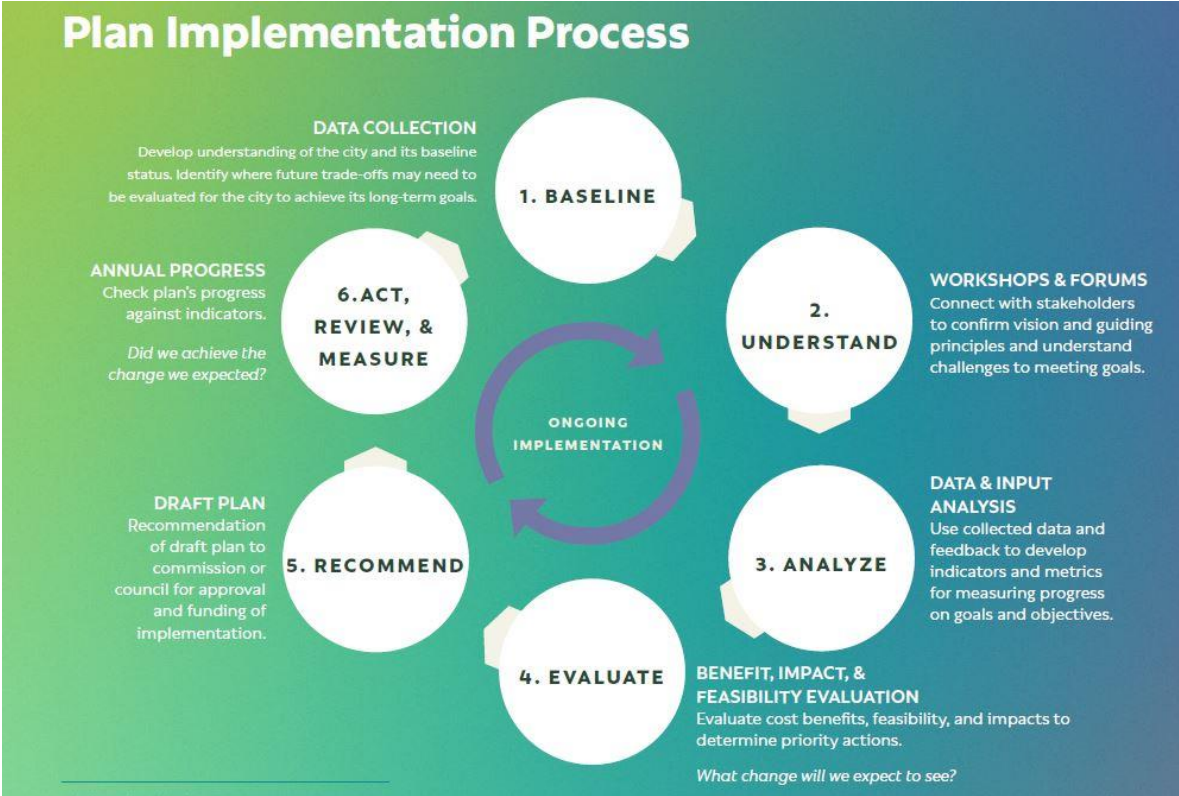


FERNDALE MASTER & CLIMATE ACTION PLAN | CASE STUDY

Taking resiliency to a new level, SmithGroup, in collaboration with the City of Ferndale, developed a community-based joint master plan and climate action plan to create a path towards a more socially, physically, and economically sustainable community.

In 2022, the City of Ferndale completed a comprehensive planning effort using the RRC Resiliency Toolkit as a guide. This inner-ring suburb of Detroit has an active and socially conscious public and regularly seeks to lead the way through their policies and implementation. Their previous master plan set the stage with an emphasis on equity and sustainability that Ferndale hoped to sharpen into a stronger resilience and inclusive framework. Prior to the planning process, Ferndale had already passed a climate action resolution, including a commitment to reach net-zero emissions by 2030; completed an affordable and inclusive housing action plan; and prioritized creating a culture of equity and justice for community members who are traditionally disenfranchised. They wanted to be sure their plans are based around this collective vision of comprehensive community resilience and partnered with SmithGroup to update their Master Plan and Parks and Recreation Plan as well as create a new Climate Action Plan. Ferndale officially joined ICLEI and the compact of Mayors for the Paris Agreement in 2021, and the three plans need to align in a tangible, sustainable way. By creating these plans concurrently, Ferndale was able to ensure their next steps were in strategic alignment around a common framework of guiding principles, goals, and outcomes. The momentum built throughout the process not only created resilient plans, but also resilient discourse that will help community members, elected officials, and city staff enact real change over the next 20 years.



“In Ferndale, we need to think globally and LEAD locally.”

– Plan Ferndale Community Respondent 2021

Updating three plans at once required dedicated coordination and communication to ensure alignment of values and strategies. The process was built around the five key resiliency steps from the MEDC Resilience Toolkit.

Step 1: Build Awareness and Capacity

First and foremost, this plan was created with a robust engagement process. The goal was to create safe spaces for honest conversations, provide a diversity of opportunities for involvement, and educate city officials and community members along the way to create a shared vision around resiliency among community members, elected officials, and government staff. Alongside the traditional surveys, workshops, pop-up stands and community office hours, the team utilized the following means of engagement to maximize input during a pandemic:

- [Educational one-pagers](#) were printed and posted online to share existing resources and gather feedback on potential interventions,
- Virtual [expert summits](#) allowed community members to learn from topic experts while sharing their lived experience,
- Social media polls allowed people to share opinions on topics such as zoning, community values, and park design by sharing scenarios and encouraging discourse.

Step 2. Assess Vulnerabilities

These engagement methods focused on a diverse set of topics which were important to Ferndale residents, such as preserving their neighborhood character or enhancing equitable community safety. A [self-assessment survey](#) was conducted early in the process by planning commission and steering committee members to help identify and prioritize the most impactful vulnerabilities facing Ferndale. This information was combined with an analysis of existing plans, community initiatives, and trends to determine what actions are most needed. Quantitative analysis from GIS mapping verified the locality of vulnerabilities, and the data was used to forecast the future performance of the City against its long-term goals. This allowed the City to complete a concrete “gap analysis” of where actions were needed against deepest vulnerabilities.

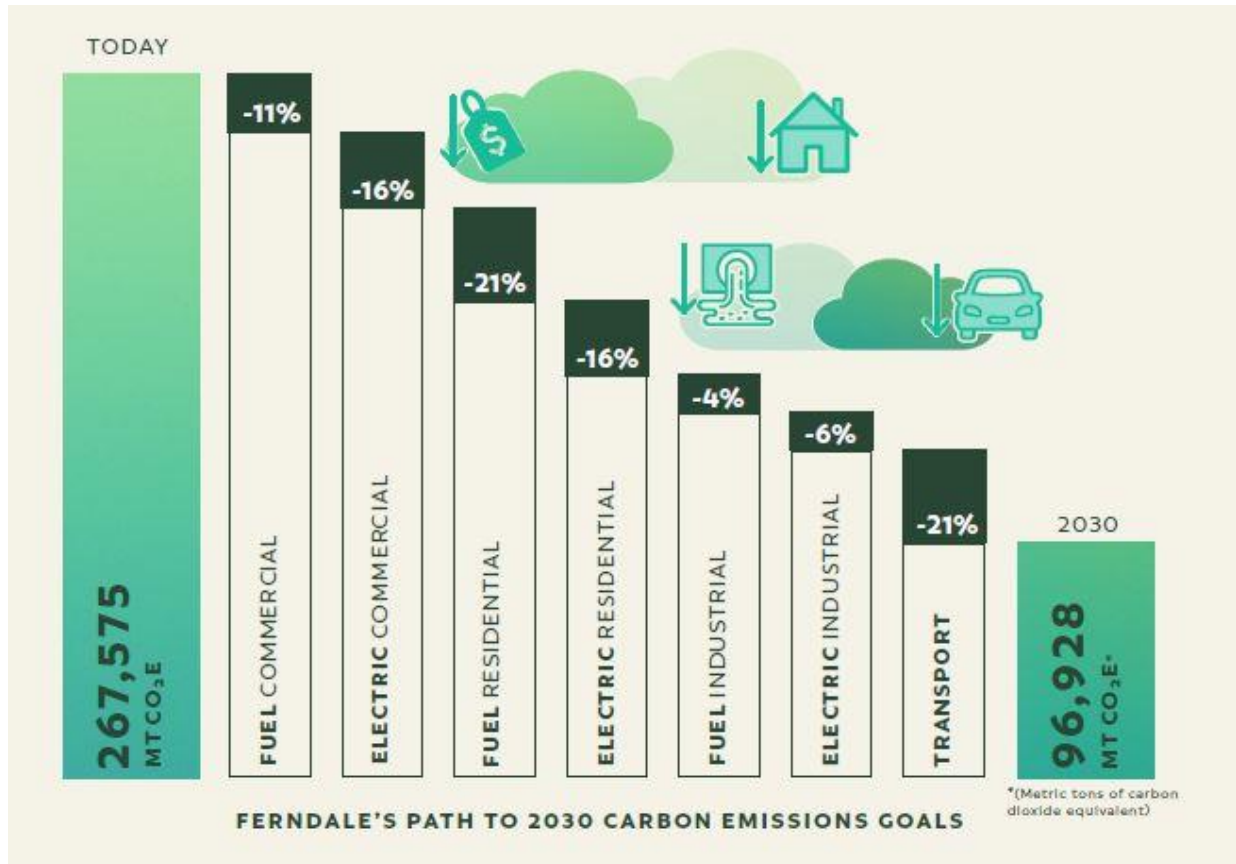
Step 3. Set Priorities

The results of the assessment were presented to verify which actions city council and community members found most important. Priorities were ranked considering factors such as staff capacity, partnership capacity, cost to residents, and community interest.



Step 4. Take Action

Each goal for Plan Ferndale included key strategies which were translated into an action plan, emphasizing the need for partnerships to achieve implementation. This action plan was intentionally broad-based, including short-term and long-term actions as well as zoning changes, redevelopment sites, staffing needs, and policy updates. One-page summaries were created for high priority initiatives so they could later be used for educational social media posts, council meeting packets, and more.



Step 5. Track Progress

The goals of Plan Ferndale included potential “outcomes” of the goals in relation to community development, decarbonization, and equity for both the public and city staff to see how they are performing. Outcomes ranged from impacts to the number of cost burdened households to changes in the city’s greenhouse gas emissions inventory. Creating a comprehensive set of indicators, or “outcomes” also let Ferndale tie into broader regional and national efforts. They utilize datasets generated by others, including the U.S. Census Bureau and city contractors addressing energy and waste. These outcomes are essential to help Ferndale both build resilient capacity and pivot as necessary in the future.

Learn more about how the MEDC supports the growth of vibrant, diverse and resilient communities across the state of Michigan at <https://www.miplace.org/>.