La Crosse County
Climate Action Plan - Summary

LA CROSSE COUNTY
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Contents

I. Introduction

This document is a summary of La Crosse County's 2-Part Climate Action Plan. Recent public support and actions of the County Board were the impetus for creating the Climate Action Plan. For over a decade La Crosse County has acknowledged the need for a proactive approach to address climate change by lessening local impacts on the natural environment. This plan supports the public feedback and Board actions that identify sustainability and climate action as key objectives:

- La Crosse County Resolution #21-8/20 to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050
- Envision 2050 La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan public engagement. Sustainability was identified as a core value of residents.
- Two priorities identified in the 2024 County Board 5-Year Strategic Plan: 1) carbon neutrality and 2) environmental stewardship.

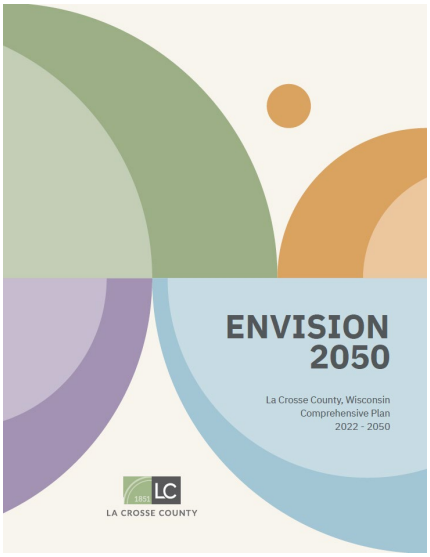

Figure 1. Envision 2050 - La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan Cover.

Sustainability is the practice of managing consumption of natural resources to avoid destabilization of the planet's ecological balance, while meeting present needs without compromising humanity's ability to meet future needs. There's a limited supply of many resources, such as land, water, fertile soil, minerals, and hydrocarbons that La Crosse County relies upon to maintain adequate services for residents and their quality of life. Negligent consumption of these natural resources affects the global ecological balance and proliferates the negative impacts of climate change. Simply put, sustainability can be achieved through environmental stewardship and waste reduction.

Sustainability is related to global climate change, as destruction of natural environments and waste resulting from human consumption are factors contributing to climate change. We are experiencing, and generations of humans will continue to experience, the long-term consequences of past and present behaviors. If "climate action" isn't taken, climate change will increase barriers to improving the sustainability of human behaviors. As human population and consumption increases, and living systems such as forests, waters, wildlife, and soils deteriorate, the margins of positive impacts resulting from climate action will decrease. Acting unsustainably will exacerbate the impacts of climate change in La Crosse County. The Climate Action Plan will assist La Crosse County government and residents with protecting the local environment, while also mitigating, and adapting to, the effects of climate change.

II. Plan Structure

The La Crosse County Climate Action Plan is a 2-part plan to improve local sustainability and reduce human induced impacts to the environment. Each part has a different scope:

- **Part 1: County Government Operations Plan** - A guide for La Crosse County government to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from its operations to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, in accordance with Board Strategic Plan goals and County Board Resolution #21-8/20.
- **Part 2: Community Sustainability Plan** - A guide to further improve sustainability in unincorporated La Crosse County, in accordance with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and public engagement. Sustainability is achieved by

partnering with residents to protect the local environment, reduce waste, support public health, improve climate resilience, leverage economic opportunities, and prepare for anticipated changes resulting from climate change and technological advancements related to energy and transportation.

A. Part 1 – County Government Operations Plan Scope

Part 1 identifies actions La Crosse County can take to achieve cost savings and carbon neutral operations by 2050.

Part 1 recommends actions La Crosse County should take to reduce emissions from its buildings, vehicle fleets, administrative operations, and provision of services to residents between 2025 and 2050. The intended audience of CAP Part 1 is primarily the County leadership, staff, and elected officials charged with implementation of the plan.

GHGs are gases that absorb infrared radiation in the atmosphere and impact climate. These gases are often produced from combustion of fuels and other organic matter. Reducing GHGs, which include carbon emissions, will likely lead to several organizational efficiencies and cost savings related to vehicle fleet and building energy usage. By adapting some of its own behaviors, the County can do its part to alleviate its impacts on global climate.

Broadly, to achieve the County's established goal of carbon neutral operations by 2050, its government operations must:

1. Collect and analyze data about the County's resource consumption, specifically energy use and emissions data.
2. Reduce emissions from buildings and energy use by transitioning to renewable energies, upgrading heating and cooling infrastructure, and weatherizing buildings.
3. Reduce emissions from fleet vehicles and commuting employees by making data-driven vehicle use and procurement decisions, upgrading fleets to hybrids and EVs, and removing barriers to alternative modes of transportation.
4. Divert waste from the landfill and capture as many emissions from the landfill as possible.
5. Increase "carbon sinks" and greenspaces which absorb and offset emissions that cannot be eliminated by other actions.

A Staff Advisory Team (SAT) was established to guide and review Part 1. This group is comprised of the leadership of several County departments and County vehicle fleet managers, including Highway, Facilities, Land Conservation, Sheriff, and Zoning & Planning staff. To represent the intent of Part 1, the following Purpose Statement was drafted by the Staff Advisory Team:

La Crosse County recognizes its responsibility to operate in accordance with the principles of sustainability to better serve residents and support long-term local health and prosperity. We will work toward effective, efficient, sustainable government operations that meet present needs while minimizing waste and negative impacts on the environment and future generations. We will prepare for, and adapt to, changing global conditions to improve our ability to endure potential challenges related to climate and resource availability. The culmination of climate action efforts will result in the achievement of carbon neutral County operations by 2050.

B. Part 2 – Community Sustainability Plan Scope

Part 2 is a guide to support local collaboration and improved sustainability, primarily in unincorporated towns in the county.

Local sustainability can be improved through actions that balance the needs of residents, private employers, and the environment to mitigate negative impacts they may have on each other. These actions will help rural residents lower their energy bills, protecting farmlands and natural environments, and improve their climate resilience.

There's been an historic amount of federal funds available for sustainability projects in recent years. With support from the public and elected officials, implementation of Part 2 is accomplished by competing to bring more federal and state dollars to La Crosse County residents rather than other states and counties that will otherwise benefit.

Part 2 identifies actions that support local collaboration and improved conservation and sustainability primarily in the unincorporated towns in La Crosse County.

A Community Advisory Team (CAT) was established to guide and review the planning process and plan drafts. This group was comprised of town residents with a variety of backgrounds. There were farmers, town clerks, sustainability professionals, solid waste management professionals, engineers, and County Board Supervisors on the team. To represent the intent of this plan, and the community's broad vision for local sustainability, the following Purpose Statement was drafted by the Community Advisory Team (CAT):

La Crosse County's Community Sustainability Plan empowers the community to implement effective and actionable solutions that will reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions, promote sustainability, and strengthen climate change adaptation and resilience for generations of residents. This plan recommends regenerative actions that will preserve our environment and improve the quality of life of residents.

III. Part 1 – Government Operations Plan Summary

A. Part 1 Assessment Findings

To understand County operational efficiency, a series of assessments were completed.

1. **2022 Sustainability Indicator Reports**:
   - These annual reports have been tracking County water use, energy use, and landfill intake since before 2012.
   - Consumption of water, paper, and gasoline have decreased since 2007, but diesel fuel use increased since 2007.
   - The Sheriff's Office and Highway Department accounted for 23% and 70% of vehicle fuel, respectively in 2023.
   - Highway Dept. consumes 97% of diesel purchased by the County. Diesel use dropped 17.6% 2014-2023. Reductions in gas and diesel use has saved the County $75,000 since 2015.
   - The County has saved $1,780,000 on electricity 2007-2023.
   - The County has saved $937,000 on natural gas from 2007-2023.
   - Since 2009, La Crosse County has saved $1,000,000 on paper.
   - Landfill waste has increased by 14.7% and recycling has increased by 148.8% 2007-2022.
2. **County GHG Assessment**:
   - The GHG Assessment was an addition to the 2022 Indicators Report. ICLEI protocols were used to estimate the County's GHG emissions footprint for the first time.
   - County GHG emissions from electricity have fallen 63.6% 2007-2022.
   - Emissions from commuting and vehicle use have risen 14.2% 2007-2022.
   - While a significant amount of methane is emitted from the landfill, current landfill methane emissions were 78.4% lower in 2022 than they were in 2007.

- The County's GHG "footprint" in 2022 was 15,255 CO_2e. To achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, the County must reduce its footprint to 0 CO_2e by eliminating as many of the emissions it can at their sources and offsetting the remaining emissions by expanding "sinks" that absorb emissions.

3. **Sawatch Labs Vehicle Fleet Assessment**:
   - A grant was received to completely fund an assessment of County fleets using OBDII sensors. Feasibility of transitioning some vehicles to EV or PHEV was assessed.
   - 40 medium and light duty vehicles (44% of all light-medium duty fleet vehicles) were tested. They traveled 131,591 miles over a four-month period when temperatures ranged from -11 to 68 degrees F.
   - 22 of the 40 vehicles tested could be transitioned to plug in hybrid or EV and still meet the County's needs. Transitioning these vehicles would result in a $350,000 cost savings to the County over 10 years. Most of the savings is a result of lower fuel and maintenance costs for EVs.
   - Transitioning vehicles to plug in hybrid or EV would only reduce the County's GHG emissions by 1,167 tons over 10 years. As electrical utilities continue to decarbonize, the emissions reductions from transitioning to EV will significantly increase.

Figure 2. County staff installing sensors to collect fleet use data.

4. **Wisconsin Clean Cities Fleet Assessment**:
   - A grant was received to completely fund a formula-based analysis of all fleet vehicles. Vehicle efficiency was assessed to determine if transitioning to any alternative fuels would save La Crosse County money and reduce emissions.
   - Highway Department fleet accounts for 56% of County vehicle emissions, primarily due to the use of their heavy-duty vehicles. Highway consumes 97% of the diesel used by La Crosse County.
   - Alternative fuels like biodiesel and compressed natural gas (CNG) could result in cost savings, but their combustion still creates a significant amount of emissions.

5. **Employee Commute Survey**:
   - Over 3 weeks, the survey was completed by 218 individuals, representing 18.6% of all County employees, to identify how employees commute and why.
   - 52.5% of respondents drive alone to work every day; Of those not driving alone, many worked remotely.
   - 61.3% of respondents are interested in telecommuting/remote work.
   - 8.1% of respondents biked to work one or more days a week, with 4% biking three or more days a week.
   - 32.5% of respondents responded they were open to carpooling to work and 29.4% were open to cycling to work.
   - The greatest obstacles for County employees related to mode of commuting were:
     - Travel time (45.5%)
     - Lack of access to alternatives (high cost, distance, infrastructure) (42.3%)
     - Working late or irregular hours (34%)

6. **EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager Energy Bill Audit**:

- A grant was received to benchmark La Crosse County energy use. Energy bills dating back to 2021 have been entered in EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager.
- Bill data will continue to post in the software. With a larger sample of bills spanning a longer duration of time, energy use and efficiency trends can be further analyzed.
- The Administrative Center has the highest Energy Star score of all County buildings, with a score of 59/100. Buildings must score >75 to be considered energy efficient.

B. Part 1 Elements & Key Takeaways

Part 1 includes 5 elements:

1. Administration & Policy
2. Natural Resources
3. Commuting & Fleets
4. Buildings & Energy
5. Waste Reduction & Pollution Mitigation

Each element is a chapter of the plan, and each chapter includes a summary of related research of existing conditions. Annual sustainability indicator reports, a greenhouse gas emissions assessment, 2 vehicle fleet assessments, an energy bill audit, and research of existing conditions inform the goals and recommendations related to each element. Implementation of Operations Plan recommendations will lead to the County's achievement of carbon neutral operations.

Complete citations for data provided in the following sections are provided in the Climate Action Plan.

Element 1: Administration & Policy

Key Takeaways:

- Reducing paper use further can be achieved as more operations continue to go digital.
- There may be low-cost opportunities to prepare education and programming for staff to reduce waste.
- Administration will need to make and support budget requests related to energy efficiency and waste reduction to achieve the County's carbon neutrality goal.
- Continuous data tracking and analysis is necessary to understand implementation progress and operational efficiency.

Element 2: Natural Resources

Key Takeaways:

- In the long-term, expanding "carbon sinks", like publicly managed forests, parks, and open spaces will be necessary to offset the operational emissions La Crosse County cannot realistically eliminate.
- Highway Department buildings are in the 500 year floodplain and located adjacent to surface waters. The site may be vulnerable to future major flooding events.
- Reducing impervious surfaces surrounding La Crosse County's downtown campus would assist with managing urban stormwater runoff and reduce the heat-island effect.

Element 3: Commuting & Fleets

Key Takeaways:

- SMRT Bus, which is managed by La Crosse County, could be further utilized to reduce tailpipe emissions from commuting.
- More than half of La Crosse County's employees drive alone to work, and even more are interested in having a telecommuting/remote work option. Staff feel there are obstacles to choosing other modes of transportation to work.
- 55% of County vehicles analyzed are good candidates for replacement with EVs or PHEVs.

Element 4: Buildings & Energy

Key Takeaways:

- Building energy use accounts for 24% of total County operational CO2e emissions.
- Hillview, Lakeview, and the Law Enforcement Center account for 67% of the County's electricity use & 87% of its natural gas use.
- Increasing renewable energy use is key to reducing the County's operation emissions. Utilities increasing their energy generated from renewable sources will significantly reduce the County's emissions.

Figure 3. A solar photovoltaic energy system being installed at the County Law Enforcement Center May 2024.

Element 5: Waste Reduction & Pollution Mitigation

Key Takeaways:

- While the County Landfill is a source of 45% of the County's estimated GHG emissions, more analysis should be conducted to analyze them.
- Since 2007, more waste is being recycled, but more waste is also being landfilled.
- The County should consider the future of waste management in the County, and someday implement the Master Land Use Plan.
- The County must do anything it can to divert more waste to extend the life of the landfill.
- Besides the landfill, electricity use in buildings (14%), stationary combustion (natural gas and propane, 11%), and mobile combustion (fleets/commuting, 30%) comprise La Crosse County's GHG footprint.

C. Part 1 Implementation

The sustainability staff, Administration, the Facilities Director, and the Solid Waste Director will be the primary Operations Plan implementation leads, in coordination with other department directors or their staff designee(s). Broad Climate Action Operations Plan implementation target outcomes including the following:

1. Carbon neutrality of County facilities by 2050.
2. Cost savings from reduced consumption and waste reduction and increased energy efficiency.

Quarterly staff advisory team (SAT) meetings to facilitate Operations Plan implementation are encouraged. Implementation will follow the attached Part 1 Implementation Guide (Appendix B). Implementation details are included in the Implementation Guide in Appendix B. The Guide also includes estimated project timelines:

- Ongoing = Ongoing action

- Short-term = Anticipated priority in next 1 - 5 years
- Mid-term = Anticipated priority in next 5 -10 years
- Long-term = Anticipated priority in next 10 - 25 years

Estimated GHG reduction impact is also estimated on a scale of 1 to 5 for each recommended action. For example, actions with "short-term" timelines and 5/5 direct GHG reduction impact may be considered the highest priorities following this plan's adoption.

Recommended actions for implementation are considered "a-la-carte", meaning actions may be prioritized based on what may most realistically be achieved over time. With so many possible actions that could realistically be conducted to improve sustainability in La Crosse County, it will be challenging to complete them all. The list of a variety of recommended actions in the Implementation Guide in Appendix B allows those implementing this plan to be agile as priorities and available funding related to particular actions may shift.

Annual operations plan evaluations should be completed to track implementation progress. Continued annual Sustainability Indicators Reports and additional periodic assessments of the County's energy consumption and waste production will enable staff to identify measurable progress towards its sustainability and climate action goals. Projections of anticipated emissions resulting from plan implementation and analysis of individual County buildings would also inform implementation priorities and strategy. Additionally, GHG projections are a requirement of many grant and funding opportunities related to sustainability projects. Updates to the plan may occur as needed but would preferably occur every 5 years to reflect potential changes in County priorities.

As the primary objective of this plan is to achieve La Crosse County's goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, progress implementing this plan will primarily be evaluated based on measures of La Crosse County GHG reductions. Other metrics such as tonnages of landfilled waste and water consumption will serve as metrics of operational sustainability. The 2022 Sustainability Indicator Report provides a baseline value of GHG emissions from County operations. Annual indicators reports will continue to assist La Crosse County in tracking its progress towards carbon naturality.

Cost savings from fleet and building improvements and waste reduction is intended to be a secondary priority. In some instances, actions required to achieve the County's sustainability goals will not be immediately cost effective, but they may result in long-term cost savings. Data from future building energy audits, fleet usage, and EPA Energy Star Portfolio can be compared against the baseline data collected as part of the climate action planning process.

Staff may consider methods of projecting future La Crosse County GHGs to identify future sustainability milestone dates more clearly and evaluate the impact of the implementation of specific actions.

IV. Part 2 – Community Sustainability Plan Summary

A. Part 2 Public Engagement & Survey Findings

To understand residents' concerns regarding local sustainability priorities, barriers to using renewable energy and realizing cost savings, a county-wide survey was conducted May – July of 2024. The survey and open houses were publicized by:

- 3 TV segments
- 1 radio segment

- 1 press release
- Posting at 5 county libraries
- Posting at town halls
- Posting on County sustainability webpage
- Posting on County social media accounts
- Posting on some town social media accounts
- Sharing at the June 15th Dairy Breakfast
- Sharing at the County Fair

74.7% of survey respondents who are town residents are at least slightly concerned about climate change.

Figure 4. Residents at the Greenfield Open House.

3 open houses were held; at Farmington Town Hall in May, at Greenfield Town Hall in June, and at the West Salem Public Library in July. At the town halls, residents could ask questions and provide feedback directly to the planning team. An estimated 60 town residents attended the town halls. 3 virtual office hours were held the day following each event to discuss the plan one-on-one with members of the public.

263 responses were received, and 168 responses were from town residents. Survey findings include the following:

- The largest percentage of responses, 17.33%, came from the Town of Greenfield, followed closely by the Town of Shelby with 16.77%, and the Town of Farmington with 14.97%.
- 43.38% of responses were from individuals aged 61 years or older. No responses recorded from any town residents under the age of 18.
- 78.66% of respondents expressed concern about the potential loss of clean drinking water.
- 77.5% are worried about possible ecosystem loss.
- When respondents were asked about how they learn about climate change, the most popular source used was the internet, cited by 69.51% of respondents. 36.59% rely on family and friends as a primary source of information. Given the variability in reliability of these sources, these may not be the most dependable sources for accurate climate information.
- Only 21.95% mentioned that their local government has served as a resource towards understanding climate change.
- 68.48% have noticed a change in general weather patterns. 57.58% observed higher than average temperatures. 45.45% of respondents have noticed longer periods without rain. 47.88% have observed more frequent flooding in recent years.
- 74.7% of respondents range from slightly concerned to extremely concerned about climate change.
- 62.58% receive information regarding recycling and waste reduction options from the Annual Municipal Newsletter.
- 69.46% of town residents utilize trash pickup services as their primary method of trash disposal.
- 71.70% of town residents take part in specialized waste disposal or recycling, including use of the Hazardous Material Program.
- 73.58% of town residents utilize recycling drop-off.
- 51.57% of town residents already compost at home.

B. Part 2 Elements & Key Takeaways

Part 2 includes 7 elements:

1. Environmental Conservation
2. Agriculture & Local Food System
3. Waste Reduction & Diversion
4. Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy
5. Land Use & Transportation
6. Health, Safety, & Environmental Justice
7. Green Economy

Each element is a chapter of the plan, and each chapter includes a summary of related research of existing conditions. 3 public open houses and a community survey performed in the summer of 2024 and research of existing conditions inform the goals and recommendations related to each element. Implementation of Community Sustainability Plan recommendations may generally reduce waste and community impacts to the environment.

Complete citations for data provided in the following sections are provided in the Climate Action Plan.

Element 1: Environmental Conservation

Key Takeaways:

- In La Crosse County, there are 10 waterbodies on the State's 303(d) impaired waters list, 9 exceptional waterbodies, and 2 outstanding waterbodies.
- The northern half of the county has streams with lesser water quality, while streams in the southern third had the highest water quality. Elevated pollutants in local waters threaten public health, public recreation, tourism, and economic opportunities in the region.
- La Crosse County has 274 miles of streams, covering 983 surface acres, excluding the Mississippi River, and man-made Lake Neshonoc (600 acres).
- 44% of non-urban county land is classified as woodland. These areas are vital carbon sinks.

Element 2: Agriculture & Local Food System

Key Takeaways:

- Many local farmers partner with the La Crosse County Department of Land Conservation to protect soil, manage nutrient runoff, and maintain eligibility for farm preservation tax credits.
- Changes in climate will affect the nature of local agriculture due to shifts in growing seasons.
- There were 29,000 acres of corn harvested as grain, 55,000 acres of corn harvested as silage, 17,500 acres of soybeans harvested, and 35,300 dairy cows and calves in La Crosse County in 2023, contributing $2.2 billion to the local economy.
- While very few individuals are employed in the "Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining" industry (520 county-wide, 0.8% of local workforce), many more are employed in the local "food system". 3,911 residents work in "food preparation and serving related occupations" (6.1% of the local workforce). 6,776 jobs in La Crosse County are in some way linked to agriculture, spanning roles including, but not limited, farmers, veterinarians, processors, and machinery sellers/renters.

- Increasing the amount of food sourced locally is mutually beneficial to farmers, consumers, and those employed in the local food system. Sourcing more food locally could result in cost savings, reduced emissions, improved health, and stronger community relationships.

Element 3: Waste Reduction & Diversion

Key Takeaways:

- Waste reduction, diversion, and reuse are key to reducing emissions and extending the life of the La Crosse County Landfill.
- In 2023, 36% of regional waste (85,404 tons), a record total, was diverted from the landfill to be recycled or sent to Xcel Energy where it's processed into refuse-derived fuel (RDF). This partnership has extended the life of our public landfill significantly. In 2022, 35,100 tons (26.2%) of waste was successfully diverted from the landfill to Xcel to create 22,100,000 kW of energy, which is enough to supply 2,428 households.
- In 2023, 114, 939,231 cubic feet of methane gas was extracted from the landfill and used to power nearby Gundersen Health facilities, significantly reducing Gundersen & La Crosse County's emissions.
- For every million metric tons of organic waste that is not reused as compost, approximately 469 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gases are released in the form of methane. Composting can reduce these emissions by more than 50%.
- In 2022, 15,900 tons (11.9%) of waste were recycled by the County Solid Waste Department; an additional 7,860 tons were recycled by other municipal programs in 2021.
- Food waste comprises a significant amount of landfilled waste. Food waste in the U.S. is responsible for the following:
    - GHG emissions equivalent to those of more than 50,000,000 automobiles annually.
    - 58% of fugitive methane emissions from landfills are from food waste.
    - 61% of methane from landfilled food waste escapes before collection systems can capture them, as food breaks down quickly.

Element 4: Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

Key Takeaways:

- Community-wide, buildings consume 40% of the total energy used and could potentially provide the greatest energy reduction potential in La Crosse County.
- From 2005 to 2021, Xcel Energy reduced coal consumption in its upper Midwest plants from 51% to 18% of its total fuel use and increased natural gas from 5% to 22% of its total fuel use. CO2 emissions from natural gas in Wisconsin increased by 65.8% from 2010 to 2020. Xcel Energy has published its decarbonization plan to become a carbon neutral electricity provider by 2050.
- Heating and cooling are the largest residential electricity use. 64.6% of Wisconsin housing units are heated with utility gas and 12.1% are heated with bottled, tank, or LP gas.
- Renovating existing buildings produces far fewer emissions than constructing new ones. Upfront carbon emissions from new home construction are equivalent to 23 years of energy consumed by an existing building.
- From 2020 to 2024 residents of La Crosse County (including the City of La Crosse) saved the following on their energy bills by utilizing Focus on Energy programs:
    - Residential: $2,085,372
    - Business: $2,877,879

  - Renewables: $1,016,835
  - Total: $4,963,251
- Across all residential and business sector energy efficiency projects leveraging Focus on Energy programs 2020-2024, 53,284,357 kWh of electricity and 1,451,728 therms of natural gas were saved.
- 2020–2024, La Crosse County residents achieved more savings than some large counties across the state with more than twice La Crosse County's population. This may be mostly attributed to local embrace of renewable energy. Completion of renewable energy projects in the county from 2020-2024 that leveraged Focus on Energy programs resulted in 23,906,837 kWh of electricity savings**.**
- Data center construction strains the electrical grid and burdens taxpayers. Datacenters also consume a significant amount of water, and 10-20% of total data center energy consumption is related to increased use of artificial intelligence (AI).
- In 2022, the U.S. purchased 35% of crude oil that is processed abroad for use by buildings and transportation. Producing more local fuel and renewable energy in the US will save Americans money and reduce American dependency on foreign powers, significant federal subsidies, and turbulent fuel markets.
- Only 10.94% of total energy use in Wisconsin in 2020 was considered renewable. In 2022, 38.62% of renewable energy in Wisconsin was hydroelectric and 28.68% of renewable energy was wind energy. La Crosse County can expect utility solar energy development in the future, but due to local geography, it is unlikely to be several hundreds or thousands of acres in size.
- Several incentives are available to increase solar installations at private residences. A home that transitions to 100% solar energy could reduce monthly CO2 emissions by 765 pounds per month and recover installation expenses from savings on energy bills in 8-12 years.

Element 5: Land Use & Transportation

Key Takeaways:

- "Smart Growth" planning principles should be followed to promote sustainable development in areas that are anticipated to experience growth. Smart growth principles can be reflected in ordinances and long range plans, such as comprehensive plans. Generally, locating trip origins (usually residential households) closer to trip destinations (places of employment, commercial businesses, recreation, etc.) reduces infrastructure costs and emissions.
- La Crosse County contains more than 300,000 acres, nearly 70% of which is agricultural or natural cover.
- County-wide housing density is approximately 100 homes per square mile with much lower density in the county's more rural towns including Washington, Burns, and Bangor at less than 10 homes per square mile (640 acres).
- By almost every measure, infill development, or redeveloping existing urban areas, is one of the most sustainable land use practices communities can prioritize. Developing and growing communities laterally, rather than vertically, causes several negative, cascading effects. "Sprawl" is a term often used to summarize these effects, which include, but are not limited to:
  - Incurring huge costs to existing residents to expand road, water, storm sewer, and sanitary sewer service areas.
  - Increased emergency services response times.
  - Increased impervious surface areas that increases flooding.
  - Destruction of farmlands.
  - Destruction of natural habitats.
- Urban sprawl is estimated to cost the U.S. economy more than $1 trillion per year, primarily due to personal transportation and infrastructure costs.

- According to the U.S. Census, 42.3% of people employed in La Crosse County commute from outside of the county to work, and 28.1% of people who live in La Crosse County commute outside of the county to work.
- In 2021, 52% of Americans' trips were 3 miles or less, and 28% of trips are less than 1 mile, indicating that walking or biking should be realistic modes of transportation for most Americans' trips. As most employment and shopping destinations are in urban areas, many rural town residents live much further than 1-3 miles from their destinations.
- While many non-EV drivers have "range anxiety" and are concerned about the distance an EV can travel on 1 charge, only 2% of Americans' trips are more than 50 miles. Standard battery ranges are equivalent to gasoline vehicle ranges on many new EVs.
- Projections indicate the population of La Crosse County will increase by 10,716 residents (8.9%) between 2020 and 2040. This is 1-5% lower than previous decades. Available projections do not account for the potential of climate migration, who may increase housing demand and fill job vacancies in the future. As many as 216,000,000 people across six continents may be forced to relocate due to changing climate conditions by 2050.

Element 6: Health, Safety, & Environmental Justice

Key Takeaways:

- A 2016 study found that annual federal health expenditures are projected to increase from ~$1.2 billion to $8 billion by 2100 due to increased frequency of illness related to changing climate conditions.
- In 2023, Canada experienced 6,500 successive wildfires that burnt nearly 72,000 acres of forests and negatively impacted global air quality. Large climate-related events such as wildfires become more frequent, the county is likely to experience an increase in hazy skies and health advisories. Seniors, children, and others with respiratory issues and asthma, are significantly affected by the harmful particulate matter produced by distant wildfires.
- In 2017, the La Crosse County Health Department Nitrate Task Force found that 30% of 540 wells tested by the Department contained nitrate levels that exceeded federal standards and 60% of wells had at least some nitrate contamination.
- The majority of La Crosse County faces an 80-100% risk of flooding. Portions of the towns of Shelby, Medary, Onalaska, and Holland are at the greatest risk of increased flooding.
- While the actual number is likely higher, Wisconsin reported 5,327 cases of Lyme disease in 2022, indicating that the average number of cases has more than doubled over the past 15 years. As the climate has changed, ticks have become more prevalent.
- By 2018, the annual average daily temperature of La Crosse County increased by about 5 degrees Fahrenheit compared to the 1950 average. Projections indicate that the annual average daily temperature is expected to rise by 9.5 degrees Fahrenheit by 2090 compared to the 1980 average. With increased heat, individuals face a greater risk of heat-borne illness and increased costs to cool homes. Low-moderate income populations will likely be disproportionately most affected.
- The La Crosse County Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan identifies Thunderstorms and flash flooding/stormwater flooding as the highest disaster threats facing the county. Several County properties are at risk of future flooding.
- Wildfires are identified as a low threat, and extreme heat is a moderate threat. Locally, more hot days are anticipated.
- In the next 25 years, the community can expect:
    - Increases in temperatures of 6.5°F, with the greatest increases in the winter.
    - Sixteen less nights a year with temperatures below 0°F.
    - Twenty-four more days a year with temperatures above 90°F.

- More precipitation with more severe precipitation events, resulting in Increased flooding and stormwater inundation.
- Less snow cover, deeper frost depth, and more freeze-thaw cycles.

Element 7: Green Economy

Key Takeaways:

The World Economic Forum estimates that nature's value to the global economy is $44 trillion dollars, which is more than half of global GDP.

- The World Economic Forum estimates that nature's value to the global economy is $44 trillion dollars, which is more than half of global GDP. Often, increasing efficiency and reducing waste is good for the environment and businesses' bottom-line.
- Advancements in industries and technologies related to waste diversion, transportation, agriculture, renewable energy, HVAC, and construction are significant components of the decarbonized, "green economy" of the future.
- Prioritizing sustainability helps businesses' bottom line.
- It's estimated that commercial and industrial operations are the source of 21% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Some local businesses, such as Emplify Health (formerly Gundersen Health) and Trane Technologies, have prioritized sustainability and emissions reductions for more than a decade.
- In the winter of 2023-2024, there were 20 to 30 fewer inches of snow across the state than in previous years. Warmer winters will reduce opportunities to participate in winter recreation such as skiing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing.
- In 2023, tourism to La Crosse County brought $307.3 million in direct visitor spending and $502 million in economic impact, resulting in generation of $35 million in state and local taxes. The climate may alter local outdoor recreation opportunities. Tourism supports 4,000 jobs in La Crosse County, and many local businesses rely on revenues from tourism to remain in operation.
- Remote working during and following the Covid-19 pandemic significantly reduced emissions from commuting. One study found that working remotely 4 or more days per week can reduce one's carbon footprint by 54%.
- Adjusted for inflation in 2024 dollars, the average annual cost of disasters in the United States from 1980 to 1990 was 82% lower ($22.9 billion) than the 2013 to 2023 average. BlackRock estimates that 58% of U.S. metros will experience annualized GDP losses of 1% or more by 2060-2080 if no climate action is taken.

C. Part 2 Implementation

Implementation will follow the attached Part 2 Implementation Guide. County staff will lead the implementation of this plan in partnership with residents, community groups, government agencies, and private entities. Zoning, Planning, & Land Information, Community Development, Facilities/Parks, Solid Waste, Emergency Management, Administration, and Land Conservation departments will be key leads for various plan recommendations. Sustainability staff will coordinate with partners to manage projects and implementation progress. Implementation details are included in the Implementation Guide in Appendix B. The Guide also includes estimated project timelines (ongoing, immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term) to assist in prioritizing recommended actions. Actions with "short-term" timelines may be considered the highest, most feasible priorities at the time of this plan's adoption.

Sustainability staff will coordinate with partners to manage projects and implementation progress. Implementation details are included in the Implementation Guide in Appendix B. The Guide also includes estimated project timelines:

- Ongoing = Ongoing action
- Immediate = Immediate priority
- Short-term = Anticipated priority in next 1 - 5 years
- Mid-term = Anticipated priority in next 5 -10 years
- Long-term = Anticipated priority in next 10 - 25 years

Recommended actions for implementation are considered "a-la-carte", meaning actions may be prioritized based on what may most realistically be achieved over time. With so many possible actions that could realistically be conducted to improve sustainability in La Crosse County, it will be challenging to complete them all. The list of a variety of recommended actions in the Implementation Guide in Appendix B allows those implementing this plan to be agile as priorities and available funding related to particular actions may shift.

To establish realistic, non-arbitrary success metrics for community sustainability, further analysis is necessary. Use of a platform like as ICLEI ClearPath will allow reasonable progress metrics to be identified using current, available data. ClearPath processes emissions data to project climate action progress and set realistic performance metrics. Some county-wide success metrics to evaluate possible outcomes of the implementation of this plan may include the following:

Figure 5. Triple Bottom-Line of Sustainability. Source: University of Iowa Office of Sustainability & the Environment, https://sustainability.uiowa.edu/about-us/what-sustainability

To evaluate implementation progress, staff will:

- Take account of plan recommendations that have been completed.
- Evaluate success metric progress.
- Assess recommendation feasibility.
- Prioritize recommendations for implementation.
- Estimate budget requirements for subtasks of recommendations.

When prioritizing tasks, staff will consider the "triple bottom-line" of sustainability framework (Figure 28). This framework outlines the "3 P's", which are referred to as the "3 E's" in variations of the model; People (Equity), Planet (Environment), and Prosperity (Economy). Realistic goals related to sustainability can be achieved by balancing the 3 P's. Improving sustainability can often directly or indirectly reduce carbon emissions. High priority tasks to support recommendations will be based upon this framework, which establishes that the most impactful actions resulting from this plan will balance and support the 3 Ps of the triple bottom-line.

V. Part 1 & 2 Implementation Guides

Climate Action Plan Implementation Guide (Part 1 - La Crosse County Government Operations)

Goal		Recommended Actions	Lead(s)	Direct GHG Reduction Impact (5 = Highest impact)	Timeline
lement 1: Organization Administration & Policy					
Goal 1: Engage employees on climate action and ensure they are climate-competent in their personal and professional lives.	1.1.	Create online employee training modules related to waste reduction, energy savings, and natural resources conservation.	IT, Facilities	1	Mid-term
	1.2.	Establish an employee sustainability policy and make sustainability part of new employee and new supervisor orientation.	HR, Planner	1	Mid-term
	1.3.	Include sustainability data and climate research in La Crosse County employee newsletters.	Planner, Marketing	1	Ongoing
Goal 2: Utilize new and existing partnerships to further sustainability in the region and foster new opportunities for collaboration.	2.1.	Advocate for state and federal policy improvements related to building codes, renewable energy, transit, and more (WLGCC).	Planner	5	Ongoing
	2.2.	Collaborate with the Climate Action Plan Staff Advisory Team to implement this plan. Plan implementation relies on multiple leads.	Planner, Staff Advisory Team	3	Ongoing
	2.3.	Establish a climate action work group with other local and regional governments to collaborate on shared ventures and share guidance.	Planner, Health	3	Short-term
	2.4.	Increase staff capacity to complete sustainability and climate-related projects. Consider partnering with WisCorps to hire LTEs.	Planner, Solid Waste, Facilities, &/or Land Conservation	4	Short-term
Goal 3: Allocate the funding necessary to achieve Climate Action Plan implementation.	3.1.	Make recommendations on funding related to sustainability initiatives during the annual budget process.	Planner, Solid Waste, Facilities, Land Conservation	1	Ongoing
	3.2.	Create savings reports that illustrate saved resources due to the sustainability efforts of the County.	Planner, Facilities, Finance	1	Ongoing
	3.3.	Establish a climate action and sustainability fund to support implementation of the climate action plan.	Planner, Administration	5	Short-term
	3.4.	Support staff with trainings and certifications related to sustainability and building efficiency principles that can be implemented to reduce County energy expenses.	Planner, Facilities	2	Short-term
Goal 4: Collect data that will help the County understand the impacts of its operations and progress towards sustainability goals.	4.1.	Continue to complete annual Sustainability Indicators Reports/GHG assessments to track reductions in the County's carbon footprint due to implementing climate action strategies.	Consultant, Sustainability Lead	2	Ongoing
	4.2.	Continue annual WDNR Green Tier Legacy Community Scoring to evaluate the sustainability of the County's operations relative to other member communities.	Planner, Intern	1	Annually
	4.3.	Perform a cost benefit analysis to determine which plan recommendations result in the greatest GHG reductions per dollar spent on climate mitigation and adaptation.	Consultant	1	Short-term
	4.4.	Assess emissions impacts and cost savings resulting from a variety of work options, including telecommuting, flex time, 4 day work week, etc. Amend policies to allow for work options that are proven to reduce energy bills and commuting emissions.	HR, Finance, Facilities, Consultant	3	Short-term
	4.5.	Complete a GHG inventory of Scope 3 emissions to quantify the indirect emissions from La Crosse County operations.	Consultant	1	MId-term
	4.6.	Complete emissions projections to estimate the County's timeline for achieving carbon neutrality and set realistic progress milestones.	Consultant, Sustainability Lead	1	Short-term
Element 2: Natural Resources and Conservation					
Goal 1: Protect natural, undeveloped areas in the county to support climate resilience and offset carbon emissions.	1.1.	Plant native species of vegetation in County rights-of-way along county highways and town roads.	Land Conservation, Highway	2	Mid-term
	1.2.	Assess forestry and agricultural program carbon credits for their potential offsets with scope 1 and scope 3 of operational emissions.	Land Conservation	4	Long-term
	1.3.	Minimize mowing of County-owned properties and county road rights of way. Maintain bi-annual schedule for mowing county road rights-of-way.	Facilities, Highway	2	Ongoing
Goal 2: Reduce the impacts of the County's impervious surfaces and increase flood resilience.	2.1.	Reduce use of salt on roadways following snowfall, particularly to avoid soil, surface water, and groundwater contamination.	Highway, Facilities	1	Ongoing
	2.2.	Increase stormwater infiltration areas to reduce the over inundation of stormwater infrastructure and help recharge groundwater. Commit funds to projects that restore wetlands, increase greenspaces, and preserve natural areas.	Land Conservation, Facilities	1	Mid-term
	2.3.	Add natural landscaping to reduce the amount of lawn the County must mow or maintain. Remove impervious surfaces where possible.	Facilities	2	Mid-term
	2.4.	Design and implement shared stormwater infrastructure and conservation development designs at and near the landfill with adjacent landowners. Where feasible, emulate smaller, decentralized restored landscape features that can serve as wildlife habitat and park features.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	2	Long-term
Goal 3: Create and preserve positive ecological health and aesthetic beauty surrounding the landfill.	3.1.	Continue to work with neighboring municipalities to increase vegetative screening of the landfill.	Solid Waste	2	Ongoing
	3.2.	Continually promote ecological restoration of the landfill by establishing a program or event, and/or coordinating with an existing program or event, for the purpose of communicating the restoration vision for the landfill property. Implement the Landfill Master Land Use Plan and update it every 5 years based on ecological conditions.	Solid Waste	1	Updating 2024-25
	3.3.	When necessary, perform construction in a manner that creates more natural contours at the landfill, including defined drainageways that also enhance aesthetic beauty.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	1	Ongoing
	3.4.	Restore bedrock features and dry prairies in sand overburden materials at the landfill.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	2	Long-term
	3.5.	Explore opportunities to establish tree nurseries to produce stock for plantings, restore tree cover for forest and savanna restoration by direct seeding rather than planting individual trees, and continue tree test plots program at County-owned properties.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation, Facilities	4	Ongoing
Element 3: Commuting & Fleets					
Goal 1: Support and incentivize reductions in emissions from staff commuting. Reduce emissions from staff commuting by 20% by 2030.	1.1.	Publicize the discounted transit pass program for county employees to encourage more transit ridership and cut down emissions and downtown campus parking needs.	HR, Marketing, Community Development Manager	2	Ongoing
	1.2.	Conduct a downtown County parking study that analyzes emissions impacts, property value impacts, and alternative uses for parking areas.	Facilities, Consultant	1	Mid-term
	1.3.	Make County campuses more bike-friendly by providing amenities such as bike lockers, indoor storage, showers, etc.	Facilities	2	Short-term
	1.4.	Provide level 2 charging for staff that drive County EV fleet vehicles and domicile them at their private residences.	Sheriff, Highway	5	Mid-term

	1.5.	Explore incentive options for employees who commute to work by modes of transportation with lower environmental impact, such as carpooling or transit. For example, by allowing 15 more minutes for employees who ride the bus to get to work or provide free charging for employees driving electric vehicles.	HR, Administration, Facilities	3	Mid-term
Goal 2: Transition away from using GHG emitting fuels for County fleet vehicles. Obtain a zero-emission light and medium duty fleet by 2045.	2.1.	Reduce non-heavy duty fleet emissions by 30% by 2035 (50% electrification). Increase fuel efficiency of remaining fleet vehicles and off-road equipment by 10% by 2030.	Fleet Managers	5	Ongoing
	2.2.	Ensure all primary county buildings are EV ready with Level 2 chargers. Establish a budget for EV charging station installation. Develop an RFP template for EV charging infrastructure installation projects. Develop a time-of-use EV charging plan.	Facilities, Xcel	5	Short-term
	2.3.	Perform fleet assessments periodically to determine the cost effectiveness of non-fossil fuel alternatives.	Planner, Finance	1	
	2.4.	Develop an EV charging infrastructure implementation plan. Update the plan following fleet assessment. Develop vehicle replacements schedules and cost-benefit analysis procedures.	Planner, Facilities	1	Short-term
	2.5.	Create a centralized vehicle inventory and collect vehicle mileage and usage data annually to more accurately estimate GHG emissions and asset value depreciation.	Fleet Managers, Finance	2	Short-term
	2.6.	Using fleet data, create a county fleet maintenance plan and replacement standards. Consider acquisition of plug-in hybrid vehicle replacements for fleet vehicles there are not all EV alternatives for.	Fleet Managers, Finance	3	Mid-term
	2.7.	Conduct a short-term EV Sheriff patrol car pilot project.	Sheriff	1	Mid-term
	2.8.	Cover cost for vehicle maintenance staff to obtain EV maintenance certifications and continuing education to service La Crosse County fleets.	Highway, Administration	3	Mid-term
	2.9.	Continue to operate and fund SMRT Bus and explore electric bus options.	Community Development Manager	2	Ongoing
	2.10.	Use the AFLEET tool or similar product to estimate emissions from employee-owned vehicles used for County work. Perform a cost benefit analysis comparing whether purchasing EV or PHEV Health Department & Human Services Department fleets would be more cost effective and result in fewer emissions than reimbursing employees for use of their personal vehicles.	Health & Human Services	1	Mid-term
Element 4: Buildings & Energy					
Goal 1: Assess energy efficiency and analyze opportunities to increase building energy efficiency, capture cost savings, and reduce emissions.	1.1.	Maintain an inventory of refrigerants used at county buildings by type, quantity, and use so we can more accurately estimate the County's carbon footprint. Reduce use of refrigerants whenever possible.	Facilities	2	Short-term
	1.2.	For each metered county building, complete Energy Star's Sustainable Buildings Checklist. Consider performing building audits. Use Focus on Energy Commitment to Community programs and/or other resources to conduct energy assessments on municipal facilities that are identified as high energy users. Use the results to develop an action plan to increase efficiency and reduce energy costs.	Facilities	1	Short-term
	1.3.	Evaluate the feasibility of geothermal energy at new and existing county buildings.	Facilities	1	Ongoing
	1.4.	Assess the feasibility of generating geothermal energy from waste at the landfill to serve offsite users.	Consultant, Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	1	Annually
Goal 2: Incrementally increase building energy efficiency and reduce emissions. Improve building energy efficiency by 15% by 2030.	2.1.	Install simple energy efficiency upgrades such as, auto-shut off LED lights, smart power strips, and modern automated HVAC systems in all county buildings where feasible. Consider policy to reduce unattended electrical devices.	Facilities	4	Ongoing
	2.2.	Power County buildings with 100% renewable energy. Increase solar energy generation and use at county properties utilizing secondary sites evaluated in 2022 that were not funded by ARPA.	Facilities	5	Mid-term
	2.3.	Perform annual tune-ups to increase energy efficiency in our boilers and to take advantage of Focus on Energy rebates when replacing components.	Facilities	2	Annually
	2.4.	Apply for the US Department of Energy Clean Energy to Communities Program. Consider In-Depth Partnership, Peer-Learning Cohort, or Expert Match options to receive technical assistance for energy improvements.	Sustainability Lead	2	Applied 2024. Ongoing
	2.5.	Connect the Lakeview chiller system to a private well instead of municipal water to reduce long-term costs and increase efficiency.	Lakeview	3	Mid-term
	2.6.	Replace remaining T8 lighting with LED lighting at Lakeview.	Lakeview	3	Mid-term
Goal 3: Establish County building efficiency standards and create plans to facilitate a smooth transition to climate resilient buildings.	3.1.	Upgrade County SolSmart certification from Silver to Gold.	Planner, Intern	1	Short-term
	3.2.	Require new municipal buildings, and significant remodels of existing buildings, to be designed to achieve a sustainable building certification, such as an ENERGY STAR score of >75, or certification through LEED, WELL, Passive House, Net Zero Energy, Green Globes, or Living Building.	Facilities, Administration	5	Mid-term
	3.3.	Adopt succession plans for transitioning from natural gas to cleaner fuels. Implement the plans with capital budgeting.	Facilities	5	Mid-term
	3.4.	Use alternative materials with lower amounts of embodied carbon when constructing new roads and buildings. Draft RFP language.	Facitliies, Highway	4	Mid-term
Goal 4: Improve the climate resilience of County owned and operated properties.	4.1.	Complete a GIS asset inventory to assess potential losses of county property and assets due to future flood events.	Land Information, Planner	1	Mid-term
	4.2.	Prepare or update internal emergency action plans to improve climate resilience.	Emegency Management, Sherriff	1	Short-term
	4.3.	Assess the feasibility of a downtown microgrid. Construct a downtown microgrid if feasible, to achieve cost savings on energy and ensure the County can function and respond to public threat and emergencies during grid outages and extreme weather events.	Planner	1	Short-term
Element 5: Waste and Pollution Mitigation					
Goal 1: Promote and enable waste reduction and diversion.	1.1.	Promote electronic transfers, receipting, and invoicing over paper whenever possible.	Administration, HR	2	Ongoing
	1.2.	Upload County water use and natural gas use to Energy Star Portfolio annually.	Facilities, Intern	1	Annually
	1.3.	Monitor developing technologies to minimize waste transport out of the county.	Solid Waste	1	Ongoing
	1.4.	Explore additional reuse programs for ash trees affected by the emerald ash borer.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	1	Short-term
	1.5.	Continuously identify new ways to maximize landfill air space (alternative waste processing, improve waste compaction, waste diversion/re-use opportunities, etc.).	Solid Waste	5	Ongoing
	1.6.	Increase pre-processing of waste through utilization of a materials recovery facility to maximize waste diversion to Xcel and minimize landfill airspace consumption. Increase landfill diversion rate from 30% to 50%	Solid Waste	5	Long-term
	1.7.	Review and update Solid Waste Management Plan every 5 years. Concurrently update the recommendations in this chapter to reflect Management Plan updates.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	3	Every 5 Years
Goal 2: Establish policies and programs that reduce consumption, encourage circular practices, and discourage generation of waste and pollutants.	2.1.	Review and update the County procurement policy and incorporate sustainable purchasing preferences for the following: (a) cradle to cradle/circular practices, (b) lower life cycle costs, (c) quadruple bottom line, and (d) product stewardship. Develop template request for proposal language.	Finance	3	Short-term
	2.2.	Utilize 100% post-consumer content recycled paper, and other materials, whenever possible.	Finance	2	Ongoing
	2.3.	Electrify landscaping implements/tools.	Facilities, Highway	3	Mid-term
	2.4.	Cease the use of pesticides/herbicides in lawn care/landscaping activities.	Facilities	1	Short-term
	2.5.	Proactively establish solar PV panel and EV battery recycling facilities and protocols at the landfill in anticipation of increased use.	Solid Waste	3	Mid-term

Goal 3: Establish and maintain mutually beneficial public-private partnerships and ensure partnerships do not result in increased emissions.	3.1.	Continue and extend Solid Waste Department's partnerships with Xcel Energy and Gundersen Health to divert landfill emissions and extend the life of the landfill's airspace.	Solid Waste	5	Ongoing
	3.2.	Create a County committee specifically focused on sustainability, resource conservation, environmental health, and environmental justice concerns, etc. Consider hiring full-time sustainability staff.	Administration, Sustainability Lead	2	Mid-term
	3.3.	Utilize emerging technologies to accurately analyze fugitive emissions produced by the County Landfill.	Solid Waste, Consultant	4	Short-term
	3.4.	Following feasibility assessments of a landfill-Gundersen microgrid, assist with providing necessary infrastructure.	Solid Waste	3	Short-term

Climate Action Plan Implementation Guide (Part 2 - Community Sustainability)

Goal		Recommended Action	Staff Lead(s)	Timeline
Element I: Environmental Conservation				
Goal 1. Increase natural areas, green spaces, and carbon sinks to improve climate resilience.	1.1	Hold an annual tree sale or giveaway to increase greenspaces and carbon sinks. Provide maintenance information to participants. Establish programmatic goals.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Short-term
	1.2	Expand pollinator-friendly, native plantings county-wide. Establish a fund and partner with property owners to plant several acres annually.	Facilities	Short-term
	1.3	Provide financial support to, or collaborate with, land trusts to protect critical natural areas, particularly those in or near waterways. Incentivize dedication of lands for protection using conservation easements.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Mid-term
	1.4	Use federal, state, or non-profit programs that promote afforestation and purchase lands to improve continuity and expansion of the County Forests. Sequester carbon through planting on new vegetation in these areas.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Long-term
	1.5	Protect and restore natural systems that protect the community from flooding, including parks, wetlands, riparian areas, and natural drainage ways/swales. Conduct a GIS analysis to identify areas of opportunity.	Facilities, Land Conservation, Land Information	Ongoing
	1.6	Identify opportunities for increased forestry and forest management at county parks and county forests. Sequester carbon by planting more trees at county-owned properties.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Mid-term
Goal 2. Engage community members to share information and expand local conservation efforts.	2.1	Offer technical guidance and financial support to towns that wish to develop and implement stormwater utility policies to improve water management, reduce flooding risks, and enhance water quality.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.2	Assist with the Soak It Up urban stormwater management program, aimed at improving water quality and reducing runoff through green infrastructure and community engagement initiatives.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	2.3	Design and implement demonstration projects in collaboration with community members, such as planting native species in open spaces within business parks adjacent to the landfill, showcasing sustainable landscaping practices.	Land Conservation	Long-term
	2.4	Continue to partner with landowners in the Bostwick Creek and Coon Creek Watersheds to improve water quality.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
Goal 3. Reduce human impacts to natural areas.	3.1	Establish a grant program to support outdoor sustainability improvements by providing funds for composting bins, rain barrels, and planting trees.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.2	Educate community on integrated pest management practices and best management practices to minimize chemical use on lawns.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.3	Reduce salt used on roads as much as possible. Host Wisconsin Salt Wise workshops to educate salt applicators on best salt management practices. Require salt applicators to obtain a Salt-Wise Certification.	Facilities, Highway	Short-term
	3.4	Incentivize or require green infrastructure and minimum green space provisions to offset impacts of impervious surfaces constructed in new subdivisions. Encourage or require tree plantings in new subdivisions.	Planner, Surveyor	Mid-term
	3.5	Require large commercial and light industrial business developments to create comprehensive stormwater management plans that establish infiltration and pollutant reduction standards reduce flooding on neighboring properties.	Land Conservation, Planner	Mid-term
Goal 4. Analyze the health and quality of the local environment to identify and address barriers to local sustainability.	4.1	Conduct a GIS analysis to assess opportunities for rehabilitation of habitats, impaired water sources, soil, forests, and prairies.	Land Information	Mid-term
	4.2	Map stormwater conveyance systems within the County's Storm Sewer System area to analyze existing infrastructure.	Land Conservation	Short-term
	4.3	Continue to periodically update and implement the County's Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Expand funding and implementation where feasible.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	4.4	Conduct biannual water quality sampling of the County's 27 watersheds. Implement practices that reduce phosphorous and fecal coliforms in waterbodies.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
Element II: Agriculture & Local Food System				
Goal 1. Assist local producers with becoming climate resilient.	1.1	Promote agroforestry practices such as expanding tree canopies in livestock pastures to mitigate the effects of increasing temperatures. Establish a program to assist farmers in funding roofed farmyards for livestock.	Land Conservation, UW Extension	Mid-term
	1.2	Join the 4 per 1000 Initiative, which is an international initiative consisting of governments, foundations, research organizations, private companies, and farm and forestry organizations who are committed to improving soil carbon management, combating poverty and food insecurity, and mitigating climate change. Review the states-and-local-authorities list of action item commitments and take action that makes strategic sense related to this plan.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.3	Provide agricultural labor force training on growing, marketing, and preparing local, climate-resilient food.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
Goal 2. Continue to support producers in implementing soil and water conservation best management practices.	2.1	Implement the Wisconsin Transition to Grass program to help farmers improve soil, water, and livestock health.https://www.cleanwisconsin.org/bipartisan-transition-to-grass-legislation-will-help-wisconsin-farmers-improve-soil-water-and-livestock-health/?org=825&lvl=100&ite=2490&lea=3254849&ctr=0&par=1&trk=	Land Conservation	Short-term
	2.2	Showcase local conservation projects to agricultural producers and the public. These events will feature demonstrations of successful conservation practices, such as soil health management, water conservation techniques, and biodiversity enhancement.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	2.3	Implement conservation education programs focused on agricultural best management practices, including methods for carbon capture and surface water management. Conduct farmer workshops on nutrient management planning to enhance crop yields, promote soil health, prevent runoff, and reduce environmental impacts.	UW Extension	Ongoing

	2.4	Commission a feasibility study to explore potential opportunities for a biomass “upcycling” facility that would produce value-added biomass products. The upcycling facility could include a regional manure composting operation, a mixed substrate composting operation, and a processing operation for biomass harvested from nutrient catch strips and agricultural land prairie strips.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
Goal 3. Improve production of, and access to, local, healthy foods.	3.1	Establish a Food Policy Council that will advise county officials and staff on enhancing local food supply chains and improving food access. The council will focus on creating local partnerships to increase access to affordable and nutritious food options in the community. Create a Food Systems Plan that addresses the production, distribution, value-added, marketing, end-market, and disposal of food, and charge the Food Policy Council with overseeing the plan’s implementation.	Sustainability Lead, Health, Community Development	Mid-term
	3.2	Identify and map any healthy "food deserts" within the community and leverage tools, such as grants, incentives, and partnerships with local businesses, to increase access to nutritious food options.	Health, Land Information	Mid-term
	3.3	Increase local access to plant-based foods by collaborating with retailers and food vendors to expand their offerings of affordable plant-based options, and by supporting initiatives such as community gardens, and partnerships with local producers. Create education opportunities that promote the health and environmental benefits of eating plant-based and low-carbon foods.	Health	Mid-term
Element III: Waste Reduction & Diversion				
Goal 1. Share waste disposal programs and County sustainability efforts with the public to increase access and awareness.	1.1	Increase public awareness of waste drop off sites in the towns and their regulations through education and outreach. Organize and standardize the system of municipal drop-off sites. Implement consistent guidelines, operational hours, and accepted materials across all sites to streamline user's experience. Develop clear signage and user-friendly instructions at each site.	Sustainability Lead, Solid Waste	Mid-term
	1.2	Establish an interpretive center at the current landfill office and provide interpretive signs, displays, materials and programs to explain the ecology of the planned restoration of prairies, savannas, and woodlands.	Solid Waste, Facilities, Land Conservation	Long-term
	1.3	Communicate information on waste reduction, recycling, and organics collection options available for residents. This information should be collected from, and based on, content shared by regional waste collecting, recycling, composting, and reuse organizations. Models include the City of Portland’s Be Cart Smart, and the City of Fayetteville’s Solid Waste Diversion and Recycling Education Plan.	TBD, Solid Waste	Ongoing
Goal 2. Develop new strategies for recycling and waste diversion to maximize the operational life of the La Crosse County Landfill.	2.1	Establish a "repair cafe" periodically at the landfill to provide community members with a space to bring broken items and receive assistance with repairs. These cafes will offer tools, materials, and volunteer experts who can help repair a variety of items, such as electronics, clothing, furniture, and household appliances. Determine feasibility of partnership and consolidation of multiple services to minimize impacts to carbon footprint.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Promote partnerships with local thrift stores and Habitat for Humanity to increase resource reuse. These collaborations can include joint donation drives, and coordinated efforts to repurpose and resell household items, building materials, and furniture.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.3	Facilitate the recycling of refrigerants and refrigeration equipment by establishing accessible recycling programs.	Solid Waste	Ongoing
	2.4	Establish a demolition materials facility to divert more demolition materials from being landfilled. Collaborate with municipalities to develop a construction and demolition waste management ordinance aimed at increasing the recycling of waste materials. Include deconstruction inspection as part of the demolition requirements for residential and commercial buildings. Remaining construction and demolition waste will be directed to the County recovery facility for proper disposal.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.5	Offer technical assistance and evaluate ways to expand the County's successful single stream recycling program.	TBD, Solid Waste	Mid-term
	2.6	Ensure community-wide access to composting sites. Consider providing a curbside collection composting service. Promote the use of existing composting programs and facilities.	TBD, Solid Waste	Mid-term
Goal 4. Analyze landfilled waste to better understand local waste streams.	4.1	Perform a study to determine how much waste could be diverted from the landfill for combustion by Xcel Energy.	Solid Waste	Short-term
	4.2	Develop a waste audit and diversion assistance program, helping businesses establish tracking and reporting waste streams; identify reduction, diversion, and beneficial use opportunities; and identify financing to improve businesses' bottom-line.	Solid Waste	Mid-term
	4.3	Partner with waste haulers to inventory town recycling drop off tonnages. Explore ways to increase recycling participation and capacity.	Solid Waste	Mid-term
	4.4	Conduct a feasibility study on implementing 'landfill mining' to divert more waste and generate recycling revenue. This study should analyze the composition and characteristics of landfill waste, potential environmental impacts, technological requirements, and economic viability.	Solid Waste	Long-term
Element IV: Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy				
Goal 1. Increase use of low-emission, renewable energy.	1.1	Coordinate a group-buy program for solar installations, heat pumps, and home electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to offer bulk pricing discounts. Goal: >10 homes annually.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.2	Advocate for proactive language for residential and commercial uses within ordinances that reduce ambiguity and streamline the permitting process for renewable energy. For example, add language to the zoning ordinance to specify that ground-mounted solar installations are exempt from being counted towards the estimation of allowed accessory structure size on a property.	Planner, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	1.3	Support individual and institutional solar energy projects by implementing incentives, providing technical assistance, conducting educational campaigns, and streamlining permitting processes.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.4	Support towns in acquiring solar energy systems on town properties by providing technical assistance and incentives.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.5	Research and inventory HOA documents and restrictive covenants which illegally restrict the use of solar use in neighborhoods.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.6	Evaluate the feasibility of partnering with farmers and local utilities to create a manure biodigester cooperative that reduces methane emissions, significantly improves the nutrient uptake speed of manure spreading, reduces risk of surface water contamination, financially supports local farmers, assists farmers with WDNR nutrient management compliance, and produces energy for the community.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.1	Establish a sustainability resource work group for builders and HVAC companies to collaborate on sustainable building practices, energy-efficient HVAC systems, and renewable energy integration.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Promote weatherization grant programs to increase public awareness and participation.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Ongoing

Goal 2. Improve building energy efficiency, lower energy bills, and reduce emissions from building energy use.	2.3	Promote use of Focus On Energy programs, such as its home energy rebate program. Establish a small local grant program to promote home energy efficiency upgrades, including HVAC/heat pumps, weatherization, efficiency windows, insulation, electric stoves, and electric panel upgrades.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.4	Communicate available energy efficiency incentives to residents, focusing on low-income and minority residents. Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase the durability, safety, and efficiency of their homes. Goal: 10 households annually, each achieving 15% energy use reductions.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
Goal 3. Improve the resilience of the electrical grid as climate changes and demand for electricity increases.	3.1	Work with stakeholders to support utility efforts to modernize the electric distribution grid in the County. Promote green power purchase options, such as those provided by Xcel Energy's "Renewable Connect". Collaborate on promotion and education of available options.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.2	Develop a protocol for calculating county-wide GHG emissions. The County should develop a baseline for these emissions as soon as possible and then track the emissions to estimate the emission reductions resulting from initiatives.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.3	Address issues with energy time-of-use/availability at peak usage by increasing storage capacity. Help property owners address hurdles to implementation of energy storage infrastructure including collaboration to develop incentive programs and permit streamlining if determined to be a significant constraint. Explore partnerships with US Department of Energy, NREL, LNBL, SolSmart and other resources.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	3.4	Pursue US Department of Energy or Wisconsin Public Service Commission Funding to complete a comprehensive rural energy plan, renewable resource planning, and building energy audits for towns interested in reducing their energy bill and improving resilience.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
Element V: Land Use & Transportation				
Goal 1. Remove barriers to use of transit and active transportation.	1.1	Collaborate with the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Shared Ride, SMRT, and other transit providers to enhance and expand their systems, with a focus on improving transit accessibility, frequency, and coverage across the county.	SMRT	Ongoing
	1.2	Collaborate with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) to strategically plan and fund enhanced connections for alternative transportation throughout the urban towns, focusing on improving infrastructure for pedestrians, bicycles, and electric vehicles.	SMRT, Planner	Ongoing
	1.3	Develop a public-facing resource that maps all bike routes and pedestrian paths throughout the county.	Land Information, Planner, LAPC	Short-term
	1.4	Identify locations for “Park & Rides” in rural parts of the county. Explore feasibility of micro-transit and other solutions for rural community that connect to existing transportation infrastructure.	SMRT, Planner, LAPC	Mid-term
	1.5	Regularly update Safe Routes to School plans and implement strategies that support safe active transportation and bus transportation to schools. Create bicycle safety education materials through public workshops and web content.	Health, Planner, LAPC	Ongoing
	1.6	Partner with municipalities and the Highway Department to improve connectivity of bikes and trail systems between rural and urban communities. Expand the shoulders of select county-maintained roads to accommodate safe travel for bicycles and pedestrians.	Highway, LAPC	Long-term
Goal 2. Prepare for adoption of new, low emission transportation technologies.	2.1	Collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and local utilities to establish public electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure along corridors throughout the county. Explore grant opportunities to secure funding for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, including public and private charging stations. When installing EV charging infrastructure, design for future capacity needs by considering anticipated growth in electric vehicle adoption.	Sustainability Lead, Planner, LAPC	Mid-term
	2.2	Collaborate with neighboring governments on regional electric vehicle (EV) planning to develop comprehensive strategies that support EV adoption and infrastructure development.	Sustainability Lead, Planner, LAPC	Short-term
	2.3	Conduct a rate study to determine parking fees for charging stations that will encourage EV adoption and support infrastructure.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
	2.4	Create an EV and EV charger technology guide. Include ADA compliant charger siting information. Share information on EV's, EV technology, and Federal, State, Utility, and County EV programs and incentives available to community members.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
	2.5	Collaborate with partners on demonstration events for alternative transportation E-bikes, electric cars, public transit, etc.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
Goal 3. Conduct land use planning that supports smart growth principles to prevent urban sprawl, loss of farmlands, and loss of natural areas.	3.1	Assist with establishing and maintaining boundary agreements between municipalities and townships to conduct proactive land use planning for urban fringe areas and manage urban development.	Planner	Ongoing
	3.2	Incentivize or require new developments proposed near existing sanitary districts in unincorporated areas to connect to sanitary district water and sewer or facilities.	Planner, Surveyor	Short-term
	3.3	Explore innovative re-uses of reclaimed non-metallic mines, such as water treatment facilities, wetland banking, re-vegetation projects, agricultural use, landfill sites, and recreational areas.	Land Conservation, Planner, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.4	Conduct an environmentally informed zoning analysis to identify potential policy changes that could reduce possible environmental hazards some properties may face due to changing environmental conditions.	Land Information, Planner, Zoning Administrator	Mid-term
	3.5	Require or incentivize developments in shoreland areas to use green infrastructure such as bioswales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, rain water catchment areas, and other pervious surface strategies to reduce flood risk and minimize sediment entry into waterways.	Planner, Zoning, Land Conservation	Long-term
	3.6	Create a land bank initiative to acquire and assemble priority infill sites, preserve land for stormwater retention and flood mitigation, and create parks and dedicated public green spaces.	Planner, Sustainability Lead, Facilities	Long-term
	3.7	Encourage or require sidewalks and space for future street connections in new subdivisions, particularly those near existing sidewalks, trails, and developed areas.	Surveyor, Planner	Mid-term
	3.8	Update the Outdoor Recreation Plan to reflect current community needs, environmental considerations, and sustainable practices. Work with community groups to maintain and improve existing County recreational facilities, including but not limited to trails, parks, and ecological enhancements.	Facilities, Community Development Manager, Planer, Land Conservation	Ongonig
Element VI: Health, Safety, & Environmental Justice				
	1.1	Create a concise sustainability messaging guide that effectively communicates the importance and community benefits of sustainability.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing

Goal 1. Prepare for climate impacts to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the public.	1.2	Prohibit sump pump connections to public sanitary sewer systems to prevent flooding and sewer system backups. Inspect residences and businesses to enforce regulations.	Health	Short-term
	1.3	Enhance the coordination between local natural resource agencies and vector control programs to ensure populations of mosquitos, ticks, rodents, and other potential disease vectors are managed in a way that protects human health and ensures ecological integrity and vitality.	Health	Mid-term
	1.4	Educate residents about the health risks associated with the use of natural gas and propane-powered appliances.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Mid-term
	1.5	Partner with public institutions, such as libraries and schools, to provide sustainability education, programming, and resources to the public.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Ongoing
Goal 2. Protect sources of drinking water.	2.1	Join and promote the EPA's WaterSense Program or the Groundwater Guardian Green Sites program for water utilities to local businesses.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Short-term
	2.2	Develop a local wellhead protection plan and program to safeguard groundwater resources and ensure the long-term sustainability of drinking water sources.	Health, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.3	Require the establishment of "green zones" in new subdivisions to protect wells and groundwater resources. Implement guidelines for setback distances, land use restrictions, and best management practices that prioritize groundwater protection and sustainable development.	Health, Sustainability Lead, Surveyor, Planner	Short-term
	2.4	Collaborate with realtors, builders, county officials, and municipal governments to develop processes to inform current and potential residents of well contamination risks.	Health	Short-term
Goal 3. Establish programs, procedures, and facilities to support most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community.	3.1	Assist residents in signing up for state utility and heating bill assistance programs and home weatherization programs.	Human Services, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	3.2	Adapt public facilities, and develop new ones, to serve as resiliency hubs (community centers that can provide resources before, during, and after climate disasters and emergencies) following guidance from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). Establish a cooling center for vulnerable populations (i.e., those with limited mobility or lack of access to private vehicles).	Human Services, Facilities	Long-term
	3.3	Ensure that facilities serving vulnerable populations (e.g., senior centers, libraries, hospitals and clinics) are resilient to climate hazards and have established best practices for responding to emergencies such as flooding, power outages, and extreme heat. Assess facilities and provide guidance to service providers.	Emergency Management, Health, Human Services	Mid-term
	3.4	Ensure there are specific procedures in emergency response and recovery plans that address citizens most vulnerable to weather-related emergencies. These citizens may include those who require mobility assistance; are disproportionately affected by extended power outages, flooding, etc.; or are non-English speakers and readers.	Emergency Management, Health, Human Services	Ongoing
	3.5	Partner with community organizations to assist in communicating with, and supporting, vulnerable community members regarding extreme weather events. Support the creation of call trees and block networks to check on neighbors during/after extreme weather events, particularly when they involve grid disruption. Deploy point-in-time alert systems (e.g., Rave Alert, Nixle) to notify people of extreme weather events, periods of dangerous heat/cold, poor air or water quality, and other public health concerns, and refer them to resources on symptoms and prevention of climate-related illness.	Emergency Management, Human Services	Long-term
Goal 4: Identify, analyze, and prepare for potential risks and natural hazards resulting from changing climate conditions.	4.1.	Implement, and periodically update, the County's Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan to enhance resilience, reduce disaster risk, and protect vulnerable populations in the County. Expand projections and evaluations of potential local hazards due to climate change.	MRRPC, Emergency Management	Updating 2025 - 2026
	4.2.	Complete a detailed climate vulnerability assessment to identify areas facing the greatest climate risk. Use assessment results to create a map of key infrastructure that is vulnerable to climate change and a flash flood risk map to identify areas within the county that are particularly vulnerable. Implement risk reduction and share the results of the assessment, particularly among vulnerable populations and neighborhoods.	Emergency Management, Land Information, Health, Human Services, Sheriff	Mid-term
Element VII: Green Economy				
Goal 1. Prepare the local workforce for emerging career opportunities related to sustainability, electrification, and energy.	1.1	Establish a green jobs apprenticeship and internship program. Promote internship placement with local employers.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.2	Work with local partners and employers to develop a community green jobs electronic bulletin board promoting local green job opportunities.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.3	Prepare potential employment, training, and housing opportunities for anticipated climate migration.	Community Development	Long-term
Goal 2. Establish La Crosse County as a hub for emerging industries related to sustainability, electrification, and energy.	2.1	Develop a targeted marketing strategy to attract businesses within emerging industries related to sustainability.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Evaluate various circular economy models to determine their feasibility and strategies for local implementation.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.3	Establish programs and policies to encourage development of local businesses that use waste resources in the manufacture of their products. Consider development of a sustainable materials business park, similar to the Phoenix Resource Innovation Campus or the Kent County Sustainable Business Park.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.4	Develop partnerships with businesses to repurpose wastewater.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.5	Quantify the economic benefits of implementing the Community Sustainability Plan and attracting emerging industries.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	2.6	Encourage retailers and restaurants to donate, reduce, reuse, or compost their unsold food. Designate “zero-waste managers” to educate staff and help manage products reaching the end of their marketable life, donation of edible unsold products, and collection of organic waste for composting.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.1	Update existing County Community Development loans and grants to include energy efficiency improvements as eligible costs. Update grant scoring rubrics to include bonus points for project components related to energy efficiency and sustainability. Establish a grant specifically tailored to support businesses in implementing energy efficiency and sustainability-related projects.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Short-term

Goal 3. Support businesses that prioritize sustainability and aim to reduce the environmental impact of their operations.	3.2	Work with distribution and other refrigeration users in La Crosse to voluntarily phase out refrigerants with high ozone depletion and global warming potential in advance of US EPA phaseout. Explore rebates for improving refrigeration efficiency.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.3	Require recycling and diversion of waste created by demolition projects funded by the County's Housing Acquisition & Demolition Grant.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.4	Market the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program. Assist business owners with pursuit of PACE funds for energy upgrades.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	3.5	Promote commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs. Develop energy efficiency programs for businesses that don't own their own building. Use the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy Smart program as a model. Goal: 10% of commercial/ industrial buildings by 2030 achieving a 20% efficiency increase per location.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term

Climate Action Plan Implementation Guide (Part 1 - La Crosse County Government Operations)

Goal		Recommended Actions	Lead(s)	Direct GHG Reduction Impact (5 = Highest impact)	Timeline
Element 1: Organization Administration & Policy					
Goal 1: Engage employees on climate action and ensure they are climate-competent in their personal and professional lives.	1.1.	Create online employee training modules related to waste reduction, energy savings, and natural resources conservation.	IT, Facilities	1	Mid-term
	1.2.	Establish an employee sustainability policy and make sustainability part of new employee and new supervisor orientation.	HR, Planner	1	Mid-term
	1.3.	Include sustainability data and climate research in La Crosse County employee newsletters.	Planner, Marketing	1	Ongoing
Goal 2: Utilize new and existing partnerships to further sustainability in the region and foster new opportunities for collaboration.	2.1.	Advocate for state and federal policy improvements related to building codes, renewable energy, transit, and more (WLGCC).	Planner	5	Ongoing
	2.2.	Collaborate with the Climate Action Plan Staff Advisory Team to implement this plan. Plan implementation relies on multiple leads.	Planner, Staff Advisory Team	3	Ongoing
	2.3.	Establish a climate action work group with other local and regional governments to collaborate on shared ventures and share guidance.	Planner, Health	3	Short-term
	2.4.	Increase staff capacity to complete sustainability and climate-related projects. Consider partnering with WisCorps to hire LTEs.	Planner, Solid Waste, Facilities, &/or Land Conservation	4	Short-term
Goal 3: Allocate the funding necessary to achieve Climate Action Plan implementation.	3.1.	Make recommendations on funding related to sustainability initiatives during the annual budget process.	Planner, Solid Waste, Facilities, Land Conservation	1	Ongoing
	3.2.	Create savings reports that illustrate saved resources due to the sustainability efforts of the County.	Planner, Facilities, Finance	1	Ongoing
	3.3.	Establish a climate action and sustainability fund to support implementation of the climate action plan.	Planner, Administration	5	Short-term
	3.4.	Support staff with trainings and certifications related to sustainability and building efficiency principles that can be implemented to reduce County energy expenses.	Planner, Facilities	2	Short-term
Goal 4: Collect data that will help the County understand the impacts of its operations and progress towards sustainability goals.	4.1.	Continue to complete annual Sustainability Indicators Reports/GHG assessments to track reductions in the County's carbon footprint due to implementing climate action strategies.	Consultant, Sustainability Lead	2	Ongoing
	4.2.	Continue annual WDNR Green Tier Legacy Community Scoring to evaluate the sustainability of the County's operations relative to other member communities.	Planner, Intern	1	Annually
	4.3.	Perform a cost benefit analysis to determine which plan recommendations result in the greatest GHG reductions per dollar spent on climate mitigation and adaptation.	Consultant	1	Short-term
	4.4.	Assess emissions impacts and cost savings resulting from a variety of work options, including telecommuting, flex time, 4 day work week, etc. Amend policies to allow for work options that are proven to reduce energy bills and commuting emissions.	HR, Finance, Facilities, Consultant	3	Short-term
	4.5.	Complete a GHG inventory of Scope 3 emissions to quantify the indirect emissions from La Crosse County operations.	Consultant	1	MId-term
	4.6.	Complete emissions projections to estimate the County's timeline for achieving carbon neutrality and set realistic progress milestones.	Consultant, Sustainability Lead	1	Short-term
Element 2: Natural Resources					
Goal 1: Protect natural, undeveloped areas in the county to support climate resilience and offset carbon emissions.	1.1.	Plant native species of vegetation in County rights-of-way along county highways and town roads.	Land Conservation, Highway	2	Mid-term
	1.2.	Assess forestry and agricultural program carbon credits for their potential offsets with scope 1 and scope 3 of operational emissions.	Land Conservation	4	Long-term
	1.3.	Minimize mowing of County-owned properties and county road rights of way. Maintain bi-annual schedule for mowing county road rights-of-way.	Facilities, Highway	2	Ongoing
Goal 2: Reduce the impacts of the County's impervious surfaces and increase flood resilience.	2.1.	Reduce use of salt on roadways following snowfall, particularly to avoid soil, surface water, and groundwater contamination.	Highway, Facilities	1	Ongoing
	2.2.	Increase stormwater infiltration areas to reduce the over inundation of stormwater infrastructure and help recharge groundwater. Commit funds to projects that restore wetlands, increase greenspaces, and preserve natural areas.	Land Conservation, Facilities	1	Mid-term
	2.3.	Add natural landscaping to reduce the amount of lawn the County must mow or maintain. Remove impervious surfaces where possible.	Facilities	2	Mid-term
	2.4.	Design and implement shared stormwater infrastructure and conservation development designs at and near the landfill with adjacent landowners. Where feasible, emulate smaller, decentralized restored landscape features that can serve as wildlife habitat and park features.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	2	Long-term
Goal 3: Create and preserve positive ecological health and aesthetic beauty surrounding the landfill.	3.1.	Continue to work with neighboring municipalities to increase vegetative screening of the landfill.	Solid Waste	2	Ongoing
	3.2.	Continually promote ecological restoration of the landfill by establishing a program or event, and/or coordinating with an existing program or event, for the purpose of communicating the restoration vision for the landfill property. Implement the Landfill Master Land Use Plan and update it every 5 years based on ecological conditions.	Solid Waste	1	Updating 2024-25
	3.3.	When necessary, perform construction in a manner that creates more natural contours at the landfill, including defined drainageways that also enhance aesthetic beauty.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	1	Ongoing
	3.4.	Restore bedrock features and dry prairies in sand overburden materials at the landfill.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	2	Long-term
	3.5.	Explore opportunities to establish tree nurseries to produce stock for plantings, restore tree cover for forest and savanna restoration by direct seeding rather than planting individual trees, and continue tree test plots program at County-owned properties.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation, Facilities	4	Ongoing
Element 3: Commuting & Fleets					
Goal 1: Support and incentivize reductions in emissions from staff commuting. Reduce emissions from staff commuting by 20% by 2030.	1.1.	Publicize the discounted transit pass program for county employees to encourage more transit ridership and cut down emissions and downtown campus parking needs.	HR, Marketing, Community Development Manager	2	Ongoing
	1.2.	Conduct a downtown County parking study that analyzes emissions impacts, property value impacts, and alternative uses for parking areas.	Facilities, Consultant	1	Mid-term
	1.3.	Make County campuses more bike-friendly by providing amenities such as bike lockers, indoor storage, showers, etc.	Facilities	2	Short-term
	1.4.	Provide level 2 charging for staff that drive County EV fleet vehicles and domicile them at their private residences.	Sheriff, Highway	5	Mid-term

	1.5.	Explore incentive options for employees who commute to work by modes of transportation with lower environmental impact, such as carpooling or transit. For example, by allowing 15 more minutes for employees who ride the bus to get to work or provide free charging for employees driving electric vehicles.	HR, Administration, Facilities	3	Mid-term
Goal 2: Transition away from using GHG emitting fuels for County fleet vehicles. Obtain a zero-emission light and medium duty fleet by 2045.	2.1.	Reduce non-heavy duty fleet emissions by 30% by 2035 (50% electrification). Increase fuel efficiency of remaining fleet vehicles and off-road equipment by 10% by 2030.	Fleet Managers	5	Ongoing
	2.2.	Ensure all primary county buildings are EV ready with Level 2 chargers. Establish a budget for EV charging station installation. Develop an RFP template for EV charging infrastructure installation projects. Develop a time-of-use EV charging plan.	Facilities, Xcel	5	Short-term
	2.3.	Perform fleet assessments periodically to determine the cost effectiveness of non-fossil fuel alternatives.	Planner, Finance	1	
	2.4.	Develop an EV charging infrastructure implementation plan. Update the plan following fleet assessment. Develop vehicle replacements schedules and cost-benefit analysis procedures.	Planner, Facilities	1	Short-term
	2.5.	Create a centralized vehicle inventory and collect vehicle mileage and usage data annually to more accurately estimate GHG emissions and asset value depreciation.	Fleet Managers, Finance	2	Short-term
	2.6.	Using fleet data, create a county fleet maintenance plan and replacement standards. Consider acquisition of plug-in hybrid vehicle replacements for fleet vehicles there are not all EV alternatives for.	Fleet Managers, Finance	3	Mid-term
	2.7.	Conduct a short-term EV Sheriff patrol car pilot project.	Sheriff	1	Mid-term
	2.8.	Cover cost for vehicle maintenance staff to obtain EV maintenance certifications and continuing education to service La Crosse County fleets.	Highway, Administration	3	Mid-term
	2.9.	Continue to operate and fund SMRT Bus and explore electric bus options.	Community Development Manager	2	Ongoing
	2.10.	Use the AFLEET tool or similar product to estimate emissions from employee-owned vehicles used for County work. Perform a cost benefit analysis comparing whether purchasing EV or PHEV Health Department & Human Services Department fleets would be more cost effective and result in fewer emissions than reimbursing employees for use of their personal vehicles.	Health & Human Services	1	Mid-term
Element 4: Buildings & Energy					
Goal 1: Assess energy efficiency and analyze opportunities to increase building energy efficiency, capture cost savings, and reduce emissions.	1.1.	Maintain an inventory of refrigerants used at county buildings by type, quantity, and use so we can more accurately estimate the County's carbon footprint. Reduce use of refrigerants whenever possible.	Facilities	2	Short-term
	1.2.	For each metered county building, complete Energy Star's Sustainable Buildings Checklist. Consider performing building audits. Use Focus on Energy Commitment to Community programs and/or other resources to conduct energy assessments on municipal facilities that are identified as high energy users. Use the results to develop an action plan to increase efficiency and reduce energy costs.	Facilities	1	Short-term
	1.3.	Evaluate the feasibility of geothermal energy at new and existing county buildings.	Facilities	1	Ongoing
	1.4.	Assess the feasibility of generating geothermal energy from waste at the landfill to serve offsite users.	Consultant, Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	1	Annually
Goal 2: Incrementally increase building energy efficiency and reduce emissions. Improve building energy efficiency by 15% by 2030.	2.1.	Install simple energy efficiency upgrades such as, auto-shut off LED lights, smart power strips, and modern automated HVAC systems in all county buildings where feasible. Consider policy to reduce unattended electrical devices.	Facilities	4	Ongoing
	2.2.	Power County buildings with 100% renewable energy. Increase solar energy generation and use at county properties utilizing secondary sites evaluated in 2022 that were not funded by ARPA.	Facilities	5	Mid-term
	2.3.	Perform annual tune-ups to increase energy efficiency in our boilers and to take advantage of Focus on Energy rebates when replacing components.	Facilities	2	Annually
	2.4.	Apply for the US Department of Energy Clean Energy to Communities Program. Consider In-Depth Partnership, Peer-Learning Cohort, or Expert Match options to receive technical assistance for energy improvements.	Sustainability Lead	2	Applied 2024. Ongoing
	2.5.	Connect the Lakeview chiller system to a private well instead of municipal water to reduce long-term costs and increase efficiency.	Lakeview	3	Mid-term
	2.6.	Replace remaining T8 lighting with LED lighting at Lakeview.	Lakeview	3	Mid-term
Goal 3: Establish County building efficiency standards and create plans to facilitate a smooth transition to climate resilient buildings.	3.1.	Upgrade County SolSmart certification from Silver to Gold.	Planner, Intern	1	Short-term
	3.2.	Require new municipal buildings, and significant remodels of existing buildings, to be designed to achieve a sustainable building certification, such as an ENERGY STAR score of >75, or certification through LEED, WELL, Passive House, Net Zero Energy, Green Globes, or Living Building.	Facilities, Administration	5	Mid-term
	3.3.	Adopt succession plans for transitioning from natural gas to cleaner fuels. Implement the plans.	Facilities	5	Mid-term
	3.4.	Use alternative materials with lower amounts of embodied carbon when constructing new roads and buildings. Draft RFP language.	Facitliies, Highway	4	Mid-term
Goal 4: Improve the climate resilience of County owned and operated properties.	4.1.	Complete a GIS asset inventory to assess potential losses of county property and assets due to future flood events.	Land Information, Planner	1	Mid-term
	4.2.	Prepare or update internal emergency action plans to improve climate resilience.	Emegency Management, Sherriff	1	Short-term
	4.3.	Assess the feasibility of a downtown microgrid. Construct a downtown microgrid if feasible, to achieve cost savings on energy and ensure the County can function and respond to public threat and emergencies during grid outages and extreme weather events.	Planner	1	Short-term
Element 5: Waste and Pollution Mitigation					
Goal 1: Promote and enable waste reduction and diversion.	1.1.	Promote electronic transfers, receipting, and invoicing over paper whenever possible.	Administration, HR	2	Ongoing
	1.2.	Upload County water use and natural gas use to Energy Star Portfolio annually.	Facilities, Intern	1	Annually
	1.3.	Monitor developing technologies to minimize waste transport out of the county.	Solid Waste	1	Ongoing
	1.4.	Explore additional reuse programs for ash trees affected by the emerald ash borer.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	1	Short-term
	1.5.	Continuously identify new ways to maximize landfill air space (alternative waste processing, improve waste compaction, waste diversion/re-use opportunities, etc.).	Solid Waste	5	Ongoing
	1.6.	Increase pre-processing of waste through utilization of a materials recovery facility to maximize waste diversion to Xcel and minimize landfill airspace consumption. Increase landfill diversion rate from 30% to 50%	Solid Waste	5	Long-term
	1.7.	Review and update Solid Waste Management Plan every 5 years. Concurrently update the recommendations in this chapter to reflect Management Plan updates.	Solid Waste, Land Conservation	3	Every 5 Years
Goal 2: Establish policies and programs that reduce consumption, encourage circular practices, and discourage generation of waste and pollutants.	2.1.	Review and update the County procurement policy and incorporate sustainable purchasing preferences for the following: (a) cradle to cradle/circular practices, (b) lower life cycle costs, (c) quadruple bottom line, and (d) product stewardship. Develop template request for proposal language.	Finance	3	Short-term
	2.2.	Utilize 100% post-consumer content recycled paper, and other materials, whenever possible.	Finance	2	Ongoing
	2.3.	Electrify landscaping implements/tools.	Facilities, Highway	3	Mid-term
	2.4.	Cease the use of pesticides/herbicides in lawn care/landscaping activities.	Facilities	1	Short-term
	2.5.	Proactively establish solar PV panel and EV battery recycling facilities and protocols at the landfill in anticipation of increased use.	Solid Waste	3	Mid-term

Goal 3: Establish and maintain mutually beneficial public-private partnerships and ensure partnerships do not result in increased emissions.	3.1.	Continue and extend Solid Waste Department's partnerships with Xcel Energy and Gundersen Health to divert landfill emissions and extend the life of the landfill's airspace.	Solid Waste	5	Ongoing
	3.2.	Create a County committee specifically focused on sustainability, resource conservation, environmental health, and environmental justice concerns, etc. Consider hiring full-time sustainability staff.	Administration, Sustainability Lead	2	Mid-term
	3.3.	Utilize emerging technologies to accurately analyze fugitive emissions produced by the County Landfill.	Solid Waste, Consultant	4	Short-term
	3.4.	Following feasibility assessments of a landfill-Gundersen microgrid, assist with providing necessary infrastructure.	Solid Waste	3	Short-term

Climate Action Plan Implementation Guide (Part 2 - Community Sustainability)

Goal		Recommended Action	Staff Lead(s)	Timeline
Element I: Environmental Conservation				
Goal 1. Increase natural areas, green spaces, and carbon sinks to improve climate resilience.	1.1	Hold an annual tree sale or giveaway to increase greenspaces and carbon sinks. Provide maintenance information to participants. Establish programmatic goals.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Short-term
	1.2	Expand pollinator-friendly, native plantings county-wide. Establish a fund and partner with property owners to plant several acres annually.	Facilities	Short-term
	1.3	Provide financial support to, or collaborate with, land trusts to protect critical natural areas, particularly those in or near waterways. Incentivize dedication of lands for protection using conservation easements.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Mid-term
	1.4	Use federal, state, or non-profit programs that promote afforestation and purchase lands to improve continuity and expansion of the County Forests. Sequester carbon through planting on new vegetation in these areas.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Long-term
	1.5	Protect and restore natural systems that protect the community from flooding, including parks, wetlands, riparian areas, and natural drainage ways/swales. Conduct a GIS analysis to identify areas of opportunity.	Facilities, Land Conservation, Land Information	Ongoing
	1.6	Identify opportunities for increased forestry and forest management at county parks and county forests. Sequester carbon by planting more trees at county-owned properties.	Facilities, Land Conservation	Mid-term
Goal 2. Engage community members to share information and expand local conservation efforts.	2.1	Offer technical guidance and financial support to towns that wish to develop and implement stormwater utility policies to improve water management, reduce flooding risks, and enhance water quality.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.2	Assist with the Soak It Up urban stormwater management program, aimed at improving water quality and reducing runoff through green infrastructure and community engagement initiatives.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	2.3	Design and implement demonstration projects in collaboration with community members, such as planting native species in open spaces within business parks adjacent to the landfill, showcasing sustainable landscaping practices.	Land Conservation	Long-term
	2.4	Continue to partner with landowners in the Bostwick Creek and Coon Creek Watersheds to improve water quality.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
Goal 3. Reduce human impacts to natural areas.	3.1	Establish a grant program to support outdoor sustainability improvements by providing funds for composting bins, rain barrels, and planting trees.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.2	Educate community on integrated pest management practices and best management practices to minimize chemical use on lawns.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.3	Reduce salt used on roads as much as possible. Host Wisconsin Salt Wise workshops to educate salt applicators on best salt management practices. Require salt applicators to obtain a Salt-Wise Certification.	Facilities, Highway	Short-term
	3.4	Incentivize or require green infrastructure and minimum green space provisions to offset impacts of impervious surfaces constructed in new subdivisions. Encourage or require tree plantings in new subdivisions.	Planner, Surveyor	Mid-term
	3.5	Require large commercial and light industrial business developments to create comprehensive stormwater management plans that establish infiltration and pollutant reduction standards reduce flooding on neighboring properties.	Land Conservation, Planner	Mid-term
Goal 4. Analyze the health and quality of the local environment to identify and address barriers to local sustainability.	4.1	Conduct a GIS analysis to assess opportunities for rehabilitation of habitats, impaired water sources, soil, forests, and prairies.	Land Information	Mid-term
	4.2	Map stormwater conveyance systems within the County's Storm Sewer System area to analyze existing infrastructure.	Land Conservation	Short-term
	4.3	Continue to periodically update and implement the County's Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Expand funding and implementation where feasible.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	4.4	Conduct biannual water quality sampling of the County's 27 watersheds. Implement practices that reduce phosphorous and fecal coliforms in waterbodies.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
Element II: Agriculture & Local Food System				
Goal 1. Assist local producers with becoming climate resilient.	1.1	Promote agroforestry practices such as expanding tree canopies in livestock pastures to mitigate the effects of increasing temperatures. Establish a program to assist farmers in funding roofed farmyards for livestock.	Land Conservation, UW Extension	Mid-term
	1.2	Join the 4 per 1000 Initiative, which is an international initiative consisting of governments, foundations, research organizations, private companies, and farm and forestry organizations who are committed to improving soil carbon management, combating poverty and food insecurity, and mitigating climate change. Review the states-and-local-authorities list of action item commitments and take action that makes strategic sense related to this plan.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.3	Provide agricultural labor force training on growing, marketing, and preparing local, climate-resilient food.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
Goal 2. Continue to support producers in implementing soil and water conservation best management practices.	2.1	Implement the Wisconsin Transition to Grass program to help farmers improve soil, water, and livestock health.https://www.cleanwisconsin.org/bipartisan-transition-to-grass-legislation-will-help-wisconsin-farmers-improve-soil-water-and-livestock-health/?org=825&lvl=100&ite=2490&lea=3254849&ctr=0&par=1&trk=	Land Conservation	Short-term
	2.2	Showcase local conservation projects to agricultural producers and the public. These events will feature demonstrations of successful conservation practices, such as soil health management, water conservation techniques, and biodiversity enhancement.	Land Conservation	Ongoing
	2.3	Implement conservation education programs focused on agricultural best management practices, including methods for carbon capture and surface water management. Conduct farmer workshops on nutrient management planning to enhance crop yields, promote soil health, prevent runoff, and reduce environmental impacts.	UW Extension	Ongoing

	2.4	Commission a feasibility study to explore potential opportunities for a biomass “upcycling” facility that would produce value-added biomass products. The upcycling facility could include a regional manure composting operation, a mixed substrate composting operation, and a processing operation for biomass harvested from nutrient catch strips and agricultural land prairie strips.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
Goal 3. Improve production of, and access to, local, healthy foods.	3.1	Establish a Food Policy Council that will advise county officials and staff on enhancing local food supply chains and improving food access. The council will focus on creating local partnerships to increase access to affordable and nutritious food options in the community. Create a Food Systems Plan that addresses the production, distribution, value-added, marketing, end-market, and disposal of food, and charge the Food Policy Council with overseeing the plan’s implementation.	Sustainability Lead, Health, Community Development	Mid-term
	3.2	Identify and map any healthy "food deserts" within the community and leverage tools, such as grants, incentives, and partnerships with local businesses, to increase access to nutritious food options.	Health, Land Information	Mid-term
	3.3	Increase local access to plant-based foods by collaborating with retailers and food vendors to expand their offerings of affordable plant-based options, and by supporting initiatives such as community gardens, and partnerships with local producers. Create education opportunities that promote the health and environmental benefits of eating plant-based and low-carbon foods.	Health	Mid-term
Element III: Waste Reduction & Diversion				
Goal 1. Share waste disposal programs and County sustainability efforts with the public to increase access and awareness.	1.1	Increase public awareness of waste drop off sites in the towns and their regulations through education and outreach. Organize and standardize the system of municipal drop-off sites. Implement consistent guidelines, operational hours, and accepted materials across all sites to streamline user's experience. Develop clear signage and user-friendly instructions at each site.	Sustainability Lead, Solid Waste	Mid-term
	1.2	Establish an interpretive center at the current landfill office and provide interpretive signs, displays, materials and programs to explain the ecology of the planned restoration of prairies, savannas, and woodlands.	Solid Waste, Facilities, Land Conservation	Long-term
	1.3	Communicate information on waste reduction, recycling, and organics collection options available for residents. This information should be collected from, and based on, content shared by regional waste collecting, recycling, composting, and reuse organizations. Models include the City of Portland’s Be Cart Smart, and the City of Fayetteville’s Solid Waste Diversion and Recycling Education Plan.	TBD, Solid Waste	Ongoing
Goal 2. Develop new strategies for recycling and waste diversion to maximize the operational life of the La Crosse County Landfill.	2.1	Establish a "repair cafe" periodically at the landfill to provide community members with a space to bring broken items and receive assistance with repairs. These cafes will offer tools, materials, and volunteer experts who can help repair a variety of items, such as electronics, clothing, furniture, and household appliances. Determine feasibility of partnership and consolidation of multiple services to minimize impacts to carbon footprint.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Promote partnerships with local thrift stores and Habitat for Humanity to increase resource reuse. These collaborations can include joint donation drives, and coordinated efforts to repurpose and resell household items, building materials, and furniture.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.3	Facilitate the recycling of refrigerants and refrigeration equipment by establishing accessible recycling programs.	Solid Waste	Ongoing
	2.4	Establish a demolition materials facility to divert more demolition materials from being landfilled. Collaborate with municipalities to develop a construction and demolition waste management ordinance aimed at increasing the recycling of waste materials. Include deconstruction inspection as part of the demolition requirements for residential and commercial buildings. Remaining construction and demolition waste will be directed to the County recovery facility for proper disposal.	Solid Waste, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.5	Offer technical assistance and evaluate ways to expand the County's successful single stream recycling program.	TBD, Solid Waste	Mid-term
	2.6	Ensure community-wide access to composting sites. Consider providing a curbside collection composting service. Promote the use of existing composting programs and facilities.	TBD, Solid Waste	Mid-term
Goal 4. Analyze landfilled waste to better understand local waste streams.	4.1	Perform a study to determine how much waste could be diverted from the landfill for combustion by Xcel Energy.	Solid Waste	Short-term
	4.2	Develop a waste audit and diversion assistance program, helping businesses establish tracking and reporting waste streams; identify reduction, diversion, and beneficial use opportunities; and identify financing to improve businesses' bottom-line.	Solid Waste	Mid-term
	4.3	Partner with waste haulers to inventory town recycling drop off tonnages. Explore ways to increase recycling participation and capacity.	Solid Waste	Mid-term
	4.4	Conduct a feasibility study on implementing 'landfill mining' to divert more waste and generate recycling revenue. This study should analyze the composition and characteristics of landfill waste, potential environmental impacts, technological requirements, and economic viability.	Solid Waste	Long-term
Element IV: Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy				
Goal 1. Increase use of low-emission, renewable energy.	1.1	Coordinate a group-buy program for solar installations, heat pumps, and home electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to offer bulk pricing discounts. Goal: >10 homes annually.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.2	Advocate for proactive language for residential and commercial uses within ordinances that reduce ambiguity and streamline the permitting process for renewable energy. For example, add language to the zoning ordinance to specify that ground-mounted solar installations are exempt from being counted towards the estimation of allowed accessory structure size on a property.	Planner, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	1.3	Support individual and institutional solar energy projects by implementing incentives, providing technical assistance, conducting educational campaigns, and streamlining permitting processes.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.4	Support towns in acquiring solar energy systems on town properties by providing technical assistance and incentives.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	1.5	Research and inventory HOA documents and restrictive covenants which illegally restrict the use of solar use in neighborhoods.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.6	Evaluate the feasibility of partnering with farmers and local utilities to create a manure biodigester cooperative that reduces methane emissions, significantly improves the nutrient uptake speed of manure spreading, reduces risk of surface water contamination, financially supports local farmers, assists farmers with WDNR nutrient management compliance, and produces energy for the community.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.1	Establish a sustainability resource work group for builders and HVAC companies to collaborate on sustainable building practices, energy-efficient HVAC systems, and renewable energy integration.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Promote weatherization grant programs to increase public awareness and participation.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Ongoing

Goal 2. Improve building energy efficiency, lower energy bills, and reduce emissions from building energy use.	2.3	Promote use of Focus On Energy programs, such as its home energy rebate program. Establish a small local grant program to promote home energy efficiency upgrades, including HVAC/heat pumps, weatherization, efficiency windows, insulation, electric stoves, and electric panel upgrades.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	2.4	Communicate available energy efficiency incentives to residents, focusing on low-income and minority residents. Contract with an organization to reduce the cost for low-income residents to receive professional home energy audits and recommendations for energy use reduction and monitoring. Develop a program to identify and implement measures that increase the durability, safety, and efficiency of their homes. Goal: 10 households annually, each achieving 15% energy use reductions.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
Goal 3. Improve the resilience of the electrical grid as climate changes and demand for electricity increases.	3.1	Work with stakeholders to support utility efforts to modernize the electric distribution grid in the County. Promote green power purchase options, such as those provided by Xcel Energy's "Renewable Connect". Collaborate on promotion and education of available options.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.2	Develop a protocol for calculating county-wide GHG emissions. The County should develop a baseline for these emissions as soon as possible and then track the emissions to estimate the emission reductions resulting from initiatives.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.3	Address issues with energy time-of-use/availability at peak usage by increasing storage capacity. Help property owners address hurdles to implementation of energy storage infrastructure including collaboration to develop incentive programs and permit streamlining if determined to be a significant constraint. Explore partnerships with US Department of Energy, NREL, LNBL, SolSmart and other resources.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	3.4	Pursue US Department of Energy or Wisconsin Public Service Commission Funding to complete a comprehensive rural energy plan, renewable resource planning, and building energy audits for towns interested in reducing their energy bill and improving resilience.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
Element V: Land Use & Transportation				
Goal 1. Remove barriers to use of transit and active transportation.	1.1	Collaborate with the La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Shared Ride, SMRT, and other transit providers to enhance and expand their systems, with a focus on improving transit accessibility, frequency, and coverage across the county.	SMRT	Ongoing
	1.2	Collaborate with the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) to strategically plan and fund enhanced connections for alternative transportation throughout the urban towns, focusing on improving infrastructure for pedestrians, bicycles, and electric vehicles.	SMRT, Planner	Ongoing
	1.3	Develop a public-facing resource that maps all bike routes and pedestrian paths throughout the county.	Land Information, Planner, LAPC	Short-term
	1.4	Identify locations for “Park & Rides” in rural parts of the county. Explore feasibility of micro-transit and other solutions for rural community that connect to existing transportation infrastructure.	SMRT, Planner, LAPC	Mid-term
	1.5	Regularly update Safe Routes to School plans and implement strategies that support safe active transportation and bus transportation to schools. Create bicycle safety education materials through public workshops and web content.	Health, Planner, LAPC	Ongoing
	1.6	Partner with municipalities and the Highway Department to improve connectivity of bikes and trail systems between rural and urban communities. Expand the shoulders of select county-maintained roads to accommodate safe travel for bicycles and pedestrians.	Highway, LAPC	Long-term
Goal 2. Prepare for adoption of new, low emission transportation technologies.	2.1	Collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and local utilities to establish public electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure along corridors throughout the county. Explore grant opportunities to secure funding for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, including public and private charging stations. When installing EV charging infrastructure, design for future capacity needs by considering anticipated growth in electric vehicle adoption.	Sustainability Lead, Planner, LAPC	Mid-term
	2.2	Collaborate with neighboring governments on regional electric vehicle (EV) planning to develop comprehensive strategies that support EV adoption and infrastructure development.	Sustainability Lead, Planner, LAPC	Short-term
	2.3	Conduct a rate study to determine parking fees for charging stations that will encourage EV adoption and support infrastructure.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
	2.4	Create an EV and EV charger technology guide. Include ADA compliant charger siting information. Share information on EV's, EV technology, and Federal, State, Utility, and County EV programs and incentives available to community members.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
	2.5	Collaborate with partners on demonstration events for alternative transportation E-bikes, electric cars, public transit, etc.	Sustainability Lead, LAPC	Short-term
Goal 3. Conduct land use planning that supports smart growth principles to prevent urban sprawl, loss of farmlands, and loss of natural areas.	3.1	Assist with establishing and maintaining boundary agreements between municipalities and townships to conduct proactive land use planning for urban fringe areas and manage urban development.	Planner	Ongoing
	3.2	Incentivize or require new developments proposed near existing sanitary districts in unincorporated areas to connect to sanitary district water and sewer or facilities.	Planner, Surveyor	Short-term
	3.3	Explore innovative re-uses of reclaimed non-metallic mines, such as water treatment facilities, wetland banking, re-vegetation projects, agricultural use, landfill sites, and recreational areas.	Land Conservation, Planner, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.4	Conduct an environmentally informed zoning analysis to identify potential policy changes that could reduce possible environmental hazards some properties may face due to changing environmental conditions.	Land Information, Planner, Zoning Administrator	Mid-term
	3.5	Require or incentivize developments in shoreland areas to use green infrastructure such as bioswales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, rain water catchment areas, and other pervious surface strategies to reduce flood risk and minimize sediment entry into waterways.	Planner, Zoning, Land Conservation	Long-term
	3.6	Create a land bank initiative to acquire and assemble priority infill sites, preserve land for stormwater retention and flood mitigation, and create parks and dedicated public green spaces.	Planner, Sustainability Lead, Facilities	Long-term
	3.7	Encourage or require sidewalks and space for future street connections in new subdivisions, particularly those near existing sidewalks, trails, and developed areas.	Surveyor, Planner	Mid-term
	3.8	Update the Outdoor Recreation Plan to reflect current community needs, environmental considerations, and sustainable practices. Work with community groups to maintain and improve existing County recreational facilities, including but not limited to trails, parks, and ecological enhancements.	Facilities, Community Development Manager, Planer, Land Conservation	Ongonig
Element VI: Health, Safety, & Environmental Justice				
	1.1	Create a concise sustainability messaging guide that effectively communicates the importance and community benefits of sustainability.	Sustainability Lead	Ongoing

Goal 1. Prepare for climate impacts to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the public.	1.2	Prohibit sump pump connections to public sanitary sewer systems to prevent flooding and sewer system backups. Inspect residences and businesses to enforce regulations.	Health	Short-term
	1.3	Enhance the coordination between local natural resource agencies and vector control programs to ensure populations of mosquitos, ticks, rodents, and other potential disease vectors are managed in a way that protects human health and ensures ecological integrity and vitality.	Health	Mid-term
	1.4	Educate residents about the health risks associated with the use of natural gas and propane-powered appliances.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Mid-term
	1.5	Partner with public institutions, such as libraries and schools, to provide sustainability education, programming, and resources to the public.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Ongoing
Goal 2. Protect sources of drinking water.	2.1	Join and promote the EPA's WaterSense Program or the Groundwater Guardian Green Sites program for water utilities to local businesses.	Sustainability Lead, Health	Short-term
	2.2	Develop a local wellhead protection plan and program to safeguard groundwater resources and ensure the long-term sustainability of drinking water sources.	Health, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.3	Require the establishment of "green zones" in new subdivisions to protect wells and groundwater resources. Implement guidelines for setback distances, land use restrictions, and best management practices that prioritize groundwater protection and sustainable development.	Health, Sustainability Lead, Surveyor, Planner	Short-term
	2.4	Collaborate with realtors, builders, county officials, and municipal governments to develop processes to inform current and potential residents of well contamination risks.	Health	Short-term
Goal 3. Establish programs, procedures, and facilities to support most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community.	3.1	Assist residents in signing up for state utility and heating bill assistance programs and home weatherization programs.	Human Services, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	3.2	Adapt public facilities, and develop new ones, to serve as resiliency hubs (community centers that can provide resources before, during, and after climate disasters and emergencies) following guidance from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN). Establish a cooling center for vulnerable populations (i.e., those with limited mobility or lack of access to private vehicles).	Human Services, Facilities	Long-term
	3.3	Ensure that facilities serving vulnerable populations (e.g., senior centers, libraries, hospitals and clinics) are resilient to climate hazards and have established best practices for responding to emergencies such as flooding, power outages, and extreme heat. Assess facilities and provide guidance to service providers.	Emergency Management, Health, Human Services	Mid-term
	3.4	Ensure there are specific procedures in emergency response and recovery plans that address citizens most vulnerable to weather-related emergencies. These citizens may include those who require mobility assistance; are disproportionately affected by extended power outages, flooding, etc.; or are non-English speakers and readers.	Emergency Management, Health, Human Services	Ongoing
	3.5	Partner with community organizations to assist in communicating with, and supporting, vulnerable community members regarding extreme weather events. Support the creation of call trees and block networks to check on neighbors during/after extreme weather events, particularly when they involve grid disruption. Deploy point-in-time alert systems (e.g., Rave Alert, Nixle) to notify people of extreme weather events, periods of dangerous heat/cold, poor air or water quality, and other public health concerns, and refer them to resources on symptoms and prevention of climate-related illness.	Emergency Management, Human Services	Long-term
Goal 4: Identify, analyze, and prepare for potential risks and natural hazards resulting from changing climate conditions.	4.1.	Implement, and periodically update, the County's Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan to enhance resilience, reduce disaster risk, and protect vulnerable populations in the County. Expand projections and evaluations of potential local hazards due to climate change.	MRRPC, Emergency Management	Updating 2025 - 2026
	4.2.	Complete a detailed climate vulnerability assessment to identify areas facing the greatest climate risk. Use assessment results to create a map of key infrastructure that is vulnerable to climate change and a flash flood risk map to identify areas within the county that are particularly vulnerable. Implement risk reduction and share the results of the assessment, particularly among vulnerable populations and neighborhoods.	Emergency Management, Land Information, Health, Human Services, Sheriff	Mid-term
Element VII: Green Economy				
Goal 1. Prepare the local workforce for emerging career opportunities related to sustainability, electrification, and energy.	1.1	Establish a green jobs apprenticeship and internship program. Promote internship placement with local employers.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.2	Work with local partners and employers to develop a community green jobs electronic bulletin board promoting local green job opportunities.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	1.3	Prepare potential employment, training, and housing opportunities for anticipated climate migration.	Community Development	Long-term
Goal 2. Establish La Crosse County as a hub for emerging industries related to sustainability, electrification, and energy.	2.1	Develop a targeted marketing strategy to attract businesses within emerging industries related to sustainability.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	2.2	Evaluate various circular economy models to determine their feasibility and strategies for local implementation.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.3	Establish programs and policies to encourage development of local businesses that use waste resources in the manufacture of their products. Consider development of a sustainable materials business park, similar to the Phoenix Resource Innovation Campus or the Kent County Sustainable Business Park.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.4	Develop partnerships with businesses to repurpose wastewater.	Sustainability Lead	Long-term
	2.5	Quantify the economic benefits of implementing the Community Sustainability Plan and attracting emerging industries.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	2.6	Encourage retailers and restaurants to donate, reduce, reuse, or compost their unsold food. Designate “zero-waste managers” to educate staff and help manage products reaching the end of their marketable life, donation of edible unsold products, and collection of organic waste for composting.	Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.1	Update existing County Community Development loans and grants to include energy efficiency improvements as eligible costs. Update grant scoring rubrics to include bonus points for project components related to energy efficiency and sustainability. Establish a grant specifically tailored to support businesses in implementing energy efficiency and sustainability-related projects.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Short-term

Goal 3. Support businesses that prioritize sustainability and aim to reduce the environmental impact of their operations.	3.2	Work with distribution and other refrigeration users in La Crosse to voluntarily phase out refrigerants with high ozone depletion and global warming potential in advance of US EPA phaseout. Explore rebates for improving refrigeration efficiency.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term
	3.3	Require recycling and diversion of waste created by demolition projects funded by the County's Housing Acquisition & Demolition Grant.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Short-term
	3.4	Market the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program. Assist business owners with pursuit of PACE funds for energy upgrades.	Community Development, Sustainability Lead	Ongoing
	3.5	Promote commercial and industrial energy efficiency audit and upgrade programs. Develop energy efficiency programs for businesses that don't own their own building. Use the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy Smart program as a model. Goal: 10% of commercial/ industrial buildings by 2030 achieving a 20% efficiency increase per location.	Sustainability Lead	Mid-term