



CITY OF IOWA CITY MEMORANDUM

Date: March 20, 2019
To: Ashley Monroe, Assistant City Manager
From: Brenda Nations, Sustainability Coordinator
Re: Update on Climate Action Plan

The City Council adopted the Iowa City Climate Action and Adaptation Plan in September 2018 which includes 35 actions for the community and municipality to undertake to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These high impact actions were identified and quantified so when implemented, Iowa City can achieve the 2025 and 2050 greenhouse gas reduction targets set by City Council. This memo outlines the progress that City staff has made towards these goals since the adoption of the Plan.

The Sustainability Coordinator has attended the monthly community-driven Climate Action Advisory Board meetings and also attends their Communications, Equity, and Transportation Working Group meetings as described in the Advisory Board Quarterly Report (included in the March 7 Information Packet). These meetings are going well and allow communication and coordination between the City and the Advisory Board on the implementation of the Plan. The meetings have been well organized and run by the Advisory Board members, who have been diligently working as a group to move forward the implementation of the Plan.

City staff have also been collaborating across departments to implement the municipal actions within the Plan. Staff progress over the last six months is outlined in key areas below, organized by a general update and then by Climate Action Plan section titles.

General Updates

Staff Climate Action Group

A group of 22 staff members representing all departments has been meeting every other month to capture ideas and improve daily operations to reduce municipal emissions. This group has created a list of simple and complex actions that City employees can undertake and become more involved in steps towards climate action so that climate awareness can become institutionalized within our organization. In April, the group will prioritize actions such as composting in City facilities, polling City employees about commuting options and incentives, and reducing paper usage. They will assemble the ideas the group has generated into a workable plan for the upcoming year.

Climate Grant

The application period for another round of the Community Climate Action Grant closed March 1, 2019. The staff committee will meet next week to review applications to award funding from FY2019 and FY2020 (\$25,000 each year). A broad selection of applications was received this round. The grant award committee has criteria to evaluate proposals and seeks to award

funding for projects addressing a spectrum of Climate Plan objectives. This grant funding has been a positive method to engage the community, support climate work, and fund worthwhile projects in Iowa City that will reduce our emissions.

Equity Fellow

Iowa City was one of seven communities nationally chosen to host an Equity and Diversity Fellow this summer. The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) awarded grant funding to a selection of member applicants to hire a full-time fellow over the summer to further equity and sustainability work within their cities. The scope of work in Iowa City will focus on outreach and getting a better sense of the needs of underserved and under-represented communities who may be disproportionately impacted by climate change. Equity and sustainability staff will collaborate on mentoring the fellow over the 12-week period this summer. The job opportunity will be posted next week both nationally through USDN as well as locally. Applications will be received through the end of April and selection for the position will be in May. We will be looking for applicants who have an interest in both sustainability and equity, as well as experience with working or living with under-represented communities. The fellow will also receive free attendance at the October 2019 USDN annual meeting to present on the work accomplished in Iowa City.

Climate Festival Planning

Staff has been in contact with event planning faculty at the University of Iowa and other stakeholders to assist in planning for a Climate Festival we plan to hold in September 2020. The University faculty agrees that it will be a beneficial partnership for students and has suggested that they could supply student help in the way of internships and volunteers for the festival.

Tracking and Annual Reporting

In addition to memos such as this, City staff plans on updating the community annually on the progress of the Climate Action Plan. The update will include an annual community-wide greenhouse gas inventory, which is done by City staff for every calendar year to quantify greenhouse gas reductions and analyze trends. Progress on all thirty-five actions in the Plan will be evaluated and annual materials will be generated for public awareness. Because data collection and analysis for both the inventory and the actions will take several months, reporting for the 2018 calendar year has already begun in order to create the annual report expected to be completed this fall.

Buildings

Tracking Municipal Utilities

City staff have been tracking municipal utility data (natural gas and electricity) for the past 10 years. A more effective software program was recently purchased to analyze the facility data with the intent of prioritizing energy efficiency improvements. The software also allows the City to more easily track and quantify building emissions from energy use in City facilities. A sustainability intern has been managing the integration of our data with the new software and the project is substantially complete. We now look forward to bringing on the budget-approved Assistant Facility Manager in the new fiscal year to more actively monitor and manage our utility

usage. The addition of this position will also allow staff to more quickly implement energy efficiency projects on City facilities.

Energy Efficiency Improvements in Municipal Facilities

Several improvements have been implemented in City facilities. A Building Automation System (BAS) was installed for Robert A. Lee and at Mercer along with a new boiler system and HVAC work. A BAS, now in ten of our facilities, allows staff to monitor and optimally operate the building HVAC systems with the intent of lowering energy use and costs. A comprehensive BAS at City Hall is the next planned installation.

Quite a few energy efficient lighting improvement projects have been completed, converting over 2,000 bulbs to LED lights in the last six months. These projects include many parking ramp stairwells, several areas of the Transit building, the household hazardous waste room at the Landfill, Cable TV offices, an IT server room, Equipment shop, and the Refuse building. Several other lighting replacements are planned at Parks buildings, the MPO offices in City Hall, and outdoor lighting at Mercer. Staff is working hard to take advantage of lighting rebates available from MidAmerican Energy through the end of March.

Solar Projects

Staff worked with consultants who completed a solar feasibility study for a selection of City facilities. Resulting from the study and direction from Council, staff is pursuing two solar array projects. The Public Works facility under construction will have a rooftop solar installation; the design will be underway shortly. The Terry Trueblood Recreation Area will also see a smaller solar installation project later this year.

On a related note, the City Manager's Office and Sustainability staff have met with both MidAmerican Energy and Eastern Iowa Light and Power, to talk about partnering on potential opportunities for solar or other energy saving projects. Discussions are still underway.

Efficiency Opportunities for Owner-Occupied Rehab Projects

As of February 1, 2019, participants in the City's owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program will receive an energy audit by the City's affiliated Green Iowa AmeriCorps (GIA). To date, two projects are scheduled for audits to increase the home's energy efficiency. Participant homes will also receive weatherization to improve energy efficiency and lower energy costs. The City typically performs work on 20-25 housing rehab projects per year. Additionally, City staff also sent letters to past program participants at the end of January 2019 to let them know about the free energy audits. Green Iowa AmeriCorps have had 10 people sign up through our partnership. As of this writing, eight households have completed their audits. GIA have also completed additional weatherization for one household and another is signed up.

Building Inspection for Energy Efficiency

Building Inspection staff ensures that all new dwelling units and additions meet the specific insulation and thermal values for walls, floors, ceilings, windows and doors according to Energy Code. Staff must have verification by one of three paths of compliance: 1) a prescriptive method, in which plans have to show that the building is designed to the minimum values stated

in the code before staff issues a building permit, 2) a performance method, where data can be supplied using software called ResCheck, in which information such as insulation values, window and door thermal values and others are entered and a report shows if the building meets energy code requirements as it was designed, or 3) a “HERS Rating”, which is an in-depth energy performance assessment provided by a certified third-party rater.

On final inspection, staff are looking for the required tag at electrical panel. The tag at the electrical panel needs to include the following information: duct leakage and blower door test results, window and door U-values, insulation R-values and equipment efficiencies.

Transportation

Electric Vehicles and Charging Stations

Two more electric vehicles will be soon to be added to the City fleet, which currently includes two electric cars, three electric utility vehicles, and three hybrid vehicles.

Public charging stations for electric vehicles were recently added in the Capitol St, Dubuque St. and Chauncey Swan parking ramps. These are additions to the public charging station at Harrison St. ramp and fleet charging station in Chauncey Swan ramp.

EV (Electric Vehicle) Readiness Planning

Staff applied for funds from The Iowa Economic Development Authority to create a local readiness plan for electric vehicles. Codes and policy changes, as well as incentives would be evaluated as practices that cities could undertake that would promote the integration of electric vehicles in our community. While the idea of a plan was well received, the IEDA suggested that we increase the scope of the plan to be an Eastern Iowa regional plan. Staff has reached out to communities and MPOs in the region, all who have been interested in cooperating in the creation of a plan. Staff plans to gather letters of interest and updating the application to reapply next month. If awarded funds, a consultant would be jointly hired to create the regional plan. During the process of creating the plan, City staff will be able to assess which practices would be most valuable to adopt locally and set a timeline for implementation. Sustainability staff was just informed that they will be one of seven national representatives for the USDN electric vehicle planning group.

Increase in Bike Lanes

One bike lane on 1st Ave. (Bradford to Hwy 6) was added last year, but there are plans for six more lanes to be striped this construction year in the following locations:

- 1) Dodge and Governor Streets (Burlington to Summit)
- 2) Mormon Trek Blvd. (Hwy 6 to Melrose)
- 3) Clinton (Benton to Church)
- 4) Madison St. (Burlington to Market)
- 5) Foster Rd. (Dubuque to Prairie Du Chien)

6) McCollister Rd. (Gilbert to Sycamore)

Council will be updated on project progress through the fall.

Waste

Container Rollouts

The bulk of approximately 13,000 95-gallon recycling carts were distributed from December 10-22, 2018. The bulk of the 95-gallon organics carts requested by residents followed after the bulk recycling cart distribution (December/January). So far, 4,145 total, or just over 25% of our customers have been delivered. About 30 customers sign up online daily and at this point we're delivering within a day or two. Refuse's first organics compost load will be ready for the public on April 9.

From an outreach perspective, carts have inspired increased communications with residents. During the distribution of carts and for the month following, staff was getting a lot of great questions from residents and had conversations with residents about recycling, some of which we feel like we had not before engaged. Staff plans to track the first months of participation and analyze data this spring, so we could have more information to share in May.

Community Education Efforts

Although the waste sector is a small percentage (2%) of community-wide emissions, it has become an increasingly large percentage (54%) of the municipal emissions (see page 9 [of Iowa City Municipal Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Update](#)). Because the City owns and operates the Iowa City Landfill, which receives waste from all of Johnson County, the emissions from the landfill must be reported as a sector within the municipal greenhouse gas inventory. Staff recently met to ensure that all actions in the Waste section of the Plan are in progress and on track. Work on an education campaign for diversion of construction materials is in progress. Recycling and reuse workshops headed by the Resource Management Division have been held early in 2019.

Staff is examining needed compost pad improvements and preparing for a methane-capture study for the Landfill and Waste Water Treatment Facility. An RFP for consultant work on this project is anticipated in the next few months. Also, a pilot composting program is rolling out at City Hall at the end of March. Staff at other City facilities have expressed interest in starting their own onsite compost programs.

Local Food Initiatives

Community garden plots are currently available for reservation, starting on March 8 with online reservations for those who rented space last year, and in-person reservation, beginning on April 1. This year, the City will have over 220 plots for rent in varying sizes. Next year, Creekside Park will add a community orchard of approximately 26 fruit-bearing plantings (6 trees; 20 bushes), Walden Pond will add 10-15 plots, and Chadek Green will be reconfigured to include varying sizes and additional pathways.

In addition to increasing community gardens and gardening programs, staff is working on an agreement to support local food initiatives. A significant portion of budgeted local food funding has remained unspent. More information will be brought to Council prior to finalizing the agreement.

Route Changes for Refuse Operations

Refuse and Engineering staff worked with the City's GIS platform to devise a revised plan for refuse truck routing. Solid Waste, Recycling, and Organics pickup have had standard routes for years, adding streets to routes as streets were built out throughout Iowa City. Drivers would occasionally need to skip over parts of town to go assist another route, especially if route stops were imbalanced. Staff modified all routes to keep all resident pickups on the same day of the week, rebalance the number of stops, and reduce excess vehicle miles traveled. It is still too recent to observe considerable fuel savings but staff is monitoring impacts of this change.

Adaptation

Tree Plantings

In addition to the 1,500 trees that have been planted in the past three years, approximately 75 trees will be planted this year to buffer the railroad along 420th St. By expanding our tree canopy, these trees will assist in eliminating CO₂ from the air, reducing stormwater runoff, removing air pollutants and providing shade for years to come.

Stormwater Position Changes

The FY2020 budget also includes a new Stormwater Technician position. This person will assist the Stormwater Engineer facilitate neighborhood stormwater projects and residential stormwater management assistant programs. The budget allows for the City to hire the position in summer.

Natural Areas Management

Staffing changes were made in the Parks Division to establish an Assistant Parks Superintendent position. The Assistant Superintendent will be able to support management of natural areas maintenance contracts. The City-owned natural areas, like Riverfront Crossings Park, sequester carbon, reduce runoff, and can help control flooding. We have made progress in maintaining these areas and will continue to have better support, with recent position hire.

Conclusion

In the six months since the plan was adopted, much work has been accomplished by City staff. We will continue to provide periodic updates throughout the year and look forward to putting together our first annual progress report for the Council and the community this fall.

If you have any questions, please contact me at brenda-nations@iowa-city.org

CC: Tracy Hightshoe, Neighborhood and Development Services Director