

SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT Work Plan FY26

MISSION

The City of South Portland has become a leader in sustainability across the state of Maine through ambitious climate goals, clean energy investments, and innovative programming. This progress is largely due to the leadership of the Council, very productive partnerships, and overwhelming community support.

The mission of the Sustainability Department is to continue in our leadership role by guiding the development of policies and practices that promote a robust economy, strong community connections, and a healthy environment. Our climate action plan, *One Climate Future* (OCF) lays out a framework for the initiatives we are pursuing to meet the climate goals Council adopted in 2018: (1) Use 100% clean, renewable energy for municipal operations by 2040; (2) Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions citywide 80% by 2050; and (3) Build the resilience of our neighborhoods, infrastructure, and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change.

In addition, the City Council declared climate change an emergency in 2019 and expressed its desire to accelerate our transition away from fossil fuels by 2030. This means we need to continue on our bold course and incorporate OCF goals into all of the municipal services we deliver.

FOCUS AREAS

To achieve these goals, we work across five focus areas. A brief summary of each is below, followed by concrete actions to support implementation. We will explore and apply for grant funding wherever possible to support these programs.

1. BUILDINGS & ENERGY USE

Our aim is to help all buildings in South Portland be energy efficient, electrified, and use renewable energy. We will advocate for and develop programs to help make this transition financially feasible for residents and businesses.

- Energy Management**: Continue to manage solar projects, electricity accounts and contracts, and energy data.
- Net Zero, Resilient Municipal Buildings**: Serve on the Facilities Committee and promote design standards & performance-based procurement for renovations and new City buildings.
- Energy Policy & Utility Regulatory Reform**: Actively advocate for & participate in forums designed to shape energy policy at the state level in support of modernized infrastructure, resilience, and renewable energy.

- Commercial Energy program: Develop workshops to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy (topics: C-PACE, EMT rebates, EV business grant, solar policy, etc).
- Energy Navigator program: Work with GPCOG to develop an energy coaching program for residential properties.
- Energy Efficient Rental Housing: Explore ideas for improving energy efficiency in rental units through a national cohort.
- Climate Ready Capital Budgeting: Participate in yearlong technical assistance/pilot program to leverage decarbonization and resilience factors in capital budgeting using new software.
- Solar Proliferation Strategy: Develop a strategy or program for promoting solar in tandem with Maine's solar for all program.
- Leaf Blower Phase Out Ordinance: Propose an ordinance to phase out highly polluting gas-powered leaf blowers.

2. CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Our aim is to build the resilience of our community, economy, and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. We will work to achieve this by taking action to minimize climate risks, improving social connections, and protecting/cultivating natural resources.

- Coastal Resilience Education & Outreach: Develop tools and convene forums to help property owners understand anticipated climate impacts and evaluate resilience solutions.
- Coastal Resilience Assessment: Evaluate a range of hardscape solutions for improving resilience at six coastal sites.
- Resilience Overlay Zoning: Work with Planning to integrate resilience standards into the City's zoning code to minimize risks from sea level rise, storm surge, and extreme weather.
- Climate Resilience Planning Tool: Work with Portland to develop a Risk Based Asset Management Tool (RBAMT).
- Climate Team meetings: Improve interdepartmental coordination and integrated planning by meeting regularly and developing a Climate Resilience Plan.
- Resilient Yards: Work with partners to implement another round of this program.
- Envision Resilience project: work with university partners to imagine the possibilities.

3. WASTE REDUCTION

Our aim is to minimize waste by expanding existing programs for reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting, and exploring new options for moving toward zero waste by 2050.

- Education and Outreach: Work with the Waste Reduction Committee to develop and deliver education and outreach to residents about how and why to reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Advocacy for State level Policies: Advocate for and participate in the development of state-level waste reduction policies. (*Packaging product stewardship, organics*)
- MFU Recycling: Review other communities' practices and develop a proposal to require recycling at multi-family units.

- PAYT proposal: Develop a proposal for the adoption of a pay-as-you-throw program in tandem with curbside food waste collection.
- Expand Food Waste program: Explore options to expand access to and participation in our food waste program.
- Electric Tool Library & Swap Shop: Continue to manage the South Portland Electric Tool Library (SPETL) side by side with the Swap Shop.
- Rechargeable Battery Recycling: Continue to explore options for recycling large rechargeable batteries.
- Repair Fairs: Organize and host a repair fair for residents.

4. TRANSPORTATION & LAND USE

Our aim is to support a transition to electric vehicles along with a community mode shift from private vehicles to public transportation, ride-sharing, biking, and walking.

- EV charging: Expand the City's EV charging infrastructure through installation of networked public chargers in Mill Creek.
- Fleet transition to EVs: Work with departments and SPSD to electrify our municipal fleet and school buses and install charging infrastructure at City buildings.
- Middle school byway project: Work with PW to develop a safer route for bikes/peds to the new middle school through Thornton Heights, avoiding Cash Corner.
- Bike-Ped Master Plan: Work with Planning to plan for and develop a bike-ped master plan.
- Bike share program: Bring BikeShare to South Portland.
- Anti-Idling program: Expand anti-idling campaign to more locations throughout City and promote anti-idling technologies for municipal vehicles.
- EV charging ordinance: Review applications; recommend policy changes if needed

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our aim is to create a more engaged community through inclusive processes that build local capacity and create opportunities for collaboration. We will do this by developing creative engagement programs and integrating equity into all sustainability initiatives.

- Engagement plan: Utilize the City's website, OCF website, community newsletters, Sentry column, social media, forums, events, and other participatory outreach methods to educate all community members about climate change and sustainability programs.
- Progress on One Climate Future: Work with City Council and department heads to incorporate *One Climate Future* into municipal operations, goal setting, and budgeting; complete an annual progress report.
- Participation & Leadership: Attend, give presentations, and participate in trainings, forums, and conferences to keep South Portland up to date on sustainability issues.
- Workforce Development: Support the development of young people seeking to work in this field through internships, fellowships, and school projects.