

Recommendations for Use of Sustainability Fund - VOP Budget 2021

The **Ad hoc Oak Park Climate Action Planning group** developed the following recommendations for the Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees. We hope these recommendations will support Board decisions on the immediate expenditure of the Sustainability Fund in 2021. *It is the consensus of this group that the climate crisis is urgent and concerted action must be taken immediately.* These recommendations were developed based on a focused review of municipal Climate Action Plans in the United States and are based on the following criteria:

1. They address the highest source of emissions--residential and commercial building energy use--for Oak Park from 2017-2019, according to the Village's current Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GHG).
2. They support an inclusive and equitable approach to addressing climate change by reducing barriers to access, prioritizing low- to middle-income residents, and offering community-wide benefits.
3. They provide "no-regret" options that are cost-efficient, will reduce emissions, and are expected to be part of any future sustainability strategy for Oak Park.

Policy Recommendation 1

Recognizing that building energy use is the highest contributor to GHG in Oak Park and 70% of Oak Park's housing stock was built before 1940 and therefore is considerably less energy efficient, we recommend a public relations campaign to educate, encourage and incentivize Energy Efficiency Audits and Retrofits. There are numerous programs that offer free audits and energy efficiency incentives available through the utility companies ComEd, Nicor and other organizations like Elevate Energy. However, these initiatives are not well publicized and are underutilized. This marketing and communications campaign would conduct outreach, awareness, and education for all residential and commercial building owners and occupants about available energy audits, funding for retrofits, and climate change and its current and future impact on the Village. It would include

a user-friendly, one-stop webpage(s) that provides:

- accessible information about climate change,
- current climate change initiatives that the Village has undertaken
- resources for energy audits
- retrofit resources and funding
- rooftop solar information and funding
- storytelling/case studies of success for residences and commercial buildings
- a GHG Dashboard

- Creative and widespread social media presence

3) Community-level outreach such as door hangers and leaflets for houses of worship, the libraries, the township, village hall, and other venues where people gather, prioritizing reaching low-income residents.

This campaign will need to be coordinated with ComEd and other providers of free energy audits.

Policy Recommendation 2

Creation of a Residential Retrofit Grant Fund for energy efficiencies required to achieve the recommendations made during audits. This program would be targeted to low-income homeowners and in rentals in multi-unit buildings. Grants between \$2-5,000 depending on the total square footage of the building.

Policy Recommendation 3

Creation of a Reduce energy/Encourage Solar program to incentivize the installation of rooftop solar linked to energy reductions and efficiencies. We have learned from other municipal Climate Action Plans that while residential enthusiasm for energy efficiency audits and retrofits can be lukewarm, people get excited about solar. This program is focused on families intent on installing solar so that they also work towards energy efficiency *and* reductions in energy use. Any commercial or residential building that can show **a 15 percent reduction** in energy use in that building via efficiency and retrofits *over one year* would be eligible for a \$1,000 rebate on the solar installation.

Policy Recommendations 4/5

Oak Parkers have high expectations to take timely and effective action on climate change using the extensive funds that have been accumulating in the Sustainability Fund for this purpose. Meeting these expectations and also implementing the initiatives recommended here will require significant time and expertise within village staff and coordination with the Energy and Environment Commission.

4) Contract short-term, one-time specialized expertise to work closely with Village Staff and the Energy and Environment Commission to develop a timely and reliable GHG Inventory and comprehensive Climate Action Plan

5) Hire a permanent, full-time staff person who will:

- Collaborate with village communications staff and the PR consultant to oversee implementation of the marketing and communications campaign
- Coordinate implementation of Climate Action Plan and provide quarterly reports on Climate Action progress to the Village Board—this information

would also supply the data for the GHG dashboard. In addition, publish annual reports on energy efficiency and other benchmarks related to the goals in the Plan. This would require prior experience in climate action planning, effective community engagement at all levels, and facilitation skills.

- Recruit participation in, monitor implementation of and collect data on the implementation of Energy Efficiency Audits, Retrofits and Roof-top Solar installations and Assess their ongoing quality and comprehensiveness.
- Publicize Cook County PACE fund program with commercial building owners
- Organize and disseminate information about a new concept that Ann Arbor developed that effectively markets and communicates information about roof-top solar and audit/retrofits -- house parties (as does Elevate Energy in Chicago area).

The Ad Hoc Climate Action Group and the EEC would welcome participating in these processes and offer specialized expertise and technical assistance in development of job descriptions, identifying candidates, and interviewing for the consultant and the staff position.

Additional details:

The full set of climate-smart programs that the *ad hoc* group considered are included in the attached spreadsheet, included in the climate action plans from Ann Arbor, Michigan; Fort Collins, Colorado; Boston, Massachusetts; Concord, New Hampshire; and Evanston, Illinois.

Recommendation 1 PR Campaign	\$75,000
Recommendation 2 Retrofit Grant Fund	\$500,000
Recommendation 3: Solar Rebates	\$225,000
Recommendation 4: Consultant for GHG	\$ 50,000
Recommendaiton 5: FT Staff (salary and benefits)	\$115,000
	Total: \$965,000

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