

MICHIGAN CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK March 2022



We acknowledge the original Indigenous inhabitants and stewards of the Great Lakes and the land we now call Michigan. This land encompasses the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg: the Three Fires People who also identify as Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. We recognize Michigan's 12 federally recognized Native Nations, historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and those who were forcibly removed from their homelands. In offering this land acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty, history and experiences.

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CONTENTS:

3

5

8

9

Michigan Communities Taking Climate Action

Introduction

Components of Strong Local Climate Policy

Challenges and Opportunities

11

A Closer Look – Case Studies

11 Ann Arbor

Highland Park

Grand Rapids

Traverse City

How to Take Action in Your Community

Sources

13

15

18

20



INTRODUCTION

Long before we started to see state and federal action on climate, cities and other communities have been leading the way in climate action, both in Michigan and around the world. Today more than 200 communities in the U.S. have set 100 percent renewable goals for electricity, and over 50 are already powered entirely by renewables. Many cities are now setting carbon neutrality goals, striving for zero emissions from all sources including transportation, heating, and cooling. Ambitious city action has demonstrated that cost-effective drawdown of climate pollution is possible, and local climate policies have resulted in real emissions reductions. In many cases these policies also have created local jobs, reduced energy prices, improved reliability, and improved health by lowering pollution.

The motivation to act on climate at the local level has been driven in part because local governments see the impacts of climate change up close, and have to respond to and prepare for the increasing impacts of our overheating planet. In the summer of 2021 alone, a hurricane devasted parts of Florida and the East Coast, droughts and wildfires brought chaos to California, never-seen-before heat baked the Pacific Northwest, and multiple flooding events blocked freeways and drove people from homes in metro Detroit. One Detroit storm ranked as a "1000-year storm"—a scale of storm that is now predicted to occur more frequently than in the past. The nation's largest extreme events last year resulted in over \$100 billion dollars in damages and hundreds of

deaths. With each additional increment of warming, these types of catastrophic events will grow more frequent and intense, and they disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color.

To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, scientists urge us to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, with a goal of 1.5 degrees. This means cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in half by 2030, and to zero by 2050 at the latest. To help meet these essential goals, in 2015 nearly every nation in the world signed a historic agreement at the Paris Climate talks and pledged to make significant GHG cuts. The agreement was a tremendous step forward, but the nation's pledges fall short of what is needed to limit warming below 2 degrees—and only a small portion of nations backed up their pledges with concrete plans. Continued ambitious policies at the local level to reduce climate emissions can help fill the gap, both to slow global warming and to drive a groundswell for change at the state and federal levels.

City action also has helped inspire state level climate policy. Twenty-four states plus the District of Columbia have now adopted greenhouse gas targets, many of them with goals to achieve zero emissions by 2050. In September 2020, Michigan's Governor Gretchen Whitmer committed our state to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and our state's action plan to achieve these reductions is due to be finalized in Spring 2022. Action by Michigan communities will help our state achieve this bold and necessary carbon neutrality goal.

This report highlights the communities in Michigan that have set ambitious climate mitigation goals to reduce emissions. It also presents case studies to show how communities across the state are overcoming their unique challenges to address the climate crisis, and how many are doing this while prioritizing equity and justice.

Investments to adapt to, prepare for, and make communities more resilient to the flooding, heat waves, and other worsening climate impacts that we are now seeing are equally important for all levels of government, including cities. These investments must be prioritized for frontline communities experiencing the greatest impacts and cumulative impacts from fossil fuel pollution. An analysis of city climate adaptation policies and best practices is outside the scope of this report. We have included a list of resources and where to find more information on climate adaptation and preparedness at the end of the report.

Most of the policies included in this report are the result of campaigns led by community members. We also include a list of communities currently working to pass and achieve climate goals. If you think your community should be included in these lists, please let us know by emailing <u>climate@miclimateaction.org</u>.

MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES TAKING CLIMATE ACTION

At least 16 Michigan communities have set goals to be carbon neutral or to reach 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. Ten of the goals cover the entire community, while six focus on municipal operations. More than half of these local climate goals now strive to be carbon neutral.

COMMUNITY	GOAL/ACTION	DOCUMENT	
Community-wide Carbon Neutral Goal			
City of Ann Arbor	Carbon neutral by 2030	A2ZERO Action Plan	
Charter Township of Kalamazoo	Carbon neutral by 2030	Resolution Endorsing Climate Emergency Declaration	
City of Montague	Carbon neutral by 2040	Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency	
Oakland County	Carbon neutral by 2050	Oakland County Resolution (p.65)	
City of Rockford	Carbon neutral by 2050	<u>City Council</u> <u>Proclamation (p.5)</u>	
Shelby Township (Oceana County)	Carbon neutral by 2040	<u>Shelby Township</u> <u>Climate Emergency</u> <u>Declaration</u>	
Washtenaw County	Carbon neutral by 2035	Washtenaw County Climate Emergency Declaration	
City of Ypsilanti	Carbon neutral by 2035	<u>City of Ypsilanti</u> <u>Sustainability Plan</u>	

Community-wide 100% RE Goal			
City of Traverse City	100% RE by 2040, 40% RE by 2025	<u>Traverse City Light &</u> <u>Power Strategic Plan</u>	
City of Petoskey	100% renewable electricity community- wide by 2035	<u>Livable Petoskey</u> <u>Master Plan</u>	
Municipal 100% and Carbon Neutral Goals			
City of Detroit	Cut GHG 100% by 2050 (35% by 2024, 75% by 2043)	<u>Detroit Greenhouse</u> <u>Gas Ordinance</u>	
City of East Lansing	100% RE by 2025 for city operations	City of East Lansing Policy Resolution 2020-1	
City of Grand Rapids	100% RE by 2025 for city operations	<u>City of Grand Rapids</u> <u>Strategic Plan</u>	
City of Grand Rapids	Carbon neutral for city operations by 2040	<u>Declaring Climate</u> <u>Change a Crisis (p.13)</u>	
City of Lansing	Carbon neutral for city operations by 2040	City of Lansing Climate Action Plan 2020-2023	
Meridian Township	100% RE for city operations by 2035, 50% RE by 2025	<u>Meridian</u> <u>Township Climate</u> <u>Sustainability Plan</u>	
City of Jackson	Cut GHG 90% by 2050 for city operations	<u>City of Jackson</u> <u>Environmental</u> <u>Action Plan</u>	

The communities we have listed above have set a specific greenhouse gas reduction target by a certain date. Other local governments in Michigan are taking action to address climate change, including passing resolutions declaring a climate emergency, but do not yet have greenhouse gas reduction goals or deadlines for reaching those goals. We have listed them separately below as honorable mentions. Other notable communities can be found among those taking the <u>Michigan Green Communities Challenge</u>, in which communities measure their progress toward sustainability goals, including climate resilience and adaptation.

	HONORABLE MENTIONS
City of Ferndale	Became the first city in Oakland County to <u>Declare a Climate Crisis</u> in July 2020, and joined the ICLEI <u>Race to Zero Initiative</u> .
City of Flint	Updated its <u>Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint</u> to include sustainability and climate adaptation strategies. UM Flint and the City a <u>nnounced a new partnership</u> to develop a sustainability plan that will include climate change.
County of Kalamazoo	Passed a <u>Climate Emergency Declaration</u> that calls on the County to set aggressive goals and create a climate action plan, and commits to keeping concerns of vulnerable communities central to a just transition.
City of Highland Park	Soulardarity created the <u>Blueprint for Energy Democracy</u> , a guide to make the city a global model of sustainability and self-determination, and worked with Union of Concerned Scientists to <u>develop a plan</u> to power the entire city with 100% locally-owned renewable energy.
City of Kalamazoo	Passed a <u>Climate Emergency Declaration</u> that calls on the City to set aggressive goals and create a climate action plan, and commits to keeping concerns of vulnerable communities central to a just transition.
City of Holland	Holland has a Community Energy Plan with goals to cut per capita GHG emissions by more than half, has increased renewables and efficiency, and a local group is working to <u>cut GHG emissions per</u> <u>person in half every 10 years</u> .
Leelanau County	A citizen-led initiative partnered with UM to develop a plan for how to achieve <u>100% Renewable Electricity for Leelanau County</u> . The goal has not been adopted by local government, but businesses and individuals are investing in renewables and efficiency.
City of Southgate	Southgate created its <u>Climate Action Plan</u> in 2012 with a goal of 50% GHG reduction by 2050.

COMPONENTS OF STRONG LOCAL CLIMATE POLICY

To address the climate crisis with the urgency and justice that science demands, strong local climate policies should:

- Include commitments to reduce GHG emissions to zero by 2050 and at least 50% by 2030 to align with international climate goals. Electricity goals should be 100% renewable by 2035. The strongest goals cover the entire community, in addition to city or county operations. Energy efficiency is essential to achieving ambitious climate and clean energy goals, and is the most cost-effective way of cutting emissions. Determining the potential for energy efficiency should be the first step.
- Center equity, justice, and a just economic transition in the policy planning, language, and implementation by including measures that prioritize affordability and access for all community members, prioritize low-income communities and environmental justice communities, and include at the table people and communities most impacted by fossil fuel pollution from the beginning.
- Result in Additional and Local Renewable Energy Community commitments
 to climate should result in fossil fuels being replaced with clean, renewable energy
 and should result in additional renewable energy that is built locally as much as
 possible. How a community defines renewable or non-carbon energy sources is
 important. All of our energy needs can be met through non-polluting and naturally
 replenishing sources of energy like wind, solar, geothermal, and waves or tides.
 Sierra Club's Ready for 100 Program specifically excludes fossil fuels, nuclear energy,
 incineration of municipal and medical waste, and other polluting sources of energy
 that some try to classify as renewable. Unbundled renewable energy credits (RECs)
 are not recommended to help meet local goals because they do not provide the local
 job creation, energy cost-saving, pollution reduction benefits, or guarantee of new
 renewable energy coming online.
- Create action plans and report progress on GHG reductions. Communities can play an important role in our state's and our nation's ability to cut greenhouse gases, but only if they deliver on their commitments. Policies should include language creating a plan to achieve the goals, doing a greenhouse gas inventory, and committing to regularly report progress. Strong action plans include strategies to decarbonize each sector (electricity, buildings, transportation, and more), the cost for each strategy, and a timeline to implement them.

For more detailed information and resources, we encourage you to visit the Sierra Club's <u>Guidelines for Community Commitments to 100% Renewable Energy</u>, where much of the information in this section was found.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Every community faces unique challenges when working to decarbonize equitably, and there are also many common challenges, including finding the financing and funding for green projects, having the staff and tools needed, and getting buy-in and coordination among city departments.

One of the greatest challenges facing many cities is the lack of control over their energy supply. While some Michigan communities in this report have municipally owned electric utilities (which operate as not-for-profit enterprises) or electric co-operatives, the majority of communities receive their electricity from one of Michigan's large investor-owned utilities: Consumers Energy or Detroit Edison (DTE). These utilities are structured so their primary goal is to make money for shareholders—a mission that does not always align with a community's climate goals, timelines, or desire for more affordable and reliable energy, not to mention more distributed and community-owned energy sources.

DTE and Consumers Energy's transition to renewables is much slower than the pace set by the leading cities. Currently, only 15 percent of DTE's power derives from renewable energy. DTE and Consumers have committed to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and 2040 respectively, and Consumers has committed to the positive step of retiring all coal by 2025. However, their long-term energy plans known as Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) do not decarbonize fast enough to match the scale of the climate crisis, and they continue to rely on polluting and expensive fossil fuel gas plants for far too long. They also are not taking enough concrete steps to improve energy affordability and reliability, especially for low-income communities and communities of color who bear disproportionately high energy burdens.

These big utilities also use their powerful influence in the legislature to lobby against stronger renewable energy and energy efficiency standards, and to prevent the growth of distributed and community solar, making it harder for people and communities to

generate their own solar energy. In 2016, DTE and Consumers convinced Michigan's legislature to pass bills to end Michigan's retail net metering program. This has resulted in a new pricing program that devalues solar energy and has slowed the state's rapidly growing rooftop solar industry. They also have succeeded in preventing the passage of a bill to lift the arbitrary 1 percent cap on rooftop solar and other policies that would allow a more distributed buildout of renewables.

DTE and Consumers have also lobbied against a bill that would ensure community solar projects can move forward in Michigan. Community solar is an important tool for communities working to decarbonize. Community solar projects are local solar installations that are shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced. They are a key mechanism to increase access to the benefits of distributed solar for people who cannot install rooftop solar, including renters, people who live in multi-unit buildings, and people who have shaded roofs or some other mitigating factor. Community solar projects also allow for local economic development benefits to the broader community, even those members who are not subscribed.

DTE and Consumers do offer customers, including cities, the option to purchase more renewable energy through their Voluntary Green Pricing (VGP) programs, which are required by law. While Michigan organizations have successfully advocated to improve these programs, the costs of renewable energy through these programs remains too high. Energy through these programs is more expensive than renewables a city would be able to purchase through different avenues, such as buying into large-scale solar projects that are being built, and makes VGP programs an unaffordable strategy for a community trying to reach 100% renewables.

Some cities around the country have formed their own municipal utility to take back more control of energy decisions from large investor-owned utilities, but municipalization can be a long and challenging process. Other cities are turning to a tool known as community choice aggregation (CCA), which allows cities to band together and purchase renewable energy. Currently nine states have authorized CCAs through state law, but Michigan does not allow CCAs to operate. The states with CCAs include Ohio, Illinois, and California, where 47 communities are now served mainly by CCAs. Nearly 50 communities in California are now powered with 100 percent renewable energy, and CCAs have been a key factor in their success. In some of the communities with CCAs, the investor-owned utilities still operate the transmission lines and deliver the clean energy to residents and businesses. The revenue generated from the CCAs, instead of going to shareholders, is invested in community benefits like putting people to work building local clean energy. While Michigan does not have a law authorizing CCAs, some cities are finding other innovative ways to take back more control of their energy decisions. The case studies below highlight some of this work.



A CLOSER LOOK – CASE STUDIES

Every community is unique, with individual challenges, resources, and priorities. We took a closer look at four communities in Michigan to showcase how these communities are working to address the climate crisis and do so equitably.

ANN ARBOR

A thriving city of 120,000 people and home to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor is also a national climate leader. In November 2019, the City Commission adopted a goal to transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030, one of the most ambitious climate goals in the nation. The city then adopted the <u>A2ZERO Action Plan</u>, which details how Ann Arbor will equitably eliminate the 2.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent it produces every year.

The plan focuses on 44 actions to achieve the following core strategies: moving to 100 percent renewable electricity, switching all appliances and vehicles to electric, making all buildings more energy efficient, reducing vehicle miles traveled by at least 50 percent, and moving towards a circular economy. The plan also includes costs for each strategy and an estimated timeline for implementation.

Since the plan was adopted, the city has been busy making progress. According to Dr. Missy Stults, Ann Arbor's sustainability and innovations manager, in the first year of

this work the city has installed 2 megawatts (MW) of rooftop solar through their bulk buy program, built 110 electric vehicle charging stations, added two electric garbage trucks, electrified 20 percent of the city's vehicle fleet; improved energy efficiency at affordable housing units, and planted 1,800 trees on private land in underserved areas, added year round curbside composting and launched a reusable takeout container campaign. This was done with existing funds and grants.

To achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, Ann Arbor will need \$1 billion in funding to make all of the investments needed. To pay for these programs, the City Council approved a millage vote that will be on the ballot in November 2022. If it passes, the city will collect the funds over twenty years to fund the A2ZERO plan.

The city has also come up with an innovative approach to move more rapidly to powering the community with publicly owned and locally sourced renewable energy. City staff have proposed creating a Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU) within the DTE service territory to immediately begin rapidly building up local renewable energy. An SEU is a new concept. It is a publicly owned, locally powered municipal utility that provides robust energy efficiency programs, installs rooftop solar, geothermal, and microgrids in neighborhoods and business districts, and builds community solar and energy justice systems. Since DTE does not provide these services, it is perfectly legal for the city to start the SEU within the DTE service territory to serve unmet needs.

There is also an effort led by members of the public to convince the City of Ann Arbor to break free from DTE and form a municipal utility. In January 2022, the City Council called for the creation of a feasibility study to look into this option.

In May 2021, the University of Michigan also adopted a carbon neutrality goal for all of its campuses, including the Ann Arbor campus with its 388 buildings and nearly 50,000 students. While the University of Michigan is not included in the City of Ann Arbor's plans, the communities are very much interconnected. This commitment not only presents major additional climate reductions, but also opportunities for partnership and synergy with the city.

Ann Arbor's ambitious climate goals are built on many years of sustainability work by the city, and are the result of strong leadership by the mayor, city council, and the sustainability and innovation office, which has grown to a staff of 13 people during Dr. Stults's tenure. "Our main goal is not just finding solutions that work in Ann Arbor," Dr. Stults said. "We want to find solutions that are transferable across the state and the region." She says that these goals are hard, but they are also achievable because the team works on this mission every day. She also acknowledges that not every community has access to a large staff and budget, which makes a huge difference in what they are able to accomplish.



HIGHLAND PARK

A city of 10,000 people just six miles from downtown Detroit, Highland Park was once the birthplace and epicenter of the automobile industry. Today it is a laboratory for energy democracy with visions of becoming a global model for sustainability and self-determination.

In 1907 Henry Ford bought land in Highland Park, where he began to build the Model T and constructed the first assembly line factory. Chrysler Motors was also founded in Highland Park, and headquartered there for 70 years. The auto industry eventually left the area, taking thousands of jobs and tax dollars with it, which presented enormous economic challenges for the city and people who remained.

In 2011, the city owed \$4 million in electric bills and reached a settlement with DTE in which two-thirds of the city's streetlights were not only turned off but also physically removed. Highland Park residents were left in the dark. The nonprofit organization Soulardarity formed the following year to start replacing street lights with solar powered lights, and organizing for energy justice. Soulardarity and other community groups also began engaging with the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) as they considered DTE's Integrated Resource Plan and making the case that the IRP should promote affordability, health, community ownership, local clean energy, and good jobs.

Soulardarity and Highland Park community members also worked to develop a vision for the future they are working to build. In 2019 they released <u>The Blueprint for Energy</u> <u>Democracy</u>: a guide for the city and citizens to make Highland Park a global model

of sustainability and self-determination - where Highland Parkers have the power to control the future of their community. This Blueprint seeks to return Highland Park to a hub of innovation and a thriving community. It also seeks to address the climate crisis and the many other intersecting crises facing the community, including extremely low income, aging and divested housing stock, food insecurity, lack of internet access, and energy poverty—where a disproportionate amount of a household's income goes toward energy bills. A survey by Soulardarity found that 45 percent of Highland Park residents are having trouble paying their energy bills, and 25 percent have experienced gas or electric shutoffs. This is made worse by aggressive increases in residential electric rates. In 2019, DTE proposed increasing electric rates in a way that would hit low-income ratepayers the hardest, leading to an increase of up to 45 percent for the lowest usage and lowest income customers, while rates for industrial and other large energy users would rise much more slowly.

In 2021, Soulardarity worked with the Union of Concerned Scientists to create a plan for how exactly the community can replace the annual 86,200-megawatt hours of electricity they purchase from DTE with locally-owned clean energy. The report Let <u>Communities Choose</u>: Clean Energy Sovereignty in Highland Park, Michigan found that they can meet this goal through energy efficiency, rooftop solar, community solar, other distributed solar like solar carports, and through community water and energy resource centers (CWERKs)—small-scale facilities that convert waste into electricity, reclaimed water, and thermal energy. The research also recommended a suite of state policies to improve the economics of rooftop solar, including improving how owners of rooftop solar are compensated, and eliminating size restrictions on distributed generation.

The research also provides a list of recommendations for local Highland Park policymakers that are instructive for many small local governments, including to enact a solar ordinance, set local clean energy benchmarks, offer on-bill financing and create city-owned solar projects, develop solar and efficiency businesses, set standards for developers to provide community benefits, and create a sustainability commission.

This plan makes clear that achieving this vision of locally owned clean energy is possible, and it helpfully includes the cost of each of the projects. Developing these clean energy resources will require up-front investments of about \$10 million, which will be paid back over time. Raising these funds is among the next steps for Soulardarity.

Highland Park presents an inspiring vision for what an equitable, empowering, community-owned, clean energy system can look like. It would benefit us all to help this community achieve this vision and become a global model for sustainability and energy sovereignty.



GRAND RAPIDS

In 2005, none of Grand Rapids's electricity came from renewable sources, so the mayor at the time, George Heartwell, pledged to power 20 percent of city operations with renewables within just three years. Michigan's second largest city hit that target a year early, and Heartwell increased the goal to 100 percent by 2020 for city operations. Shortly after taking office, his successor Mayor Rosalynn Bliss shifted the deadline to 2025. This was the first 100 percent renewable energy goal in the state, and came after the city already had the most LEED-certified buildings per capita of any city in the country (2010). Journalists started calling Grand Rapids the Greenest City in America.

Today, the city is working to achieve this 100 percent renewable goal, and is also working on strategies to decarbonize beyond electricity. Mayor Bliss signed on to the We Are Still In and Cities Race to Zero campaigns, which contain pledges to reach zero emissions in the 2050 or sooner. The city also set goals to reduce carbon emissions 85 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2040 for city operations, and estimates this will cost \$500,000 to \$1 million per year for 24 years. Grand Rapids has also stepped up its focus on social equity, and created a partnership with community stakeholders by creating the Community Collaboration on Climate Change (C4) to help integrate environmental justice and climate change into the city's Master Plan, and create a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

Since 2008, the city has reduced carbon emissions by 30 percent, thanks to energy efficiencies in buildings, LED parking lot lighting, significant energy efficiency upgrades at the water filtration plant and water resource recovery facility, purchasing all electric and hybrid vehicles for the city fleet, and the fire department installing geothermal energy at two stations.

The city estimates it will reach a 47 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2025 due to recent investments, including a \$85 million investment in a biodigester that converts food waste to energy. That project is being funded by tax-exempt municipal bonds, and the gas produced by the project will help meet the electricity needs for the wastewater plant, which is one of the city's largest uses of energy. The city also invested \$9.3 million in LED street lighting to greatly reduce energy use, and built a 1-megawatt solar array at the Lake Michigan Filtration Plant.

An important challenge to addressing climate change in Grand Rapids is maintaining ambitious carbon reduction goals while also responding to the urgent need for adaptation and community resilience.

Grand Rapids has also been working with partners as part of the Zero Cities Project to develop policies to equitably decarbonize the building sector by 2050, and received national recognition as a model for leading with equity in building policy development. This work now continues with the newly launched Equitable, Healthy and Zero Carbon Buildings Initiative (E.H.Zero) that aims to achieve affordability, positive health outcomes, and resilience while reducing energy use and carbon emissions in its buildings.

There has been community pressure for the City of Grand Rapids to move faster, and to set a community-wide goal for carbon neutrality by 2030, spearheaded by the 60-organization Grand Rapids Climate Coalition. In summer 2021, the coalition's carbon neutrality resolution was building momentum in the community and support in the City Commission. The city then moved very quickly to craft their own resolution, which passed in September 2021. While the city's 10-page resolution includes many strong statements including declaring a climate crisis, and "[urging] all residents, businesses, organizations and public entities" to act on climate, the city's actual commitments in the resolution are minimal. Community advocates voiced disappointment that the resolution does not commit to community-wide carbon neutrality. The resolution instead reaffirms the City Manager's existing goal to achieve carbon neutrality for city operations by 2040.

The city has begun engaging with community stakeholders, such as C4 and the Grand Rapids Climate Coalition, and is working on a community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory and climate vulnerability assessment over the next year to provide a baseline of information to work from when creating the science-based target goal for the community.

According to Annabelle Wilkinson from the Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability, one main challenge to achieving 100 percent renewables and working toward community-wide carbon neutrality is the lack of control the city has to accomplish the goal. The City of Grand Rapids is a customer of Consumers Energy, so a lot of where the city's energy comes from cannot be regulated locally, only federal or state legislation can do that. Consumers Energy offers its customers renewable energy at a premium price, and the city does participate to offset some of its energy, but achieving 100 percent through these programs would be cost prohibitive (See Challenges).

The city continues to strategize with leadership at utility companies to help them meet their goals, and to advocate for stronger state energy and environmental justice policies. For example, the City of Grand Rapids submitted testimony with Environmental Law and Policy Center in Consumers Energy's Integrated Resource Plan filing with the MPSC, and submitted a letter in support of community solar bills.

Community climate advocates have voiced concerns about the influence of Consumers Energy and DTE within the energy work in the City of Grand Rapids, pointing out that both Consumers and DTE have representatives on the City's Energy Advisory Committee, and the C4 group accepted a large grant from Consumers Energy. City staff maintain that they receive the utilities' feedback in the same manner they do community members.

Grand Rapids enjoys a reputation for sustainability for many of its early green goals, and yet not all parts of the city are enjoying the same outcomes. A 2019 University of Michigan study identified Grand Rapids as home to 5 of the state's 10 census tracts with the highest environmental injustice scores. Said one of the authors, "The location with the highest score in Michigan is in southwest Grand Rapids, a heavily Latino neighborhood at the southern end of the Roosevelt Park neighborhood, between U.S.-131 freeway and the I-196 Business Loop. It ranks ahead of 97% of all other census tracts in Michigan for cancer risk from air pollutants, traffic proximity and volume, and proximity to hazardous waste facilities." In light of this, an important challenge to addressing climate change in Grand Rapids is maintaining ambitious carbon reduction goals while also responding to the urgent need for adaptation and community resilience and prioritizing action to address the sources of environmental injustice and their negative consequences on human well-being. This is an area where community advocates and the city strongly agree, and it is work that both have said they are making a priority.

TRAVERSE CITY

Set on the Grand Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan, Traverse City is known as a hot tourist destination and as the cherry capital of the world. The city also has an interesting energy story. Traverse City is now known as a green energy leader, but not long ago, a coal plant held the best beachfront spot in town.

Traverse City has a municipally owned utility, Traverse City Light & Power (TCLP), which owned and operated the coal-fired power plant. In 1996, while the coal plant was still operating, Traverse City and TCLP built the very first utility-scale wind turbine in Michigan, which remained the only large wind turbine in the state for several years. The coal plant shut down in 2005, and just over a decade later Traverse City became the first city in Michigan to set a community-wide 100 percent renewable energy goal.

Members of the public were the primary initiators of this goal, including some of the same people who helped bring the wind turbine to town twenty years prior. They were motivated by the desire to address the climate crisis, and also by concerns about the community's reliance on coal plants downstate that were contributing to pollution and environmental injustice. As part of the work to build support for the goal, the local group of residents brought in former Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell to meet with city and TCLP leaders at a luncheon and then speak to over 200 people at a public event about why bold action on climate change is needed. The effort rapidly gained the support of the Traverse City mayor, city manager, and commissioners, and in late 2016 the City Commission passed a resolution committing to reach 100 percent renewable electricity for city operations by 2020, in just three years.

Traverse City was able to achieve this goal, and city operations are now powered with 100 percent renewable energy. The goal spurred a local solar array to be built at the foot of that first large wind turbine. The rest of the power came from the purchase of a portion of a new utility scale solar project. With such an ambitious timeframe, renewable energy credits (RECs) were needed in 2020 and 2021 as a bridge until the utility scale solar project was completed.

While Traverse City's first renewable energy goal was created only for city facilities, it was also intended to put political pressure on the board of TCLP, which had the power to expand the goal to include electric power for all residents and businesses. After more work by the community and the appointment of more supportive board members, TCLP adopted a strategic plan in August 2018 that included goals to power the entire community with 100 percent renewable energy by 2040, and reach 40 percent renewable energy by 2025. This was the first community-wide 100 percent renewable energy goal in Michigan.

Traverse City Light & Power immediately got to work adding another local solar installation near the first, and seeking large solar and wind projects to invest in. Today, over 24 percent of the total electricity provided by TCLP comes from renewable energy sources, double the amount when the first goal was set. In summer 2021, the TCLP board agreed to purchase renewable energy from two major new solar projects: a 100-megawatt solar facility in Oceana County (expected 2023) and a 125-megawatt solar project in Calhoun County (expected 2022). TCLP is projected to exceed its interim goal and have over 43 percent renewables by 2025.

According to City Commissioner and TCLP Board member Tim Werner, the Traverse City Light & Power board is very optimistic about reaching the city-wide 100 percent renewable energy goal. Werner credits his optimism to the quality of the TCLP staff and board, as well as the desire of the community that Traverse City be a leader in addressing climate change. He also sees a big opportunity to move up the target date for the goal to 2030. In July 2021, Consumers Energy announced it would close the Campbell coal plant 15 years early, by 2025. TCLP has been locked into a contract with Consumers to buy power from this plant through 2040, which was central to the 100 percent goal being set for 2040. This early closure provides TCLP an opportunity to move up its 100 percent goal to an earlier date.

Werner also says he would like the utility to set a broader climate goal. While the city does not currently have a carbon neutrality goal, the TCLP board is currently working on storage, electric vehicles and EV infrastructure, building electrification, energy efficiency, and time-of-use rates.

Some of the main challenges faced by TCLP are related to the utility's small size. Because of its size, TCLP relies on its membership in the Michigan Public Power Agency (MPPA), which aggregates smaller utilities to build larger energy projects. TCLP has only been able to add renewable energy projects when MPPA makes them available. Also, limited staff capacity at the city and TCLP limits the efforts to reduce the city's carbon footprint.

Traverse City Light & Power is addressing these challenges in a multitude of ways, and Werner sees opportunities. The board just hired a new leader to replace the recently retired executive director, and the job description placed a heavy emphasis on expectations surrounding leading the city to shrink its carbon footprint. The TCLP board is moving forward with a long-term integrated resource plan, which will be key in guiding TCLP and the city to a lower carbon footprint. Finally, there are ongoing discussions that TCLP is part of with several other communities to explore building a utility scale solar project in the northwest portion of the state's lower peninsula.

HOW TO TAKE ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If we are to meet the global climate goals in the urgent timeframe science demands, and do so in a way that is equitable and addresses environmental injustice, it is going to take leadership at every level. We need more communities setting ambitious goals, creating solid plans, and following through with investments and programs to achieve the necessary emissions reductions. We need states doing everything they can to rapidly decarbonize every sector. We also need large utilities to work with communities to help them achieve their goals, and not be a roadblock to progress in the legislature.

Most of the local climate policies in place are the result of community advocates demanding action, and the leadership from motivated elected officials and city staff. Below is a list of groups and individuals leading the ongoing work in communities to pass and implement ambitious climate goals and their contact information so that you can get involved in collective action in your community. If your group is not listed, let us know at <u>climate@miclimateaction.org</u>.

If you do not see a group listed for your community, see these toolkits to start your own: <u>Sierra Club's Ready for 100 Activist Toolkit</u> and <u>The Climate Mobilization 2030 Toolkit</u>.

COMMUNITY AND GROUP	CONTACT	EMAIL
Ann Arbor		
<u>A2Zero</u>	Missy Stults, City Sustainability and Innovations Manager	sustainability@a2gov.org
Ann Arbor 2030 District	Jan Culbertson, Leadership Chair	jculbertson@2030disricts.org
Ecology Center	Mike Garfield, Executive Director	michaelg@ecocenter.org

ONGOING COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

Detroit		
<u>Detroit</u> <u>Environmental</u> <u>Agenda</u>	Detroit Environmental Agenda	facilitator@detroitenv.org
<u>Detroit 2030</u> <u>District</u>	Connie Lilley, Director of Sustainable Products and Initiatives	<u>connielilley@2030distrits.org</u>
<u>EcoWorks</u>	Briana DuBose, Director of Strategic Community Initiatives	bdubose@ecoworksdetroit.org
<u>Southwest Detroit</u> <u>Environmental</u> <u>Vision</u>	Raquel Garcia, Executive Director	raquel@sdevweb.org
Grand Haven		
<u>Sierra Club</u> <u>Michigan Chapter</u>	Jan O'Connell, MI Beyond Coal Campaign Sarah Tresedder, Federal Climate & Energy Organizer	jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org
Grand Rapids		
<u>Grand Rapids</u> <u>Climate Coalition</u>	Janet Zahn, Co-Chair Nathan Rauh Bieri, Administrator	info@grclimate.org
<u>Grand Rapids</u> 2030 District	Cheri Holman, Executive Director	grandrapids@2030districts .org
<u>Sierra Club</u> <u>Michigan Chapter</u>	Jan O'Connell, MI Beyond Coal Campaign Sarah Tresedder, Federal Climate & Energy Organizer	jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org

<u>Community</u> <u>Collaboration on</u> <u>Climate Change (C4)</u>	Ned Andree, C4 Project Coordinator	c4projectcoordinator@gmail.com	
<u>Office of</u> <u>Sustainability,</u> <u>Grand Rapids</u>	Annabelle Wilkinson, Environmental and Climate Justice Specialist	sustainability@grcity.us	
Highland Park			
<u>Soulardarity</u>	Rafael Mojica, Program Director	rafael@soulardarity.com	
Holland			
<u>Holland Climate</u> <u>Collaborative</u>	Peter Boogaart, Don Triezenberg, Environmental Action Council Members	<u>pboogaart@hotmail.com,</u> don.triezenberg@gmail.com	
<u>Sierra Club</u> <u>Michigan Chapter</u>	Jan O'Connell, MI Beyond Coal Campaign Sarah Tresedder, Federal Climate & Energy Organizer	jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org	
Kalamazoo			
<u>Kalamazoo</u> <u>Climate Crisis</u> <u>Coalition</u>	Denise Keele, Founder	denise.keele@wmich.edu	
Lansing Area – East Lansing and Clinton County			
<u>MidMichigan</u> Environmental Action Council	MidMEAC	info@midmeac.org	
Lansing Environmental Action Team	Randy Dykhuis, Coordinator Terry Link, Clinton County lead	<u>randy@dykhuis.net</u> <u>link@msu.edu</u>	

Leelanau			
<u>Leelanau Energy</u>	Joe Defors, President	info@LeelanauEnergy.org	
	Marquette County		
<u>Climate</u> <u>Adaptation</u> <u>Task Force</u>	Jennifer Hill, City Commissioner	info@superiorwatersheds.org	
Montague and White Hall			
<u>White Lake Area</u> <u>Climate Action</u> <u>Council</u>	Tamara Horne	wlacac@gmail.com	
Muskegon			
<u>Sierra Club</u> <u>Michigan Chapter</u>	Jan O'Connell, MI Beyond Coal Campaign Sarah Tresedder, Federal Climate & Energy Organizer	jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org	
Oakland County			
<u>Turn Oakland</u> <u>County Green</u>	Andrew Sarpolis, Executive Director	andrew.sarpolis@sierraclub.org	
Traverse City			
<u>Groundwork</u> <u>Center for</u> <u>Resilient</u> <u>Communities</u>	Ashley Soltysiak, Program Director	ashley@groundworkcenter.org	
<u>NMEAC</u>	Ann Rogers, Chair	<u>a-rogers@charter.net</u>	



State/National Coalitions and Resources	Contact
Climate Mobilization Project and Toolkit	TCM@climatemobilization.org
Michigan Alliance for Justice in Climate (MAJIC)	Ryan "Rei" Fielder, <u>rei@michiganej.org</u>
Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition	Juan Jhong Chung, juan@michiganej.org
Michigan Green Communities	info@migreencommunities.com
Michigan's United Statewide Decarbonization Campaign	Eric Ini, <u>eini@miunited.org</u>
Sierra Club's Ready for 100 Program and Activist Toolkit	Mike Berkowitz, <u>mike.berkowitz@sierraclub.org</u>
State of Michigan Catalyst Communities Program	



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