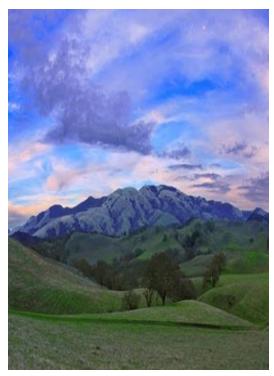


# MCE Walnut Creek Community Outreach Plan

May – November 2016

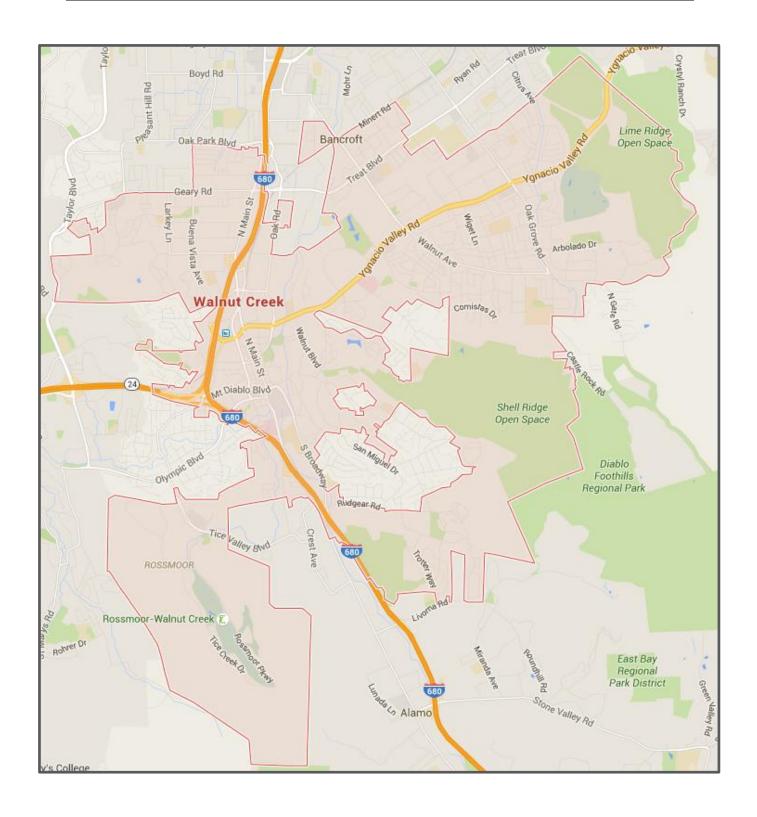


View of Mount Diablo



Rossmoor Residents in Walnut Creek

### Map of Walnut Creek



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#### Overview

MCE's Walnut Creek Community Outreach Plan combines strategies used successfully for previous enrollments (Marin 2010-12; Richmond 2013; unincorporated Napa County 2014-15; and Benicia, El Cerrito, and San Pablo 2015) with targeted strategies based on analysis of the electricity accounts in Walnut Creek, recognizing the unique characteristics and different information channels of this new service area.

This document serves as a roadmap for MCE's community outreach strategy for the electricity customers in Walnut Creek. The purpose of MCE's community outreach strategy is to reach as much of the Walnut Creek community as possible, including a demographically and socio-economically diverse collection of neighborhoods, to ensure all electric customers will be equipped with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their electric service provider.

MCE will educate the general customer base including residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal account holders through communitywide outreach. MCE will also implement targeted outreach strategies to specific community groups (e.g. service clubs, nonprofits, chambers of commerce, etc.).

The MCE Walnut Creek Community Outreach Plan combines strategies used successfully for previous enrollments (Marin 2010-12; Richmond 2013; unincorporated Napa County, Benicia, El Cerrito, and San Pablo 2015) recognizing the unique characteristics and different information channels of the communities in Walnut Creek and provides an overview of the direct mail and advertising plan, meeting, event and presentation venues, and other strategies to facilitate community understanding of MCE and the new electricity options.

#### Introduction to MCE Walnut Creek

The Walnut Creek Council first began exploring Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) programs like MCE, sometimes referred to as Community Choice Energy programs, in December 2014. The Council received a presentation about MCE and CCA in June 2015 and established an Ad Hoc Committee in June 2015 to further explore CCA. CCA was discussed at seven Council meetings. On March 15, 2016, the Walnut Creek City Council voted 3-1 in favor of joining MCE.<sup>1</sup>

Walnut Creek voted to join MCE to give residents and business a choice in where their power is purchased. The MCE Board of Directors voted to admit Walnut Creek as a member at its April 21, 2016<sup>2</sup> meeting. MCE's service area also includes all of Marin

http://walnutcreek.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view id=12&clip id=2725

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Walnut Creek City Council Meeting Minutes:

MCE Board of Directors Meeting: https://www.mcecleanenergy.org/meeting-archive/

County, all of Napa County, the City of Benicia in Solano County; and the fellow Contra Costa cities of El Cerrito, Lafayette, San Pablo, and Richmond. MCE's Implementation Plan was updated to include Walnut Creek, submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission on April 22, 2016, and approved on May 10, 2016.

MCE offers Walnut Creek residents and businesses a choice of affordable, renewable energy in competition, but also in partnership, with PG&E. For customers who choose MCE, PG&E continues to provide electric delivery services including operating power lines, reading meters, issuing monthly bills and providing the same maintenance and repair services it always has – at the same rates. MCE provides the electric generation service, determining the sources of power, and replaces what PG&E would otherwise charge for electric generation.

As a not-for-profit, community-based electricity provider, MCE gives the Walnut Creek community more local control as to how and where its ratepayer dollars are spent. MCE's priorities include reinvesting revenues toward 1) reducing energy-related greenhouse gas emissions; 2) supporting local energy efficiency and renewable generation projects; and 3) maintaining competitive rates.

Residents and businesses in within Walnut Creek will soon have six choices for their electricity supply: MCE Light Green 50% renewable; MCE Deep Green 100% renewable; MCE Local Sol 100% local solar; or customers can choose to opt out and keep PG&E's 29.5%<sup>3</sup> renewable generation service. Customers can also sign up for PG&E's 50% renewable or 100% renewable options.<sup>4</sup>

Because California State law (Assembly Bill 117, 2002) requires CCA programs like MCE to become the default provider of electric generation service, customers will be automatically enrolled with MCE unless they choose to opt out and continue purchasing power from PG&E's energy supply.

Light Green is MCE's default service for automatic enrollment. If customers take no action, they will automatically jump from 30% to 50% renewable energy at the start of their September 2016 billing period, which varies by customer. Customers may request to opt out of MCE service at any time on or after May 20, 2016.

Customers may also request to enroll in MCE's Deep Green 100% renewable energy service on or after May 20, 2016. Early requests to enroll in MCE's Local Sol 100% local solar option are also being accepted and added to a waitlist. Service for Local Sol is expected to begin in late 2016. Local Sol is sourced completely from one solar system in Novato, California. Customers who choose MCE's Local Sol option will purchase all

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> As reported in the Annual Report to the California Energy Commission Power Source Disclosure Program in June 2016 (www.energy.ca.gov/sb1305/labels)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Visit <u>www.pge.com</u> to learn more about other PG&E service options

of their electricity from this 1.5 megawatt photovoltaic solar facility currently under construction at the Cooley Quarry in Novato. Early requests to enroll in MCE's Local Sol option are being accepted and added to a growing waitlist. Service for Local Sol is scheduled to begin in 2016. Enrollment in Local Sol is limited. Once this current project is fully enrolled, there is the possibility to build other Local Sol type projects in MCE's service area, including in Walnut Creek.

Customers who opt out after 60 days of service with MCE will be subject to a one-time \$5 (residential) or \$25 (commercial) administrative fee. Customers will also be subject to PG&E's terms and conditions of service and will not be able to return to MCE service for 1 year.<sup>5</sup> There is no fee for customers who opt out before MCE service starts or within the first 60 days of service.

#### MCE Customer Service

MCE provides customer service via telephone, email, letter and in-office meetings.

1 (888) 632-3674

info@mceCleanEnergy.org

1125 Tamalpais Avenue San Rafael, CA 94901

The call center is dedicated to assisting customers with questions and processing opt outs and Deep Green enrollments. Call center representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week between May 19, 2016, and November 30, 2016 to process opt out requests. Regular call center hours, for all other inquiries, are Monday-Friday, 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. Translation services for more than 100 languages are also available to non-English and non-Spanish speaking callers.

The info@mceCleanEnergy.org email address is monitored and maintained by MCE senior customer service staff; MCE's standard procedure is to make all reasonable efforts to respond to emails within one business day. Customers may request to opt out via the info@mceCleanEnergy.org email by sending their PG&E account number, name and address.

MCE will provide in-office support at the Walnut Creek City Hall for two days after the first enrollment notices are delivered, in order to respond to any public inquiries relating to enrollment and/or opting out. For a list of dates that MCE will be available on-site in city or town halls, visit <a href="www.mceCleanEnergy.org/events">www.mceCleanEnergy.org/events</a>. MCE will also provide information to city or town staff so that they can respond to public inquiries and direct them to MCE as needed. Because the second notice is sent to customers throughout the County according to meter read date, if additional MCE staff presence is requested, MCE will locate a staff member in one location in the County and include that information on the notice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>More information on PG&E's terms of service can be found here: www.mcecleanenergy.org/terms

MCE's San Rafael office customer service hours are Monday – Friday from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.

#### Community Outreach Focus Group

Local input is central to MCE's mission, so forming a voluntary Community Outreach Focus Group (COFG) to guide outreach efforts is a priority. MCE proposes that the COFG be composed of various community representatives with diverse perspectives. Examples include people from industry and business associations, sustainability, English as a Second Language (ESL), or senior-focused community organizations and local government officials or staff from each of the five jurisdictions. MCE will also ensure that invited COFG participants include community members who are openly opposed to Walnut Creek's inclusion in MCE, as well as those who are supportive, and/or undecided. Participants are invited based on consultations with city staff and council. Specific duties of the CLAG are listed below.

- Meet to advise on outreach. This group will provide valuable insight to MCE helping to determine strategies for public engagement, outreach opportunities, and venues for reaching a broad cross-section of Walnut Creek.
- Review and provide feedback on enrollment notices. CLAG participant feedback will be incorporated into the notices. Although State law requires certain language to be included, MCE strives to customize these notices where possible, so that they facilitate informed decision-making by electricity customers in new communities.
- Help organize and promote MCE-hosted town hall-style meetings. These
  meetings will provide an additional venue to provide residents and businesses
  information and answer questions about the new energy choices available.
  COFG participants can help organize and promote attendance at these
  meetings. Similarly, a COFG participant could invite MCE to give a presentation
  to groups in their networks, such as groups of businesses they know, or at their
  places of worship.

#### Community Demographics<sup>6</sup>

Population estimates, July 1, 2015, (V2015)	67,673
Persons under 18 years, percent, April 1, 2010	16.7%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, April 1, 2010	26.6%
Female persons, percent, April 1, 2010	53.7%
White alone, percent, April 1, 2010 (a)	78.7%
Hispanic or Latino, percent, April 1, 2010 (b)	8.6%
Foreign born persons, percent, 2010-2014	22.4%

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> All information taken from the census data: http://www.census.gov/

Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2010-2014	64.6%
Persons per household, 2010-2014	2.14
Veterans, 2010-2014	4,787
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2010-2014	83.2%
Non-English language spoken at home, for persons 5 years+, 2010-2014	24.0%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2010-2014	97.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2010-2014	61.9%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2010-2014	32.3
Median household income (in 2014 dollars), 2010-2014	\$80,399
Persons in poverty, percent	6.0%
Population per square mile, 2010	3,248.1

#### Communitywide Outreach Strategies

#### Mailed Enrollment Notices

Enrollment notices will be sent to every electricity customer in Walnut Creek, as required by California law, which requires that four such notices be sent; MCE will send five (as done in the past) as part of its effort to help energy customers make an informed decision.

The notices, mailed in English and Spanish, will inform customers of the September enrollment, along with MCE's Terms & Conditions of Service, with instructions on how to opt out if they'd like to stay with PG&E's electricity supply. Given the particular concentration of Russian speakers in Walnut Creek, the notices will include a sentence on how to obtain more information in Russian. The notices will also include a referral to the website, which is available in Spanish and has online Google translation options for other languages (including but not limited to Russian, Chinese, Lao, and Vietnamese).

Three notices will be mailed before enrollment and two will be mailed after service starts. The first notice will be mailed in batches through early and mid-June 2016. The second and third notices will be sent within 60 days prior to the start of service, depending on the date of MCE service start (e.g. some start first week of September and others the second week of September, depending on the start of their billing period). The fourth and fifth notices will be sent within 60 days after starting service. If a customer opts out, they will not receive additional enrollment notices.

#### Walnut Creek Enrollment Notice Schedule:

Notice 1 (mailed letter in envelope)

Early to mid-July

Notice 2 (mailed letter in envelope)

Mid-July to mid-August – staggered by service start date

Notice 3 (mailed tri-fold brochure)

Mid-August to early September

– staggered by service start date

September Enrollment

Notice 4 (mailed tri-fold brochure)

• Late September to mid-October – staggered by service start date

Notice 5 (mailed tri-fold brochure)

Late October to mid-November
– Staggered by service start date

#### Advertising

MCE further seeks to inform Walnut Creek ratepayers about MCE and the enrollment process via conventional advertising methods, which could include the following:

#### Print Advertising

- East Bay Times
- Rossmoor News
- Walnut Creek Journal
- Lamorinda Times

#### Outdoor Advertising

- Billboards
- BART
- Broadway Plaza
- The County Connection Transit

#### Digital Advertising

- Geographically targeted web-based advertising
- Promotional social media posts

#### MCE Walnut Creek Webpage

MCE will create a webpage (www.mceCleanEnergy.org/WalnutCreek) dedicated to the Walnut Creek enrollment and include the URL on customer outreach materials. The webpage will include the enrollment timeline, information on the choices available to customers, including the choice to opt out, frequently asked questions and a calendar of community events where MCE will be present.

#### Community Events and Tabling

MCE will participate in community events to distribute MCE information and literature. Events may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Sports events (Save Mount Diablo Trails Challenge 4/17, 5k summer marathons, bike rides, baseball/softball leagues)
- Libraries
- Farmers markets (Downtown/Locust St., Shadelands, Kaiser, Rossmoor, Diablo Valley)
- Off the Grid
- Art on Main
- Spring Fling at Ruth Bancroft Garden
- Art and Wine Festival
- First Wednesday
- Walnut Festival

#### City of Walnut Creek Communication Channels

The City has identified the following outreach channels to share information with the community:

- The Nutshell
- Dedicated Community Choice Energy webpage on walnut-creek.org
- Facebook ads
- Twitter
- Nextdoor
- E-newsletters
- WCTV community bulletin board
- MCE commercial 30 second spot to show on WCTV, Facebook, Lesher Center for the Arts, and the library
- Walnut Creek Senior Center

#### **Targeted Outreach Strategies**

#### Community Based Organizations

MCE will contact community based organizations to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), to provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or to partner in any other way to inform their audience about MCE's service. MCE will contact the following entities.

Organizations with an asterisk work in both Walnut Creek and Lafayette. MCE will also be conducting outreach to enroll the City of Lafayette during the same time frame and will leverage opportunities to educate members of both communities by identifying organizations and events with a regional audience or membership.

#### **Environmental Organizations**

- Water Districts
- Sustainable Walnut Creek
- Sustainable Rossmoor

- Sustainable Contra Costa County
- Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center
- Sierra Club (presents at downtown library)
- Interfaith Climate Action Network<sup>7</sup>
- Climate Action Lobby of CCC<sup>7</sup>
- Rising Sun's California Youth Energy Services<sup>7</sup>
- Bike East Bay<sup>7</sup>
- Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation
- Lindsay Wildlife Experience
- The Gardens at Heather Farm
- Friends of the Creeks

#### Neighborhood groups and Homeowners Associations

- Almond Shuey
- Livona Estates
- Parkmead
- Rancho San Miguel
- Rudgear Estates
- Rudgear Meadows
- Sunnyvale West
- The Woodlands

#### Places of Worship

- Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist
- St. Anne's Catholic Church
- Shell Ridge Community Church
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- Walnut Avenue United Methodist Church
- Congregation B'nai Tikvah
- Hillside Covenant Church
- St. Stephens Catholic Church
- Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church
- Walnut Creek Islamic Center
- Faith Christian Fellowship

#### Rotary Clubs

• Rotary Club of Walnut Creek

- Sunrise Rotary Club of Walnut Creek
- Diablo View Rotary Club

<sup>7</sup> Organizations work in both Walnut Creek and Lafayette. MCE will also be conducting outreach to enroll the City of Lafayette during the same time frame and will leverage opportunities to educate members of both communities by identifying organizations and events with a regional audience or membership.

#### Other organizations

- Girl Scouts<sup>7</sup>
- Macaroni Kid<sup>7</sup>

#### City Commissions, Boards, and School Districts

MCE will work with municipal staff to contact City Commissions and local school districts to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), to provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or to partner in any other way to inform their audience about MCE's service. MCE will contact the following school entities.

#### School Districts

- Mt. Diablo Unified School District
- Acalanes School District
- Walnut Creek School District
- San Ramon Valley Unified School District
- Lafayette School District

#### Private and Public School Parent Teacher Associations

- Foothill Middle School
- Berean Christian High School
- Contra Costa Christian Schools
- Garden Gate Montessori School
- North Creek Academy and Preschool
- Palmer School
- St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception School
- Seven Hills School
- Springfield Montessori School
- Walnut Creek Christian Academy
- Buena Vista Elementary
- Walnut Creek Intermediate
- Indian Valley Elementary
- Walnut Heights Elementary
- Northgate Parent Faculty Club
- Las Lomas High School

#### Commercial and Industrial Businesses

Of all customer rate classes, commercial and industrial customers generally consume the largest amount of electricity. Consequently, they have the opportunity to reduce the largest portions of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

MCE will contact organizations and trade organizations that work with Walnut Creek businesses to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or partner in any other way to inform their staff, patrons and networks about MCE's coming service. MCE will contact the, including the following entities.

- Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce
- Walnut Creek Downtown
- Shadelands PBID
- Macerich/Broadway Plaza

MCE will directly contact the largest employers in Walnut Creek to offer a presentation about MCE (to key staff or all staff), and to provide information for their employees. MCE will contact the following major employers in Walnut Creek, as identified by the State of California's Employment Development Department.<sup>8</sup>

- AAA Northern CA, Nevada, & Utah
- John Muir Medical Center
- Kaiser Permanente Walnut Creek

MCE will also contact the following employers.

- Verizon
- Del Monte
- Joint Genome Institute
- Safeway
- Nordstrom
- US Postal Service
- Macy's
- Target
- Whole Foods

#### Individuals for whom English is a Second Language

MCE will also focus specific outreach to individuals to whom English might be a second language (ESL). While the ESL population in Walnut Creek is relatively small, it is important to MCE that all residents and business understand the change to their electricity service and are able to make informed decisions. Similarly, employees who work for businesses in Walnut Creek may make energy-related decisions, and MCE aims to ensure language barriers do not prevent them from becoming well-informed about the new options available to the community.

MCE has a Spanish website, will provide Spanish printed informational materials, and has Spanish speaking customer service specialists available through its call center.

 $<sup>^8</sup>$  "Mayor Employers in Contra Costa County" State of California, Employment Development Department. www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/majorer/countymajorer.asp?CountyCode=000013

There are also call center translation options for more than 100 languages including Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Tagalog, Lao, and Vietnamese.

MCE will be available to community based organizations to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or partner in any other way to inform their staff, members, and/or networks about MCE's coming service.

#### Low-Income Customers

Customers who qualify for the standard energy discounts are another constituency group that will receive special consideration in MCE's outreach. Discounts like the California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) and Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) are unaffected by MCE service and continue to be managed and billed by PG&E. If a customer is already enrolled in these programs, they do not need to do anything if they elect to stay with MCE; their discount will remain the same.

For a single family residence, this CARE discount eligibility is broken down as follows:

Number of Persons in Household	Total Gross Annual Household Income
1-2	\$31,860 or less
3	\$40,180 or less
4	\$48,500 or less
5	\$56,820 or less
6	\$65,140 or less
7	\$73,460 or less
8	\$81,780 or less
Each additional person, add	\$8,320

Since potential changes to a utility bill will especially impact those with lower incomes, MCE will focus outreach to low-income residents by contacting community based organizations that work specifically with low-income residents, such as affordable housing developments, to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), to provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or to partner in any other way to inform their audience about MCE's coming service.

#### **Seniors**

Because senior citizens may live on fixed incomes or have special electricity discounts, MCE makes outreach to seniors a high priority.

MCE will contact the following community based organizations that work specifically with seniors to offer a presentation (at a meeting or community event), to provide information for newsletters or websites, and/or to partner in any other way to inform their audience about MCE's coming service.

- Rossmoor mutual meetings, Golden Rain Foundation
- Rossmoor Sustainability Club
- Walnut Creek Senior Center
- Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services

#### **Net Energy Metering Customers**

In 2015, a total of 294 permits were pulled for new solar projects in Walnut Creek. MCE has a Net Energy Metering (NEM) program for residences and businesses with solar installations. For NEM customers, a meter tracks the difference between the amount of electricity solar panels produce and the amount of electricity used during each billing cycle. When more electricity is produced than used, a credit is generated for the excess power.

For any excess electricity a solar system produces, MCE credits customers at the Deep Green premium rates (MCE's full Light Green retail rates + \$0.01/kWh). Excess credits roll over each month and never zero out. NEM accounts with credits over \$100 can be "cashed out" each year in April. MCE bills monthly, so annual "true-ups" are smaller.

Please note that when a NEM account enrolls with MCE, PG&E performs a "true-up" and bills that account for all electric charges incurred since their last "true-up" statement.

To educate solar customers, MCE will send customized enrollment notices to NEM customer accounts, discuss NEM account considerations during public presentations, and distribute NEM-specific outreach materials (e.g., one-page flyers) at community events. MCE will also contact solar businesses to ensure that they are aware of MCE's NEM program.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> MCE's Net-Energy Metering (NEM) program may be available for other qualifying, small-scale renewable energy technologies besides photovoltaic (PV) solar. These could include wind, biopower, micro-hydroelectric resources, etc.

#### Analysis of Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

#### Strengths

- MCE's stable and competitive rates
- Generous Net Energy Metering program (for customers with rooftop solar)
- Increased renewable energy supply without solar installation
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Community energy choices where none existed before
- Large businesses and well-known brands located in Walnut Creek

#### Challenges

- Correcting misinformation
- Ensuring all customers are informed of their choices
- Communicating with residents and businesses in unincorporated areas of Walnut Creek
- Informing solar customers of net energy metering program and enrollment impacts

#### **Opportunities**

- Community members may already be aware of MCE through City's and County's initial CCA outreach work and because other Contra Costa communities already receive MCE service
- Community emphasis on sustainability values
- Split Supervisorial district provides contact with more local networks and interests
- Walnut Creek's status as a shopping center and restaurant destination
- Possible synergistic collaboration between Walnut Creek and Lafayette outreach plans
- Free marketing and co-branding opportunities for green businesses
- Ability to offer tailored energy efficiency programs in the future
- Opportunity to develop local renewable energy projects with MCE's Feed-In Tariff
- Ability to cultivate broader awareness of climate change and renewable energy throughout neighboring Contra Costa communities
- Ability to strengthen Walnut Creek's brand as the Jewel of the East Bay

#### General Outreach Timeline

#### **April**

- Draft MCE Walnut Creek Community Outreach Plan
- Solicit input from municipal staff on outreach plan
- Begin outreach to community leaders as possible COFG participants

#### May

- Publish MCE Walnut Creek webpage (<a href="www.mceCleanEnergy.org/WalnutCreek">www.mceCleanEnergy.org/WalnutCreek</a>)
- Provide community outreach plan to MCE Executive Committee
- Provide municipal staff with MCE basic informational document to respond to public inquiries
- Contact community groups and offer to present at their meetings and events
- Begin presentations to organizations, attend organizational events, and circulate MCE information in community newsletters and on websites (May onward)
- Customers may request to opt out or up

#### June

- Mail enrollment notice 1
- MCE staff presence at Walnut Creek City Hall following first notice mailing
- Host first Walnut Creek COFG meeting to discuss outreach lists, enrollment notices, community workshops
- Contact community groups and offer to present at their meetings and events
- Commence advertising plan (June October)
- Conduct MCE-hosted town-hall style community workshop in Rossmoor

#### July

- Mail enrollment notice 2 (notices staggered by customer service start date)
- Contact community groups and offer to present at their meetings and events
- Conduct second COFG meeting
- Conduct MCE-hosted town-hall style community workshop in Walnut Creek

#### August

- Conduct COFG meeting
- Conduct MCE-hosted town-hall style community workshop in Rossmoor
- Mail enrollment notices 2 and 3 (notices staggered by customer service start dates)

#### September

- MCE scheduled to reduce rates by 9%
- Commence automatic enrollment; all customers who have not opted out will jump from 30% to 50% renewable energy service with MCE Light Green
- Mail enrollment notice 3 and 4 (notices staggered by customer service start dates)

#### October

• Mail enrollment notice 4 and 5 (notices staggered by customer service start dates)

#### November

- Conduct COFG meeting to discuss future MCE community involvement
- Mail last batches of enrollment notice 5 (notices staggered by customer service start dates)