

CLIMATE ACTION CHECKLIST for GRAND RAPIDS BUSINESSES



It will take the entire Grand Rapids community to prepare and mitigate the effects of climate change. This checklist outlines how your business or organization can support [The Grand Rapids Climate Action & Adaptation Plan](#) (The CAAP).

Why is sustainability good for business?

The model of the “triple bottom line” outlines **people, profit, & planet**, however, developing sustainable values for your business can go beyond measuring the impact of a product, policy, or action, on the environment.

Sustainability is an opportunity to evaluate, and improve, **process** in order to maximize efficiency and avoid future costs. Green businesses attract a growing customer base who are invested in the global impact of their purchases.

What does sustainability look like in the workplace?

It starts with conversations and connections to map process and identify key people to enact change. Efficient businesses will produce less waste by finding opportunities for it to be eliminated entirely or used as feedstock for new value-added products. Investing in sustainable technology and upgrades can provide your business with a leading edge on the electric economy.

How do businesses contribute to our community goals?

Local businesses have the opportunity to improve the health of the local community that sustains them by being leaders who model the best practices to create a safe & resilient future.

Achieving Grand Rapids community-wide science-based targets will only be made possible with community buy-in and action. The City will act as a leader for this work with it's own municipal operations, implementing actions under local control, as well as advocating for legislative and regulatory changes to meet our community goals.

What is The CAAP?

A road map for how the Grand Rapids community will reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and prepare for the impacts of climate change on our environment, people, and infrastructure.

On August 12th, 2025 the City of Grand Rapids adopted The CAAP to achieve the science-based targets of:

- **62.8% per capita** GHG reduction by **2030***
- **100% per capita** GHG reduction by **2050 ***

**from 2019 baseline of 2,472,415 MTCO_{2e}*

The CAAP outlines six key sectors of focus:

Energy Systems (pages 40 - 51)

Addressing the generation, distribution and consumption of fossil fuel-based energy.

Residential Homes (pages 52 - 61)

Increasing the affordability, energy efficiency, health, climate resilience & access to renewable energy of housing.

Buildings & Industry (pages 62 - 70)

Reducing GHG emissions from large commercial buildings & industrial processes.

Transportation (pages 71 - 77)

Reducing reliance on fossil-fuel powered single-occupancy vehicle usage, increasing active and shared modes of transportation, and increasing access to electric vehicles.

Nature Based Solutions (pages 78 - 85)

Increasing sequestration and increasing nature's resilience to climate change and extreme weather events.

Food Systems (pages 86 - 95)

Reducing wasted food and increasing access to local food purchasing and growing opportunities in the city.

For more information please visit:

www.grandrapidsmi.gov/CAAP



Office of
Sustainability



Safe & Efficient Buildings

Relevant CAAP Chapters:

- Residential Homes [RH]
- Buildings & Industry [BI]
- Energy Systems [ES]

The goal:

Increasing the affordability, energy efficiency, health, climate resilience and access to renewable energy of buildings AND reducing greenhouse gas emissions from buildings & industrial processes.

Efficiency

- BI Purchase **ENERGY STAR**® certified equipment
- BI Implement LED lighting where applicable, such as EXIT signs
- RH Perform regular preventative maintenance on HVAC and water heating fixtures per the maintenance schedule on the label
- RH Fix leaky taps or running toilets to save water and money
- RH Install low-flow water fixtures like toilets and faucet aerators
- BI Keep windows & doors *closed* while using heat or AC
- BI Pursue ENERGY STAR Certification to get recognized for building energy performance

Conservation

- BI Limit the use of personal space heaters and encourage staff to bring for extra layers or adjust the thermostat
- BI Install occupancy-sensing controls for lights & HVAC in private spaces such as offices, meeting rooms, or bathrooms
- ES Offset CO2 emissions by buying renewable energy credits
- BI Implement energy efficiency strategies by utilizing *building automation systems* (BAS) for your heating, ventilation, & air conditioning (HVAC) needs and lighting schedules to limit electrical loads and energy consumption during non-business hours

Financial Resources

- BI Visit [Lean & Green Michigan](#) for assistance & resources
- RH Take advantage of utility energy efficiency programs & incentives from [DTE](#) and [Consumers Energy](#):

- BI Check out the [2030 Energy & Carbon Guidebook](#) from the [Michigan Green Building Collaborative](#) to improve your building's energy performance → and meet your carbon emissions reduction goals:



- BI Enroll in the [MiGBC Automated Benchmarking Service](#) (ABS) and keep track of energy use & progress on reduction goals

- BI Enroll in the MiGBC Grand Rapids Energy Assistance Program (EAP) for financial support for energy assessments

- BI Energy audits will identify potential opportunities for savings & efficiency. To learn more about the different levels of energy audits **visit this page** →



- BI Encourage your staff to fully shut down unnecessary electronics and computer workstations including computers and monitors

- ES Establish a GHG emission reduction or renewable energy goal

- ES Research renewable energy options, such as solar power, and present viable options to leadership

- RH Check out [Michigan Saves](#) to finance building renovations for energy efficiency upgrades

Preparedness

- RH Create an emergency response plan for natural disasters to ensure a safe and orderly environment for your staff members
- RH Employees are trained on the business's emergency plan
- RH Consider indoor air-quality monitors such as CO detectors



Business Rebates



Instant Discounts



Energy Audits



For more information please contact:

Jennifer Spiller (she/her)
Healthy & Sustainable Buildings Policy Specialist
Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability

Email: jspiller@grcity.us

Clean Commutes

Relevant CAAP Chapters:

- Transportation (T)

The goal:

Reducing reliance on fossil fuel powered single-occupancy vehicle usage, increasing active and shared modes of transportation, and increasing access to electric vehicles.

Promote Active & Public Transportation

- T Review pedestrian and bicycle safety infrastructure in your parking lot & offer amenities to encourage alternative commutes such as bike racks, showers, or carpool parking
- T Plan a group, “practice” bus-ride to try nearby routes & stops

Pollution Reduction

- T Offer a ride to a coworker to reduce the number of single-destination & single-person trips and promote ride sharing
- T Utilize the **City of Grand Rapids’** new *DART EV* →  *CarShare* program to rent a car for just \$5/hour
- T Enforce a no-idle policy for vehicles waiting for 10+ minutes
- T Offer telecommuting flexibility and virtual meeting options, when reasonable, to spare a commute

Access & Safety

- T Maintain sidewalk access for pedestrians, wheelchair users, and strollers in front of your business or parking lot
- T Make sure your handicap access is clearly labelled and free from obstruction at all times (furniture, snow, deliveries, etc.)
- T Participate in the **Wheels to Work**® program to support car-free transit options for employees → 

Electrification

- T Establish an electrification roadmap for fleet vehicles to buy more efficient, or alternative fuel, hybrid or electric vehicles
- T View the **U.S. Department of Transportation’s** EV planning resources & educational materials →  including employee surveys, toolkits, and more
- T View the **U.S. Department of Energy’s** Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy resources for **Clean Cities and Communities** → 

- T Form a volunteer group of staff to seasonally maintain nearby bus stops to create a clean, safe and secure stop for all riders
- T Become a *Bicycle Friendly Business*™, as designated by **The League of American Bicyclists** → 

- T Review the **Grand Valley Metro Council’s** (GVMC) map of bike lanes and pedestrian trails → 
- T Dedicate a few parking spots, closer to the building, for staff who carpool to work
- T Maintain your vehicles & equipment as specified by the manufacturer to ensure it is operating at its highest efficiency
- T Encourage staff to participate in *Active Commute Week* (during the second week of September) via the new **West Michigan Rides** mobile app → 

- T View the City’s **Sidewalk Snow Support Program** to learn how to keep pedestrians safe in winter by shoveling sidewalks, corners, & access ramps → 
- T Enforce proper parking for your staff and customers to prevent blocked bike lanes & maintain access for emergency services
- T Dedicate parking spots near your building for carpooling only

- T Join the **Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council** (EIBC) to gain access and opportunities for innovation and business growth related to Michigan’s advanced clean energy economy → 

For more information please contact:

Robert Cloy II (he/him)

Environmental & Climate Justice Specialist
Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability

Email: rcloy@grcity.us

Thriving Environment

Relevant CAAP Chapters:
• Nature Based Solutions (NS)

The goal:

Increasing sequestration (carbon storage) and increasing nature's resilience to climate change.

Building Community

- NS Start a "green team" or other initiative for employees to learn and connect about sustainability in the workplace. Prioritize a diverse team of staff to ensure sustainability initiatives provide meaningful, long-term change at your organization
- NS Organize a volunteer opportunity to remove trash from our environment with the **West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC)** via their Adopt-a-Stream program → 
- NS Join the **MI Sustainable Business Forum's (MISBF) Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Taskforce** for assistance and local case studies → 
- NS Incorporate sustainability into your company principles, values, vision or mission statements, and strategic plans
- NS Intersect sustainability throughout master or strategic plans to ensure company-wide participation in sustainability actions
- NS Communicate your sustainability practices to your customers
- NS Organize a volunteer opportunity to plant trees with **Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP)** → 
- NS Connect with your local watershed group to learn where stormwater goes after it leaves your building or parking lot. View a list of local volunteer-orgs at the **Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW)** → 

Sustainable Campus

- NS Identify and maintain storm drains on your campus via **LGROW's Adopt a Drain Program** → 
- NS If an irrigation system is used, set up sprinklers so there is minimal overspray to the parking lot or road. Use a weather-based irrigation controller to avoid use during rainy weather
- NS Dedicate a portion of your campus to native wildflowers and native grasses for pollinators and include signage for visitors
- NS Create a garden on your campus to beautify your space, or allow staff to grow vegetables, fruit, or flowers
- NS Check out resources on creating bird-friendly buildings from *Bird City*, an initiative of the **Michigan Audubon Club** to increase bird habitat → 
- NS Provide insects & pollinators space to overwinter by letting autumn leaves cover the ground before the winter snow
- NS Work alongside your **landscaping services** to implement these sustainable practices for your campus
- NS Encourage low-carbon management practices for your landscape such as limited mowing, no-mow, drought resistant native plants instead of ornamental varieties
- NS Utilize the **Michigan Communities Tree Species Selection Guide** to select trees for your campus → 
- NS Integrate rain gardens, bioswales, and/or cisterns to store and slow down stormwater from your building or parking lot.
- NS Use native plants and drought tolerant landscaping instead of ornamentals or annuals that need more water and fertilizer
- NS Utilize green cleaning products to maintain healthy indoor air quality and protect our environment from harmful chemicals
- NS Provide a proper outdoor ashtray (also called a smoker's pole) for staff or visitors to properly dispose of cigarettes
- NS Provide outdoor areas for staff to enjoy the local environment

NS Use deicing salt sustainably and sparingly with these tips:

- **Shovel** first to reduce the amount of salt you need
- Don't pour, but **scatter** a cup, or handfuls, to evenly spread the salt across the icy area
- **Switch** to sand, or a cold weather deicer, as salt (NaCl) does not melt ice at temperatures 15° F or lower
- **Sweep** up excess to reuse when the weather warms up

For more information please contact:

Robert Cloy II (he/him)
Environmental & Climate Justice Specialist
Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability

Email: rcloy@grcity.us

Resilient Food Systems

The goal:

Reducing waste and increasing access to local food and growing opportunities.

Support Local

- FS Consider a local food purchasing preference into your procurement → policy using best practices from the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#)



- FS Support restaurants that use local foods for catering, and include local, plant-based, and vegetarian options

Minimize Waste & Loss

- FS Read the **Michigan Sustainable Business Forum's** *Michigan Food* → *Waste Roadmap* to learn about reducing food waste & loss statewide



- FS Reduce the purchase of single-serve or individually packaged food items

- FS Encourage staff to bring food storage containers to celebrations or meetings to share excess, uneaten, food with family and neighbors

- FS Properly label contents, & expiry date, when storing leftover food in a group space (i.e. a break room or kitchenette)

- FS Adopt a policy for events and dining spaces to reduce food waste and loss

- FS Purchase bulk-packaged supplies and buy products that limit the amount of packaging

- FS Print double sided & save misprints for scrap paper

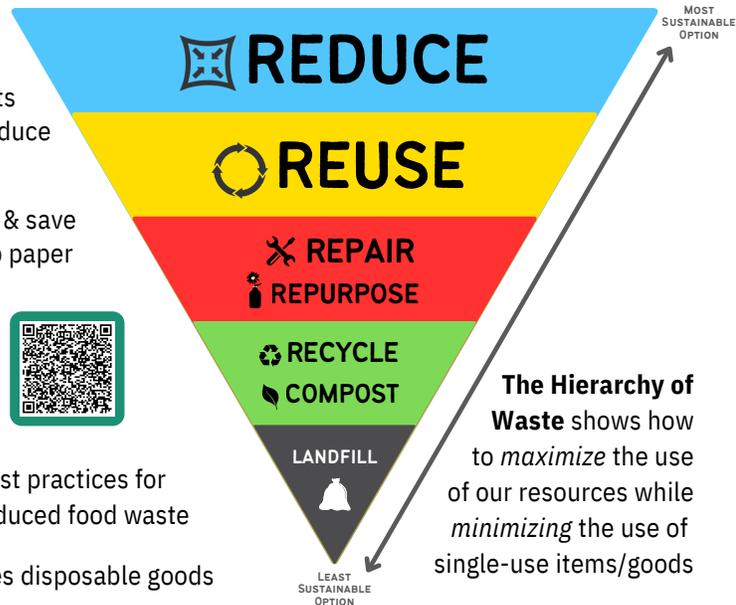
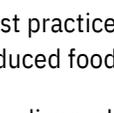
- FS Donate extra unserved food to community centers or food banks

Read here about the **Good Samaritan Food Donation Act** and how it protects businesses from liability after donating food in good faith →



- FS Join the **MI Food Waste Reduction Coalition** to share best practices for recovery and connect with other businesses who have reduced food waste

- FS Implement a sustainable procurement policy that reduces disposable goods



Start the Circular Economy Conversation

- FS Evaluate your **waste hauler** contract to understand if your hauler offers compost or recycling
- FS Connect with your **janitorial services** to evaluate integrating composting into your workplace
- FS Establish a team of staff to educate on how to reduce waste and prevent contamination
- FS Conduct a food waste audit to estimate the volume of material for compost services
- FS Identify other organic waste products such as paper, cardboard, unbleached paper towel, and yard waste that could be collected by a commercial compost service.
- FS Explore these technology take-back & electronics recycling resources:

- FS Encourage the repair- if it is both *possible* and *practical*- of office equipment, such as furniture or electronics, instead of sending it to landfill

- FS Sponsor a neighborhood *dumpster day* at your place of business in order to reduce illegal dumping by allowing neighbors to drop off bulky items for free

Kent County Department of Public Works has three locations to drop off electronics →



← **Comprenw** provides secure IT asset disposition services for corporate e-waste



PADNOS offers convenient sites for anyone to drop off their end-of-life equipment →



For more information please contact:

Robert Cloy II (he/him)

Environmental & Climate Justice Specialist
Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability

Email: rcloy@greity.us

CITY CLIMATE RESOURCES

for GRAND RAPIDS BUSINESSES



Check out these resources from other communities for additional sustainable business tools:

Iowa City, IA



[Climate Minded Businesses in Iowa City](#)

Explore a public map of businesses that pursue climate action via sustainable changes & upgrades.

Circular Indiana



[Reducing Waste and Saving Money](#)

A statewide initiative to advance a low-waste circular economy for Indiana.

Ann Arbor, MI



[Sustainability for Businesses & Non-Profits \(home page\)](#)

A collection of resources about sustainable business practices and community initiatives.



[Ann Arbor Green Business Challenge](#)

Review the Green Business Challenge (GBC) for ideas and resources on sustainability in the workplace.



[Green Rental Housing for Landlords](#)

Learn about rental energy efficiency requirements & recommendations to stay competitive and save money.



[Sustainable Food Business Coalition](#)

Connect with other businesses who have reduced food waste and loss through best practices.

Portland, OR



[Sustainability at Work \(home page\)](#)

A collection of resources about sustainable business practices and community initiatives.



[Portland Green Office Checklist](#)

Review their Green Office Checklist for ideas and resources on sustainability in the workplace.



[How to Buy Green at your Business](#)

Learn about sustainable swaps for consumable office needs such as water, paper towels, and dishware.



[Business Recycling Guide](#)

Review best practices to engage employees and custodial staff to implement recycling and waste reduction.



[Sustainable Procurement Policies](#)

Read examples of how purchasing can build healthy communities, economies, and environments all along local and global supply chains. View Portland's *Sustainable Procurement Policy* to model for your business.