

Cleveland

A data driven approach to the sustainable transition



Population

396,815

Lying on the shores of Lake Erie, Cleveland is one the major cities in the Midwest, with a legacy of manufacturing and heavy industry that continues to this day. Sitting at the heart of the US' Great Lakes basin — home to 30 million Americans and 84% of the country's surface fresh water — Cleveland is dependent on a body of water that is under increasing stress from climate change, especially rising temperatures and heavier rain events.

The city has made great environmental progress since the Cuyahoga River fire of 1969 towards developing a thriving and resilient future. It is combining its efforts to improve water quality, air quality, and public health with its aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The city has been disclosing to CDP since 2013.

Matthew Gray, Chief of Sustainability and Erika Meschkat, Sustainability Manager in the Mayor's Office of Sustainability for the City of Cleveland, discuss the city's journey from big polluter to "a thriving green city on a blue lake".

For the city's sustainability team, climate action is integral to building a more inclusive and resilient community. That means working with different neighborhoods to develop a shared vision for a more sustainable city.

The city is pioneering ways to get these projects off the ground, even on a limited budget. Through the [Cleveland Climate Action Fund](#), a crowd-funding platform, it has empowered people from different neighborhoods to seek funding for their own projects. **"It's great to be able to make their ideas tangible"**, says Gray. In 2018, neighborhood climate workshops led to more than 40 projects, with the Cleveland Climate Action Fund providing matching dollars for more than half of those projects.

Driving climate action locally and regionally

The city has made community engagement a key pillar of its climate action efforts. It is working to ensure that a diversity of ideas, voices and visions for the future are reflected in its plans.

Cleveland is also taking a lead in engaging other cities on environmental issues in the Ohio region. Gray tells us the city is **"thinking regionally on the resilience front with other cities on the Great Lakes"**. It co-leads the Great Lakes Climate Adaptation Network of around 20 cities that share approaches to adapting to the impacts of climate change, which are already making themselves felt in the region in the form of heatwaves, intense rainfall flooding, and more.

Disclosing to CDP has been invaluable to drive this forward. **"Having that common platform and methodology is critical"**, says Gray. Through

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"Addressing climate change in Ohio is also about addressing matters of social justice", Meschkat tells us. **"People of color in low income communities are disproportionately impacted by the burdens of climate change"**, particularly so in Cleveland where they have historically borne the brunt of the city's industrial pollution.

"We've learned a lot of lessons over the years about what real engagement looks like with the community", Gray says. The city government is holding a dozen workshops with citizens to incorporate their views into its updated climate action plan, **"but it's also to really support neighborhood-based climate action projects"**.

Emission targets

80%

reduction by 2050 with
2010 baseline.

Best practice examples

- ▼ Holding neighborhood climate workshops to learn about citizens' priorities
- ▼ Using the disclosure process to drive engagement with different stakeholders
- ▼ Linking environmental issues with social and economic concerns
- ▼ Working on shared adaptation challenges with neighboring cities
- ▼ Empowering citizens by helping to plan and fund neighborhood-based climate action projects

CDP's disclosure platform, Cleveland has been able to track its performance over the past five years – and expects to see emissions to continue to decrease – while **“comparing ourselves to other cities, including best practices in all these areas of climate action”**.

“The process is worth it”, he continues, **“even if it can be challenging”**. It has helped Cleveland understand where its emissions are coming from, and **“engage with people who have the data – they're your natural partners in actually reducing those emissions”**.

Overall, the city has worked with 80 different organizations to gather its data and input. That in turn has generated momentum to boost climate action. **“Now we're really focusing more on how you integrate all these actions on energy efficiency, renewable energy, transportation, and more”**.

Cleveland's 2030 vision

Working with local neighborhoods and collecting data on emissions is helping Cleveland to refine its vision for the future. **“We certainly imagine a much cleaner city: cleaner air, cleaner energy and even cleaner water”**, Gray says. **“We imagine a thriving environment supporting a sustainable economy in 2030 and beyond”**.

The city is spearheading projects to make that vision a reality. As part of its nine action areas, the administration is working with foundations, community organizations, businesses, and tree experts to help Cleveland live up to its moniker as ‘the Forest City’. The Cleveland Tree Plan lays out

how the city will restore its canopy cover from 19 percent to 30 percent by 2040. This would reduce the urban heat island effect, slow storm water runoff, and improve quality of life in the process. At the same time, the additional trees would add approximately \$15 million of value to the community.

When it comes to greening its energy supply, there's no shortage of initiatives either. **“We have unique assets here like offshore wind”**, Gray says. **“We think by 2021 we can install 20 megawatts in Lake Erie. And then expand it over time and bring down the costs.”** The city and its partners have also made use of vacant land to build three major solar farms: **“that's an area we're going to keep looking into”**. As part of its community choice aggregation program, about 50,000 residents and small businesses also receive 100% clean power through the purchase of renewable energy certificates (RECs).

By dovetailing climate action with economic and social development, Cleveland is working towards a better future for all its residents.



Key data reported to CDP in 2017

▼ Climate hazards:

3 major climate risks including:



Heat waves



Flash/surface floods storms



Rain storms

▼ Adaptation actions:

5 climate-change related projects in development:



Increased energy security



Additional funding opportunities



Development of new businesses

▼ Emissions reduction actions:

9 emissions reduction opportunities identified:



25% zero-carbon electricity supply by 2025



Greenspace expansion



Energy efficiency measures



Smart public transport



CDP is a global environmental non-profit that helps investors, companies, cities, states and regions assess their environmental impact and take urgent action to build a truly sustainable economy. CDP works with over 500 cities on measuring and disclosing environmental data each year to manage emissions, build resilience, protect themselves from climate impacts and create better places for people to live and work. These cities are disclosing over 8,000 urban sustainability actions, demonstrating their commitment to building a sustainable economy and tackling climate change.

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