



**CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY GROUP
REGULAR MEETING**

Thursday, January 8, 2026
6:00 PM

Highland Park City Hall, Pre-Session Conference Room
1707 St. Johns Avenue
Highland Park, Illinois

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Statutes of the State of Illinois and the Ordinances of the City of Highland Park, a Special Meeting of the Sustainability Advisory Group of the City of Highland Park is scheduled to be held at the hour of 6:00 PM on Thursday, January 8, 2026 at the City of Highland Park City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois, during which it is anticipated there will be a discussion of the following:

Individuals with questions or feedback about an agenda item can address the Advisory Group in the following ways:

1. **EMAILS FOR THE RECORD.** Email the Sustainability Advisory Group staff liaison, Sustainability Manager, Austin Knight at aknight@cityhpil.com. If you wish to have your comments read into the record, limit your communication to 200 words or less. Public comments received by 3:00 PM the day of the meeting will be read under Business from the Public. Public comments should contain the following information:
 - In the subject line, identify, "SAG Meeting – Read into the Record"
 - Name, Address, City Phone (optional)
 - Topic or agenda item number of interest
 - Organization or agency representing, if applicable
2. **EMAILS WITH UNLIMITED INFORMATION.** Individuals who do not wish to have their comments read into the record can email Sustainability Manager Austin Knight an unlimited number of words. Emails will be forwarded to the Sustainability Advisory Group if requested.
3. **TELEPHONE.** Individuals with no access to email may leave a message with Sustainability Manager Austin Knight at 847.926.1037 by 3:00PM day of meeting.
4. **LIVE COMMENTS.** Individuals are able to address the Commission/Advisory Group during the meeting. Questions/comments are limited to written testimony into the record or spoken comments, not both. Comments should be limited to three minutes or less.

MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order

I. Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

- November 13, 2025 Regular Meeting

III. Business from the Public

V. New Business

- (a) Introduction of New Members and Staff
- (b) Brief Overview of Sustainability Plan and Work Plan
- (c) Discussion: HP Environmental Award
- (d) Discussion: Formation of New Work Groups
- (e) Discussion: Sustainability Sunday Posts

VI. Other Business

- (a) City Staff Update
- (b) Chairman Update
- (c) Advisor Comments

VII. Adjournment

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY GROUP OF
THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

MEETING DATE: Thursday, November 13, 2025

MEETING LOCATION: Pre-Session Conference Room – Highland Park City Hall
1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

At 6:03 PM, Chair Futterman called the Sustainability Advisory Group (“SAG”) meeting to order and Sustainability Manager Knight called the roll.

Advisors Present: Chair Futterman, Foerster, Klee

Advisors Absent: Advisors Geelhoed, Fine, Hopkins

Staff Present: Assistant to the City Manager Erin Jason, Sustainability Manager Austin Knight

Also Present: Student Advisor Lucas Hoobler

MINUTES

(a) Approval of the October 20, 2025 Sustainability Advisory Group Special Meeting Minutes

Advisor Klee moved to approve the minutes. Advisor Foerster seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the motion passed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

Hannah Donart, Highland Park resident, voiced concerns regarding vehicle idling’s impact on health and the City’s ordinance compared to state law and nearby counties. She then talked about safer play spaces for kids by switching from plastic play spaces due to chemicals and heat islands to more sustainable options that are also more ADA friendly. She finished by mentioning previous work on Indoor air quality monitoring and how it’s something she wants to do in Highland Park.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Discussion: 2026 Work Plan Details

Chair Futterman asked Sustainability Manager (SM) Austin Knight to go over the documents provided, to which he proceeded to do. Chair Futterman asked each Advisor to share what they are interested in working on over the next year.

Advisor Foerster shared she was interested in Climate Coach and a communications plan, but wants to know the scope of the communications plan is as it relates to SAG and the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Assistant to the City Manager (ACM) Erin Jason explained the City’s pathways and sustainability plan as it relates to the CAP along with its relation to SAG. ACM Jason gave an overview of communications

expectations for City staff and SAG with Sustainability Sunday, tabling, and the Speaker Series being highlighted as examples for SAG. She gave examples of Spring Clean-Up and commercial composting as it relates to what SAG can help influence as priorities in 2026.

The discussion refocused around what SAG's messaging would be and what channels it would go through for the best use of Advisor's time. Advisor Foerster asked about the CAP and sustainability plan, specifically how they are related to each other along with timeframe. ACM Jason explained that the CAP is still in development with an aim to be presented to Council at the end of 2026 and be in line with the infrastructure plan at 5-10 years to meet the 6% per year greenhouse gas reduction (GHG) goal. The CAP provides more actionable items with measurable results that are/can be budgeted for right now compared to the sustainability plan.

Advisor Klee shared his interest in exploring ways residents can make personal contributions to reduce their carbon footprint especially if they have limitations or want to do more. He brought up the former vehicle sticker program or a voluntary charge on a water bill to go direct towards carbon capture, renewable energy credits (RECs), or similar GHG reduction mechanisms. Advisor Klee also discussed additional messaging opportunities within the water bill to promote programs such as Climate Coach or Speaker Series. Discussion ensued on possibility of a competition with neighboring communities to energize community involvement, if a water bill voluntary fee is possible, and other opportunities such as branded gear or vehicle window clings for sale. Advisors asked if offsets/RECs will be shown in the GHG inventory. SM Knight explained after the absolute emissions inventory is calculated, yes the inventory can be adjusted for any RECs purchased while still being compliant with international reporting standards.

Advisor Klee spoke about working more with the high schools and schools overall to promote sustainability culture. He brought up including more sustainability material in the welcome packets as a way to introduce these concepts; ACM Jason said they do have some content in current welcome packets staff will review in future with SAG to update.

Chair Futterman shared their interest in having a unified brand for all sustainability efforts in the City amongst government entities. A discussion between Advisors and staff ensued as to who would be involved in the creation of the logo and what it would mean. Chair Futterman stated an opt-out REC program would be more effective than current electric aggregation program. He stated a different provider other than MC2 would be preferable as their price isn't attracting many subscribers. He also mentioned that MC2's community solar was lagging with a long wait list and that the City should look into additional options.

Chair Futterman sited another priority for him is compost options for multi-family including looking at a community drop-off. In addition, he cited closing the loop by using the compost created from Highland Park organics wherever possible within City limits was of interest to him.

Advisors asked what SAG's role is and where are they useful, such as with community solar, where they do not have the authority to act on the City's behalf. ACM Jason then provided the example of composting in the next hauling contract where staff does research, provides it to SAG, and Advisors can then make their recommendation of what to include or not to Council. She then spotlighted how SAG discussed IL Energy Stretch Code and their recommendation had City Council pause on adoption wanting more information leading to staff pursuit of a grant for prep work to then bring back to SAG and Council to address these concerns.

Advisor Klee asked about the 2027 leaf blower gas ban for data and enforcement. ACM Jason reviewed the current progress of where the North Shore Consortium is and the City's level of enforcement along with what other neighboring cities are doing.

Student Advisor Lucas Hoobler talked about how the high school currently does a charity drive and how that could be done as a competition between the two high schools for an offset program/environmental charity. Advisors discussed ideas for possible actions to raise money. ACM Jason mentioned student groups have the opportunity to run a sustainability related service project for MLK Day of Service.

OTHER BUSINESS

a) City Staff Update

SM Knight stated the Environmental Award is available for nominations now through December 31st and to contact previous winners to help nominate if possible.

He then talked about the RFP for the IL Energy Stretch Code grant and the main aims to accomplish with it. He discussed how solar panel applications were down, but solar paired with storage were applications were up. SM Knight reported the City has made progress towards the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus EV Ready program's Silver recognition being only 3-4 actions away from achieving it.

In response to a request from Advisors, ACM Jason explained how budgets are set in general for advisory group functions and how that number listed is reflected in SAG events.

b) Chair Update

Chair Futterman reported Go Green Deerfield is having their kickoff for Green Drinks 7pm on Wednesday, November 19th at the Italian Kitchen where speakers will be talking about the Berkeley Prairie. He noted he will be the presenter at a future meeting of this group and will keep SAG informed.

c) Advisor Comments

Advisor Klee commented on the northern lights

ADJOURNMENT

Advisor Klee moved to adjourn Chairman Futterman seconded the motion. Voice vote, unanimous. Chair Futterman declared the meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Austin Knight, SM

FY2026 SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY GROUP ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Jurisdiction and Purpose:

The Sustainability Advisory Group (“SAG”) was established by Resolution R166-2018. The Sustainability Advisory Group is a recommending body to City Council and has the following duties and responsibilities:

- Provides advisory recommendations on matters related to the preservation, enhancement, management and protection of the City's environment and natural resources;
- Provides advisory recommendations pertaining to education, outreach, and communications regarding preservation and enhancement of the City's environment and natural resources;
- Provides advisory recommendations regarding proposed amendments and variations to environmental and natural resources-related policies, regulations, ordinances, and plans; and
- Provides advisory recommendations regarding implementation of and updates to the City’s Sustainability Plan.

FY2026 Members:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jay Futterman • Michael C. Klee • Stephanie Foerster | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Liaisons: Lucas Hoobler, Amelia Griffin • Council Liaison: Anthony Blumberg • Staff Liaison: Austin Knight |
|--|--|

The Sustainability Advisory Group meets the second Thursday of every other month at 6:00 PM or as posted, as set forth in the SAG’s annually adopted meeting schedule.

FY 2026 Objectives

1. Implement pathway(s) for achieving long term goals of the 2023-2027 Sustainability Plan:
 - a. Reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions by 45% by 2030
 - b. Reaching net zero carbon as community by 2035
2. Prioritize accomplishing goals laid out in the 2023-2027 Sustainability Plan; 2026 focus areas:
 - a. Communication
 - Community Education
 - Climate Coach
 - b. Energy
 - Greenhouse Gas Reduction
 - c. Natural Areas
 - Air, water, soil quality

Operating Expense Requests

	Amount
Programming & Events: Arbor Day, Shred Events, Solar Home Tour, Election Sign Recycling, Compost Kitchen Pails etc included in the Sustainability Fund Budget.	\$7,900
FY2026 TOTAL REQUEST:	\$7,900

Advisory Group FY2025 Chairman: Jay Futterman /ap Date: **10/27/2025**

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN UPDATE

The Strategy for 2023-2027

Mayor and City Council

Mayor Nancy R. Roterling
Councilmember Anthony E. Blumberg
Councilmember Jeff Hoobler
Councilmember Annette Lidawer
Councilmember Yumi Ross
Councilmember Kim Stone
Councilmember Andrés Tapia

City Manager

Ghida S. Neukirch

Department Directors

Ron Bannon – Public Works Director
Joel Fontane – Community Development Director
Erin K. Jason – Assistant City Manager
Lou Jogmen – Police Chief
Julie Logan – Finance Director
Joe Schrage – Fire Chief
Emily Taub – Assistant City Manager

Sustainability Consultant

Kelly Shelton – Quercus Consulting

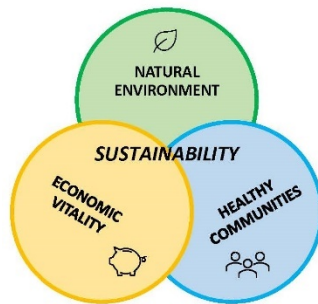
September 25, 2023



OVERVIEW

The City of Highland Park is a municipal leader in sustainability initiatives within the Chicago metropolitan region. To achieve its sustainability objectives, numerous stakeholders must work together to provide input, resources, and solutions. The City's 2023-2027 Sustainability Plan serves as a guide for the City of Highland Park to further advance our community's environmental leadership. This plan focuses primarily on the accomplishments and actions of City government. However, the residents and businesses of Highland Park play a vital role in making our entire city sustainable.

While there are many detailed components that lend to the success of this plan, this written document aims to highlight the overarching themes, successes, goals and strategies.



Environmental sustainability includes making sure that human activity does not deplete or degrade the planet's resources. As the City of Highland Park continues its mission to become even more environmentally sustainable, our decisions impact neighboring communities, and their decisions impact Highland Park's residents and environment. To that end, a collaborative approach is necessary because healthy living extends beyond city limits.

The Sustainability Plan identifies the City's major sustainability accomplishments while charting the path for future sustainability efforts, goals, and budgeting for the years of 2023 through 2027.

The Sustainability Plan is organized into the following eight areas of focus:

- **Communication:** The City promotes sustainability initiatives and programs for residents and commercial entities in effective and impactful ways.
- **Economic Development:** The City provides resources and support to community businesses to increase their environmental sustainability.
- **Energy:** The City works to reduce greenhouse gas reduction emissions by increasing energy efficiency, and the use of renewable sources of energy.
- **Leadership:** The City commits to sustainability programs and initiatives including the Greenest Region Compact, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, and other pledges.
- **Mobility:** The City strives to improve the bike and pedestrian network, encourage the use of public transportation, and increase the efficiency of the City fleet.
- **Natural Areas:** The City continues proactive stewardship of the natural environment by addressing critical natural areas in our community, including trees, ravines, bluffs and other habitats.
- **Waste Management:** The City leads efforts toward reducing total solid waste volumes and increasing participation in recycling and composting programs.
- **Water:** The City continues its leadership in protecting surface and groundwater sources and increasing water conservation.

This plan is a working document and is used in the day-to-day operations of the City. It is reviewed for progress regularly to ensure goals are being met and to seek solutions to challenges that hinder progress towards achieving specific goals. Please contact the City Manager's Office at 847.926.1000 with any questions about this Sustainability Plan or to discuss sustainability initiatives.



BACKGROUND

The City of Highland Park issued its first Sustainability Plan in 2010 and since then it has implemented many of the recommended projects and policies. It has also embedded sustainable practices and procedures within its departments. Sustainability is truly a routine feature of many of Highland Park's municipal operations.

In 2016, the City reviewed its unmet needs in the subjects touched by sustainability and developed a "short term strategic plan" to establish specific actions and targets for the years of 2017, 2018, and 2019.

For 2020, the plan was updated again by combining outstanding goals from previous plans and introducing new objectives from two independent resources:

- The Greenest Region Compact 2 (GRC2) – This is a valuable resource for municipal sustainability planning developed by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. It provides a comprehensive list of possible action items culled from over 150 sustainability plans.
- SolSmart - This is a non-profit program that provides recognition and no-cost technical assistance to help local governments reduce barriers to solar energy growth. SolSmart provides a comprehensive list of possible action items focused on enabling and encouraging adoption of solar power.

These sources were used to develop a long list of possible actions to advance sustainability in Highland Park. The version published in 2019, provided an updated assessment of the City's accomplishments and explored objectives for 2020-2022. The update reflected feedback from the City Council, City staff, the Sustainability Advisory Group, the Green Alliance, and residents.

This current version provides an update of the City's accomplishments and explores objectives to be implemented through 2027. This version also looks further ahead and incorporates long term plans through 2035.



SUSTAINABILITY PLAN UPDATE The Strategy for 2020-2022

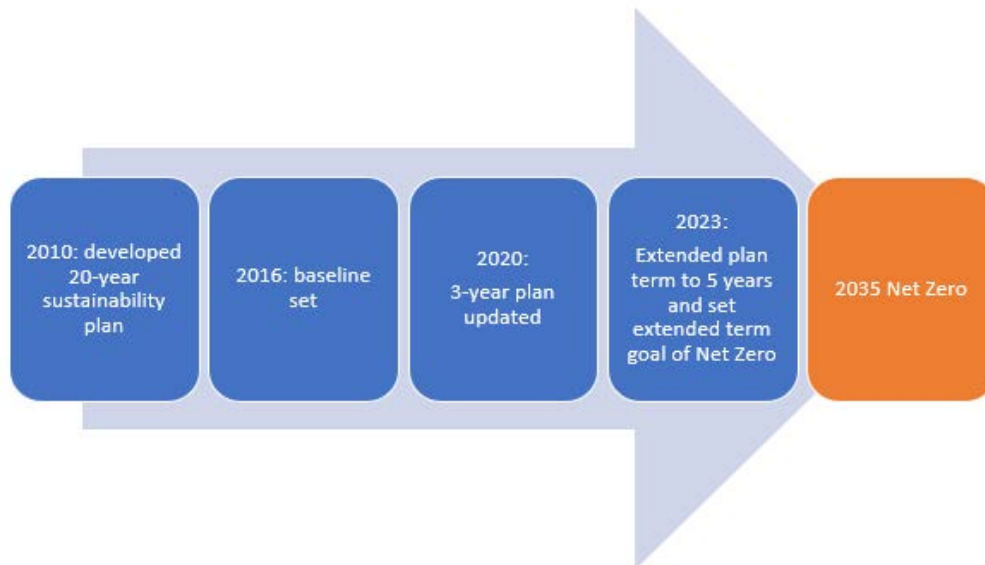
Funding sources for Sustainability Plan initiatives include the City's Sustainability Fund -- which includes funds from the City's refuse and recycling franchise fee, revenue from the Recycling Center, and funds from the Municipal Aggregation program. The City will also seek grants when possible to supplement other sources of funding.



EXTENDED TERM (2035) SUSTAINABILITY OUTLOOK

Statement: Highland Park will reduce greenhouse gas emissions¹ by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero carbon emissions² by 2035.

Establishing an outlook beyond 2027 will enable Highland Park to put in place plans to be net zero by 2035. The net zero carbon emissions goal applies not just to City government buildings and facilities, but to all of Highland Park.



To move toward net zero emissions, Highland Park will convene stakeholders at least annually to discuss successes and opportunities. Stakeholders will include the City, sister governments, the business community and residents. Goals will be reviewed annually to encourage continuous improvement.

A holistic approach will incorporate all opportunities to be more sustainable -- including energy, waste, water and more – and involve the residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

The net zero vision includes the following:

- Generating electricity without emissions by increasing renewable energy
- Using electricity to power vehicles and equipment
- Increasing the efficiency of energy and water use
- Reducing waste and increasing recycling and composting

¹ Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activities. Emissions reduction will involve reducing energy use, transportation and waste while increasing recycling and composting.

² Net zero carbon emissions is an ideal state where the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere is balanced by the amount removed. To achieve net zero, Highland Park will reduce emissions from energy, transportation and waste and increase recycling, composting, the use of renewables as well as additional initiatives such as electrification and increasing tree cover.

COMMUNICATION

The City Council has indicated a preference for informing residents and businesses about opportunities to advance sustainability. Highland Park first addresses sustainability by informing residents and businesses about opportunities to advance environmental priorities collaboratively. This elevates the act of communicating and public education about sustainability into a prominent role in this strategic plan. Much of the work is coordinated by the City Manager's Office, with other departments and committees providing subject matter expertise.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- In 2020 the City adopted bird-friendly construction standards that require the City and its general contractors, agents, representative and subcontractors to incorporate to the greatest extent practicable bird-safe building materials and design features into the design of newly-constructed buildings to be used primarily by the City.
- Annual in-person and virtual activities were held to celebrate Arbor Day.
- The City informed residents about recycling and composting through its communication channels.



2023 – 2027 Actions

- Reconvene the Green Alliance, a collaborative group of representatives from local governments and institutions such as the county, library, park district, school districts, township, hospital, and the business community.
- Promote sustainability with residents at festivals, lectures, workshops and other events, and expand food scrap composting participation at events hosted by Green Alliance organizations.
- Add more citywide sustainability actions to the searchable online map and continue promotion of the map for use by residents, businesses, and property owners.
- Compile year-end achievements on all tasks and measurable goals and draft annual citywide work plans in cooperation with the City's departments.
- Promote participation in the Solar Home tour combined with a showcase of electric vehicles.
- Develop targeted communication plan with a goal of reducing residential natural gas use.
- Incorporate sustainability issues into City communications on a regular basis.
- Continue to promote community solar, and opportunities for group purchasing discounts for solar and other renewable energy technologies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City of Highland Park has a robust business environment with nine business districts, and the City Manager's Office Business Development Division conducts regular outreach with the City's business community. The City's role in engaging the local business community merits a meaningful approach toward promoting sustainability initiatives that can be undertaken by businesses, and also to assist with attaining the sustainability goals identified as desirable by the business community.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- In 2022, Lake County launched the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy ("C-PACE") financing program for clean energy and sustainability projects on commercial facilities.

2023 – 2027 Actions

- Engage the Chamber in a discussion about its priorities and concerns of its member businesses. Specific to sustainability, the discussion will explore:
 - How the subject of sustainability can be used to promote local businesses.
 - How the City can recognize and support businesses that practice and promote sustainability, as well as local goods & services.
- Promote the environmental awards through its multiple communication platforms, including recognizing landscape contractors that utilize sustainable methods and low-emission equipment.
- Evaluate and establish criteria for an Environmental Business Recognition Program acknowledging businesses who have implemented environmentally friendly processes into their operations and incorporate innovation and continuous improvement.
- Evaluate establishing sustainability incentives for local businesses and multifamily residential properties to implement sustainability improvements to their properties.
- Continue *Highland Park Composts!* Program and outreach to continue growing food business participation in composting. Continue promoting those businesses that implement or continue composting.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the City's plastic bag recycling ordinance and consider alternative methods of reducing plastic bag use.
- Encourage battery-powered landscaping equipment.* Educate licensed landscapers about gas leaf blower restrictions, and implement gas leaf blower ban as of January 1, 2027.

**indicates action set forth in 2020-2022 plan that has not yet been fulfilled*



ENERGY

Energy management is a crucial component of any sustainability plan. The ultimate energy goals of the City are to increase the efficiency of its buildings and vehicle fleet, and to reduce reliance on fossil fuels by increasing the use of renewable sources of energy. Multiple departments have a role to play in reducing Highland Park's energy consumption. Energy management extends beyond the borders of the City and is a regional matter. As such, the City will focus its efforts towards achieving its energy goals locally as well as regionally through intergovernmental councils of government, with sister governments, and through partnerships with neighboring communities.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- In 2020, the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of 5% by 2025 was reached.
- A webinar was hosted by Highland Park and North Shore Gas in 2021 to discuss energy saving opportunities for restaurants.
- The City achieved SolSmart Silver designation in 2022.
- Highland Park residents participated in the Solar Homes Tour in 2022.
- Converted to LED streetlights and LED lighting for Fire Station #33, Police Department parking lot, Highland Park Library and Highland Park Senior Center (HPCC).



2023 – 2027 Actions

- Consider 100% green power for future residential aggregation contract.
- Participate in efforts by the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus to negotiate changes to the ComEd franchise agreement to enable the City to recoup costs of energy upgrades to City buildings.
- Promote energy efficiency programs offered by the utilities for the City, residents and businesses.
- Promote the Lake County Property Assessed Clean Energy ("PACE") financing program for energy efficiency projects on commercial facilities.
- Explore opportunities to install behind the meter solar panels at various City properties, including the water plant.
- Continue annual updates of the GHG emissions inventory and monitor progress toward the reduction goal.
- Consider stretch code adoption, when available.
- Review SolarApp to streamline solar permitting and review.
- Track solar installations in a format that complies with CDP reporting requirements.
- Work toward net zero for new City buildings; incorporate renewable energy and electric only into new construction, equipment replacements and renovation projects.
- Continue to maximize energy efficiency incentive programs offered by the utilities to the public sector, including custom programs.
- Continue lighting retrofits with LED fixtures.
- Monitor the Volkswagen Settlement Fund, managed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Inflation Reduction Act and other incentives for fleet funding opportunities.
- Review the Sustainable Fleet Policy and adjust as needed to embrace technological

advances. Consider vehicle disposal to address inefficient vehicles remaining in operation elsewhere.

- Continue adding hybrid and electric vehicles to the City fleet, including police patrol vehicles and for 2026 for the Fire Department.
- Consider requiring low- or zero-emission equipment in construction and maintenance contracts.
- Standardize vehicle data collection to measure impact of fleet efficiency upgrades.
- Identify opportunities for the installation of electric vehicle chargers in City parking lots and streets and continue installing conduit for future charging stations in City lots.
- Participate in the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus EV Ready program.

LEADERSHIP

The City has been recognized as a municipal and regional leader in sustainability achievements over the years, but continual improvement is needed to maintain our leadership role. Recognitions and awards highlight the City's accomplishments and enhance the City's reputation for leadership in sustainability.

Highland Park also has a strong history of collaborating with neighboring communities, such as on the creation of the GIS Consortium and the North Shore Electricity Aggregation Consortium. Specific to sustainability, the City's leadership on the electric vehicle charging station purchasing agreement was a great success. New opportunities are available every year and can result in cost savings while also achieving policy objectives.

Leadership and recognition efforts will be led by the City Manager's Office.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- Secured a Greenest Region Corps member until the program was paused. The intern supported citywide sustainability programming.
- Set a GHG reductions goal and achieved initial goal earlier than expected.

2023 – 2027 Actions

- Secure a GRC member to support citywide sustainability programming when program resumes operations.
- Add a full time sustainability staff member to the City.
- Research opportunities to apply for recognition programs such as Cities 100 and Walk Friendly Community. Staff will facilitate discussions with City commissions and the Green Alliance to determine whether or not to pursue applications and develop work plans accordingly.
- Explore opportunities for greater efficiency or impact by working in partnership with neighbors including, but not limited to, Deerfield, Highwood, Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, Wilmette, and Glencoe, and collaboration opportunities offered at the county level.
- Consider establishing a Sustainability Speaker Series with the Sustainability Advisory Group, and partner with other sister governments for such public education events.
- Complete the Global Covenant of Mayors requirements by developing full climate action and adaptation plans by the end of 2023.



MOBILITY

Highland Park is dedicated to providing safe and interconnected transportation network that encourages multimodal transportation including walking, cycling, mass transit, and zero-emission vehicles. The citywide bike and pedestrian network, privately-owned vehicles, and mass transit options enable mobility for all residents and visitors. Highland Park has a Bike/Walk Plan, MoveHP, which aims to make the city more accessible to those travelling on foot and by bike. Progress is monitored by the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG). TAG provides recommendations related to multi-modal, vehicular, and pedestrian and parking conditions including MoveHP and Complete Streets. Public Works is the lead department responsible for implementing its recommendations every year.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- Adopted the MoveHP plan in 2020. This is a 5-year update to the Bike-Walk HP 2030 plan.
- Partnered with Bike Walk HP and the Historic Preservation Commission to host community bike rides.

2023 – 2027 Actions

- Support and collaborate with TAG on MoveHP implementation, and additional initiatives to increase the use of non motorized modes of transportation
- Complete the Clavey Road Side Path (Green Bay to Route 41 Ramp), as recommended by the Bike/Walk plan.
- Construct multiple bike/walk improvement projects as part of the 10-year capital improvement plan, including Sheridan Road Sidewalk (Roger Williams Av to Cedar/Dean).
- Collaborate with Pace Transit Services to provide better access by improving bus routes in Highland Park, and to add electric busses to routes through Highland Park.
- Advance from Bronze to Silver in the Bike Friendly Communities program.



NATURAL AREAS

Highland Park is known for the proactive stewardship of its natural environment. The City has worked diligently to care for its trees, ravines, and other habitats through code protections and widespread public education efforts. Multiple departments and commissions have a role to play.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- Promoted permeable pavers and bioswales as public benefits in the design guidelines document.
- Expanded pollinator habitat along the McClory Trail.
- Planted trees citywide, expanding diversity of species.



2023 – 2027 Actions

- Add municipal and private pollinator gardens to the City's searchable map and the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge's database.
- Identify information source to increase awareness regarding invasive species such as buckthorn and other topics for public education. The resource will provide information including maintenance and environmentally safe removal.
- Continue to develop new habitats to support plant pollinators through the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge in partnership with the Park District.
- Promote the benefits of native and pollinator plants and raise awareness of invasive species through educational materials and other communication vehicles.
- Work to replace invasive phragmites grass within the Briergate area with pollinator and native habitat.
- Develop and enhance educational materials and programs for property owners and landscapers in the areas of Highland Park's ravines, bluffs, and shorelines.



WASTE MANAGEMENT

The challenges in the waste management field have increased since the last update of this plan. Online shopping has increased packaging waste and changes in the international market for recyclable materials has reduced opportunities for landfill diversion. Although Highland Park consistently achieves a citywide recycling rate near 30% (40% for residential) there is room to expand participation in recycling and composting services. The City Manager's office will lead the effort to reduce the City's volume of solid waste and to increase participation in recycling programs and composting.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- Renewed waste, recycling and composting commercial and residential hauling RFPs to continue encouraging the reduction of waste and maximize recycling and/or composting.

2023 – 2027 Actions

- Launch All In Communitywide curbside compost program for residential properties.
- Encourage composting at City and sister governments' special events.
- Demonstrate progress toward making City-sponsored events zero-waste.
- Focus on opportunities to promote reuse through special events and in conjunction with SWALCO.
- Encourage use of compost by contractors, evaluate the use of compost for use in City projects, and work to provide information about compost to residents.
- Collaborate with LRS and SWALCO to increase the City's recycling and composting rate by weight (percent of total waste) and by participation (percent of total accounts recycling/composting) for residential and commercial customers.
- Investigate options for leaf pick-up for City facilities.



WATER

Highland Park sits on the shore of Lake Michigan and operates a Water Treatment Plant that provides potable water to more than 60,000 customers within Highland Park and other area municipalities. Highland Park is dedicated to protecting its surface and groundwater sources with both the City Manager's Office and Public Works taking a leadership role.

2020 – 2022 Accomplishments

- Completed a code amendment to speed the review process for beach structure permits, required to protect the City's shoreline.
- Constructed parking lots and alleys with permeable paving.

2023 – 2027 Actions

- Expand enforcement of the City's phosphate ban and address the use of pesticides and salt. The City will comply with recommendations from the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission which is leading the effort to identify best practices on these issues.
- Investigate incentives as well as provide education to encourage residential rain gardens.
- Lead effort with Community Development, the City Manager's Office, and the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, to identify effective and appropriate measures to meet stormwater quality regulations.
- Collaborate with Lake County Stormwater Management Commission to develop and enhance educational materials and programs for property owners and landscapers in the areas of Highland Park's ravines, bluffs, and shorelines.
- Continue to use green infrastructure on City-owned property, including the Right of Way, into its storm sewer replacement projects, and to educate private landowners about the benefits of such projects on their own properties.
- Identify opportunities to encourage green infrastructure through the sewer permit requirements.
- Develop public education about reducing contaminants from stormwater runoff.
- Update the City's Source Water Protection Plan (Lake Michigan)
 - Illinois EPA requirement
- Reconstruction using permeable pavers at the following locations:
 - Second St. Parking Lot (north of 1853 Second St) – Michael's
 - Allee Lane
 - alley from Maple Lane to Vine Avenue
- Collaborate with Public Works to explore options to clarify the green stormwater management infrastructure and techniques allowed in the municipal code.



SUMMARY

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2020-2022

COMMUNICATION

In 2020 the City adopted bird-friendly construction standards that require the City and its general contractors, agents, representative and subcontractors to incorporate to the greatest extent practicable bird-safe building materials and design features into the design of newly-constructed buildings to be used primarily by the City.

Annual in-person and virtual activities were held to celebrate Arbor Day.

The City informed residents about recycling and composting through its communication channels.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2022, Lake County launched the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (“C-PACE”) financing program for clean energy and sustainability projects on commercial facilities.

ENERGY

In 2020, the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of 5% by 2025 was reached.

A webinar was hosted by Highland Park and North Shore Gas in 2021 to discuss energy saving opportunities for restaurants.

The City achieved SolSmart Silver designation in 2022.

Highland Park residents participated in the Solar Homes Tour in 2022.

Converted to LED streetlights and LED lighting for Fire Station #33, Police Department parking lot, Highland Park Library and Highland Park Senior Center (HPCC)

LEADERSHIP

Secured a Greenest Region Corps member until the program was paused. The intern supported citywide sustainability programming.

Set a GHG reductions goal and achieved initial goal earlier than expected.

MOBILITY

Adopted the MoveHP plan in 2020. This is a 5-year update to the Bike-Walk HP 2030 plan.

Partnered with Bike Walk HP and the Historic Preservation Commission to host community bike rides.

NATURAL AREAS

Promoted permeable pavers and bioswales as public benefits in the design guidelines document.

Expanded pollinator habitat along the McClory Trail.

Planted trees citywide, expanding diversity of species.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Renewed waste, recycling and composting commercial and residential hauling RFPs to continue encouraging the reduction of waste and maximize recycling and/or composting.

WATER

Completed a code amendment to speed the review process for beach structure permits, required to protect the City’s shoreline.

Constructed parking lots and alleys with permeable paving.



ACTIONS FOR 2023-2027

COMMUNICATION

Reconvene the Green Alliance, a collaborative group of representatives from local governments and institutions such as the county, library, park district, school districts, township, hospital, and the business community.
Promote sustainability with residents at festivals, lectures, workshops and other events, and expand food scrap composting participation at events hosted by Green Alliance organizations.
Add more citywide sustainability actions to the searchable online map and continue promotion of the map for use by residents, businesses, and property owners.
Compile year-end achievements on all tasks and measurable goals and draft annual citywide work plans in cooperation with the City's departments.
Promote participation in the Solar Home tour combined with a showcase of electric vehicles.
Develop targeted communication plan with a goal of reducing residential natural gas use.
Incorporate sustainability issues into City communications on a regular basis.
Continue to promote community solar, and opportunities for group purchasing discounts for solar and other renewable energy technologies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Engage the Chamber in a discussion about its priorities and concerns of its member businesses. Specific to sustainability, the discussion will explore how the subject of sustainability can be used to promote local businesses and how the City can recognize and support businesses that practice and promote sustainability, as well as local goods & services.
Promote the environmental awards through its multiple communication platforms, including recognizing landscape contractors that utilize sustainable methods and low-emission equipment.
Evaluate and establish criteria for an Environmental Business Recognition Program acknowledging businesses who have implemented environmentally friendly processes into their operations and incorporate innovation and continuous improvement.
Evaluate establishing sustainability incentives for local businesses and multifamily residential properties to implement sustainability improvements to their properties.
Continue <i>Highland Park Composts!</i> Program and outreach to continue growing food business participation in composting. Continue promoting those businesses that implement or continue composting.
Evaluate the effectiveness of the City's plastic bag recycling ordinance and consider alternative methods of reducing plastic bag use.
Encourage battery-powered landscaping equipment. Educate licensed landscapers about gas leaf blower restrictions, and implement gas leaf blower ban as of January 1, 2027.



ACTIONS FOR 2023-2027 (continued)

ENERGY

Consider 100% green power for future residential aggregation contract.
Participate in efforts by the Metropolitan Mayor’s Caucus to negotiate changes to the ComEd franchise agreement to enable the City to recoup costs of energy upgrades to City buildings.
Promote energy efficiency programs offered by the utilities for the City, residents and businesses.
Promote the Lake County Property Assessed Clean Energy (“PACE”) financing program for energy efficiency projects on commercial facilities.
Explore opportunities to install behind the meter solar panels at various City properties, including the water plant.
Continue annual updates of the GHG emissions inventory and monitor progress toward the reduction goal.
Consider stretch code adoption, when available.
Review SolarApp to streamline solar permitting and review.
Track solar installations in a format that complies with CDP reporting requirements.
Work toward net zero for new City buildings; incorporate renewable energy and electric only into new construction, equipment replacements and renovation projects.
Continue to maximize energy efficiency incentive programs offered by the utilities to the public sector, including custom programs.
Continue lighting retrofits with LED fixtures.
Monitor the Volkswagen Settlement Fund, managed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Inflation Reduction Act and other incentives for fleet funding opportunities.
Review the Sustainable Fleet Policy and adjust as needed to embrace technological advances. Consider vehicle disposal to address inefficient vehicles remaining in operation elsewhere.
Continue adding hybrid and electric vehicles to the City fleet, including police patrol vehicles and for 2026 for the Fire Department.
Consider requiring low- or zero-emission equipment in construction and maintenance contracts.
Standardize vehicle data collection to measure impact of fleet efficiency upgrades.
Identify opportunities for the installation of electric vehicle chargers in City parking lots and streets, and continue installing conduit for future charging stations in City lots.
Participate in the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus EV Ready program.

ACTIONS FOR 2023-2027 (continued)

LEADERSHIP

Secure a GRC member to support citywide sustainability programming when program resumes operations.
Add a full time sustainability staff member to the City.
Research opportunities to apply for recognition programs such as Cities 100 and Walk Friendly Community. Staff will facilitate discussions with City commissions and the Green Alliance to determine whether or not to pursue applications and develop work plans accordingly.
Explore opportunities for greater efficiency or impact by working in partnership with neighbors including, but not limited to, Deerfield, Highwood, Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, Wilmette, and Glencoe, and collaboration opportunities offered at the county level.
Consider establishing a Sustainability Speaker Series with the Sustainability Advisory Group, and partner with other sister governments for such public education events.
Complete the Global Covenant of Mayors requirements by developing full climate action and adaptation plans by the end of 2023.

MOBILITY

Support and collaborate with TAG on MoveHP implementation, and additional initiatives to increase the use of non motorized modes of transportation.
Complete the Clavey Road Side Path (Green Bay to Route 41 Ramp), as recommended by the Bike/Walk plan.
Construct multiple bike/walk improvement projects as part of the 10-year capital improvement plan, including Sheridan Road Sidewalk (Roger Williams Av to Cedar/Dean).
Collaborate with Pace Transit Services to provide better access by improving bus routes in Highland Park, and to add electric busses to routes through Highland Park.
Advance from Bronze to Silver in the Bike Friendly Communities program.

NATURAL AREAS

Add municipal and private pollinator gardens to the City’s searchable map and the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge’s database.
Identify information source to increase awareness regarding invasive species such as buckthorn and other topics for public education. The resource will provide information including maintenance and environmentally safe removal.
Continue to develop new habitats to support plant pollinators through the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge in partnership with the Park District.
Promote the benefits of native and pollinator plants and raise awareness of invasive species through educational materials and other communication vehicles.
Work to replace invasive phragmites grass within the Briergate area with pollinator and native habitat.
Develop and enhance educational materials and programs for property owners and landscapers in the areas of Highland Park’s ravines, bluffs, and shorelines.



ACTIONS FOR 2023-2027 (continued)

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Launch All-In Communitywide curbside compost program for residential properties.
Encourage composting at sister governments' special events.
Demonstrate progress toward making City-sponsored events zero-waste.
Focus on opportunities to promote reuse through special events and in conjunction with SWALCO.
Encourage use of compost by contractors, evaluate the use of compost for use in City projects, and work to provide information about compost to residents.
Collaborate with LRS and SWALCO to increase the City's recycling and composting rate by weight (percent of total waste) and by participation (percent of total accounts recycling/composting) for residential and commercial customers.
Investigate options for leaf pick-up for City facilities.

WATER

Expand enforcement of the City's phosphate ban and address the use of pesticides and salt. The City will comply with recommendations from the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission which is leading the effort to identify best practices on these issues.
Investigate incentives as well as provide education to encourage residential rain gardens.
Lead effort with Community Development, the City Manager's Office, and the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, to identify effective and appropriate measures to meet stormwater quality regulations.
Collaborate with Lake County Stormwater Management Commission to develop and enhance educational materials and programs for property owners and landscapers in the areas of Highland Park's ravines, bluffs, and shorelines.
Continue to use green infrastructure on City-owned property, including the Right of Way, into its storm sewer replacement projects, and to educate private landowners about the benefits of such projects on their own properties.
Identify opportunities to encourage green infrastructure through the sewer permit requirements.
Develop public education about reducing contaminants from stormwater runoff.
Update the City's Source Water Protection Plan (Lake Michigan - Illinois EPA requirement)
Reconstruction using permeable pavers at the following locations: Second St. Parking Lot (north of 1853 Second St) – Michael's, Allee Lane and the alley from Maple Lane to Vine Avenue.
Collaborate with Public Works to explore options to clarify the green stormwater management infrastructure and techniques allowed in the municipal code.

CLOSING

The City of Highland Park is committed to environmental leadership and sustainability. With focused plans in the areas of Communication, Economic Development, Energy, Leadership, Mobility, Natural Areas, Waste Management and Water, the City aims to become net zero by 2035. This goal will only be met with a comprehensive, inclusive process. All stakeholders (City government, residents, and businesses) must be committed to the goal. Data and reporting will be necessary to track progress toward the goal. Collaboration and partnerships will be key drivers to success.

The City thanks the Sustainability Advisory Group (SAG) for leading the effort of developing this plan. Members of the SAG include:

Kelly Nichols, Chair
Jay Futterman, Vice Chair
Julie Campbell
Megan Geelhoed
Michelle Kramer
Daniel M. LaCosse
Tatiana H. Papakos
William White, Student Representative
Kim Stone, Council Liaison

