

CITY OF CHARLESTON

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024 PROGRESS REPORT

This report highlights implementation progress from May 2021 (plan adoption) to December 2024. The 5-year action plan has a goal to be fully implemented by 2026.



TRANSPORTATION

- 28 EV CHARGING PORTS WERE INSTALLED AND IN 4 CITY GARAGES.
- CITY AWARDED \$195K IN EECBG FUNDING FOR FLEET TRANSITION PLAN AND NEW EV PICKUP
- BCDCOG WON \$6.6M AWARD FOR CHARGING, FUELING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DOT GRANT.



CARBON SINKS

- POLLINATOR GARDEN GUIDE CREATED AND 'NO MOW MARCH' SIGNAGE FOR RESIDENTS
- CHARLESTON CLIMATE COALITION AWARDED \$40K TO SUPPORT CHARLESTON RAINPROOF REINVIGORATION AND FOCUS ON EASTSIDE AND ECOCORRIDOR.
- MULBERRY FOOD FOREST OPENED IN 2024



BUILDINGS

- SOUTHEAST GRANT AWARD TO ADOPT STRONGER BUILDING AND ENERGY CODES AND CREATE WORKFORCE TRAINING.
- SCOR AWARDED \$124.4M SOLAR FOR ALL GRANT TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY ON LOW INCOME HOUSING AND GOVERNMENT/NON PROFIT BUILDINGS.



WASTE

- CITY AWARDED \$15K DES GRANT TO SUPPORT COMPOST PROGRAM AND YOUTH CENTERED MARKETING MATERIALS.
- 228 TONS OF FOOD SCRAPS COMPOSTED, 20 DROP SITES, 2,991 HOUSEHOLDS COMPOSTING, AND 372 METRIC TONS OF CO₂E ELIMINATED*
- 5 TONS OF PUMPKINS COMPOSTED*



EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 10,700+ RESIDENTS REACHED AT 39 EVENTS*
- YOUTH FOCUSED PROGRAMMING IN 2024; COLLABORATION WITH LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS.
- 40+ LIBRARIANS TRAINED ON HOW TO HOST A COMPOST WORKSHOP AND USE OUR RESOURCES.
- 400+ RESIDENTS PARTICIPATED IN 3 PUMPKIN SMASH EVENTS.*

- 200 RESIDENTS AT DRIVE ELECTRIC CHARLESTON EVENT LEARNED ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES
- 20 COMPOST WORKSHOPS REACHED OVER 1,500 RESIDENTS, 1,000+ KITCHEN CADDIES GIVEN AWAY
- 12 MONTHLY COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS WITH HUNDREDS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS*
- 100+ VOLUNTEERS

* = 2024 DATA

CO₂E = CARBON DIOXIDE EQUIVALENT

VISION

To substantially reduce carbon pollution in an equitable way and improve the health and quality of life of Charlestonians now and in the future.

TABLE 1: BUILDINGS ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Increase energy efficiency and conservation			
B1	Support efforts to strengthen the energy code (2009) at the state level and advocate for state building policies that align with carbon neutrality by 2050 and other initiatives in the SC Energy Efficiency Roadmap	Ongoing	* GRANT FUNDED! Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance awarded part of \$90M DOE grant ' Technical Assistance for Adoption of Latest and Zero Building Codes Grant ' to adopt a more recent energy code and obtain more staff to support code compliance. (No cost share)
B2	Support state efforts and explore local equitable gap funding opportunities for energy efficiency in new construction and upgrades to existing construction	Underway	EPA ' Climate Pollution Reduction Grant ' statewide grant application for funding to support energy efficiency in new and existing buildings, with a focus on housing in disadvantaged communities was not selected for funding. Need to identify alternatives.
B3	Consider expanding incentives for sustainable construction and renewable energy via the zoning code, such as building certification programs like Charleston RISES	Underway	This action is being considered as part of the City's zoning code rewrite.
B4	Increase staff capacity and funding to conduct a Facilities Assessment Plan and continue improving energy efficiency of existing City buildings, and to ensure new City buildings lead by example by being energy efficient and pursuing industry best practices that align with carbon neutrality by 2050	Underway	New capital projects pursue energy efficient equipment. Hiring a Facilities Analyst and conducting an assessment are essential next steps.
B5	Create mechanical, electrical and plumbing standards that include energy efficiency for City facilities	Coming Soon	Pending staff capacity and future Facilities Assessment Plan.
B6	Consider creating stronger guidelines above minimum code for new City construction, include total cost of ownership standards and consideration of a tailored Charleston RISES certification	Ongoing	New City owned construction pursues LEED and Charleston RISES best practices.
B7	Assess feasibility of expanding staff capacity and training to strengthen enforcement of energy code compliance	Ongoing	* GRANT FUNDED! Included in the ' Technical Assistance for Adoption of Latest and Zero Building Codes Grant ' award.
B8	Consider developing or adopting alternative standards that expand allowable construction method options to include those which are inherently more energy efficient and sustainable, such as rammed earth, etc.	Underway	Staff in various departments are learning about alternative and sustainable construction materials and methods available. Root Down Collective presented at RSAC in 2024.

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED): BUILDINGS ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Promote and plan for renewable energy			
B9	Explore opportunities to restart the Green Business Challenge	Underway	Partnering with the Charleston Climate Coalition to support their launch of 'Lowcountry Thrives', a new program aiming to promote sustainable practices and provide resources for local businesses to be more eco-friendly.
B10	Support state efforts for the disclosure of utility data by property sellers	Underway	*GRANT FUNDED! Included in the recent DOE grant award ' Technical Assistance for Adoption of Latest and Zero Building Codes Grant '. (No cost share)
B11	Support renewable energy projects including community solar and other initiatives, such as those in the SC Energy Efficiency Roadmap	Underway	*GRANT FUNDED! SCOR awarded 125M from EPA ' Solar For All Grant ', to support community solar in disadvantaged communities and on City facilities. (No cost share)
B12	Create design guidelines for renewable energy standards in the historic district	Complete	The Board of Architectural Review adopted a policy statement for solar to provide direction and encourage the use of solar in the historic district.
B13	Investigate the feasibility of renewable energy and battery storage opportunities for City facilities and plan for future funding opportunities	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! A solar feasibility assessment for existing structures is included in the EPA ' Solar for All Grant ' scope. It is dependent upon the completion of a Facilities Assessment Plan that will inform proactive maintenance for City facilities, including a roof replacement schedule. (No cost share) 'Electric vehicle ready' infrastructure is now standard in new City construction. All new capital projects are including solar energy in their design, including a new fire station on Johns Island, the Hope Center, and the new Public Service and Safety Operations Center.

TABLE 2: TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Increase use of public transit systems			
T1	Require new large development projects located along existing or planned transit corridors to install bus stop shelters and transportation infrastructure like turnouts	Complete	This is now required in the zoning code as part of the Technical Review Committee's process and successful installations are visible all over the City, such as Morrison Yard.
STRATEGY: Increase employee commuter options			
T2	Explore opportunities with CARTA to create an employer transit program for part-time City staff riders, such as charging fees based on use	Coming Soon	Initial analysis determined to wait for the new Lowcountry Rapid Transit, as most staff are located north of the City.
T3	Review existing temporary City telecommuting policy and adopt permanent policy	Complete	90 metric tons of CO ₂ E were avoided thanks to remote work in 2022. Program could be expanded to reduce staff commute pollution even more and save taxpayer \$ on office space .
STRATEGY: Embrace electric and other low/no emission motors			
T4	Expand publicly-accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure, especially at ride share, mobility hubs, on-street peninsula access and City parking facilities	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! The BCDCOG's regional application for the DOT ' Charging, Fueling and Infrastructure Grant ' was awarded. Plus, 28 new EV stations were installed in 4 City garages.
T5	Create policy to require charging stations in new large commercial construction and consider EV ready requirements for smaller projects	Underway	Funding not approved under CPRG to subsidize commercial EV installation, however, the IRA includes tax credits for charging stations in disadvantaged communities. Also, the EV-ready code is ready to be added to the zoning update.
T6	Create a plan to transition the City fleet and other small engines to alternative fuel vehicles, include vehicle replacement standards and charging infrastructure	Underway	*GRANT FUNDED! The City was awarded \$195K through DOE's ' Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant ' to fund a Fleet Transition Plan and acquire our first EV pickup truck. City is eligible for \$15k in EV tax credits from our first two Nissan Leafs, which have been working great and well received.
T7	Consider options to phase in alternatives to gas powered small inefficient engines	Ongoing	The City successfully converted 90 fleet leaf blowers to electric, achieving the City's 100% transition goal and saving 356 metric tons of CO ₂ e annually. Staff now prioritize electric when buying all small engine equipment. An 'Electric Lawn Care Expo' was hosted in April 2022.
STRATEGY: Improve land use policy to reduce vehicle miles travelled			
T8	Concentrate development in compact, walkable centers that are well connected to public transit and offer a mix of uses, services and housing options	Ongoing	The City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning code already address this, and it remains a priority in the zoning code update.
T9	Right-size parking codes with maximums and explore opportunities to allow developers to pay into a parking in-lieu fund	Underway	This is being considered in the zoning code rewrite.

TABLE 2 (CONTINUED): TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Increase bicycle and pedestrian activity			
T10	Continue to work on the bike share program and provide micromobility services for all City employees	Ongoing	The City launched a new e-bike share program in 2022 which has expanded to over 75 hubs. Discussions continue on a potential discount and/or monthly membership for City employees and City residents.
T11	Improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities and infrastructure, such as intersection improvements, bicycle repair service stations and bicycle corridors identified in the People Pedal Plan	Underway	Two new staff positions were hired in 2023 to implement the People Pedal Plan. They include a Mobility Planner and a Transportation Project Manager to oversee construction contracts.
T12	Establish temporary and permanent car free areas such as rethinking curb spaces	Ongoing	2nd Sunday on King St remains successful, and last year saw the introduction of quarterly evening family-friendly street fests on King.
T13	Transition existing Complete Streets resolution into ordinance prioritizing pedestrians at key crossings	Coming Soon	Pending staff capacity. SCDOT adopted Complete Streets Policy in 2021 to include walking, biking and transit needs as part of their plans.
T14	Expand consistent wayfinding signage to increase safety and the user experience	Coming Soon	Pending staff capacity and resources, consider leveraging Lowline wayfinding resources.
STRATEGY: Reduce idling			
T15	Explore creative options to improve enforcement of the City's existing anti-idling policy	Coming Soon	Pending staff capacity. (This ordinance is currently enforced by the Livability Department.)
T16	Improve traffic signals on the peninsula by synchronizing 88 of the traffic signals to benefit all modes	Underway	Some funding has been allocated by BCDCOG to have the traffic signals retimed on the peninsula. This is in coordination with SCDOT's Road Safety Audit.
T17	Encourage virtual community meetings or those located along transit routes, as possible	Ongoing	New technology was installed in the Public Meeting Room in 2023 to allow for hybrid meetings. Many meetings offer a hybrid option.

TABLE 3: WASTE ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Reduce waste and consumption			
W1	Continue supporting the elimination of single-use plastics	Ongoing	City amended plastic code in 2023 to close the extra thick plastic bag loophole. Data shows much improvement!
W2	Perform a garbage can audit and use the data to evaluate and restructure the way garbage and trash are collected to incentivize recycling and composting	Underway	The extensive audit, commenced in 2022, is almost complete.
W3	Promote zero waste office practices for City staff to reduce, reuse and recycle and consider establishing sustainable procurement standards for City operations	Ongoing	City Green Team inspired more eco-friendly MEOC activations and created a reusable water bottle campaign to help reduce single use plastic water bottles.
W4	Strengthen partnerships to enhance edible food recovery and donation, such as Food Rescue US	Ongoing	A partnership with Fields to Families donates edible unsold produce at City farmers markets to people in need.
W5	Support the reuse, repair, recovery and refurbishment economy, including for construction waste	Ongoing	City started a yard sign recycling program in 2023 to reuse the metal H-frames for public meeting announcements and save taxpayer dollars. We are seeking partners to help support the repair, recovery and refurbishment sectors, please contact us.
STRATEGY: Increase recycling and composting			
W6	Explore ways to create more opportunities for community wide composting, such as drop centers	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! SCDES awarded the City \$15k from their 'Solid Waste Grant' to support the compost program. (No cost share) The residential program, now with 23 drop sites and 8 regional partners, has diverted over 436 tons of food scraps from landfills (31 full garbage trucks!) by 3,000+ households. 2 Farms, 2 targeted pumpkin drop sites and 3 Pumpkin Smashes diverted 5 tons of pumpkins.
W7	Explore opportunities to make composting more available in City buildings, at City sponsored events such as Farmers Markets, and private events held on City property	Ongoing	Two City departments and both City farmers markets piloted composting successfully in 2023.
W8	Continue to add recycling bins next to garbage cans in public places and label them with consistent signage	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! With a SCDES 'Solid Waste Grant' \$20k award, the City proactively replaced worn recycling can lids and signs to reduce contamination.
W9	Support the County's efforts to promote education for event and commercial recycling, and examine options to encourage businesses and events to recycle	Ongoing	A 'Sustainable Events Manual' was created in 2023 to guide event planners.
W10	Support mattress recycling	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! A mattress recycling program was successfully piloted in 2021 with SCDES 'Solid Waste Grant' \$15k funding. It remains on pause pending an able hauler.

TABLE 4: CARBON SINKS ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Protect and promote natural ecosystems			
C1	Collaborate with regional and state partners to increase preservation and restoration of saltwater ecosystems like our marshes and wetlands as these are key carbon sequestering assets	Ongoing	Marketing support for oyster shell recycling and marsh grass plantings is ongoing. Marsh restoration with NFWF grant project happening in Oldtown Creek.
C2	Continue with opportunities to acquire flood damaged properties and convert the land use to natural conditions that capture carbon and water	Ongoing	Over 46 properties have been acquired so far resulting in 8.7 acres of new green space. Staff have plans for more as capacity allows. 94 acres at Oakville were preserved in a conservation easement with support from partners.
C3	Examine land use policy to make room for existing marshes to migrate, such as adjusting zoning and developing more stringent marsh buffers	Underway	An analysis occurred as part of the Comprehensive Plan, the data is being used to inform the zoning code rewrite.
C4	Continue to expand Charleston Rainproof and Adopt a Drain programs as ways to protect water quality and health of blue carbon	Ongoing	*GRANT FUNDED! Rainproof was on hold in 2024 and will be renovated in 2025 with more support in disadvantaged communities coming from a \$40k Climate Mayor's grant the Charleston Climate Coalition will manage. The 2023 Rainproof Mini Grant Program resulted in 29 new rain gardens, for a total of 68 rain gardens since inception.
C5	Pilot the application of super sink plants in appropriate public spaces, such as non-invasive native bamboo, and adapt practices to be pollinator friendly	Underway	Adopt a Drain is a regional program with two partners: Charleston County and Isle of Palms. Both programs will benefit from increased staff capacity and funding.
			A Pollinator Guide was created in 2024 to inform residents on how to comply with the city landscape code while still supporting pollinators, and "No Mow March" will be piloted in 2025 with freshly designed signage.
			Charleston, a Bee City USA Affiliate, is considering a pilot for super sink plants, pending staff capacity, resources, or partner support. If interested, please contact us.

TABLE 4 (CONTINUED): CARBON SINKS ACTION PLAN

ID	ACTIONS	STATUS	PROGRESS
STRATEGY: Plant and protect tree canopy			
C6	Plant and prioritize tree plantings in areas that need it most, such as underserved communities with less overall canopy and communities with aging inventory	Underway	Tree canopy storymap analyzes and identifies underserved communities.
C7	Consider strengthening tree protection regulations in zoning per recommendations in the Trees to Offset Stormwater project report	Underway	City is hoping to apply for a subgrant from the USDA 'Urban & Community Forestry Grant' , being announced soon to support trees in disadvantaged communities. (No cost share)
C8	Encourage tree plantings on private property	Ongoing	Planning is complete and this is being considered as part of the zoning code rewrite.
C9	Continue the City's Street Tree Program planting trees in the ROW in partnership with residents	Ongoing	Collaborating with 'Charleston Trees' and Charleston Parks Conservancy to plant more trees on public and private property, resources are available on our website for property owners.
C10	Perform street tree inventory and use data to guide funding to maintain existing canopy and seek opportunities to grow canopy and diversify species	Underway	City and CPC collaborated to create Charleston's first Food Forest at Ardmore in West Ashley.
C11	Explore partnerships to create an urban forestry workforce training program with local school programs, such as Trident Tech horticulture program	Underway	The program continues but is still experiencing a lack of staff capacity to complete all requests and has a wait list.
			Street Tree Inventory is in process. City considering using that data to submit for a grant to support capacity, tree plantings and maintenance in disadvantaged communities.
			City is partnering and supporting 'Charleston Trees' and Charleston Parks Conservancy who are aiming to develop this program.
			City is planning to apply for subaward funding from USDA's 'Urban & Community Forestry Grant' .

WHAT YOU CAN DO, CHARLESTON

CREATING A MORE RESILIENT
AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

WAYS TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION AROUND YOUR HOME

You can make a difference by taking action in your home with small changes. Here are some suggestions of how you can help right now. The actions with the highest impact are marked .



SUSTAIN YOUR LIFESTYLE

- Consume foods which are grown locally and/ or are grown organically. Join a [farm share](#) and shop at [farmers' markets](#). Plant fruits and vegetables in your own garden or participate in a [community garden](#). Eat at restaurants that feature local and seasonal foods, including [seafood](#).



- Eat a plant rich diet. [Reduce your consumption of meat and dairy](#). Try "meatless Mondays". Avoid food waste.

- Buy [local products](#).

- Support [environmentally-conscious businesses](#).



- Follow the City's [Sustainable Event Guide](#) when hosting.

- Communicate with your elected officials regarding new and emerging solutions. Attend the City's [Resiliency and Sustainability Advisory Committee](#) public meetings.

PROTECT YOUR AIR, WATER AND CARBON SINKS



- Support Pollinators! Use the [Pollinator Garden Guide!](#)



- [Plant trees](#), especially where they'll provide shade for your house, and [native plants](#) for their resilience.

- Reduce pesticide and fertilizer use. [Purchase compost](#).

- Properly dispose of waste including pet waste.



- Participate in marsh restoration programs like [SC Oyster Restoration](#) and [From Seeds to Shoreline](#) (at school).

REDUCE YOUR WASTE

- Buy only items that are necessary and you will use. Focus on enduring purchases instead of disposable.

- Avoid single-serving packaging, especially plastic. Buy in bulk with reusable bags or jars.



- [Compost](#) your organic (food, yard) waste.

- Take your own reusable bags to the store.

- Donate unused clothes and electronics to charity.

- Opt-in for electronic catalogs and billing statements. [Try these 4 tips](#) to stop junk mail.

- Use extra paper as scrap paper and print double sided.

- Recycle. Find out [what can be recycled](#). View Charleston County's recycling [pick up schedule](#).

MAKE YOUR HOME MORE RESILIENT

- [Adopt a storm drain](#) to help maximize the amount of water that can flow into drains and protect water quality.
- Connect a [rain barrel](#) to your gutter system.
- [Rainproof](#) your home and install a rain garden, native plants, a green roof, or permeable pavement.
- Establish a household emergency plan and kit for storms, heat emergencies and other disasters.

LIGHTEN YOUR TRANSPORTATION FOOTPRINT

- Reduce single-destination and single-occupant trips.
- Walk, [ride a bike](#), use public transit, or carpool. Use tools like [Lowcountry Go](#), or [plan your CARTA route](#) online or in the easy [Transit app](#).
- Use the most efficient vehicle when feasible.
- Avoid idling your vehicle, such as in the carpool pick up.
- Ride in a more efficient or alternative fuel car, such as a hybrid or electric vehicle.

USE ENERGY EFFICIENTLY AND RENEWABLY

- Get a free energy assessment from [Dominion](#) or [Berkeley Electric](#). Or use the [SC Energy Saver Tool](#).
- Perform energy efficiency improvements, like insulation. Utilize free weatherization programs (if income qualified) such as [Energy Conservation Corps](#) and [Palmetto CAP](#).
- Consider installing solar on your home. Do an [initial assessment](#). Get the facts about [how solar works](#) and understand [consumer information](#).
- Use CFL and LED bulbs, they save energy and last longer.
- Unplug electronics and turn off lights. Use power strips.
- Adjust your thermostat to save while asleep or away from home. Install a programmable thermostat.
- Replace refrigerators and other appliances with those labeled ENERGY STAR®.
- Only run the dishwasher, dryer and washer when full.
- Wash clothes in cold water and hang out to dry.
- Take shorter showers. Install a low-flow showerhead.