

Sustainability and Resiliency Community Work Plan

Created by and for
Our Community Members

2025 Annual Report



Executive Summary

In 2024, the Rochester City Council accepted the Sustainability and Resiliency Community Work Plan (SRCWP), establishing an annual process to track progress across 103 tactics.

Current activity is strong:

- 17% are “Complete”
- 12% are “In Progress”
- 53% of tactics are “In Progress – Continuous”
- 17% are “Not Started”

To support consistent reporting, City staff identified responsible departments and staff contacts for City-led tactics and piloted a Smartsheet survey in late 2024 before inviting community partners to report on Community-led tactics in early 2025.

Highlights this cycle include:

- Expanded housing health and safety work (e.g., lead hazard remediation)
- Organics diversion pilots
- Progress on neighborhood services
- Programs improving youth safety and mobility

Together, these efforts reflect steady, collaborative momentum toward a healthier, more resilient Rochester.

Background

Established in 2019, the City’s Sustainability and Resiliency Task Force, made up of a diverse cross-section of community members, led the development of the Sustainability & Resiliency Community Work Plan (SRCWP) with broad public input, leveraging existing commissions, committees, and nonprofits. The plan was finalized and published in 2021.

In September of 2022, the Rochester City Council adopted updated, science-based greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals, signaling a more ambitious approach to combating climate change. These goals supersede previous targets set in the 2017 Energy Action Plan (EAP) and reflect the City’s commitment to aligning with global efforts in addressing climate change. The goals include a **50% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030**, and **net-zero emissions by 2050**. The largest emission sectors are building energy use (78%), transportation (20%), and solid waste (2%). As of 2023, the Rochester community has reduced GHG emissions by 28% from the 2007 baseline.

In 2024, the Sustainability and Resiliency Community Work Plan (SRCWP) was formally accepted by the Rochester City Council, leading to the need for annual progress reporting on the Plan.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

community-wide greenhouse gas emissions from building energy, vehicle travel, and the management of municipal solid waste

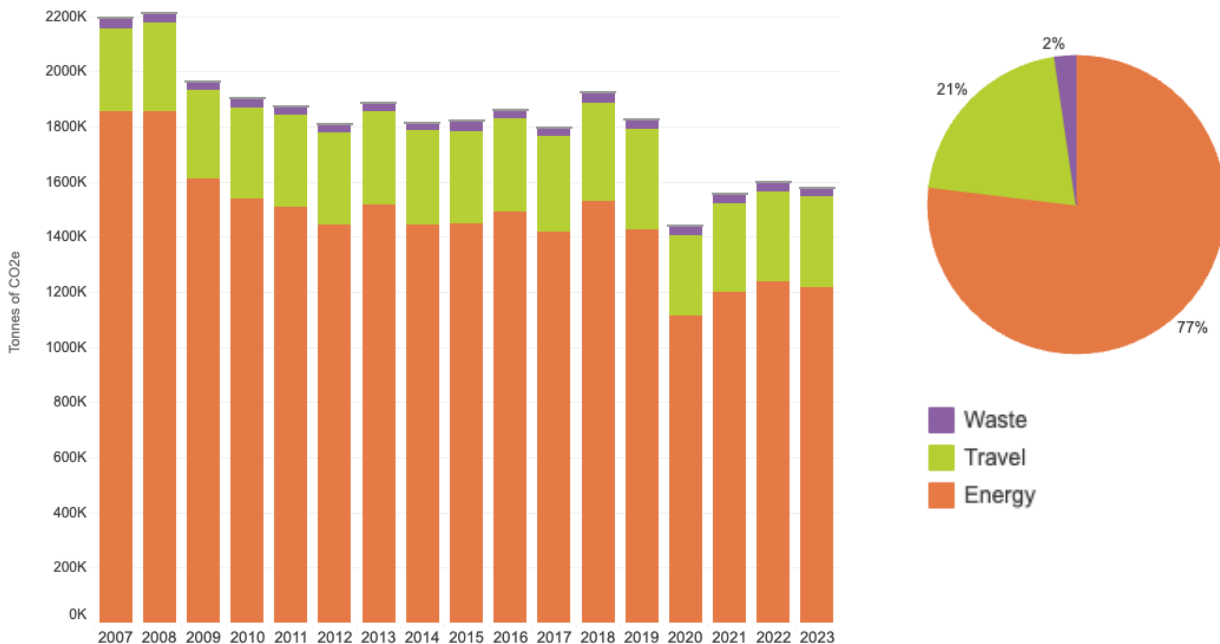


Figure 1. Community-wide greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes of CO2e) from Building Energy, Vehicle Travel, and Solid Waste measured from 2007 until 2023 (most recent reporting year).

Annual Reporting Process

Within the SRCWP, there are 103 tactics, roughly half of which are led by the City and half of which are led by the Community. City staff are responsible for reporting on City-led tactics, and the Sustainability and Resiliency Commission (SRC) is responsible for collecting updates on Community-led tactics.

Contact Type Summary



Figure 2. The Contact Type Summary shows the amount of City-led tactics versus Community-led tactics and the current status of those tactics: Complete, In Progress, In Progress - Continuous, Not Started, and Blank.

In the fall of 2024, the Sustainability Division worked with the SRC to determine contact organizations and specific contacts for each Community-led tactic. At the same time, City staff identified the responsible departments and designated staff contacts for all City-led tactics. A SmartSheet survey was created for all Plan tactics with quantitative and qualitative questions for both City and Community-led tactics.

The SmartSheet survey was piloted first with the City-led tactics, allowing staff to test the survey process and make refinements before it was distributed more broadly. In early 2025, the updated survey was then sent out to Community-led tactic contacts to begin the data collection process for the SRCWP Community-led tactics. This included outreach to organizations that aligned with the tactics via phone and email.

In the spring of 2025, the SRC conducted additional outreach with Community-led tactic contacts that did not complete the survey. Moving into the summer of 2025, the Sustainability Intern continued the follow up process with Community-led tactic contacts and conducted additional independent research, when necessary, to complete the SRCWP annual reporting process. The progress and highlights in this report are sourced from data gathered through the annual reporting process. City staff also created a progress dashboard to aid in reporting tactic status.

Overall Progress

The Sustainability Plan Dashboard highlights strong momentum, with over 80% of tactics actively in progress or completed.

- 17% of tactics are “Complete.”
- 12% are “In Progress,” reflecting tactics that are underway but not yet continuous.
- 53% are “In Progress – Continuous,” showing that many actions require ongoing work and long-term commitment.
- 17% of tactics have not yet been started.
- No tactics are currently on hold or left blank, which demonstrates that each tactic has been reviewed and given a status.



Sustainability Plan Dashboard

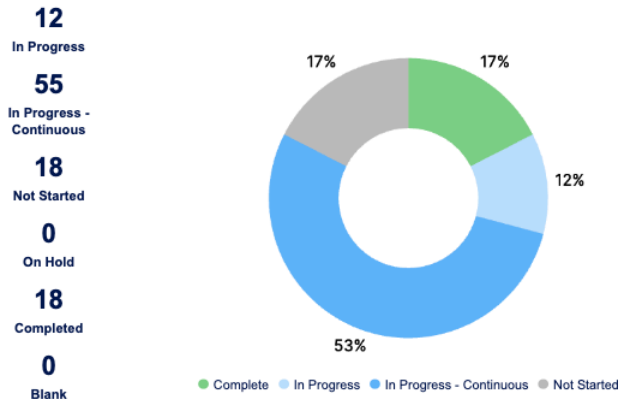


Figure 3. Sustainability Plan Dashboard. Distribution of SRCWP tactic statuses: 17% Complete, 12% In Progress, 53% In Progress - Continuous, and 17% Not Started; none are On Hold or Blank (n=103 tactics).

Focus Area

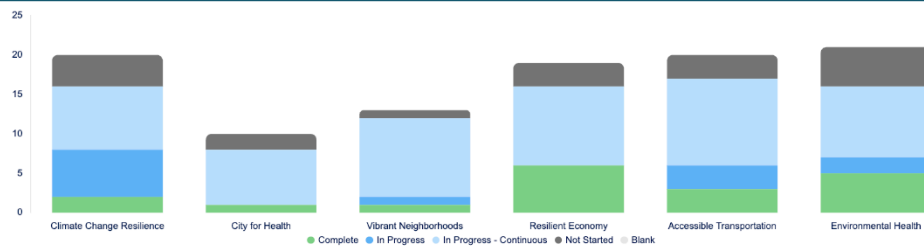


Figure 4. The Focus Area Summary depicts each Plan focus area, how many tactics each contains, and the current status of the tactics within.

In order to address the needs of Rochester residents, the SRCWP tactics are separated into 6 key focus areas: Climate Change Resilience, City for Health, Vibrant Neighborhoods, Resilient Economy, Accessible Transportation, and Environmental Health. In the Sustainability Plan, each of the focus areas incorporate City-led and Community-led tactics as shown in figure 5.

Sustainability Plan Details

Primary	Status	Primary Contact Type
Climate Change Resilience		
C1: Work with state and federal representatives to advocate for policies that address local concerns about climate change		
a. Advocate for policy changes at the state and federal level that support these sustainability and resiliency recommendations.	In Progress - Continuous	City
C2: Improve the climate resilience of our built environment		
a. Assess climate change vulnerability and evaluate risk and resiliency by determining flood prone areas throughout the City.	In Progress	City
b. Evaluate funding models which help remediate overall damage or protect households within flood zones.	Complete	Community
c. When the City starts working with a particular flood-prone area, weave in integration of services like energy audits, weatherization, lead, and asbestos abatement.	In Progress - Continuous	City
d. Create a tool to allow community members to share specific issues such as, damaged sidewalks, maintenance problems, potholes, frost heaves, broken lights, etc.	In Progress - Continuous	City
e. Prioritize the use of materials that are made to last, reducing the ongoing operation, maintenance, and eventual replacement of the materials. Further, as a means to reduce heat island effect, evaluate materials that have a higher solar reflectivity index.	Not Started	City
C3: Power our buildings with locally generated renewable electricity		
a. Identify and pursue opportunities to locate renewable energy within our community to benefit low-income residents and environmentally minded institutions.	In Progress - Continuous	Community
b. Facilitate opportunities for large power users to generate their own renewable power.	In Progress	Community
c. Require new construction to execute an electrification life-cycle cost analysis and create incentives to reduce the financial gap and increase efficiency.	In Progress	City
C4: Rochester's Sustainability and Resiliency Commission will recommend a carbon emissions reduction goal for City residences to meet by a specified date		
a. Create a deep energy retrofit program for residential properties.	In Progress - Continuous	Community

Figure 5. An image from the "Sustainability Plan Details" provides an example of the focus area "Climate Change Resilience" with tactics listed below, detailing their Status and Primary Contact Type.





Climate Change Resiliency



City for Health



Vibrant Neighborhoods



Accessible Transportation



Resilient Economy



Environmental Health

City and Community Highlights

Climate Change Resilience

Rochester will lead the transition to an equitable, reliable, responsible carbon-free community to adapt and thrive in a changing climate. Our community continues to reduce GHG emissions, increase access/equitable distribution of resilient infrastructure and transportation, and learn from and alongside each other about climate change and how to interrupt and reverse it.

- **City Tactic C2c:** The City of Rochester administers a Home Rehabilitation Program to preserve the community’s housing stock, including projects that address flood-prone homes and lead hazards. In 2024, through a state-funded lead-based paint remediation grant, the City served 16 households.
- **Community Tactic C4b:** Focused on expanding funding and lending for energy-efficiency projects, deep energy retrofits, and housing resiliency for under-resourced residents, this tactic is currently in progress under Semcac’s leadership. The nonprofit prioritizes income-qualified households, older adults, and high-energy-use homes, and over the past year has leveraged nine state and federal grants to deliver energy audits and retrofit improvements.

City for Health

Healthy residents nurture a sustainable and resilient community. Healthy environments, community connectedness, and access to quality healthcare support health for our community. Our community will work to meet the individual needs of residents in an equitable, culturally relevant manner to attain the highest standard of health for all.

- **City Tactic H2c:** The City of Rochester’s Emergency Management (EM) primary role is coordination/preparation for sheltering needs due to weather events, fires, or other needs. Along with multiple sheltering locations, the City works with multiple entities including Olmsted County EM, the American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army among others. In 2024, an estimated 50 residents were provided with temporary emergency sheltering!
- **Community Tactic H1a:** A comprehensive view of Rochester residents’ access to good healthcare has been established through the Olmsted County Community Health Assessment and Planning (CHAP) process, implementing a three-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) cycle. Within the CHIP plan (from 2024 to 2026), access to care is a top health priority, with 17,000 residents impacted by the CHIP collective impact work focused on healthcare access.

Vibrant Neighborhoods

A vibrant neighborhood is a supportive, connected, inclusive community where residents with diverse identities and backgrounds are welcomed and can achieve a high quality of life. Community members and local leaders will foster resident-led efforts to develop relationships and partnerships that make our neighborhoods more sustainable, resilient, and reflective of all Rochester residents.

- **City Tactic N5b:** Homeownership is an important achievement that often allows families to accumulate wealth more easily and be

more invested in their communities, so breaking down barriers created by inequitable housing policies will reduce homeownership disparities. The City of Rochester facilitates a co-design process to understand barriers and create pathways for homeownership for communities of color, working with the Coalition for Rochester Housing and Three Rivers Community Action.

- **Community Tactic N4b:** Aligned with its mission to connect and empower neighbors to build a vibrant and livable Rochester, RNeighbors partners with neighborhood groups to expand local services, leverage resources, and address livability challenges. Recent grant successes, including a \$23,000 Minnesota Youth Water Safety award from the Department of Education, advance this community-building work.

Resilient Economy

A resilient economy relies on a diverse set of sectors, employers, employees, and resources to create equitable opportunities and access to financial stability for all. Through local supply chains, community engagement, education, mentorship and entrepreneurship, our economy will become more sustainable. Our community will work to grow, diversify, and retain both business and residents to build a resilient economy where all are welcome.

- **City Tactic RE1b:** By guiding new development, the City of Rochester encourages repurposing of underused or vacant real estate to create complete, walkable communities, as well as encourage social interactions, revitalize neighborhoods, and build community belongingness. In 2024, six developments repurposed vacant lots located in infill locations within the City.
- **Community Tactic RE4b:** The Rochester Art Center increases access to public art and performances, as well as culture development and celebration. Through exhibitions and programs for all ages, the Rochester Art Center offers complimentary admission for all people ages 21 and under, reducing barriers for families and youth to visit the museum. Over the past 4 years, the average annual attendance was 33,000 people per year, including residents, tourists, and medical destination visitors.

Accessible Transportation

Access to transportation is a necessity for all, especially community members seeking affordable and accessible options. Our community will work to create a non-polluting multimodal transportation network through which residents can easily and safely travel regardless of means, language, or ability.

- **City Tactic T1b:** Infrastructure and signage that is accessible in multiple languages and abilities helps to guide, direct, and educate residents. Increasing access to alternative transportation and mass transit options for example, is more sustainable and affordable than car ownership. The City of Rochester provides these resources, located at bus stops, directories, public buildings, parks, public amenities, and public parking.
- **Community Tactic T3e:** The cost of driver's education can be a barrier to earning a license, reducing mobility and access to jobs. Rochester Public Schools Community Education helps lower that barrier by offering reduced-rate driver's education for high school students and, in partnership with the Rochester Police Department, providing driving partners for learners who don't have a licensed adult to practice with.



Environmental Health

A healthy environment encompasses responsible use of natural resources, land preservation, biodiversity, pollution prevention, and overall soil, air, and water quality, in addition to being equitable and economically efficient for all. Our community will work to balance natural resources, social equity, and financial resources to create a healthy environment for residents.

- **City Tactic E2a:** The protection of existing water assets ensures the health and availability of our community’s water resources. The City of Rochester’s Public Utilities (RPU) continues to implement the objectives and plans of action listed in RPU’s Wellhead Protection (WHP) plan. The WHP plan identifies recharge areas of the public water supply wells to determine the vulnerability of the aquifer to human land use impacts, as well as identifying potential/existing contaminants.
- **Community Tactic E4f:** Olmsted County, which manages the county’s solid waste system, has launched two organics pilots to divert food scraps from the waste stream and create beneficial end uses. A six-month Food Scrap Drop-off Pilot (mid-June to December) collected 18,000 pounds of material for composting. The Food Rescue App Pilot remains in testing and, based on early success, has been extended through 2025.

Closing Summary

This inaugural cycle documented meaningful progress, clearer governance, and a shared reporting framework spanning City departments and community partners. Priorities for the coming year include accelerating “Not Started” tactics and publishing more frequent, standardized dashboards. Continued collaboration will be essential to meet Rochester’s climate, health, and affordability goals while improving everyday quality of life for residents.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to City departments, Sustainability and Resiliency Commissioners, community organizations, and residents who contributed data, stories, and time to this report.

Environmental Stewardship

Fiscal Responsibility

Social Equity

These three pillars of sustainability are all interconnected and must be addressed together to create a sustainable city.

