



# Moving from Climate Action Planning to Implementation

FROM “WHAT” TO “HOW”



# Presenter Introduction

11 years of local govt. experience w/ City of La Crosse

Environmental & Sustainability Planner since 2017

Staffed Sustainable La Crosse Commission

Managed 2022 Climate Action Planning Process

*Portrait of Lewis Kuhlman, 2020*





# City of La Crosse

Small city (Pop, 51,380)

Outdoor recreation takes advantage of geography

Consolidation of departments

Planning Manager and 2 Associate Planners taking on comprehensive planning and bike-ped planning now.

*Aerial Photo of Downtown, 2013*



# Outline

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## P L A N S

- Strategic Plan for Sustainability  
(2007-2020)
- Climate Action Plan (2021-2022)
- Year-One Implementation Plan  
(2023)

## T O P I C S

- Planning process
- Action identification
- Results
- Lessons learned



# Strategic Plan for Sustainability

Adopted in May 2009

20 goals, 97 actions

7-member oversight committee

14-member internal working group



City of La Crosse & La Crosse County  
*Strategic Plan for Sustainability*



Adopted by City of La Crosse Common Council: May 14, 2009



Adopted by La Crosse County Board: February 19, 2009

[www.sustainablelacrosse.org](http://www.sustainablelacrosse.org)

# Planning process

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- Precursor: endorsed *The Natural Step* model (2007)

## ABCD

- Awareness of sustainability
- Baseline of information
- Created a compelling vision
- Developed an action plan

# Action identification

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*The Natural Step* framework:

- Reduce our dependence upon fossil fuels, extracted underground metals and minerals.
- Reduce our dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature.
- Reduce our dependence on activities that harm life sustaining ecosystems.
- Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly and efficiently.



# Results - Sustainability Indicators Report

Annual report showing progress toward goals

Reduction in GHG emissions due to utility

Single-sort recycling doubled collection

Increased investment in bike facilities

IT policy to decrease paper use



City of La Crosse  
Sustainability Indicators  
2019 Report

October 30, 2020

Prepared by Anders Olson



La Crosse, Wisconsin



# Lessons learned – Shift committee focus

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- Need to move from discussion and updates to action
  - Adapt actions to SMART goals
- Use reports to motivate progress
  - Annual Implementation Plan
- Use existing networks for sharing between municipalities
  - APA-WI, GTLC, WLGCC, ICLEI, USDN
- Compare progress using common metrics
  - GHG inventory

# Lessons learned - Adapt goals to be SMART

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- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Example of not-so-SMART goal
  - “Consider LEED analyses in planning new projects and major renovations which will identify opportunities for green building methods and technologies.”
- Example of SMART goal alternative
  - “Require LEED certification for all new construction and major renovations on municipal buildings and development receiving municipal funding by 2012.”



# Climate Action Plan

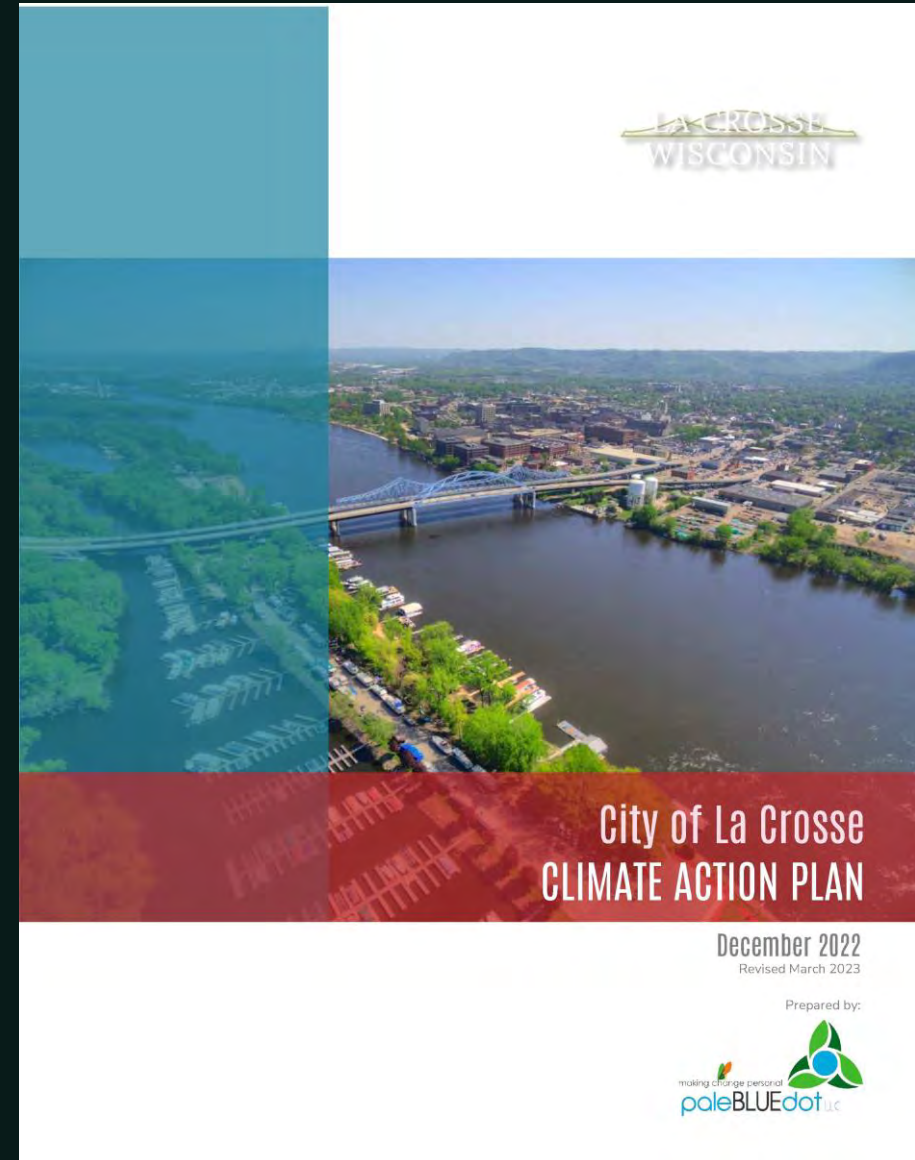
Adopted in January 2023

9 sectors, 44 strategies, 314 actions

5-member steering committee

50-member team

Overall goal of 40% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030



# Preparation

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- Precursor: Carbon neutrality resolution (2019)
- Dissolved joint commission, formed steering committee
- Not enough budgeted for the planning process
  - Conducted 1st Greenhouse Gas Inventory in 2020
  - Partners in Energy's Energy Action Plan Report
- Resolution to set aside energy credits to fund the plan
  - Product of the Tax Cut & Jobs Act of 2017

# Planning process

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- Background data gathering
- Climate Action Plan (CAP) Team selection and workshops
- Focus group meetings to ensure equity consideration
- Public engagement
  - Open houses, and online surveys and tools
- Draft plan review: CAP Team and public comment period
  - Meeting and review period for common council members

# Action identification

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- Alignment with carbon neutrality goal
- Based on Strategies identified in baseline reports
- Action Finder tool
  - Picked from large collection of climate actions from other communities
  - Extensively organized and categorized
- Revise actions to suit our community

# Results

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- General capital budget request for implementation (\$150,000/year)
- Funding outreach and engagement for Carbon Free Challenge
- Contracted marketing consultant for business and organization outreach
- Contracted grant services

# Lessons learned – Reduce CAP Team Size

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- Difficult to schedule for 50 people
- Difficult to hold people accountable
- Steering committee members could be facilitators

Training and selection



# Lessons learned – Reduce Workshop Length

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- Each sector had a working group, 9 total
  - 3 rounds of 3 concurrent sessions
  - 3+ hour meetings
- Spaced out working group review of draft plan
  - 3 nights per week for 3 weeks
- Combine or limit number of working groups

# Lessons learned – Too many actions

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- Buffet vs. limited menu

Difficulty making actionable to support Strategies

- Some actions were too broad, completed, redundant, or not applicable

- Work backward to determine limit

Ex: 12 actions per year for 7 years, plus 20% for flexibility: 100 actions

- Applicability under State Law



# Year-One Implementation Plan

Adopted May 2023

Top ten actions w/ added detail + 4 supporting actions each

Initial draft by staff

Shared document for working groups

## Contents

- Introduction ..... 1
- 1. Increase Bus Frequency ..... 2
- 2. Assist Private Fleet Operators with Transitioning to Electric Vehicles ..... 3
- 3. Reduce Home Energy Audits Costs ..... 4
- 4. Promote Energy Audits and Incentives for Commercial Buildings ..... 6
- 5. Organize Annual Residential Solar Group Purchase Program ..... 7
- 6. Incentivize, Encourage, & Require Tree Planting for Heat Island Mitigation ..... 8
- 7. Plan for an Increase in Severe Weather Events ..... 9
- 8. Reduce Building Vulnerability to Flooding ..... 10
- 9. Support Community Networks for Populations Vulnerable to Extreme Weather ..... 11
- 10. Incentivize Building Resilience ..... 12

## Introduction

The City of La Crosse's Common Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in January 2023. This year one implementation plan focuses on its Top Ten Actions. Each top action is complemented with four actions that have the potential to increase their effectiveness. In total, there are fifty possible actions to begin implementing in 2023. It's important to note that implementation is an iterative process that may require adjustments over time. Regular monitoring and evaluation will help identify areas for improvement and necessary changes to ensure success.

## Top Ten Climate Actions

1. *Increase bus frequency. At a minimum, extend 30-minute service on weekdays by one hour until 6:42 pm on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 to provide flexibility to employees who work into the evening. (TM 2-2)*
2. *Assist private fleet operators who with grant applications for EVs and EV infrastructure; require they set EV goals of 30% by 2030 and 100% by 2040 to qualify for assistance. Goal: 10 New organization commitments annually. (TM 3-3)*
3. *Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase the durability, safety, and efficiency of their homes. Goal: 500 households annually, each achieving 15% energy reductions. (BE 1-3)*
4. *Promote existing commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs. Develop energy efficiency programs for businesses that don't own their own building. Use the Minnesota*

# Action identification

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- Action starting point

314 action / 7 years = ~45 actions

- Discussion on how to prioritize actions

Sector

Strategy

Order (indicative of level of support)

Type of action (regulation, incentive, model, pilot project)



# Action Identification – Top Ten

10 actions to meet 9 strategies in 4 sectors

5 mitigation and 5 adaptation

Measurable goals attached

## Top Climate Actions

The following are likely the phase 1 actions with the greatest impact—GHG reduction or climate adaptation potential—or those which help to establish a solid foundation for later actions included in the Climate Action Plan. These climate actions represent a “Quick Start” sub-list of impactful actions for community-wide and municipal operations and are recommended for prioritized implementation.

### GHG Reduction Actions (Mitigation)

#### Section 02 Transportation and Mobility

- TM 2-2 Increase bus frequency. At a minimum, extend 30-minute service on weekdays by one hour until 6:42 pm on routes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 to provide flexibility to employees who work into the evening.
- TM 3-3 Assist private fleet operators who with grant applications for EVs and EV infrastructure; require they set EV goals of 30% by 2030 and 100% by 2040 in order to qualify for assistance. Goal: 10 New organization commitments annually.

#### Section 04 Buildings and Energy

- BE 1-3 Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase the durability, safety, and efficiency of their homes. Goal: 500 households annually, each achieving 15% energy reductions .
- BE 1-4 Promote existing commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs. Develop energy efficiency programs for businesses that don't own their own building. Use the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy Smart program as a model. Goal: 15% of commercial/ industrial buildings by 2030 achieving a 20% efficiency increase per location .
- BE 4-5 Organize annual Residential Solar Group Purchase program for La Crosse, supported by a program administrator such as MREA or others experienced in solar group purchase programs. Goal: 70 participants and 750 KW installed annually.

### Climate Resilience Actions (Adaptation)

#### Section 03 Land Use and Housing

- LH 4-1 Based on the City's Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, Heat Island, and Carbon Sequestration Study, identify vulnerable urban tree canopy and street tree sections and develop policies to incentivize, encourage, or require strategic tree planting for heat island mitigation.
- LH 3-5 Enhance stormwater system plans and infrastructure to handle an increase in severe weather events based on climate change projections rather than historic trends.

#### Section 04 Buildings and Energy

- BE 5-5 Use green infrastructure and other nature-based approaches (e.g., floodplain restoration) to reduce the vulnerability of buildings to flooding, with particular focus on critical facilities .

#### Section 09 Health and Safety

- HS 3-1 Support existing community networks and connections led by and/or geared towards populations vulnerable to extreme weather events, including people who are elderly, homebound, disabled, isolated, or those likely to need financial assistance.
- HS 1-16 Incentivize building owners to increase the resilience of existing and new buildings. Ensure that incentive programs prioritize multi-family dwellings and improvements that benefit vulnerable populations

# Structure

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- Action background
  - Sector, strategy and measurements
- Goal elaboration
- Cost
- Work sequence
- Considerations
  - Included link to references
- Lead
- Support
- 4 complementary Actions
  - Selected by related topic and achievability

# Results – Form working groups

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- 50 actions per year is too many to take on alone.
- Used Climate Action Plan division of 3 working groups.
- Increased steering committee membership from 5 to 7.
  - 2 members leading each group; chairperson assists all groups.
- Solicited involvement from CAP Team.

# Results – Form working groups (cont'd.)

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- Unofficial groups, so organization can be informal
- Discuss information needs and do research
- “What are other communities doing for this action?”  
No need for experts yet.
- Aiming for a capital budget request by December, to submit in January.



# Lessons learned

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- Remember where action recommendations came from to follow up.
- Start with 7 committee members.
- Be clear about scope  
Ideation vs. implementation
- Continue engagement with stakeholders involved in the planning process.

Thank you

Lewis Kuhlman, AICP

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