Just Transition builds What We Need Now

We must build the world we need now. This may begin at a local small scale, and must expand to begin to displace extractive practices. We must build and flex the muscles needed to meet our communities' needs.¹³

Embarking on a Just Transition would make Berkeley a leader on climate action done right, but existing Just Transition examples from around the world can provide much guidance. In Poland, a 75% decline in coal mining jobs was coupled by a mining social package and special privileges for mining communes. Canada's efforts to phase out coal-powered electricity have been accompanied by a national stakeholder task force that has travelled the country to hear from Canadians on how to justly shepherd the transition. Egypt's fuel price increases were paired with minimum wage boosts, food stipends, and progressive taxation.¹⁴

Here in Berkeley, there are a number of policies that the City may take up in pursuit of a Just Transition. In the realm of mitigating climate change, the retrofitting of residential buildings for electrification and enhanced energy efficiency is a necessary – and expensive – component of any transition towards a sustainable Berkeley. Estimates suggest that all-electric single-family homes can “reduce annual GHG emissions by 33 - 56% in 2020 and by 76 – 88% in 2050 compared to a natural gas-fueled home.”¹⁵ Residential emissions can also be reduced through the densification of our community and a long-term shift away from single-family homes as a primary form of living, but Berkeley's existing stock of single-family homes isn't just going to go away.¹⁶ Retrofitting and electrifying our existing housing stock is important, but is too expensive a lift for the City to expect or require all homeowners to go about alone.¹⁷ A Just Transition in building electrification would involve the City dedicating its own resources as well as engaging the state and federal governments to fund retrofits and support residential homeowners through the process of electrifying their homes.

While Berkeley has been at the forefront of guaranteeing a generous minimum wage, any Just Transition must ensure that all workers in Berkeley earn a living wage into the future as the global economy is shaken by the impacts of climate change. On top of the direct economic impacts of climate change, the ongoing shift in employment opportunities toward gig-based and contractor work that does not always guarantee a living wage and good benefits presents a threat to the livelihoods of workers in Berkeley and elsewhere. On a warming planet with rapidly intensifying weather conditions, access to food, shelter, and quality healthcare will be more important – and more precarious – than ever before. Local and state policies, such as ensuring that minimum wage laws apply to app-based contract work¹⁸, will go a long way in a warming-afflicted

¹³ https://climatejusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CJA_JustTransition_Principles_final_hi-rez.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.iisd.org/articles/just-transition-examples>

¹⁵ https://www.ethree.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/E3_Residential_Building_Electrification_in_California_April_2019.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/32/19122>

¹⁷ https://www.nahb.org/-/media/NAHB/nahb-community/docs/committees/construction-codes-and-standards-committee/home-innovation-electrification-report-2021.pdf?_ga=2.114118479.990433442.1620163394-283412800.1620163394

¹⁸ <https://cities-today.com/seattle-passes-minimum-wage-for-rideshare-drivers/>

future towards shoring up the health and economic stability of workers. Additionally, Berkeley's Living Wage Ordinance, which ensures "that businesses in a contractual relationship with the City pay their employees a wage that can support a family at, or above, the poverty level"¹⁹, is an important labor policy that can be upheld and even strengthened as economic stresses require more support for employees on the part of employers. Beyond the active role that Berkeley's City government must play in ensuring a Just Transition, workers themselves need to be empowered to ensure that the sweeping economic changes of the transition to a sustainable economy does not leave them behind. Berkeley must, at every turn, protect the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively and support the efforts of workers in the private-sector to assert their rights in every instance possible.

There is a wealth of potential policies in academic literature and real-world examples that a Just Transition Working Group can draw upon in envisioning a Just Transition for Berkeley. "Smart growth" strategies offer effective and just climate mitigation and adaptation policies that Berkeley can draw upon to effectively manage its transition off of fossil fuels and foster economic opportunities for the City. These include planning for a denser city, preserving green spaces, discouraging new construction in areas at risk of extreme weather conditions such as wildfires, upgrading stormwater systems, and generally encouraging energy efficient land use patterns.²⁰ There is an expansive world of policy opportunities for Berkeley's Just Transition Working Group to draw on in envisioning and pursuing a fossil-free Berkeley that protects frontline communities, expands worker rights, and fosters a more prosperous future for our city in the face of this crisis.

~~Whether branded as a Just Transition or not, Berkeley can draw plenty of inspiration from around the world in its efforts to ensure that workers, people of color, and the poor are elevated and protected in our fight against climate change, rather than left behind.~~

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In 2006, Berkeley residents voted in favor of Measure G, which committed the City of Berkeley to reduce its emissions by 80% below 2000 levels by 2050. The City Council, staff, and the community subsequently worked in tandem to develop the Berkeley Climate Action Plan, which lays out the City's path to achieving the stated goal on Measure G.²¹ In 2018, the City Council voted to declare a Climate Emergency citing an "existential Climate Emergency that threatens our city, state, nation, civilization, humanity, and the natural world."²² Both the establishment of the Berkeley Climate Action Plan and the declaration of a Climate Emergency put the City leagues ahead of

¹⁹https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Finance/Home/Vendors_Living_Wage_Ordinance.aspx#:~:text=Effective%20July%201%2C%202021%2C%20the,of%20not%20less%20than%20%2419.67.

²⁰<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-climate-change#:~:text=Smart%20growth%20policies%20contribute%20to,effects%20of%20a%20changing%20climate.>

²¹<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/climate/>

²²https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Council_2/Level_3_-_General/Climate%20Emergency%20Declaration%20-%20Adopted%2012%20June%202018%20-%20BCC.pdf

other cities, states, and even the country on initiating climate action, but were still nowhere near enough.

At the state level, California's environmental efforts place it well ahead of most other states. Even California's efforts, however, are insufficient at best and ineffective at reducing emissions at worst.²³ The City of Berkeley must lead the state and the country both in aggressive and ambitious climate legislation that gets us to net-zero carbon emissions as soon as possible as well as climate mitigation and adaptation efforts that overcome and reverse historic environmental racism and lessen the economic turbulence that will accompany reshaping our economy in the coming decades so that all working Berkleyans have the right to a good job and secure future. Past and future efforts to reach net-zero fossil fuel emissions must be examined in an active pursuit of a Just Transition for Berkeley.

To ensure that Berkeley's shift towards carbon neutrality overcomes historic inequities and offers economic prosperity for all, a working group task force must be established that advises the City Council on integrating the Just Transition model into its legislation, identifies important policies in pursuit of a Just Transition, and reports to the City Council on the city's fossil fuel transition progress through the Just Transition lens. By examining Berkeley's economy and jobs, a working group task force can also help the city by identifying what jobs are vulnerable to the shift off of fossil fuels and where there are opportunities for the transition to create new employment opportunities. This Just Transition Working Group Task Force, convened by the City Council, the Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC), the Labor Commission, the Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission, the Community Health Commission, the Youth Commission, and Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), is a necessary first step in what will be a long process in guaranteeing that Berkeley's transition off of fossil fuels leaves no one behind and instead fosters economic and social opportunity for the people of Berkeley.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This proposal advances and enhances Berkeley's climate goals.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Staff time related to working group task force activities.

CONTACT

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ATTACHMENTS

²³ <https://www.kqed.org/science/1972957/state-auditor-says-california-air-regulator-overstated-emission-reductions>

1. Resolution
 2. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment: San Francisco Bay Area Region Report
 3. Climate Justice Alliance: Just Transition Principles
- RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

COMMIT THE CITY OF BERKELEY TO A JUST TRANSITION FROM THE FOSSIL FUEL ECONOMY

WHEREAS, in Berkeley, fossil fuel-driven global warming has already caused sea level rise, droughts, extreme weather conditions, and longer and more intense fire seasons, and

WHEREAS, business-as-usual fossil fuel emissions will lead to major increases in temperature, more dramatic droughts, more frequent extreme weather, and up to 3 meters of sea level rise, and

WHEREAS, historic inequities and environmental racism leave people of color and the poor in a uniquely vulnerable position when faced with dramatic warming, economic turbulence, and extreme weather, and

WHEREAS, the transition off of fossil fuels will have inevitable economic consequences including the loss of jobs and industries that are reliant on fossil fuel extraction and consumption, and

WHEREAS, a proactively planned and equitably executed transition away from the fossil fuel economy can be an opportunity to correct historic wrongs and boost Berkeley's economy,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council commits the City of Berkeley to a Just Transition to net-zero carbon emissions that secures a livable future for all Berkeleyans, combats environmental racism and the unique vulnerabilities of people of color, and ensures that all Berkeleyans have access to good paying jobs free from the fossil fuel economy,

AND THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council establishes a Just Transition ~~Working Group~~~~Task Force~~ that:

- A. Advises the City Council on integrating the Just Transition model into its legislation, identifies important policies in pursuit of a Just Transition, and reports to the City Council on the city's fossil fuel transition progress through the Just Transition lens.
- B. And is convened by the author and including but not limited to 2 other members of the City Council, representatives from the Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC), the Labor Commission, the Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission, the Community Health Commission, the Youth Commission, and Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), the

Ecology Center, as well as labor allies and community partners at the UC and in the City of Berkeley.