



Figure 1. Image from VISIT Milwaukee.

Milwaukee County Climate Action 2050 Plan

Community Engagement Strategy

Achieving Net Zero Carbon Emissions While Advancing Equity, Justice, and Community Resilience



Introduction

Milwaukee County is developing a Climate Action 2050 Plan (CA50) to achieve net zero carbon emissions from County operations while advancing equity, justice, and community resilience. Diverse, equitable and inclusive community engagement is a foundational component of this project, as the CA50 Plan will have lasting impacts on county residents. This community engagement strategy (CES) outlines Energetics’ plan for conducting comprehensive and meaningful outreach throughout Milwaukee County.

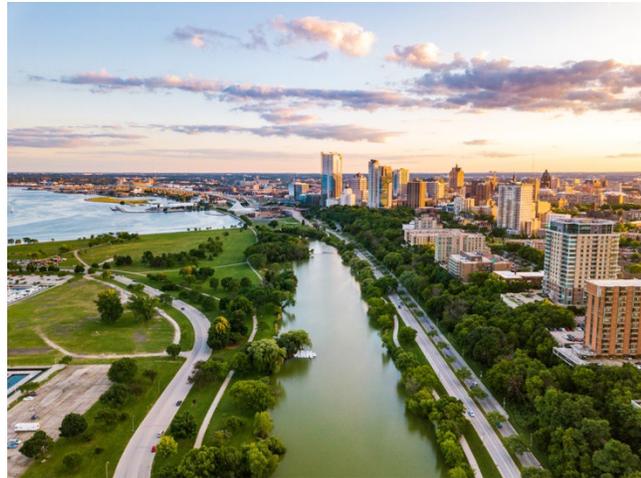


Figure 2. Image from VISIT Milwaukee.

Framework and Methodology

Guiding our strategy is the "Community Engagement to Ownership" framework, pictured below. This framework describes a spectrum of outreach activities that progress from early informative efforts to empowered decision-making that allows stakeholders to shape the future of their communities.



Using this framework ensures that we will build a relationship with county residents that is based on mutual learning—as community members learn about the project, we can learn about their concerns, values, and needs and how to best incorporate those in CA50.



Figure 3. Image from VISIT Milwaukee.

Commitment to Equity

Energetics acknowledges and understands the histories of inequity, injustice, and displacement extant in the communities we work and live in, and we recognize the systems by which these issues are perpetuated today. We believe that a commitment to justice is imperative in breaking harmful cycles of racial, economic, and cultural abuse. Thus, we are committed to empowering communities who have all too often been, and still are, disenfranchised through both overt and implicit practices of prejudice. In our work we prioritize racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic respect. We believe that endogenous knowledges hold the utmost value in exploring, developing, and implementing community-led solutions. We are committed to prioritizing trust and transparency between Energetics and Milwaukee County residents and their county government. To develop a truly equitable CA50 Plan, Energetics has generated multiple key strategies for the inclusion and empowerment of Milwaukee County's diverse communities.

Non-English-Speaking Communities

Milwaukee County celebrates a linguistically diverse population. According to the [2020 American Community Survey](#), 17.5% of residents speak a language other than English. The non-English language spoken by the largest group is Spanish (spoken by 10.9% of the population). To ensure equitable collaboration with non-English speaking communities, Energetics recommends:

- Identifying key language communities by geographic location.
- Communicating directly with community organizations representative of non-English speaking communities.
- Sourcing potential translation services and prioritizing translation where it may have the highest impact on inclusion.

Taking specific steps to facilitate engagement with non-English speaking communities ensures that the CA50 Plan is representative of the varied linguistic populations of the county.

Communities with Disabilities

Residents' vulnerabilities and needs may vary depending upon their physical and mental wellness needs. Individuals with disabilities may be experiencing everyday obstacles that increase their exposure to climate hazards and their overall vulnerability. To secure representation of these needs in the CA50 Plan, Energetics recommends:

- Deploying strategically accessible engagement modalities to accommodate the outreach needs of county residents, ideally ensuring an abundant mix of in-person and digital participation options.
- Optimizing digital accessibility through auditory processing technology and closed captioning wherever possible and appropriate.

BIPOC Communities

Milwaukee County faces challenges in the shape of drastic racial inequity, ranking among one of the highest across the country in racial segregation. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) suffer disproportionately from economic, health, and climate hazards¹. Recognition of this complex history is critical in strategic community engagement and community-driven solution building. To establish equitable representation in the CA50 Plan, Energetics recommends:

- Identifying key geographic areas that display patterns of racial and economic disparity.
- Using key performance indicators to verify survey responses equitably represent economically and racially marginalized communities.
- Direct distribution of surveys to BIPOC-led community organizations and local aid organizations.
- Conducting direct outreach with BIPOC-led community organizations and local aid organizations (homeless support centers, women's shelters, etc.).

Communities Experiencing Poverty

Milwaukee County residents experience some of the most severe economic inequities in the country. Communities experiencing economic challenges may experience climate change in drastically different ways. Energetics understands that economic inequities often converge with other inequities to impede a community's ability to thrive. In order to ensure the CA50 Plan justly represents communities facing economic challenges, Energetics recommends:

- Identifying key geographic areas that display patterns of economic disparity.
- Using key performance indicators to verify survey responses equitably represent economically marginalized communities.
- Direct distribution of surveys to local community aid organizations.
- Conducting direct outreach with local community aid organizations (homeless support centers, women's shelters, etc.).

LGBTQ+ Communities

Energetics recognizes that members with intersectional identities are at higher risk of many forms of vulnerability. Equitable inclusion of LGBTQ+ community members in the planning process requires respect for all identities, regardless of how they may intersect. An additional challenge queer communities face is a lack of demographic

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-report-shows-disproportionate-impacts-climate-change-socially-vulnerable>

representation in U.S. Census datasets. Because the data are largely unavailable, firsthand accounts of queer experiences in the County are vital to an equitable CA50 Plan. Therefore, Energetics recommends:

- Identifying key LGBTQ+ community spaces and organizations.
- Directly distributing surveys to LGBTQ+ community organizations.
- Conducting direct outreach with LGBTQ+ community organizations.

Three-Point Strategy Overview

To ensure our outreach and engagement efforts include as many community groups as possible, the CES encompasses three focus areas:

1. Digital Engagement
2. Surveys and Community Feedback
3. In-person Engagement

Energetics will use this combination of engagement efforts to ensure that opportunities for participation and feedback are accessible to residents of all backgrounds. Goals, methods, and anticipated challenges and solutions for each of these engagement approaches are addressed in their own respective sections.

Digital Engagement Strategy

Goals

The digital engagement aspect of the community engagement strategy serves two main purposes. First, we aim to inform residents about the CA50 Plan, the design process, and opportunities for participation. Second, we aim to consult and involve residents and key community organizations to gather input from different communities and ensure community needs and assets are integrated into the process and inform planning. Additionally, digital engagement can help reach younger demographics and residents who may face challenges attending in-person events.

Methods

Energetics will provide guidance to the County on using and expanding established digital communication channels to inform and engage residents throughout the project. These efforts will be launched at the beginning of community engagement efforts and prior to sending out any surveys or holding in-person events. This will provide the County with a way to publicize participation opportunities and a place to direct anyone with questions about the planning process, increasing resident awareness and involvement. Energetics will adhere to County branding guidelines in the design of any digital content and will provide at least one day's notice to Milwaukee County for suggested updates and posts.

As a part of the digital engagement focus, Energetics will work with Milwaukee County to design a webpage for the CA50 Plan at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/climate-plan>. The County will create and manage the account with Energetics' support and guidance. Content will include information on the project background, past and upcoming events, a standing survey, project timeline, draft reports, and other County sustainability efforts. This official webpage will serve as a place to provide county residents with relevant information about the project and a place to submit comments throughout the life of project.

Energetics recommends expanding the reach of the project by utilizing the County's existing digital connections to residents. This could include disseminating information directly through County newsletter(s), reaching out through

existing social networks, and digitally engaging with relevant local organizations. These efforts can be supported through collaborative cross-promotion with different County departments.

Finally, Energetics will use Zoom, a video conferencing platform, to hold virtual public meetings as needed throughout the project. These meetings will supplement in-person engagement and offer additional options for residents to participate in listening sessions and workshops or to provide comments on draft reports.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

It can be difficult to ensure that digital communications reach all the communities which make up Milwaukee County. Energetics recommends strategic engagement with County departments and local organizations to amplify key project messages across different platforms. This will help spread awareness about the CA50 Plan and the different avenues for public participation in the project.

Surveys and Community Feedback

Goals

In supporting community-driven climate adaptation strategies, Energetics must incorporate qualitative data representative of residents' lived experiences into the development of the CA50 Plan. By administering community surveys, we intend to provide residents with a platform to express concerns about the impact of extreme weather events and other climate hazards on their lives.

Understanding residents' perceptions of and experiences with climate hazards will facilitate the development of an effective and equitable climate adaptation plan which reduces County emissions while pursuing environmental justice. Additionally, Energetics aims to use surveys to collect public comments on draft deliverables such as the vulnerability assessment and CA50 Plan and receive comments about the planning process throughout the life of the project through a standing survey hosted on the Milwaukee County Office of Sustainability webpage.



Figure 4. Image from VISIT Milwaukee.

Methods

Standing Survey

The standing survey will consist of an informative consent preface and optional open-ended questions. The survey asks residents to share their personal experiences with extreme weather and climate change, as well as provides a platform for residents to express their concerns and needs to offset the impacts of climate change throughout the county. Energetics will develop the survey using SurveyMonkey software. The survey will be live for the duration of the project and hosted on the project webpage created by Milwaukee County as part of the digital engagement strategy. Survey responses will be collected by Energetics and shared with the County on a regular basis.

Vulnerability Assessment Survey

The vulnerability assessment survey is intended to procure qualitative data that may inform and enhance the vulnerability assessment. The survey consists of an informative consent preface, open-ended questions, multiple choice questions, and demographic questions. The survey asks residents about their experiences with, perceptions of, and concerns about climate change and extreme weather events, as well as solicits advice from residents on how to

best prepare vulnerable communities for impacts of climate change. Energetics will develop the survey using SurveyMonkey software. The survey will be hosted on the project webpage and made available through direct distribution and social media outreach.

Public Feedback on Draft Reports Survey

Surveys will also be conducted alongside in-person meetings to collect public feedback on draft versions of the vulnerability assessment and CA50 Plan once they are published on the project webpage. These surveys will allow for a longer public comment period and serve as a means for residents who couldn't attend the in-person meetings to share their feedback on the draft reports.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Securing sufficient survey responses can be a challenge. To ensure survey length doesn't contribute to a low response rate, and to respect residents' time, Energetics staff will test the time it takes to complete each survey.

Another challenge can be achieving responses that are representative of Milwaukee County demographics. To determine if responses are roughly proportionate to county demographics, surveys will include optional demographic questions that we can then compare to census data. If there are significant differences, we can conduct targeted outreach to underrepresented communities.



Figure 5. Image from VISIT Milwaukee.

In-Person Engagement

Goals

Connecting with Milwaukee County residents in person will help increase visibility of the CA50 Plan, build trust and rapport with residents, and reach additional communities and organizations. In-person engagement is also meant to help reach those who may not be engaging digitally, such as senior residents or residents with limited access to computers or the Internet.

Methods

Subconsultants

Energetics will work with Water365 and EHSE Management Solutions, two subcontractors located in Milwaukee County. Both partners have established connections in Milwaukee County and share Energetics' commitments to equitable engagement. They will utilize their local knowledge and experiences to help plan and implement in-person engagement efforts, including leading and attending in-person events and making additional local contacts.

Project-Specific Events

Project-specific events will serve as an opportunity for community education and feedback. These may take the form of a listening session, a town hall, or a workshop. Meeting spaces will be chosen based on factors including accessibility and neighborhood demographics to ensure we are reaching all communities in Milwaukee County. Energetics plans to hold these events periodically throughout the project to keep residents continuously informed and involved during the planning process. This will be especially important around the times that major deliverables are published.

Informal Interviews

During both community and project-specific events, we intend to conduct semi-structured interviews with residents. This in-person feedback will supplement the information we collect through surveys and digital engagement to help us better understand residents' needs and concerns.

County Board Presentations

At a minimum, Milwaukee County's Sustainability Director will share the following plan deliverables with the County Board as the documents become available: 1) Draft Vulnerability Assessment; 2) Draft Climate Action Strategies List; and 3) Draft Climate Action 2050 Plan. Energetics will attend a County Board meeting to present the final plan and recommend its adoption.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

For in-person engagement to be successful, residents must be able to access the meeting spaces. Barriers that may impede resident access to meeting spaces include a lack of transportation and building inaccessibility. Energetics will consider the proximity of public transportation options to meeting spaces and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance of buildings when selecting ideal spaces for in-person engagement.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of many Milwaukee County residents, presenting an additional challenge to in-person engagement. Energetics will consider ways to lower the risk of in-person engagement to vulnerable populations such as attending outdoor, warm weather events in the summer.

Engagement Milestones Timeline

Please note that this timeline is subject to change and will be further developed in coordination with Milwaukee County, the STF, Water365, and EHSE Management.

- November 2022:
 - Digital engagement established (webpage).
- December 2022:
 - Community Engagement Strategy finalized.
 - Standing Survey published.

- Vulnerability Assessment Survey published and distributed.
- April 2023:
 - Vulnerability Assessment Report Feedback Survey published and distributed.
- April 2023 – June 2024:
 - In-person engagement sessions hosted to solicit public feedback on the Draft Vulnerability Assessment report.
 - Ongoing in-person engagement to develop CA50 Plan, coordinated with Milwaukee County, Water365, and EHSE Management.
- March 2024:
 - CA50 Plan Feedback Survey published and distributed.
 - In-person engagement sessions hosted to solicit public feedback on the CA50 Plan report.