



## 2023 Annual Report Sustainability Commission Ypsilanti, Michigan

### INTRODUCTION

The Sustainability Commission of the City of Ypsilanti is governed by the City of Ypsilanti's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2, Section 171, allocates the following tasks to the Sustainability Commission:

- a. To create a model of sustainability through efforts to advocate, educate and promote the social, economic and environmental health of the community now and into the future.
- b. To broaden the lens and scope of energy and environmental needs in the future such as wind, solar, clean air, water and improving infrastructure.
- c. To recognize natural resources as chief assets of the City of Ypsilanti and encouraging responsible stewardship of these assets.
- d. To collaborate with citizens, employees, employers, service providers and other governmental agencies and educational agencies to share ideas.
- e. To create a Sustainability Plan.
- f. To review the City of Ypsilanti's Climate Action Plan, Alternate Fuel Policy, the Michigan Green Communities Challenge, and other plans and policies and to continue the work of said plans and policies.
- g. To prioritize sustainability policies.

In 2023, the Sustainability Commission's membership was as follows:

Beth Gibbons (chair)	Takunia Collins
Nancy Heine (vice-chair)	Liz Ratzloff
Julia Bayha	Shannon Baer
Bryan Foley	Devin Shelton (joined May 2023)

There was one vacant regular seat and two vacant youth seats as of December 2023.

As a best practice and per §2-174(e), the Commission shall provide an annual report to City Council. This report discusses,

1. The operations of the Commission during the past year
2. The status of any on-going activities, including the Michigan Green Communities Challenge
3. The progress towards the goals laid out in the Climate Action Plan and Energy Plan
4. Recommendations to the legislative body related to sustainability

### SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION OPERATIONS

The Sustainability Commission held regular monthly meetings during 2023; these meetings were held in-person with public participation in person and via Zoom. No meetings were held in July, per schedule; the Commission did not have a quorum to meet in August and December.

The Commission passed a resolution to take on the duties and responsibilities of being the City's Bee City USA Committee. The City won Gold in the 2023 Michigan Green Communities Challenge. Commissioner Bayha led the City's fourth annual Earth Day event. Commissioner Gibbons contributes regularly to the City's monthly newsletter with the Sustainability Corner. Commissioner Foley advanced creating sustainable and green spaces. Commissioner Collins educates youth on history through agricultural practices, connecting the past and the future. The Commission learned about such topics and activities as regional recycling efforts, changes to the City's curbside recycling program, and federal sustainability and grant opportunities.

The Commission acknowledges and appreciates work taking place across the City advancing Sustainability Plan goals including: the next phase of dam removal work, including the mussel survey and relocation; the implementation of the Resilient Washtenaw plan; and the DDA's and City's solar rebate program.

Included in this year's annual report is the implementation matrix from the adopted Sustainability Plan.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

The Sustainability Commission plans to focus on implementation of the following Sustainability Plan goals:

- Continue to recruit additional members, including youth members.
- Continue to conduct outreach & engagement on social media and welcome the community to our work and our meetings.
- Supporting a resilience hub network that supports 48197 & 48198.
- Participate in the Michigan Green Communities Challenge for 2024.

## **ACTION**

The Sustainability Commission adopted this report at its special February 2024 meeting and approved transmittal to City Council.

**Plan Implementation Matrix**

Capital Improvements Plan = CIP; Zoning Ordinance = ZO; CED = Community & Economic Development; DPS = Department of Public Services

	Timeframe	Lead Party	Status
<b>Sustainability Goals: Earth</b>			
<b>GOAL: Eliminate new instances of soil contamination and responsibly deal with the legacy of existing polluted sites</b>			
Explore creation of an overlay zone, or other zoning or building regulations, to control the types of uses that may be permitted in areas with soils that would allow for easy transmission of contamination or uses that have a high risk of contamination near ecologically sensitive areas, such as waterways.	Mid	CED	
Research and confirm existing sites of contamination with EGLE	MID	CED	
Use Brownfield TIF capture to fund remediation of sites that may be redeveloped.	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to work with the Washtenaw County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to remediate sites.	ONGOING	CED	
Explore and pursue grant opportunities to remediate sites that may not be good candidates for commercial redevelopment or that pose an immediate threat.	ONGOING	CED	
<b>GOAL: Ensure buildings and infrastructure are constructed in a manner complementary to soil structure, slopes, and drainage.</b>			
Make soil information available to all, and directly provide information on soil structure to those who choose to build a new structure that requires a foundation.	ONGOING	CED	
Incorporate green infrastructure into planned capital improvement projects wherever possible, and identify potential sites for demonstration projects.	ONGOING	DPS	
Strengthen zoning protections to limit erosion in areas of steep slopes.	NEAR	CED	
<b>Sustainability Goals: Water</b>			
<b>GOAL: Protect the watershed from further contamination.</b>			
Consider a sensitive features overlay zone providing a buffer around the Huron River and Paint Creek that provides site and use regulations tailored to the proximity to these waterbodies	MID	CED	
Invest in consistent enforcement for compliance to the sensitive feature overlay zoning district	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to pursue updates to the zoning ordinance, such as tree protection regulations, that preserve and improve vegetation that can mitigate stormwater impacts.	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to support the work of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner and other partners to educate members of the public, particularly single-family homeowners, on stormwater issues.	ONGOING	DPS	
Monitor adherence to the City's phosphorous fertilizer and tar sealcoat ordinances for effectiveness.	ONGOING		
Work with Washtenaw County Environmental Health to research the status of remaining private wells and provide resources and recommendations for testing water quality to property owners	ONGOING		
<b>GOAL: Preserve and expand the City's capacity to deal with heavy rainfall to mitigate negative effects on people and property.</b>			
Incorporate capacity upgrades for grey stormwater management into the CIP based on predictions for greater precipitation	ONGOING	DPS	
Update the flood maps, including FIRM, based on climate projections and changes to the river channel since the FIRM formulation in the 1970s	LONG	DPS	

	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Status</b>
Investigate an equitable stormwater fee schedule that encourages converting impervious to pervious surfaces and proper use of rain barrels or other detention/retention systems.	MID	COUNCIL/ DPS	
Consider banning basements or enforce floodplain standards in boundaries where the soil has limited capacity to handle stormwater	LONG	CED	
Develop a Stormwater Management Plan	MID	DPS	
Continue to pursue the removal of the Peninsular Dam	ONGOING	MANAGER	
Continue to maintain City lands that are in the flood zones and vacant for stormwater and floodwater mitigation.	ONGOING	VARIOUS	
Pursue GSI projects in the City parks, particularly in the flood zones.	ONGOING	DPS	
Pursue conservation &/or access easements along the Huron River.	ONGOING	CED	
Explore offering incentives to property owners to retrofit existing buildings and site improvements with stormwater-friendly infrastructure, including rain gardens.	LONG		
Explore the potential to equitably enact a stormwater fee structure to encourage private retrofit stormwater infiltration and detention infrastructure	LONG	COUNCIL/ DPS	
<b>GOAL: Promote resources for water conservation and testing to ensure access efficiency upgrades and clean water</b>			
Work with YCUA to develop home and business water efficiency financing programs	MID		
Promote Great Lake Water Authority program WRAP to perform conservation audits and funds for repairs to help reduce low-income households reduce water bills	ONGOING		
Collaborate with YCUA on water conservation and infrastructure improvement projects.	ONGOING		
<b>Sustainability Goals: Energy</b>			
<b>GOAL: Decrease the community's emissions by 171,310 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030.</b>			
Work with the City of Ann Arbor to investigate bulk buying of renewable energy through the Community Choice Aggregation Legislation.	ONGOING		
Purchase renewable energy credits (RECs) for City operations.	LONG		
Promote state policies, incentives, grants, and Community Energy Management programs that encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy to property owners.	ONGOING		
Promote Washtenaw County's weatherization program for low-income homeowners.	ONGOING	CED	
Work with community stakeholders to initiate an energy competition. The university and City can partner together to challenge another city and university to an energy reduction competition.	LONG		
Implement an inter-departmental site plan review process with attention to sustainability-related strategies such as energy use and efficiency, generation and offsetting of emissions, on-site water management and infiltration, etc.	ONGOING	CED	
Investigate the feasibility of a microgrid.	LONG		
Review and incorporate aspects of the International Dark Sky Model ordinance to reduce energy waste (i.e. motion activated lighting on municipal buildings)	MID	DPS	
Participate in or sign-on to regional, national, or international commitments to energy, climate, and sustainability including but not limited to the Paris Climate Agreement, the Sierra Club's "Ready for 100" pledge, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.	SHORT	COUNCIL	

	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Status</b>
Develop an electric charging vehicle infrastructure strategy	MID	DPS	
Create a green rental certification program to encourage energy-efficient improvements	MID	CED	
Work with the HDC to incorporate historically compatible fixtures that are dark sky compliant	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to pursue policies and projects that improve nonmotorized transportation.	ONGOING	DPS/CED	
Continue to encourage solar energy installations throughout the City.	ONGOING	CED	
Partner with other agencies, such as YCUA , DTE, and MiSaves to provide education and incentives for energy use reductions, both residential and commercial.	ONGOING		
Continue to participate in local, regional, national, and international efforts for climate mitigation and adaptation.	ONGOING		
Continue membership in communities such as ICLEI that help support local efforts to combat and adapt to climate change.	ONGOING		
<b>GOAL: Decrease government operation emission in support of attaining citywide net zero by 2030</b>			
Establish an Energy Manager position to be responsible for the following duties:	MID	MANAGER	
o Improve knowledge of energy management among city staff and appointed officials among staff			
o Create a data-driven system that is replicable over time, and includes annual forecasts, benchmarks for energy use reductions, and an internal reporting protocol			
o Work with the Sustainability Commission to produce an annual report that highlights where emission reductions and procedural improvements have been made			
o Improve communications with facility managers, utility providers, and relevant contractors to resolve issues quickly			
o Increase outreach to and participation of industrial and commercial customers in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects			
o Research and utilize the most efficient equipment available			
Continue to incorporate renewable energy into the energy portfolio of each government building including back-up generation	ONGOING	DPS	
Re-establish the City's revolving loan fund for energy efficiency projects.	MID	MANAGER	
Conduct a GHG inventory every 5 years using input from 2012 & 2018 findings in the ICLEI GHG framework	LONG	DPS	
Improve fleet fuel efficiency with clean diesel, alternative fuels, and electrification.	ONGOING	DPS	
Publicly report on progress made toward energy goals.	ONGOING	DPS/CED/MANAGER	
Continue to make energy-efficiency improvements to City owned facilities	ONGOING	DPS	
<b>ENERGY: Reduce the amount of waste generated in Ypsilanti that enters landfills</b>			
Conduct a waste audit to understand the baseline composition of the waste stream at the municipal operations and community level	SHORT	DPS	
Help publicize local re-use opportunities, such as the Buy Nothing Project and Freecycle.	ONGOING	CED	
Implement an educational campaign on existing recycling and composting options	SHORT	DPS	
Expand recycling to public spaces and all City facilities by placing artful, educational, and engaging waste sorting stations throughout the community	MID	DPS	

	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Status</b>
Create a coordinated recycling system that has a one stop for difficult-to-recycle materials including electronics and refrigerant management	LONG	DPS	
Increase access to curbside recycling services to multi-family units	MID	DPS	
Define Zero Waste for Ypsilanti using the Zero Waste hierarchy. Set a goal for City operations to be zero waste (excluding medical waste) by a specific date with annual benchmarks.	LONG		
Require that any events with a City permit provide for recycling, compost, and provide a discount for Zero Waste events	LONG		
Require government operations to use durable or compostable materials	MID		
Implement a pilot program for a municipal kitchen compost system with high food-waste generators.	LONG		
Investigate a partnership with a commercial-scale compost operation	MID		
Pilot curbside community composting services for leftover food	LONG		
Investigate funding sources to bring down the cost of a biodigester	MID		
Permit onsite composting of mulched leaves	DONE		
Continue to explore options to improve recycling and composting opportunities within the City and with partners.	ONGOING	DPS	
<b>Sustainability Goals: Biodiversity</b>			
<b>GOAL: Expand and protect natural habitats</b>			
Incorporate model language for rewilding landscaping into the city's ordinance	SHORT		
Create informational materials for property owners on preferred and prohibited plants	SHORT	SUSTAINABILITY	
Rezone undeveloped land on Mansfield and on Clark to a more protective zoning district	MID	CED	
Continue to support the local food system	ONGOING	CED	
Support traffic calming and other infrastructure design that help reduce animal road crossing mortality	ONGOING	DPS/CED	
Promote "bird safe" designs and "lights out" programs during migratory season	SHORT	CED	
Consider programs for habitat improvement such as bat houses, pollinator gardens, and others as they develop			
Train inspectors to spot wildlife-friendly plants to prevent their removal	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to monitor health of the city's wetlands and work with the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation to protect them	ONGOING		
Partner with the County to inventory land that could be nominated for NAPP			
Encourage warm light to protect insects	ONGOING	CED	
Encourage use of native and climate-change adapted plants wherever possible	ONGOING		
Work with DTE to provide warmer, more night-sky friendly public lighting.	ONGOING	DPS	
Review the existing lighting ordinance and update to explicitly permit motion-sensitive lighting.	SHORT	CED	
Review and incorporate aspects of the Dark Sky Model Lighting Ordinance to reduce negative effects on insects and migratory birds	MID	CED	

	Timeframe	Lead Party	Status
<b>GOAL: To preserve and expand a resilient tree canopy</b>			
Implement a tree preservation ordinance	MID	CED & DPS	
Plant additional street trees and trees in parks in accordance with the Urban Forest Management Plan, with a particular prioritization of those sites indicated by the Tree Equity map.	ONGOING	DPS	
Increase and diversify the public tree stock according to the Urban Forest Management Plan	ONGOING	DPS	
Invest in tree maintenance	ONGOING	COUNCIL	
Continue the City's Arbor Day Tree City USA designation	ONGOING	DPS	
Coordinate tree planting efforts with sidewalk maintenance efforts and considerations.	ONGOING	DPS	
Update street planting guidelines to prioritize tap roots species and vary pit size by species	SHORT	DPS	Complete
<b>Sustainability Goals: Complete Neighborhoods</b>			
<b>GOAL: Maintain and expand transportation options including the development of bicycle, pedestrian, and sharing networks.</b>			
Implement a parking cash-out alternative benefit option for City employees	SHORT	HR	
Prioritize transit-oriented development	ONGOING	CED	
Partner with the DDA and AATA to provide a discounted transit pass as an alternative to downtown parking permits	MID	DPS	
Encourage corporate sponsorship of transit passes and infrastructure to encourage employee bus and bikeshare ridership	MID	DPS	
Consider pursuing car, scooter, or bike-sharing programs with Eastern Michigan University as a partner.	ONGOING	CED	
Close sidewalk gaps	ONGOING	DPS	
Add bicycle lanes to major thoroughfares and trunklines	ONGOING	DPS	
Retain the mix of uses within each corridor but allow them throughout the area.	ONGOING	CED	
Restore two-way function to Cross, Huron, and Hamilton Streets.	LONG	DPS	
Separate Cross and Washtenaw for vehicle traffic.	LONG	DPS	
Restore Harriet Street as the Main Street of adjacent neighborhoods.	LONG	CED	
Prioritize pedestrians at crosswalks, and investigate where pedestrian walk signs can be made automatic	MID	DPS	
Work with MDOT to make state-owned roads more accessible to nonmotorized users	ONGOING	DPS	
Coordinate with Townships and WCPRC on Border to Border (B2B) trail development	ONGOING	DPS	
Encourage police enforcement and legislative support for bike and pedestrian safety	ONGOING	YPD	
Improve neighborhood walkability by improving sidewalk connectivity and conditions. Prioritize the improvement of nonmotorized connections that link neighborhoods and job centers.	ONGOING	DPS	
Continue to support the development of intercity and commuter rail	ONGOING	MANAGER	
Coordinate citizens to advocate for slower traffic speeds on state owned corridors	ONGOING		

	Timeframe	Lead Party	Status
<b>GOAL: Incentivize energy efficient and socially responsible development</b>			
Consider density bonuses, particularly on transit and commercial corridors, in exchange for developers meeting criteria that achieve city goals	MID	CED	
Incentivize US Green Building Council's LEED for Neighborhood Development standard for new development	MID	CED	
Develop a Green Business/Neighborhood Certification program	LONG	CED	
Seek affordable housing development and identify parcels where it can locate near services	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to prioritize infill development	ONGOING	CED	
Continue to provide a variety of housing options, including affordable housing and missing middle housing.	ONGOING	CED	
Provide a Sustainability Commissioner liaison to a neighborhood interested in developing an eco-district	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
<b>GOAL: Increase neighborhood resiliency during times of disruption.</b>			
Identify walkable/bikeable neighborhood resource centers throughout the City, such as community centers, churches, schools, or social clubs.	SHORT		
Work with these identified resources to increase their capacity to serve as emergency resource centers, including backup power generation, emergency shelter, and food and resource distribution.	MID		
Work with the Health Department and other partners to make resources available for community leaders who wish for their homes to serve as small-scale resources during disruptions.	ONGOING		
<b>Sustainability Goals: Communication</b>			
<b>GOAL: Play a leading role in educating Ypsilanti residents on sustainability topics.</b>			
Implement an educational series about energy efficiency in different venues with a focus on teaching the most vulnerable populations about resources that help reduce their utility bills	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
Continue to work with sustainability-related organizations to develop and offer in school guest lectures, field trips, and other learning opportunities with local schools	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
Work with schools to reduce waste and incorporate reusable items on campus	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
Determine a designated point person on city staff to direct sustainability-related questions or comments to the correct department			
Promote the city's energy, climate, and sustainability vision through the established online newsletter and develop other municipal marketing materials to update residents on city efforts, key sustainability topics, and easy-to-follow tips at home	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
Organize competitions between municipal employees, business owners, and neighborhoods that promote sustainability-focused activities:	ONGOING	SUSTAINABILITY	
o "Bring Your Green to Work,"			
o Energy treasure hunts,			
o Adopting catch basins or green infrastructure,			
o Zero waste days,			
o Smart commute weeks, and challenges to bike, walk, or take public transit to work.			

	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>	<b>Status</b>
Partner with Ypsilanti Community Schools on communication and education efforts.	ONGOING		
Consider creating a Communications Specialist position to lead and coordinate communication and education efforts within the City.	MID	MANAGER	Complete
Make critical public documents accessible and multilingual	ONGOING	MANAGER	
Publicize available efficiency and support programs, such as the County's weatherization program and YCUA's water assistance program.	ONGOING		
<b>GOAL: Develop the datasets necessary to determine where disaster relief should be targeted</b>			
Conduct an Environmental Justice analysis that identifies vulnerable populations and structures that are disproportionately impacted by climate change	LONG		
Work with SEMCOG and the County to expand local air quality monitoring system	SHORT		
Investigate infrastructure materials that can weather extreme weather	ONGOING		
<b>GOAL: Mitigate the damage inflicted on residents, infrastructure, and property from extreme weather.</b>			
Implement renewable backup power systems for areas of refuge and emergency facilities	ONGOING	DPS	
Collaborate with landlords, YCUA, and DTE to ensure that in a time of crisis essential water and gas/electricity are not shut off	ONGOING	CED/MANAGER	
Work with Washtenaw County to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan.	MID	YPD/YFD/DPS	
Partner with Washtenaw County to expand emergency preparedness and communication tools including a multilingual and universally accessible plan that includes climate change predictions	MID	MANAGER	
Work with the County to identify additional accessible warming and cooling shelters	MID		
Require occupied residential rental units to have one air-conditioned room	MID	CED	
Review response protocol and update where needed to respond to severe storm events	MID	MANAGER	
Continue to explore Resilience Hubs in coordination with local community partners and facilities.	MID		
Publicize available utility assistance programs, such as THAW, leading into and during peak heating and cooling seasons.	ONGOING		
Work with Washtenaw County and utility partners to ban utility shutoffs for nonpayment during states of emergency or extreme weather events.			
Improve snow and ice response for sidewalks	ONGOING	DPS (PUBLIC) CED (PRIVATE)	