

Milwaukee Climate & Equity Plan

July 16, 2025 Implementation Update



ECO ENVIRONMENTAL
COLLABORATION
OFFICE

milwaukee.gov/ECO



milwaukee.gov/ClimatePlan

Goals:

1. Reduce community greenhouse gas emissions: **45% by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.**
2. Improve racial and economic equity by **creating green jobs that pay at least \$40,000 and include recruiting local people of color.**



The Plan Timeline

- 2019-2022: Milwaukee creates a **City-County Taskforce on Climate and Economic Equity** that engages the public on developing the plan.
- 2023: Mayor Johnson and the Milwaukee Common Council officially adopt the ***Climate and Equity Plan*** as part of the Citywide Comprehensive Plan. Every strategy or “Big Idea” in the plan describes how it reduces greenhouse gasses, improves racial equity, and increases community resilience.
- By the end of 2024, ECO had secured federal funding to implement all 10 Big Ideas.
- 2025: ECO is implementing the plan. Much of federal funding is now at risk or has been rescinded. Equity efforts have been target of the current administration.



The 10 Big Ideas



1. Green Jobs Accelerator



2. Healthy Homes Upgrades

3. New Net Zero Energy Homes

4. Commercial Building
Benchmarking + Energy standards



5. People-centered Transportation

6. Electric vehicles



7. Greening the Electric Grid



8. Nature in the City



9. Food Waste Reduction



10. Resilience Ambassadors

Green Jobs Accelerator



Strategy

Creating clear pathways to increase the number of people of color employed in family-supporting green jobs. This includes public outreach, coordination with existing training providers, clear career ladders from entry-level employment to progressively higher skills, public benefits agreements on government-funded projects, and support for businesses owned by people of color working in this field.

Implementation Update

- ECO Green Jobs Coordinator hired in summer, 2024 (funded through Urban Forestry grant)
- Launched Green Jobs Guide (print + web) with career pathways, local job and training info, and support services, developed in collaboration with industry experts and training providers Milwaukee.gov/GreenJobs
- Community Workforce Agreements written into multiple ECO federal grant applications
- Launching state-certified Arborist Pre-Apprenticeship Program in August 2025 (which will serve as a model for other green careers)
- Integrating Employ Milwaukee support services into City's RPP program
- Week-long blue/green jobs career exploration event tentatively planned for late August

Healthy Home Energy Upgrades



Strategy

Making weatherization and renewable energy retrofits more affordable as part of holistic housing improvements that also address lead-based paint and other health hazards.

Healthy Home Energy Upgrades

Implementation Update

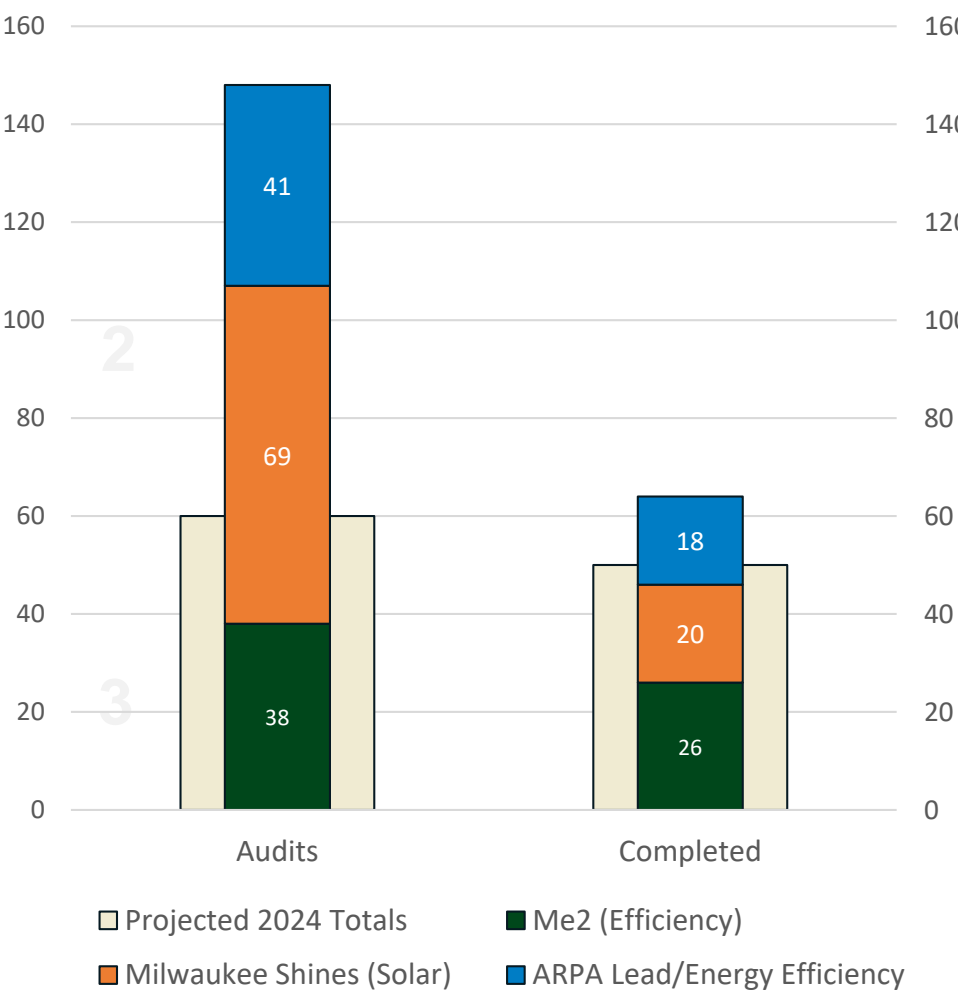
- ECO deploying \$2m in ARPA funds
 - SDC shutdown delayed program; funds redistributed to Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity and Me²
 - \$1.25m to Milwaukee Habitat to integrate lead and energy efficiency; \$200,000 for Me² Incentives (Metrics on next slide). Me² is a market-based contractor-led program and has been able to reach more homes faster.
 - Me² continues to offer energy loans in partnership with Summit Credit Union; Habitat for Humanity holistic retrofit projects will continue into 2026.
- Worked with Green Homeowners United, Forward Together Wisconsin, Our Future Milwaukee, Clean Wisconsin, and Sherman Park Community Association Focus on Energy and Wisconsin Conservation voters to promote IRA Tax Credits and HOMES rebates.
- \$1m EPA environmental justice grant was also awarded to ECO in 2024 to provide more holistic healthy homes assessments, but was terminated by the Trump Administration shortly after new Resilience Ambassadors were hired and trained.
- ECO applied for and received \$2m for new HUD grant to add Healthy Homes upgrades to other abatement, energy efficiency, and housing repair programs to cover approximately 123 homes.



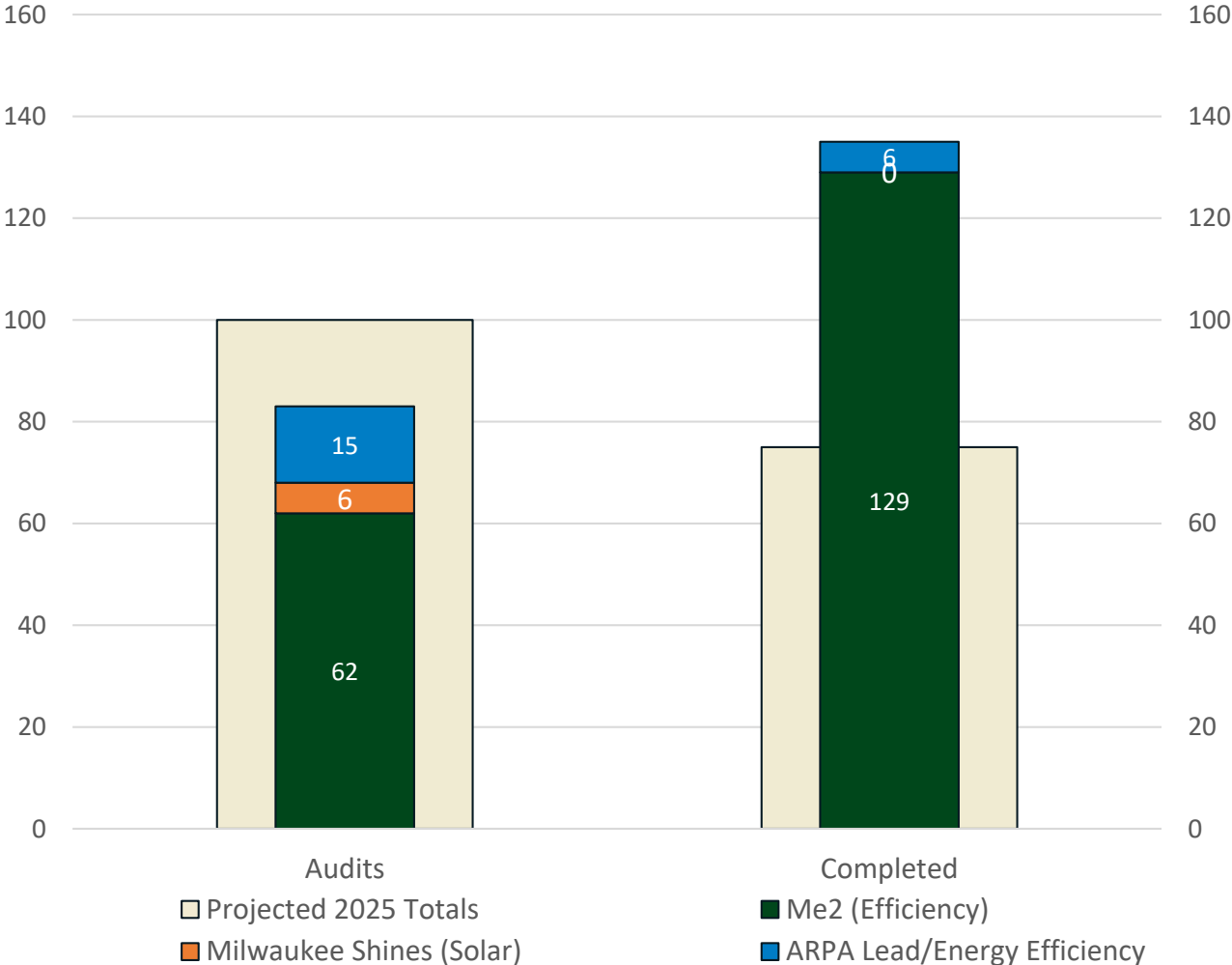
[Milwaukee.gov/Me2](https://milwaukee.gov/Me2)

Healthy Home Energy Upgrades

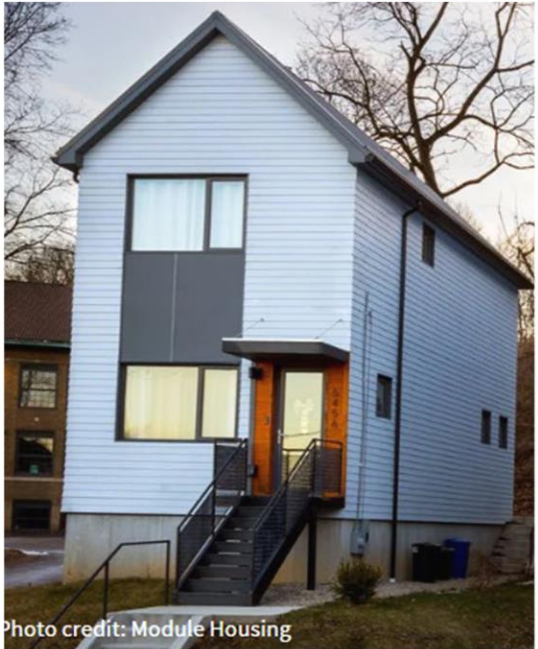
2024 Home Energy Retrofits



2025 Home Energy Retrofits (Through June)



New Net Zero Energy Homes



Strategy

Building healthy, affordable, net-zero energy, all-electric homes on Milwaukee's scattered vacant lots. The project envisions supporting a new factory in Milwaukee that constructs panelized housing components year-round to both reduce the cost of new home construction and restore manufacturing job opportunities for people of color.

Implementation Update

Challenges

- Common Council reallocated \$847,900 in APRA funds to other projects and directed ECO to cancel its contract with Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity (after aborted RFP to private developers)
- In fall 2024, US DOE announced that ECO has been awarded a \$3.4 million contract to support 25 new Net Zero Energy Homes, technical assistance, and a down payment on a housing factory. To date, DOE has not awarded the contract, nor have they fully revoked it.

Progress

- ECO worked with a class at UWM SARUP to develop sample net zero energy wall panels to start educating developers and students.
- ECO is still seeking to get a pilot home built to the Department of Energy ZERH standard. Housing developers have been struggling with high construction costs, generally.



Commercial Building Energy Benchmarking & Performance Standards



Strategy

Requiring large commercial building owners to annually track and report on their energy use and develop longer-term building performance standards to gradually **reduce GHG emissions from commercial buildings**.

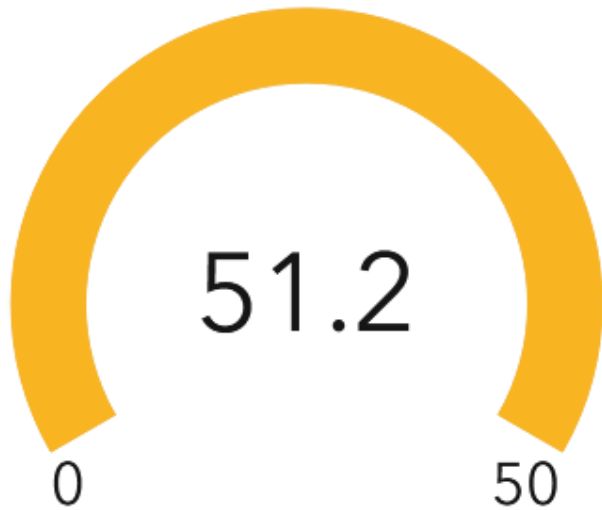
Implementation Update

- Common Council adopted a commercial building benchmarking policy in 2024 (City Ordinance 200-62). The first reporting deadline is September 30th, 2025.
- Program website is live at Milwaukee.gov/Benchmarking. The City offers training to commercial building owners.
- City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, and MPS benchmark their buildings energy use.
- ECO was awarded a \$9m grant to support this effort from US DOE in 2024. However, the US Department of Energy currently has not released any of the obligated funding to Milwaukee or any other grantee nationally.
- State Supreme Court recently struck down State Legislature roadblocks to a better statewide energy code.
- ECO worked with local houses of worship and multi-family buildings on a pilot program called the Cream City Climate Challenge and Green Congregations
- ECO has financed over \$40m in energy efficiency projects through our Commercial PACE program since 2010.

People Centered Transportation

Implemented through DPW, DCD, and MCTS

Progress towards Mayor Johnson's Commitment to
Installing 50 Miles of Protected Bikeways:



miles of protected bikeways completed or in progress from 2023 -
2026.

In June of 2023, Mayor Cavalier Johnson set a goal of 50 new miles of
protected bikeways completed or in progress by 2026.

[Milwaukee Bike Hub Map](#)

Strategy

Helping people drive less by improving and expanding city-wide public and active transportation options and creating thriving communities where people live, work, and play through transit-oriented development.

Implementation Update

Progress

- City of Milwaukee has completed 51.2 miles of protected bike lanes
- Traffic calming projects throughout Milwaukee. Both City and County have adopted “Vision Zero” policies to eliminate traffic deaths and improve pedestrian safety.
- Zoning code updated to allow for more diverse housing types and increase density.

Challenges

- MCTS fiscal challenges have led to postponement or cancellation of plans to add new Bus Rapid Transit routes.
- Federal government cancelled \$34m project for 6th Street safety improvements

Electrify Transportation



[Engage.Milwaukee.gov/EV](https://engage.milwaukee.gov/EV)

Strategy

Building a network of publicly-accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, increasing EV adoption rates through public outreach, and transitioning municipal fleets to **EVs, hybrids, and other low-emissions vehicles.**

Implementation Update

Progress

- \$15m federal EV Charging grant underway; total funding for at least 53 sites. ECO is submitting projects to US DOT in batches, with first 13 sites at Milwaukee Public Libraries and Milwaukee County Parks. ECO will expand public engagement for future sites and issue RFP for vendor after the federal government releases construction funds.
- 2023 City ordinance 310-18 requires the purchase of electric or low-emission vehicles when cost effective and practical. By the end of 2025, the City fleet will have 35 EVs in its fleet, 17 municipal EV charging ports, and 112 hybrid gas/electric vehicles.
- State NEVI fast-charging projects are slowly advancing, including planned stations in Johnson Creek and Greenfield, WI

Challenges

- Federal budget bill is ending EV tax credits.
- Uncertainty with Public Charging grant

Greening the Electric Grid



*We Energies Caledonia Solar project
power Milwaukee buildings*



Strategy

Transitioning the electric grid to carbon-free sources of energy through advocacy for better renewable energy policy with state utility regulators, direct purchase of renewable energy from new, utility-scale projects, and expansion of rooftop solar in the City.

Implementation Update

Progress

- Caledonia Solar project complete. 60 city buildings are now powered by 100% renewable electricity and 20 more will be by 2026.
- \$2.7 million Energy Saving Performance Contract with Johnson Controls for rooftop solar on municipal buildings, using Direct Pay Tax Credits
- \$62.5 million solar grant to WEDC, now called “PowerUp Wisconsin” is moving forward slowly
- *Grow Solar* Group-Buy program added 183 KW of rooftop solar in 2024. 2025 program is fully booked.

Challenges

- Federal budget bill is ending solar and wind tax credits early
- Large data centers use an enormous amount of energy; We Energies received approval for new gas-powered plants.

Protect and Restore Nature in the City



GROW A CAREER. GROW A FUTURE.

Find your green career
at [Milwaukee.gov/GreenJobs](https://milwaukee.gov/GreenJobs)

Strategy

Protecting existing natural areas and increasing the amount of green space and trees on private and public property through the expansion of the Green and Healthy Schools Program and removal of excess asphalt in commercial parking lots that also contribute to urban heat islands.

Implementation Update

- \$12m federal tree planting grant is moving forward.
- Agreements in place with Milwaukee Community Service Corps and Milwaukee County; agreement with MPS still under review
- Forestry Arborist career ladder established
- Using ecological data, DPW is doing outreach to high need communities and offering home owners a free tree on qualified private properties (DPW-led project with DNR funding)
- Green School yard projects steadily being designed and installed (5 annually) through partnership with MPS and Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee
- ECO currently recruiting a Water Centric City Coordinator

Waste Reduction and Sustainable Consumption

Strategy

Redirecting surplus food to feed people and reduce waste through a new FEED partnership, as well as reducing plastic pollution and exploring lower-carbon cement.

Implementation Update

- Food Waste Coordinator hired in summer 2024 using \$400,000 USDA grant
- FEED MKE Coalition is an active coalition now with 390 active members from across the Greater Milwaukee area representing individuals and organizations of all sizes
- Mini-grants awarded to 9 local organizations to date for food recovery and composting (including Soul Brew Kombucha and The Gathering, both pictured), with 2 more pending.
- Community compost drop-off sites being planned
- Launched Mayor's Food Waste Challenge, offering
 - Free waste audits and action plans
 - Classes and educational events

Milwaukee.gov/FeedMKE



Resilience Ambassadors



Established in 2017 to promote a collaborative, neighborhood-level effort to achieve Milwaukee's climate action goals by providing additional supports to the residents and community leaders who are already making an impact in their neighborhoods.



milwaukee.gov/ECONEighborhoods

Resilience Ambassadors

Partnering with trusted neighborhood-based organizations to connect underserved communities with available tools and resources to make their homes and neighborhoods more resilient to climate change.

Implementation Update

- Eco Neighborhood Initiative now supporting four neighborhoods, including Sherman Park, Harambee, Lindsay Heights, and Century City/Triangle Neighborhood.
- Hired and trained two paid Resilience Ambassadors through the EPA Environmental Justice Grant to support healthy home interventions. The EPA terminated the grant in March shortly after it was launched
- ECO supported Sherman Park in establishing the *Green Congregations* connecting neighbors with flood prevention, energy efficiency and other sustainability resources
- Sherman Park hosted “Earth Day in May” and many other tabling and educational events have been organized across the neighborhoods.

Additional Climate Education



ECO is proud to partner with the Milwaukee Health Department to host a Climate Communications Workshop Series in Fall 2025

- Centered on building resident capacity for sharing their climate stories to affect change at the interpersonal, community and policy levels.
- Workshops will include:
 1. Storytelling 101
 2. Climate communications training that is:
 - Milwaukee and WI-centered
 - Rooted in facts
 - Adaptable to a variety of audiences
 - Action-oriented
 - Uplifts the efforts already in motion in our city and state
 3. Mixed media approaches for sharing your story
 4. Collaborative partnerships with Milwaukee-based organizations
 5. A final showcase of our participants' stories

10 for 10 on Funding!

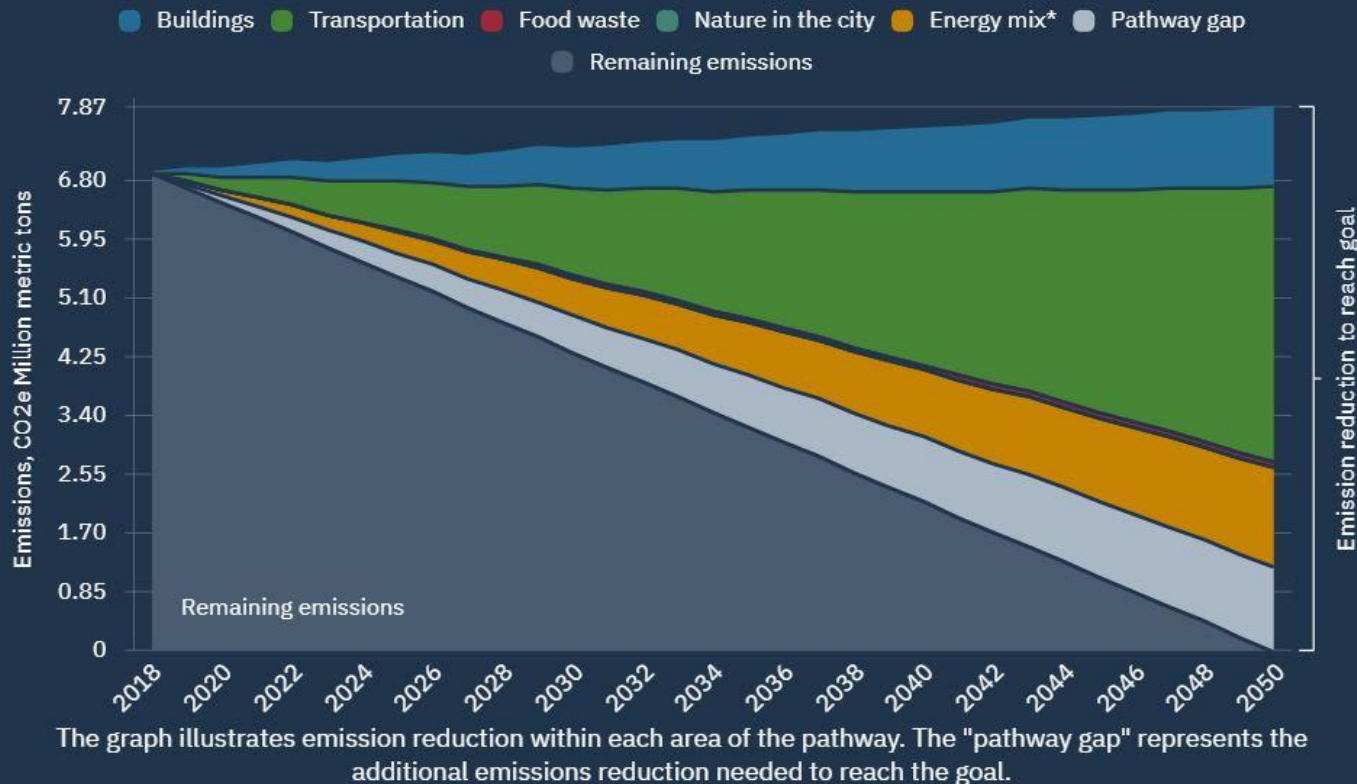
(Each of the 10 Big Ideas were funded with some now at risk)

Federal Grant	Purpose	Status	Funding	Risk
EPA Environmental Justice	Support ECO Neighborhood Initiative (Resilience Ambassadors and home energy assessments.)	Grant Terminated; \$57,000 has been charged to EPA but un-reimbursed; City is part of a class action law-suit filed against EPA; ECO staff still employed with local funds but ambassadors laid off.	\$1,000,000	
DOT Charging & Fueling Infrastructure grant	Build community Electric Vehicle Charging Network	Grant received. PW Committee approved first 13 sites at MPL and Milwaukee County Parks. Next step is request federal construction funds, then issue RFP for P3 vendor.	\$15,000,000 (\$1.1m for Engineering)	
USDA Community Forestry	City Forestry, MPS, Milwaukee County tree planting and maintenance	Everything moving forward; ECO's Green Jobs Coordinator re-started a pre-apprenticeship training program for arborists	\$12,000,000 (\$200k to ECO)	
DOE Codes Grant	Commercial building benchmarking policy + building performance standard	Grant awarded, but conditional upon DOE approving workplan. No movement from DOE; \$60k un-reimbursed; Holding recruitment of 4 staff. Without legal action, funds will likely be lost by year's end	\$9,000,000	
USDA Compost and Food Waste Reduction	Reduce community food waste	Awarded; Being reimbursed so far. Mini-grants being awarded	\$400,000	
EPA Carbon Pollution Reduction (EPA)	Regional Climate Planning in partnership with SEWRPC	Awarded to SEWRPC. Project is proceeding with plan due at year's end.	\$1,000,000 (\$200k to ECO)	
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant	Plan is for energy dashboard; municipal lighting; benchmarking call center.	Awarded. Projects are being reimbursed. Johnson Controls Energy Saving Performance Contract is underway.	\$522,370	
DOE C-SITE	Net Zero Energy Housing	Grant announced, but we have not received a contract. DOE staff says they will contact us when they know more	\$3,400,000	
HUD Healthy Homes	Supplement ARPA lead/energy work	Awarded and approved by Council. Workplan being finalized	\$2,000,000	

Public Reporting

Milwaukee.gov/ClimatePlan

Emission reduction from our transition pathway

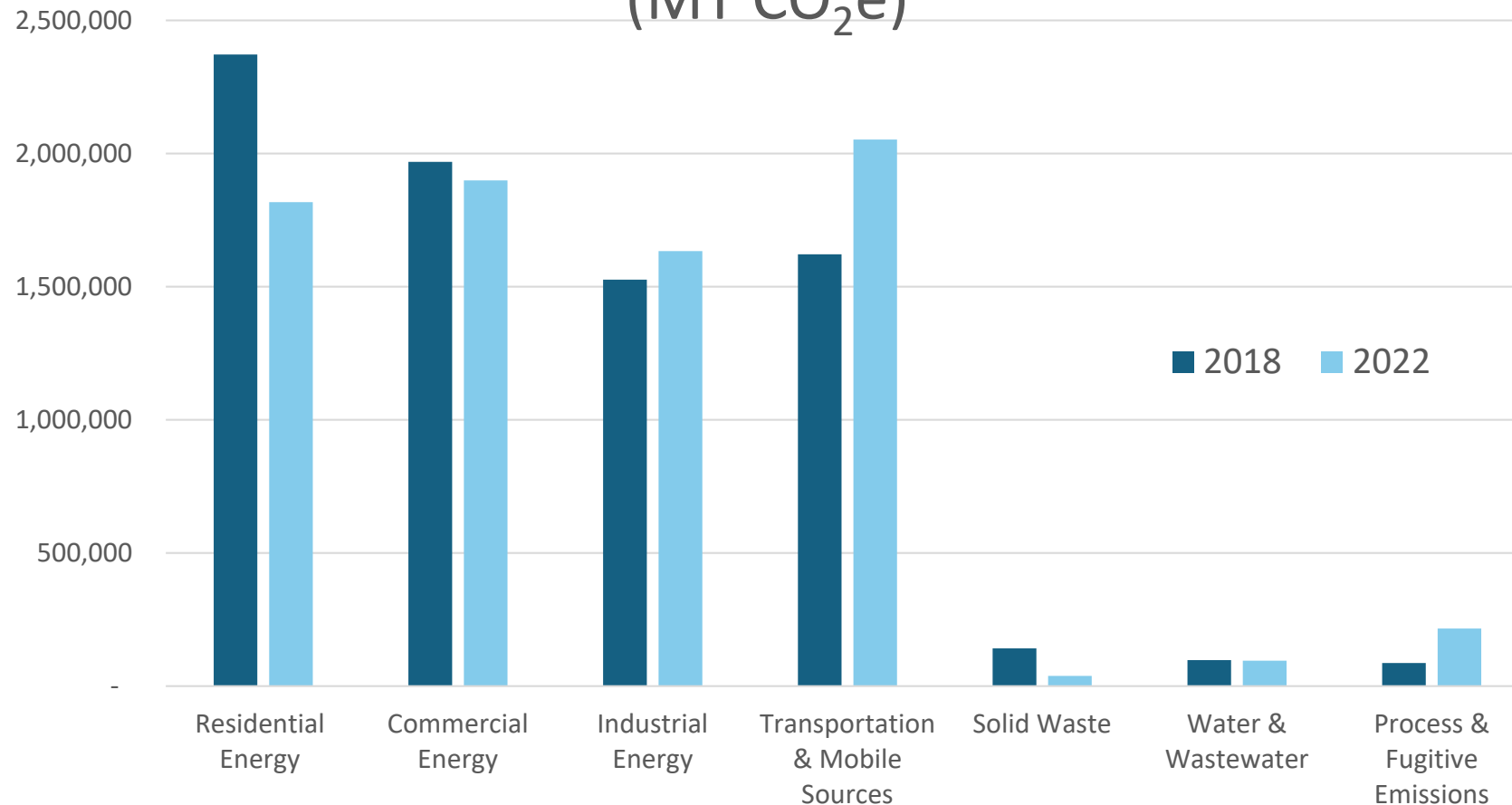


* The Energy mix accounts for a reduction in emissions that contributes 18% toward reaching our goal. In the diagram, part of the emission reduction (1%) is allocated to other transition areas than the Energy mix, ensuring that reductions are not double-counted.

- **Public Dashboard:** Sustainability commitments, actions, and carbon reduction are displayed on the City's website using the ClimateView dashboard.
- **Greenhouse Gas Inventory Updates:** These will be made semi-regularly, including an update in 2025 using 2022 data, and in 2028.
- **ACEEE City Clean Energy Scorecard:** Periodic reporting on action progress will be made here or through other similar national reporting efforts.

City of Milwaukee Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

City of Milwaukee Emissions 2018 and 2022
(MT CO₂e)



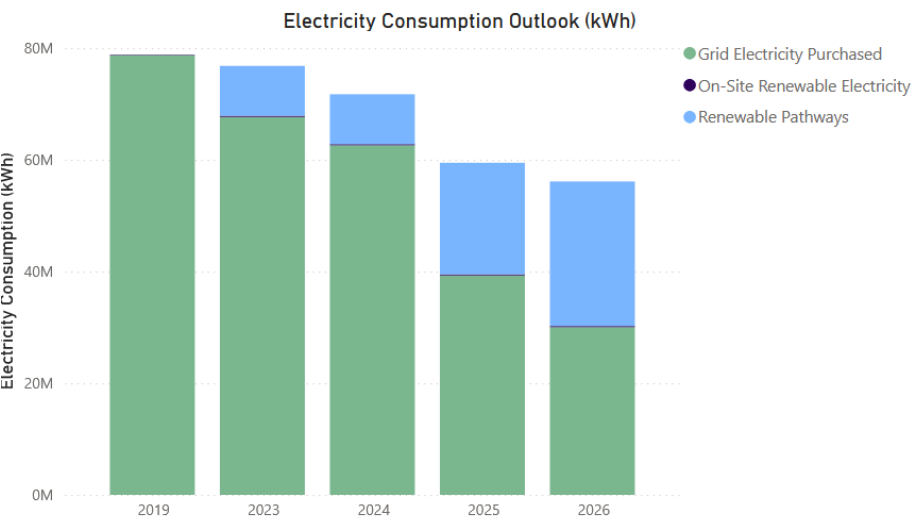
Overall GHG Emissions in 2022 are 7.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO₂e), down from 7.7 million MMT in 2018

Data is courtesy of SEWRPC using ICLEI Clear Path methods.

Reporting for City Operations

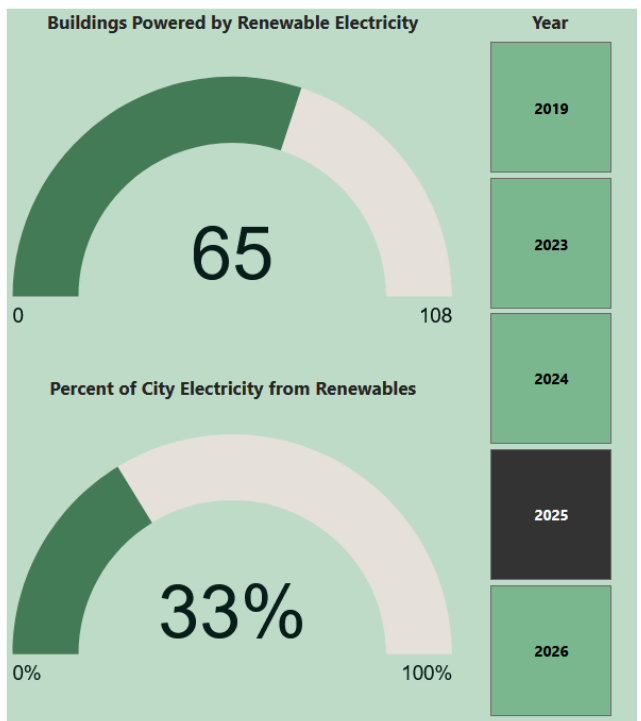


City of Milwaukee Renewable Electricity Trends



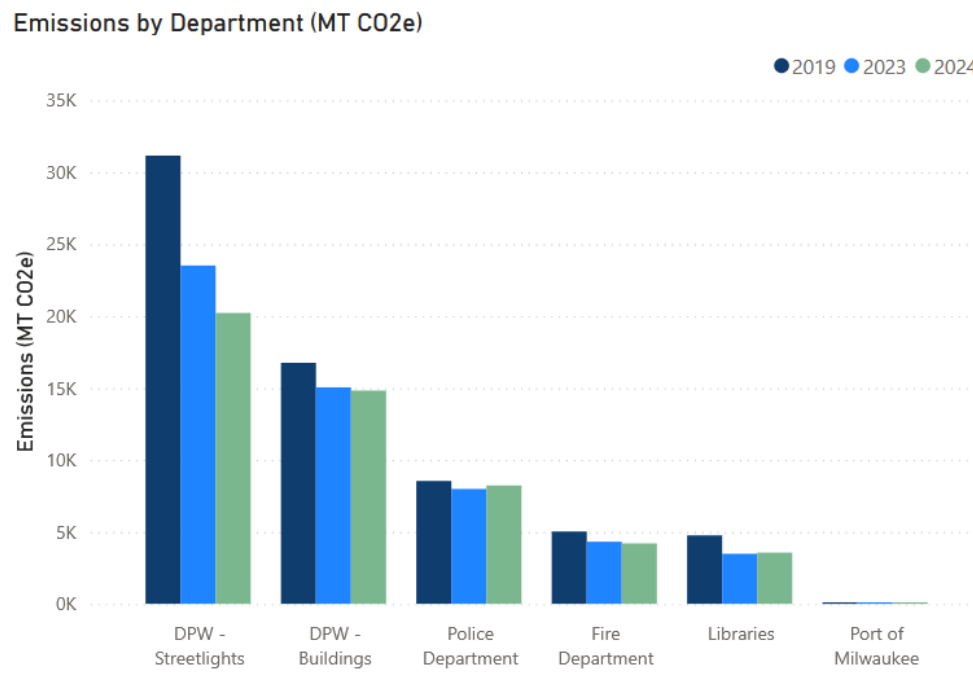
Electricity Reduced
2019-2024 with Streetlight
LED Upgrades
13.8M kWh

Renewable Pathways
*A large-scale solar array
project built in partnership
with WE Energies.*



Department

Buildings



[PowerBI Dashboard Link](#)

Regional and Statewide Leadership



Wisconsin Local Government Climate Coalition

The Wisconsin Local Government Climate Coalition provides a coordinated voice for local governments that are pursuing clean energy and climate change solutions in the state. The Coalition provides **a platform for members to collaborate on overcoming barriers to decarbonization** and coordinating with state agencies. Additionally, ECO, Milwaukee County, and Wauwatosa sustainability staff routinely meet. WLGCC.org

Regional Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

The *Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan* is serving as the basis for the **regional climate plan**. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is developing the [regional plan](#) based on Milwaukee's Climate and Equity Plan. Final Plan is due December 31st, 2025.



Connect with Us!

 [Sign Up for Our
Quarterly Newsletter](#)

Follow Us on Social



[@ecoCityMKE](#)



[@ ecoCityMKE](#)



Milwaukee.gov/ECO

Milwaukee.gov/ClimatePlan

