

Form Name: Boards and Commissions Application
Unique ID: 1451694797

Date Received: 4/15/26
Voter registration verified:
On:
By: MH

Applicant Information

Name	Cynthia Li
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Are you a Sunnyvale resident?	Yes
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How long have you lived in Sunnyvale?	15 years
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Description Area	Residence Notice:Unless otherwise noted, your principal place of residence must be in Sunnyvale. You must live in Sunnyvale at the time of appointment and at all times during service on a board or commission.
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Current Main Residence	[REDACTED]
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Email	[REDACTED]
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Phone	[REDACTED]
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Description Area	Employment NoticeCity of Sunnyvale employees may not serve on a board or commission.
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I am a current City of Sunnyvale employee.	No
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Have you ever served on a City of Sunnyvale board or commission?	No
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Have you attended a meeting of the City Council, or a board or commission?	Yes
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Briefly describe what you learned by watching or attending a meeting of the City Council, board or commission. What improvements would you suggest?	I learned that passing policies via public comments is a time-consuming but necessary step to creating change. By watching the City Council work, I also observed the meticulous decision making of each elected official, and have come to appreciate the care it takes to make decisions on behalf of the city. In the future, I would suggest sessions that organize community public comments and Council Member questions in a more efficient way to streamline the process for community members to stay and listen to a specific policy/ordinance. However, ultimately, my most valuable takeaway from watching Sunnyvale decision-makers work is that democracy takes time, but it always gets it right.
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Have you attended meetings of the board(s) or commission(s) for which you are applying? No

Board or Commission Selection

First Choice Sustainability Commission

Applicant Qualifications

What motivated you to apply for this board or commission?

I have always been passionate about protecting our planet, which first realized in my love for nature. Over time, I've come to realize a deeper reason why I am interested in climate: being in nature seems to bring out the best in people. As I've grown up, I've learned the best way to protecting this beautiful place is through policy. It's about changing our systems to function sustainably, to be a lasting success and compassionate to our environment. This is why I am motivated to be on the Sunnyvale Sustainability Commission. I want to serve as a bridge between youth voices in Sunnyvale and sustainable advancement at the city level. I think my lived experiences can provide the Commission a different perspective to considering policies by considering the youth perspective. Through my conversations with City Council Member Linda Sell, the Environmental Service Department staff Emily Kam and Rhea Grover, and former Sustainability Commission president Kristel Wickham, I can recognize that this is the space that would allow me to make systemic change in the way our city approaches climate issues. Recalling the Climate Action Playbook, it's clear how determined Sunnyvale is to achieve 85x45 and I would love to do my part to make that happen. I recognize my voice is powerful when I speak out about climate change, but I know that serving in the Sunnyvale Sustainability Commission can transform my voice into real policy impact.

What skills or attributes can you bring to this board or commission?

I have extensive experience working with climate policy being on the Executive Leadership Team and serving as the Sunnyvale Action Team Co-lead for SVYCA (Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action). Relevant skills and attributes would include reading policy language, writing and delivering public comments, team leadership of 10-20 students, personal networks with Sunnyvale Council members, ESD staff, and the City Sustainability Librarian. I am confident in my public speaking skills and social media literacy, winning 1st at FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) States for Intro to Social Media Strategy. I can apply an assured speaking voice, strong body language, and intentional hand gestures because I recognize that they are the keys to effective communication. From what I learned in FBLA, I've employed in SVYCA. I used my graphic design skills and understanding of social media marketing to grow the SVYCA Instagram account around 300% since I first became Social Media Officer in June of 2025. Working with 350 Bay Area, I organized the Sunnyvale contingent for Make Polluters Pay (Polluters Pay Climate Superfund Act of 2025) at the March 28th No Kings day protest and collected over 100 signatures. Building off of that, I have substantial experience canvassing, doorknocking, and petitioning, and I have trained the SVYCA Core Team of Co-leads on the process. Policy-specific examples include: Clipboarding 80+ signatures for MPP at Sunnyvale and Hayward farmers markets, Doorknocking 120+ houses with Sunnyvale Safe Streets for Hollenbeck Bike Lanes, Social Media Campaigning for the Open Space Authority Yes on Measure D. Previous policy successes include passing the: FUHSD Climate Action Resolution, FUHSD Environmental Education Policy, FUHSD Youth Transit Pass, and Option 1 for buffered bike lanes on Hollenbeck. From every stage, I understand how climate policies are passed: grassroots organizing, conversations with electeds, public comments, agendaing items, and finally press releases. I plan on using my experience to better connect advocates with council members as a Sustainability Commissioner to make climate advocacy as effective as possible for everyone involved. Overall, my most valuable asset is the connections I have with youth, adults, and elected officials in the climate space. From school climate groups ranging from FUHSD (Fremont Union Highschool District) and MVLA (Mountain View - Los Altos High School District) to organizations like BAYCS (Bay Area Youth Climate Summit) and OSA (Open Space Authority). I want to help the Sustainability Commission quickly get in touch with professionals in various climate areas and use my network to amplify our work across the city.

The primary role of a board or commission member is to provide advice to City Council on policy issues that are within the scope of the board or commission. What steps would you take to effectively exercise this specific board or commission role?

1. Research: These findings will be organized onto a printed document, and referenced to create a thesis and CER.

I will begin with defining the policy. What would it do for the environment and how does it fit into the Sunnyvale Climate Action Playbook? Does it target Clean Electricity, Decarbonizing Buildings, Decarbonizing Transportation & Sustainable Land Use, Resource Management, Community Empowerment, and/or Climate Adaptation? This allows for more actionable advice on issues the City has agreed to address, and advances the Climate Action Playbook.

Next, I would look into the pros/cons of policy implementation. For pros, find short-term and long-term impacts the policy would have on the CAP and sustainable advancement in the city. Highlight the benefits this will have on all demographics of Sunnyvale Citizens, in environmental, health, living quality, economy, and etc. areas. For cons, address how policies impact low-income communities or underrepresented groups. The ways it impacts the status quo, but also what will happen if nothing changes. Our role in the Sustainability Commission is to answer the big questions when Councilmembers ask the positive and negative effects a policy will have.

After that, I would look into the history of the policy. Often climate policies have had a solid or successful run in other cities, counties, or even states. I would ask what worked and what didn't? To determine how I can give advice to Sunnyvale decision-makers to leap past the barriers it faces.

2. Distilling Findings: The reference point for advice within the meeting. Questions such as, "Explain what this does from a climate point of view?" Will use the claim. Questions about metrics will use the Evidence portion to exemplify. Questions asking "Why this policy?" will be met with the in-depth reasoning to benefits.

After general research is finished, I would create a thesis statement and CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) to the policy to answer the question, "Why is this important?" Shown in this example below.

Claim: Investing \$1 million in active transportation will decrease emissions by 2-10% by 2030 because it shifts the transportation standard to low-impact methods, it provides transportation equity to women and low-income communities, and boosts the economy around \$150,000 per season by offering better inter-city connectivity.

[The thesis breakdown would be topic, argument, and focus. It will

distill the entire policy issue into one sentence.]

Evidence: "The transport sector accounts for a significant portion of urban greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions...Research shows that walking and cycling could reduce urban transport GHG emissions by 2-10%, making active mobility one of the most effective climate actions cities can pursue." (c40.org) "Public transport is most used by the poor and other disadvantaged groups...more than 500,000 people using the Sao Paulo Metro Line 5...56 percent are women and 58 percent come from low-income households." (worldbank.org) "in commercial areas near bike share stations...bike share users spent an average of \$1.29 more per week than others...an additional \$150,000 per season generated in sales due to the bike share." (cts.umn.edu)

[These will be sourced from reputable organizations and research papers, .edu, .org. They will address each "focus" in the claim and support the general "argument".]

Reasoning: Investing in active transportation will set up permanent systems to decarbonize Sunnyvale. It will give equitable access to all city citizens to resources, businesses, and community centers. Through this, the Sunnyvale economy will improve as more movement, spending, and resource utilization will create a more productive economy. Sunnyvale investing in active transportation will advance other CAP goals of reducing vehicle miles per person, increase transportation options, and support shared mobility. This will set up a strong example for other cities to follow, as Sunnyvale continues as a leader in sustainability.

[This ties in the claim and evidence together by speaking on direct and indirect city impacts the policy would have, advancing the CAP, and the standard it sets for all climate decision-making.]

3. Meeting: Listen first, speak second.

The key to communication is listening. We have 2 ears and 1 mouth for a reason! According to this philosophy, my process would begin with listening to any thoughts, questions, or concerns the City Council has about a specific policy issue.

I will use their answer to infer what the Council's current priorities are, so I can give effective advice that aligns with the Council's vision. This is when I focus my prepared research and CER points into advice that fills in the gaps and targets relevant arguments to the Council's current scope of priorities. I would go in a back and forth, and add my perspective as youth to their decision development.

In this manner, I hope to move parliamentary procedure productively. (since I've has many experiences waiting until 10-11pm for city public comments!) By covering the important

points to policy issues, and leaving space for Councilmembers to have their own autonomy.

Education - List college degrees, majors and any relevant training or experience that demonstrates your ability to effectively serve on this board or commission.

SVYCA Sunnyvale Action Team Co-lead, gained experience in understanding sustainable policies by first-hand passing them while working with Sunnyvale elected officials. Mock Trial Lead Attorney, understanding of the law and Speech & Debate experience in front of lawyers and judges. 350 Bay Area Make Polluters Pay petitioning training, understanding state climate policies from an organizer perspective. FUHSD Climate Collective Homestead High School Site Co-lead, student leadership within the (site-specific) Homestead Climate Collective Club and communication across the 5 schools in FUHSD with the district Board of Trustees. ASB (Associated Student Body) Sustainability Commissioner, school-wide leadership, created Homecoming recycling system, organized ASB Thrift Store and raised \$458 donated to the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF).

Describe your involvement in community activities, volunteer and civic organizations.

One of my favorite pastimes is to go organization-exploring. I love looking around at posters in the Sunnyvale Library, digging through an email blast to find a chance to volunteer, combing through my school newspaper to read about school happenings, or attending community events to see what each table has to offer! I find volunteering very therapeutic, because it's a way to move your body and mind to contribute to something bigger than yourself. I have served with my school volunteer clubs, accruing 25+ hours with Key Club, 17+ hours with CSF, and 80+ hours on my own time! Jumping from teaching at Hongyun Art (studio) over the summer, to face painting at my old elementary school- West Valley's Walk-a-thon, interviewing clients at Martha's (food) Kitchen in San Jose, and doing some weekend tree planting at Canopy in Palo Alto! I organized the SVYCA 2025 IMPACT Summit, which brought together over 500+ youth, elected officials, and community members for an incredible day of learning and community engagement. I adore my local civic organizations, having been long-time members of SVYCA, 350 Bay Area, Sunnyvale Safe Streets, and many more to name. From my immersion in these communities, I've been inspired to start my own nonprofit, Studio Sproutling. By combining my love for the environment with my passion for art, our mission is to teach kids about climate change through hands-on art projects. We are looking forward to partnering with the Sunnyvale Library at the new Lakewood location this coming fall; and this has been my own way of adding to my local Sunnyvale community in a way that truly excites me.

Description Area The City has a Code of Ethics and Conduct for Elected and Appointed Officials and an Attendance Policy (7.2.19), 2 G (II) that appointed members are required to follow.

Do you have any concerns related to the above code and policy? No

Are you willing to accept a temporary appointment for the remainder of an unexpired term? Yes

Board or Commission-Specific Questions

Sustainability Commission

Category One: I'm a Sunnyvale resident. Yes

Category Two: I'm a Sunnyvale business community member. No

Sustainability is a new and emerging concern in many communities. What do you think are the primary sustainability policy issues this commission will be addressing over the next few years?

As climate change exceedingly becomes an existential threat, I expect this commission to address the systemic roots of GHG emissions. Starting off with transportation, accounting for 53% of Sunnyvale emissions, tackling this targets Strategy 3, Play 3.1, 3.2. Supporting future policy issues similar to the Peery Parks Rides backed and passed by Mayor Larry Klein are a great step toward affordable public transit. Partnerships with VTA would also prove beneficial to creating transit systems like the FUHSD VTA Youth Transit Pass, that introduce a large population to public transit at a low barrier to entry. The ultimate policy win(s) would be seeing bike lane implementation all across the city, in clear and protected areas. I believe the commission will prioritize moving Sunnyvale to have active transportation options everywhere. Observing Natural Gas accounting for 37% of GHG emissions, I predict policies that shift toward Electric power noted in Strategy 1, Play 1.1, 1.3, Strategy 2, Play 2.2, 2.H, Play 2.3. From current patterns this will cover residential and commercial change to rebates and reach codes. Working on policies that guide sustainable city construction will continue, and increased community outreach for SVCE and Valley Water for awareness about home rebates.

Description Area View the Climate Action Playbook

Have you read the above version of the Climate Action Playbook? Yes

What are your thoughts on the Playbook? How might the actions ("Plays") be improved?

I personally think the CAP is very intentionally written to balance a naturally technical-heavy report into a more digestible read for others. Every one of the plays can legitimately move Sunnyvale towards a more sustainable future. However, I believe plays could be improved if there was more accountability written into the Climate Action Playbook. This could come in the form of visualizing a timeline needed to achieve each strategy, play, and move. Implementing this would help readers understand the scale and time needed to complete each part. Additionally, writing the group/people responsible for working on the play would help with transparency, because not many Sunnyvale community members are aware of how the city staff work on large projects such as the CAP.

Your Agreement

Description Area

IMPORTANT NOTICE - READ BEFORE SIGNING:By selecting both "Yes" and "Submit Form" below I am adding my digital signature to this application. I am also agreeing with the following statements:All statements I have made on this application are true and correct.I authorize the City of Sunnyvale (City) to investigate the accuracy of this information.I release the City from all claims and liabilities arising from such investigation.I acknowledge that any false statement on this application will be grounds for the City to deny my appointment. A false statement discovered later, will be grounds to dismiss me from my appointment at any time.I acknowledge that any false statement on this application could lead to criminal charges. Charges could fall under California Penal Code, Section 115 or other applicable law.

I agree

Yes

Your full name

Cynthia Li

Date

Apr 15, 2026
