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## Introduction

The City of La Crosse’s Common Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in January 2023. This year one implementation plan focuses on its Top Ten Actions. Each top action is complemented with four actions that have the potential to increase their effectiveness. In total, there are fifty possible actions to begin implementing in 2023. It’s important to note that implementation is an iterative process that may require adjustments over time. Regular monitoring and evaluation will help identify areas for improvement and necessary changes to ensure success.

### Top Ten Climate Actions

1. *Increase bus frequency. At a minimum, extend 30-minute service on weekdays by one hour until 6:42 pm on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 to provide flexibility to employees who work into the evening. (TM 2-2)*
2. *Assist private fleet operators who with grant applications for EVs and EV infrastructure; require they set EV goals of 30% by 2030 and 100% by 2040 to qualify for assistance. Goal: 10 New organization commitments annually. (TM 3-3)*
3. *Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase the durability, safety, and efficiency of their homes. Goal: 500 households annually, each achieving 15% energy reductions. (BE 1-3)*
4. *Promote existing commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs. Develop energy efficiency programs for businesses that don’t own their own building. Use the Minnesota*

*Chamber of Commerce's Energy Smart program as a model. Goal: 15% of commercial/ industrial buildings by 2030 achieving a 20% efficiency increase per location. (BE 1-4)*

5. *Organize annual Residential Solar Group Purchase program for La Crosse, supported by a program administrator such as MREA or others experienced in solar group purchase programs. Goal: 70 participants and 750 KW installed annually. (BE 4-5)*
6. *Based on the City's Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, Heat Island, and Carbon Sequestration Study, identify vulnerable urban tree canopy and street tree sections and develop policies to incentivize, encourage, or require strategic tree planting for heat island mitigation. (LH 4-1)*
7. *Enhance stormwater system plans and infrastructure to handle an increase in severe weather events based on climate change projections rather than historic trends. (LH 3-5)*
8. *Use green infrastructure and other nature-based approaches (e.g., floodplain restoration) to reduce the vulnerability of buildings to flooding, with particular focus on critical facilities. (BE 5- 5)*
9. *Support existing community networks and connections led by and/or geared towards populations vulnerable to extreme weather events, including people who are elderly, homebound, disabled, isolated, or those likely to need financial assistance. (HS 3-1)*
10. *Incentivize building owners to increase the resilience of existing and new buildings. Ensure that incentive programs prioritize multi-family dwellings and improvements that benefit vulnerable populations. (HS 1-16)*

## Working Groups

Using the CAP process's sub-teams as a model, the steering committee could form 3 working groups to help with the implementation of the top actions and their complementary actions.

- Working Group 1 (Transportation & Businesses): Actions 1, 2, and 4
- Working Group 2 (Residential Assistance): Actions 3, 5, 9, and 10
- Working Group 2 (Green and Grey Infrastructure): Actions 6, 7, and 8

## 1. Increase Bus Frequency

Increasing bus frequency is an important Transportation & Mobility action for GHG reduction. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to increase the share of commuters travelling by bus to 3% by 2030. As of 2019, bus riders made up 1.6% of commuters. Using the current total commuter number of 39,197, 3% would be 1,176 commuters taking transit, an increase of 549.

### Goal

The CAP draws on MTU's [Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan](#) recommendation to extend 30-minute service on weekdays by one hour until 6:42 pm on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 to provide flexibility to

employees who work into the evening (Pg. 6-2). La Crosse's Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) operates buses between 5:12am and 10:40pm. Before 5:42pm, buses operate on a 30-minute cycle. After that time, they operate on a 60-minute cycle.

### Cost

MTU estimates the annual cost of this improvement to be \$111,137 for 1,300 hours of service.

### Work Sequence

- A. Review linked documents in CAP Implementation Matrix.
- B. In collaboration with grant services consultant, identify funding sources in addition to those in the MTU plan in chapter 6.
- C. Track increases in ridership during that additional hour to support for further actions.

### Considerations

If funding is from a one-time source, the MTU will have to identify new sources in subsequent years. The latest Transit Development Plan has additional documents that could add to this recommendation: [Needs Assessment](#), [Service & Policy Recommendations](#), and [Executive Summary](#).

### Lead

MTU

### Support

Planning Dept., La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), transit advocacy groups, major employers.

### Complementary Actions

- I. Identify funding for public transit improvements and service increases. (TM 2-1)
- II. Establish a parking cash out program, where municipal employees who do not drive to work can cash out their parking space or receive a comparable transit benefit. Provide guidance for other businesses and organizations to implement their own parking cash out program. Goal: 10 New organizations establishing programs annually. (TM 1-4)
- III. Add transit-oriented development (TOD) requirements to commercial design standards; add design standards for transit corridors, including accommodations for bus stops and wider sidewalks. (TM 2-3)
- IV. Partner with sports and entertainment organizations for free bus rides to/from events. (TM 2-6)

## 2. Assist Private Fleet Operators with Transitioning to Electric Vehicles

Transitioning to electric vehicles is another important Transportation & Mobility action for GHG reduction. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to increase electric vehicle use to 20% (11,800 vehicles) by 2030. There are approximately 77 EVs in La Crosse now.

### Goal

Work with ten new organizations each year.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services. Supporting materials may add to costs. EV incentives from the Federal and State government have increased, so the city could assist organizations to identify and attain grants, tax rebate, and technical assistance to ease their fleet's transition to electric vehicles.

### Work Sequence

- A. Identify what EV incentives are available to businesses.
- B. Develop support materials such as a frequently updated list of incentives, letters of support, and contacts with the incentivizing organizations.
- C. Reach out to business organizations (LADCO and Chamber of Commerce) and large institutions to share the incentives.
- D. Assist applicants or refer them to outside assistance.

### Considerations

Review [Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Ready Guide](#). The fleet operators that are interested in help should be committed to converting 30% of their vehicle to electric by 2030 and 100% by 2040.

### Lead

Planning Dept.

### Support

WisDOT, LAPC, Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, and WI Clean Cities.

### Complementary Actions

- I. Require new development to have wiring capacity to for electric vehicle charging and reserve a percentage of new parking spots for exclusive EV use. (TM 3-9)
- II. Collaborate with the [electric utility](#) to provide incentives for EV charger installation at small and medium-sized businesses, with a priority in areas that promote equity. (TM 3-11)
- III. Develop a detailed implementation plan for EV charging infrastructure at municipal facilities. Budget for municipal EV charging station installation and upkeep. (TM 3-8)
- IV. Implement the [La Crosse Energy Action Plan](#)'s municipal operations EV strategies. (TM 6-1)

## 3. Reduce Home Energy Audits Costs

Reducing the cost for home energy audits is an important Buildings & Energy action for GHG reduction. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to reduce building energy consumption by 15%.

### Goal

500 households annually achieving 15% annual energy reductions each year.

## Cost

[Homeadvisor.com](https://www.homeadvisor.com) estimates the cost of a typical home energy audit to be between \$200 and \$700. That means meeting the goal of auditing 500 homes a year could cost between \$100,000 and \$350,000 annually.

## Work Sequence

- A. Review the Mayor's Home Energy Challenge for lessons that could apply here.
- B. Look for partner organizations to conduct energy audit program.
- C. Identify funding source for program.
- D. Prepare materials to show how incentive can be combined to reduce the cost of improvements.
- E. Help homeowners get assistance with completing forms to qualify for incentives.

## Considerations

There are likely not enough energy auditors in the area to meet that annual goal, so the city will need partners. Also, this program could use multiple funding sources to bring homes up to code.

## Lead

Planning Dept.

## Support

Community Risk Management Dept., US DOE, WI OEI, WHEDA, Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, CouleeCAP, Habitat for Humanity, and WTC.

## Complementary Actions

- I. Revive/expand Mayor's Home Energy Challenge to increase weatherization projects. Fund an income-based payment system for low- and fixed-income residents to participate in energy efficiency and weatherization program(s) at little to no cost. Finance energy efficiency retrofits and renewable energy projects for all residential buildings. Establish a tiered incentive based on percent improvement to energy efficiency and income qualifications for applicants. (BE 1-5)
- II. Communicate available energy efficiency incentives to residents, focusing on low-income and minority residents. (BE 1-7)
- III. Implement the [Energy Action Plan](#)'s Energy Efficiency Strategies: 1) increase awareness of energy efficiency rebates and behavior changes, 2) host an energy challenge, 3) connect residents with free and low-cost energy assistance programs, and 11) update existing loans and grants to include energy efficiency improvements as eligible costs. (BE 4-1)
- IV. Create an on-line "one-stop shop" for building and development energy efficiency and renewable energy information and resources as an expansion to the City's existing "Energy Resources" website content. Resource should include the City's anticipated [Net Zero Energy Guide and checklist](#), [Solar Ready Guide](#) as well as content connecting residents and businesses with resources for energy efficient products, costs, rebates, incentives, contractors, etc. (BE 1-13)

## 4. Promote Energy Audits and Incentives for Commercial Buildings

Promoting commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs is another important Buildings & Energy action for GHG reduction. It also supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to reduce building energy consumption by 15%.

### Goal

15% of commercial and industrial buildings increase energy efficiency by 20%. There are 111 industrial parcels and 2,159 commercial parcels in La Crosse. There may be multiple buildings on each parcel, but 15% would be 341 parcels or about 49 per year.

### Cost

[Greenlinrates.com](https://www.greenlinrates.com) estimates the cost of a typical commercial energy audit to be between \$1,000 and \$15,000. To do 49 per year, the annual cost could range from \$49,000 to \$735,000.

### Work sequence

- A. Secure funding and help from a program administrator.
- B. Identify potential incentives for projects.
- C. Reach out to businesses directly and through business organizations.
- D. Conduct commercial energy audit to identify cost-effective energy efficiency improvements.
- E. Show how Federal, State, and utility incentive can be combined to significantly reduce the cost of improvements.
- F. Help businesses get assistance with completing forms to qualify for incentives.

### Considerations

Not all businesses own their building, they may need help in other ways. For example, there could be technical assistance for property owners and businesses to negotiate rents that fairly offset cost and savings without pricing the tenant business out.

### Lead

Planning Dept.

### Support

Community Risk Management Dept., US DOE, WI OEI, WEDC/WHEDA, Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, Chamber of Commerce, DMI, a NLBA, LADCO, Rewiring America, ACEEE, DMI, CoC

### Complementary Actions

- I. Inform businesses of financing opportunities for energy efficiency improvements. Information campaigns may include Focus on Energy programs, energy efficiency performance contracting, Property-Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing; Clean Energy Credit Unions; and Federal, State, County, Utility, and City incentive programs. (BE 1-8)

- II. Promote incentives for building electrification. Goal: 5% of commercial/industrial market conversion (an estimated 25 commercial businesses, 10 industrial businesses annually) by 2030. (BE 3-4)
- III. Create heat pump grant to incentivize fuel switching. Incentive could be coordinated or combined with energy efficiency / weatherization incentives. (BE 3-5)
- IV. Identify and engage in opportunities to assist with accessing funding, feasibility assessments, information/educational content or other technical resources for businesses and organizations to support and promote micro-grid, and district heating and cooling projects, especially where 'waste' energy or geothermal can be utilized. (BE 1-15)

## 5. Organize Annual Residential Solar Group Purchase Program

Organizing an annual residential solar group purchase program is another important Buildings & Energy action for GHG reduction. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to increase renewable energy from 0.24% to 5% of community-wide electric use by 2030.

### Goal

70 participants and 750 KW installed annually.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services. Supporting materials may add to costs. Solar incentives from the Federal and State government have increased, so the city or consultant could assist homeowners to identify and attain grants, tax rebate, and technical assistance to lower their costs.

### Work Sequence

- A. Partner with a solar group buy program administrator.
- B. Solicit a contractor.
- C. Identify target audience and determine prequalifying criteria.
- D. Schedule outreach campaign and informational events.

### Consideration

La Crosse worked with MREA on a solar group buy in 2020 which only resulted in 4 properties getting solar panels installed. That amount was not worthwhile for the contractor. The education sessions provided good information for the 90 attendees. Over half who pursued projects were disqualified right away, because the houses that couldn't support a rooftop array or were highly shaded. The investment wasn't possible for many, and they wondered if their credit score would be good enough. Older attendees worried they wouldn't recoup their investment.

Try to get a group of 50 up front before selecting an installer. Use tools like Project Sunroof to help identify the solar opportunity at each property. City and County staff need to step up support and outreach, and possible incentivize participation.

### Lead

Planning Dept.

### Support

La Crosse County, Program administrator such as MREA or Renew WI, solar installers, Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, [Project Sunroof](#)

### Complementary Actions

- I. Organize an annual Commercial property and Industrial property group purchase program. Coordinate program with City's Solar Top 50 effort. Goal: 30 participants with 3,000 KW installed annually. (BE 4-4)
- II. Identify the top privately owned Solar PV sites within the city (including rooftop, ground mounted, and carport site potential). Effort should include the development of a Solar PV Site Assessment for identified with estimated installation costs, and projections for energy generation and economic payback over a minimum 20-year period. Assessments, along with a summary highlighting the economic potential should be provided to property owners. This strategy could be coordinated with the Commercial property and Industrial property Solarize program. Solar Top 50 assessment effort could be repeated annually, particularly through 2025. (BE 4-3)
- III. Develop renewable energy programs that increase on-site and community renewable energy and create benefits for low-income community members. Example programs include the [City of Dubuque Low Income Solar Renewable Energy Credit \(SREC\)](#), Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Community Solar for Community Action, and the [Texas Energy Poverty Research Institute Community Solar Program Model](#). Goal: 10,000 MWh of clean energy delivered through programs annually by 2030. (LH 5-1)
- IV. Support the development of community solar projects that benefit all residents, particularly communities of color and low-income populations. Advocate for passage of bill [SB 490](#). (BE 4-6)

## 6. Incentivize, Encourage, & Require Tree Planting for Heat Island Mitigation

Planting trees to mitigate heat islands is an important Land Use & Housing action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to mitigate heat island impacts, particularly for vulnerable populations.

### Cost

Trees cost around \$500 each; planting in areas like downtown could add up to \$10,000 in cost per tree for soil cells and infrastructure replacement.

### Work Sequence

- A. Map the public tree canopy and include tree characteristics and health.
- B. Identify where there are gaps or threats.

- C. Identify incentives for tree planting offered by the state and federal government, and other organizations.
- D. Research what tools other communities in the state are using to mitigate heat islands.

### Consideration

Refer to the “Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, Heat Island, and Carbon Sequestration Study” and UW-Madison student capstone project on heat island mitigation.

### Lead

Parks Dept.

### Support

Arbor Day Foundation, Planning Dept., iTree.

### Complementary Actions

- I. Increase maintenance to sustain mature tree canopy, decrease tree hazards, and delay tree replacement needs. (LH 4-4)
- II. Adopt a tree preservation ordinance that requires obtaining a permit for tree removal on private property (with exceptions for diseased and nuisance trees) and develop a fee structure that does not place a burden on low-income property owners. (GS 1-8)
- III. Incentivize/award projects that reduce heat islands, prioritizing areas with the highest heat island coefficients as identified in the City's 2021 Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, and Carbon Sequestration Study. Incentives might include below-market loans, product rebates, grants, and giveaways. Awards can reward exemplary work, highlight innovation, and promote solutions across the public and private sectors. (GS 3-6)
- IV. Plant shade trees around municipal buildings to reduce indoor cooling needs, and around parks, playgrounds, and other outdoor spaces to reduce outdoor temperatures. (GS 1-2)

## 7. Plan for an Increase in Severe Weather Events

Planning for an increase in severe weather events is an important Land Use & Housing action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan’s strategy to increase housing and community resilience to the impacts of climate change, including flooding and extreme temperatures.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services. Energy efficiency incentives from the Federal and State government have increased, so the city or consultant could assist building owners to identify and attain grants, tax rebate, and technical assistance to lower their costs.

### Work Sequence

- A. Review existing plans, including Emergency Management Plan and Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan
- B. Compare climate change projections in adaptation reports to historic trends.
- C. Identify possible infrastructure needs.

D. Research funding availability to support project implementation.

### Consideration

The City issues stormwater management fee [credits](#) for adding stormwater management projects.

### Lead

Stormwater Utility

### Support

NWS, FEMA, WI DNR, Planning Dept., Fire Dept.

### Complementary Actions

- I. Protect and restore natural systems that protect the community from flooding, including parks, wetlands, riparian areas, and natural drainage ways/swales (LH 2-1).
- II. Create a demonstration green roof, green/live wall, and/or vertical garden project, and include these categories in projects that qualify for stormwater fee credit. (GS 3-6)
- III. Establish a preparedness education program and an emergency alert system that help protect the community from flooding and extreme heat events. (LH 3-3)
- IV. Strengthen local ordinances/regulations to better protect riparian areas, streams, and wetlands that store and filter floodwaters, and strengthen enforcement of those policies. (W 3-4)

## 8. Reduce Building Vulnerability to Flooding

Reducing building vulnerability to flooding is an important Buildings & Energy action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to increase resilience of community-wide building stock to the impacts of climate change.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services. There are flood hazard mitigation funds from the Federal and State government. The city or consultant could work with landowners to qualify for grants and loans.

### Work Sequence

- A. Identify critical facilities that could be at risk.
- B. Rank facilities by risk and importance.
- C. Research case studies of green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions.
- D. Select suitable solutions for top ranking facilities.
- E. Identify potential funding sources.

### Lead

Stormwater Utility

## Support

FEMA, WI DNR, engineering firms, Fire Dept., Planning Dept,

## Complementary Actions

- I. Require and/or incentivize the use of green infrastructure such as bioswales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, rainwater catchment areas, and other pervious surface strategies to reduce flood risk and minimize sediment entry into creeks from trails and roads. (BE 5-5)
- II. Increase the use of permeable pavement and other green infrastructure (e.g., swales, rain gardens, urban tree canopies) to reduce overland flow and increase detention and infiltration that address stormwater before it enters the sewer system and prioritize the use of these strategies in areas at higher risk of flooding. (W 3-1)
- III. Establish incentives to encourage the use of green infrastructure and greenspace by property owners, while ensuring that these policies do not conflict with efforts to increase the city's density. (GS 1-11)
- IV. Promote and require urban design and redevelopment approaches that incorporate natural systems and green infrastructure into site improvements, rights of way, green corridors, and other infrastructure facilities. (GS 3-2)

## 9. Support Community Networks for Populations Vulnerable to Extreme Weather

Supporting community networks for populations vulnerable to extreme weather is a Health & Safety action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to ensure that emergency services and health care facilities are prepared for impacts of climate change.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services.

### Work Sequence

- A. Identify existing support networks.
- B. Interview leaders about what support they need.
- C. Research support (such as communication tools) for them to use.
- D. Assist with outreach to increase network size.

### Target audience

Elderly, homebound, disabled, isolated, or those likely to need financial assistance.

### Lead

Planning Dept.

### Support

County Health & Human Services

## Complementary Actions

- I. Adapt public facilities and develop new ones to serve as resiliency hubs (community centers that can provide resources before, during, and after climate disasters and emergencies) following guidance from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). (HS 1-12)
- II. Support the creation of call trees and block networks to check on neighbors during/after extreme weather events, particularly when they involve grid disruption. (HS 3-4)
- III. Collaborate to form and maintain a public health and climate change working group, with a focus on networks for community support, adaptation, and education. (HS 3-5)
- IV. Ensure redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety in the event of natural or manmade disasters. (E 3-4)

## 10. Incentivize Building Resilience

Incentivizing building resiliency is an important Health & Safety action for climate resilience. It supports the Climate Action Plan's strategy to assist the community's vulnerable population in preparing for and mitigating local climate change impacts.

Projects may include elevating HVAC and electrical equipment off basement floor, installing backflow preventers, maintaining shade trees, installing permeable pavement, conserving energy, generating renewable energy onsite, and building safe rooms.

### Cost

Staff would have to estimate time commitment or cost for contracted services. There are weatherization funds from the Federal and State government. The city or consultant could assist building owners to identify and attain grants, tax rebate, and technical assistance to lower their costs.

### Work Sequence

- A. Identify existing incentives from the State and Federal Government.
- B. Reach out to community groups serving vulnerable populations.
- C. Promote these incentives.
- D. Determine ways the city incentives could compliment those from the State and Fed.

### Considerations

Ensure that incentive programs prioritize multi-family dwellings and improvements that benefit vulnerable populations.

### Lead

Planning Dept.

### Support

Xcel Energy, Focus on Energy, WI DOA, FEMA, WI DNR

### Complementary Actions

- I. Deploy point-in-time alert systems (e.g., Rave Alert, Nixle) to notify people of extreme weather events, periods of dangerous heat/cold, poor air or water quality, and other public health concerns, and refer them to resources on symptoms and prevention of climate-related illness. (HS 1-3)
- II. Assist residents in signing up for state utility and heating bill assistance programs and home weatherization programs. (HS 1-11)
- III. Aid populations vulnerable to financial strain caused by climate hazards (e.g., low-income populations, communities of color, older adults, and people with disabilities), including helping with and reducing utility costs. (HS 1-14)
- IV. Develop workforce training capacity to assess, train, and place laborers that can take on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. (E 2-1)