



City offers 'low carbon diet' to residents

Davis households hope to shed 5,000 pounds of carbon emissions

Written by ALI EDNEY

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The city of Davis is going on a diet.

Selected residents will soon begin a city-sponsored project called the Low Carbon Diet, intended to reduce household carbon dioxide emissions by 5,000 pounds per year.

The city's 30-day program will begin Oct. 12 in order to coincide with the UC Davis Centennial celebration. Participants representing 100 households throughout Davis will begin following a plan adopted by the city in order to begin lightening Davis' carbon footprint.

"We're treating the first 100 participants as a pilot project with the idea to scale it out to the community size later," said Mitch Sears, sustainability programs coordinator for the city. "We're going to try and capture several thousand households here in Davis and get each to do their own little part."

While the pilot program will last 30 days, the goal is for each household to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions by 5,000 pounds - around 2 metric tons - over the course of a year.

A study conducted by an MIT class in 2007 found that the average American produces 20 metric tons of CO₂ emissions in one year. If the MIT findings hold true for Davis, the city is asking for a 10 percent reduction.

Those participating in the first phase of the program are volunteers from residential areas throughout Davis.

"We chose 100 participants to coincide with the Centennial celebration," said Dominique Sayer of the city manager's office.

The group will follow a workbook adopted and provided by the city that includes instructions for how to calculate carbon footprints and strategies to reduce emissions.

After an orientation the participants will form support groups that will meet to discuss progress, what tactics are working and those that are not. Some of the tactics that will be used in the program include changing out old light bulbs, not rinsing dishes before putting them in the dishwasher and driving cars with better fuel economy.

At the end of the program, each household will complete a survey the city will use to fine-tune the program to be best suited for the larger community of Davis, Sayer said.

"We have to do everything we can to provide leadership, but it is going to take the effort of the community to resolve the city's carbon footprint," Sears, the sustainability coordinator, said.

The city reviewed the amount of carbon dioxide emissions produced in Davis and found that three to four percent of the emissions are a direct result of city operations while 96 to 97 percent come from the general population, Sears said. "The goal is for each household to lose 5,000 pounds, a little over two metric tons, over the course of a year, which is not an insignificant amount. Put that over the 100 households [in the pilot program], and then eventually spread it to thousands of homes in Davis, and hopefully we'll see major results."

A representative from the city announced the program in last week's ASUCD meeting, said ASUCD Vice President Molly Fluet in an e-mail.

"I think it is a great program and seeing the city's commitment to involve students makes me realize how dedicated the city of Davis is to the university, most of the time," said Fluet.

The Vice President's staff is currently in communication with senators and commissions to see if ASUCD is going to be interested in participating in the city's challenge.

For those interested in learning more about the program, the workbook being adopted by the city of Davis for the project, *Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5,000 Pounds* by David Gershon, is available for sale at The Avid Reader on Second Street in Downtown Davis.

ALI EDNEY can be reached at city@californiaaggie.com.