

City of San Diego

Climate Advisory Board (CAB)

2026 Work Plan

1. Strategic Framing & Design Principles

Background

The Climate Advisory Board (CAB) was established in 2023¹, and seated in 2024², to serve as an advisory body to the Mayor, City Council, and relevant City departments on policies and issues related to climate environment, environmental justice, energy justice, climate equity, sustainability, and energy policy for the City of San Diego and to assist the City in implementing the Climate Action Plan and attaining the City's stated goals in these areas.

Purpose

The 2026 Climate Advisory Board (CAB) Work Plan is designed to maximize **climate and equity impact considering current fiscal and staffing constraints**, while reinforcing the CAB's role as a **credible, solutions-oriented advisory body**.

San Diego's Climate Action Plan³ (CAP) sets **legally-binding** and ambitious emissions-reduction targets across buildings, energy, mobility, land use, and waste. However, FY2026 budget⁴ actions materially constrain execution capacity:

- Elimination of dedicated Sustainability & Mobility department and transfer of responsibilities into City Planning, General Services, Transportation, and Engineering and Capital Projects
- Elimination of multiple positions supporting the CAP
- Reduced non-personnel funding for decarbonization, mobility planning, and outreach

At the same time, **meaningful funded capacity remains** within:

¹ https://docs.sandiego.gov/council_reso_ordinance/rao2023/0-21624.pdf

² <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/public-hearings-meetings/climate-advisory-board>

³ <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/work/working-on/cap>

⁴ https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/fy26ab_full.pdf

- City Planning (e.g., Climate, Preservation and Public Spaces Division Policy, Community & Mobility Planning Division)
- General Services Energy Division (Municipal Energy and Zero-Emission Vehicles)
- The Climate Equity Fund (capital and prior-year appropriations)
- Grant-funded activities

In addition, there are opportunities to raise funds and implement low-cost actions that the city can pursue, however these will require political will and community support.

Consistent with its advisory role, CAB may recommend actions that exceed current funding or staffing levels where necessary to achieve the City's adopted climate and equity goals.

Given the volunteer nature of the Board, CAB will prioritize depth over breadth and may defer or narrow activities to maintain effectiveness and sustainability.

This Work Plan is calibrated to this perspective.

Design Principles

The 2026 Work Plan is guided by the following core principles:

1. Impact-Aligned

All CAB work must demonstrate a defensible pathway to Climate Action Plan (CAP) progress, including emissions reductions, accelerated implementation, improved compliance, or removal of structural barriers.

2. Budget-Aware

CAB priorities reflect awareness of City funding and staffing capacity, while considering recommendations needed to achieve adopted climate goals.

3. Credibility Through Pragmatic Ambition

CAB will be ambitious—but disciplined— by advancing recommendations that balance urgency with feasibility in order to build long-term trust and influence.

4. Equity Embedded Across All Work

Equity is treated as a core success criterion across all CAB recommendations, with explicit attention to distributional impacts, such as those within Communities of Concern and Environmental Justice Communities. CAB will explicitly note when equity goals are constrained by funding or authority, ensuring honesty with the public and policymakers.

5. Public, Stakeholder, and Cross-Board Engagement

CAB will function as a two-way channel between the City and residents, communities, stakeholders, and related advisory boards—seeking participation and coordination, and incorporating public input into recommendations.

6. Consistency with CAB Capacity

CAB will carefully prioritize its work and identify where it will Lead (regular agenda time, recommendations), Monitor (receive updates, flag issues if needed) or be Opportunistic (as capacity allows).

7. Measurable and Reportable

Each objective includes tracking metrics that show progress and inform the 2026 CAB Annual Report.

Definition of Success (Annual Report):

CAB can credibly demonstrate that its work influenced real policy or implementation decisions, advanced CAP progress within fiscal constraints, and measurably elevated equity outcomes.

2. 2026 CAB Work Plan Objectives

The CAB plans to shift the timeline for the work plan to match the city's fiscal year rather than the calendar year. To facilitate this transition, the 2026 Work Plan will cover the remainder of FY26 as well as FY27 (approx 18 months).

Objective 1: Strengthen CAB Governance, Effectiveness, and Accountability

Rationale: In its second full year, the CAB can strengthen its operations to increase its impact.

CAB Engagement Level: Lead.

Key Initiatives

- Formalize board member attendance, preparation, and quorum expectations
- Align board meeting agendas with planned staff and council activities
- Mature the workplan, meeting planning and annual reporting
- Establish coordination with related City boards (e.g., Mobility Board, Resiliency Advisory Board)
- Encourage residents, communities, and stakeholders across all council districts to engage with the CAB through existing public meetings and agenda processes

- Increase board member awareness of relevant topics through staff briefings, agenda presentations, and shared reference materials

Tracking Metrics

- Number of board meetings cancelled due to lack of quorum
- Number of unexcused absences for each board member
- Number of public speakers (non-agenda, agenda, presentation)
- Number of related board coordination touch-points
- Number of formal CAB recommendations and % adopted or incorporated

Objective 2: Advance Equitable Building Decarbonization

Rationale: Buildings remain one of the City's largest emissions reduction opportunities, but consultant support has been significantly reduced.

CAB Engagement Level: Lead. CAB will focus on a limited number of policies at a time, emphasizing those with high emissions impact, strong equity implications, and near-term decision points.

Key Initiatives

- Advise on the Benchmarking, Building Performance Standards, and Reach Codes, including exceptions and non-compliance pathways
- Review outcomes and learnings of the HEART program
- Review alignment between Building Decarbonization Plan and CAP targets
- Advise on City participation in SB 1221 Neighborhood Decarbonization Pilots
- Elevate equity impacts of policies, incentives and enforcement by highlighting distributional effects, implementation barriers, and community-level outcomes

Tracking Metrics

- Number of formal CAB recommendations and % adopted or incorporated
- Number of CAB recommendations or agenda items identifying gaps between current policies/resources and CAP targets
- Whether CAB identified and elevated equity implications, gaps, or tradeoffs in building decarbonization policies

Objective 3: Elevate Equitable Mobility & Mode Shift

Rationale: While consultant support declined, the City Planning Department and the Transportation Department retained grant-funded mobility planning capacity and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding.

CAB Engagement Level: Monitor. CAB will focus on elevating equity and CAP-alignment considerations in select mobility/parking initiatives, leveraging recommendations from organizations that are focused on technical review.

Key Initiatives

- Integrate and elevate community feedback and recommendations from the Mobility Board and relevant community mobility-oriented organizations to inform CAB recommendations. Potential areas include:
 - Bicycle Master Plan Update (BMPU)
 - Street Design Manual update
 - Implementation and further exploration from the [Parking Demand Management Study](#)
 - New programs and Strategy 6 ideas with CAP mode-shift targets (if SANDAG funding is secured to update the CAP)
 - Infrastructure prioritization (e.g. scoring process for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) from the [Mobility Master Plan](#))
 - Bike Share Feasibility Study (led by SDSU / City of La Mesa)

Tracking Metrics

- Number of touchpoints with Mobility Board
- Number of touchpoints with community mobility-oriented organizations
- Number of formal CAB recommendations and % adopted or incorporated
- Whether CAB elevated equity and CAP-alignment considerations

Objective 4: Support Additional CAP Strategies

Rationale: While all CAP strategies contribute to long-term success, limited capacity requires the CAB to engage selectively beyond priority focus areas, emphasizing issues where timely advisory input can add the greatest value.

CAB Engagement Level: Opportunistic. CAB will engage selectively on additional CAP strategies based on member capacity, urgency, and relevance to adopted goals.

Key Initiatives

- Monitor and selectively engage on additional CAP strategies, elevating significant gaps, risks, or opportunities as capacity allows

- Review and uplift recommendations from related boards and community organizations
- Engage with SDCP and its Community Advisory Committee to assess opportunities to support local renewable energy generation, including non-residential projects

Tracking Metrics

- Whether CAB engaged on or escalated issues related to additional CAP strategies during 2026
- Number of touchpoints with related boards, community organizations, and SDCP

Objective 5: Elevate the Climate Equity Fund

Rationale: The Climate Equity Fund⁵ (CEF) remains one of the City's most powerful climate equity tools. While the CEF has identified funding each fiscal year, it may be waived by council action.

CAB Engagement Level: Monitor. CAB will focus on policy-level guidance and transparency

Key Initiatives

- Request a staff presentation on CEF activities since inception in 2021, including program overview, budget allocations, project selection and expenditure status
- Assess and elevate alignment with Climate Equity Working Group priorities
- Recommend improvements that elevate community-level benefits and accountability

Tracking Metrics

- Whether CAB agenda items addressing CEF transparency, alignment, or impact

Objective 6: Suggest Improvements to CAP Transparency and Public Understanding

Rationale: With limited execution capacity, transparency and public understanding become even more critical to maintaining momentum and trust.

⁵ https://docs.sandiego.gov/council_reso_ordinance/rao2021/R-313454.pdf

CAB Engagement Level: Lead. CAB will prioritize a small number of discrete improvements to CAP transparency.

Key Initiatives

- Recommend targeted improvements to CAP Dashboard clarity and usability
- Advise on improving public understanding of key tradeoffs, priorities and progress
- Document and publicly note risks, gaps, or unmet assumptions as appropriate.
- Consult on Climate Action Plan update, supporting public engagement and equity in the representation of community interests

Tracking Metrics

- Whether CAB documented risks, gaps, or unmet assumptions related to CAP implementation during 2026
- Number of formal CAB recommendations and % adopted or incorporated

3. Summary and Action Pathways

This section provides an easy reference to all objectives, and includes potential action pathways for operationalizing the work plan.

Each objective will request 1 to 2 board members to track progress on the objective.

Some objectives may have ad-hoc committees to address specific activities, others will rely on board members to bring forward actions.

Officers will continue to update and maintain these action pathways through the duration of this work plan.

Objective	Engage ment Level	Workplan Scope	Action Pathways
1: Strengthen CAB Governance, Effectiveness, and Accountability	Lead	Board operations, coordination, advisory output, and public engagement	Officers lead governance setup and ongoing maintenance
2: Advance Equitable Building Decarbonization	Lead	Advise on select high-impact building policies, elevate equity, and document gaps vs CAP targets	Ad-hoc committee aligns with staff to plan and sequence CAB engagement. Later potential ad-hoc committee for an activity
3: Elevate Equitable Mobility & Mode Shift	Monitor	Integrate and elevate Mobility Board and community recommendations with an equity and CAP-alignment lens	Assign liaison(s) to coordinate
4: Support Additional CAP Strategies	Opportunistic	Monitor other CAP strategies and escalate significant gaps, risks, or opportunities	Individual members elevate topics to the Chair. Later potential ad-hoc committee for an activity
5: Elevate the Climate Equity Fund	Monitor	Review transparency and alignment and elevate opportunities to strengthen community equity benefits	Request staff presentation and determine follow-up
6: Suggest Improvements to CAP Transparency and Public Understanding	Lead	Recommend targeted transparency improvements, support public understanding, and document key risks and gaps	Ad-hoc committee to determine initial plan. Later potential ad-hoc committee for an activity