

5. Implementation

The Syracuse Community is at an inflection point.

Unprecedented investment, urban redesign, and innovation have presented this moment for municipal and community leaders to challenge the status quo and design a pathway toward a welcoming, equitable, and opportunistic City, distinct from other metropolitan centers. At the precipice of change, the City acknowledges asset and legacy components of its infrastructure, housing stock, and natural resources. Opportunity exists on the Onondaga Lakefront, vacant land, redevelopment of the East Adams Neighborhood, and implementation of the Housing Market Strategy. Guidance for these strategic investments is to be pragmatic, with the intention of long-term impact, and to serve all members of this community, their future generations, and the communities the City intends to attract. The *Sustainable Syracuse Initiative* reflects this guidance and encourages one step further, the mitigation of carbon emissions and investment in climate resiliency. As the effects of climate change are realized, it is imperative that the municipality and community strategically acknowledge climate change will be a system change to the current use of infrastructure, housing stock, and natural resources. **This chapter intends to demonstrate sustainability as a necessary value to achieve future community and economic prosperity by connecting strategies of the Climate Action Plan to tangential investment and programming that ultimately informs the development of priorities in Comprehensive Plan 2040.**

Green building design and energy use connect development to the opportunities, and needs, of tomorrow by incentivizing economic investment, building climate resiliency, and diminishing the disproportional impact of rising energy costs across the Syracuse community. Action now, by the City and community, to understand current energy use and the overall grid capacity will inform strategies toward efficient energy use tactics (metering, load balancing) that increase the effect of strong building envelopes (windows, insulation) and appliances (heat pumps, LED lighting).



Furthering the greening of the grid, led by public utilities and incentivized by state agencies, to develop renewable energy sources is essential. Proposed NYS Cap and Invest policy to curtail carbon emissions will incentivize such investment and attract economic activity. **If the Central New York region's infrastructure offers salvation against increasing operational costs due to carbon taxing, then industry, including their workforce, will flock to the lower cost option.** Additionally, green building and energy efficiency creates opportunity for workforce development in operational and administrative roles across sectors of industry. Efficient energy use lowers GHG emissions and energy costs across the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors of the Syracuse economy and attracts private investment to the City. Green building and energy use actions are the foundation for community and economic impact related to climate change.

The NYS CLCPA (2019) mandates 70% renewable energy generation by 2030.

Source: Climate Change Statutes, Regulations, and Policies. (2025). Retrieved December 29, 2025, from https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/climate-change/statutes-regulations-policies#:~:text=The%20Climate%20Leadership%20and%20Community%20Protection%20Act,%20**Energy%20storage**%203%2C000%20megawatts%20by%202030.

Transformative urban growth requires innovative transportation solutions. Municipal and community leaders acknowledge the relationship and are using this unprecedented moment to redesign the transportation network of Syracuse. **As the I-81 Interstate is redesigned, there is space to redevelop a transportation network that prioritizes alternative mobility options across the sectors of public transportation, bike infrastructure, and pedestrian pathways.** The focus on the development of multi-modal options yield both economic development and climate action opportunities for the Syracuse community. **Economically, these options are less expensive than a single-use vehicle, and alternative transportation infrastructure connects disadvantaged neighborhoods to economic centers inaccessible, because of transportation barriers, prior to development.** When viewed as a method for climate action, micromobility and public transit emit substantially fewer GHGs than single use vehicles and could equitably protect the Syracuse residents from future fuel taxes, which often disproportionately impact underserved populations.

For those that cannot, or choose not, to utilize alternative mobility infrastructure, the municipality and community must develop the infrastructure necessary to support an electric vehicle transition. **Disproportional access to charging infrastructure will impede climate mitigation overall and economic development in two distinct forms.** First, it will deter EV users. Second, without equitable charging distribution, the underserved neighborhoods of Syracuse will lack adequate infrastructure to adhere with NYS mandates, such as the 2035 mandate to ban non-electric light duty vehicle sales. The transportation network redesign will affect all aspects of quality of life. During development it is essential to acknowledge the connection of transportation to economic development and the system shift of climate change.

Implementation of the Municipal Tree Ordinance will continue the efforts of the Division of Forestry to expand and protect tree cover.

Source: Tree Ordinance Modernization. (2025). Retrieved December 29, 2025, from <https://www.syr.gov/Departments/Parks-Recreation/Tree-Ordinance-Modernization>.

The impacts of climate change will be felt by the most vulnerable populations first. These populations include the elderly, young, people with disabilities, houseless, and impoverished. Community mitigation and adoption efforts can be further supported by intentional action from local government bodies, such as collective efforts toward the Onondaga County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Harmful Algal Bloom and Nine Element Clean Water Plan. The Syracuse community will experience increasing temperatures and precipitation levels throughout the 21st century. To adapt the built and natural environment to the impending ecosystem shift, it is essential to educate residents, businesses, and industry on the impacts of climate change. However, it is education alongside implementation that will build a climate resilient city. **Implementation of climate adaptation goals such as stormwater mitigation infrastructure, tree canopy expansion, and equitable access to cooling spaces reduce the community risk and public health costs of unprecedented extreme events.** By addressing FEMA flood zones, curbing the urban heat island effect, and offering sanctuary from extreme heat, the Syracuse community will make a strategic economic investment, reduce individual burden and develop climate resiliency.

Preservation of the natural environment is the greatest strategy to mitigate effects of climate change because local greenery cools temperatures, cleans the air, absorbs stormwater, and sequesters carbon emissions. Economically, preservation of the natural environment protects natural resources, such as water filtration and natural cooling systems that lessen the need for adaptation investments. Additionally, to protect the natural environment it is important to decrease greenhouse gas emission sources produced by food (methane) and excessive waste. **Education on recycling, composting, and reuse opportunities reduce potent waste processing emissions and implement a circular economy structure that connects residents, businesses, and industry to less expensive and wasteful pathways for procurement of goods.** Strategies and goals to address the impending impacts of climate change are economic, protect the community, and ultimately aim to preserve the natural environment.

As municipal and community leaders steward the major investments and programs present in the Syracuse community, they must be pragmatic, think long-term, design to serve all, and be sustainable in implementation. Development opportunities on vacant land and adjacent to water should incorporate flood mitigation architecture. Homes addressed by the Housing Market Strategy should consider building envelope and energy efficiency upgrades as well as green infrastructure. Transit routes affected by I-81's demolition, new bike and pedestrian pathways, and Centro's Bus Rapid Transit system should adhere to the City's Vision Zero Complete Streets Toolkit. Marketing to attract new residents to the City of Syracuse should advertise the community's plethora of green space and natural resource amenities. **As Syracuse navigates the inflection point of the century, it is imperative that the municipality and community value sustainability as a method to design the distinct, equitable, economically prosperous, and climate resilient city of tomorrow.**

To implement the goals of the **Climate Action Plan** and designate sustainability as a value for decision making, in the Comprehensive Plan 2040, there are four core tools to reach achievement:

- ✓ **Collaboration**
- ✓ **Data Management**
- ✓ **Funding Acquisition**
- ✓ **Benchmarking**

Outlined in the following graphic are methods to use these tools, applicable to municipal and community operations, and the overarching timeline of goals delineated in the Climate Action Plan strategy chapters.

The next two pages outline what the municipality and community should do in the near term to take action toward the climate goals set in this Climate Action Plan.

Collaboration

- ✓ Sustainability Task Force
- ✓ Institutional Engagement with Educational and Medical Institutions
- ✓ Adherence to the Climate Education and Engagement Executive Memorandum
- ✓ Youth Empowerment

Data Management

- ✓ Building & Facility Maintenance and Energy Management System
- ✓ GHGI Tracking Dashboard
- ✓ ArcGIS Visualization of Climate Impacts

Funding Acquisition

- ✓ Engagement with NYS funding opportunities (NYSERDA, NYS DEC, NYPA, NYS DOS)
- ✓ Create Sustainability Programming Fund within Municipal Budget
- ✓ Attract External Investment
- ✓ Explore Carbon Markets

Benchmarking

- ✓ Climate Action Progress Dashboard
- ✓ Track Revenue
- ✓ Track Savings

Near Term Municipal Climate Action

Action taken by the City of Syracuse toward the goals outlined in this plan are aimed to lower the GHG emissions from City operations, save taxpayer dollars, and improve delivery of services to constituents.

Green Building. Over the next few years, the City should prioritize management of their energy use and organization of their building and facilities management portfolio. With this organization, the City will be prepared to strategically engage with opportunities to improve building efficiency and create renewable energy generation and storage.

Transportation. The City should focus on two aspects of transportation in the coming years. First, they should expand micro-mobility infrastructure and access to public transportation. Second, they should begin to expand municipal EV charging infrastructure for a light duty fleet transition. As the City expands charging infrastructure, they should right size their fleet prior to transition toward electric vehicles.

To adhere to the NYS 2035 LDV zero-emission only sales mandate, the City will explore methods to transition the light-duty fleet.

Source: DEC Announces Adoption of Advanced Clean Cars II Rule for New Passenger Cars and Light-Duty Truck Sales. (2022). Retrieved December 29, 2025, from <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/About/Newsroom/2022-Announcements/2022-12-29-DEC-Announces-Adoption-of-Advanced-Clean-Cars-II>.

Climate Adaptation. This City has a major role to play in the climate adaptation transition for the Syracuse Community. Stormwater management must be at the forefront of infrastructure project planning, to include sewer systems, green infrastructure, and tree canopy. The City should also promote opportunities to expand cooling access and architecture upgrades in the City's aging housing stock. Additionally, the City should coordinate with Onondaga County cooling centers to open recreation facilities for summer cooling hours, especially where youth congregate.

Natural Environment. Protection, management, and expansion of the natural environment is essential to achieve climate resiliency in the City of Syracuse. Over the next few years, the City should perform a Natural Resource Inventory and create a Natural Areas Management Plan. These tools will guide City Officials to make data informed decisions, during development, so that projects improve the natural and built ecosystem of the Syracuse Community.

To promote intergovernmental coordination, the City should incorporate Onondaga County's Hazard Mitigation Plan into the future planning.

Source: Onondaga County Department of Planning (2025). 2025 Onondaga County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Onondaga County, New York.: Department of Planning. Retrieved from <http://www.ongov.net/planning/2025OnondagaCountyMulti-JurisdictionalHazardMitigationPlan.html>.

RELATED GOALS FROM BUILDING A CLIMATE-READY SYRACUSE CHAPTER

