

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

**SOCAN**

Confronting Climate Change

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Lessons Learned from Recent COVID Restrictions:  
Imagining the Future of Ashland

Results of a Summer 2020 Survey  
Conducted by The SOCAN Ashland Action Project

### Executive Summary

In June and July 2020, the [Ashland Action Project](#) of Southern Oregon Climate Now ([SOCAN](#)), conducted an online survey of Ashland residents entitled, “*Lessons Learned from Recent COVID Restrictions: Imagining the Future of Ashland.*” 225 individuals completed the survey, nearly all of whom live in Ashland as well as some who work here. The survey sheds light on a constituency that is highly concerned about climate change and already taking individual action. Despite the disruption, confusion, and isolation of recent social restrictions, nearly all respondents describe positive aspects to their experience and an opportunity to see Ashland’s beauty and vulnerabilities in a new light. The vast majority stated that they are extremely (61%) or very (29%) concerned about climate change. 88% stated that it is important for individuals to take steps to adapt to climate change. 82% of respondents stated it is important for residents to reduce their climate impacts and nearly 86% have already taken steps to do so. Nearly 69% of respondents stated that their experience with the pandemic in Ashland has changed their views about what it means to have a healthy local economy. Nearly 88% believe we can reduce our climate impacts *and* have a healthy local economy, and are calling for leadership to create a more diversified, sustainable, affordable, and resilient economy. 84 of the 225 respondents indicated that they want to work on climate action issues in Ashland; the issues that most interest them include supporting local growers and promoting renewable energy. The results suggest that there is a significant pool of Ashland residents that care deeply about climate issues and are willing and ready to work on these issues. The results also suggest that more education is needed about Ashland’s [Climate and Energy Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#) and how to achieve local greenhouse gas reduction goals. We conclude the report with additional recommendations for city operations, policymakers, residents and businesses along with resources for more information.

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## 1. Introduction

In June and July 2020, a group of Ashland-based climate activists affiliated with [Southern Oregon Climate Action Now](#) (SOCAN) conducted a survey of Ashland residents entitled, “Lessons Learned from Recent COVID Restrictions: Imagining the Future of Ashland.”

The survey was conceived of the unique experience of living with the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time conscious of the climate change crisis that looms ahead. COVID-19 and the resulting economic slowdown have highlighted our strengths, vulnerabilities, and inequities. Our lives have been utterly disrupted. But this time was also an opportunity to experience the effects of dramatically reduced human activity. In many parts of the world, improved air and water quality has been observed, along with rebounding wildlife. According to the [International Energy Agency](#), reduced economic activity associated with the pandemic will lead to an 8% reduction in greenhouse gases this year.

In his August 4 blog, “[COVID-19 is awful. Climate change could be worse,](#)” Bill Gates described 8% as

*“...a meaningful reduction, and we would be in great shape if we could continue that rate of decrease every year. Unfortunately, we can’t.*

*“Consider what it’s taking to achieve this 8 percent reduction. More than 600,000 people have died, and tens of millions are out of work. This April, car traffic was half what it was in April 2019. For months, air traffic virtually came to a halt.*

*“To put it mildly, this is not a situation that anyone would want to continue. And yet we are still on track to emit 92 percent as much carbon as we did last year. What’s remarkable is not how much emissions will go down because of the pandemic, but how little.”*

The pandemic is far from over. The economic damage and uncertainty it has inflicted force us to reflect, imagine, and rebuild. Will we simply try to recreate the past? Can we build a more sustainable and resilient local economy, capable of withstanding the climate crisis--or better yet, join a growing number of cities actively incorporating climate solutions? Can residents, businesses, and local governments work together effectively along with other people and jurisdictions around the world to reduce our climate impacts and avert a public health and economic crisis? This survey, developed by the [Ashland Action Project of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now](#), asked Ashland residents to share their experiences and insights from the recent social restrictions and how these experiences have affected their views on climate action, the local economy, and their personal and community priorities.

The survey findings shed light on an Ashland constituency that is highly motivated to take climate action. As such, it provides insights to policymakers, residents, businesses, nonprofits, and the growers’ community on strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions while also enhancing the economic diversity, sustainability, liveability, and resilience of Ashland.

The Ashland Action Project expresses sincere thanks to all who took the time to share their experiences during this difficult time. We also feel special appreciation for the 84 residents who said they want to work on meaningful greenhouse gas reduction in Ashland. We look forward to working with you!

## 2. Top 15 Survey Highlights

1. This report captures the pandemic experiences of 225 local residents--the positive, the negative, and the introspective. Despite disruption, confusion, fear, and isolation, the vast majority describe positive aspects to the experience and an opportunity to see Ashland in a new light.
2. Despite the immediate concerns of the pandemic, the vast majority of these Ashland residents stated that they are very (or extremely) concerned about climate change.
3. Many respondents are not very familiar with Ashland’s Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP).
4. A 2017 study conducted in conjunction with the CEAP found that residences and businesses account for 98% of Ashland’s greenhouse gas emissions, while city operations account for just 2%. Individual climate action is essential to meaningful greenhouse gas reduction in Ashland.
5. Nearly 86% of respondents have taken steps to reduce their own climate impact (and describe these actions in positive terms rather than as deprivations) and 56% have taken steps to adapt;

- 64% have attended a city council and 41% a public commission meeting; 48% have an emergency evacuation plan; and 26% have used a “carbon footprint” calculator.
6. The vast majority of these Ashland residents believe we can reduce our climate impacts *and* have a healthy local economy.
  7. These residents envision a sustainable Ashland in which all their needs can be met locally, by walking or cycling. They cherish the growers market and the ability to access locally grown food. They envision an Ashland in which the retail sector is focused primarily on the needs of local residents rather than tourists, and outdoor recreation opportunities continue to be prioritized.
  8. The walkable-bikeable, minimally-air conditioned, hyper-local lifestyle that Ashland offers is threatened by the increased incidence of wildfires, decreased snowmelt and higher temperatures that climate change is bringing to our region.
  9. While climate-conscious residents are “doing all we can” to reduce their emissions, they also express that individual action is necessary but not sufficient to address climate change.
  10. 84 survey respondents say they want to work on greenhouse gas reduction in Ashland--a tremendous opportunity to advance this work.
  11. These Ashland residents are also calling for leadership on climate issues, especially at a time when we are called upon to rethink the basis of our local economy. While they have highly valued the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and other arts and culture opportunities that have abounded in Ashland, they believe that economic diversification is essential.
  12. To marry economic and climate action, respondents are calling for strong leadership, an end to “business-as-usual” thinking, and an emphasis on green job creation.
  13. Many residents also seek a more equitable society, in which housing, solar energy, and low-waste consumption are affordable and available to all. They seek to bridge the gap between those residents who are homeowners and/or have abundant assets and those who are renting and/or do not. Living a climate-conscious lifestyle should not be an expensive choice.
  14. These residents are convinced that Ashland has the creativity, commitment, talent, intelligence, and consciousness to build a diversified, equitable, green economy.
  15. City programs incentivizing energy and water conservation and solar panel installation, are often cited as key to residents’ ability to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

### 3. Background, Survey Methodology, and Who Took the Survey

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of many people, and after significant community discussion and input, Ashland approved [a Climate and Energy Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#) in March 2017. The CEAP is a comprehensive, landmark document, but implementing it takes time and commitment, and a willingness to change the way we think about our community, how we do business, and how we work together. The Ashland Action project came about because Ashland members of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN) wish to support the CEAP and accelerate the process of putting it into action. Our goal is to amplify the voice of climate activists, and raise awareness, political support, and organization of residents about climate issues and climate action.

As part of the CEAP, a five-year analysis of Ashland’s greenhouse gas emissions was conducted by The Good Company, a Eugene-based climate action consulting firm. Their February 2016 report,

[“Greenhouse Gas Inventory Community and City Operations Results, Analysis and Recommendations,”](#) (GHG Inventory) is the most recent study available on greenhouse gas emissions in Ashland.

Greenhouse gases are often just called “carbon” (CO<sub>2</sub>) as a shorthand. However, CO<sub>2</sub> is only one of several greenhouse gases of concern, and not even the worst. The CEAP defines greenhouse gas as: *“A gas that absorbs and emits thermal radiation in the atmosphere, contributing to the “greenhouse effect” by preventing heat from leaving the atmosphere. CO<sub>2</sub> is the most common greenhouse gas, but this category also includes methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, and even water vapor (picture a humid day). Greenhouse gases vary greatly in the strength and persistence of their warming effect; for example, methane has a greenhouse effect approximately 72 times stronger than CO<sub>2</sub>, but its atmospheric lifespan is much shorter.”*

One key finding of the GHG inventory was that the residential and commercial sectors of Ashland account for 98% of emissions. Household goods and food accounted for 48% of GHGs, including manufacture and transport of goods and food consumed by residents and waste management systems. Therefore, it is imperative that Ashland residents and businesses be actively engaged in GHG reduction. City operations account for only 2% of Ashland’s GHGs, but offer a tremendous opportunity to test and demonstrate climate smart solutions that others in the community can pick up and build on. Updated studies would help assess progress since 2017 and establish targets to move forward.

## Survey Methodology

The survey was developed using [Survey Monkey](#). Some questions were open-ended and others were multiple choice with opportunities for comment. We also asked for basic demographics. The survey was anonymous, however, respondents could provide their contact information if they wished to work on climate action or wanted a copy of the survey report.

Conducting a study during a pandemic is challenging when residents have been advised to stay home. A press release about the survey was sent to local print and broadcast media, but the survey received no coverage. The survey link was circulated from June 5- July 1 through local Facebook groups, Next Door, email lists, climate action groups, and personal contacts. We put up posters in stores that were open. Ashland Action team members wrote letters to the editor about the survey, three of which were published in *The Ashland Tidings* while the survey was open.

## Who Took the Survey?

A total of 225 people responded to the survey. Of these, 216 reported living in Ashland zip code 97520. Three work for the city of Ashland; we included their responses even if they live outside of Ashland.

Survey respondents tended to be older than the overall community.

Age Group	Survey Respondents	City of Ashland (2011-2015)
Under 18	0.5%	20.2%*
18-24	0.5%	9.6%*
25-34	1.9%	11.0%
35-44	8.1%	10.9%
45-54	13.4%	10.8%
55-64	25.9%	17.2%
65-74	32.5%	12.4%
75+	17.2%	7.9%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

\* These U.S. Census Bureau statistics are for ages Under 19, and ages 19-24.

- **Gender:** Two-thirds identified themselves as female, 31% male, and 4% did not identify.
- **Employment Status:** 44% of respondents described themselves as retired, while 29% stated they work full-time and 20% work part-time. Approximately 6% are not looking for work, less than 2% are looking for work, and less than 1% describe themselves as disabled and unable to work.
- **Housing Status:** Nearly 79% described themselves as homeowners and 19% as renters; the remaining 2% described themselves as unhoused or did not specify their housing status.
- **Voter Registration:** Over 97% of respondents stated that they are registered to vote
- **Children at Home:** Nearly 87% of respondents have no children living at home, while 13% have between one and three children living at home.

## 4. Experiences, Emotions, and Insights of COVID Restrictions

The survey asked respondents to discuss, in open text, “the most negative or difficult aspects” of the recent restrictions for them, as well as “the most positive aspects.” Many wrote at length --expressing both sorrow and sweetness, of heightened feelings of both isolation and connection. Again, abundant thanks to these residents who took the time to share their feelings and experiences.

The dominant themes expressed include:

#### Life Came to a Standstill

The most commonly cited negative or difficult aspects of the restrictions revolved around the loss of the ability to participate in activities outside the home with the attendant feelings of missing interacting with people associated with those activities. They range from, *"We had travel plans, which were ended"* to *"Not having open restaurants and other businesses"* to *"Not seeing plays"* to *"finding ways to stay active with the YMCA being shut down"*. Feelings of missing *"family gatherings, friends and community"* or the *"inability to visit my aging father in a continuing care community"* or not *"seeing friends in person"* combined with a number of respondents who missed human touch, *"No hugging or handshakes"*.

#### Not Knowing What and Who to Believe

A significant percentage of responses revolve around the ambiguity of the restrictions imposed, the social friction it caused and what compliance of those restrictions were or were not being followed. Such as, *"Not being confident that there would be effective enforcement of State guidance"* or that *"members of the community and even business owners being too lax about how serious covid is"* or *"worrying that we don't follow restrictions that make the pandemic less harmful"*. Concern was shown because of *"The lack of enforcement, given the lack of voluntary compliance"* and *"Conspiracies"*.

Mask wearing, in particular, was cited numerous times from comments like *"The extremists who don't wear masks and are angry, verbally violent or dismissive"* to *"The risks of essential trips...to grocery stores, where others don't wear masks"* to *"lack of facemasks in the general public"* to *"stores should be able to enforce the mask requirement"* to *"The policing of every single action by the fear mongers"* who *"out"* people on social media for not wearing masks.

#### Isolation, Uncertainty and Unearthing Truth from Fiction

Feelings of fear, anxiety, depression through isolation accompanied by worry of self and others was a recurrent response. *"I don't feel comfortable to go out to socialize"* or *"staying home alone, isolation, need to take protective measures, constant worry about the possibility of catching CoVid-19"* or feeling badly that store employees are stuck with no alternatives than to potentially endanger their health in order to keep us supplied". Fear and worry of *"providing services to the housed and homeless in need"*. Other fears and worries about businesses failing, the university suffering and that *"OSF will go bankrupt and Ashland will be economically devastated"* were also present. In addition, through job loss, furlough or the job loss of others, financial instability was a concern. *"Being self-employed...has been a nightmare for getting any kind of unemployment support"* or that the *"most negative is a family member who is totally furloughed"* or *"working from home at 20% furlough. I cannot afford to retire"* and, in general, the worry of *"the lack of work and the uncertainty of wages"*.

#### Simple Pleasures

Whether it was *"being with family"*, *"working from home"*, *"getting home improvement projects completed"* or *"reading"*, *"gardening"* or *"cooking"*, the greatest number of responses about the positive aspects of the recent restrictions focused on the simple pleasure of being at home more. *"Family time has been the most positive aspect"* and *"the emergency has deepened family relations"* and enjoying *"a pleasant time with my sons"*. Respondents had *"time to pull MORE weeds than usual"* or

grew a “*Victory Garden*” as well as appreciating “*gardens everywhere!*” People were “*baking more*”, “*cooking more interesting recipes*” and “*having meals with the family every night*”. Many responses revolved around taking more care and having more time to focus on cleaning, organizing and getting rid of things.

Respondents working from home also noted that they welcomed the increased time that they had at home because they did not have to commute to work. They then did not have to get “*dressed for work*” or they were able to “*work in a less stressful environment*” with “*my dog in my lap*”.

### Taking Time to Ground

Many respondents expressed that the restrictions presented them the ability and time to be both introspective as well as creative as they negotiated the requirements brought on by the pandemic and learned how to navigate the changes in interacting with the world. They found that they had time to “*slow down*”, “*simplify*”, “*reassess the priorities*” of life and “*contemplate values*” or “*reboot*” and to “*consider the value of social /community involvements*” and to “*reflect*” and “*to think*” about how we can “*build a society rooted in deeper meaning*”. They had “*unscheduled*” time and found that “*this new life is restful*” and they could “*re-remember what’s important in life*” or to want to “*live life differently*”. Others expressed that they have learned to “*love what is and enjoy life to the fullest extent regardless of the pandemic*”. In addition, gratitude was shown in “*sharing this experience on a global level*” and feeling a “*sense of connectedness with(the)larger world*”. “*Life gets reduced to its essence*”.

Respondents’ introspection lent itself to being resourceful in learning new ways to navigate the pandemic world. Many had time to be creative by “*having more time for my art*” or in “*recalibrating my daily routines*” and in heeding a “*call to step away from day to day work that I had no passion for*” Many were “*learning to use Zoom*” or Google Meet to “*teach OLLI classes*” or connect with friends and family out of town or “*taking online classes around the world*”. “*Learning new stuff*” and doing “*more connecting in other(new) ways*” of communicating have helped “*everyone cope*”, “*deepened family relations*” or used to accomplish tasks to “*avoid close contact*.”

### Time to Look at Nature

Whether for the “*quiet, peaceful days*”, “*clean air*”, “*daily walks*” or “*spending time in nature*”, many respondents found renewed appreciation for the “*beauty*” of Ashland’s surroundings. There was “*more time to walk and hike*” combined with “*being able to spend time in nature without being too crowded*” or “*watching kids play outside*” and valuing “*that air quality was better,*” “*realizing the planet savours this quiet,*” and the ability to “*observe nature from the front porch*”.

“*Just the opportunity to be quiet*” was often expressed, noting that “*things seem less busy, noisy*”, that there were “*less people*”, “*less traffic*” and more “*quiet time*”. In addition, there was “*an intensity of nature*” and in “*realizing just how wonderful my life is in this uncongested, quiet little town*”.

### A Community Supportive of Others

Gratitude for community spirit and the value of community involvement during the initial restrictions was present in more than a quarter of responses. “*People caring for each other. People who are less likely to be affected offering help to others who are more vulnerable (and) a willingness to try new ways to connect*” showed that physical distancing did not prevent social interaction. “*People are more mindful*”, “*friendlier*” and more “*interactive*”. “*Town feels more nourished and pleasant*” and “*supportive*”



*of others*". Respondents saw *"neighbors working together for the whole of the community"* and were *"getting to know the neighbors better"* and *"got help"* when needed or made *"my yard more presentable to the neighbors"*. Some saw an *"increased sense of solidarity with the community"*. People supported *"local business"* or recognized businesses and essential workers *"dealing with shoppers' whims"* and *"banded together to support healthcare providers"*. Neighbors had *"social distancing conversations"*, *"evening howling"* and physically distanced *"happy hour"* which *"brought our neighborhood together"* which brought a *"great sense of connection"* to the community and beyond.

## 5. Ashland's Economy Will Never Be the Same

Across the country, the virus has inflicted serious economic consequences, causing many to urgently reconsider the basis of their local economy and how best to move forward. In some cases, cities and towns are considering how best to incorporate resilience and sustainability in the rebuilding process, taking steps to better adapt to climate changes already underway and also build in solutions to reduce their greenhouse gas contributions.

In Ashland, nearly 69% of respondents stated that their experience with the pandemic in Ashland has changed their views about what it means to have a healthy local economy.

### Diversification

The need for economic diversification in Ashland was the most common idea that respondents cited. Potential strategies for diversification include more people working from home, the development of light industry, the creation of a Center for Climate Change Studies at SOU, improved integration with other Rogue Valley communities, and a greater emphasis on recreation based on local outdoor opportunities and a variety of cultural experiences.

*"I see how fragile our economy is here, depending so heavily on tourism." Ashland needs diversification, including new economic "activities that focus on other than rich white people."*

### Sustainability

Many respondents also asserted the need for a more sustainable and resilient economy, and that economic and environmental sustainability calls for a simpler lifestyle with a reduced emphasis on consumption. Many reflected that unnecessary consumption is unhealthy and not a solid and sustainable base for the economy, and called for heightened awareness of the distinction between necessities and luxuries.

*"Our economy was unhealthy because it was based on waste and greed."*

It is predicted that many of Ashland's small businesses--particularly those catering to tourists--will fail in the coming years.

*"I worry about the future of our sweet town."*

*“. . .this has given us time to stop and see what impact we're having on our environment and how we will need to proceed differently in the future.”*

### Loving the Local Life

Respondents expressed an overwhelming preference that basic goods and services be sourced locally. Many responses cited the importance of supporting local food producers and local businesses and appreciate the extent to which that is happening now. Local purchasing also is consistent with the walkable, bikeable lifestyle that many respondents cherish about living in Ashland.

### Equity

Another major theme among respondents is that the local economy should benefit all people and the environment. Ashlanders with resources are doing well. Recent restrictions and job loss have made economic inequalities more visible. A living wage is necessary in order to have a resilient economy.

*“The purpose of a healthy economy is to ensure everyone has what they need.”*

Many respondents expressed that creativity and cooperation will help us build a more equitable and sustainable community.

### Affordability

The high cost of living in Ashland, especially high rents, have made more people vulnerable in recent years, and even more so with the economic disruptions of 2020. Respondents urged the need to support locals as well as provide for tourists, and provide a service center for “panhandlers.”

Several respondents asserted that *“There is no healthy economy under capitalism.”*

### Other Views

Only a few respondents asserted that *“We have to remain open for business,”* and viewed the restrictions as the fundamental problem rather than the virus itself. A few people wrote that *“A healthy local economy requires OSF, SOU, service businesses, restaurants, and retail,”* and expressed the view that Ashland could return to the pre-COVID normal. A few urged that the city curb spending and maintain a healthy rainy day fund.

## 6. Coming Back Greener and Stronger

Climate action and business interests are sometimes framed as a trade-off. We asked respondents if they believe it is possible to reduce our climate impacts *and* have a healthy local economy. Nearly 87% said they believe it is possible to do both, whereas 12% said they aren't sure, and less than 2% said no.

Overall themes conveyed by respondents included a belief in the resilience, commitment, intelligence, resourcefulness and creativity of Ashland residents. Respondents expressed gratitude for the “natural splendor” that we live in and that surrounds us. To reduce climate impact and build a healthy economy,

many respondents called for strong leadership, role modeling, abandoning “business-as-usual” thinking with emphasis on a green economy that produces sustainable and meaningful jobs.

Many respondents called for increasing safe bike and foot traffic, providing greater support for local farmers and businesses, and increasing the use of renewable energy, electric vehicles, and bicycles. Respondents would also like more diverse tourism opportunities, including those focused on outdoor recreation. While calling for leadership, many respondents also stated that individual choices help to drive “greener” policies.

*“So many opportunities when we let go of the reflex to return to “business as usual”. IF we can get the leaders to lead. IF we can prioritize a new economy that integrates at every level-- climate impacts, climate realities AND make adjustments, create new infrastructures from the individual to business to government. We have to work together.”*

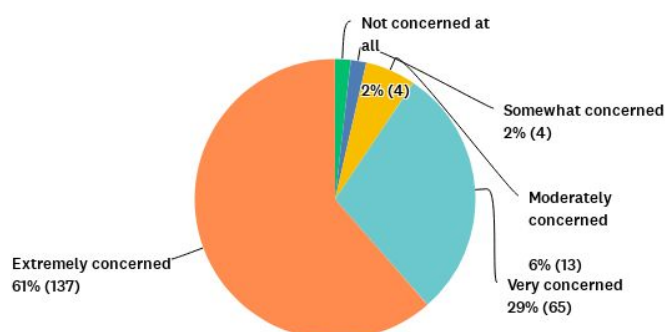
*“Green energy and sustainability projects can be the economic engines for sustainable commerce.”*

*“Changing habits to combat climate change will help our local economy grow and prosper in the long run, while maintaining the course will drive our community into the ground.”*

## 7. Highly Concerned about Climate Change

We asked respondents about their level of concern about global warming and climate change.

Q5 How concerned are you about global warming and climate change?

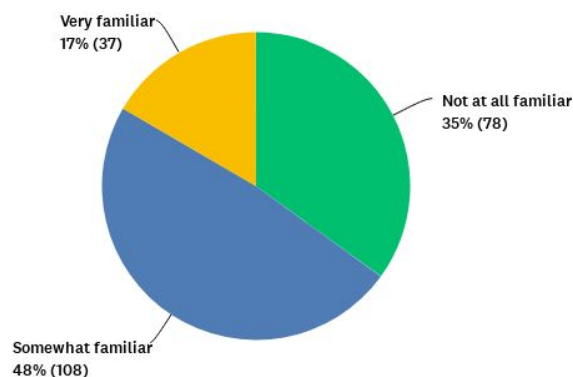


Responding to climate change involves reducing and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (“mitigation”) and/or adapting to the climate change already in the pipeline (“adaptation”). The Ashland Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) defines mitigation as *“Strategies and actions focused on slowing the pace and lessening the severity of climate change by reducing or offsetting greenhouse gas emissions.”* It defines climate adaptation as *“Strategies and actions focused*

*on changing behavior, land use, and environmental management to prepare, protect, and build resilience of infrastructure, ecosystems, public health, and quality of life to anticipated effects of climate change.”*

Despite these concerns, one-third of respondents state that they are not familiar with the CEAP.

#### Q6 Are you familiar with the Ashland Climate and Energy Action Plan? (CEAP)

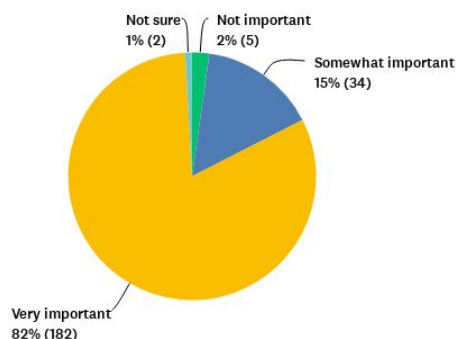


There is a need for continued education and outreach about how the city, local businesses, and residents can reduce Ashland’s greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to the climate impacts already upon us.

#### Importance of Reducing Emissions (Mitigation)

The overwhelming majority of respondents assert that it is “very Important” or “somewhat Important” that the residents of Ashland reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

#### Q7 Is it important that the people of Ashland reduce their greenhouse gas emissions?



Respondents were given an opportunity to comment on their choice and 56% did so with ideas of what they have done or could do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They described action steps

related to transportation (25%), energy use (11%), consumption (10%), government action (6%), forestry (2%), agriculture, food waste, and water (about 1% each).

### Do Individual Actions Matter?

While most respondents indicated that they believed that their individual actions play a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, about 12% of respondents expressed that the real action needed to avert climate change is beyond their control, and/or that actions by those living in Ashland are insignificant because Ashland is small compared to the big issue. Some (13%) stated that fossil fuel companies, major industries and big businesses are larger contributors of greenhouse gases, and that they need to take responsibility for greenhouse gas emission reductions. Others expressed simply that there are other national and global issues that are more important than trying to reduce our greenhouse gases in Ashland. These include unemployment, social justice, forest management, and water rights. Interestingly, one respondent asserted that water, healthy soil, and the natural gas pipeline are more important than climate action, although these are climate issues.

Nearly 8% of respondents could be described as “alarmed” by climate change and the seeming inaction to avert a crisis. The [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#) describes the “Alarmed” as those who are fully convinced of the reality and seriousness of climate change and are already taking individual, consumer, and political action to address it. These Ashland respondents expressed their concern that we may not act in time, that the government is not providing the necessary leadership, and that business as usual is not sustainable.

*“I remind people who tend to have 'amnesia' that we are in sixth mass extinction and to please get with the program.”*

*“I don't hold out great hope that humans can change from consumerism and greed to seeing ourselves as a part of the whole of the earth.”*

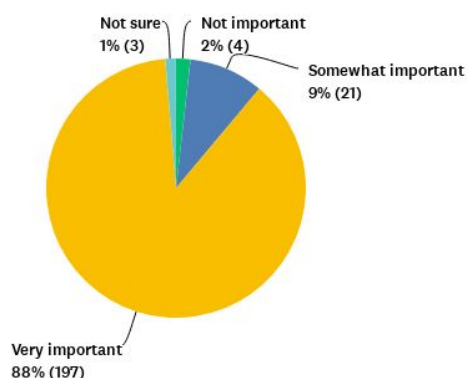
*“I am part of the youth of this planet and if we don't stop and act now I might not even be able to grow up with our fatal changes to the world that are already taking place. The earth has so many moving pieces; like clockwork and if one of those gears decides to stop moving our whole world will be gone before we know it.”*

Many respondents specifically stated that we all need to do our part and be an example (21%). While these respondents conveyed an understanding that individual actions are meaningful, other respondents downplayed the importance of individual actions and suggested that greenhouse gases are “someone else’s problem.”

### Importance of Adaptation

We also asked respondents whether they believed it was important for Ashland residents to take steps to adapt to climate change. Nearly all respondents felt that adaptation is important.

### Q8 Is it important that the people of Ashland take actions to adapt to climate change?



It appears that a slightly higher proportion of these Ashland residents feel it is very important to adapt to climate change (88%) than it is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (82%).

Dominant themes and areas of concern highlighted by respondents include:

1. Adapt or die. We have no choice but to adapt. Without adapting things will get much worse.
2. Concerns about wildfire danger: be prepared and prioritize forest management. Smoke and wildfires pose serious risks to our lives and our economy.
3. Everyone must do their part and take action, we each have a role to play, Ashland should be a leader and government action at all levels will help.
4. Water shortages and drought due to elevated temperatures caused by global warming are worrisome. A continued emphasis on water conservation is needed. Our drinking water supply is in danger, and so are our ecosystem and our local farmers and food supply.
5. Fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions must be curtailed. We must use less energy, and switch from natural gas and coal. Driving hybrids or electric vehicles, using solar, and buying local are all steps in the right direction.

Respondents acknowledged the connection between elevated temperatures, drought, water supply, wildfires, smoke, tourism, health, government and the economy.

*“Climate and health, environmental, human, economic, social health are all interconnected so they need to be solved as part of a system and not as separate problems. Look at how nature uses systems.”*

*“The ability to adapt to every environmental niche, no matter how harsh, is a key strength of the human species...but adaptation should never be a substitute for efforts to change the ways our life habits contribute to climate change.”*

*“If anyone, any family, any tract of land suffers, due to climate impact, then it affects us. We are on a little blue dot, what we breathe and emit, is it. We need to face the impact in each little neighborhood in Jackson County.”*

### Setting Priorities

Respondents were asked about the “most important steps the people of Ashland could and should take to reduce our impact on the climate.” Respondents were given 12 possible steps to choose from and asked to select up to five. We consciously framed this question in terms of what *residents* can do rather than what the city should do, since the residential and commercial sectors account for the vast majority of Ashland’s greenhouse gas emissions. However, city policies play an important role in supporting the climate actions that have the most support among residents.

Respondents have prioritized four actions as the most important for greenhouse gas reduction.

Produce less waste	63%
Reduce the amount of "stuff" we buy	63%
Buy more locally-grown food	63%
Use less energy	62%
Eat a more plant-based diet	49%
Increase recycling of post-consumer waste	46%
Make our streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians	33%
Reduce the use of potable water for irrigation	33%
Encourage more neighborhood cooperation	26%
Plant more deciduous trees in Ashland's urban spaces	24%
Increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations	20%

## 8. Engaged and Taking Action

Several questions were aimed at understanding how engaged respondents are in political activity and motivated to take climate action--and actually *doing it*? Respondents were given a list of possible actions and asked to select all actions that they had taken. Consequently, the total exceeds 100% because most respondents have taken multiple actions. Nearly 86% have taken steps to reduce their own climate impact; 64% have attended a city council meeting; 56% have taken steps to adapt to climate change; 48% have developed an emergency evacuation plan; 41% have attended a meeting of a public commission, and 26% have used a “carbon footprint” calculator.

As a follow-up question, respondents were asked to describe changes they have made to reduce their climate impacts. 161 respondents answered this question with written responses, many of which were quite lengthy. On average, respondents described actions in 3-4 categories, and some listed actions in up to 7 categories. Within each category, respondents listed multiple changes they have made. These responses can provide inspiration for all of us.

#### Transportation (75% of respondents)

Respondents described reduced driving and air travel, and increased walking, biking, carpooling, use of public transport, and combining shopping trips with neighbors. Many have switched to electric and hybrid vehicles. They described a goal of doing as much shopping as possible within the city.

*"I have also used more public transport and walked more often in an effort to reduce the amount of driving I do. We combine trips, and when doing errands downtown we park and walk between multiple locations. I use a bicycle for transportation around town, a hybrid car for travel. "*

*"I'd bike more if the bike lanes were more consistent so that I felt separated from cars."*

#### Home Energy Conservation and Switching to Solar (45% of respondents)

Respondents described taking an energy audit to identify opportunities for reducing home energy usage. Steps they have taken include using heat and AC sparingly, installing solar panels, energy-efficient windows, smart thermostats, better insulation, low-energy appliances, heat pumps, and UV- and light-blocking shades and curtains. Many respondents are line-drying their laundry, and keeping their windows and doors open at night in hot weather and shutting the house during the heat of the day.

*I am "considering solar panels on the house, but I am a renter. ..it would be great to have a solar package that could travel with me every time I have to move."*

*"We added a ductless heat pump to cool the main living space in our house. While this is worse for the environment than not using AC at all, we are aging and are concerned that we will need this in order to survive the increasing summer temperatures."*

*"We have needed to adapt to climate change because of the smoke season. We are a one-car family (two adults) and usually take the bus or bike where we need to go... smoke season is hard with that lifestyle."*

#### Waste Reduction (43% of respondents)

Here again, respondents voluminously detailed their waste reduction strategies. They are recycling, buying in bulk, hauling electronics and batteries to California, shredding and composting yard waste, composting kitchen waste, buying products with only reduced, recycled or recyclable packaging, using plastic sparingly, reducing overall purchases, and making their own products to reduce waste.



*"I developed a character/meme called Wastey to motivate my kids to be aware of their food waste, including how we put food in/out of the fridge and how much we eat and where it comes from. Have a practice called 'Twice' where we work to use any single-use plastic twice. "*

*"I do not buy things that are packaged in little packets with a lot of extra packaging. "*

#### Changes to consumption patterns (39% of respondents)

Consumption generates waste, so to some extent separating these concepts is a bit artificial. However, respondents described multiple changes to their consumption patterns beyond those geared specifically at reducing waste. These include: buying and eating locally, growing and eating more produce and sharing it with friends and neighbors, buying in bulk, buying only used items or new items with recycled content, buying less in general, purging, cancelling Amazon, not buying products produced far away, re-using and repairing, processing "a lot of food on our property", staying aware of best practices with use of products, and asking retailers to be aware of best environmental practices.

*"Consume less in all realms (don't eat out, don't eat much meat, don't buy new clothes unless absolutely necessary, etc) . We focus on locally grown food and go to restaurants that also use locally grown food. Glean food from neighboring trees."*

*"We belong to a Buy Nothing group on Facebook and share resources with others. We try to find people who need/want items we're getting rid of rather than throwing them out. We donate what we can't 'rehome.'"*

#### Yard Use (29% of respondents)

These residents have been working hard to repurposing their outdoor spaces to use fewer resources. They have removed their lawns in favor of drought-tolerant landscapes, planted native pollinator gardens, planted edibles, mulched bare areas, used shade cloths and trees to reduce heat intensity, enriched soil with household compost, eliminated pesticide use, and landscaped to reduce run-off.

#### Reduced water usage (27% of respondents)

Indoors, these residents describe taking shorter or fewer showers and using water-limiting shower heads and faucets, and not waiting for the water to get hot before jumping in. Some have installed tankless hot water heaters, replaced low flow toilets with super-low flow ones, and only run full loads of wash.

*"We have many routine household approaches to reducing water and energy use, such as - no small dishwasher or laundry loads, flushing toilets only as necessary, recycling reusable water from the kitchen sink. save some of the water in a bucket that is wasted running the faucet to get "hot" water to the back of the house, and using it on dry spots in the yard or garden. "*

Outdoors, residents describe installing xeriscaping and drought-tolerant plants, greywater systems, and rain barrels. Many have used Ashland's water conservation program for guidance on reducing landscape water usage, installing controllers, drip lines, low-volume sprayers, and drip emitters, and watering in

the early morning to limit evaporation.

#### Dietary changes (22% of respondents)

These respondents described eating locally, reducing meat consumption, moving toward more plant-based diet, organic eating, supporting the local growers market, seasonal eating, growing veggies and other edibles, sharing abundance with friends.

#### Local Purchasing (22% of respondents)

Again, this category of action overlaps with the general “consumption” category, however it was a distinct theme raised by many respondents. Many described trying to buy exclusively local, citing the importance of the growers' market. Many try to travel sparingly outside city limits, eating almost exclusively locally sourced food and processing seasonal food.

*“I dine in locally owned restaurants and when I buy “stuff”, I look first at local shops.”*

#### Political Action (14% of respondents)

These Ashland residents are attending climate-focused rallies and events, voting for policies that supports applying science and practical ways to mobilize action to mitigate the effects of climate change, testifying against and repeatedly voicing opposition to the Jordan Cove natural gas pipeline, writing letters to the editor about topics related to climate change, testifying against removing mature trees in Lithia Park as part of a revised Japanese Garden Plan, and donating to local groups such as SOCAN, Beyond Toxics, KS Wild, Rogue Action Center.

*“I notice ... there is no option to check to elect new officials or to run for an elected position. Or, an option to create a newspaper column in a local paper. Or, an option to write letters to elected officials. These are the foundations of making change, not the self gratification of buying less, a problem of privilege or, demanding the local food Co-op use recycled bamboo cafe plates for diners. A problem of the idle. Real work and change happens at the legislative level.”*

*I do “all the good things but I do think it will take large government legislation at this point. We can't “compost” our way out of this.”*

#### Fire and Emergency Preparedness (10% of respondents)

These respondents described steps they have taken to reduce their risks in the event of wildfire or other emergency.

*“We live on the edge of the woods, so we do have an emergency evacuation plan (complete with a camper van with 2 weeks of food) so we can get out of town without relying on a shelter.”*

*“Since we lived in Mt. Ashland and were evacuated two years ago, we know firsthand how quickly fire can threaten our home and our lives, not to mention our beautiful neighborhood. We have evacuation suitcases packed at all times that also contain a list of things to grab if time.*

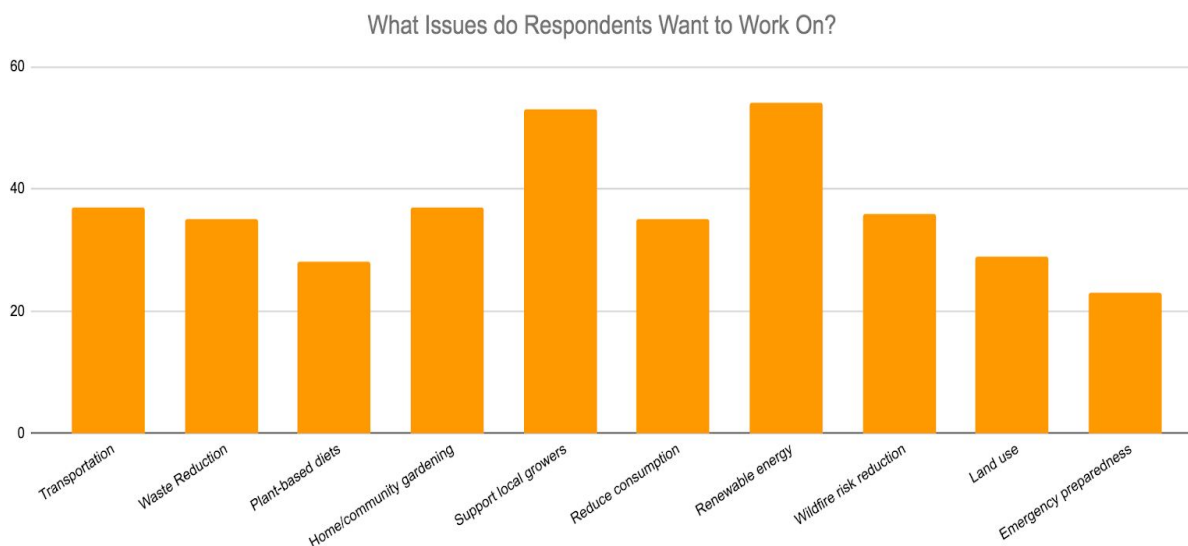
*Our neighborhood has a call/text plan in place to warn of danger. Finally, we hired an expert who fire proofed our property every spring to help prevent fires and we follow all fire safety guidelines. We are lucky to have a volunteer fire department in our neighborhood that communicates fire restrictions and safety protocols through multiple mediums.”*

### Changes to investments (1%)

Few respondents described making changes to their investments to support climate action, such as divesting from fossil fuel companies and investing in green infrastructure.

## 9. Ready to Get Involved

We asked respondents whether they are interested in working to reduce Ashland's climate impact. 84 people responded affirmatively. Most selected multiple issues of interest. Renewable energy and support of local growers were the issues of highest interest.



## 10. Recommendations

### For City Policymakers and Staff

1. Continue to focus on implementing the CEAP and provide education to policymakers, city staff, residents, and businesses on how they can help to achieve GHG goals
2. Further develop the walkable-bikeable lifestyle, investing in bicycle and pedestrian safety
3. Expand the availability of electric vehicle charging stations
4. Continue to support and expand firewise and emergency preparedness planning
5. Maintain small business-friendly policies so residents can meet their needs locally

6. Diversify the economy with an emphasis on green jobs
7. Maintain or expand incentives for energy and water conservation and solar installation, with an emphasis on improving the affordability of climate action for renters and/or low-income households
8. Maintain or expand incentives for energy and water conservation and solar installation
9. Expand the use of community and residential solar energy as the Bonneville Power contract expires in the coming years

### **For Residents and Businesses**

1. Learn about the CEAP
2. Buy and eat local -- walk, bike, or use public transport when possible
3. Switch to a hybrid or electric vehicle if you can
4. Use a carbon footprint calculator, [food waste audit](#), or water footprint calculator
5. Conduct a home energy, water, and fire safety audit (offered by the City of Ashland)
6. Switch from natural gas to electricity and install solar panels if you can
7. Vote for candidates for city, county, and statewide office who support the priorities listed above and can articulate a specific climate action agenda
8. Get involved with and/or financially support climate action groups
9. Get inspired by the actions that others have taken

## **11. Resources for Action**

[Ashland Climate Policy Commission](#)

[Ashland Conservation and Climate Outreach Commission](#)

[Ashland Firewise](#)

[Ashland Transportation Commission](#)

[Carbon Footprint Calculators](#)

[City of Ashland Renewable Energy Programs](#)

[City of Ashland Water Conservation Programs](#)

[Environmental Center Rethink Waste Project](#)

[Jackson County Master Recyclers](#)

[Pollinator Project Rogue Valley](#)

[Recology](#)

[Rogue Valley Food System Network](#)

[Southern Oregon Climate Action Now](#)

[SOCAN YouTube](#) channel, with education on regenerative gardening practices and other climate topics

[Water Footprint Calculator](#)

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