



CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS

# *Taking Climate Action*

**COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN** 2nd Annual Update: 2023



**CEDAR RAPIDS**  
City of Five Seasons®



The City of Cedar Rapids' Community Climate Action Plan, launched in September 2021, charts a future rich in community, passion, and dedication to the greater good. We are proud of this plan and the work that has been done in its second year. Working together is how we will keep Cedar Rapids growing and prospering, and how we will reach our important community goals to be carbon-free, resilient, and accessible. This report provides an update on the plan's implementation for its second year, calendar year 2023.



The purpose of this document is to provide a summary update on the implementation of the Community Climate Action Plan for its second year, CY 2023.

The full Community Climate Action Plan can be viewed at [CityofCR.com/Climate](http://CityofCR.com/Climate)

# COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

## CLIMATE RESOLUTION GOAL 1: CARBON-FREE

This goal area focuses on reducing carbon emissions 45% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; transitioning to 70-100% clean and renewable energy by 2050; achieving 35-65% low-to-no emission transportation by 2050; eliminating coal and reducing carbon in industry by 65-90%; supporting carbon capture; and reducing methane and black carbon from diesel and goal 35% by 2050

- ACTION 1: Sustainable Neighborhoods
- ACTION 2: Green & Healthy Homes
- ACTION 3: Sustainable Businesses
- ACTION 4: Energy Disclosure
- ACTION 5: Sustainable Buildings
- ACTION 6: ADUs & ACUs
- ACTION 7: Sustainable Development
- ACTION 8: Transit & Mobility
- ACTION 9: Complete Streets
- ACTION 10: Solar
- ACTION 11: Electric Vehicles
- ACTION 12: Industry Collaboration

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## CLIMATE RESOLUTION GOAL 2: RESILIENT & ACCESSIBLE

This goal area focuses on building resilience to flooding and climate hazards; as well as guaranteeing access to clean water and air, healthy food, high quality parks and nature, good-paying green jobs, and direct connections to City government. All of these areas have a focus and priority on vulnerable residents.

- ACTION 1: Resilience Hubs
- ACTION 2: Resilience Programs
- ACTION 3: Regional Stormwater
- ACTION 4: Food Access
- ACTION 5: Hard Infrastructure
- ACTION 6: ReLeaf
- ACTION 7: Water Quality in the Watershed
- ACTION 8: Stormwater BMPs
- ACTION 9: Green Economy Plan
- ACTION 10: Sustainable Purchasing
- ACTION 11: Equitable Engagement
- ACTION 12: Student Engagement

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## GOAL AREA 1: CARBON FREE Vision for 2050

**OBJECTIVE 1A** | Reduce carbon emissions 45% by 2030 and net-zero by 2050

**OBJECTIVE 1B** | Increase renewables to 70-100% electricity

**OBJECTIVE 1C** | Increase transport sector’s share of low-emission energy to 35-65%

**OBJECTIVE 1D** | Eliminate coal, reduce carbon in industry 65-90%, and sequester remaining carbon

	ACTION ITEM	CCAP SCHEDULE	NOTES
1	Build a sustainable neighborhood program to advance sustainability achievements in each neighborhood and provide an exciting community-building opportunity for Neighborhood Associations.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In year one, the <b>Green Homes Program</b> provided a way for CR residents to engage in the CCAP by sharing their sustainable actions, committing to do more, and receiving ongoing educational materials.</li> <li>• City staff continued to share climate action information through social media, email blasts, and traditional media channels. Staff engaged residents directly at monthly neighborhood association meetings and events throughout the year, including <b>Bike to Work Week, EcoFest, Juneteenth, Resident Appreciation Day, City Week Open House, National Night Out, and United Way Day of Caring.</b></li> <li>• Residents had the opportunity to serve as volunteers and collect heat data as part of the <b>Spot the Hot Heat Mapping</b> Campaign, which provided neighborhoods updated information on areas of extreme heat.</li> <li>• <b>Emerging local artists designed rain art that appeared on city sidewalks when it rained.</b> Artists created designs related to the CCAP, and multiple volunteer groups installed the art. Installations were located along bus routes to promote the transit system.</li> </ul>
2	Create a fund to implement a green and healthy homes and small businesses program to support deep energy and water efficiency retrofits, hazard remediation, renewable energy, and vehicle and large appliance electrification, prioritizing vulnerable neighborhoods.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>\$390,000 in funding was identified for Neighborhood Finance Corps energy efficiency program in core CR neighborhoods.</b></li> <li>• HACAP (LIHEAP) and Green Iowa AmeriCorps support programs including <b>utility bill assistance, weatherization, and free energy efficiency tools.</b></li> </ul>

3	Build a sustainable business program that enhances sustainable building practices ( <i>energy efficiency, clean energy, electrification, water, waste reduction</i> ) and sustainable land use practices ( <i>trees, green infrastructure, gardens, biking facilities</i> ).	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>City's Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program</b> engaged with interstate commerce businesses on wide variety of sustainability focused topics; business attraction focused on how to leverage circular economy to enhance the competitiveness of industrial base in Cedar Rapids.</li> </ul>
4	Support residential energy disclosure for prospective homeowners, renters, and commercial energy benchmarking to encourage energy awareness and conservation.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City staff members are currently identifying opportunities to support residential energy disclosure.</li> </ul>
5	Develop a sustainable building policy for new construction and major renovations.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic development provides tax incentives for development projects that benefit the community. Any project receiving LEED certification may receive up to 10 years, 100% tax exemption or reimbursement, based on demonstrated increasing cost.</li> <li>The city currently prioritizes <b>Energy Star</b> in its purchases.</li> </ul>
6	Update land development regulations to expand missing middle housing and neighborhood scale commercial opportunities throughout the city.	Within 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Economic development provides financial incentives for developers to provide urban housing.</b> Criteria include a) at least three housing units b) 75% or more of the building area is dedicated for housing, and 3) located within established commercial area – in close proximity to workplaces, retail, transit, etc.</li> <li>Accessory dwelling units are permitted throughout Cedar Rapids.</li> </ul>

7	Create a sustainable development policy that defines the characteristics of a 15-minute neighborhood as well as guidance and incentives to fill in missing amenities and features, prioritizing vulnerable neighborhoods.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, the City created a list of potential <b>15-minute neighborhoods</b>.</li> <li>• <b>The City also participated in a resiliency cohort organized by the Local Policy Lab</b>, and received assistance with identifying policy approaches in other municipalities.</li> <li>• <b>Local Policy Lab provided research of peer cities</b> to establish what those cities are doing with respect to complete neighborhoods.</li> <li>• <b>Students from the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities created a guidebook</b> on complete neighborhood planning in North America specifically tailored toward helping medium sized cities like Cedar Rapids explore implementation.</li> <li>• Several City team members are collaborating to develop an index identifying gaps in amenities centered around identified neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
8	Enhance transit and shared transportation options (micro-mobility and car-sharing) in under-resourced communities and high priority transit locations.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The city continues to offer and support <b>bike and scooter share programs</b> in partnership with Veo.</li> <li>• In 2023, 20% of Cedar Rapids Veo riders did not own or have access to a car, 35% of riders would have driven to complete their last trip had Veo not been available, and 33% of Veo riders were able to shed a car/decrease car usage because of Veo.</li> </ul>
9	Enhance the Complete Streets Policy to further community education and prioritize urban heat island mitigation and tree plantings in vulnerable neighborhoods.	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The City's Complete Streets Policy was operationalized in 2014.</b></li> <li>• <b>The <a href="#">ReLeaf program</a> uses a tree equity score when prioritizing planting</b>, which incorporates equity, canopy coverage, and climate into the analysis.</li> <li>• <b>The City received a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grant to organize a community volunteer heat mapping</b> campaign, which resulted in a report and map showing areas of extreme heat. See more information at <a href="http://www.CityofCR.com/SpottheHot">www.CityofCR.com/SpottheHot</a>.</li> </ul>

10	Support large-scale solar installations in underutilized areas (parking lots and rooftops) and urban reserve areas that offer multiple benefits.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Cedar Rapids became an anchor tenant in <a href="#">Alliant Energy's Community Solar Garden</a>, which allocates 900, 250-watt solar blocks over 20 years. In turn, the City receives a credit on its energy bill exceeding the amount of the investment.</li> <li>• A team of City staff are evaluating solar potential on city buildings and land.</li> <li>• <b>In 2023, the City participated in 3rd "Solar Group Buy" along with partners in Johnson &amp; Linn Counties</b> [source], resulting in more than 477 residential solar installations</li> <li>• <b>The City's four (4) solar installations on NW Transit &amp; three (3) water booster stations</b> are saving approximately \$8-10k annually in electricity costs.</li> <li>• Local electric grid will have 50% renewable energy by 2025 and 50% reduced emissions by 2030.</li> <li>• <b>The City is gold-rated SolSmart community</b> for solar-friendly policies, programs, and utilities.</li> </ul>
11	Develop readiness in the community for electric vehicle infrastructure and emerging low-emitting technologies.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In 2023, the City created zero-emission plans</b> for transit and fleet (Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization funded the transit plan).</li> <li>• \$185,610 was earmarked from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program to help finance charging infrastructure for fleet vehicles.</li> <li>• <b>The City co-hosted the Sustainable Economy &amp; Transportation Conference</b> with Alliant &amp; Metro Economic Alliance in 2022.</li> </ul>
12	Collaborate with industry around emission reductions (carbon capture, renewable energy) and community sustainability efforts (stormwater BMPs, garden and tree plantings, philanthropy, volunteerism).	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to the above efforts, an <b>update of the City's Target Industry Analysis was completed in Q1 2023</b>. The study confirmed the City's existing target industries are unchanged from 2014, but renewable materials, renewable fuels and hydrogen production stand out as specific, priority activities for manufacturing within the current planning time frame.</li> </ul>

## GOAL AREA 2: RESILIENT & ACCESSIBLE Vision for 2050

- OBJECTIVE 2A** | Build resilience to flooding and climate hazards with priority for vulnerable residents
- OBJECTIVE 2B** | Ensure all residents have affordable and accessible food options for growing and consuming healthy, culturally relevant food
- OBJECTIVE 2C** | Ensure equitable access to parks and natural space
- OBJECTIVE 2D** | Ensure equitable access to clean air and water
- OBJECTIVE 2E** | Create high-wage, green jobs, and green economic development
- OBJECTIVE 2F** | Provide direct connection to city government for vulnerable residents

ACTION ITEM	CCAP SCHEDULE	NOTES
<p><b>1</b> Develop indoor and outdoor resilience hubs to provide basic amenities to residents in public spaces (info kiosks, wi-fi, charging, shelter, back-up power, water, food).</p>	<p>2-3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rollin' Recmobile</b> continues to provide recreational support for kids and families in City parks and partners with community service providers to share important resources for residents.</li> <li>• City staff is currently identifying opportunities to support Resilience Hubs through the <b>Garden in Parks</b> plan.</li> <li>• On days of extreme cold or heat, the City's libraries open their doors to residents. <b>Linn County Emergency Management keeps ongoing list of shelters for hot and cold days.</b></li> </ul>



<p>2 Support and expand existing resilience programs to mitigate flooding and prepare residents for future climate extremes.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Utilities Watershed Program</b> worked with partners to support farmers in the <b>Cedar River Watershed with \$625,000 in financial assistance to plant 9300 acres of cover crops</b>, which enhance the resilience of soils to extreme weather and reduce downstream flooding (2022-2023).</li> <li>• <b>NOAA grant supported the development of an updated heat map</b>, showing detailed information of heat islands by neighborhood.</li> <li>• <b>Neighborhood PACT</b>: The city program informs residents how they can Prepare, Act, Communicate, and Train for extreme weather events.</li> <li>• <b>Neighborhood Resource Centers</b> are locations where residents can seek basic needs following extreme weather events.</li> <li>• <b>The Flood Protection System</b> will protect the city from flood levels up to three feet above the 2008 flood volume.</li> <li>• <b>The Stormwater Master Plan</b> identified opportunities to protect the city from heavy rain events.</li> <li>• <b>Emergency Shelters</b> are available to residents during extreme weather.</li> <li>• <b>Increased tree canopy through the ReLeaf program</b> helps reduce the impacts of extreme heat and anchors topsoil during flood events.</li> <li>• <b>The city hosted the National Alliance to End Homelessness</b>, which supports the goal of ensuring all residents have access to basic needs.</li> </ul>
<p>3 Support the stormwater master plan with particular focus on regional detention basins and major funding gaps for hard infrastructure maintenance.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional detention basins serve to reduce flash flooding, improve water quality, and in some cases may also provide recreational opportunities.</b></li> <li>• The City's <b>Stormwater Master Plan has identified several regional detention basin locations</b> both in areas with existing development, and in future growth areas. Projects are being evaluated based on flood mitigation potential and community cohesion.</li> <li>• The City continues to work toward identifying funding sources for construction of these basins in coordination with future private development plans.</li> </ul>

<p>4</p> <p>Develop a food access policy as part of a sustainable development approach to ensure vulnerable residents can acquire healthy and relevant food (land access, growing, consuming, selling) within a 15-minute walk (including urban farms, gardens on commercial properties, public gardens, pantries, groceries, education).</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout the CCAP planning process, efforts to expand healthy food access emerged as the top community priority to support climate action locally. Gardens provide access to healthy food, build a sense of community, and support local resilience.</li> <li>• The City completed a <b>Garden in Parks Plan</b>, which utilized a community-driven planning process to add to the network of community gardens in parks across the city. Eight site plans were developed.</li> <li>• City staff completed construction of the <b>Sinclair Park Community Garden. All garden plots were rented in the first year.</b></li> </ul>
<p>5</p> <p>Support conversion of underutilized hard infrastructure (parking lots, roofs, underpasses) to support gardens, cooling features, and active programming (Resilience Hubs, markets, recreation).</p>	<p>2-3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FY24 Stormwater Master Plan update</b> includes a feasibility study for utilizing City Right of Way and/or City property for underground stormwater detention to reduce flooding risks.</li> </ul>
<p>6</p> <p>Implement the city's ReLeaf program, supporting vulnerable neighborhoods with air and heat pollution challenges.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ReLeaf is the City's plan to replant 34,221 trees along streets and 8,275 trees in parks</b> following the August 2020 Derecho.</li> <li>• Priorities in the plan include native species, heat reduction, and under-resourced neighborhoods.</li> <li>• As of the end of 2023, <b>7,141 trees have been planted since the Derecho.</b></li> </ul>
<p>7</p> <p>Protect water quality by supporting source water protection initiatives and existing watershed partnerships that reduce nutrient-rich runoff into the Cedar River.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a partnership with the <b>Soil &amp; Water Outcomes Fund, the City helped prevent 192,764 pounds of nitrogen and 8,012 pounds of phosphorus from entering the Cedar River</b> from crop ground.</li> <li>• <b>The City completed a Phase 2 Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP)</b> utilizing guidance from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The SWPP outlines a watershed approach to securing safe and reliable drinking water, regardless of threats from climate change.</li> </ul>

<p>8 Support stormwater BMP cost-share and ERU reduction programs on large properties.</p>	<p>Within 1 year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Stormwater Master Plan identified the need for creating public-private partnerships</b> to address some of the local stormwater needs. Stormwater management has a triple bottom line that includes economic, environmental, and social impacts. The triple bottom line concept was embraced knowing the financial piece would be needed to get large-scale buy-in.</li> <li>• Since 2016, the City has supported a <b>Stormwater Cost Share Program and an ERU Reduction Program that allows private properties to financially partner with the City</b>. Private properties that have large buildings, parking lots, and other impervious areas are known areas to target for marketing for stormwater practices. Large properties have the larger return on investment (for the private property owner and City resources), are an easier sell, and potentially have a larger environmental impact. Because of this, parcels with larger impervious areas are targeted to provide education on the</li> <li>• City's programs.</li> </ul>
<p>9 Complete and implement a green economic development plan, identifying green jobs, community strengths, and programs for equitable business and workforce development.</p>	<p>2-3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Updated Cedar Rapids Food and Bioprocessors Manufacturing Report (2018)</b>. The new study includes an expanded section on CO2 potential feedstock for future industry growth. The study update has been undertaken through Iowa State University's Center for Agricultural and Rural Development.</li> </ul>

<p>10 Expand sustainability support and expectations in purchasing, contracts, and development to support circular economy, local buying, and cooperative buying.</p>	<p>2-3 years</p>	<p>Continue to implement the <b>Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines</b> and research new sustainability practices. The guidelines provide best practices for a range of practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiny Trash &amp; Compost</li> <li>• Event waste reduction</li> <li>• Pesticide and chemical reduction</li> <li>• Energy efficiency</li> <li>• Transitions to electric vehicles and equipment</li> <li>• Native plant and tree purchasing for City properties</li> <li>• Electric landscape equipment (chainsaws, trimmers)</li> <li>• Facilities are equipped with Tiny Trash, Recycling, Compost, and updated signage.</li> <li>• City crews recycle asphalt, sand, and concrete used on streets, which lowers costs and operationalizes sustainability.</li> <li>• Annually, nearly 3,000 tons of material collected by street sweepers are processed for recycling.</li> <li>• Staff have reduced the amount of salt used during snow and ice events by 30 percent, made possible by equipment upgrades and process improvements.</li> </ul>
<p>11 Operationalize the equitable engagement toolkit to reach more under-resourced and under-represented residents.</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on best practices, the <b>Equitable Engagement Toolkit is being finalized</b> with a plan to embed it in citywide operations.</li> <li>• Utilities became a member of the <b>Water Equity Network</b>.</li> </ul>
<p>12 Establish City-student partnerships to engage youth in plan implementation.</p>	<p>2-3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 staff positions were identified as having a connection to students through presentations, job shadows, tours, internships, and interviews</li> <li>• City staff hosted <b>multiple job shadows and provided tours for students</b> interested in careers in sustainability</li> <li>• City Staff <b>collaborate with teachers in the Cedar Rapids Community School District</b> to provide students sustainability-related project opportunities</li> <li>• <b>CRCSD middle school students participated in the Rain Art project.</b> Students designed, created, and installed Rain Art at their school.</li> </ul>

