



2024 Year in Review



DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR:

A YEAR IN REVIEW

As the Department of Sustainability closed out the 2024 calendar year and reflected on our accomplishments, our team remained confident in our ability to deliver progress, execute our top priorities, and uphold our commitment to meaningful community engagement. While the federal funding landscape remains uncertain, the Department is still working to **implement millions of dollars** in federal, local, and foundation grants. Under Mayor Brett P. Smiley's leadership, we work collaboratively across departments to integrate a climate resilience and justice lens in citywide initiatives, furthering the **implementation of Providence's Climate Justice Plan**.

In 2024, the Department began to plan for the **decarbonization of City-owned buildings** via energy efficiency upgrades, electrification of heating systems, and deployment of on-site renewable energy systems. This effort is being supported by grants, available rebates and incentives, and leveraged funds, as well as **interdepartmental collaboration** with Public Property, Public Works, and Recreation to align our capital needs with carbon neutrality goals. After the successful release of the City's first building energy report, **Setting the Baseline for Carbon Neutrality**, we launched the Building Energy Reporting Ordinance (BERO) Program, a critical cornerstone of the City's 2019 Climate Justice Plan, to deliver on the City's promise to confront climate change challenges and foster a healthier living environment for all of our communities, especially our frontline, environmental justice communities who bear the brunt of climate pollution.

The Department continued to support the **decarbonization of the City's fleet**, administering \$100,000 in Master Lease funding to implement charging infrastructure for City-owned vehicles and began to oversee the implementation of grant funding to update to the **City's EV Fleet Study** and support the construction of additional charging infrastructure. We also began to implement millions of grant dollars to **improve recycling and expand food waste diversion programs**. Programs include education and outreach, support for the city's network of community composting options, student-centered waste diversion programs in school cafeterias, a business recycling pilot, and infrastructure investments in the City's residential curbside trash and recycling collection program.

Our year has also been filled with accomplishments rooted in deep community engagement through a **collaborative governance** approach. We launched the **Olneyville Resilience Hub** at the Joslin Recreation Center—the City's first pilot—with community members and partners with the goal of ensuring robust programming that is responsive to local needs. Our community collaborative approach is also reflected in the progression towards the final design for the **Public Street Waterfront Access Project**, following a round of stakeholder engagement during summer 2024.

As we think about the year ahead, the Sustainability Department is deeply grateful for the continued support of our community partners, the Sustainability Commission, Mayor Smiley, the Providence City Council, and our City colleagues. Together, we will advance climate justice and improve the quality of life for the people of Providence.

-Priscilla De La Cruz, Director of Sustainability

Department of Sustainability

The Department of Sustainability's mission is to create an equitable, healthy, low-carbon, and climate resilient future for Providence. The Department develops and implements mission-aligned policies and programs using a collaborative governance model that engages community at all stages. The Department's establishing ordinance directs it to adopt and promote the goals of the Climate Justice Plan, which include:

- A carbon neutral city by 2050.
- The decarbonization of City-owned buildings and vehicles by 2040.
- Access to housing with affordable, efficient and clean energy, while eliminating fossil fuel use in all buildings.
- Healthy air and community spaces free from pollution, with a focus on port-area neighborhoods and other communities exposed to the highest rates of pollution.
- A sustainable, zero-waste economy, with a focus on support for local businesses.
- Access to clean and efficient public transportation and infrastructure that support walking and bicycling and otherwise reducing carbon and co-pollutants.
- Preparing the city for the impacts of climate change.

The Department reports to the Mayor's Chief of Policy and Resiliency. Additionally, the Department staffs and is advised by a volunteer, community-led group, the Sustainability Commission, which holds monthly public meetings.

Our Team



Priscilla De La Cruz
Director



Kevin Proft
Deputy Director



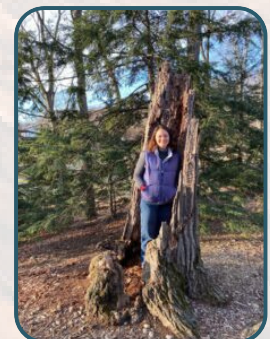
David Ruggiero
Director of Energy Operations



Julia Dearden
Fiscal & Communications Coordinator



Andrew Broccolo
Energy Manager



Sophie Worsh-Farnum
Policy Associate

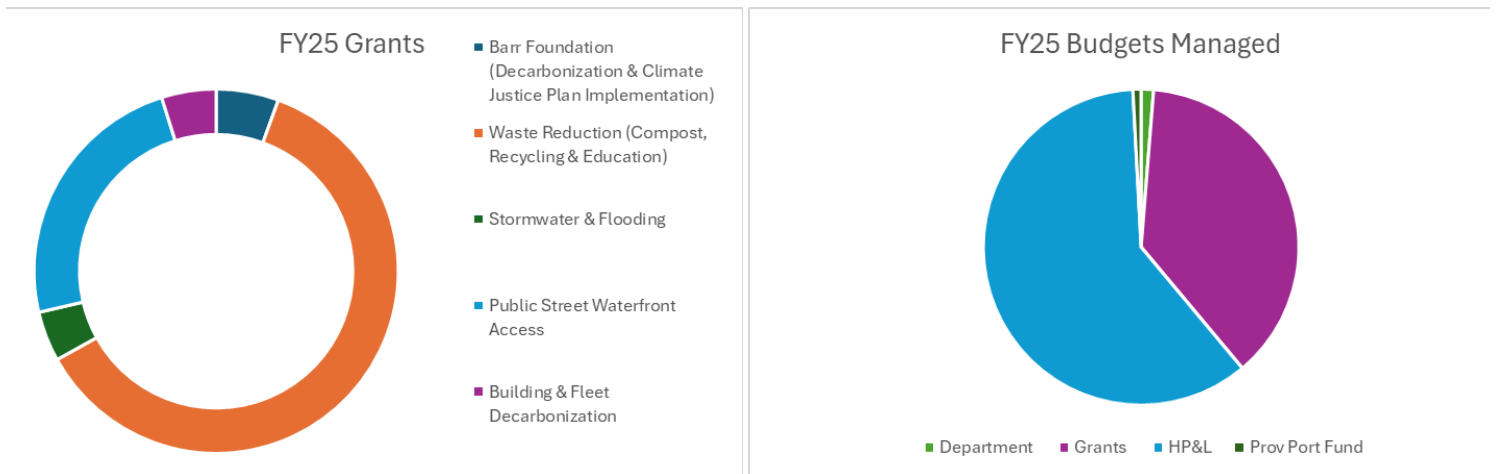
Financial Report

In FY 2025, the Department of Sustainability managed a **services and supplies budget** of \$227,000. The Department successfully leveraged this modest operating budget to secure Foundation, State, and Federal grants for many programs and projects. During 2024, the Department managed **eleven grants totaling nearly \$7 million**. These grants are for a range of priorities, including implementing the Climate Justice Plan, waste reduction, stormwater and flooding mitigation, and the Public Street Waterfront Access project.

In 2024, the responsibility for managing the City's gas and electric utilities was transitioned from the Departments of Public Property and Finance to the Department of Sustainability. In 2025, Sustainability will also take on management of water and sewer utilities. Together, these **utility accounts total approximately \$12.7M** in annual transactions and have significantly increased the Department's administrative and fiscal management workload. The Department is improving efficiency relating to utility management and is using data from utility bills to make informed decisions about capital improvements, energy supply procurement, and budget forecasts. Additionally, in response to a 2024 RI Public Utilities Commission ruling regarding net metering credits, the Department fully **monetized the \$1.5M in net revenue** from the City's Captona solar array contract. These funds have been earmarked to offset the budgetary impact of the City's settlement with the Providence Public School District (PPSD).

The Department also administers the **Sustainability Projects Reserve Account** established by the ProvPort lease and tax-exempt agreements. Per City ordinance, ProvPort must deposit 1% of its annual revenue into the account to support sustainability projects that benefit near-port neighborhoods. During the first calendar year, this translated to approximately \$150,000. The Sustainability Department and the Sustainability Commission – which consults on the use of the funds – are developing a policy to guide project selection and administration of the funds.

The Department is managing approximately \$20 million on an annual basis.



Grants and Leveraged Funds

Barr Foundation | 2022-2026

\$375,000 – Decarbonization, BERO, Resilience Hubs, Community Partnerships

USDA CFWR | 2023-2025

\$332,804 – Community Composting Initiatives

U.S. EPA SWIFR | 2024-2027

\$3,400,000 – Municipal and Private Waste Diversion Initiatives

The Recycling Project | 2025-2026

\$375,000 – Residential Carts and Education

RIRRC Municipal Grant Program | 2024-2027

\$37,660 – Curbside Education & Outreach

NBEP Public Street Design | 2023-2025

\$125,000 – Public Street Design

RIIB/MRP Action Grant | 2024-2026

\$1,000,000 – Public Street Construction

SNEP SOAR | 2024-2026

\$300,000 – Study Flooding in Frontline Communities

SNEP Watershed Implementation | 2023-2025

\$481,080 – Public Street Construction

RI OER Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

\$100,000 – Building Management System at Public Safety Complex

U.S. DOE Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

\$227,000 – Municipal Fleet Electrification

TOTAL – \$6,753,544

Municipal Energy Heat, Power & Light (HP&L) Utility Budget Management:

The Sustainability Department manages approximately a gross \$12M Heat, Power & Light (HP&L) utility budget, including \$6M in utility expenses and \$6M in revenue in the form of net metering credits. The Department:

- Instituted weekly energy market watch reviews in order to lock in lower energy prices when markets are favorable.
- Saved \$1.2M against the approved HP&L utility budgets during the past and current fiscal years through strategic energy procurement. This includes \$310,000 in savings through energy procurement in 2024 alone.
- Identified \$35,000 yearly avoided costs in late utility payment fees by revamping the utility bill management and payment process.
- Coordinated the transfer of \$3M in net metering credits as part of the City's settlement with PPSD.

Utility Bill Management & Payments

Responsibility for the data collection, processing and payment of bills for the City's 900+ utility accounts was transferred from the Public Property and Finance Departments to the Department of Sustainability in 2024. The Sustainability Department successfully integrated these accounts into its Energy Intelligence Suite (EIS) – a cloud-based database program – and refined the method by which these bills are paid. The new approach enables in-depth analysis of all utility bills by the Energy Manager with oversight from the Director of Energy Operations to ensure consumption data and expenditures are on pace with budgeted projections. This work is done in tandem with the Fiscal & Communications Coordinator, who manages purchase orders and invoice payments for all utility accounts – work which was previously being managed by Public Property's Fiscal Advisor. These changes have improved efficiency, sped up bill processing times, avoided the accumulation of late fees, and ensured billing errors are flagged and resolved in a timely manner.



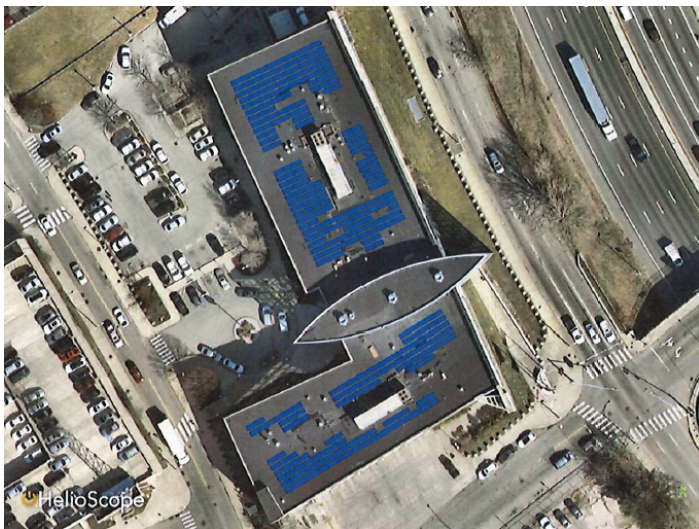
Decarbonization

During the second year of the Smiley Administration, the Department of Sustainability took major strides towards achieving the City's municipal and citywide decarbonization goals to phase out fossil fuels in our public buildings. The Department began formulating a long-term decarbonization strategy for municipal buildings, which includes energy efficiency projects and pilot rooftop solar projects, as well as a formal Decarbonization Roadmap Plan in accordance with Providence's Energy Efficiency and Carbon Neutral Ordinance. The Department:

- Ushered the **Public Safety Complex rooftop solar project**. The Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA), the owners of the building, support the installation. The City will own the system along with all its electric and environmental benefits. The system will pay for itself by the sixth year of operation and generate an estimated \$1M in savings and avoided costs over the 25-year lifespan of the array.
- Collaborated with the Department of Public Property to ensure the design of the new **Department of Public Works headquarters** complies with the City's decarbonization ordinance. This included supporting the completion of a feasibility study for a ground source or air source heat pump installation and rooftop solar and battery storage.
- Began working with PowerOptions to produce a **Building Decarbonization Roadmap**. The roadmap will include: decarbonization design strategies for each city-owned building, rooftop solar assessments, capital costs and available incentives, financing options, lifetime monetary and greenhouse gas saving profiles, and a recommended implementation timeline for the roadmap. The completed roadmap is expected fall 2025.

Efficiency and Electrification

The goal of a decarbonization plan is to make a building as energy efficient as possible, electrify the buildings mechanical systems, then supply the building with carbon-free "green power." In 2024, the Sustainability Department worked with RI Energy to craft a **Strategic Energy Management Partnership (SEMP)** which focuses on increasing the energy efficiency of the City's buildings. With enhanced financial incentives, technical support, and clearly defined energy savings goals that align with our 2040 decarbonization goal, our SEMP plan has enabled the City to achieve lighting audits for 40 municipal buildings that are on track to be retrofitted in 2025 and incorporates a building management software upgrade at the Public Safety Complex. We also fast-tracked technical reviews and incentive offers for the new DPW headquarters and seven recreation center electrification projects.

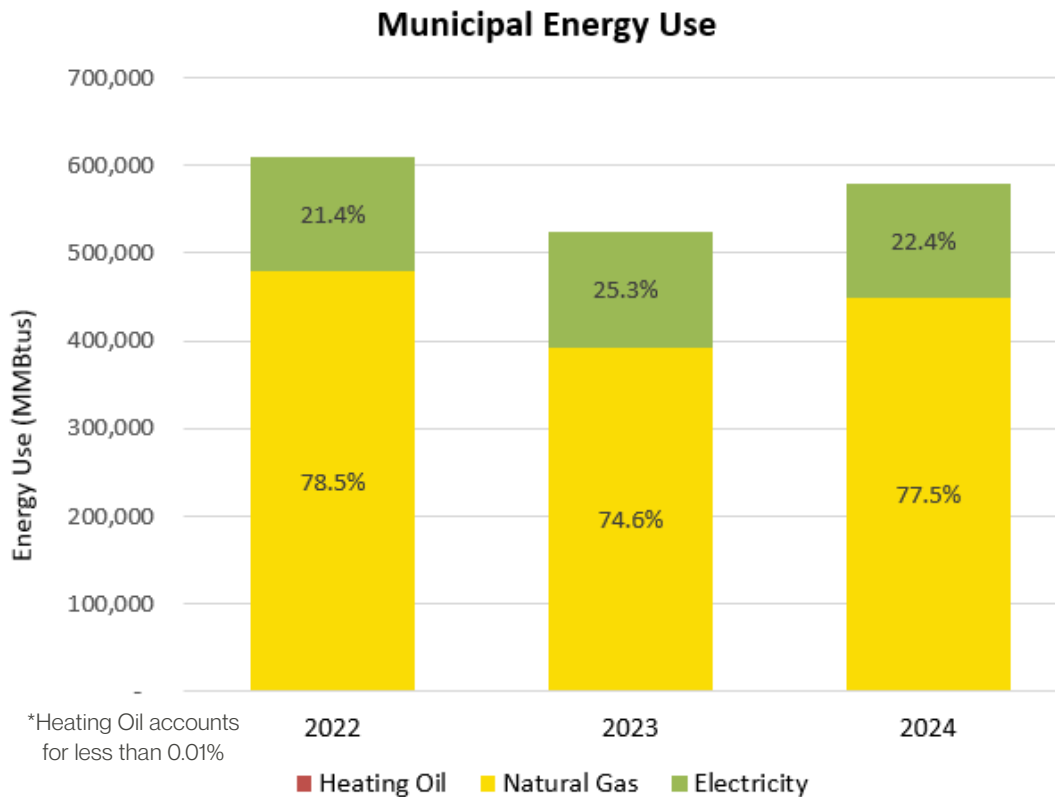


Public Safety Complex solar array blueprint

Building electrification projects are also moving forward and now include **20+ buildings** that have either been completed, are under contract, or are in the planning stages. This includes the seven recreation centers, nine schools, three public safety buildings, three buildings at Roger Williams Park, and the new DPW headquarters. These projects are on track to be completed by 2029 and will be the first buildings to be fully decarbonized when the City begins receiving 30,000,000 kWhs of green power annually, per the City's existing Captona solar contract.

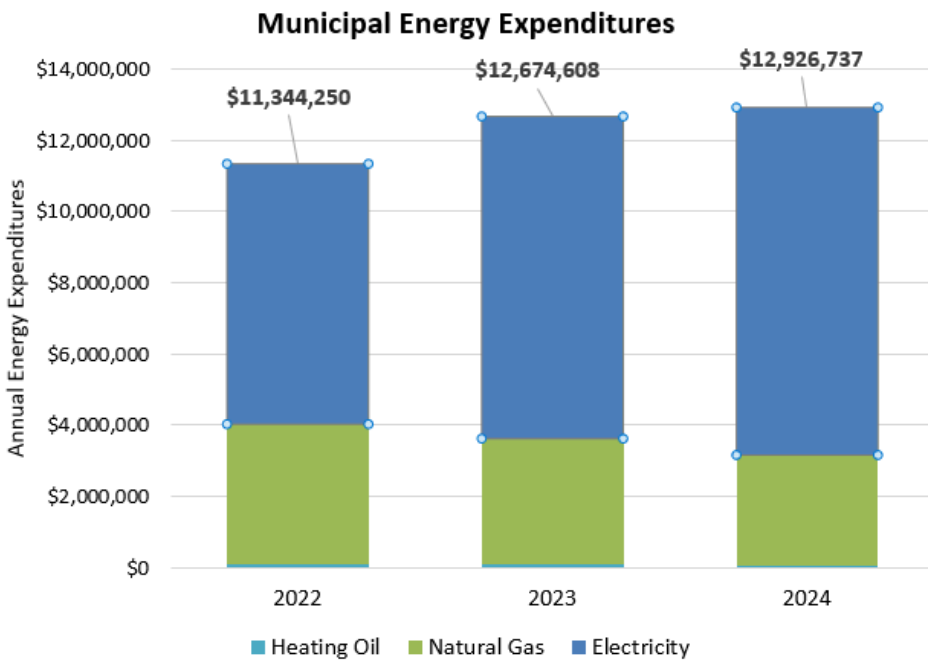
Energy Use, Expenditures & Emissions

The City is using a 2022 baseline year for this year's report and all future annual reports. The transition to the EIS energy management information system uncovered some holes in the historic data that had been collected. While these data gaps were closed prior to the 2020 COVID outbreak, energy usage during 2020 and 2021 are not representative of a typical year so they have been excluded.



Municipal Energy Use

As measured against a 2022 baseline, Providence has reduced its total energy consumption by 5% over the past two years. A milder winter in 2023 demonstrates the impact weather has on energy use especially our primary heating fuel – natural gas. Most notable is that the percentage of natural gas in the total mix of annual energy use is declining while electricity is increasing. This is a result of the City's electrification efforts.

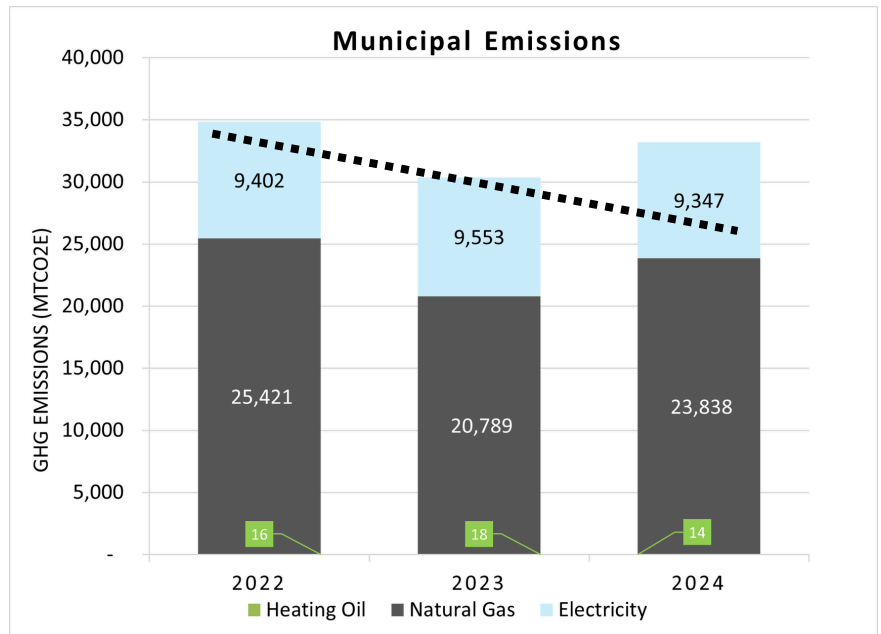


Municipal Energy Expenditures

Over the past 3 years the cost of energy has increased both in relative and absolute terms. While our energy usage has decreased by 5%, total expenditure has increased by 14%. The volatility in the natural gas markets over the past two years has driven prices up and resulted in higher electric rates.

Municipal Energy Emissions

As measured against a 2022 baseline, Providence has reduced its municipal greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 5% over the past two years. For the City’s part, the reduction in energy use and the move away from natural gas are the primary contributors. Outside of its control, but in alignment with the City’s climate targets and the state’s Act On Climate mandates, as well as the 100% Renewable Energy Standard by 20233, the New England electric grid continues to add cleaner sources of energy to its generation mix which reduces the emissions profile.



Energy Initiatives

A Broader Look at Citywide Carbon Emissions and Climate Goals

The State of Rhode Island’s **Act On Climate** mandates a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, an 80% reduction by 2040 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Additionally, the State has adopted a renewable energy standard that requires 100 percent of the State’s electricity supply to be from renewable energy by 2033. Finally, the Governor signed an executive order in spring 2023 that requires gas-powered vehicle sales to be phased out by 2035.

Locally, the **Providence Climate Justice Plan** sets a goal for Providence to be a carbon-neutral city by 2050. Related strategies include scaling back vehicle miles traveled, increasing EV adoption, and scaling up the use of heat pumps for heating and cooling.

With these mandates and goals set, Providence must continue to increase energy efficiency and transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable solutions.



In 2023, the Sustainability Department conducted a **triennial greenhouse gas inventory** released in 2024. This inventory is based on 2021 data and accounts for emissions from both public and private sources, which is consistent with Global Protocol for Community-scale Greenhouse Gas Inventories (GPC). The Department reports at the GPC BASIC level, which includes scope 1 and scope 2 emissions from stationery and transportation sources, as well as scope 1 and scope 3 emissions from waste emitted from Providence residents.

In total, the City emitted about 2.2 million metric tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2021, with **emissions decreasing 13.3%** compared to our baseline year (2015). Since our last inventory in 2018, emissions decreased 9.9% - equivalent to a 3.3% reduction per year. If Providence maintains this rate of emissions reduction, it would meet its 2050 carbon neutrality goal.

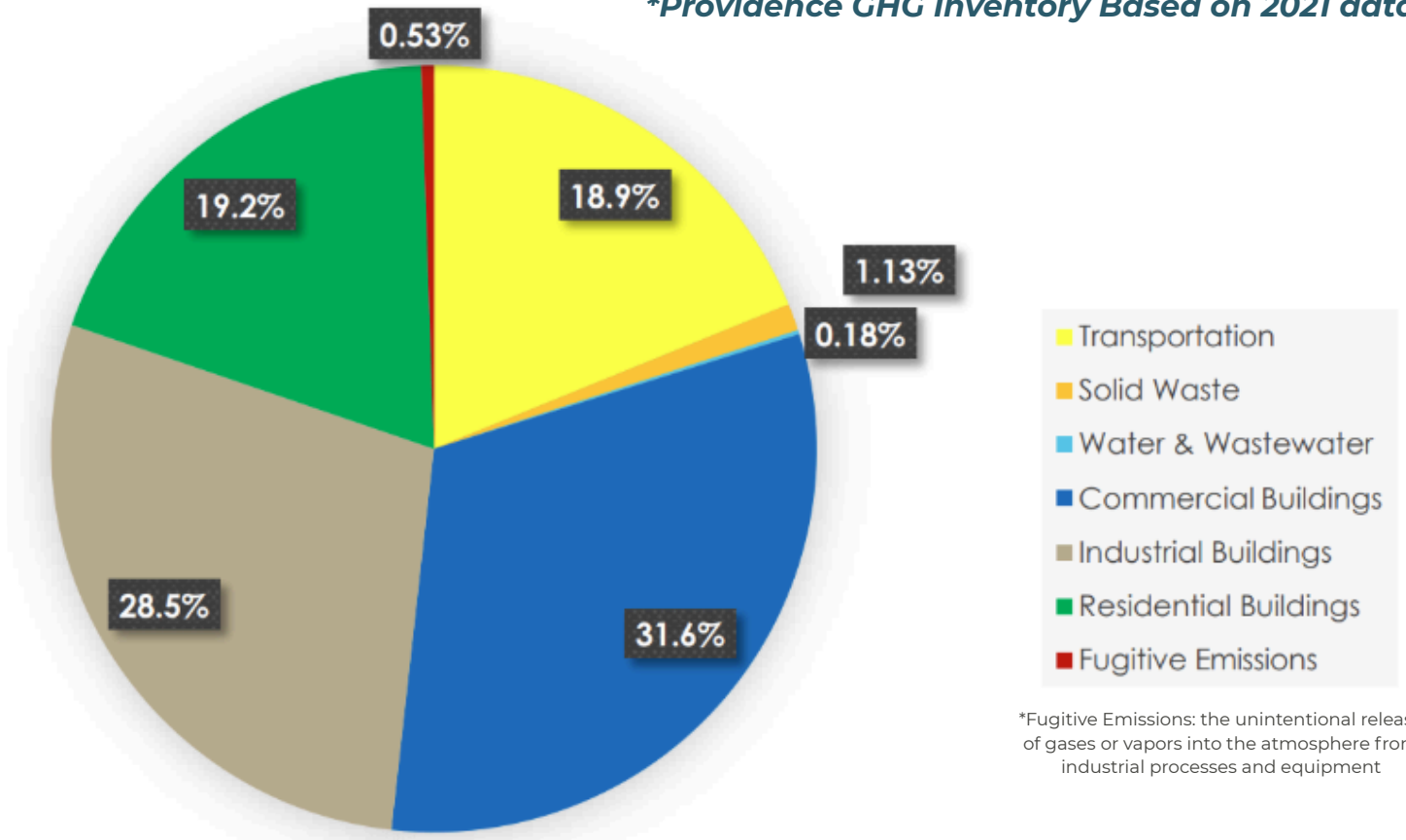
Citywide Carbon Emissions Overview

Providence residents and businesses have emitted about 2.2 million metric tons of CO₂e (MMTCO₂e) in 2021. The pie graph breaks down the City's emissions by sector.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions are the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels. Emissions have decreased 12.79% since the 2015 baseline inventory.

The majority of those emission reductions (9.45%) occurred from 2018-2021. This period includes the time of COVID-19 shutdowns. We anticipate future inventories will show a rebound in emissions. Achieving the 2050 carbon neutrality goal will require sustained investments. Our full 2021 Inventory of Citywide Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) report can be found at providenceri.gov/sustainability/annual-reports.

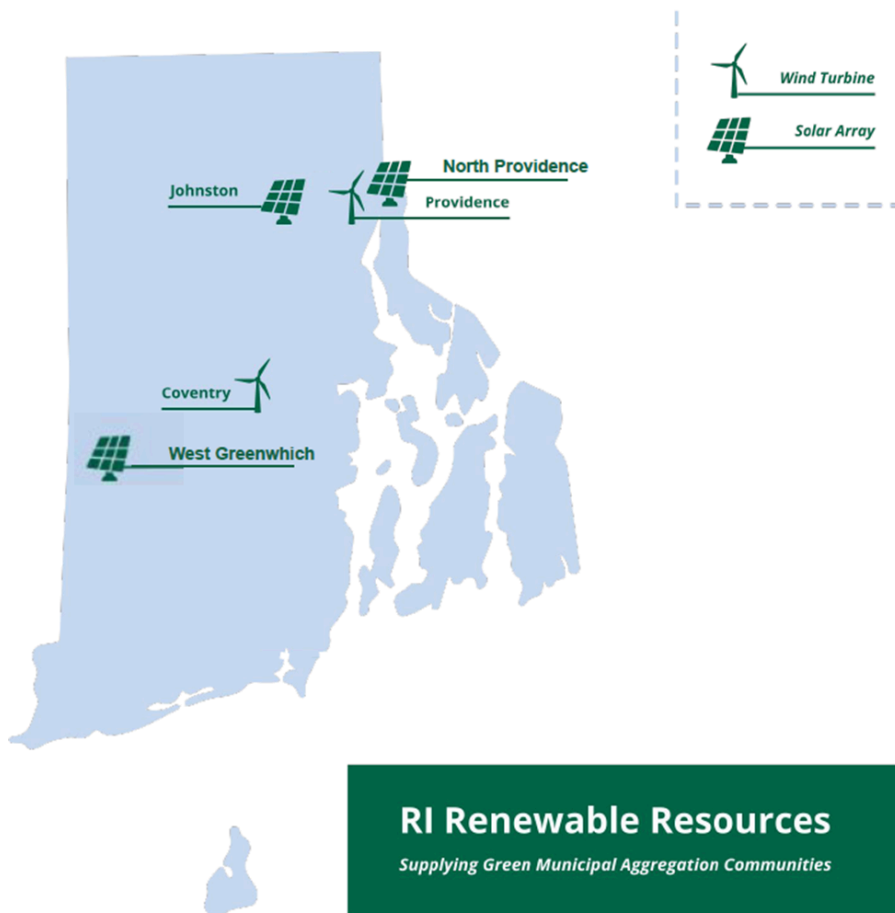
****Providence GHG Inventory Based on 2021 data***



Citywide Clean Energy Initiatives

Providence Community Electricity

In spring 2023, the City launched the **Providence Community Electricity Program (PCE)**. The program has two goals – (1) provide an electricity supply rate to residents and businesses that is competitive with the utility’s rate, and (2) include more local renewable energy in our supply than is required by RI state law. From launch to December 2024, PCE has purchased 29,000 voluntary RI New renewable energy certificates (RECs), avoided 20.7 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions – the equivalent of 21,700 barrels of oil – and collectively saved residential customers \$2.4 million on their utility bills. Further, by partnering with Green Energy Consumers Alliance, a local nonprofit organization, the City has ensured our voluntary RECs are **sourced from local projects**, including wind turbines in Coventry and Providence, and solar projects developed on capped brownfields in Johnston, North Providence, and West Greenwich.



\$2.4 million saved for residential customers on their utility bills since PCE launched in December 2024.

Avoided 20.7 million pounds of carbon emissions – equivalent to 21,700 barrels of oil.

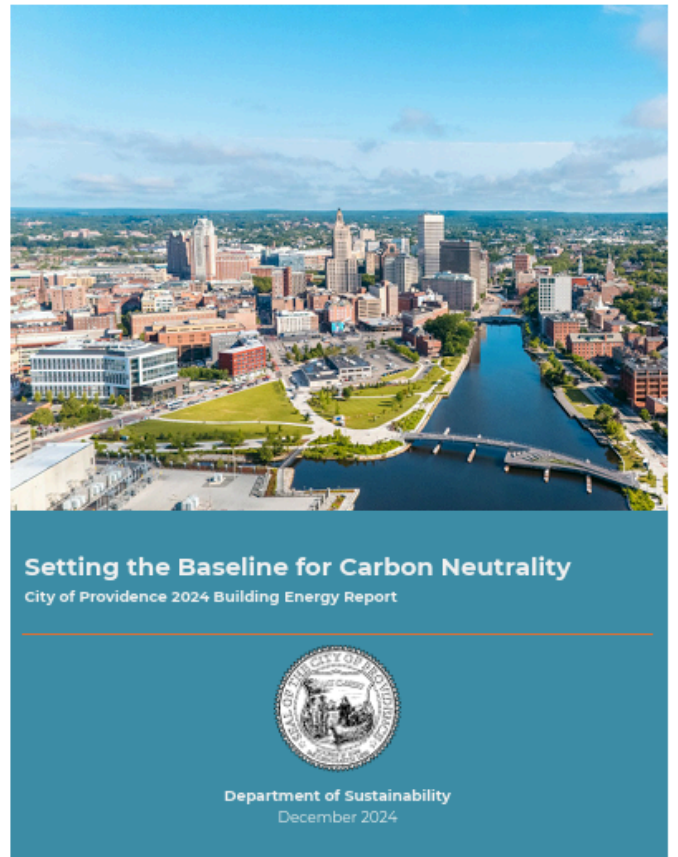
Building Energy Reporting Ordinance (BERO) Program

In 2023, the City Council passed the Building Energy Reporting Ordinance (BERO). BERO mandates that owners of the City's largest buildings report their building's overall energy usage to the City, which will then publicly disclose the data. The program aims to **measure the energy performance of the City's largest buildings to enable energy efficiency** efforts going forward, thus reducing carbon emissions in the building sector. The program also enables property owners to conduct energy efficiency audits of their buildings to understand what energy conservation measures can be implemented at their property. Energy conservation measures, like weatherization and heating and cooling upgrades, can often result in significant energy cost savings for property owners.

The Department of Sustainability is taking the lead on implementing the state's first energy reporting program, and in 2024, the Department **successfully reported on City-owned buildings** over 10,000 square feet.

In 2025, the owners of approximately 400 buildings with over 50,000 square feet will also be required to report. The list of properties covered by the ordinance will be updated on an annual basis as new or refined data becomes available to the Department.

The Department is **working with RI Energy and other partners** to ensure reporting is relatively simple and offering assistance to building owners so they can comply with the ordinance while maximizing cost-saving energy efficiency opportunities.



providenceri.gov/sustainability/building-energy-reporting

Environmental Justice

Public Street Waterfront Access Project



The Sustainability Department is working with community members to provide more equitable waterfront access to port-adjacent neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are largely cut off from the waterfront by I-95 and the Port of Providence.

In 2021, in response to sustained community advocacy, the State's Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) designated Public Street, between Allens Avenue and the Providence River, a public right of way. This guarantees access to the waterfront at Public Street in perpetuity.

Despite this designation, Public Street remains unsafe and uninviting for visitors. To address these issues, the Sustainability Department's **Public Street Waterfront Access Project** aims to enable safe and welcoming access to the waterfront for South Providence and Washington Park residents, while accommodating the operational needs of abutting industrial business owners. To ensure the project is achieving the community's vision the Department has done multiple rounds of public engagement. The Department has also met individually with each abutting business and/or land owner on multiple occasions to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed. These concerns include ensuring their trucks maintain the ability to maneuver within the street and limiting the potential for trucks and pedestrians to come into conflict. The project will provide separated space for pedestrians and vehicles, add lighting, and maintain sightlines to improve safety. The project will also add amenities, like shade trees and benches, and introduce green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff and improve water quality.

The project is in the design and permitting phase, with the Department **securing over \$1.9 million in grant dollars** to support each step of this project. The Department continues to work to overcome challenges related to historic contamination and aging infrastructure at the site.

Increasing Capacity for Community-Based Environmental Justice Work

The Sustainability Department, through local and grant funds, is supporting Providence-based community organizations with an environmental justice focus. For example:

- The Department supported Movement Education Outdoors' youth environmental justice education program in winter 2024 and 2025. Each iteration was comprised of about 10 to 12 Providence youth between the ages of 11 and 17 and provided space for youth to grapple with environmental injustice, express themselves through art, and meet and engage with local environmental activists.
- The Department will support Breathe PVD to continue its important work engaging residents in discussions, protective measures, and action around air quality concerns in frontline communities in Providence.
- The Department is supporting Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, including the Nuevas Voces program, and the Olneyville Neighborhood Association as backbone partners to the Olneyville Resilience Hub.
- The Sustainability Department, with the Department of People and Culture, provided support to local community organizations to offer trainings on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to City staff.

The Department is also providing funding and opportunities to build the capacity and leadership of residents living in the City's frontline communities. For example:

- The Department is supporting the Community Resilience Committee, a group of residents who help identify community priorities and direct efforts at the Olneyville Resilience Hub at the Joslin Center.
- The Department, with Providence Emergency Management Agency, supported community members to become multilingual emergency preparedness trainers, enabling the City to offer Spanish-language Until Help Arrives classes for the first time.

Applying a Sustainability and Equity Lens

Sustainability and equity need to permeate the City's approach to governing. The Sustainability Department collaborates with other City Departments and partners to integrate the Climate Justice Plan in City plans, policies, and regulations to ensure that sustainability and equity are centered. For example, the Sustainability Department worked with the Planning Department on the Comprehensive Plan update and is continuing to partner on the ProvPort Master Plan and zoning ordinance amendments. The Department also partnered with Providence Emergency Management Agency on the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and ensured the City's Sustainable Stormwater and Sewer Study included an equitable public engagement framework.



Climate Resiliency

Resilience Hubs



The Climate Justice Plan calls for the City to create a network of **Resilience Hubs**. They are community-led, City-supported spaces that provide year-round community-building services and programming aligned with neighborhood-identified needs like language classes and health-related services. These trusted spaces also support residents before, during, and after emergency events like heatwaves or floods. Hubs use a collaborative governance model to ensure that those who are most impacted by the climate crisis in Providence are centered in decision-making processes.

In partnership with backbone organizations, including the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and Olneyville Neighborhood Association, City Departments including Sustainability, Recreation, and Providence Emergency Management Agency, are piloting **Providence's first resilience hub at Joslin Recreation Center**, the Olneyville Resilience Hub.

In early 2024, the Olneyville Resilience Hub at Joslin Recreation Center hosted a kick-off event and officially opened. The Hub increases place-based services and programming working with the Recreation Department, PEMA, and community-based organizations. Importantly, the Department and Hub partners facilitated a **robust public engagement** effort relating to major building renovations at Joslin Recreation Center funded by the State's Capital Project Fund. The engagement resulted in a more thorough understanding of community priorities, providing the architects with the information needed to design the renovations to meet community needs in 2025 and support a \$3,665,000 renovation project.

The **Olneyville Resilience Hub** has hosted and supported a wide range of programming since the launch. These programs address community priorities and needs and expand capacity of partner organizations in the area that offer critical programming and services, but may not have an accessible, convenient, or free location to utilize. Programming at the Hub has included language exchange nights (Coalition for a Multilingual RI), English classes (Community Libraries of PVD), the CAPP Agency satellite site offering LIHEAP assistance, peer mental health groups (Project LETS), compost education and workshops (Zero Waste Providence, Harvest Cycle), PEMA winter and flooding preparedness trainings, community garden committee meetings, and much more. The Hub will continue to partner with organizations that meet the needs of the greater Olneyville community, adapting to address new priorities as they arise.

Composting, Waste Reduction & Recycling

The Sustainability Department has secured a significant amount of grant funding for waste reduction efforts, including improving recycling and reducing food waste.

The City is partnering with community organizations and businesses to bolster their existing efforts to reduce food waste. Efforts include: free backyard compost mentorships, improvements to the community composting drop-off site network, education and outreach on composting and local food waste diversion options, implementation of cafeteria waste diversion efforts in Providence Public Schools, and technical assistance for businesses and institutions to divert food waste. The Department also helped increase the capacity of a Providence-based food waste hauling business through equipment purchases and is assisting a local non-profit to redevelop a brownfield site into a medium-scale compost processing site in the West End.



Mayor Smiley at the compost press conference at Joslin Rec.



Deputy Director Kevin Proft provides remarks with City Councilors Vargas (left) and Ryan (right).

In terms of recycling, the Sustainability Department has secured millions of dollars in funding to take a multi-pronged approach to increasing the City's lagging recycling rate. Efforts will include: replacing the City's mismatched and undersized trash and recycling carts with new carts, in-person and mail-based education and outreach efforts, and investments in technology to help the City identify which buildings' carts have contamination, which will enable more targeted education and enforcement efforts. The Department also secured grant funds to purchase a new recycling truck and carts for the Department of Public Works to introduce a pilot program to encourage more businesses to recycle.

Stormwater & Flooding Mitigation

The City of Providence received a SNEP SOAR grant to work with community-based organizations and partners to engage the public and stakeholders in the selection of one to two recurring **flood areas for study** by an engineering firm. The City will collaborate with community partners– Providence Resilience Partnership, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC), and Nuevas Voces– to develop a curriculum for the public engagement phase of the project. The goal of the curriculum will be to educate a cohort of residents and stakeholders about urban flooding and provide them with the context and information they need to meaningfully participate in key decision-making processes and site selection.

In collaboration with partners, we will recruit a cohort of community members to represent the community on this project. The cohort will participate in a series of sessions that first **educates community members about flooding**, laying a foundation of knowledge from which they can meaningfully participate in the decision-making process to decide which area(s) should be addressed by available funding.

Following the prioritization of the sites by the community cohort, an engineering firm will be procured with input from cohort members, to develop studies with useful and **actionable recommendations to mitigate flooding**. Engagement of the cohort will continue at key points throughout the engineering phase to inform important decisions and guide recommendations. The engineering firm will also provide a final presentation to the community cohort upon the study's completion.

The Department also successfully supported the Stakeholder Task Force phase of the **Sustainable Stormwater and Sewer Study**. The Task Force, which was comprised of individuals from key stakeholder groups who represent a wide set of interests, completed their final recommendations on the consultant Raftelis' identified funding needs and a financing analysis for the 10-year management of the City's stormwater and sewer systems. The Study is expected to be released in July 2025 and will include an analysis of the City's existing and future stormwater and sanitary sewer systems' operations and management of their costs. It will also inform priorities for capital improvement projects to be implemented on a prioritized basis to repair or replace aging infrastructure, address water quality and flooding concerns, and build the City's resilience to changing weather patterns and sea level rise.



Green infrastructure in Roger Williams Park.



Mayor Smiley visiting flooding near Branch Avenue.

Responding to Extreme Heat & Cold

The Department of Sustainability collaborates with Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), the Department of Recreation, and the Community Libraries of Providence to provide spaces where residents can stay safe during periods of extreme temperatures. During **summer heatwaves**, the Recreation Department extends hours at pools and splashpads and opens them on Sundays and holidays when they would otherwise be closed. Community Libraries of Providence provides air conditioned or heated space at its nine publicly accessible libraries during regular operations and opens key branches on Sundays and holidays to provide relief for residents during extreme heat or cold. During winter 2024/2025, the Olneyville Resilience Hub at Joslin Recreation Center also served as a warming center for residents for the first time.

The Sustainability Department helped plan heat and cold response efforts by allocating Barr Foundation grant funding to support these services over the past three years. In the summer of 2024, Community Libraries of Providence opened on Sundays or holidays twice while Recreation extended hours or opened on Sundays or holidays on nine occasions.



THE ROAD AHEAD

As we enter the next fiscal year, the Sustainability Department is proud to lead on climate justice, embed equity and justice citywide, and implement cost-saving strategies in energy efficiency, waste reduction, and climate resilience preparedness. With the dedication and expertise of our team and the **collaborative interdepartmental approach fostered by Mayor Brett P. Smiley**, we are ready to build on our successes.

In the coming year, we will expand decarbonization efforts to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the dependence on fossil fuel sources in city-owned buildings through measures like energy efficiency and clean energy upgrades. The Department will deliver the **Providence Decarbonization Roadmap Plan for municipal buildings** to help the City understand the sequence of building improvements needed to make our buildings energy-efficient and carbon-neutral by 2040, enabling the City to secure the necessary resources to meet the target strategically. We will continue implementing the **Building Energy Reporting Program** by expanding the energy reporting requirement to private property owners of large buildings for public disclosure for the first time in Providence, delivering a framework that the state can replicate.

Beyond reducing carbon emissions in our built environment, we will continue to **implement waste diversion** initiatives focused on expanding composting and improving the City's recycling rate and **support efforts to improve stormwater runoff** and assess flooding prevention strategies. We are also eager to work collaboratively with community members on a **5-year update the Providence Climate Justice Plan**.

Undeniably, our work is more urgent than ever as the impacts of climate change accelerate and increase the vulnerability of our communities. Despite the challenges, we will strive to create an equitable, healthy, and low-carbon Providence. Our commitment to a climate-resilient present and future remains.





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