



Sustainability Plan

2024

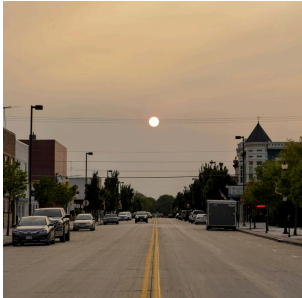


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Introduction



Sustainability Defined

United States Environmental Protection Agency

To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.

Commitment

City of Sheboygan



The City of Sheboygan has a strong commitment to sustainability, dating back to 2007 when it became an Eco-Municipality and further solidified in 2013 with its Green Tier Legacy Community status. The city has implemented numerous initiatives, such as converting city lights to LED, installing precast concrete manholes, cleaning water catch basins, distributing recycling education materials, and planting trees to combat the emerald ash borer. In 2022, Sheboygan revived its Sustainability Task Force, consisting of 12 members appointed by Mayor Ryan Sorenson. This task force focuses on conservation, sustainability, clean water, and climate change, operating through working groups on Land Use and Conservation, and Energy, Housing, Infrastructure, and Transportation. The city actively seeks community input and expertise to guide its efforts. Sheboygan tracks its progress through annual Green Tier Reports, highlighting achievements in energy, waste management, development, water conservation, restoration, and community wellness. By engaging citizens and continuously improving its practices, Sheboygan is dedicated to creating a more sustainable and resilient community for future generations.

Why Sustainability



The City of Sheboygan's sustainability plan is essential to address pressing environmental and community health challenges. Sheboygan has already demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through various initiatives, such as the reestablishment of the Sustainability Task Force in 2022, which focuses on areas like conservation, clean water, and climate change. The city's proactive measures, including the transition to cart-based recycling, which increased recycling tonnage by nearly 20%, and the significant reduction of CO2 emissions through the use of electric scooters, highlight the effectiveness of sustainable practices. Moreover, Sheboygan faces specific environmental challenges that necessitate a robust sustainability plan. The city has experienced severe flooding, such as the 1998 flood that caused extensive property damage and led to a \$25 million investment in storm sewer upgrades. With fluctuating water levels in Lake Michigan and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, it is crucial to implement comprehensive flood management and water conservation strategies. Additionally, Sheboygan's environmental health profile indicates concerns such as high poverty rates and environmental justice issues, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities. By prioritizing sustainability, the city can address these disparities, improve public health, and create a more resilient community. The sustainability plan will also support local agriculture, enhance food security, and promote energy efficiency, further contributing to Sheboygan's long-term economic and environmental well-being.



Energy

Objective: Foster energy conservation and local energy production from renewable resources.

The City of Sheboygan has made significant strides in energy sustainability. One of the most notable initiatives is the conversion of city lights to LED, which has improved energy efficiency. Additionally, Sheboygan is set to become a key energy hub with the development of a 99-megawatt battery energy storage system adjacent to the current Edgewater Generating Station. This project, announced by Alliant Energy, is planned to begin construction in 2024 and will be operational shortly after the retirement of the Edgewater Generating Station in 2025. The battery system will have the capacity to power over 100,000 Wisconsin homes for four hours, representing a significant step towards cleaner, renewable energy sources and increased energy resiliency for the community.

Goals

- Achieve SolSmart Silver Designation
 - Sheboygan Currently Holds SolSmart Bronze Status. To achieve Silver SolSmart status, Sheboygan will streamline solar permitting, update zoning codes, increase municipal solar use, enhance community outreach, and support local solar market growth. These actions across key categories will help the city meet higher criteria for solar energy promotion.



- Establish a Program for Rooftop Solar in Low-Income Housing
 - The City of Sheboygan will establish a rooftop solar program for low-income housing, leveraging Wisconsin's \$62.45 million Solar for All grant. Coordinating with the state's Weatherization Assistance Program, the initiative aims to increase solar access for around 15,000 homes, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing utility costs.
- Inform Citizens and businesses of Funding Resources Available
 - The City of Sheboygan will update its website to provide information and resources about funding available through rebates and tax credits. These options will be expanded through the Inflation Reduction Act and are available for homeowners. Rebates will likely be administered through Focus on Energy.



Transportation

Objective: Enhance and promote mobility alternatives to the automobile; design safe, efficient and environmentally sound transportation infrastructure; and connect to other local and regional networks.

The City of Sheboygan has taken several steps towards transportation sustainability. The city has focused on enhancing the performance of its transportation system while protecting the natural environment. The Sustainable Sheboygan Task Force has also been actively discussing sustainable transportation options, encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public transportation. Additionally, the city's Department of Public Works has been involved in cleaning debris from water catch basins, which helps maintain the quality of stormwater runoff from roads. These initiatives demonstrate Sheboygan's commitment to creating a more sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation infrastructure.

Goals

- Expand access for active transportation and micro-mobility
 - Sheboygan is continuing to expand access to active transportation and micro-mobility by applying the Complete Streets Policy, improving sidewalks along busy roadways, and implementing traffic-calming measures near schools. The city is also enhancing its trail and path system, with a focus on better connectivity and walkability, including a pedestrian bridge across the Sheboygan River.
- Adopt a Vision Zero policy and implementation plan
 - Sheboygan will adopt a Vision Zero policy to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Supported by a \$25 million federal grant, the plan will focus on improving road safety for all users, especially cyclists and pedestrians. Key initiatives include sidewalk improvements, traffic-calming measures, and trail enhancements. The city will collaborate with regional partners to implement safety strategies through engineering, education, and enforcement.
- Electrification and hybridization of city vehicles
 - Sheboygan will electrify and hybridize its city vehicle fleet, starting with lighter fleet vehicles. The city will conduct lifecycle cost analyses to identify the best candidates for replacement. By leveraging federal incentives and grants, Sheboygan aims to make this shift both environmentally and financially sustainable.





Land Use & Planning

Objective: Guide and promote sustainable city-wide development patterns and incorporate sustainable features into buildings and grounds.

Sheboygan has made significant strides in sustainability regarding land use and planning. The city has implemented zoning and ordinance updates to promote sustainable landscaping and control invasive species. In 2019, the Planning and Development Department released a Sustainability Guidebook, which includes projects like community gardens, native landscaping, and rain gardens to enhance local green spaces. Additionally, the city's Sustainability Task Force, reinstated in 2022, focuses on land use and conservation, recommending strategies to improve environmental stewardship and sustainable development.



Goals

- Allow a range of housing types by-right to minimize protracted and discretionary processes
 - Sheboygan plans to address housing availability by allowing a range of housing types, such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and small multi-family buildings, by-right in more residential zones. This zoning change will streamline the approval process, reduce development costs, and expedite construction, helping to meet the city's projected need for new housing units.
- Ensure all housing types are built or renovated to be energy efficient, climate ready, and minimally carbon emitting.
 - Sheboygan will ensure housing is energy efficient, climate ready, and minimally carbon emitting by leveraging programs like Focus on Energy's Affordable Housing New Construction pilot. This program offers incentives for high-efficiency designs, targeting certifications such as Zero Energy Ready Home or Phius+.



Food

Objective: Promote local food production, sales, and consumption

Sheboygan has advanced food sustainability and local food initiatives through several key efforts. The city's 2019 Sustainability Guidebook promotes local food benefits, and Sheboygan County's nearly 1,000 farms support robust local food production. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, such as those from Old Plank Farm and Springdale Farm, provide residents with weekly produce shares. The city has also established community gardens in areas like Optimist Park and the Gateway neighborhood, enabling urban residents to grow their own food. Additionally, organizations like Nourish Farms educate the community on sustainable food practices and local sourcing.

Goals

- Streamline permitting process for community pantries and community fridges
 - The city will work with the Public Health Department to develop simplified guidelines and expedited approval procedures for community groups interested in operating these initiatives. This may involve creating a specific permit category for community food sharing projects, reducing fees, and providing clear health and safety standards. The Building Division will collaborate with Public Health to offer assistance and guidance to community groups throughout the application process, ensuring compliance with regulations while facilitating quicker implementation.
- Support expansion of farmers market program to increase food access and support local agriculture
 - The City of Sheboygan will work with Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization to increase the number of participating vendors and expand market hours to accommodate more shoppers. The city will also collaborate with local organizations to provide educational programs on nutrition and cooking with fresh, local produce, explore additional locations for satellite markets to serve more neighborhoods, and promote the farmers market as a community gathering space by incorporating live music, cooking demonstrations, and family-friendly activities.





Waste/Recycling

Objective: Promote awareness, reduce initial consumption, promote reuse, increase recycling and reduce the amount of substances entering the landfill.

In 2020, the city transitioned to a cart-based recycling program with the help of a \$277,500 grant from The Recycling Partnership. This shift from bagged recycling to 95-gallon lidded carts increased recycling tonnage by nearly 20%, improved worker safety, and reduced processing costs. The city also purchased seven fully automated side-load collection trucks, enhancing efficiency and service continuity. Additionally, Sheboygan's revived Sustainability Task Force continues to track recycling efforts and promote waste reduction through community education and monthly recycling tracking initiatives.

Goals

- Provide education on setting up and maintaining compost bins at home, community gardens, and the workplace for organic waste
 - The city will collaborate with local organizations to offer hands-on workshops and classes on setting up and maintaining compost bins, similar to the family-friendly worm composting experience recently offered in Plymouth. These educational programs will cover various composting methods, including traditional backyard composting and vermicomposting, tailored to different settings. The city will also develop online resources and printed materials to provide ongoing guidance.
- Create a pilot project to make established community events zero-waste
 - Sheboygan will collaborate with event organizers to replace plastic and styrofoam products with bio-based, recyclable, or compostable alternatives. Building on its successful recycling initiatives, Sheboygan will leverage its experience in public education and waste management to implement this project. The city will provide guidance on sourcing sustainable materials, setting up proper waste sorting stations, and educating attendees about zero-waste practices. Following the pilot, Sheboygan will extend sustainable practices to all city events and create incentives for private event organizers to adopt zero-waste strategies. These incentives may include reduced permit fees, promotional support, or access to city-owned sustainable event supplies.





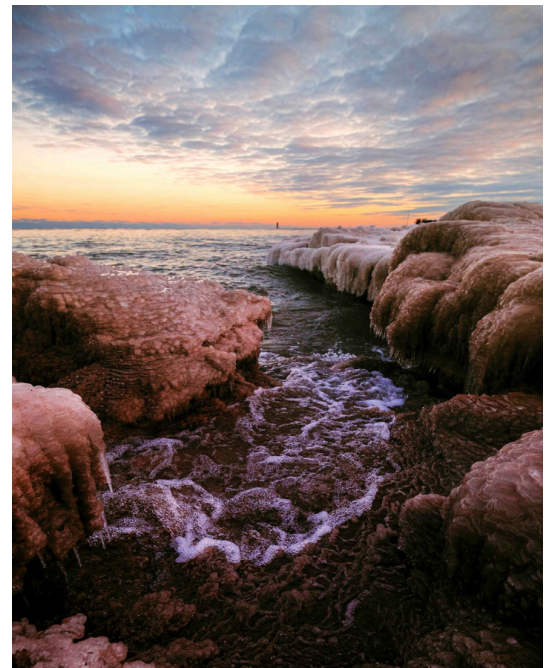
Water Conservation

Objective: Protect and enhance the City's natural resources

Sheboygan has taken several steps to promote water conservation and protect water quality. The city has been actively involved in cleaning up and restoring the Sheboygan River Area of Concern, implementing projects to remove contaminated sediments, improve habitat, and enhance water quality. The Department of Public Works has contributed to water conservation efforts by installing precast concrete manholes to limit ground and surface water infiltration, as well as cleaning debris from water catch basins to protect water quality. Additionally, the city received nearly \$50,000 in water protection grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2024 to support local conservation initiatives.

Goals

- Provide education about incentives for water conservation improvements such as plumbing fixtures.
 - Sheboygan plans to educate citizens on incentives for water conservation improvements, focusing on upgrading plumbing fixtures throughout the city. To encourage widespread adoption, Sheboygan will partner with local plumbing suppliers to offer discounts on approved water-saving devices. The city will also launch an educational campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of water conservation and provide guidance on proper installation and maintenance of these fixtures.
- Implement water-based landscapes to manage stormwater in marginalized communities and those most susceptible to flooding.
 - The city will focus on creating green infrastructure solutions such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable pavements in low-lying areas and neighborhoods identified as vulnerable in its flood vulnerability assessment. This approach will help reduce runoff, improve water quality, and enhance the aesthetic appeal of these communities. The city will also integrate these water-based landscapes into its existing parks, creating multi-functional areas that serve both as flood management tools and recreational spaces.





Natural Land Management

Objective: Protect and enhance the City's natural resources

The city has been actively involved in the restoration and conservation of the Sheboygan River Area of Concern, implementing projects such as shoreline stabilization, wetland restoration, and invasive species control. These efforts, funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, have significantly improved local habitats and water quality. Additionally, Sheboygan's revived Sustainability Task Force focuses on land use and conservation, recommending strategies to protect natural resources and promote sustainable development. The city has also supported the creation of pollinator habitats and the removal of invasive species, further contributing to the health and sustainability of its natural landscapes.

Goals

- Establish tree canopies in flood-prone areas and areas susceptible to urban heat island effect
 - Building on its existing natural land management efforts, the city will focus on expanding tree cover in areas identified as vulnerable to flooding. This initiative will leverage findings from the city's flood vulnerability assessment and the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to strategically plant trees that can help mitigate flood risks and reduce urban heat. The city will prioritize native species that are well-adapted to local conditions and can withstand fluctuating water levels. By increasing tree canopy cover from its current 28% towards a goal of 50%, Sheboygan aims to reduce runoff by approximately 1.4%, enhance water quality, and create cooler urban microclimates.
- Preserve natural areas to maintain ecosystem health.
 - The city's 2024-2028 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan emphasizes the importance of its waterfront parks. To combat the threats posed by climate change and invasive species, Sheboygan will continue projects such as shoreline stabilization, wetland restoration, and invasive species control. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to protect the Lake Michigan ecosystem and the Sheboygan River. Additionally, the city collaborates with organizations like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin DNR to restore and protect natural habitats, ensuring the long-term sustainability of local flora and fauna.



Implementation



Goal	Timeframe	Departments Involved
1. Achieve SolSmart Silver Designation	5 Years	1. Planning, Communications
2. Establish a Program for Rooftop Solar in Low-Income Housing	3-5 Years	2. Planning
3. Inform Citizens and businesses of Funding Resources Available	1 Year	3. Communications
4. Expand access for active transportation and micro-mobility	Ongoing	4. Planning, Public Works, Shoreline Metro
5. Adopt a Vision Zero policy and implementation plan	5 Years	5. Administration, Planning, Public Works

Implementation



Goal	Timeframe	Departments Involved
6. Electrification and hybridization of city vehicles	10+ Years	6. Administration, Shoreline Metro
7. Allow a range of housing types by-right to minimize protracted and discretionary processes	3 Years	7. Planning, Attorney
8. Ensure all housing types are built or renovated to be energy efficient, climate ready, and minimally carbon emitting.	5-10 Years	8. Planning, Building Inspection, Public Works

Implementation



Goal	Timeframe	Departments Involved
9. Streamline permitting process for community pantries and community fridges	5 Years	9. Planning
10. Support expansion of farmers market program to increase food access and support local agriculture	1-3 Years	10. Planning, Administration, Communications
11. Provide education on setting up and maintaining compost bins at home, community gardens, and the workplace for organic waste	3 Years	11. Planning, Administration, Communications

Implementation



Goal	Timeframe	Departments Involved
12. Create a pilot project to make established community events zero-waste	10 Years	12. Communications, Public Works, Administration
13. Provide education about incentives for water conservation improvements such as plumbing fixtures.	3 Years	13. Planning, Administration, Communications
14. Implement water-based landscapes to manage stormwater in marginalized communities and those most susceptible to flooding.	10 Years	14. Planning, Public Works

Implementation



Goal	Timeframe	Departments Involved
15. Establish tree canopies in flood-prone areas and areas susceptible to urban heat island effect	10+ Years	15. Planning, Public Works
16. Preserve natural areas to maintain ecosystem health.	Ongoing	16. Public Works, Administration