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December 10, 2008

Mary Nichols  
Chair, California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street  
P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: City of Walnut Creek Comments on Air Resources Board Proposed Scoping Plan**

Dear Chair Nichols:

On behalf of the City of Walnut Creek, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the California Air Resources Board's (ARB) Proposed Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan).

Walnut Creek recognizes the importance of environmental integrity and sustainable development as a core community value. So much so that our vision statement: "A balanced community meeting tomorrow's needs while protecting the quality and character we value today" mirrors the widely accepted definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report adopted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. Further, Walnut Creek has been a leader throughout Northern California in areas related to sustainability and environmental awareness, receiving several awards and commendations for our ongoing efforts.

While the City of Walnut Creek is supportive of many of the ambitious programs and policies for local government outlined in the Scoping Plan, it is crucial for state policymakers to consider the increased cost and staffing demands necessary to establish baselines, develop strategic plans and achieve the goals set forth in the Plan. AB 32 requires that reductions in GHG emissions must achieve the maximum technologically feasible and cost effective reductions and for the ARB to "consider the cost-effectiveness of these regulations." (HSC §38560)

Further, cities need reliable methods, tools, training, and technical assistance to establish GHG baselines, set targets, and monitor progress over time. In the process of conducting the City of Walnut Creek municipal operations and community GHG inventories, we uncovered inconsistencies in the data, flaws in the methodology and modeling assumptions and unreliable tools for conducting our baseline analysis and forecast. We understand these processes are fairly

new and unproven. Yet, in order for the inventories to be useful for planning purposes, the processes and supports for assessing and monitoring emissions must be consistent, fair, reasonable and reliable.

One oversight in the Scoping Plan and the Local Government Operations Protocols is the recognition and credit for past actions that offset GHG emissions on an ongoing basis. As an example, thirty years ago, the City of Walnut Creek began to preserve what is now 2,700 acres of open space. Although this large area of protected parkland provides a significant GHG emissions offset, it is not taken into account in the baseline calculations.


With regard to transportation-related emissions, Walnut Creek is encouraged by the ARB's position to allow the SB 375 process to set transportation-related targets. The 5 MMT figure noted in the Plan, while a place holder, nevertheless sets an appropriate benchmark that helps assure that the state can achieve its overall 2020 goal.

While local governments can influence development design to a certain extent, the reality is that projects must be built that are attractive for purchase by willing customers and that are economically viable. In order to effect the desired change, appropriate incentives must be provided to the development community and local agencies by the regulatory agency in order to encourage more development in areas where the reductions in GHG emissions will be the greatest.

As both the State and local governments are faced with critical budget shortages, cities will need substantial assistance to cover the costs of investing in green technologies. If financial support is inadequate, the challenges of achieving AB 32 and SB 375 goals will become more burdensome, if not impossible, for local governments to meet. The City of Walnut Creek strongly encourages the ARB to consider these limitations as it moves forward with the Scoping Plan

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. As a partner with the State of California, the City of Walnut Creek is committed to doing our part to create a sustainable California. We look forward to working with you in achieving our mutual goals.

Sincerely,



GARY SKREL  
Mayor

Cc: League of California Cities, 1400 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95864