

OFFICE OF
Sustainability

Annual Report

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About Us



The City of Detroit's Office of Sustainability leads initiatives that reduce emissions, increase resilience and improve residents' quality of life. The Office supports departments city-wide to advance bold climate goals set by the Sustainability Action Agenda and the Detroit Climate Strategy. To Learn More, reach out to sustainability@detroitmi.gov



Meet The Team

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

I often wish the word “sustainability” wasn’t necessary. Imagine a world where every action we take—building homes, managing land, producing energy—naturally prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet. Unfortunately, as a society, we’ve too often chosen short-term profits over the long-term health of our shared world. These choices have brought us to a point where urgent course correction is not just an option but a necessity.

Addressing climate change requires collective action—individuals, organizations, and governments at every level working in concert. I’m proud of the progress our city has made toward becoming more sustainable, but I’m equally aware of the road ahead. Our team is committed to rising to this challenge, ready to dig in and move forward together.



Tepfirah Rushdan
Director



Maria Galarza
Deputy Director



Patrice Brown
Ass. Ag Director



Zahra Seblini
Senior Energy Analyst



Raquel Newell
Policy & Operations
Manager



Asia Hamilton
Resilient Programs
Manager



Rasha Almulaiki
Communications



Devin Woodruff
Policy & Research

Detroit Climate Strategy

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Detroit's Climate Strategy is a framework for residents, businesses, city departments, and industry to achieve the City's emission goals and increase resilience as climate change impacts our daily lives. Addressing climate change in Detroit is urgent and requires decisive and focused actions. As the planet warms up, weather patterns are becoming more extreme and impacting our daily lives.

Priority Action Strategies:

1

Transitioning to Clean Energy

2

Increasing Sustainable Mobility

3

Accelerating Energy Efficiency and Reducing Waste

4

Prioritizing Vulnerable Residents

- Reducing Risk of Flooding
- Protecting from Extreme Heat
- Improving Air Quality



Transition To Clean Energy

Clean energy is vital for Detroit's future. Our reliance on fossil fuels has not only degraded air quality—harming the health of our residents—but also fueled the climate crisis. The UN and federal government have made it clear: urgent action is required. Michigan's goal to achieve a 100% clean grid by 2040 aligns with this directive, and Detroit is stepping up.

Through the Detroit Solar Neighborhood Initiative, passed by City Council this year, the city will convert nearly 165 acre of vacant land into 31 megawatts of clean, renewable energy and retrofit nearly 265 homes with energy-efficient upgrades, putting them on the path to solar-powered clean energy. Detroit is proving it can lead the way toward a healthier, more sustainable future.

The Solar Neighborhood Initiative

The initiative is crucial for achieving Detroit's goal of reducing municipal greenhouse gas by 35% by 2024 per the 2019 City Council approved GHG Ordinance. The Solar Neighborhood Initiative will **offset emissions 23%** of 2012 levels. Combined with the business-as-usual anticipated **decrease of 13%**, the City will be on track to achieve our municipal goals with a **36% reduction**.



Mobility is key to building a more connected, equitable, and environmentally conscious Detroit. The Detroit Climate Strategy's Sustainable Mobility priority aims to reduce emissions and ensure an equitable shift to low-carbon transportation through EV infrastructure expansion, carshare pilots, preparing EV-ready ordinances, innovative technologies, and community engagement.

This work is a collaborative effort across the Office of Mobility Innovation, Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), Municipal Parking Department, General Services Department, and Planning and Development Department, ensuring a holistic approach to sustainable mobility.



Increasing Sustainable Mobility

Mobility Projects

The Connect AV & Accessibili-D Shuttles:

Autonomous vehicle pilots enhancing access for underserved areas while providing Detroiters with the ability to experience AV solutions and provide feedback.

Toyota Mobility Foundation's Sustainable Cities

Challenge- Detroit: Pioneering a pathway to clean freight, making the city's transportation system more efficient and sustainable.

DDOT's EV and Hydrogen Buses: Currently 4 Pilot DDOT EV buses with 4 more in the pipeline, expanding clean-energy public transit options.

Municipal Parking Department EV Fleet: 40+ EV enforcement vehicles, transitioning the municipal parking department to a greener fleet

Joe Louis Greenway: Building a multi-use pathway to connect communities.

MoGo Bikes & Scooter Programs: Increased scooter capacity to over 3000, offering affordable, eco-friendly, mobility options.

EV Infrastructure Expansion: Growing the city's publicly accessible EV charging network.



Reducing Waste

Waste reduction in the city has made significant strides in 2024, focusing on increasing recycling participation and laying the groundwork for a Zero Waste Strategy. In parallel, we have begun supporting our community partners in the development of a Waste Diversion Plan aimed at improving food systems and achieving the city's ambitious waste diversion goals.



Recycling & Waste Diversion

The Department of Public Works welcomed a new Recycling Coordinator, Rebecca Serrano, who is working closely with our office to expand recycling outreach and accessibility across the city. This effort has contributed to **over 90,000** homes with weekly curbside recycling. Efforts also focus on increasing food rescue programs, reducing food waste, and piloting food scrap and yard waste drop-off sites in collaboration with local compost processors. These actions align with the city's ambition to become a leader in waste reduction and recycling innovation.



Urban Agriculture

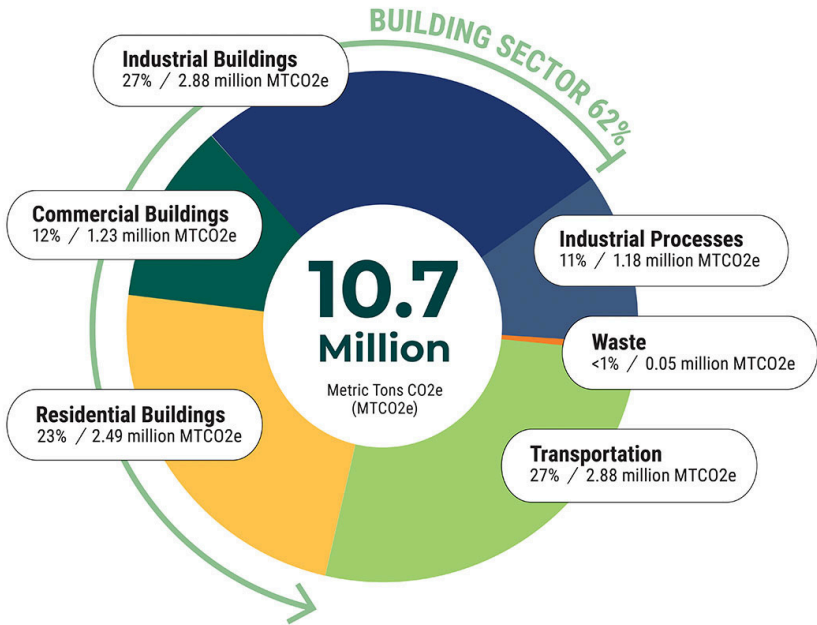
Urban agriculture in Detroit reached new heights in 2024 with the addition of a new Urban Agriculture Director, bringing fresh leadership and vision to our initiatives. This year saw increased community engagement, expanded land sales for agricultural use, and significant progress toward innovative projects like the city's first community composting pilot, which received funding in 2024. Looking ahead, agrivoltaics—a cutting-edge farming concept combining agriculture and solar energy—will make its debut in Detroit by 2026.



Highlights

- **Permits and Land Sales:** Over 60 urban agriculture-related permits issued and **148+ lots** sold for agricultural use by the Detroit Land Bank Authority.
- **Community Engagement:** More than 10 urban farm tours with council members
- **Land Based Projects:** Over 10 hours monthly of Land-Based Projects Office Hours to support local farmers.
- **Animal Keeping Ordinance:** Passed in November, this ordinance is a significant step toward regulated and sustainable urban farming practices.
- **Community Composting:** A \$100,000 donation from Carhartt is supporting the City's first composting pilot, linking urban agriculture to waste reduction efforts.

Accelerating Energy Efficiency



Benchmarking, the practice of recording utility bills to track year-over-year energy and water consumption, is a critical step in sustainability. Buildings account for 62% of Greenhouse Gas emissions in the city of Detroit, representing around two-thirds of city-wide emissions. In November 2023, the Detroit City Council unanimously passed the Benchmarking Ordinance, marking a pivotal step toward reducing the city's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

2024: A Year of Implementation

- November 2023:** Ordinance passed by City Council.
- January 2024:** Partnered with key organizations, including the Detroit 2030 District and the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), to spread awareness and provide support.
- April 2024:** Launched the benchmarking website and the How-to guide
- September 2024:** Launched the Data Jams Series and 5+ educational webinars to help building owners understand and meet compliance requirements.
- October 2024:** First compliance deadline for buildings over 100,000 square feet.
- November 2024:** Awarded 100k grant from EGLE to provide technical assistance for nonprofits, childcare centers, and places of worship.

BUILDING SIZE	FIRST YEAR REPORTING DUE DATE	FIRST YEAR REPORTING
100k square feet	October 1st, 2024	Jan-Dec 2023

Key Metrics for Phase 1:

715 buildings in Detroit met the criteria for reporting.

188 buildings successfully submitted their reports, achieving a **26% compliance** rate for reporting.

To increase compliance, we are partnering with Detroit 2030 District to host outreach events in each district and offer technical support for a subset of buildings.

Prioritizing Vulnerable Residents

As extreme weather events impact our lives, it is important to increase our community's ability to recover (resilience) and adapt to the emerging climate conditions (adaptation).

In 2024, the Office of Sustainability has been working to strengthen relationships and build out a network of resilience hubs across the eastside of Detroit.

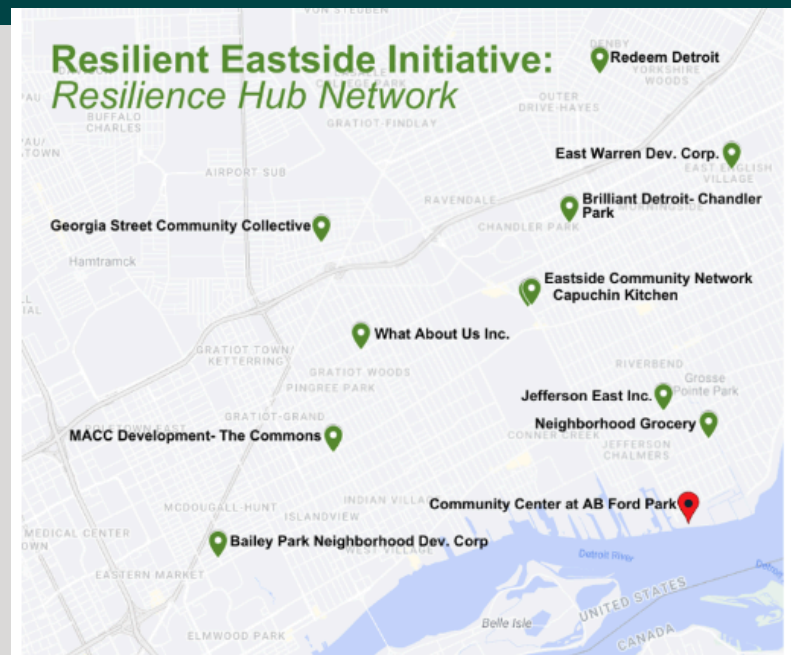


Resilient Hubs

Resilience Hub: A trusted community-serving facility that coordinates resources distribution and services before, during, and after a climate disaster.

The Resilient Eastside Initiative (REI) is a network of community resilience hubs across Detroit's Eastside that emerged from partnerships with local residents and organizations in response to the June 2021 flooding and ongoing climate related injustice issues.

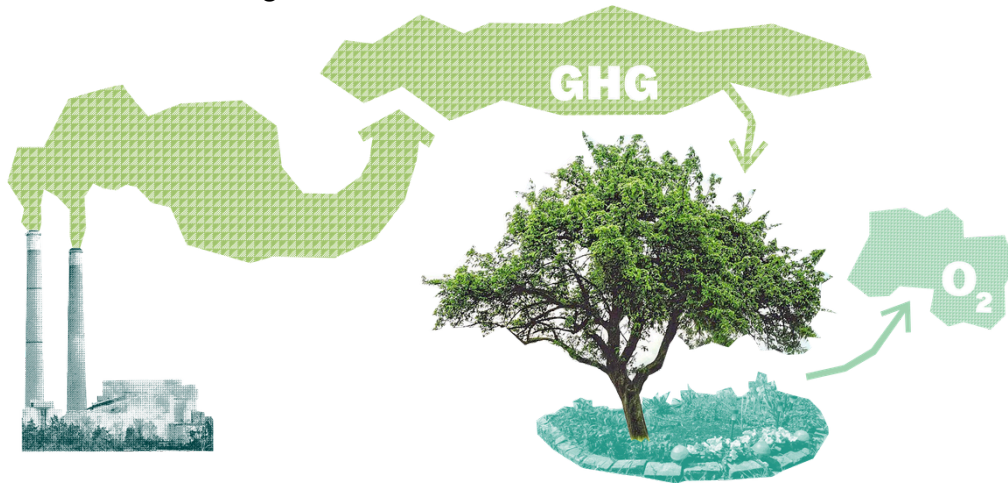
Currently, the Resilience Hub Network is made up of 9 community organizations, 2 small businesses and 1 City Community Center (A.B. Ford Community Center, formally know as Lenox Center).



GHG Emissions Analysis

The Office of Sustainability tracks municipal and citywide greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories to meet the GHG Ordinance goal of a 75% reduction by 2034. Detroit is committed to reducing GHG emissions from activities like transportation, building operations, and industrial processes while recognizing the carbon-capturing benefits of nature-based solutions such as urban forestry, agriculture, and natural resource stewardship.

GHG emissions inventory is due every 4 years. The latest inventory, completed in 2022, showing Detroit produced 10.7 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂e)—a 5% decrease from 2012. Electricity use in buildings and citywide transportation were the largest contributors.



To stay on track, Detroit has implemented initiatives such as the Solar Neighborhoods Initiative, which is projected to significantly reduce municipal emissions and support 2030 climate targets. The Office of Sustainability is also partnering with the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) to update the GHG inventory using 2023 data, with completion expected by 2026.

Key actions include:

- Improving building energy efficiency
- Ensuring new buildings are net-zero
- Expanding renewable energy use
- Electrifying vehicles and buildings with clean energy
- Increasing industrial efficiency
- Leveraging nature-based solutions to capture carbon

These efforts ensure Detroit remains on course for a more sustainable and low-carbon future.

Partner Spotlight

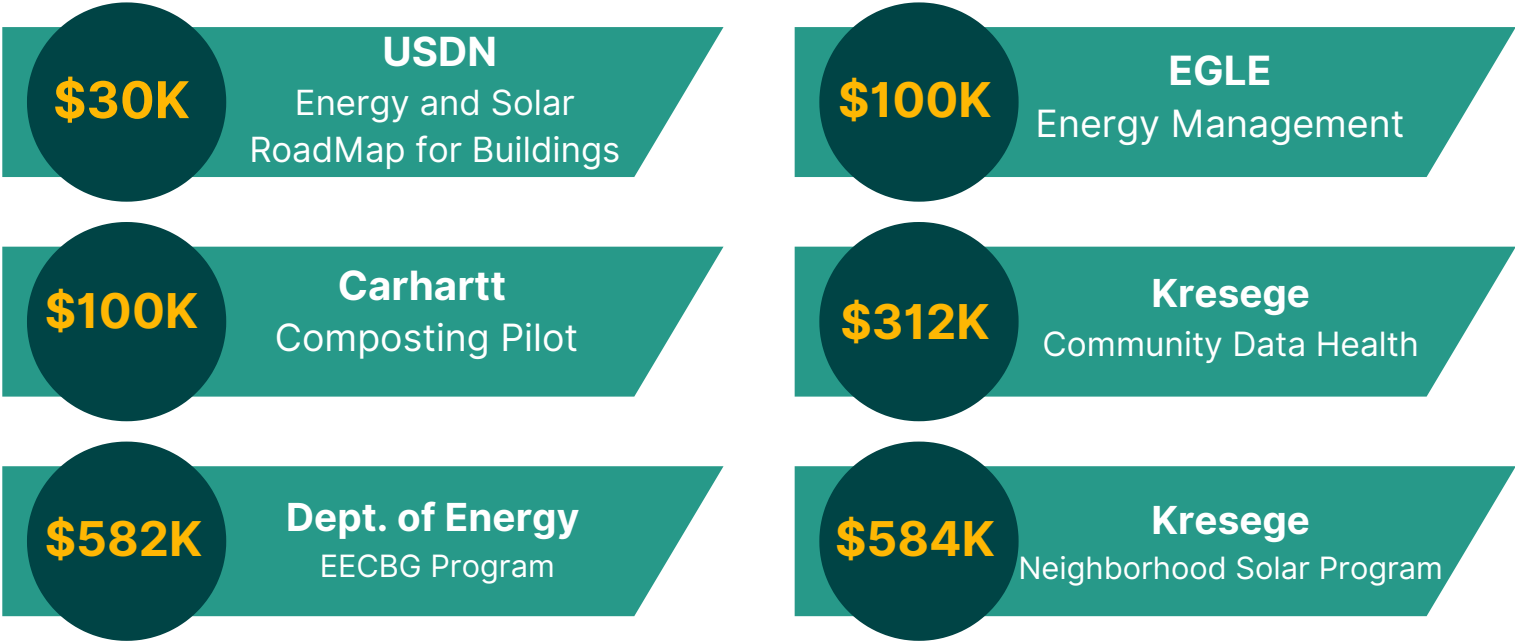
"Collaborative Efforts Driving Success"



We appreciate all our partners for their support. This list highlights many of them, but we recognize there are many more who contribute to our mission



Funding Highlights



In 2024, the Office of Sustainability secured **over \$1.5M** in grant and donation funds. Detroit’s sustainability initiatives were fueled by substantial grant funding, empowering the city to make meaningful progress across key programs.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Office of Sustainability will continue to deepen partnerships across departments, embedding and highlighting climate action throughout city operations. From Construction and Demo implementing energy-efficient retrofits to the Planning Department incorporating climate resilience in the masterplan update, sustainability principles support decision-making at every level.

Looking ahead, the Office is committed to bringing comprehensive climate education for staff and residents. Only through shared understanding and collective action can we achieve our emissions reduction goals. By equipping our community with practical knowledge and tools, we'll accelerate our transition to a sustainable future.

Thank You



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