



**COUNCILMEMBER  
SUSAN SHER**

## **An update from the desk of Councilmember Susan Sher**

I have been serving on the Ukiah City Council for just over six months. It has been an inspiring experience. As a candidate, I pledged to work hard, carefully prepare for meetings, listen to residents' concerns and be a voice for responsive local government. I am proud to say I have kept those promises.

Getting to know our City administrators and staff whom I respect and admire is a pleasure; they are a hard-working and dedicated group!

**I want to summarize some of my priorities,  
particularly on the subject of climate change - what  
has been accomplished, and what I hope to see  
happen in the near future.**

I am very concerned about the health of our planet and the quality of life we will leave for future generations. Worldwide, we have witnessed long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, displacing millions of people from their homes. Locally, drought and fire have significantly affected our economy, our well-being, and even things we used to take for granted such as availability and affordability of homeowners' insurance. Crucial to addressing these issues is a major reduction or elimination of fossil fuel emissions. We have made some progress in this area, but more rapid change is needed.

Before I was on the Council, as an active member of Climate Action Mendocino, I participated in the creation and passage of the City's Climate Emergency Resolution (CER) [2022-44-Climate-Resolution.pdf](https://www.cityofukiah.com/2022-44-Climate-Resolution.pdf) ([cityofukiah.com](https://www.cityofukiah.com)) that issued a call to action to restore a safe climate. Currently, I serve on the City's ad hoc committee of the Climate Action Plan (CAP), along with a dedicated group of resident volunteers. The completed CAP will contain an inventory of current GHG emissions, reduction goals and targets, and implementation strategies.



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Late last year, we adopted the 2040 General Plan that includes several measures to protect and manage environmental, biological, and agricultural resources, air quality, open space, as well as climate change with an emphasis on adaptation and sustainability. Our Downtown Zoning Code mandates creation of “an urban environment that implements the . . . goals of the Ukiah General Plan by encouraging the development of a healthy, safe, diverse, compact and walkable urban community.”

The City has clearly begun to realistically address climate change. Notably, a state-of-the-art recycled water system has been in place since 2021 with an extensive additional phase just approved to provide recycled non-potable water for several more public facilities; our vehicle fleet is gradually being replaced with hybrid and electric vehicles; level 2 and 3 electric vehicle charging stations continue to be installed; solar panels have been put on some City buildings; energy-efficient LED lighting is widespread; and over two-thirds of the City’s electricity portfolio is generated from renewable local geothermal, and electric LED lighting is widespread.

**We have embarked on Phase Two of the Downtown Streetscape Project that will continue to make the flow of vehicle traffic on State Street more efficient & safer for bicyclists and pedestrians & provide a more visually appealing main thoroughfare.**

A recent Council vote approved refurbishing the neglected and dangerous Orr Street Bridge to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, accomplishing the twin goals of inviting residents to get out and move their bodies and reduce carbon emissions. The “complete streets” model is being incorporated into street projects requiring narrower vehicle lanes to slow down traffic and widen sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

The Great Redwood Trail has promise as a recreational and community amenity, but it requires upkeep. Our work to remove the old railroad tracks and build out subsections of the trail was halted by litigation with the Skunk Train.

This has forced us to redesign the Trail so that it is built next to the tracks. Expansion of the Trail is a priority and we hope to soon be able to ride bicycles on the Trail to Mendocino College!



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The City has called attention to the senseless habit of idling, i.e., drivers of gas-driven vehicles leaving their engines running when parked and unnecessarily releasing harmful emissions and wasting fuel. Also, we are offering a reduced trash rate to small households that fill less than a 10-gallon trash can, rewarding those who are careful consumers and practice composting, hence contributing less to our landfill. Recently, we enacted a public rebate program for low-income residents who make energy-efficient household improvements and purchase electric-powered yard equipment.

In order to effectively address the dangerous consequences of climate change, it is critical that we significantly increase these efforts. We need to further eliminate dependence on CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting natural gas; shift away from fossil fuel vehicles and backup power systems, such as generators; and create a renewable energy labor force.

To avoid gas-powered vehicles and appliances that add more carbon dioxide to our atmosphere, increasing numbers of local residents are purchasing electric vehicles, home EV chargers, and electric appliances such as heat pumps and water heaters. We will need to provide considerably more electricity to meet this power demand. Northern California Power Agency (NCPA), the consortium of locally owned electric utilities to which the City of Ukiah belongs points out the need to triple our power production.

That means we need a comprehensive new energy plan for our city to install more solar power and increase our electrical storage capacity.

Such measures are expensive so we need to aggressively pursue available federal and state funding offered by the Inflation Reduction Act to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy. Soon, we will have all the plans in place to make these measures a reality. It is essential that we abide by the provisions of our General Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Downtown Zoning Code.

**With our enterprise utilities and engaged residents, we are uniquely positioned to demonstrate what a power-resilient community can do to address climate change!**

In the future, I will discuss other issues such as housing, planning and construction projects, parks, police, and fire as well as various neighborhood concerns.

*I welcome more active participation in Council business by City residents. Whether that means advocating for your neighborhoods or commenting on City-wide concepts or projects, when residents show up, our meetings are more meaningful. Please consider having your voices heard before or during meetings rather than protest an outcome after a Council decision is made. Send comments on agenda items via email, call in, or come in person to meetings. The Council usually meets the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. Agendas can be found at <https://cityofukiah.com/meetings> Click on the agenda for the meeting date for instructions to view or participate in a meeting.*

