

City of Madison

# Sustainability Plan

2025 Annual Implementation Update



CITY OF MADISON  
**SUSTAINABILITY**

March  
2026

## Welcome!

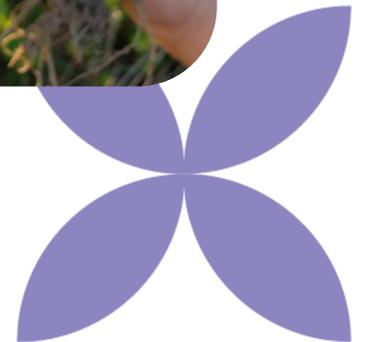
From Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway

I'm pleased to share this update on the City's work to implement Madison's Sustainability Plan. Increasing our resilience and reducing our climate pollution footprint is one of the goals of my administration, and the Sustainability Plan plays an important role in that.

This report captures the City's ongoing efforts to improve the sustainability of our community, ensure all Madisonians have a healthy environment, and serve as an example of what's possible at the local level. City staff, elected officials, businesses, community organizations, and residents across our city are dedicated to this work, because we understand that a healthy environment is essential to our wellbeing, our economy, and our quality of life.

Much has happened since our most recent Sustainability Plan was adopted in 2024. We've seen big wins for sustainability in our community but also the emergence of significant headwinds at the federal level. The repeal of the Inflation Reduction Act, which promised programs and funding to dramatically reduce carbon pollution across all sectors and invest in communities like Madison across the nation, has meant we have to stretch local dollars further. Erosion of essential, federal environmental protections for our climate, air, and water means that it is more important than ever to implement local projects and policies that protect our environment and natural resources.

The achievements and progress highlighted in this report exemplify the dedication, innovation, and strategic thinking with which the City of Madison and our partners approach sustainability and climate action. I hope you will be inspired to amplify these initiatives by taking action in your own life to help make Madison more sustainable. Together, we can make a remarkable impact.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Satya'.

**Mayor Satya**

## Introduction

In August 2024, the Madison Common Council unanimously adopted the [2024 Sustainability Plan](#). This plan is a roadmap to cut climate pollution, prepare for and minimize the impacts of climate change, improve environmental quality, and ensure the health and well-being of all Madisonians. It is the result of more than three years of collaborative effort led by the Sustainable Madison Committee and the City's Sustainability and Resilience Program. It incorporated input from City staff, local experts, community partners, and residents across Madison. The Plan's 24 goals span eight pillars of a sustainable city:

- Quality, Affordable Housing
- Resilient City Design & Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy and Decarbonization
- Sustainable Transportation
- Clean, Abundant Water
- Zero Waste
- Healthy Ecosystems
- and a Vibrant, Green Economy.

Our goals are designed to be ambitious and attainable achievements that will make Madison a more green and resilient place to live and work today and for future generations.

### Sustainability Champions

To support and track implementation of the Plan, Sustainability and Resilience Program staff organized an interagency Sustainability Champions Team. This team brings together nearly 40 City staff from 16 divisions. Each of these internal champions is dedicated to driving progress on one or more of the Plan's goals. They serve as a resource and expert for both internal and community questions, track progress toward goals and provide updates for annual reporting, present to the Sustainable Madison Committee about their affiliated goals, and participate in



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regular Sustainability Champion team meetings to identify and pursue opportunities for collaboration and coordination.

This team convened for the first time at Olbrich Botanical Gardens in July 2025 to share updates, network, and discuss tracking and reporting outcomes.



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### Highlights

2025 was the first full year of implementation, and City agencies demonstrated that action on sustainability is both achievable and impactful.

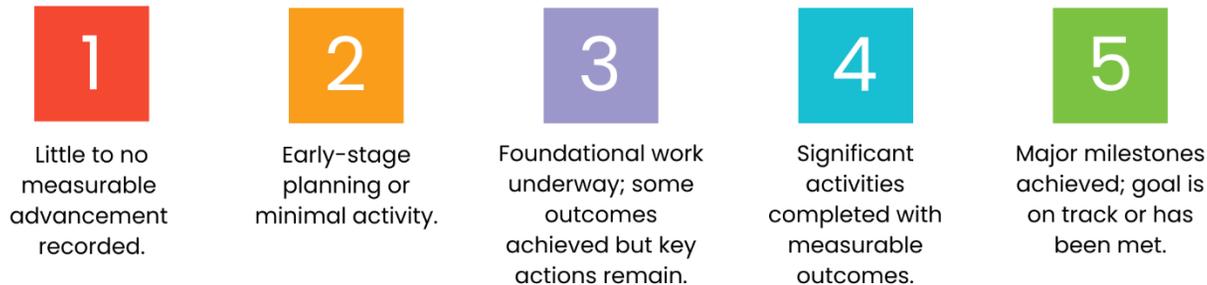
- The Building Energy Savings Program completed its second successful year, achieving a 92% energy benchmarking compliance rate among required large commercial buildings and earning Madison a Dane County Climate Champion award.
- Madison Metro secured over \$17 million in federal funding to replace aging diesel buses with more efficient hybrid electric vehicles, making our public transit fleet more sustainable.
- Eight more City facilities installed solar arrays through the GreenPower Program, expanding renewable energy capacity and providing early-career workforce training.
- The City's Fleet division piloted the use of renewable diesel across more than 385 vehicles in nine departments. This is an innovative interim strategy for reducing emissions while fully electric heavy-duty options mature in the marketplace.
- Madison adopted a new Tree Protection Ordinance developed by the City's Urban Forestry Section to strengthen protections for street trees and grow our urban tree canopy.
- The Stormwater Utility's Vegetation Management Plan laid a framework for managing over 1,500 acres of green infrastructure in ways that support biodiversity and flood resilience.



For more highlights, visit the Mayor's [2025 Sustainability Wins blog post](#).

### Navigating This Report

On the following pages, we present progress made to implement the Sustainability Plan, covering activities and accomplishments from calendar year 2025. Each of the Plan's 24 goals was reviewed by the Sustainability Champions Team and assigned a status score on a scale of one to five. These ratings are intended to serve as an honest, consistent benchmark, one that celebrates meaningful wins while identifying areas that will require attention and more resources in the years ahead.



### Next Steps

In 2025, we saw excellent progress on the Sustainability Plan, with forward momentum despite the uncertain and shifting federal landscape and limitations at the state level. In 2026, the City will continue working to align staff capacity, funding, policies and programs to advance achieve the goals in the Plan while enabling innovation and adaptation. Some advances we anticipate are adding a second full-time Sustainability Program Coordinator to the Sustainability and Resilience Team, achieving a major renewable energy milestone by surpassing 3 MW of solar installed at City facilities, opening the new Imagination Center at Reindahl Park that will serve as a showcase for green building design, and more. We will continue to share success stories and qualitative progress summaries in annual updates like this one. In addition, we will release an in-depth, quantitative progress report in 2030.

## Quality, Affordable Housing

#	Goal	2025 Status
1	Increase the availability of quality housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below 60% of area median income by supporting new construction as well as preserving and improving existing housing, with a focus on meeting the housing needs of households with incomes at or below 30% of area median income.	
2	Create and expand City policies and programs to support energy efficiency, healthy indoor air quality, sustainable building materials, and removal of environmental toxins in new and existing housing.	

### Progress Highlights

- Madison added 2,550 new homes in 2025, and another 5,005 are under construction. Of those, 398 completed and 1,307 under construction homes are affordable to renter households with incomes at or below 60% or to homeowners with income no greater than 80% AMI. The [2025 Housing Snapshot Report](#) provides the latest insights into the city’s housing trends. And the [Housing Tracker](#) shows progress toward meeting the City’s goal of creating 15,000 new homes by 2030, at least a quarter (3,750) having long-term affordability at below-market rates.
- In August 2025, the City’s Community Development Authority broke ground on the [Triangle redevelopment project](#) (scheduled for completion in 2035), which will provide up to 1,200 new affordable homes.
- In 2025, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) announced higher energy efficiency requirements for new affordable housing developments seeking Housing Tax Credits. The City of Madison updated

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our requirements for buildings seeking funding from the City's Affordable Housing Fund to align with WHEDA requirements and help ensure new affordable housing is energy efficient and low-carbon.

- The Efficiency Navigator program provided free energy and health assessments to 193 units of affordable rental housing and implemented energy and health upgrades to 60 units, which cut carbon pollution, reduce energy bills, and improve comfort and safety for families.



## Resilient City Design & Infrastructure

#	Goal	2025 Status
3	Provide equitable access to parkland, lakes, and other natural areas as well as sports, recreation, education, and wellness programming offered by the City and its partners.	
4	Preserve, protect, and increase access to land for urban agriculture, particularly for community members who live in rental housing.	
5	Facilitate the development of dense, compact, and livable neighborhoods that support walking, biking, and transit use.	
6	Increase resilience to climate change impacts including heat waves, storms, and flooding.	

### Progress Highlights

- Madison expanded two City parks in 2025: 22 acres were added to Starkweather Park on Madison’s East Side, and Midtown Commons Park on the Southwest Side gained 8.1 acres.
- Now, 98% of Madison residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, up from 95% in 2024.

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- Madisonians spent more time in City parks and park facilities in 2025 – with 4.1% more rounds of golf played, 5.8% more visitors to Olbrich Botanical Gardens, 21.7% more reservation hours for Athletic Fields, and 4.2% more park shelter reservations than in 2024.
- The Economic Development Division released a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) from individuals, small businesses, and organizations interested in expanding market and community gardens, particularly on City land.
- As part of the City's [Housing Forward Initiative](#), the City adopted new policies to expand allowable housing types in residential areas and allow property owners more flexibility. These new policies:
  - allow two units of housing on any residential lot that currently allows single-family homes citywide;
  - allow more property owners to create a "Backyard Lot" to support more homeownership;
  - adjust downtown zoning rules to create more opportunities for mid-scale development;
  - increase maximum allowed building heights in height transition areas;
  - allow two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in a detached building and simplify accessory structure rules;
  - and adjust lot area, lot width, and alley attached garage rear setback minimums to further encourage small-scale development.
- The [Stormwater Utility's Vegetation Management Plan](#), adopted in January 2025, creates a framework for managing over 1,500 acres of green infrastructure in ways that support biodiversity and flood resilience.
- The City's Engineering Division made significant progress on several flood resilience initiatives, including:
  - developing conceptual flood solutions for an additional 5 watersheds, bringing to total number of complete or near complete [watershed studies](#) to 17 out of 20;
  - beginning construction of the Pheasant Branch Greenway Enhancement project, an \$8M dollar project designed to mitigate flooding in the Old Sauk Trails Business Park which was badly damaged in 2018 floods, and restore the ponds and greenways with native, deep-rooted vegetation;
  - and enlarging the Capitol City Trail Storm sewer between S. Blount Street and S. Brearly Street to reduce flooding in the Wilson Street corridor.
- The City's Sustainability and Resilience program and scientists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison collaborated to map heat across the City of Madison and surrounding areas. Check out the [Neighborhood Heat Map](#) to see the impact of rising temperature as well as places to cool off your neighborhood.

Renewable Energy & Decarbonization		
#	Goal	2025 Status
7	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from City facilities and buildings 55% by 2030 from 2018 baseline	
8	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from private facilities and buildings to achieve the City's goal of reaching net zero emissions community-wide by 2050 from a 2018 baseline.	
9	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from City vehicles and equipment 90% by 2030 from 2018 baseline.	
10	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles community-wide to achieve the City's goal of reaching net zero emissions community-wide by 2050.	
11	Meet 100% of electricity demand for City operations with renewable energy by 2030.	

### Progress Highlights

- The City's Building Energy Savings Program completed its second successful year, achieving a 92% energy benchmarking compliance rate among required large commercial buildings and earning Madison a Dane County Climate Champion award.
- The Engineering Division began the design process for two new major facilities, the South Point West Public Works facility and the South Police and Evidence facility that includes geothermal systems and maximizing onsite solar energy generation, along with high performance building systems to minimize building energy use and carbon emissions.
- The Fleet Division piloted the use of renewable diesel across more than 385 vehicles in nine departments. This is an innovative, interim strategy for reducing emissions while fully electric heavy-duty options mature in the marketplace.
- As vehicles need replacing, Fleet closely evaluates operational needs and makes recommendations to purchase electric vehicles (EVs) whenever possible. The City of Madison now has 135 fully electric and 157 hybrid electric light- and medium-duty vehicles and 7 heavy-duty electric vehicles.
- The City's [MadiSUN program](#), administered by local nonprofit partner Renew Wiscosin, provided Backyard Solar grants to three, local non-profit organizations and assisted 30 households to go solar through the Group Buy program.
- Madison Metro secured over \$17 million in federal funding to replace aging diesel buses with more efficient hybrid electric vehicles, making our public transit fleet more sustainable.
- The City of Madison partnered with Madison Gas & Electric (MGE) to install [Madison's first pole-mounted EV chargers](#) in five locations across the community.



## Sustainable Transportation

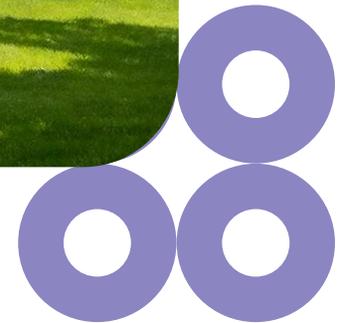
#	Goal	2025 Status
12	Increase access to and use of public transit and active transportation, including walking, biking, and rolling.	
13	Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita by 15% community-wide from 2020 levels by 2050.	

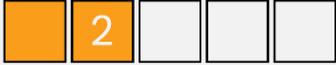
### Progress Highlights

- Madison added nearly 1 mile of new sidewalks, 7.7 miles of bicycle facilities, and 32 crossing improvements including curb extensions, Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFBs), and pedestrian refuge islands.
- The City’s [“20 is Plenty” campaign](#) was completed in 2025, reducing speed limits on most local streets to 20 mph to increase the safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles. Lower speed limits also reduce carbon emissions and other air pollution from vehicles. Review of High Injury Network (HIN) resulted in speed limit reductions on 3.9 miles of collector and arterial streets.
- The Department of Transportation approved 15 Transportation Demand Management Plans in 2025, including UW Health, Madison Metropolitan School District, Edgewood University, Summit Credit Union, MSA Professional Services, and Strand Associates, Inc. The transportation demand management strategies in these plans will help improve mobility, reduce congestion, and lower carbon emissions.
- The City of Madison is collaborating with Madison Metropolitan School District to develop a district-wide Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan and 32 individual school SRTS plans.

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- Metro Transit and MMSD also partnered for the fifth year in a row to offer the Summer Youth Pass Program, which provides students with access to the Metro Bus for free during the summer. In 2025, the Summer Youth Pass was available virtually for the first time through the Metro Transit Fast Fare mobile app.
- Madison Metro is actively planning the north-south bus rapid transit (BRT) line to expand service with 23 new stations.
- In partnership with the City of Verona, Madison Metro expanded bus service to Verona with the D2 route in August 2025, connecting Verona to downtown Madison, serving Epic Systems, Verona Area High School, and the Park & Ride.
- Madison Metro also continues to install bike parking near bus stops to enable community members to more easily make their daily trips without needing a car.



Clean, Abundant Water		
#	Goal	2025 Status
14	Ensure surface and drinking waters remain clean by reducing existing sources of contamination and preventing new ones from developing.	
15	Expand water conservation efforts to reduce peak load and annual water use by 10% from 2020 levels by 2030.	
Progress Highlights		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Olbrich Botanical Gardens</a> now uses rainwater collected in the cistern below the Frautschi Family Learning Center to water plants in the Bolz Conservatory.</li> <li>• City departments work together to keep our lakes clean and healthy:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Streets Division works to keep Madison’s streets free from leaves and other debris that would otherwise end up in our lakes. In 2025, staff collected a total of 5,257 tons of leaves (an 8% increase from 2024) to keep our lakes clean. Leaves are a major source of nutrients and suspended solids that reduce water quality in our lakes, rivers, and streams.</li> <li>○ The Engineering Division removed another 780 tons of other materials from stormwater catch basins.</li> <li>○ The Olin Transfer Station was re-built to prevent nutrient and waste runoff.</li> <li>○ The Strickers Forebay was dredged to remove an estimated 4,000 cubic yards of sediment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

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- The City continued regional partnerships to keep our waters clean, including the [Wisconsin Salt Wise coalition](#) and the [Yahara Watershed Improvement Network \(Yahara WINS\)](#) which work to keep salt and agricultural runoff from polluting our lakes, respectively.
- Madison now has 752 [terrace rain gardens](#) that capture, store, and infiltrate rainwater with the help of native plants.



## Zero Waste

#	Goal	2025 Status
16	Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill from the Madison community 50% by 2030 and 90% by 2040 from a 2021 baseline in partnership with Dane County.	

### Progress Highlights

- The City of Madison is collaborating with Dane County to define metrics of success for the [new sustainability campus](#) that the Dane County Department of Waste and Renewables is developing. These metrics, focus on waste diversion, partnerships, greenhouse gas emissions, and public participation. The sustainability campus will be located on a portion of what is currently the Yahara Hills Golf Course and aims to play a major role in supporting a local circular economy that reduces the amount of waste going to the landfill.
- Throughout the farmer’s market season in 2025, Madison residents demonstrated their commitment to composting by [diverting an impressive 40,427 pounds of food scraps from the landfill](#) through the City’s [Farmer’s Market Food Scrap Collection Program](#), operated by local non-profit partner Sustain Dane. This program enables community members to drop off their food scraps for composting at four Farmer’s Markets across the city free of charge.



## Healthy Ecosystems

#	Goal	2025 Status
17	Preserve and restore urban natural areas, with a focus on providing equitable access for residents.	
18	Implement Integrated Pest Management practices to minimize pesticide use for all City activities and City-owned properties.	
19	Equitably expand urban tree canopy coverage from 23% in 2024 to 40% by 2080.	

### Progress Highlights

- Eighteen of Madison’s 21 Conservation Parks now have management plans. The City’s Parks Division is working hard to implement these plans, adding 8,225 square feet of native plantings to parks in 2025.
- The Parks Division planted 8,225 square feet of native landscape, using a planting design style that mimics healthy prairie and savanna ecosystems, which reduces establishment time and future maintenance needs.
- Many City agencies are implementing Integrated Pest Management practices, including:
  - The Engineering Division spent more than 2,200 hours in 2025 to prevent and control invasive species on stormwater land through a combination of monitoring, hand removal of invasive plants, and collecting and sowing native plant seeds, and planting native seedlings.

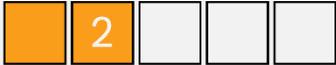
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- Engineering staff along with our Operation Fresh Start conservation youth crew collected 291 pounds of seeds from 144 native plant species and sowed seed back out to 55 sites.
- Public Works increased capacity to conduct prescribed burns and burned 443 acres in 2025 – that’s 7.8% more than last year.
- The Parks Division used goat grazing for vegetation management on over 56 acres.
- The Parks Division also grew its use of organic management, implementing an organic pilot program at Flagstone park and developing a comprehensive plan to transition more athletic fields to an organic program.
- The Golf Enterprise Program worked with a turf science consultant to develop science-based turf management programs for Monona Golf Course and The Glen Golf Park.
- The Urban Forestry Section planted 18 different families and 44 varieties of trees in 2025, because Diversity is the key to ensuring a healthy and sustainable urban forest. In addition, staff utilized the “right tree for right location” approach for selecting trees for each site to make sure each tree thrives.
- The Urban Forestry Section also treated 3,400 street trees to protect them from Emerald Ash Borer.
- Madison adopted a new [Tree Protection Ordinance](#) developed by the City’s Urban Forestry Section to strengthen protections for street trees and grow our urban tree canopy by:
  - increasing the protection zone around street trees in construction areas,
  - allowing the City to suspend or revoking permits for tree protection violations,
  - establishing a Street Tree Replacement Fund.
- On May 15, 2025, the City of Madison [planted its 100,000<sup>th</sup> street tree](#), a New Horizon Elm, on West Washington Ave. Managed by the Streets Division’s Forestry Section, street trees line over 700 miles of streets, providing critical environmental benefits like reducing heat islands, improving air quality, and managing stormwater.
- The Parks Division completed a system-wide inventory of over 46,000 trees and created a data dashboard to track existing and projected tree canopy throughout the park system.
- The Stormwater Utility Division created a new Ecological Restoration Specialist staff position to monitor native plant establishment in pond and greenway reconstruction projects, manage City ecological restoration contracts, and review contracts submitted by private developers to ensure they meet the City’s requirements for restoration.

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- The Stormwater Utility Division also planted 17,000 native plant seedlings as part of the Lower Badger Mill Creek Ponds project and 10,000 native plants at the Pheasant Branch Enhancement Project to work towards establishing native species along waterways.



Vibrant, Green Economy		
#	Goal	2025 Status
20	Leverage City purchasing power to support products and services that reduce the City’s negative impact on the environment and support a circular economy.	
21	Support environmentally-sustainable private business growth, operations, and practices.	
22	Leverage City financing tools and structural incentives to advance environmentally sustainable and climate resilient buildings, business development, and investments in the community.	
23	Work with partners to attract and support the development of new businesses focused on green- and climate-friendly services or products, especially minority and women owned businesses.	
24	Develop a green workforce and create equitable access to green jobs with a living wage.	

### Progress Highlights

- The Sustainability and Resilience Team hosted an AASPIRE Intern who completed a comprehensive policy analysis focused on local governments' sustainable purchasing policies.
- The Office of Business Resources (OBR) connected businesses with Madison Gas and Electric (MG&E) and Focus on Energy programs to help them access technical support and incentives for improving the energy efficiency of their buildings and equipment.
- The Engineering Division partnered with Operation Fresh Start and Sustain Dane to educate youth and young adults about work, training opportunities and apprenticeships in sustainability-oriented careers.
- The Engineering Division's [GreenPower program](#) installed a 1,200 kW solar array at the Madison Metro's Hanson Road Satellite Bus Facility, providing on-the-job training for early career trainees that prepares them for careers in the solar energy and electrical industries.
- The Sustainability and Resilience Program partnered with Adapt Marketing and Consulting to launch the Pathways to Energy Efficiency program, which provides local contractors with marketing assistance, technical training, and businesses coaching to enter the clean energy and energy efficiency markets.
- The Community Development Division collaborated with Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), Madison College, the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin (WFDBSCW) and Youth & Young Adult Employment programs to build a jobs pipeline for good wage jobs that pay a family-supporting wages. Interest in the Youth Apprenticeship program grew in 2025.





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**SUSTAINABILITY**

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