

CHAPTER 7 | OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION

The City plays an important role in encouraging energy conservation through policies, programs, regulations, education, and offering financial incentives. Energy efficient buildings increase the health of residents, improve comfort, and decrease utility bills. High energy costs have significant effects on low-income households that do not have the ability to absorb rate increases or seasonal spikes in demand to meet heating/cooling needs, and at times may be forced to make choices between basic needs such as housing, food, and energy. Energy efficient housing is also more resilient to climate change by helping to keep homes comfortable during extreme heat events.

State law (Government Code Section 65583[a][8]) requires housing elements to include an analysis of opportunities for energy conservation in residential development. This chapter describes the programs and initiatives available to developers and residents to encourage energy saving features, energy saving materials, and energy efficient systems in residential development.

7.1 General Plan Policies

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the City's General Plan seeks to protect and preserve open space, productive agricultural areas, and environmental resources. The primary issue addressed by the Open Space and Conservation Element is providing sufficient park space and recreation facilities to serve existing residents and planned growth. The element also seeks to celebrate and memorialize the community's natural, agricultural, and cultural roots. Additionally, the element provides policies to protect water and energy supply and quality. The following are the relevant guiding policies from the General Plan regarding opportunities for energy conservation.

- **Policy 3.5: Energy and water conservation.** Encourage new development and substantial rehabilitation projects to exceed energy and water conservation and reduction standards set in the California Building Code.
- **Policy 3.6: Renewable Energy.** Promote the use of renewable and sustainable energy sources to serve public and private sector development.
- **Policy 3.7: Construction and design.** Encourage new construction to incorporate energy efficient building and site design strategies.

7.2 Building Regulations

Building energy efficiency standards are regulated by the state under Title 24, Part 6 of the California Code of Regulations (Title 24 standards). These mandatory standards apply to both new residential structures as well as alterations to existing ones.

First established by the California Energy Commission in 1978, Title 24 standards respond to California's energy consumption crisis and need to reduce energy bills while maintaining the reliability of the current energy delivery system. Each city and county must enforce the Title 24 standards as part of its review of building plans and issuance of building permits. The standards are updated every three years to consider and incorporate new energy efficiency technologies and methods. All new construction must comply with the standards in effect on the date a building permit application is made. With regard to the Housing Element planning period, the 2022 Title 24 standards will apply after January 1, 2023.

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The California Building Code also includes green building regulations, referred to as CALGreen, to encourage more sustainable and environmentally friendly building practices, require low pollution emitting substances that can cause harm to the environment, conserve natural resources, and promote the use of energy-efficient materials and equipment. There are mandatory measures, which apply statewide, and voluntary measures, which can be adopted locally. Voluntary measures are organized into two tiers with their own respective prerequisites and elective measures: Tier 1 prerequisites set a higher baseline than CALGreen mandatory measures while Tier 2 prerequisites include all of Tier 1 prerequisites plus some enhanced or additional measures. The City adopted the California Green Building Standards Code as codified in Chapter 8.17 of the Clovis Municipal Code; the City has not adopted any of the CALGreen voluntary measures.

California Solar Mandate

The California Energy Commission (CEC) introduced the California solar mandate, which requires rooftop solar photovoltaic systems to be equipped on all new homes built on or after January 1, 2020. This initiative by the CEC is a core part of California's milestone goal of producing 50 percent of the state's energy through clean energy sources by 2030.

7.3 Energy Efficiency Programs

This section describes some of the potential ways to achieve energy savings through City and County programs, local utility providers, and the state.

City and County Programs

The following is a list of some of the energy saving and financing programs available to Clovis residents.

- **Fresno Energy Services Program.** The Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) provides housing improvements that increase a home's energy efficiency at no-cost to applicants through funding from various state, federal, and private grants. Homeowners and renters in Fresno County who are income-eligible can save money not only on their energy bills but also on weatherization repairs for mobile homes, apartments, houses, and condos. Weatherization measures may include:
 - Weather-stripping doors and caulking windows or gaps around home
 - Testing, repairing, or replacement* of refrigerators, water heaters, heating and/or cooling systems, and cooking appliance
 - Insulating exterior walls, ceilings, and floors
 - Installing low-flow shower heads
 - Upgrading interior and exterior lighting services to LED
 - Duct repair and replacement
- **Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Programs.** These programs are available to help local property owners save energy and water while improving the quality of their home or building. PACE programs offer financing options or offset the costs of upgrades such as improvements to mechanical and electrical systems, installation of water-efficient fixtures, and development of onsite renewable energy and electric vehicle charging. Financing is repaid via the property owner's tax bill or monthly utility bill over time. Eligible improvements may vary by PACE program, but generally include improvements for energy and water efficiency, distributed generation renewable energy facilities such as solar photovoltaics, and vehicle charging. The City advertises the following PACE programs on their website:
 - **Energy Efficiency Retrofit Loan Program.** Also known as On-Bill Financing (OBF), this program provides loans to finance the purchase and installment of qualifying energy-efficient equipment for residential and business customers.

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- **Home Energy Renovation Opportunity (HERO) Financing.** HERO offers a low-interest, long-term, tax-deductible financing option that is repaid through your property taxes. Financing can be used to make energy efficient upgrades to homes or businesses.

Local Public Utilities

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), which provides electricity and natural gas service in Fresno County, provides a variety of energy conservation services and assistance programs. The following programs are a few of the available services to PG&E customers.

- **California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE).** PG&E provides rate reductions for low-income households. The CARE program provides a discount of 20 percent or more on monthly energy bills. PG&E determines qualified households by a sliding income scale based on the number of household members.
- **Energy Savings Assistance Program.** This program offers free weatherization measures and energy-efficient appliances to qualified low-income households. PG&E determines qualified households through the same sliding income scale used for CARE. The program includes measures such as attic insulation, weather stripping, caulking, and minor home repairs. Some customers qualify for replacement of appliances including refrigerators, air conditioners, and evaporative coolers.
- **Energy Savings Assistance: Common Area Measures.** The Energy Savings Assistance: Common Area Measures (ESA CAM) program covers up to 100 percent of the cost of qualifying energy upgrades to common areas and central systems of deed-restricted, multifamily buildings. This includes community and laundry rooms, outdoor recreation areas, parking lots, and central heating and cooling systems. To qualify, the property must be deed restricted and the owner must certify that at least 65 percent of the tenant households meet the ESA income guidelines.
- **Energy Efficiency for Multifamily Properties.** This program is available to owners and managers of multifamily residential dwellings. The program encourages energy efficiency by providing rebates for the installation of certain energy-saving products such as high-efficiency appliances, compact fluorescent light bulbs, attic and wall insulation, and efficient heating and cooling systems.
- **Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) Program.** PG&E provides a monthly discount for qualifying low-income households of three or more people.
- **Budget Billing.** This program is designed to eliminate big swings in customer monthly payments (i.e., high winter heating and summer air conditioning peaks) by averaging energy costs over the previous 12 months.
- **Green Saver Program.** PG&E's Green Saver Program enables income-qualified residential customers in select communities to save 20 percent on their electricity bill by subscribing to 100 percent solar energy.
- **Medical Baseline Allowance.** The Medical Baseline Allowance program is available to households with certain disabilities or medical needs. The program allows customers to get additional quantities of energy at the lowest or baseline price for residential customers.
- **REACH (Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help).** The REACH program is sponsored by PG&E and administered through the Salvation Army. PG&E customers can enroll to give monthly donations to the REACH program. Through the REACH program, qualified low-income customers who have experienced unforeseen hardships that prohibit them from paying their utility bills may receive an energy credit up to \$200.

State and Federal Programs

In addition to the local programs described above, the following programs are available through state and federal funding.

- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).** This program, administered by the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD), provides two types of assistance: Home Energy Assistance and Energy Crisis Intervention. The first type of assistance is a direct payment to utility bills for

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qualified low-income households. The second type of assistance is available to low-income households that are in a crisis. CSD also offers free weatherization assistance, such as attic insulation, caulking, water heater blankets, and heating and cooling system repairs to low-income households.

- **Single-family Affordable Solar Housing (SASH) Program.** The SASH program provides qualified low-income homeowners fixed, up front, capacity-based incentives to help offset the upfront cost of a solar electric system. The program is administered through GRID Alternatives, an Oakland-based non-profit organization.
- **Multifamily Affordable Solar Housing (MASH) Program.** Established in 2008, the MASH Program provides solar incentives for qualifying affordable housing multifamily dwellings. The amount of the incentive depends on which track the applicant is eligible for (e.g., photovoltaic system offsetting common area load versus tenant load and tenant benefit). In the Central Valley (including Clovis), MASH is administered through PG&E.
- **California Solar Initiative-Thermal Program.** This program provides rebates for solar water heating and other solar thermal systems to residential and commercial customers of PG&E, Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company, and San Diego Gas & Electric.

There are also a few national voluntary recognition programs that encourage energy efficient homes and green building practices and provide guidance to cities and developers. Some of the programs utilized by the housing industry include:

- U.S. Green Building Council's LEED green building programs
- Build it Green's Green Point Rated program
- National Association of Home Builders Model Green Home Building program
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star for Homes program
- Building Industry Institute's California Green Builder program

Many of these programs have been designed to reduce the impacts associated with the construction and operation of residential buildings through reductions in energy and water use, use of innovative technologies, and reduced maintenance costs.