



Municipal Survey Analysis

Prepared by Highland Planning // March 31, 2025

OVERVIEW

Building off the Priority Climate Action Plan (CAP), which was developed in early 2024 and focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in three sectors (Municipal Operations, Transportation, and Buildings), the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (GFLRPC) is undertaking the development of a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) for the nine-County Genesee-Finger Lakes region (Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates). This survey was targeted specifically for municipal staff, elected officials, and others affiliated with municipal operations. The input from this survey will inform goals and strategies to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and climate pollution across all sectors.

ACCESSIBILITY

The survey was available online through Survey123.

PROMOTION

The survey was promoted through email and social media.

SURVEY PERIOD AND RESPONSES RECEIVED

The survey was open from October 25, 2024 through January 31, 2025 and received a total of 105 responses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section defines all of the questions asked in the Municipal Survey and provides a brief summary of the responses to each question. The summarized responses are shown in italics immediately following each question.

Section 1: First, a little about you...

1. With which Town, Village, City, or County are you affiliated?

Approximately 46 municipalities responded as well as all of the Counties, except for Wayne and Yates Counties. Seneca Falls, with 12% of responses, and Brighton, with 5% of responses, were the municipalities with the most responses.

2. What is your role at the Town/Village/City/County?

30% of respondents were municipal staff, 23% were Planning Board or Zoning Boards of Appeals members, and 18% were a mayor/supervisor/executive.

Section 2: Climate Action

3. How worried are you about climate change?
Most respondents are very worried (49%) or somewhat worried (40%) about climate change.
4. What impacts from climate change are you most worried about in your community?
Respondents were most concerned about water pollution (61%), increased spread of invasive species and/or disease (59%), and flooding (51%).
5. In general, how committed are you to reducing your municipality's carbon footprint (from government operations)?
Most respondents (73%) said they would like to do more to reduce their municipality's carbon footprint.
6. What prevents you from doing more?
Funding constraints are the largest barrier for respondents (49%).
7. Climate action has many benefits beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Which of the following are most important to you?
Improving air and water quality was most important to respondents (65%).

Section 3: Transportation and Land Use

8. The following table identifies several strategies to reduce greenhouse emissions from transportation and land use. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.
The most common strategy that municipalities have implemented is conducting an inventory of the municipal fleet (40%). The most common strategies that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for are related to increasing the availability of EV charging infrastructure as well as bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. The most common strategies that municipalities are not interested in pursuing involve changing commuting patterns for employees.
9. What other strategies is your municipality considering to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and land use?
Other strategies that municipalities are considering include strategies to increase government efficiency (such as shared services agreements) and strategies to encourage walking and cycling, such as building sidewalks and expanding bicycle and pedestrian trails.
10. If you indicated above that you would like your municipality is interested in a strategy, but needs support, what support do you need?
Financial assistance (e.g. grants) was the support most needed by respondents (86%).

Section 4: Buildings and Infrastructure

11. The following table identifies several strategies to decarbonize municipal buildings and infrastructure. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.

The most common strategy that municipalities have implemented is upgrading interior or exterior lighting to LED technology (57%). The most common strategies that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for are improving building envelope insulation (27%) and installing renewable energy generation on municipal property (e.g. roof- or ground-mounted solar panels) (26%). The most common strategy that municipalities are not interested in pursuing is installing air-source and ground-source heat pumps and heat pump water heaters in municipal buildings (29%).

12. The following table identifies strategies for implementing zero emission codes and standards for buildings. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.

The most common strategy that municipalities have implemented is educating municipal planning and permitting staff on new energy codes (35%). The most common strategy that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for is adopting and implementing green building codes (22%). At the same time, 18% of respondents are not interested in adopting and implementing green building codes.

13. What other strategies is your municipality considering to lower energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in municipal buildings and infrastructure?

Other strategies that municipalities are considering/have implemented include adopting the Unified Solar Permit and converting streetlights to LED technology.

14. If you indicated above that you would like your municipality is interested in a strategy, but needs support, what support do you need?

Financial assistance (e.g. grants) was the support most needed by respondents (87%).

Section 5: Final Thoughts

15. In your opinion, what is the one most important action you'd like to see your municipality implement in the short-term (1-3 years) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

In the short term, respondents would like to see their municipality transition to electric vehicles, install EV charging stations, divert waste, expand sidewalk and trail networks, increase public transit options, install solar panels, complete projects to reduce energy use and increase energy efficiency, and use energy management systems.

16. Think big. If funding and capacity were unlimited, what do you think is the most impactful action your municipality could take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years?

In the long term, respondents would like to see their municipality electrify municipal, residential, and commercial buildings; invest in solar and wind powers and electric grid updates to support the transition to net-zero; explore alternative sources of energy such as nuclear; close the landfill and divert waste through composting and recycling; convert municipal fleets to EVs, install EV charging stations, and provide incentives to residents and businesses to convert to EVs; and expand trail networks, build sidewalks and protected bike lanes, and create pedestrian-only zones.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

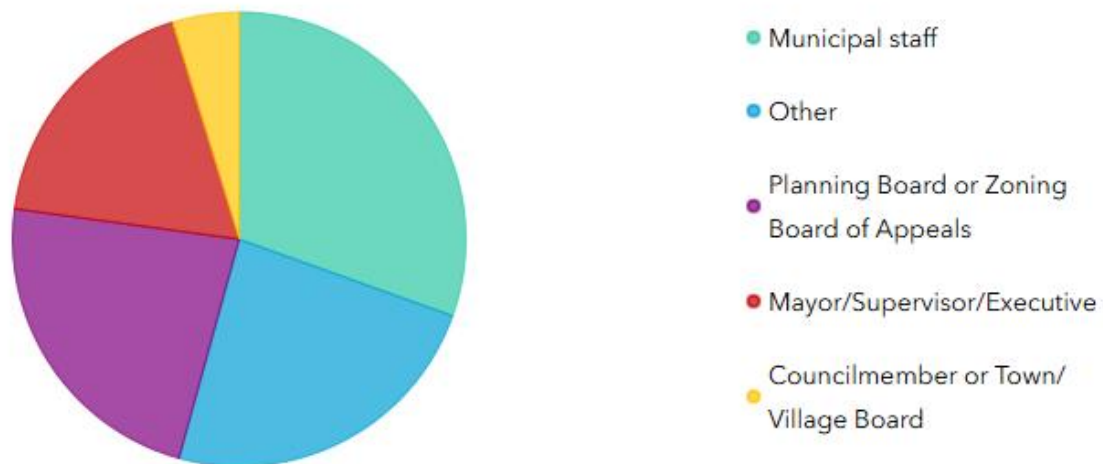
This section provides a detailed analysis of the responses received to each question.

Section 1: First, a little about you...

Question 1: With which Town, Village, City, or County are you affiliated?

Out of 105 responses, **Seneca Falls**, with 12% of responses, and **Brighton**, with 5% of responses, were the municipalities with the most responses. In total, approximately 46 municipalities responded as well as all of the Counties, except for Wayne and Yates Counties. It was not possible to determine the exact number of municipalities that responded, as some respondents did not specify whether they were affiliated with a Town or Village.

Question 2: What is your role at the Town/Village/City/County?



Out of 105 responses, 30% were **municipal staff**, 23% were **Planning Board or Zoning Boards of Appeals members**, 18% were a **mayor/supervisor/executive**, and 5% were **councilmembers or on the Town/Village Board**.

24% of respondents chose "Other." Most of these respondents were members of other municipal boards, commissions, or task forces, such as the Climate Smart Communities Task Force, Historic Preservation Committee, or Conservation Board.

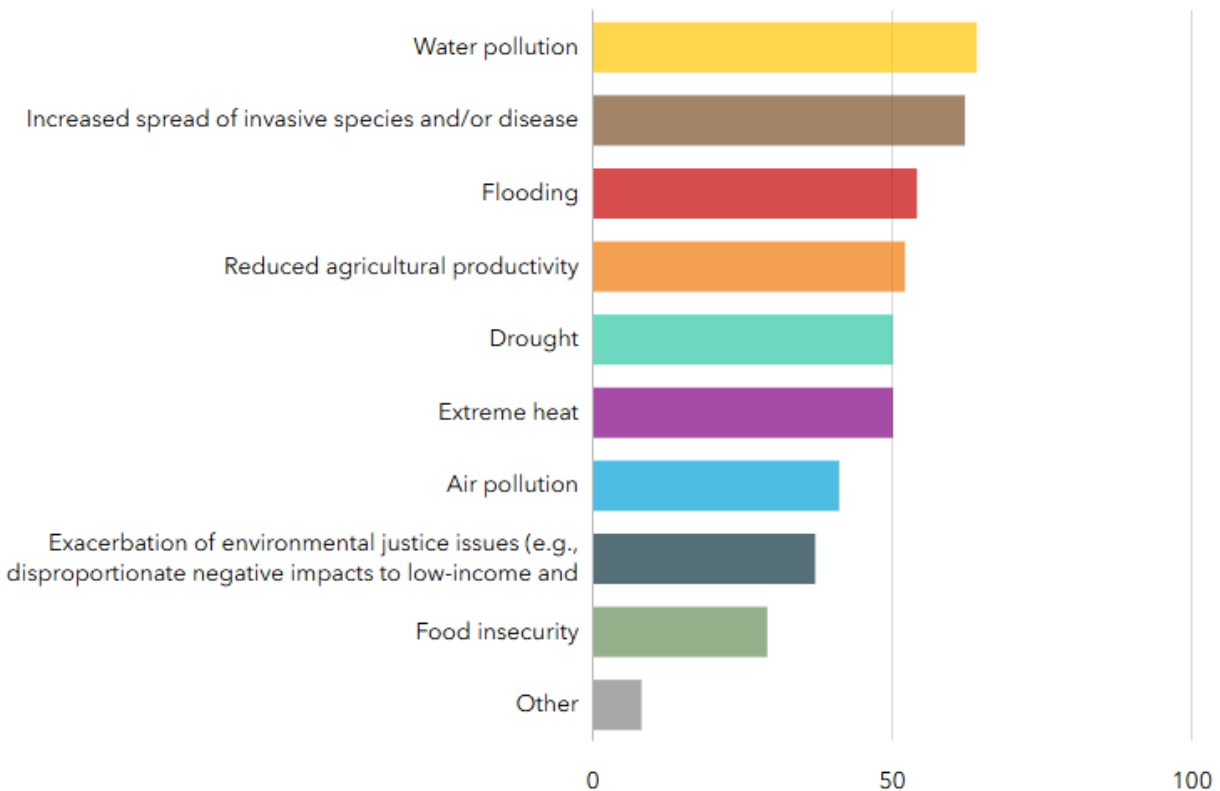
Section 2: Climate Action

Question 3: How worried are you about climate change?



Out of 105 responses, 49% were **very worried**, 40% were **somewhat worried**, and 11% were **not worried at all**.

Question 4: What impacts from climate change are you most worried about in your community?

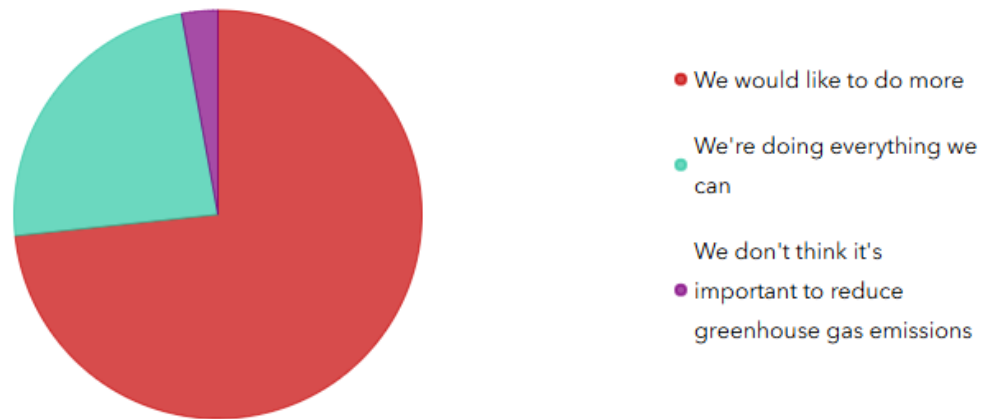


Respondents were able to select as many answers as applied. Out of 105 responses, 61% selected **water pollution** as the climate change impact they are most worried about. **Increased spread of invasive species and/or disease** (59%) and **flooding** (51%) were also concerns for the majority of respondents.

8% of respondents selected “Other.” Their responses are summarized below:

- Some respondents expressed concerns about soil and water contamination from the landfill, pesticides, overuse of manure, and forever chemicals.
- Some respondents are concerned about biodiversity loss and species extinctions.

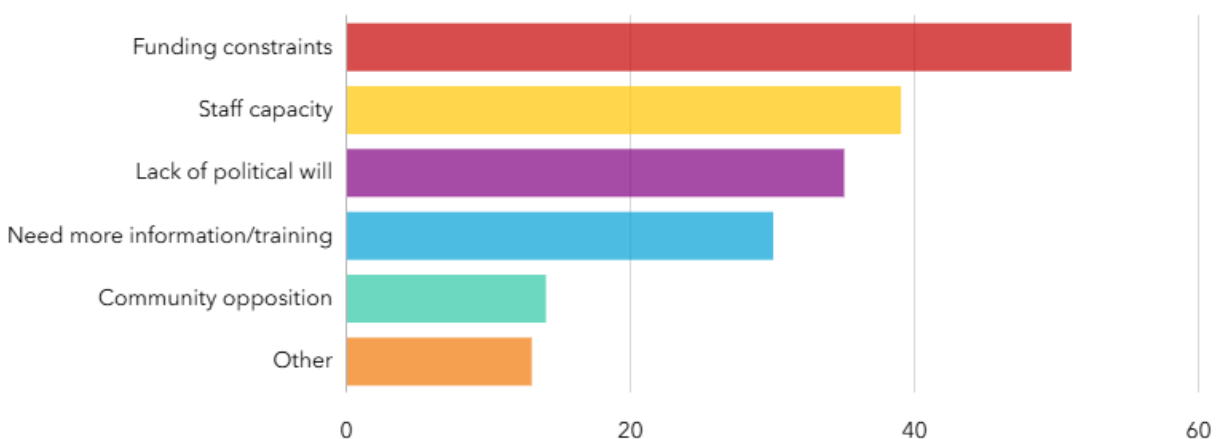
Question 5: In general, how committed are you to reducing your municipality's carbon footprint (from government operations)?



Out of 105 responses, 73% said they **would like to do more**, 24% said they are **doing everything they can**, and 3% said they **don't think it's important to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.

Question 6: What prevents you from doing more?

Note: This question was only shown to respondents who answered "I would like to do more" to Question 5.



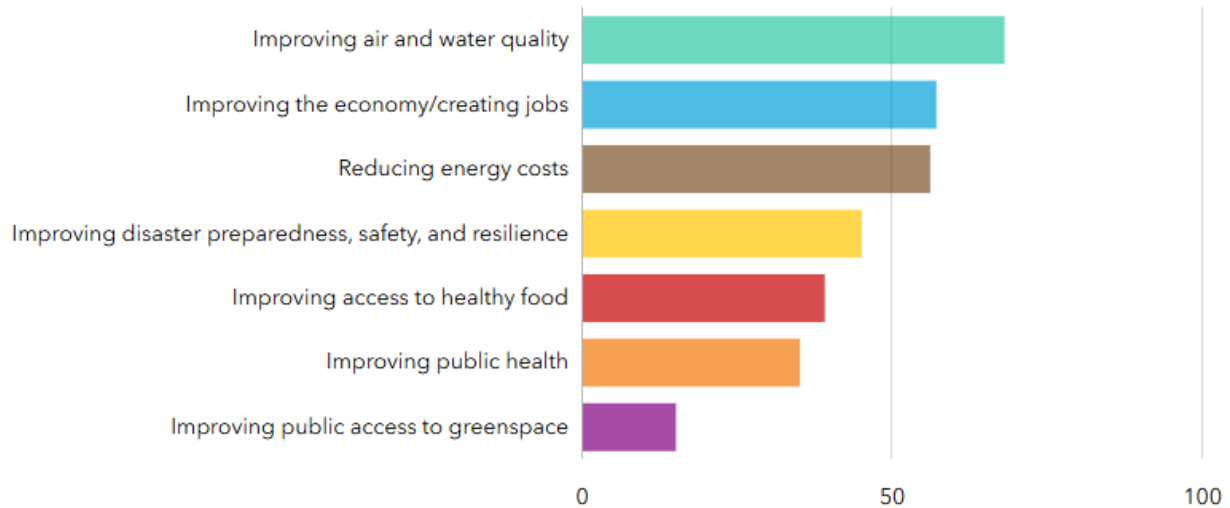
Respondents were able to select as many answers as applied. Out of 77 responses, 49% answered that **funding constraints** prevent them from doing more to reduce their municipality's carbon footprint. **Staff capacity** (37%), **lack of political will** (33%), and **need for more information/training** (29%) were also cited as barriers.

12% of respondents selected "Other." Their responses are summarized below:

- One respondent stated that having specific information about how climate change will impact our region and the potential costs of climate change impacts compared to the cost of mitigation would be helpful.

- One respondent stated that climate change does not fall neatly into one department's scope, so it is difficult to make a coordinated effort to take action.

Question 7: Climate action has many benefits beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Which of the following are most important to you?



Respondents were asked to select their top three priorities. Out of 105 responses, 65% selected **improving air and water quality**, 54% selected **improving the economy/creating jobs**, and 53% selected **reducing energy costs**.

Section 3: Transportation and Land Use

Question 8: The following table identifies several strategies to reduce greenhouse emissions from transportation and land use. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.

Strategy	My municipality is already doing this (partially or fully)	My municipality is interested but needs support (e.g., technical or financial assistance)	My municipality is not interested in this action	Unsure
Adopt a vehicle fleet efficiency policy	13%	25%	11%	51%
Conduct an inventory of the municipal fleet	40%	9%	5%	45%
Implement a car-sharing program for staff	6%	6%	40%	46%
Convert the municipal fleet to alternative fuel or electric vehicles	5%	25%	23%	47%
Adopt a policy allowing employees to telecommute to reduce commuter trips	14%	7%	34%	42%
Subsidize or incentivize public transit options for employee commutes	1%	7%	51%	40%
Engage employees to take alternative modes of transportation through a green pledge or competition	0%	7%	46%	45%
Encourage residents and businesses to invest in zero emission light, medium, and heavy-duty fleets when technology is available	5%	21%	18%	55%
Implement a program to encourage people to walk, bike or take public transportation by subsidizing transit passes, or shared mobility programs	9%	21%	26%	43%
Invest in an educational campaign to educate all road users about best practices for use of public transportation and alternatives modes of transportation	6%	23%	23%	47%

Strategy	My municipality is already doing this (partially or fully)	My municipality is interested but needs support (e.g., technical or financial assistance)	My municipality is not interested in this action	Unsure
Adopt green parking lot standards	6%	15%	20%	57%
Adopt a Complete Streets policy	22%	13%	13%	49%
Expedite and standardize permitting for installation of alternative fuel and electric vehicle refueling infrastructure	14%	27%	13%	44%
Expedite and standardize permitting for installation of pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, bike paths, and bike parking	25%	23%	14%	36%
Implement Complete Streets policies and Safe Routes to School as well as integrate Complete Street standards into zoning and design standard language	19%	20%	17%	41%
Develop municipal EV infrastructure plan	11%	24%	18%	44%
Expand EV charging infrastructure in municipal lots	19%	27%	21%	41%
Expand bike network and bike rental/share programs	17%	17%	21%	41%
Designate preferred parking in public parking facilities for alternative fuel vehicles, carpools, bike parking, etc.	12%	12%	24%	49%
Create and expand shared mobility services	2%	17%	21%	58%
Make safety improvements to roads such as roundabouts, road diets, etc.	23%	25%	15%	35%
Create low-emission zones (anti-idling) around environmental justice communities, school zones, pedestrian-centric areas, and transit stations	3%	9%	27%	58%

Strategy	My municipality is already doing this (partially or fully)	My municipality is interested but needs support (e.g., technical or financial assistance)	My municipality is not interested in this action	Unsure
Update zoning to increase density, including legalizing accessory dwelling units (i.e., mother-in-law units)	21%	20%	17%	41%
Update zoning to require certain coverage of renewable energy installations on certain land uses/zoning districts (i.e., solar panels above parking areas)	13%	20%	17%	48%
Incorporate smart growth principles into land-use policies and regulations	25%	21%	9%	42%
Incentivize mixed-use/mixed-income development in City, Town, and Village centers	25%	26%	11%	37%
Incentivize, then require through zoning and site review standards, green infrastructure, considerations for public transportation, and bike and pedestrian circulation in development projects	9%	27%	16%	47%

Out of 105 responses, the most common strategies that municipalities have implemented are **conducting an inventory of the municipal fleet (40%)**, **incorporating smart growth principles into land-use policies and regulations (25%)**, **incentivizing mixed-use/mixed-income development in City, Town, and Village centers (25%)**, and **expediting and standardizing permitting for installation of pedestrian amenities (25%)**.

The most common strategies that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for are **expanding EV charging infrastructure in municipal lots (27%)**, **expediting and standardizing permitting for installation of alternative fuel and electric vehicle refueling infrastructure (27%)**, and **incentivizing, then requiring through zoning and site review standards, green infrastructure, considerations for public transportation, and bike and pedestrian circulation in development projects (27%)**.

The most common strategies that municipalities are not interested in pursuing are **subsidizing or incentivizing public transit options for employee commutes (51%)**, **engaging employees to take**

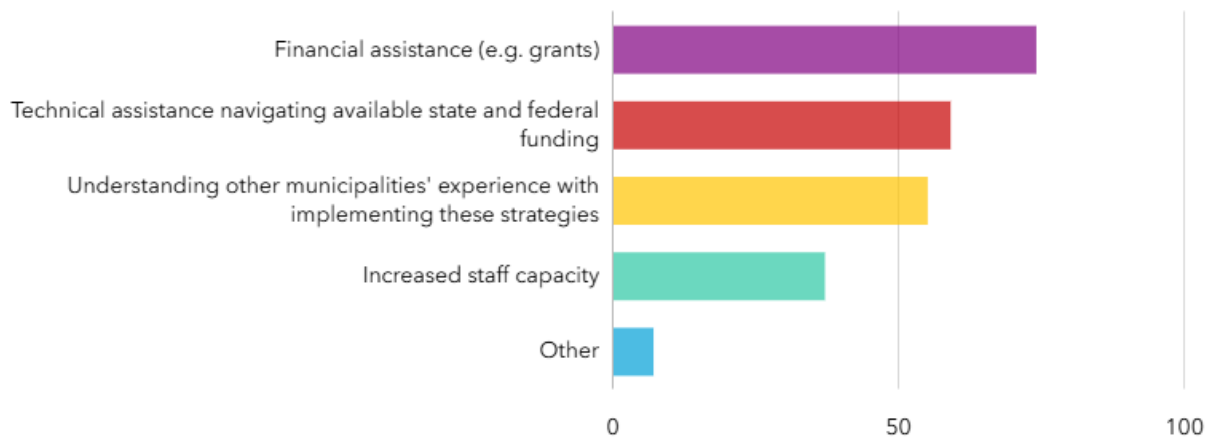
alternative modes of transportation through a green pledge or competition (46%), and implementing a car-sharing program for staff (40%).

Question 9: What other strategies is your municipality considering to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and land use?

Out of 26 responses, the most common themes are summarized below:

- Several respondents noted that many of the strategies are not feasible for rural communities.
- Some municipalities are considering shared services agreements, efficiency in work related trips, and assigning employees an area to reduce travel between visits to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Some municipalities are building sidewalks and expanding bicycle and pedestrian trails.

Question 10: If you indicated above that your municipality is interested in a strategy, but needs support, what support do you need?



Out of 86 responses, 86% stated that they need **financial assistance (e.g. grants)**, 69% stated that they need **technical assistance navigating available state and federal funding**, and 64% stated that they need help **understanding other municipalities' experience with implementing these strategies**.

7% of respondents selected "Other." Their responses are summarized below:

- Respondents stated that they need help "selling the ideas" to elected officials to help them understand the need for the strategy.

Section 4: Buildings and Infrastructure

Question 11: The following table identifies several strategies to decarbonize municipal buildings and infrastructure. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.

Strategy	My municipality is already doing this (partially or fully)	My municipality is interested but needs support (e.g., technical or financial assistance)	My municipality is not interested in this action	Unsure
Conduct energy audits in municipal buildings to identify opportunities to lower energy use and GHG emissions	40%	15%	7%	37%
Install air-source and ground source heat pumps and heat pump water heaters in municipal buildings	13%	13%	29%	43%
Upgrade interior or exterior lighting to LED technology	57%	9%	2%	30%
Improve building envelope insulation	19%	27%	9%	44%
Purchase renewable energy (such as subscribing to community solar)	17%	19%	11%	50%
Install renewable energy generation on municipal property (e.g., roof- or ground-mounted solar panels)	13%	26%	16%	41%
Pilot net-zero municipal buildings	2%	24%	14%	56%
Invest in energy management planning to reduce energy use and lower GHG emissions at municipal facilities including benchmarking	16%	17%	13%	51%
Implement energy management projects to reduce energy use and lower GHG emissions, including organics waste diversion	11%	20%	12%	54%

Out of 105 responses, the most common strategies that municipalities have implemented are **upgrading interior or exterior lighting to LED technology** (57%) and **conducting energy audits in municipal buildings to lower energy use and GHG emissions** (40%). The most common strategies that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for are **improving building envelope insulation** (27%) and **installing renewable energy generation on municipal property (e.g. roof- or ground-mounted solar panels)** (26%). The most common strategy that municipalities are not interested in pursuing is **installing air-source and ground-source heat pumps and heat pump water heaters in municipal buildings** (29%).

Question 12: The following table identifies several strategies for implementing zero-emission codes and standards for buildings. Please identify which strategies your municipality has implemented, which strategies your municipality is interested in pursuing but needs support (e.g. expanded capacity, technical assistance, financial assistance), and which strategies your municipality is not interested in pursuing.

Strategy	My municipality is already doing this (partially or fully)	My municipality is interested but needs support (e.g., technical or financial assistance)	My municipality is not interested in this action	Unsure
Follow state guidance/policy so that all newly constructed and renovated municipal buildings meet high performance building standards	24%	12%	11%	52%
Adopt local policy(ies) to encourage localized construction materials, deconstruction, reuse of materials, and recycling and minimizing construction waste	4%	20%	11%	62%
Educating municipal planning and permitting staff on new energy codes	35%	16%	8%	37%
Updating the permitting process to identify and review decarbonization projects	4%	20%	17%	56%
Adopt and implement green building codes	7%	22%	18%	51%

Out of 105 responses, the most common strategies that municipalities have implemented are **educating municipal planning and permitting staff on new energy codes** (35%) and **following state policy/guidance so that all newly constructed and renovated municipal buildings meet high performance building standards** (24%). The most common strategies that municipalities are interested in pursuing but need support for are **adopting and implementing green building codes** (22%), **adopting local policy(ies) to encourage localized construction materials, deconstruction, reuse of materials, and recycling and minimizing construction waste** (20%), and **updating the permitting**

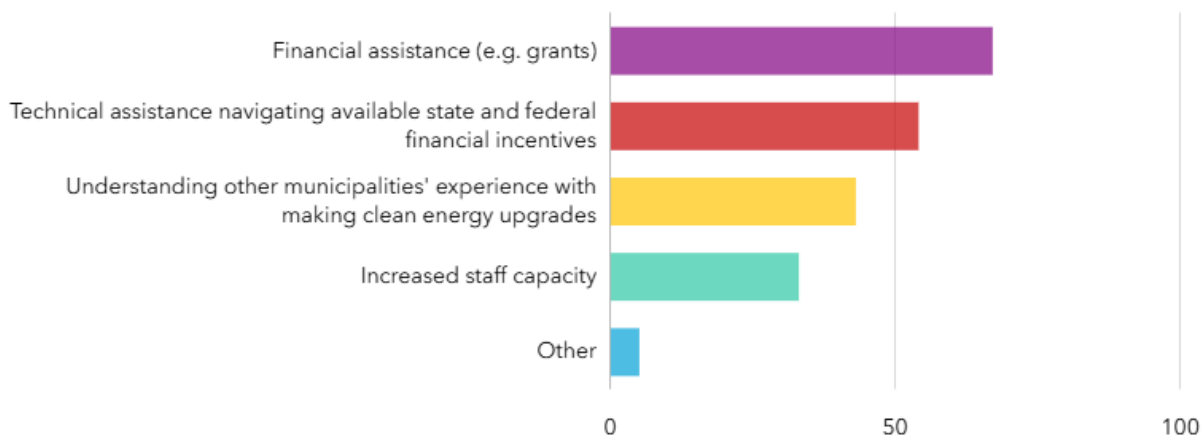
process to identify and review decarbonization projects (20%). The most common strategies that municipalities are not interested in pursuing are **adopting and implementing green building codes** (18%) and **updating the permitting process to identify and review decarbonization projects** (17%).

Question 13: What other strategies is your municipality considering to lower energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in municipal buildings and infrastructure?

Out of 14 responses, the most common themes are summarized below:

- Some municipalities have adopted the Unified Solar Permit to streamline the permitting process for small-scale solar energy systems.
- In addition to converting interior or exterior lights to LED technology, some municipalities have also converted their streetlights.

Question 14: If you indicated above that your municipality is interested in a strategy, but needs support, what support do you need?



Out of 77 responses, 87% stated that they need **financial assistance (e.g. grants)**, 70% stated that they need **technical assistance navigating available state and federal funding**, and 56% stated that they need help **understanding other municipalities' experience with implementing these strategies**.

7% of respondents selected "Other." Their responses are summarized below:

- One respondent reiterated the need for financial assistance to make their vision of a zero-waste sewer plant (ATAD digestion) a reality.

Section 5: Final Thoughts

Question 15: In your opinion, what is the one most important action you'd like to see your municipality implement in the short-term (1-3 years) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Out of 55 responses, the most common themes are summarized below:

- **Electric Vehicles:** Several respondents would like to convert their fleets to electric vehicles and install EV charging stations.
- **Waste Management:** Several respondents would like to see waste diverted from the landfill, through organics management/curbside composting and plastics reduction and recycling.
- **Alternative Transportation:** Respondents would like to see expansions of the sidewalk and trail networks as well as increased public transit options.
- **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency:** Several respondents would like their municipalities to install solar panels, complete projects to reduce energy use and increase energy efficiency, and use energy management systems. Additionally, there is support for implementing a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) to ensure a renewable energy supply for the entire municipality and lower energy costs.

Question 16: Think big. If funding and capacity were unlimited, what do you think is the most impactful action your municipality could take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years?

Out of 58 responses, the most common themes are summarized below:

- **Renewable Energy and Electrification:** Respondents think it would be most impactful to electrify municipal, residential, and commercial buildings and invest in solar and wind power and electric grid updates to support this transition to net-zero. Some respondents are also interested in exploring alternative sources of energy such as nuclear power plants or digestion of agricultural waste.
- **Waste Management:** Several respondents think it would be most impactful to close the landfill and focus on diversion of waste through composting and recycling.
- **Electric Vehicles:** Respondents think it would be most impactful to increase the availability of electric vehicle charging stations, convert municipal fleets to electric vehicles, and provide incentives to residents and businesses to convert to electric vehicles. As the region has a large agricultural community, there was also a suggestion to focus on converting agricultural equipment/vehicles to more efficient technology.
- **Alternative Transportation:** Respondents also think it would be most impactful to encourage walking and cycling by expanding trail networks, building sidewalks and protected bike lanes, and designating downtown areas as pedestrian-only zones. Respondents would also like to see the public transportation network expanded as well.