



Green Cincinnati Plan
2023

Executive Summary



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We grow together and act decisively
in the face of great challenges

Climate Change is the Crisis of our Lifetime

Rising temperatures, more extreme storms, more flooding, decreased air quality, more pests and disease, increased migration...

We are facing the crisis of our lifetime. In real time. Climate change is happening now. The impacts of climate change are impacting Cincinnati *now*...and things are projected to get worse unless we take action *now*. The reality of our situation requires an all-hands-on-deck approach.

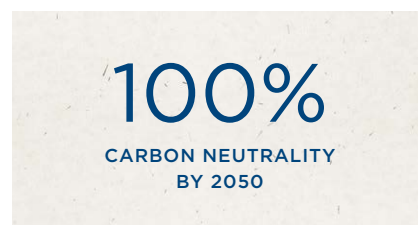
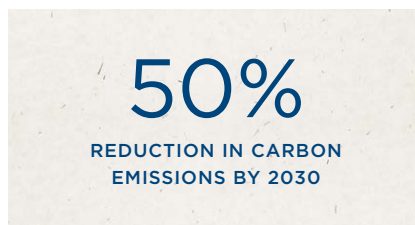
The 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan (GCP) is just such an approach, born out of one of the most extensive community engagement processes the City has ever undertaken. The GCP details how we will safeguard our natural resources, bolster our communities, and stitch together a social fabric that connects us to each other and the land we live on. The GCP delineates how we will rise to the challenge of climate change and how we will adapt in order to survive.

This is our chance to reinvent the future and save our home. There is a place for you in the action. We hope you will join us.

Local Impacts Pose Unique Threats

Cincinnati faces rising temperatures and more frequent and severe storms that will only intensify in the coming decades. The local impacts of climate change will have far-reaching health and safety consequences for residents.

Reducing carbon emissions is our best defense against climate change. In alignment with the latest science, Cincinnati is strengthening its climate targets. With the adoption of this plan, Cincinnati commits to a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and 100% carbon neutrality by 2050.



However, climate change is more than a carbon issue. It's an equity issue. Priority communities—those situated in areas with fewer trees, degraded infrastructure, and with less access to funds and political capital—have and will disproportionately suffer the effects of climate change. The GCP centered equity in its structure, design, and development to ensure that the Goals, Strategies, and Actions benefit and equip priority communities.

Commitment to Equity

The Green Cincinnati Plan is committed to equity—with an explicit focus on racial equity. We acknowledge Cincinnati's demographic makeup and our history of injustices. We believe that we will be better able to create an environment where all Cincinnatians can thrive by explicitly centering race in our efforts. The GCP will have an intentional focus on addressing the needs of the people and communities who experience elevated burdens from climate change and on an equitable distribution of benefits moving forward.

We commit to embedding racial equity throughout the engagement process, written product, and implementation of the Green Cincinnati Plan to ensure accountability and impact.

History and Overview of The Green Cincinnati Plan

The Green Cincinnati Plan has been the City's sustainability plan since 2008. Updated every five years (2013, 2018, and now 2023), the GCP has helped Cincinnati earn a reputation as an international leader in climate action. Since 2008, the actions outlined in the GCP have helped deliver a 36.6% reduction in the City's carbon emissions.

The 2023 GCP is organized into eight Focus Areas that articulate the City's Visions, Goals, Strategies, and Actions in response to the climate crisis:

- Buildings and Energy
- City Operations
- Community Activation
- Food
- Mobility
- Natural Environment
- Resilience & Climate Adaptation
- Zero Waste

These eight Focus Areas outline 40 high-impact strategies to reduce our carbon emissions 50% by 2030 and achieve 100% community-wide carbon neutrality by 2050. In addition, the Plan identifies 30 measurable goals to track our progress towards a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient Cincinnati. These strategies and goals arose as part of a community-wide, community-driven collaborative effort.

The three pillars of Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience serve as the foundation of the Green Cincinnati Plan. These pillars ensure that both the process of creating the GCP and the specific plans outlined in the GCP are grounded in carbon reduction, inclusive community building, and cross-cutting climate adaptation.

To help ensure that the Focus Areas fully embodied the Pillars, a trio of leaders oversaw each of the eight Focus Areas: a subject matter expert who chaired the group, an Equity Liaison who provided feedback and a clear community voice, and a facilitator from the City's Office of Environment & Sustainability.



Unprecedented Community Engagement Efforts

The 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan is the product of a robust and extensive community engagement process.

Guided by a diverse Steering Committee and Equity Committee composed of local business, faith, nonprofit and government leaders, the Focus Area teams led six months of in-person and virtual meetings and surveys, gathering over 3,000 ideas from community members. Engaging Cincinnatians, especially those who live in the most affected and under-resourced communities, ensures residents most impacted by climate change have a voice in creating the vision for a Green Cincinnati. Green Umbrella and Groundwork Ohio River Valley supported this community endeavor by facilitating operations, engagement, and inclusion efforts.

Over 1,600 residents participated in more than 40 public meetings and their input and ideas resulted in the Vision, Goals, Strategies, and Actions for each of the GCP Focus Areas.

GCP Conclusions: Actions and Themes

After comprehensive brainstorming, comparing ideas across Focus Areas, and ranking and prioritizing suggestions, the content for each Focus Area was arranged into four sections:

- **Vision:** articulates the long-term aim of the Focus Area
- **Goals:** represent the benchmarks against which progress toward the Vision will be tracked
- **Strategies:** explain how the City and its partners will move to achieve the Goals
- **Priority Actions:** describe specific steps that can be taken to enact the Strategies

Across the eight Focus Areas of the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan, several cross-cutting themes emerged:

- Creating jobs
- Prioritizing communities
- Emphasizing and building social cohesion
- Fostering public awareness and education
- Using the landmark federal funding opportunities

These themes cut across all eight Focus Areas as well as across the Pillars of Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience. They demonstrate how



the community's vital voice helped shape the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan and where the greatest common ground lies. Furthermore, the themes showcase the importance of integrating action at the grassroots level with communities in order to move the City forward toward a new future. With an influx of federal funds from the 2021 Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) and 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Cincinnati can implement the necessary actions to achieve the GCP's goals.



The flower motif, used throughout the plan, symbolizes the vision for Cincinnati and connects the Pillars and eight focus areas: Buildings & Energy, City Operations, Community Activation, Food, Mobility, Natural Environment, Resilience & Climate Adaptation, and Zero Waste.

Join Us: Be the Seeds of Change

The 2023 GCP sets forth an ambitious vision for Cincinnati—a call to action. The flower motif, used throughout the plan, symbolizes this vision and creates an overarching connection among the Pillars and Focus Areas. The flower, like this climate action plan, leads us to think of our natural connections, which are diverse, beautiful, cross-pollinating, delicate, rooted, and dependent on the ecosystem they are a part of.

To realize this vision, the City will lead by example, and partner with local “Champion” organizations to shape collective impact. Cincinnati is home to residents, businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations that are poised to bring this vision to life. We commit to bring Champions together, to elevate the needs of priority communities, and to track and share our collective progress along the way.

This is our chance to reinvent the future and save our home. There is a place for you in the action. We hope you join us. We need you. Be the seeds of change.