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Chattanooga readies for smart, sustainable growth with release of Mayor Tim Kelly's Climate Action Plan

Series of community-informed, scalable actions will protect Chattanooga's natural resources while positioning the City to lead in the emerging green economy

Chattanooga, Tenn. (March 7, 2023) — Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly today published the city's [Climate Action Plan](#), a growth strategy that will safeguard Chattanooga's quality of life and invest in global competitiveness amid changes to the climate and international economy.

The plan calls for smart, clean-energy growth that benefits all residents and reduces carbon emissions, driving home Chattanooga's leading position as a green, sustainable city in a changing world.

"Chattanooga is growing, our climate is changing, and the global economy is responding. We can either sit back and watch it happen, or we can adapt and lead – in a way that's good for the environment, good for our local economy, and good for quality of life," said Kelly. "That's what the Climate Action Plan is all about. It sets goals that will lead to smart, sustainable growth in Chattanooga for years to come."

As a community-wide roadmap for Chattanooga's long-term sustainability, the plan includes [goals](#) to preserve and protect the city's natural resources, including achieving a net-zero carbon footprint community-wide by 2050 and reducing the amount of waste sent to local landfills.

At the same time, it includes strategies that will lead to [significant economic and social benefits](#) – such as new, integrated transportation options, energy cost savings for taxpayers, better, more accessible park systems and wildlife preserves, and new, good-paying jobs and skill-building opportunities.

Pursuing those goals will help qualify the city to receive a portion of the hundreds of billions of dollars in grant opportunities that are being made available by the federal government, as well as millions more in philanthropic and private investments that would have generational impacts.

"America is making huge investments in green technologies and infrastructure, and as a city known for environmental restoration, we have an opportunity to become a national leader in this emerging economy," continued Kelly. "The Climate Action Plan includes strategies to make that happen – so that we can bring new, good-paying jobs and skill-building opportunities to our local workforce while increasing our tax base to better fund things that matter most to Chattanoogaans."

“The bottom line is that building a cleaner, greener city isn’t just important for the environment – it’s critical for our future economic growth and prosperity,” said Kelly.

The Climate Action Plan is centered on 6 goals:

- Achieve net zero-carbon emissions in City government operations by 2040 and city-wide by 2050
- Build a more sustainable city through new, modernized smart growth and zoning policies
- Preserve and improve Chattanooga’s natural resources
- Become a national leader in the green economy
- Achieve a zero waste footprint in City government operations by 2040 and city-wide by 2050
- Reduce disparities among socially and economically vulnerable communities

Each goal includes strategies that will be implemented through an equity lens, so that the benefits reach all Chattanooga neighborhoods – and in particular those that disproportionately suffer from health disparities and lack of access to opportunity.

“Plans of this scale only work when the community and the government work together at every level to make meaningful change, and with Chattanooga’s strong spirit of community and love of the outdoors, I’m confident we will make that happen,” said Erik Schmidt, Director of the City’s Office of Sustainability. “In fact, one of our first steps will be to convene a committee with representatives from every corner of the city to help us track and achieve the plan’s goals.”

Some of the actions included in the plan are already underway at the City, from electrifying the public transit fleet to significantly reducing energy use in city government buildings.

With approval from City Council, the Kelly administration will immediately begin working with state and federal partners to identify innovative ways to fund even more of this work – *without* any added cost to taxpayers.

For example, new federal legislation – including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act – has opened up an unprecedented amount of funding available to municipalities with a Climate Action Plan, to help invest in sustainable growth and maintain national competitiveness.

Informed by the Community

The Climate Action Plan was developed with extensive input from the community. Its foundation is based on two previous reports – the City of Chattanooga Regional Resilience Report and Green|Spaces’ Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – which gathered stakeholders, experts, and governments from around the region to identify vulnerabilities and plan for Chattanooga’s future sustainability.

The City’s Office of Sustainability also hosted a workshop and public input session to seek input on the plan from more than 150 community members and stakeholders, to ensure its goals and actions were obtainable and reflected residents’ priorities.

Next Steps

The administration will request a public comment period for the regularly scheduled City Council meeting on March 21, 2023, and for Chattanooga City Council to vote on the adoption of the plan on March 28, 2023.

If the plan is adopted, the City will immediately establish two committees: an internal Climate Action Plan implementation committee, comprising City staff who will ensure the plan's goals are integrated into all departmental work; and an external Chattanooga Climate, Sustainability, and Resilience (CSR) committee, which will include representatives from across Chattanooga who will help promote, track, and implement the plan's solutions community-wide.

The committees will develop and publish a full list of key performance indicators, and progress will be reported on a regular basis to City Council, published on the City website, and incorporated into regular Plan updates.

The City's Office of Sustainability will also begin assessing baseline measures on things like greenhouse gas emissions and solar feasibility, which will inform more specific progress indicators.

And while many of the strategies in the plan are already being implemented within City operations, the administration will be working closely with state, federal, and philanthropic partners in the short-term to identify new funding opportunities to accelerate and scale the plan's actions community-wide.