Taking Local Action

Mayors and Climate Protection Best Practices

June 2025

19th Anniversary Winners
Mayors' Climate Protection Awards

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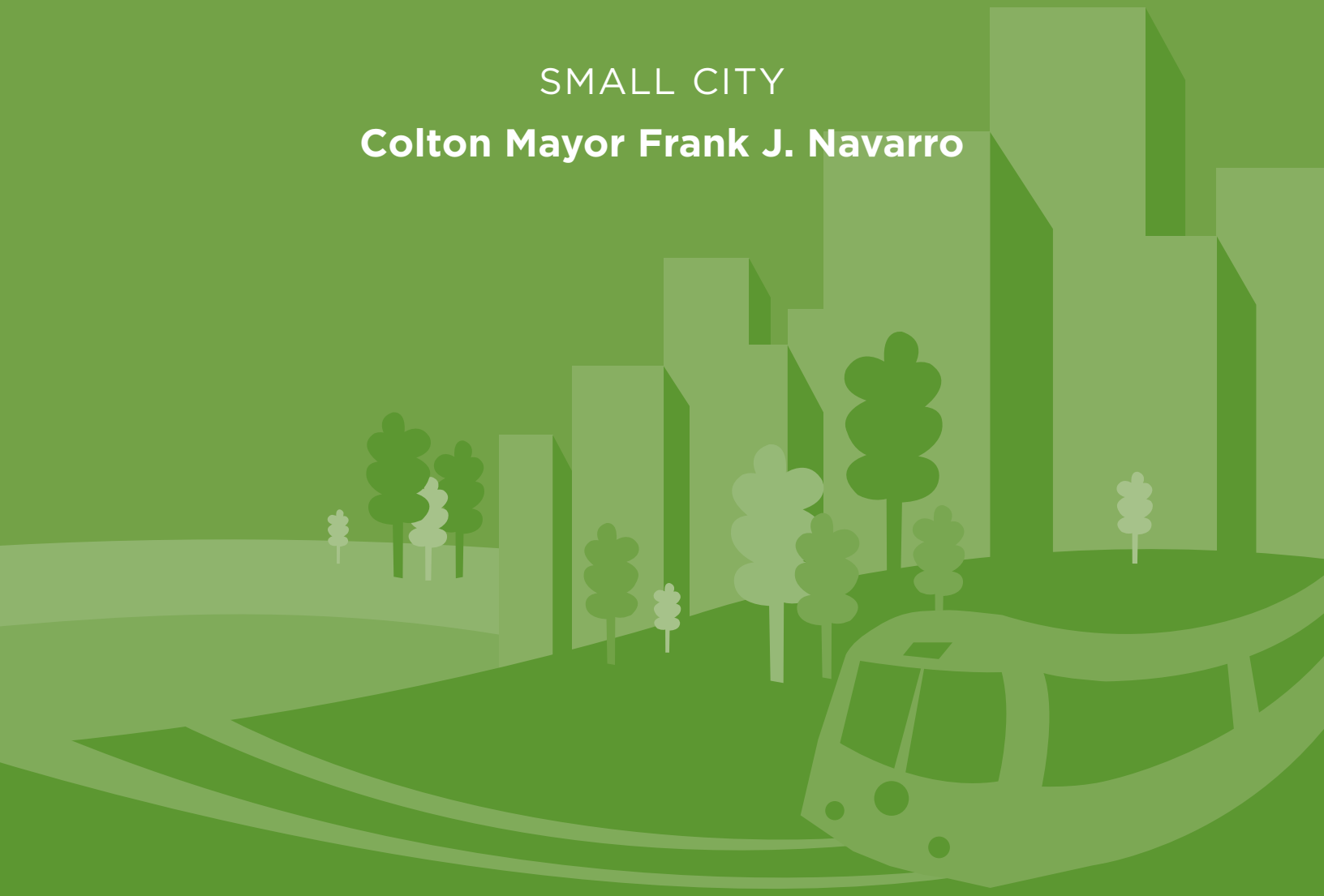


San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie

CleanPowerSF

CleanPowerSF is San Francisco's community choice aggregation (CCA) program, operated by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC). First serving customers in 2016, it provides clean, reliable, and affordable electricity to residents and businesses while reinvesting revenues into local energy programs. CleanPowerSF has grown to serve over 380,000 households and businesses with annual electric sales of 3 billion kilowatt-hours, generating $400 million in annual revenues. The program achieved 100 percent renewable electricity supply in 2023, two years ahead of schedule, and has helped reduce the city's electricity sector emissions by 98 percent.

San Francisco decided to establish the CleanPowerSF program after identifying the need to affordably accelerate the city's transition to renewable and low carbon sources of electricity as part of its Climate Action Plan. Establishing a CCA would allow the city to more effectively source clean energy supply, critical to accomplishing its climate goals:

- CleanPowerSF has provided 100 percent renewable electricity to its customers since 2023, two years ahead of the city's Climate Action Plan target. The program has helped cut San Francisco's electricity sector emissions by 98 percent from 1990 levels. By using the purchasing power of the city's residents and businesses to enter into power supply contracts with renewable energy facilities, the program also helps spur utility-scale renewable energy development across the region.
- CleanPowerSF accomplished its emissions reductions while also delivering significant financial benefits to its customers, averaging approximately $50 million per year in customer bill savings relative to the electricity supply of the local investor-owned utility in 2023 and 2024.
- CleanPowerSF is also reinvesting revenues into local programs addressing climate action and equity, ensuring that the economic and environmental benefits of the clean energy transition continue to reach customers who need it the most. These programs help customers across the city, particularly low-income residents, replace solar inverters for rooftop solar systems, buy electric bikes, switch to electric heat pump water heaters, and install EV chargers.

When first developing the program, key challenges included securing competitive clean power contracts, receiving regulatory approval, understanding and mitigating financial risk to the city at large, and developing brand awareness and comfort among residents and local businesses. These challenges were overcome by collaboratively developing several implementation plans in 2015 to ensure alignment on program design and goals, power supply content, rate setting, financial reserves and program phasing. This resulted in a strong framework for financial sustainability, risk management, and operational growth, helping the city secure broad public and policymaker support. CleanPowerSF completed citywide enrollment in 2020, increasing customer accounts served from 7,800 in phase 1 to more than 380,000, with an eligible customer participation rate of over 95 percent.

To initially finance the program, the city secured a credit facility from a major bank to a) provide working capital to fund initial operating costs and b) issue letters of credit to secure initial power purchase agreements. Once the program became operational, 100 percent of its costs were funded through customer revenues. CleanPowerSF was implemented without any financial support from the city's General Fund/tax base.

Capital to finance the new renewable energy projects that supply CleanPowerSF is secured by energy project developers using projected revenues from power purchase agreements with CleanPowerSF. In 2022, CleanPowerSF received an investment grade credit rating of A2 from Moody's, the highest credit rating received by a community choice aggregation program operating in California.

CleanPowerSF has improved the quality of life in San Francisco by supplying a significantly cleaner electricity supply to residents and businesses at competitive rates.

CleanPowerSF is building on a strong foundation of offering cleaner power at competitive rates by investing program revenues into new customer programs designed to support affordable electrification in the local community. Through a range of new program offerings, CleanPowerSF aims to ensure that all members of the community will benefit from the clean energy transition for years to come.

Colton Mayor Frank J. Navarro

Urban Heat Resilience Program

The City of Colton's Urban Heat Resilience Program is an initiative aimed at mitigating the urban heat island effect and enhancing community resilience to extreme heat events. The key components include an Urban Forest Management Plan: A strategic vision to increase the city's tree canopy from 7 percent to 30 percent, providing shade, improving air quality, and reducing surface temperatures.

The City of Colton's Urban Forest Management Master Plan details the planting of a sustainable and resilient mix of healthy trees throughout the City of Colton's public parks, avenues, parkways, arroyos, rivers, and open space. Colton's trees provide residents and the business community with beauty, shade, comfort, health, and economic benefits. Colton's trees are cared for, valued, and protected by the city and its citizens as a treasured community asset through –

- Climate Vulnerability Assessment: A collaborative effort with the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability to identify and address climate-related vulnerabilities within the community. https://www.ci.colton.ca.us/765/Sustainability
- Community Engagement and Education: Programs to raise awareness about heat resilience strategies and involve residents in local climate action efforts. The City partnered with nonprofits such as TreePeople, which partnered with the City and Community to plant an additional 500 trees in the City's empty parkways and walking routes to school. The City partnered with the Electric and Water utilities to create additional long-term funding opportunities for tree planting initiatives.

Colton's Climate Vulnerability Assessment highlighted significant risks associated with the urban heat island effect, including elevated temperatures, increased energy consumption, and adverse health impacts on vulnerable populations. The assessment underscored the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance community resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Implementing the Urban Heat Resilience Program presented several challenges: funding constraints - securing adequate financial resources for large-scale tree planting and infrastructure modifications; community engagement - ensuring active participation and buy-in from residents, particularly in underserved areas; coordination across departments - aligning efforts between various city departments and external partners to achieve program objectives. Through strategic partnerships, including collaboration with the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability, and leveraging state and regional resources, Colton successfully navigated these challenges.

The quantitative data on energy savings and greenhouse gas reductions for the City of Colton: 12,123 lbs. of air pollutants absorbed $642,441 combined energy and community benefits 4,019,188 lbs. carbon sequestered/avoided 3,145,076 kWh of energy saved 1,000 trees planted 8,888,881 gallons of stormwater filtered This program increased tree canopy and enhanced the urban forest, providing shade, reducing the need for air conditioning and lowering energy consumption.

Colton's program stands out due to its comprehensive approach: integrated planning - Combining urban forestry, infrastructure improvements, and community engagement into a cohesive strategy; collaborative partnerships - working with organizations like the Robert Redford Conservancy, TreePeople, and electric and water utilities; and community-centric - focusing on vulnerable populations to ensure equitable access to heat resilience benefits. This holistic model serves as a replicable framework for other municipalities facing similar challenges.

The Urban Heat Resilience Program's financing involved a combination of local, state, and regional funding sources. City allocations of funds designated in the city's budget for sustainability and climate resilience initiatives. The city's Water and Electric Departments funds tree planting and rebates for these initiatives annually. State Grants: Financial support from state agencies aimed at enhancing urban sustainability. This project initial project was funded by Cal-Fire. The California Climate Investments program allocated funding for this project, through Cal-Fire's Urban and Community Forestry Program (http://climateinvestmentmap.ca.gov/) Regional Partnerships: Collaborations with organizations like the San Bernardino Regional Energy Partnership to access additional resources. These diverse funding streams enabled the city to implement the program's components effectively.

The Urban Heat Resilience Program has led to tangible improvements in Colton: health benefits - reduced heat exposure decreases the incidence of heat-related illnesses, particularly among vulnerable populations; economic savings - lower energy consumption translates to reduced utility bills for residents and businesses; environmental quality - increased green spaces and improved air quality enhance overall community well-being; and community engagement - active participation in program initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. These outcomes contribute to a more sustainable and resilient community.

The City of Colton's Urban Heat Resilience Program exemplifies a proactive approach to climate adaptation. By addressing the urban heat island effect through integrated strategies, the city not only mitigates environmental impacts but also enhances the quality of life for its residents. The program's success underscores the importance of comprehensive planning, community involvement, and collaborative partnerships in building climate-resilient communities.

Large City Honorable Mentions

Population Over 100,000

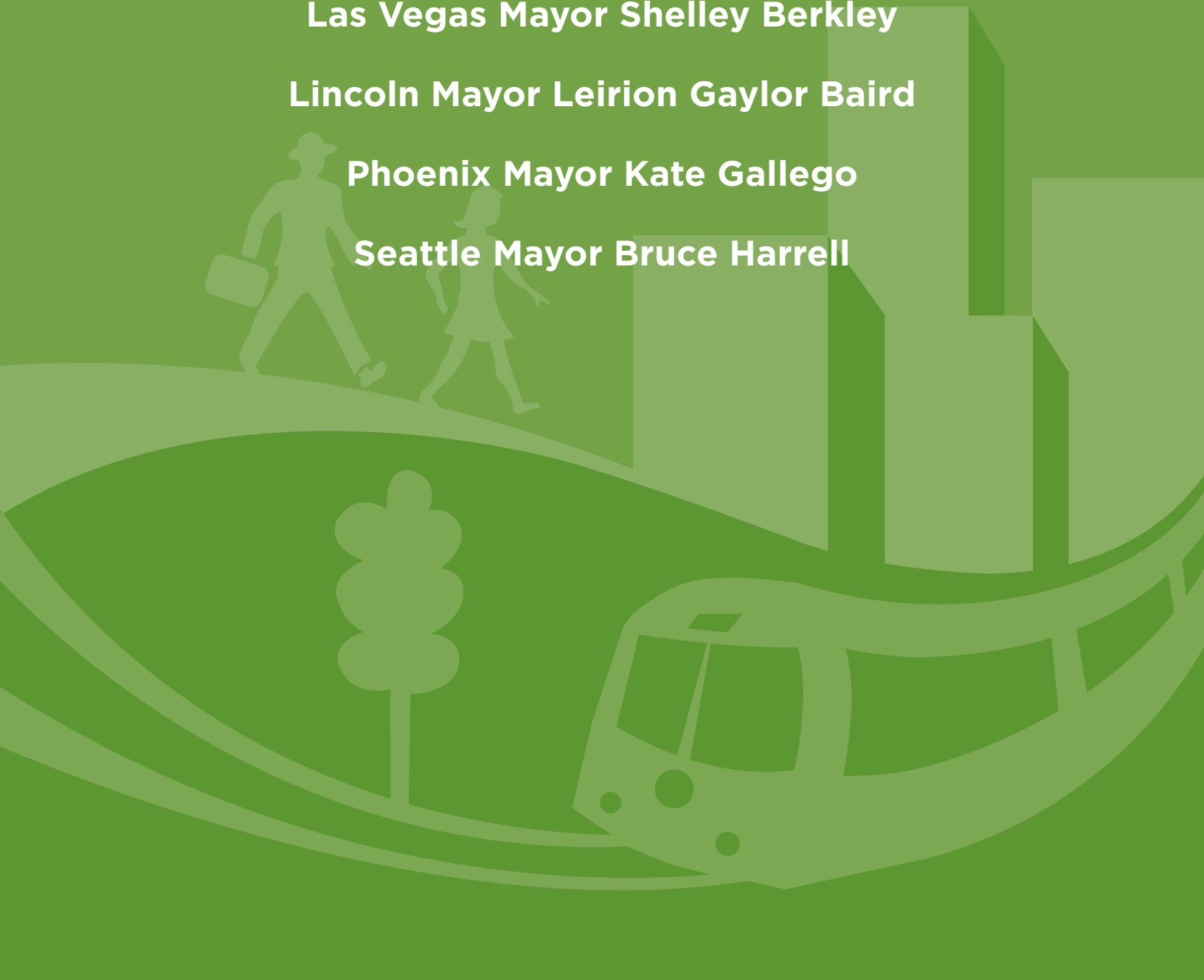
Lansing Mayor Andy Schor

Las Vegas Mayor Shelley Berkley

Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell



Lansing Mayor Andy Schor

Food Scraps Drop-off Program

In September 2024, the City of Lansing launched a pilot residential Food Scraps Drop-off Program to reduce food waste sent to landfills. The program offers residents 24/7 access to five conveniently located drop-off sites across the city. Collected material is hauled by a licensed provider to a commercial composting facility, where it is transformed into nutrient-rich compost. Due to strong community support, the city is exploring expansion opportunities, including a potential partnership with the Lansing School District to establish additional drop-off sites.

When food waste breaks down in landfills without oxygen, it produces methane – a powerful greenhouse gas that's much stronger than carbon dioxide in the short term. According to the EPA, food makes up about 24 percent of landfill waste and causes over half of landfill methane emissions. By keeping food waste out of landfills, Lansing helps cut emissions, saves on landfill costs, makes compost, and gives residents a simple way to support a cleaner, more sustainable community.

Limited staffing and resources were initial hurdles. However, the city successfully secured a full-time Mi Healthy Climate Corps member in 2024 to launch and support the program. After their term ended, the city retained them as a contract employee to continue program oversight and development.

Since its launch, the program has diverted over 40,500 lbs. (20.2 tons) of food scraps from the landfill – preventing the release of approximately 13.25 metric tons of carbon equivalent (MTCE). That's the same climate benefit as avoiding the emissions from charging over 1 million smartphones. Reducing methane emissions is one of the most impactful short-term climate actions available and contributes to better local air quality and public health.

This program uses a simple yet effective reporting tool: QR codes at each drop-off site enable residents to flag contamination or issues in real time. The city also distributed collection buckets to the first 200 registrants, who've been engaged through surveys and ongoing outreach. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with users calling the program "invaluable" and expressing hope for its continued growth.

Program costs are covered through fees collected from single-family homes for yard waste/composting services. Administrative support is funded through the city's general fund under the Office of Sustainability.

The program empowers residents to reduce landfill waste, cut costs, and contribute to a cleaner environment. It also builds a sense of ownership and pride in participating in climate solutions. One resident shared: "Thank you! I am very grateful for this program and hope it continues." Another wrote: "I use it all the time." These testimonials reflect the meaningful impact the program is having on daily life and environmental awareness in Lansing.

Las Vegas Mayor Shelley Berkley

City Composting Program

The City of Las Vegas, Nevada, implemented a composting program focused on reducing organic material like kitchen scraps and landscape debris from being sent to the landfill. Currently, there is not a residential composting program, and this program allowed residents to receive a free composter and education on how to utilize the composter properly.

Residential curbside service for the city is limited to sending material to the landfill or to the recycling facility. Unlike other communities that have an additional third bin that is sent to a composting facility, residents do not have other options. Many in Las Vegas must learn how to compost in an arid environment. The challenge expressed from those moving to Las Vegas from other communities was that although they were aware of composting, they didn't know how to compost properly or where to start. Understanding the hesitancy some residents may feel on purchasing a composter without understanding how to use it, the city selected the composter and provided the education for free.

The desert environment allows for a 12-month growing season for gardening. There was such overwhelming demand from residents to attend the composting class, as there were only so many education sessions and composters available, city staff added more classes to the original agenda to accommodate all interested parties. A total of 214 residents attended the composting program.

The composters selected were made from 100 percent post-consumer recycled plastic with two composting chambers that allow for a continuous flow of compost. Each composter holds a maximum volume of 37 gallons of material and a total of 128 composters were given to residents. Utilizing the Environmental Protection Agency's WARM model, an estimated amount of 11.72 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2E) was reduced from the atmosphere, or is equivalent to removing 2 passenger vehicles, or conserving 1,319 gallons of gasoline on an annual basis.

The city inspired residents to take control and problem solve on their own. Instead of throwing organic material away and spending money on purchasing compost, residents were taught how to create their own compost by making it themselves. Money was spent economically by utilizing city staff already knowledgeable with composting to teach the classes, and classrooms inside community centers were free. Therefore, funds were only spent on providing the residents with composters. The city's goal was to remove barriers, whether it be education or monetary, and instill confidence that residents could easily compost on their own at home.

Funding for this program was provided through a competitive grant from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to improve recycling and waste management.

With guidance from the city, residents learned a new skill, which gave attendees a sense of achievement and confidence that will hopefully spill over into other areas of their lives. Learning how to compost gave residents a sense of responsibility and awareness that our consumption matters, and instead of just "throwing it away," they were taught how to turn everyday trash into valuable compost.

Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird

Heat Pump Incentive Program

The City of Lincoln's Heat Pump Incentive Program offers incentives up to $3,800 for residents who install energy-efficient air source heat pumps. The program, a partnership with Lincoln Electric System (LES), helps households replace outdated HVAC systems, reduce energy use, save money on utility costs, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Enhanced incentives are available for low-income homeowners. By supporting high-efficiency electric heating and cooling, the program advances Lincoln's climate goals and improves comfort and indoor air quality. After strong participation in the first round, the City launched a second round of funding to meet growing demand.

A recent analysis identified energy efficiency as one of the most effective strategies to reach Lincoln's goal of 80 percent emissions reduction by 2050. Heat pumps stood out for their climate, comfort, and cost-saving benefits. Strong community interest—from an environmental group and a City Council member—reinforced the need. The program was designed to give all residents, especially low- and moderate-income households, a meaningful way to take climate action.

Since 2024, the City has incentivized the installation of 463 heat pumps, including 47 for low- and moderate-income households. These upgrades are projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 747,253 pounds annually and save 167,650 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year.

This program stands out for its simplicity and accessibility. Residents work directly with approved HVAC contractors, who apply for the incentive and apply it as a discount for the residential customer—eliminating paperwork for most participants. For low-income households, the City of Lincoln's Urban Development Department manages pre-approval. This one-stop-shop model is user-friendly and contractor-driven. Evaluation results show that over 68 percent of participants learned of the program through contractors, 95 percent said the incentive influenced their upgrade decision, and 90 percent rated the program as easy to use.

The City's vision required that it develop a new aspect to its partnership with the municipal electric utility. Staff developed a shared data system to track participation and manage approvals efficiently. In the first round, some incentives went toward replacing older heat pumps—still beneficial but not ideal. Over the life of the program, the City iterated and introduced a tiered structure to better target air conditioner replacements, maximizing emissions reductions and efficiency gains.

By replacing aging equipment, the program helps residents enjoy more comfortable homes year-round. Many residents see lower energy bills, especially those switching from inefficient systems. The program also supports energy equity, with 40 percent of the incentives available for low-income households. At the community level, cleaner, more efficient heating and cooling reduce local emissions and help meet climate goals, improving air quality and long-term public health.

The program is funded through a $1 million allocation from the City's general fund, spread over three years. The funding provided by the City's program can be combined with an incentive of $800 per resident from LES' Sustainable Energy Program. In addition to the City and LES funding, federal tax credits are available for up to 30 percent of the cost of a new heat pump.

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego

PHX Sky Train

The City of Phoenix Aviation Department began construction on the PHX Sky Train in 2009, as an investment in the future of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The fully electric people mover was a massive undertaking meant to get passengers and employees to airport facilities 24-hours a day, while also reducing pollutants and ensuring that as the airport grew, we could incorporate sustainable energy sources to support its operation. The full 5-mile line was completed in 2022, and has seen significant demand, as more than 14,000 passengers a day use it to connect to our facilities. The PHX Sky Train replaced carbon dioxide emitting shuttle buses, is more reliable, and can grow to meet even more passenger demand in the future.

Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is one of the busiest airports in the country, seeing over 142,000 passengers a day. That growth put a significant strain on the airport's existing infrastructure – roadways and vehicle fleet – and demanded an approach that could meet heightened demand and still support the airport's plan to reach Net Zero Carbon by 2040 by moving to emissions reducing technology.

The scope of the $745 million project required a complex and forward-thinking construction process, building in phases and ensuring that the PHX Sky Train could be effectively integrated into future development. Perhaps most challenging was getting our key business partners – airlines, agencies and concessionaries – to see the Sky Train as an investment in their future as well.

The PHX Sky Train has reduced energy use and emissions in a variety of ways, including the elimination of buses on our roadways and reduction of congestion, which is estimated to have an annual carbon emissions reduction of 69,000 tons. Latter stages of the PHX Sky Train also used all-LED lighting – either on a smart controller or daylight sensors. LEDs consume less energy, provide better lighting and can last 100,000 hours (7x) longer than traditional lighting.

In addition to the already stated environmental benefits, the PHX Sky Train project went above and beyond in sustainability features, including sustainable elements woven into the entire construction process, including landscaping that replaced 3.75 acres of grass – a key water conservation measure in this desert city, and the train itself is being powered with electricity that is 50 percent supplied from carbon-free energy sources.

The city issued Junior lien revenue bonds in 2010, and then an additional tranche of junior lien revenue bonds in 2019 to fund the construction of the PHX Sky Train.

The PHX Sky Train project has become one of the most recognizable, and effective customer amenities at the airport. Its implementation has meant a significant improvement in the passenger experience across the airport campus, and an equally impressive focus on meeting the department's sustainability goals, for the betterment of the whole community.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell

Residential Heat Pump Incentive Program

Seattle's Climate Action Plan has a target to reduce GHG emissions in the residential sector by 32 percent by 2030. In support of that target, Seattle intends to help fully transition households away from oil heating by 2030, which represents an 8-9 percent reduction in total building sector emissions, and 16-18 percent in the residential sector. Since 2017, Seattle's Clean Heat Program, administered through the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) and Office of Housing (OH), helps the city move toward the goal of reducing climate pollution by incentivizing moderate income and low-income households transition from oil to efficient air source heat pumps.

The program provides any Seattle homeowner or landlord with an instant rebate up to $6,000, applied directly to the customer invoice by a participating contractor. Households that qualify as low income can receive a no-cost heat pump conversion through the Office of Housing, in addition to weatherization measures to further reduce energy and utility costs. Since 2017, the city has supported approximately 2,500 households make the transition, and it's on track in meeting its goals of eliminating heating oil in Seattle by 2030.

This residential incentive program is helping the city advance its plan's goals by:

- Reducing GHG emissions: When Seattle launched the Clean Heat program in 2017, OSE estimated there were approximately 18,000 households with oil heat. Oil heat is significantly more polluting and expensive than other heating alternatives like electricity or even natural gas. Because Seattle's electricity is carbon neutral, transitioning households from oil to electric heat pumps significantly reduces GHG emissions.
- Reducing environmental risk and harm: Underground oil storage tanks pose an additional threat of soil and groundwater contamination as aging tanks erode and potentially leak, which can be costly and disruptive to clean up.
- Reducing heating costs/energy burden: An air source heat pump is three to four times more efficient than a typical oil furnace. Given the comparatively low cost of electricity in Seattle, a heat pump typically reduces heating costs by more than 50 percent. An average household spends an estimated $2,250 a year on heating oil a year and could save more than $1,100 a year. Plus, if the household participates in Seattle City Light's Utility Discount Program (for income qualified households), they receive a 60 percent discount on their electric bill, further reducing heating costs to $440 per year.

One of the main challenges included creating a rebate program design that fostered high participation rates. This required an incentive amount that was compelling, a program design that reduced barriers to access, and robust marketing and outreach support to generate awareness and action. Our partnership with a heat pump distributor and manufacturer enabled us to develop a strong network of contractors and enabled us to leverage the marketing and promotions resources of a major manufacturer (Mitsubishi). The instant rebate component eliminated paperwork for the homeowner and ensured the homeowner saw immediate financial benefits. Unlike traditional utility rebate programs, the homeowner does not have to mail in any forms or wait for a rebate check. To ensure the participation of low-income communities, OSE partnered with the Seattle Office of Housing (OH) to provide oil-to-heat-pump conversions at no cost to households up to 80 percent of area median income (AMI). The city pays for equipment, installation, and tank decommissioning and has incorporated the program offering into its existing weatherization program (HomeWise). OSE and OH coordinated on outreach strategies to low-income communities, including targeted direct mail, working with community-based organizations, and improving the program application.

The avoided emissions attributable to the more than 2,500 incentivized heat pump conversions are 12,500 MT CO2e per year or 187,500 MT CO2e over the lifetime of a heat pump. Households with heating oil are increasingly switching from oil. Program marketing, education and outreach has supported market transformation leading to unaided (without a rebate) conversions is approximately 1,300 households per year. At this rate, Seattle expects to have eliminated heating oil in the city by 2030.

The Clean Heat program's no-fuss, instant rebate has accelerated the adoption of residential heat pumps in Seattle. The program's website provides a list of participating installers, each of whom will provide a free estimate and then provide up to $6,000 off the invoiced total. The benefit of the Clean Heat program can also be stacked on top of other incentives like the Inflation Reduction Act's $2,000 tax credit. For households at or below 80 percent of AMI, the heat pump conversion – including oil tank decommissioning - is completely paid for by the City of Seattle. The program has served as a model for other jurisdictions who have adopted similar programs, including Bellevue and King County.

In 2016, Seattle City Council approved the initial Clean Heat program budget of $200,000 for a 2017 pilot launch. Through a competitive RFP, OSE leveraged this funding with contributions from a heat pump distributor and a major manufacturer. These contributions represent 25 percent of the total rebate amount. After a successful launch, Seattle City Council subsequently approved this funding amount each year. Given the program's increase in demand, $2.6 million in funding was allocated for 2023 and 2024 for 400 oil conversion rebates and 125 no-cost conversions per year. In 2024, Seattle received approximately $1 million from the WA State Department of Commerce to support "bonus" rebate for moderate income households. This funding allows the city to provide an additional $4,000 rebate in addition to the existing $2,000 rebate funded by the city. City rebates and federal tax credit amount to $8,000.

Oil-to-heat-pump conversions are a win-win for the residents of Seattle. Eliminating oil heating reduces GHG emissions while supporting improved indoor air-quality and improved comfort. Heat pumps powered with Seattle's carbon-neutral clean electricity improve occupant comfort levels during all seasons by providing heating, cooling, and air filtration functions, while significantly reducing heating bills and energy burden. Heat pumps also provide air-conditioning which has been a life-saving adaptation measure especially for vulnerable communities. Switching off oil heating reduces environmental risks by ensuring that the heating oil tank (which is often located underground) does not continue to store heating oil beyond its useful life. Leaking tanks can pollute groundwater and soil and can be expensive to clean up.

Small City Honorable Mentions

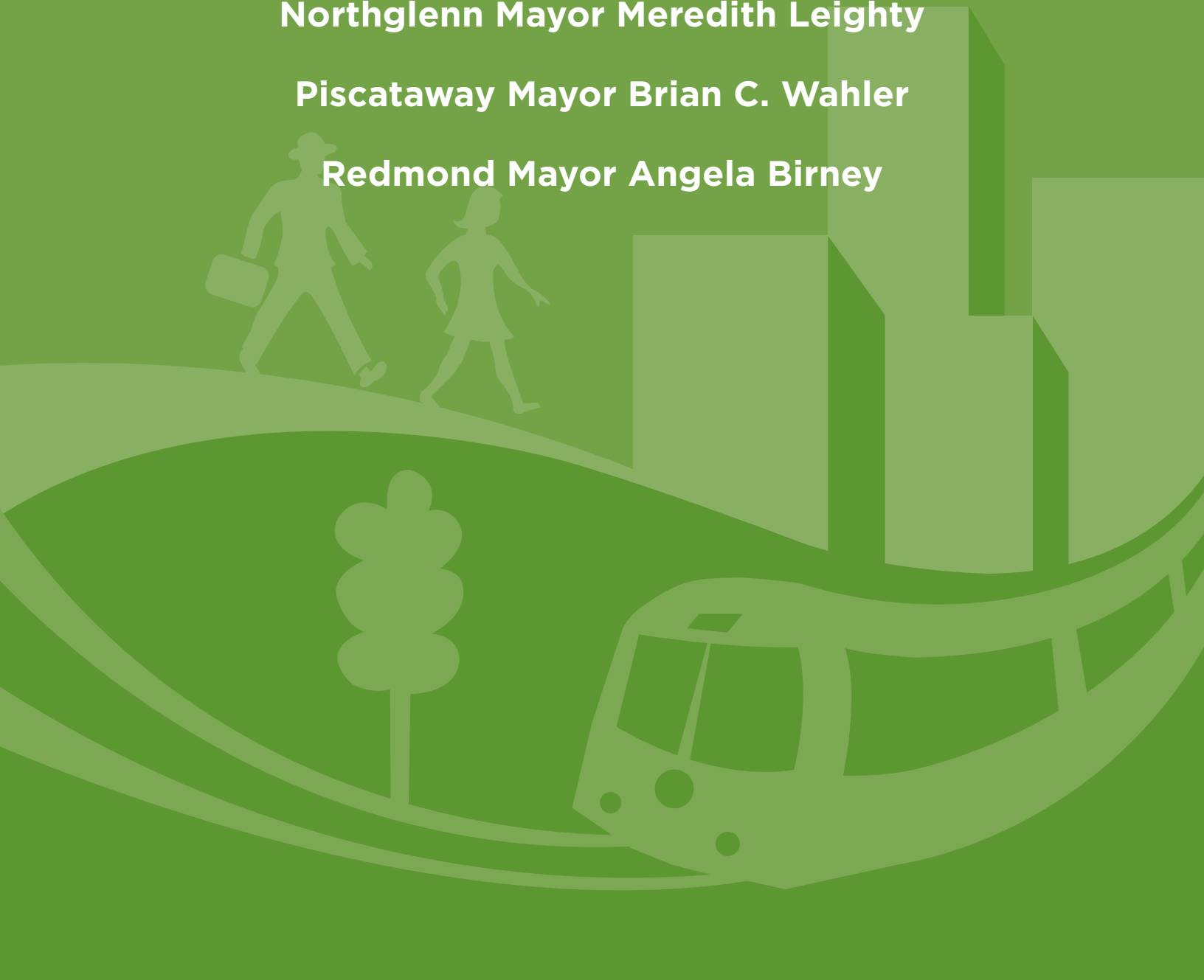
Population Under 100,000

Littleton Mayor Kyle Schlachter

Northglenn Mayor Meredith Leighty

Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler

Redmond Mayor Angela Birney



Littleton Mayor Kyle Schlachter

Tri-Cities Intergovernmental Agreement on Sustainability

The Colorado cities of Englewood (population 34,000), Littleton (population 46,000), and Sheridan (population 6,000) have joined together through a Tri-Cities intergovernmental agreement to leverage resources and advance sustainability efforts and achievements.

A recent greenhouse gas inventory indicated that commercial parcels are the largest source of air pollution and emitters of greenhouse gases in our communities. In 2024, the Tri-Cities launched the Sustainable Business Partnership, a city-led regional extension of the Colorado Green Business Network. This regional extension allows us to provide the same state resources with a tailored local approach to the Tri-Cities that benefits the cities of Englewood, Littleton, and Sheridan. This program provides technical assistance, educational outreach, and state-wide recognition opportunities for business and organizations. To maximize the impact of this state-developed program, the Tri-Cities collaborated to hire a full-time green business coordinator to help this program have an exponential impact on businesses and organizations.

Individually, none of the three cities had sufficient the resources nor could justify funding a dedicated full-time position for this purpose. However, recognizing that each of the cities shared the concern for assisting commercial emitters become more sustainable and helping them adopt responsible, environmental best practices and cost savings through efficiency gains, proved a strong and appealing foundation for collaboration.

During this first year of the program, many businesses and organizations from each community enrolled in the Colorado Green Business network. The Sustainable Business Partnership has helped our commercial sector in documenting current practices, setting goals for improvement, and decreasing environmental impact, realizing savings through efficiency.

Each of the cities used its retail plastic bag fee revenues, implemented for the purpose of reducing plastic pollution and advancing sustainability issues, to fund the cost of this initiative. While these revenues were insufficient for any one city to go it alone, when combined with the other partner cities, the revenues have been more than enough to cover the initiative.

The Sustainable Business Partnership between the Tri-Cities has increased awareness of each city's shared environmental stewardship goals, provided technical assistance to businesses and organizations, and leveraged a valuable state program to reduce environmental environment, enhance quality of life in our region, and support business resiliency to climate change. By choosing to look outward and be open to interjurisdictional partnership, progress is made possible and even accelerated.

Northglenn Mayor Meredith Leighty

CORE Green Building Certification

Northglenn's new City Hall is a fully electric, net-zero energy municipal facility pursuing CORE Green Building Certification. Completed in 2024 with no new taxes, it serves as a model of climate-conscious civic development. Beyond housing municipal functions, it was designed as a welcoming community hub and hands-on demonstration of sustainable building practices, reflecting Northglenn's environmental leadership and commitment to public engagement.

The project stemmed from a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redevelop the civic campus (our downtown) which includes the Northglenn City Hall. The previous City Hall was over 40 years old and lacked safety infrastructure, accessibility, and adequate space for employees or public engagement. Council prioritized green building standards to align with climate goals, reduce operating costs, and reflect community values of sustainability, equity, and health.

Outside of the typical challenges related to building a new municipal facility, we faced several unique challenges with this project. One of those challenges was a steep post-COVID construction cost increase which required intensive coordination and strategy to overcome and stay in-budget. Another unique challenge with this project was related to a CORE Certification requirement for rainwater capture. The City of Northglenn needed to go to water court in the State of Colorado to advocate for rainwater capture on-site which was only allowed because Northglenn is a municipal utility provider with trans-basin Water rights. The last big challenge was the need to meet several competing needs with one building. We prioritized engagement to overcome this challenge, from public meetings to design charrettes to ensure the final building met safety needs (e.g., police department input), reflected departmental workflows, and welcomed all residents with open community spaces and a welcoming fully public lobby.

The building is net energy, meaning it produces as much energy as it consumes through 476 solar panels (195 kW annually) and runs entirely on electricity (no natural gas). It's irrigated with 100 percent non-potable water captured in below-grade cisterns from roof runoff, eliminating energy use tied to treated water. Its mass timber structure reduces embodied carbon by 50 percent, saving emissions equivalent to carbon sequestered by 621 acres of forest annually.

Northglenn's City Hall is a rare example of a fully electric, net-zero municipal building and also happens to be the first CORE-certified building in Colorado and one of the first municipal buildings in the nation to achieve this standard. Unlike certifications based on projections, CORE evaluates real-world performance across energy, water, materials, and equity. The building showcases ingredient transparency, with Declare-labeled materials free of chemicals of concern, and excludes petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides from landscaping. Durable, low-impact exterior materials like zinc and thermally modified wood were chosen for longevity, renewability, and chemical-free processing. This certification reflects a holistic, measurable approach to sustainability rarely seen in civic construction.

The $38 million project was fully funded with no loans. Revenue came from an existing ½ percent sales tax and 4 percent special marijuana tax, which can only be used for capital projects. The net-zero features added about $1.6 million (5 percent) to the total cost, an investment aligned with long-term savings and climate resilience.

The building was intentionally designed for inclusivity and accessibility. It features a fully public lobby with seating and a computer kiosk for residents without home internet. All areas and bathrooms are accessible. For staff, centralized lounges and wellness rooms promote health and connection. The space embodies a sense of civic pride, safety, and sustainability.

Northglenn's Net Zero City Hall reflects a triple bottom line approach balancing environment, equity, and economy. We like to think of ourselves as "small but mighty" and think our success shows that smaller cities can still lead boldly through smart planning, cross-departmental collaboration, and authentic engagement.

See: https://www.northglenn.org/government/project_updates/new_city_hall_opening.php

Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler

Piscataway Goes Green

The Piscataway Goes Green initiative is a groundbreaking municipal program aimed at transforming energy usage and reducing carbon emissions through a comprehensive set of sustainability measures. Key components include the installation of 2.9 MW of solar arrays across eight public buildings, the deployment of 28 public EV charging stations, significant HVAC, building automation, and lighting upgrades, and a microgrid to enhance energy resilience. Upon completion, 64 percent of the township's electrical energy needs will be powered by on-site renewable energy, with carbon emissions reduced by 53 percent by 2026.

Piscataway recognized the urgent need to address rising energy costs, reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources, and tackle environmental and economic challenges. In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, which highlighted vulnerabilities to extreme weather events, the program was designed to meet the dual objectives of lowering energy expenses and carbon emissions while improving the sustainability and resiliency of public services for the community.

One of the significant challenges in advancing this initiative was navigating the complexities of funding and federal incentives, particularly the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) direct pay program. The Township successfully leveraged $13.2 million through grants, rebates, and incentives, supported by a short-term note to address timing gaps in fund disbursement. Additionally, approvals for solar installations were affected by grid saturation, requiring project modifications to comply with utility restrictions. The team overcame these obstacles to keep the project on track.

The initiative is projected to cut Piscataway's energy consumption significantly through efficiency upgrades, such as advanced building automation systems for HVAC optimization and modernized lighting systems. These energy enhancements, combined with the addition of 2.9 MW of solar energy and a 250 kW/1147 kWh battery energy storage system, will reduce the township's carbon emissions by 53 percent and deliver $19.2 million in energy savings over 20 years.

Piscataway's program is a model for municipalities nationwide, exemplifying innovation in both technology and financing. While technologies like solar panels and EV infrastructure are established, the integration of these solutions with innovative funding strategies such as energy savings performance contracts and the ITC direct pay option sets the program apart. Furthermore, Piscataway has achieved the largest single municipal deployment of public EV infrastructure in New Jersey history.

This $24.9 million initiative was funded through a combination of local and external sources. Piscataway leveraged $13.2 million in grants, rebates, and the ITC direct pay option, while the remaining balance was financed through an energy savings performance contract with Schneider Electric through the issuance of municipal bonds. This approach ensures the program is self-sustaining, as the $19.2 million in projected energy savings over the next 20 years will offset the project's costs.

The program has improved air quality in public facilities through upgraded HVAC systems. The microgrid ensures critical services like the Public Safety Building, Courthouse, Police Station, and Town Hall remain operational during outages for at least five days without utility power. Furthermore, installing 28 public EV charging stations enhances access to sustainable transportation. Energy savings allow the township to reallocate funds toward improved public services, directly benefiting residents.

Redmond Mayor Angela Birney

Climate Resiliency and Sustainability Vegetation Management

The City of Redmond has been at the forefront of sustainability and resource protection initiatives, with longstanding commitments and implementation efforts to protect the natural environment, reach carbon neutrality, and prepare for climate impacts. The Climate Resiliency and Sustainability Vegetation Management (CRSVM) Plan built on these efforts with a focus on supporting the climate resiliency and sustainability of natural systems managed and maintained by the city. The CRSVM identified key strategies such as expanding rewilding areas and tree canopy, adopting new native and climate-resilient species lists, restoring and transitioning areas to more diverse ecosystems, developing a centralized documentation to guide coordinated implementation of these activities, and engaging the community with education around sustainable practices and climate resilient efforts.

Since starting implementation of the CRSVM Plan, it has become the city's forward-looking, cross-departmental guide to strengthening actions and collaboration around how we manage our vegetation (trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses). As climate impacts and development continue, adapting practices for city-managed vegetation will help Redmond sustain an environment that is healthy and resilient to climate impacts and disruptions, while maintaining resources for future generations. Rather than prescriptive strategies, the plan offers a menu of action options, with considerations and iterations of place-based vegetation plans. This unique, dynamic, and adaptive management practice has evolved as Redmond grows and climate change continues.

Throughout the development of Redmond's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and the Parks, Arts, Recreation, Culture, and Conservation (PARCC) Plan, the community voiced that healthy, natural spaces are a priority and part of Redmond's unique identity. More than 80 percent of respondents surveyed indicated support for rewilding, expanding tree canopy, or allowing select areas to be naturalized in recent surveys. The CRSVM honors these values and priorities by making Redmond a leader in best practices for sustainable and resilient vegetation management across public property, including right-of-way, parks and trails, city facilities, street trees, waterways, tree canopy, and more.

One of the challenges the city had to overcome was the reality that vegetation management in the city is addressed by multiple work groups and, at times, can be disjointed. The CRSVM project core team, which is made up of staff representing all groups performing vegetation management, helps provide a cohesive, aligned approach to sustainable vegetation management practices. Another challenge was that tree canopy expansion locations in the city were not clearly identified. As part of this project, a robust research and analysis effort was performed to identify possible tree canopy expansion areas, followed by GIS mapping of these sites. The city now has a clear, stakeholder-informed view of tree planting locations as it works to reach 40 percent tree canopy cover by 2050.

In addressing greenhouse gas emissions, the CRSVM increases pollinator gardens, naturalized meadows, and tree canopy, with these benefits:

- Enhancing/creating green spaces increases carbon sequestration and improves air quality.
- Naturalized meadows require less maintenance, resulting in lower emissions and energy consumption.
- The CRSVM transitions the use of fossil fuel powered maintenance equipment to electric powered equipment, resulting in lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The holistic approach to sustainable vegetation management of the CRSVM is what sets this effort apart. Redmond is looking at all facets of vegetation management to strategically and methodically expand tree canopy, increase pollinator garden opportunities, rewild areas across the city, reduce pesticide usage, and reduce emissions in operations. This is a bold policy move that requires in-depth community engagement and buy-in as the city looks to fundamentally change the way certain open spaces are maintained. For example, the buy-in from public and private property owners is vital for the city to reach a tree canopy coverage of 40 percent by 2050, so a Tree Giveaway program was created to gift native trees to property owners and encourage the community to be part of the plan's implementation. Furthermore, Redmond understands the importance of community engagement and education. As the city implements the CRSVM, it is accompanied by robust education through social media, website, email blasts, and signage throughout vegetative areas to foster understanding and involvement by the community in these efforts. By taking this holistic approach, the city hopes to see faster results towards carbon sequestration, tree canopy expansion, and natural resources enhancements.

The CRSVM Plan was funded through a one-time General Fund allocation in the city's operational budget. Implementation efforts are currently being funded through operating budgets and future General Fund/Utilities Funds allocations. For larger efforts, CIP dollars may be accessed to transition right of way vegetation or other areas with greater resource needs.

The many strategies listed in this plan, most notably the growth of native ecosystems, pollinator gardens, naturalized spaces, and tree canopy, bring with them lower carbon emissions, increased landscape resiliency, decreased urban heat island effect, and increased wildlife and biodiversity of the city's natural areas. Through these benefits, Redmond community members experience the health benefits of cleaner air, a cooler environment during warmer days, and reduced noise pollution. The CRSVM sets into motion a cascade of changes that will enhance the quality of life for Redmond community members and the natural environment. Additionally, it allows Redmond to model for the community the ways that they can also be part of the climate resilient vegetation management throughout the city. By educating and engaging community members to understand the work being done, they will be able to implement some of the same practices in how they manage their own vegetation.

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