



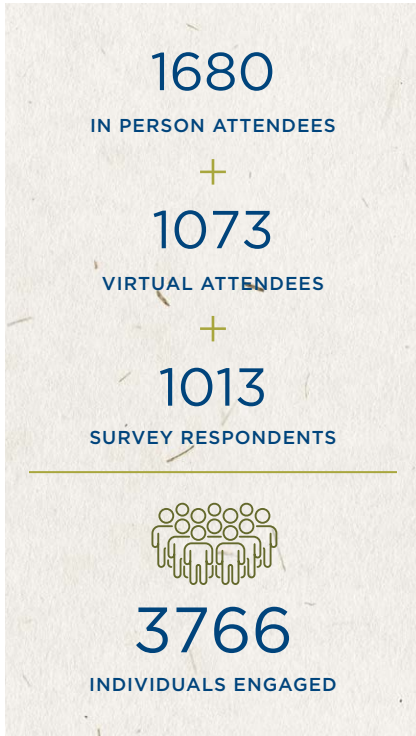
Green Cincinnati Plan
2023

How was the Green Cincinnati Plan Co-Created?



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Building a community vision through inclusive community engagement



A People-Centered Plan

People are at the center of this plan. Reinvention gives the opportunity to consider the “design-flaws” of the way things were done in the past. In designing a human-centered climate action plan, the community was challenged to define the core values on which the Plan is built.

Intentionally Inclusive Community Engagement

In many ways, process is as important as product. With the foundational Pillars of Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience in place, the Steering Committee co-designed a community engagement process to collect input from residents and partner organizations.

The process was launched with a kickoff event in May of 2022 at the Cincinnati Zoo. More than 300 residents attended to give shape to the plan, provide suggestions, and identify key community organizations who should be involved.

The effort was informed by an Equity Committee, charged with creating an The GCP Equity Framework to guide the process and eventually implementation.

Eight subcommittees focused on developing climate action plans in the following areas:

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



From June to December of 2022, each of the subcommittees held a series of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities. A trio of leaders oversaw each Focus Area Subcommittee: a subject matter expert who served as Focus Area chair, an Equity Liaison who ensured community voice, and a facilitator from the Office of Environment & Sustainability (OES) who provided structure and support. With the directive to engage and include the community at every step in the Plan’s formation, each Focus Area team held three public meetings throughout the summer and fall of 2022. In all, hundreds of residents participated in 40+ public meetings and contributed over 3,000 ideas for sustainable action, resulting in the Vision, Goals, Strategies, and Priority Actions in the Focus Area section of this Plan.



Equity Liaison Darryl Franklin presents at the Zero Waste Focus Area Meeting. Photo courtesy of City of Cincinnati.

Rooting In Equity

From the launch of the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan process, the City was intentional about using equity as a core design principle. The Steering Committee and Focus Area Subcommittee Chairs represented a diversity of perspectives reflective of Cincinnati’s demographics. To help weave equity throughout the plan, each subcommittee was supported with an Equity Liaison, a member of the Equity Committee. These individuals served as a member of the leadership “trio” of each Focus Area during the community engagement to create space for valuable—and too many times unheard—perspectives. In these two primary ways, people of diverse backgrounds were intentionally included and served as the leaders and decision-makers.

Resident Survey Provides for Virtual Engagement

Throughout the process, the Office of Environment and Sustainability and partners also provided virtual engagement options primarily via a survey of local community members. The survey asked residents about their perceptions around the impacts of climate change and what actions they would recommend. These ideas formed the themes considered in each Focus Area. Over 1,000 residents responded, representing 50 out of 52 of Cincinnati’s neighborhoods.

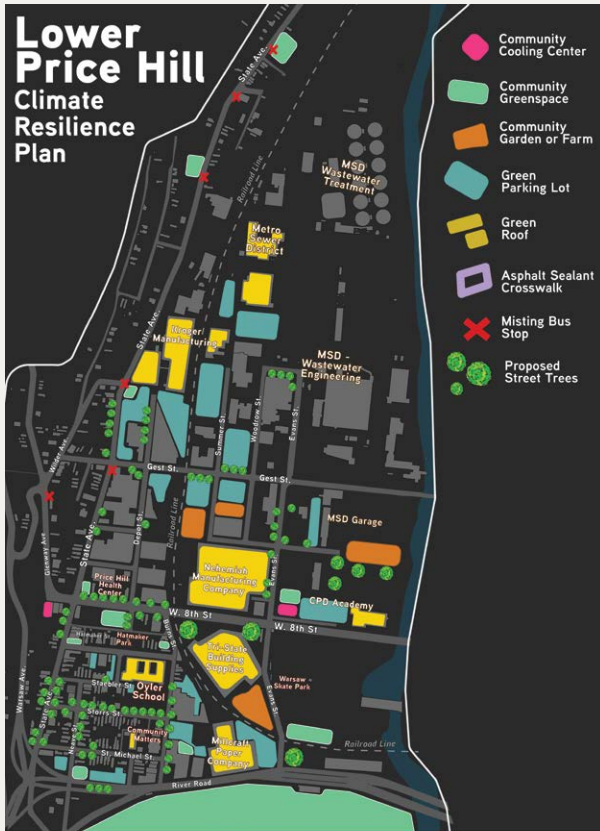


92%

OF CINCINNATIANS THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS ALREADY AFFECTING OUR CITY

77%

AGREE THAT IT IS NOT AFFECTING ALL RESIDENTS EQUALLY



Centering Priority Communities— Climate Safe Neighborhoods

Climate Safe Neighborhoods (CSN) is a national effort through Groundwork USA to identify neighborhoods that are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of racial and social injustices, spread awareness and educate residents in those neighborhoods, and ignite action towards climate resilience. The Climate Safe Neighborhoods partnership explores the relationship between historical race-based housing segregation and the current and predicted impacts of climate change. Effective community engagement is important for creating better policies and programs, addressing inequality, and building resilient communities.

Since 2021, Groundwork Ohio River Valley in partnership with Green Umbrella and the Office of Environment and Sustainability developed neighborhood Climate Advisory Groups to identify solutions to address extreme heat and flooding. Through intentional engagement with residents in priority communities, the effort honors community members as the subject matter experts in identifying local issues and co-creating community-based solutions. Residents are compensated for their work, and the goal is to develop neighborhood resilience maps, which serve as a platform for activating the residents’ vision and as a tool to advocate for resources. As of early 2023, 8 neighborhoods and 38 resident leaders have created Climate Resilience Plans (See Appendix). Many components of these plans are reflected in the GCP.



My focus was never on climate, but it was always about climate.

MARISHA DAVIS

Lower Price Hill resident,
Climate Advisory Group participant,
and now a Groundwork Neighborhood Liaison



Community members contribute to the Resilience map for South Cumminsville during the Climate Safe Community Series meeting. Photo courtesy of City of Cincinnati.

Additionally, the community engagement strategy took an explicitly accessible and placed-based approach with a focus on those communities experiencing the brunt of the impacts of climate change. All GCP community meetings were held in priority communities and at partners' facilities accessible by public transit. Surveys were made available in both virtual and paper formats as well as translated into Spanish.

The Climate Safe Community Series, an adaptation of the Climate Safe Neighborhoods effort, allowed Groundwork Ohio River Valley, Green Umbrella, and OES to pilot an approach for residents of neighborhoods experiencing disproportionate impacts of climate change firsthand to share their neighborhood-level expertise, craft a vision for their community, and provide recommendations for the 2023 GCP. Across 4 sessions during the summer of 2022, more than 225 residents representing 11 priority communities gathered to share their lived experiences. To make participation possible, childcare was provided, and residents were compensated for their time. Nearly 300 ideas were shared to improve the sustainability, equity, and resilience of these key neighborhoods. All ideas and suggestions were considered in developing the Goals, Strategies, and Actions of the Focus Areas.



Tying it all together

Co-creation of a community vision requires listening, collaboration, and compromise. With more than 3,000 citizen recommendations, the Focus Area subcommittees worked to synthesize the input from multiple channels.

Cross-Cutting Themes that Span the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan

To develop the Goals, Strategies, and Actions for the Focus Areas, the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan process incorporated feedback from many voices, backgrounds, and levels of expertise. During this process, a number of cross-cutting themes emerged as key community priorities:

- Creating Jobs
- Prioritizing Communities
- Emphasizing and Building Social Cohesion
- Fostering Public Awareness
- Leveraging Landmark Federal Funding

These themes span all eight Focus Areas as well as the three Pillars of Sustainability, Equity, and Resilience. They represent a desire and need expressed in multiple ways throughout the engagement process. They

demonstrate how the community's vital voice helped shape the 2023 GCP. 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.

Creating Jobs

Jobs that are self-sustaining provide dignity and an opportunity for wealth-building. Many priority communities lack access to such jobs and required training, forcing residents to travel far distances to work and school. This need for self-sustaining jobs arose as a theme in nearly all Focus Areas—more so than any other theme. The emerging technology and redevelopment needed to reduce the City's carbon footprint and enact the strategies in the GCP require the creation of new training pathways and jobs of varying skill levels. The training and job creation opportunities before us will be further explored in following sections.

Prioritizing Communities

Centering Equity in the GCP highlighted the need to prioritize change in the neighborhoods and communities which need it most—not necessarily those with the loudest voices or the most influence. All areas and aspects of the GCP must prioritize the communities that have been historically underrepresented and have endured a disproportionate amount of environmental injustice. While data is an imperative source that drives strategy, the lived experience of those most impacted must be considered as well.

Emphasizing and Building Social Cohesion

Social cohesion (tight-knit communities) is a critical tool for resilience and climate adaptation, and its importance came up again and again in the GCP development process. By emphasizing social cohesion, we ensure we are identifying solutions that match infrastructure and policy changes to the specific communities being served. Additionally, these solutions strengthen the relationships among members of a community and engage the community in each step of the decision-making process.



Justice40

Justice40 (J40) is dynamic, cross-department effort across the federal government to explicitly require equitable benefits be applied to programs related to climate change (e.g., clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transportation, affordable housing, workforce development, pollution remediation, clean water infrastructure, and more)—including federal funding. Justice40 aims to bring resources to communities most impacted by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards.

Fostering Public Awareness

The City cannot accomplish all the goals of the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan on its own. Instead, it must rely on the involvement and commitment of partner organizations and grass-roots efforts. Furthermore, the City needs the public's help. By understanding the GCP's overall significance and supporting investment in the appropriate strategies and actions, the public can provide the necessary momentum to propel Cincinnati forward.

Leveraging Funding Opportunities

Passed in 2022, the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) brought enormous funding opportunities to states and municipalities for job creation, infrastructure improvements, and technology development and adoption. The importance of leveraging these opportunities to accomplish the goals of the GCP spans all eight Focus Areas.

These cross-cutting themes that span the Focus Areas and the Pillars help to unify the actions and efforts of the City and community partners.

Thanks to intentional alignment of the GCP Action Plans with J40 priorities, The City of Cincinnati is primed to leverage the unprecedented federal funding opportunities through the implementation of the Green Cincinnati Plan. With the support and engagement of the broader community, the GCP lays out an actionable roadmap to advance climate action, resilience, equity, and job creation in our community. The overarching themes in the GCP align with the funding priorities of IIJA and IRA. The City of Cincinnati is exploring and pursuing funding opportunities to implement key GCP actions to improve energy efficiency, increase access to clean energy, promote active transportation, and build community resilience.

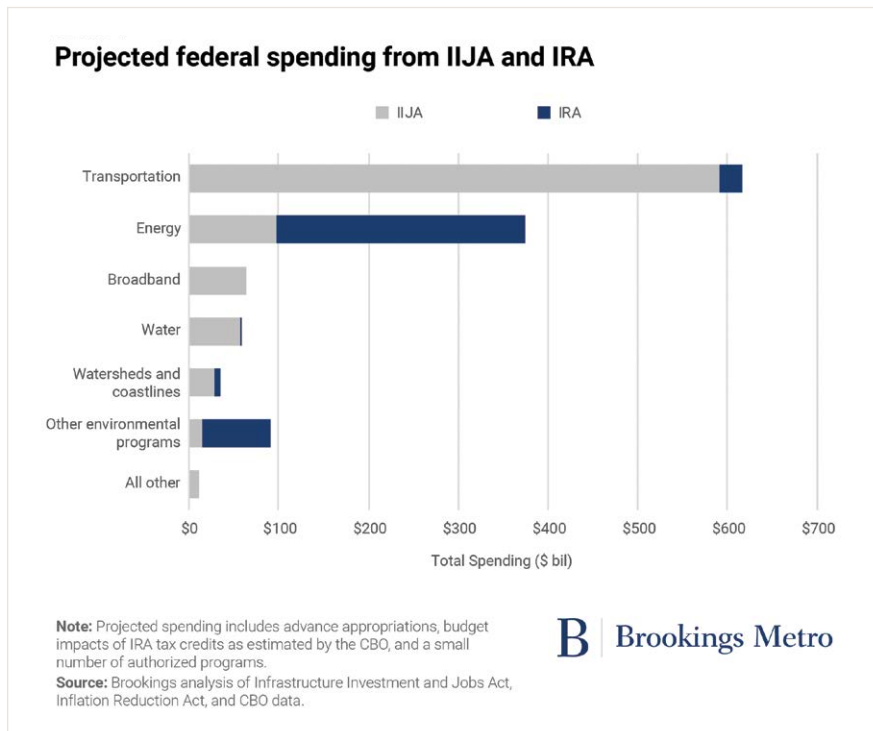
Federal Funding Opportunity Before Us

Substantial investment is required to implement the GCP in full. Luckily, we are in the midst of an unprecedented opportunity to fund sustainability projects. The federal government recently passed two key pieces of legislation, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), that created over \$1.6 trillion in funding opportunities.

Passed in November 2021, the IIJA, provides \$1.2 trillion to invest in critical infrastructure across the United States. From 2022-2026, IIJA will provide funding to implement and improve public transit, transportation infrastructure, EV charging, resilient infrastructure, environmental remediation, and power infrastructure. Building on a strong infrastructure foundation, the IRA, subsequently passed in 2022, invests \$369 billion in energy

security and climate programs. Over the next ten years, IRA will fund community investment in energy efficiency, electric vehicles, solar, and greenhouse-gas-emission-reduction programs.

IIJA and IRA are aligned with the Biden Administration’s priorities to create good-paying union jobs, tackle the climate crisis, and advance environmental justice and equity. To achieve these goals, President Biden also commissioned the Justice40 initiative (J40), a whole-of-government effort to ensure that federal agencies deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from federal investments to disadvantaged communities. J40-related criteria and tools are starting to influence most funding opportunities stemming from federal agencies and will continue to do so in coming years.



Source: Adie Tomer, Caroline George, and Joseph W. Kane. Brookings Metro: “The start of America’s infrastructure decade.”



Thank you
to all the community voices
who shaped this plan



1,680

PLANNING SESSION ATTENDEES



139

ORGANIZATIONS
REPRESENTED



42

PUBLIC MEETINGS



3000+

RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED