

# YPSILANTI CLIMATE ACTION PLAN | CASE STUDY

## Big Actions on a Small Budget

Ypsilanti is a small college town of around 20,500 residents who are diverse in their cultures, backgrounds, and experiences but are unified in their commitment to sustainability. For over a decade, the city has made progress toward improving the quality of life for residents, supporting climate resilience, and creating a culture that embraces progressive action toward decarbonization.

Despite a modest budget compared to neighboring cities, Ypsilanti has achieved many of the same milestones and implemented similar policies, gaining several major achievements.

- Recognition as a certified MEDC Redevelopment Ready Community
- Recognition as Gold Certified by Michigan Green Communities
- Designation as SolSmart Gold solar energy leader
- Specific plans focused on Climate Action, Sustainability, and Energy
- Ordinances related to sustainable development such as alternative energy, native plantings, stormwater runoff mitigation, and low impact design and,
- Maintaining a committed and passionate City Sustainability Commission.

Ypsilanti has become a model for other small communities; with 1/6<sup>th</sup> the population of Ann Arbor, Ypsi has proven that impactful climate action is not exclusive to more large, wealthy municipalities. The City has shown incredible resourcefulness, making use of partnerships and grant funding as a means to move earnestly and with a sense of urgency toward the actions that the community recognizes are necessary to create a resilient future.

### How did they do it?

In July 2012, the City of Ypsilanti developed its [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) in collaboration with Michigan Suburbs Alliance and WARM Training Center. This model process for small-city climate action planning was backed through a \$50,000 grant funding opportunity from the MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Objectives included:

- **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction:** Testing and modeling strategies.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging collective carbon footprint reduction.
- **Sector-specific Solutions:** Addressing issues in transportation, buildings, renewable energy, and government operations.

Resources developed by ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives – Local Governments Initiative) and proven practices by entities like Southeast Michigan Regional Energy Office were used to guide the planning process.

A community-driven approach ensured grassroots participation and engagement. Due to the lack of readily available resources to implement the actions identified in the CAP, it was imperative to foster a strong community connection to the plan, as many action items would need to be pursued and championed by grassroots efforts and partnerships with local organizations.

The City has since updated the CAP into a more holistic [Sustainability Plan](#) that was adopted in 2021.

## What RRC best practices were used?

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

#### Create a sustainability library



Ypsilanti District Library



[Ypsilanti District Library Sustainable Living](#)

#### RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

[Planning for a Resilient Community: Plan of Instruction \(POI\) and Instructor Manual \(fema.gov\)](#)

[Populations at Risk - Headwaters Economics](#)

[EPA EJ Screen](#)

### ACTIVE LIVING

#### Visibility for alternative transit



Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation



[Safer trails, new signage, and other improvements on the way for Ypsi-area parks and trails](#) |

Second Wave Media

#### RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR ACTIVE LIVING:

[WalkScore](#)

[County Health Rankings](#)

[EPA Walkability Index](#)

### PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE COMFORT

#### Development of bicycle and pedestrian network



MDOT, federal government



[Bike lanes, lane reductions planned for these major Ypsilanti roads](#) | M Live

#### RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE COMFORT:

[Traffic Crash Reporting System](#)

[Vision Zero Network](#)

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Identify funding sources to implement recommended tree planting program and continue policy support



Washtenaw County Conservation District



[Community Trees pilot program](#)

## RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:

[Climate Explorer](#)

[Adaptation Workbook](#)

## REDEVELOPMENT

### Prioritize infill development opportunities



Partnership for Sustainable Communities



[ReImagine Washtenaw Avenue](#) & <https://www.washtenawavenue.org/>

## RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR REDEVELOPMENT:

[The Street Network Sprawl Map](#)

[Regulating Land Use: An Introduction to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act](#) | Hirzel Law

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

### Monitor opportunities for solar funding, support the implementation of solar energy infrastructure, and publicize through Solar Ypsi

*Did you know the City of Ypsilanti updated its ordinances to support solar additions, has incorporated solar on several city-owned buildings, and received a SolSmart “Gold” designation?*



Solar Ypsi & SolSmart



<https://www.solarypsi.org/>, <https://solsmart.org/designee/ypsilanti>, [Solar Ypsi | Facebook](#)

### Upgrade streetlights to LED



Community funded through taxes



[Ypsilanti approves special streetlight assessment district](#) | M Live

## RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY:

[Zero Tool](#)

[MI Healthy Climate Plan](#)

## ENERGY AFFORDABILITY

### Educate on the availability of low and no cost business energy audit services & promote weatherization



Washtenaw County



[Washtenaw County Weatherization Program](#)

## RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR ENERGY AFFORDABILITY:

[LEAD Tool](#) | [Department of Energy](#)

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

### Increase recycling rates through competition



ZeroWaste.Org & Every Bottle Back initiative



[Ypsilanti Zero Waste Guide](#) & [Ypsilanti Township selected for investment through Every Bottle Back Initiative](#) | American Recycler News, Inc.

### RESOURCES & TOOLS FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT:

[EPA Waste Reduction Model](#)