



Beyond a Number: Making Grand Rapids a Climate Justice Leader

An open letter from the Grand Rapids Climate Coalition in response to the City of Grand Rapids' community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction goals

Grand Rapids City Commission
cc: Mayor Rosalynn Bliss and City Manager Mark Washington
City of Grand Rapids
300 Monroe Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

July 10, 2024

Dear City Commissioners,

We as the [Grand Rapids Climate Coalition](#) call on you as city leaders to take concrete action to mitigate the impacts of climate change and address historic environmental injustices like redlining that have harmed the residents of predominantly Black and Brown Grand Rapids neighborhoods.

The city has stated a [community-wide emissions reduction goal](#) of 62.8% per capita by 2030 and 100% by 2050. We welcome these concrete goals, as well as transparency about the sources of greenhouse gasses in the community. But ***we call on you to provide more ambitious leadership to actually achieve these stated goals*** in the midst of [what you have already declared an undeniable climate crisis](#) that threatens our food, health, [winters](#), and more. As the second largest city in Michigan, Grand Rapids can serve as a model for strong municipal-level climate action in the state.

We ask you—City Commission, Mayor, and City Manager—to take actions to achieve these goals and demonstrate your commitment to climate justice in these ways:

- 1) Make reducing GHG emissions a priority while governing—specifically, by advancing policies and increasing investment in public transit, walkability, and bikeability, especially in Neighborhoods of Focus, and [using proven models](#) like Ithaca's bulk purchasing and Connecticut's green banking to provide incentives for businesses to decarbonize;

- 2) Commit to increasing Office of Sustainability funding and staff to support grant writing and administration, community engagement, and implementation of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) being developed in collaboration with the Community Collaboration on Climate Change (C4) with [community input](#);
- 3) Ensure transparency and accountability by a) delineating the amount allocated to sustainability efforts, including implementing the CAAP and reducing GHG emissions, in the City's annual budget; and b) providing annual Ward-level updates of City expenditures for these efforts, along with information on the city's progress toward its emission reductions goal each quarter, on a publicly available dashboard; and
- 4) Recognize that the stated emissions reduction goals of 63% by 2030 and 100% by 2050 are minimum requirements and leverage any opportunities to accelerate completion of these goals through state, federal, or private funding.

Since 2021, our broad coalition—now [93 member organizations](#), including a diverse array of businesses, educational and faith institutions, social justice organizations, neighborhood groups, and more—has advocated for science-aligned, transformative, and equitable climate action in Grand Rapids. More than 1,000 of our community supporters have expressed support for our calls to the city to take action on greenhouse gas emissions while prioritizing climate justice.

We will continue to work in solidarity and partnership as member organizations, collaborative partners, and community supporters to advance climate justice in Grand Rapids. We will not allow systemic injustices and policy failures to become problems for individual residents to solve. We are committed to fighting for structural investments and policy changes that will make community-level transformation accessible and equitable for all of Grand Rapids' residents.

We, the below signed organizations and individuals, stand ready to support this work and also hold you accountable to achieving these emissions reduction and climate justice goals.

Sincerely,

Grand Rapids Climate Coalition member organizations, collaborative partners, and community supporters, including:

All Souls Community Church of West Michigan
Catalyst Partners
Cathedral of Saint Andrew
Church of the Servant
Dominican Sisters - Grand Rapids
EGreen Sustainability Initiative
Foresight Management
Grand Rapids Citizens Climate Lobby Chapter
Grand Rapids Democratic Socialists of America (GRDSA)
Grand Rapids Food Co-op
Green Projects Group
Growing Green Grand Rapids
Healthy Planet Strategies
Jade Rabbit
JustAir
Kennari Consulting
Kent County Food Policy Council
McGrath
Michigan Humanists
MI Green Amendment
Mixto Communications
Plymouth United Church of Christ
PROACTIVE
Public Thread
Scales Consulting LLC
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter
Speciation Artisan Ales
The Meanwhile
The Pyramid Scheme
West Michigan Environmental Action Council

and numerous city residents, with more to follow.