

# Resilient Iowa Communities Best Practices

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## Buildings and Energy

1. Commission a professional study to establish a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions for government owned and operated facilities and equipment, as well as citywide residential, commercial, industrial, wastewater, and solid waste sectors to be updated every 3-5 years.
2. Install for one or more government buildings at least one of the following measures:
  - A ground-source, closed loop geothermal system
  - An air-source heat pump
  - A district energy system
  - A renewable energy system
  - An energy storage system
  - A microgrid system
  - An EV charging station in a city parking lot
  - A rainwater harvesting system for building water use
  - A water-saving measure
    - These systems can be government-owned, or they can be owned by a third party under either an equipment-lease or energy-purchase agreement.
3. Require energy efficient new or replacement equipment for government buildings and facilities, including indoor and/or outdoor lighting fixtures.
4. Create or participate in a marketing/outreach/incentive program to either:
  - Achieve residential/commercial/governmental waste, water, and energy use reduction via energy conservation education and/or energy efficiency measures

- Increase renewable energy production by homes and businesses.
- 5. Integrate sustainable design guidelines, including stormwater management, energy efficiency, electrification, renewable energy, and EV-ready requirements into one or more of the following:
  - New government buildings
  - Tax abatement programs
  - Development agreements
- 6. Adopt codes/ordinances, development/design standards, and/or programs that facilitate ADA-compliant infill, redevelopment, and adaptable buildings prioritizing underserved, vulnerable, and special needs populations.

## **Land Use**

1. Strengthen floodplain ordinances to protect the community against future floods, such as adopt 500 year flood elevation ordinances instead of 100 year and restricting fill in the floodplain.
2. Develop a comprehensive plan or utilize a future land use plan that was adopted by the county or a regional entity.
3. Develop or modify a comprehensive plan or future land use plan to ensure that it does one or more of the following:
  - Ensures regulatory ordinances comply with the comprehensive plan including, but not limited to, having the zoning ordinance explicitly reference the comprehensive plan as the foundational document for decision making.
  - Adopts climate adaptation, mitigation, energy independence, and/or EV ready goals as part of the comprehensive plan.
  - Ensures plans include ecological provisions that explicitly aim to minimize open space fragmentation and/or establish a growth area with expansion criteria.
4. Limit barriers to higher density housing by including in the city zoning ordinance and zoning map:
  - Neighborhood single-family density at 7 units/acre or greater.
  - Multi-family housing at a gross density of at least 15 units/acre adjacent to a commercial zoning district or transit node.
  - Optional: Allow Multi-family housing in all residential areas.

5. Organize or participate in a community planning/placemaking/design process for the city.
6. Participate in regional economic development planning with representatives from surrounding townships, cities, the county, and business interests to:
  - Estimate commercial/industrial needs among all jurisdictions.
  - Jointly implement recommendations to stage highway/auto-oriented commercial development in order to avoid overbuilding and expensive low-density development.
  - For cities outside or on the fringe of metropolitan areas, conduct a build-out analysis, fiscal impact study, or adopt an urban growth boundary and a consistent capital improvement plan that provides long-term protection of natural resources and natural systems; and agricultural practices outside the boundary. For cities within metropolitan areas, incorporate woodland best management practices addressing protection of wooded areas into zoning or development review.

## **Transportation**

1. Increase walking, biking and transit use by one or more of the following:
  - Produce/distribute route maps, signage or a website
  - Document bike facilities such as bike racks, bike stations or showers
  - Add bus infrastructure, such as signage, benches, shelters, park and ride lots, and real-time arrival data-streaming
  - Increase the number of employers promoting multiple commuting options including offering qualified transportation fringe benefits instead of only tax-free parking fringe benefit
  - Be recognized as a walk-friendly or bicycle-friendly community
2. Adopt a complete streets policy or a living streets policy, which addresses landscaping and stormwater, and use it to complete a complete streets or living streets project.
3. Identify, prioritize, and remedy sidewalk gaps, lack of connectivity/safety for pedestrians, and non-ADA compliant sidewalks.
4. Adopt and expand access to electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure:
  - Create a map of existing EV charging infrastructure or develop a siting plan for electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE)
  - Encourage the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in new construction by updating building codes to require EV charging readiness in garages and parking lots; offer density bonuses for EV readiness or other incentives/requirements related to EV Charging

5. Assess equitable access to transportation and increase access to transportation in vulnerable neighborhoods/communities.
  - Conduct a transportation gap analysis
  - Reduce fares for public transit
6. Reduce or eliminate parking minimums, add parking maximums, develop district parking.

## **Environmental Management**

1. Reduce flooding and related costs through participating in [The National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System](#).
2. Create park/city land management standards/practices that maximize at least one of the following:
  - Low maintenance turf management; native landscaping; organic or integrated pest management; pollinator/monarch-safe policies
  - Recycling/compostables collection; use of compost as a soil amendment
  - Sources of non potable water, or surface/rain water, for irrigation
3. Develop a program to involve community members in hands-on land restoration, invasive species management, and stewardship projects.
4. Compare the energy use and financial performance of your facilities with other peer facilities using standardized, free tools.
5. Create a stormwater utility that uses variable fees to incentivize stormwater infiltration, minimize the volume of and pollutants in runoff, and educate property owners.
6. Maximize tree planting along your main downtown street or throughout the city.

## **Community & Economic Development**

1. Establish and utilize a city or county commission or committee to lead and coordinate development of a sustainability framework, and report to and engage community members on implementation of sustainability best practices.
2. Develop a climate action plan with emission reduction goals and action items.
3. Integrate climate resilience into city, county or tribal planning, policy, operations, and budgeting processes.

4. Adopt renewable energy (wind, solar, biomass) ordinances and expedited permit process to allow, enable or encourage appropriate renewable energy installations and/or battery energy storage.
5. Create, assist with, and promote local food production/distribution within the city or county by implementing three or more of the following:
  - An agriculture and forest protection district
  - A local food production district
  - Performance standards for minor and major agricultural retail
  - A farmer's market or co-op buying club
  - An urban agriculture business or a community-supported agriculture (CSA) arrangement between farmers and community members/employees
  - A community or school garden, orchard, or forest
  - Streamline permitting for either (1) selling produce site and/or (2) valued-added agriculture such as selling canned/processed items that use the vegetables/fruits grown on site
6. Develop and implement an extreme weather/community resilience plan to mitigate and reduce community risk, maintain public health and safety, and protect critical infrastructure.

## **Environmental Equity & Inclusion**

1. Conduct a community wealth distribution assessment to determine sectors of the community with the highest and lowest poverty levels to prioritize project and funding implementation
  - Utilize the Justice40 tool to identify indicators for sectors of the community
2. Environmental justice must begin by centering the voices and perspectives of the community, particularly those most negatively affected by economic and environmental decisions. Centering the community can take many different forms, however, to be successful it must occur at both the local and the systems levels. Community centered approach is the only basis for environmental justice work and an equitable future
  - Conduct a series of community listening sessions to hear from community members to gather insights on environmental community impacts, needs, and priorities of the community
3. Conduct research on the history of the community and its role in environmental justice and equity impacts.

- How has redlining or segregation impacted your community in relation to environmental hazards, green space, or housing stock, as an example?
  - Consider zoning decisions, including rezoning rural residentially-zoned land into industrial, and the impacts on fewer quality housing options or opportunities and potentially more industrial pollutants in the air, ground, and water.
  - What trends are identified in relation to environmental risks and demographic indicators in your community?
4. Develop a community advisory board to represent underserved and underrepresented sectors of your community to ensure historically marginalized sectors of the community are represented.
- Center the community in your work by having deep conversations with local residents.
  - Make information accessible to all, especially in communities with limited broadband, by using digital and print forms, door-to-door recruitment, and translation services.
  - Offer wraparound services to promote attendance, such as transportation options and childcare reimbursement. Also, consider health conditions and disabilities that may limit in-person attendance by providing hybrid and virtual options.
5. Develop a funding strategy to funnel additional funding and resources to documented at risk or impoverished neighborhoods or communities.
- Implement community projects that are community centered, sustainable, and have the ability to improve the quality of life in underserved neighborhoods
  - Backyard garden or community garden development
6. Identify potential workforce development pathways that could create careers to implement and sustain progress for initiatives in the community