

ITEM #16: Update on Climate Action Implementation

Council Question:

Does adopting the Heat Action Plan include financial commitments or budget implications?

Staff Response:

The adoption of the plan does not include any specific financial commitments or direct budget implications. By Council approving the resolution, staff would continue coordinating with staff around the county and could potentially use Climate Action Funds to support the implementation of actions that support Chapel Hill residents.

Council Question:

What progress have we made on the Climate Action Plan to date?

Staff Response:

Here are some highlights and examples of what the Town has accomplished. We'll have more to add later in the update process.

- *We've added more than 40 publicly available EV charging station plugs in our community.*
- *We've added 20 EV buses and 16 EV support vehicles to our Transit fleet.*
- *The rest of our Town fleet is 7% EVs and we'll soon put our first all-electric refuse vehicle into service.*
- *We've launched a free community e-bike lending library with over 500 sign-ups in the first year.*
- *We're launching an e-bike fleet for Town staff this month.*
- *We've planted trees in low-income neighborhoods that have fewer existing trees.*
- *We're one of the largest participating communities in Solarize the Triangle, a solar program that broke national records for sign-ups.*
- *We've upgraded lighting at Cedar Falls soccer fields, the Library, Public Works and other Town facilities, which improves efficiency and lessens utility costs.*
- *We're supporting state and county policy for programs like C-PACE, which was just approved in October, and provides a commercial low-cost, long-term financing tool to help commercial property owners with sustainability and resiliency upgrades.*
- *We run an annual Leave Your Leaves campaign that now includes all of Orange County.*
- *Our Office of Mobility and Greenways' is working to plan and build out our walking/biking infrastructure for the townwide Mobility Plan – a way to get around without a car.*
- *We're helping develop the first Heat Action Plan for Orange County, which the Board of County Commissioners approved in March.*
- *We're installing additional flood sensors along our major waterbodies to gather better data and hopefully lead to an alert warning system in the future.*

Council Question:

How are we doing relative to our targets?

Staff Response:

As of 2023, community emissions in Chapel Hill are down 32% from 2005 baseline levels. This means that we are slightly ahead of the Council's goal to be 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025 – a target they set in 2019.

ITEM #16: Update on Climate Action Implementation (Cont'd)

Council Question:

Previously, we had been switching to LED lighting on soccer fields and at certain facilities with the goal of using savings to fund future projects. Is that something that is complete or still on-going?

Staff Response:

We continue to upgrade lighting at Town buildings and facilities, particularly where we have grant opportunities and utility incentives. As a standard operating procedure, Public Works has been replacing older lighting technologies with LEDs when bulbs go out.

Council Question:

What are the biggest shifts or changes over the past five years and what do they mean for our ability to make progress and updating our plan?

Staff Response:

- *Technology – Battery technology for vehicles and buildings are improving with longer ranges and more sustainable materials, but vehicle manufacturers need more time to transition, and EV models are still limited compared to traditional vehicles.*
- *Funding – There are fewer state and federal grants.*
- *State and Federal Policy – We are concerned about rollbacks on climate and climate-supportive policies (e.g., Energy Star, Endangerment Finding).*
- *Utility Investments – There are rumblings about the potential for rollbacks or further delays on utility climate commitments.*

Council Question:

When are we going to update our plan?

Staff Response:

We are starting the update process in April and will return to Council in the fall with a proposed update.

Council Question:

When we adopted the plan in 2021, we acknowledged that the Town can only move the needle a small amount, it has to be a community-wide effort. Can we get an update (now or in the near term) about what UNC is doing?

Staff Response:

In order to get the latest information, it would be best to have UNC answer this question. If you would like for staff to track down this information, we can help with that.

Council Question:

Are there other community partners we are working with currently?

Staff Response:

We work directly with partners like UNC and the New Hope Bird Alliance. UNC offers research, project support, and is making significant with decarbonization. The New Hope Bird Alliance provides support and promotion for programming like Leave Your Leaves and Lights Out for Birds.



04-15-2026 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #16: Update on Climate Action Implementation (Cont'd)

Council Question:

Are the vehicles in the Public Housing fleet being replaced with energy efficient, non-polluting or electric vehicles?

Staff Response:

Like other departments, the Housing fleet is moving in this direction. For example, they added their first all-electric maintenance van within the last couple of years.

When it comes to replacing vehicles, the Town's standard operating procedure is to first look for something electric, and if that isn't available or doesn't work operationally, we then purchase the most efficient and least polluting option we can. If more details are needed, we can provide them later.