



Model Climate Ordinance Review

Leslie Brandt, PhD, Sustainability & Resilience Project Manager

Nathan Fuerst, AICP, Community Planning Project Manager

Greenlee Dahle, Community Planner

Background & Goals

2023 Climate Action Plan

+2023 Comprehensive Plan

+2026 Zoning update

=Opportunity for Integration

Goal: Identify, prioritize, and implement the best climate-informed ordinances



City of La Crosse
CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

December 2022
Revised March 2023



Project Approach

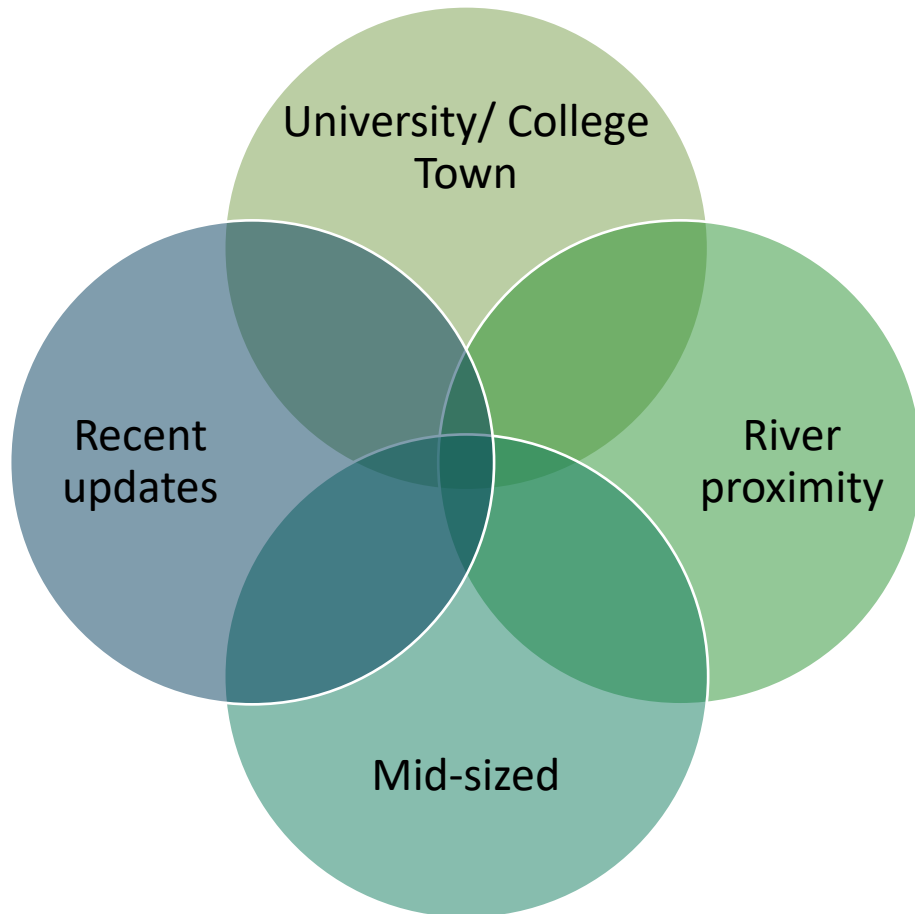
- Review peer and model ordinances that support La Crosse's Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan
- Identify sustainability- and climate-related updates for zoning and development codes
- Focus on land use, transportation, buildings, and resilience
- Provide general and topic-specific recommendations and next steps



City of La Crosse
CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



Project Approach



The review prioritized peer communities that share one or more of the following characteristics:

- university or college-town setting,
- proximity to a river or other major environmental feature,
- mid-sized city or similar demographics,
- recent experience with sustainable development through zoning.



Community Interviews

Community	State	Topics
Hopkins	MN	Sustainable Buildings
La Crescent	MN	EV-Ready
Rochester	MN	TOD
Fitchburg	WI	Tree Preservation, Community Gardens
Madison	WI	EV-Ready, Sustainable Buildings, TOD
Mequon	WI	Tree Preservation
Onalaska	WI	Tree Preservation
Stevens Point	WI	ACU & ADU

Sample Interview Questions:

- What examples, frameworks, or experts did you consult in developing this ordinance?
- What enabling conditions made it possible to pass this ordinance or update?
- What sort of objections, if any, have you responded to when trying to pass the ordinance?
- How long did it take to see a return or positive impact from ordinance implementation (e.g., financial benefits, emissions reductions, community feedback)?



Key Findings and Recommendations

Across topic areas, the review prioritized ordinances that:

- advance one or more adopted CAP goals,
- reflect contemporary practice through recent adoption or amendment,
- have been implemented by peer communities with comparable size, geography, and administrative capacity,
- align with established model ordinance frameworks (e.g., WI DNR).

Recommendations across topic areas include:

- Tie to zoning and land use authority
- Streamline code requirements
- Learn from peer communities
- Consider long-term enforcement capacity

These recommendations are provided as general findings from the research.

All ordinances reviewed are recommended as base models or supplemental references for each topic area.



Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Multi Modal Transportation

Base Model: Madison, WI

- TOD Overlay District
- Bus-based transit overlay (not rail)
- Emphasizes building form, pedestrian orientation, and parking reform
- Flexibility within existing zoning districts
- Parking maximums in overlay areas

Supplemental References

- **Cedar Rapids, IA:** Pedestrian/bicycle connectivity and site design standards
- **Bloomington, MN:** TOD standards linked to redevelopment and corridor planning
- **Eden Prairie, MN:** TOD districts with building, frontage, and connectivity standards
- **Rochester, MN:** TOD incentives (density bonuses, parking reductions)
- **Milwaukee, WI:** Mixed-use base zoning with higher design and frontage standards



EV Readiness & Charging Infrastructure

Base Models: Madison & Roseville

- Madison: Phased EV-ready parking standards within WI zoning authority
- Roseville: EV-ready standards paired with sustainability incentives
- Focus on conduit and electrical capacity, not charger installation
- Phased, parking-based requirements reduce developer pushback

Supplemental References

- **Golden Valley, MN:** EV-ready requirements tied to parking and site design
- **La Crescent, MN:** EV-ready ordinance supporting SolSmart designation
- **Eau Claire, WI:** EV-ready standards focused on conduit and capacity
- **Hopkins, MN:** EV-readiness option within Sustainable Building Policy
- **Bloomington, MN:** EV-ready linked to redevelopment and parking expansion



Sustainable & Efficient Buildings

Base Model: Hopkins, MN

- Policy-based approach triggered by discretionary approvals and public financial assistance
- Allows multiple third-party certification pathways (LEED, B3, etc.)
- Does not regulate building construction methods (avoids state code preemption)
- Adaptable without frequent zoning code amendments

Supplemental References

- **Dubuque, IA:** Sustainability criteria through development agreements and public investment
- **Eau Claire, WI:** Sustainability through development review and incentives in new LDO
- **Madison, WI:** Building energy benchmarking and tune-ups program
- **Milwaukee, WI:** Sustainability requirements tied to large developments and public investment



Tree Preservation & Urban Forestry

Base Model: Onalaska, WI

- Tree protection tied to plats and large developments
- Clear applicability thresholds and exemptions
- Tree Mitigation Fund for replacement costs
- Scalable and enforceable without a dedicated city forester
- Consistent with WI DNR model ordinance guidance

Supplemental References

- **WI DNR:** Model ordinance guidance for development-related triggers and thresholds
- **Fitchburg, WI:** Tree Preservation Plans tied to subdivision and site plan review
- **Mequon, WI:** Detailed tree preservation with city forester oversight
- **Stevens Point, WI:** Public tree preservation and construction protection standards
- **Victoria, MN:** Comprehensive tree preservation with private-property applicability



Native Plantings & Community Gardens

Base Model: Fitchburg, WI

- Community gardens defined as distinct land use, allowed citywide
- Third-party management requirement simplifies enforcement
- Basic standards for structures, setbacks, and water access
- Minimal administrative burden with gradual adoption

Supplemental References

- **Duluth, MN:** Community gardens with standards for fencing, storage, structures, and allowed animals
- **Onalaska, WI:** Native plantings and natural lawns through Property Maintenance Code
- **Rochester, MN:** Community gardens with site design, soil safety, and limited sales standards



Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs) & ADUs

Base Model: Eau Claire, WI

- ACUs defined as distinct from principal commercial uses
- Clear limits on size, employees, and intensity
- Performance-based standards (noise, lighting, signage, hours)
- ADUs: La Crosse has adopted standards; consider reducing barriers (e.g., CUPs, utility connections)

Supplemental References

- **Stevens Point, WI:** ACUs through home occupation and small-scale commercial standards; ADUs subject to CUPs



Phasing & Next Steps

Near-Term (Current Zoning Update)

- Review findings from model climate ordinance research
- TOD overlay along key transit corridors
- EV-ready requirements within parking standards
- Tree preservation tied to subdivision and site plan review
- Community garden and native planting allowances
- ACU category in select residential/mixed-use districts

Parallel or Subsequent Adoption (Policy)

- Adopt sustainable building policy referenced by zoning
- Develop native planting and landscaping guidance
- Monitor development outcomes and staff workload
- Adjust thresholds based on market response and staff capacity
- Coordinate across planning, public works, forestry, and sustainability



Thank You
Questions?



Real People. Real Solutions.

Leslie Brandt

Greenlee Dahle

