



DANE COUNTY

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Dane County Highlights Climate Action Achievements Across the Region in 2025

DANE COUNTY, WI – The Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change (OECC) today released a comprehensive list of climate and clean energy achievements from across the county in 2025, highlighting progress driven by local governments, schools, businesses, nonprofits, and residents working together to reduce emissions and build a more sustainable future.

“Dane County remains a leader on climate action,” said County Executive Melissa Agard. “Across our county, you can see leadership at every level – from cost-effective clean energy investments to people coming together to accelerate real solutions. It’s an inspiring example of the Dane County Way.”

The annual list showcases accomplishments across leadership, buildings, transportation, emissions reduction, nature-based solutions, and innovation. OECC emphasized that while the list is extensive, it reflects only a portion of the climate work happening in communities countywide.

“This list is long, but it’s incomplete,” said Kathy Kuntz, Director of the Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change. “There are so many innovative things happening across Dane County that it’s hard to capture them all. Recognizing progress matters because leadership in one place often inspires action somewhere else the following year.”

Climate Action Successes in 2025

Leadership

- Dane County announced that 100% of the electricity used in county operations in 2024 was renewable-energy offset, making it the first county in Wisconsin to reach this milestone.
- More than 200 public and private entities have now been recognized as Dane County Climate Champions, including major employers, small businesses, nonprofits, school districts, and local governments taking action on energy efficiency, water conservation, electric fleets, and sustainable land practices.

- Three additional municipalities earned SolSmart designations in 2025: Fitchburg (Gold), Verona (Silver), and Monona (Bronze), bringing the regional total to eight SolSmart-designated entities and reinforcing Dane County's leadership in making rooftop solar easier for homes and businesses.
- The Henry Vilas Zoo announced a donated solar pavilion from Cal and Laurie Couillard and pledged to become fossil-fuel free by 2040, a major step for the free, AZA-accredited zoo.

Buildings

- The Village of McFarland received more than \$1.1 million in federal clean energy tax credits tied to geothermal and solar investments at its new Public Safety Center, one of at least eight net-zero energy facilities in Dane County.
- Dane County advanced multiple zero-emissions facilities, including the new Public Safety Communications Center, which will feature geothermal heating and cooling and solar energy and is set for completion in early 2026.
- Communities including Fitchburg, Sun Prairie, Verona, Cottage Grove, and Middleton advanced geothermal and solar projects in public buildings and housing developments, while MMSD planned geothermal systems for four additional schools.

Emissions

- Even as Dane County's population continues to grow, overall greenhouse gas emissions are declining, reflecting the cumulative impact of local climate action.

Transportation

- Madison Metro successfully launched Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) using all-electric buses, reducing pollution while improving rider comfort and reliability.
- Expanded regional transit service connected Madison with surrounding communities including Middleton, Monona, and Sun Prairie.
- Dane County continued to lead the state in electric vehicle adoption, accounting for roughly 25% of Wisconsin's registered EVs despite representing about 10% of the state's population.
- OECC's Charge Up Dane County initiative advanced affordable EV charging at more than 50 sites countywide.

Nature-Based Solutions

- Dane County Land & Water Resources expanded prairie plantings and launched a new mapping tool to track carbon sequestration benefits.
- The County's food scrap composting program reached more than 1,900 households in its first six months, diverting over 43,000 pounds of food waste from landfills.

Innovation

- County Executive Agard and Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway convened the Sustainability Leaders Collaborative, bringing together municipal and school district leaders to identify new energy savings opportunities.
- Communities such as Sun Prairie, Middleton, and Fitchburg advanced resilience centers and sustainable development tools, including the use of TIF to support greener building practices.
- Dane County received a technical assistance grant to explore green financing opportunities, and the Youth Climate Conference drew more than 200 students from across Wisconsin.

Kuntz encouraged communities to share additional success stories. "If we missed a climate success in your community, I want to hear about it," she said. "We want to showcase leadership wherever it's happening."

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