

Easton council commits to cutting greenhouse emissions: 7 things you can do

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Turbines from the Jersey-Atlantic Wind Farm in Atlantic City are silhouetted during sunset July 11, 2016. Easton gets all of its electricity for municipal services from wind, an early step toward a goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050. (NJ Advance Media file photo | For lehighvalleylive.com)

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By [Kurt Bresswein | For lehighvalleylive.com](#)

It's going to take a village to help [Easton](#) City Council with this one. Council this week unanimously endorsed a goal of cutting greenhouse emissions citywide by 30 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050.

The resolution vote came the same night city officials learned they must find an estimated \$7 million to \$8 million for projects aimed at reducing sediment flowing into the Lehigh River. That effort is likely to involve charging residents, businesses and institutions a new fee that has yet to be determined, officials said.

Council is undertaking the greenhouse-gas effort as part of a Global Covenant of Mayors. The [Nurture Nature Center](#) in Easton has been assisting with the climate change initiative, including calculating the 2016 baseline emissions that shaped the future gas-cutting goals. Cities like Easton need to step up in lieu of national leadership on reducing gases linked to an ever-warming Earth, said Kathryn Semmens, science director at Nurture Nature, 518 Northampton St.

"We are moving toward a warmer future, which has consequences for the extreme weather that we might be able to experience, and it's something that we need to take action on today," Semmens told city council.

According to the resolution, the city commits to action "to achieve these Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction goals" through best practices "applicable to city government, its residents and businesses."

In helping the city work toward a climate action plan, Nurture Nature recommends hiring a consultant to implement the changes.

"Be it further resolved that the City of Easton will seek opportunities to work with utility companies, institutions, residents and neighboring jurisdictions to take actions to achieve its Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction goals," the city's resolution continues.

The effort is already underway, with help from a major landowner in the city: [Lafayette College](#). The college has set its own emissions-reductions goals of 15 percent by 2027 (below a baseline established in 2008), 35 percent by 2031, 55 percent by 2035 and 60 percent by 2039, according to Nurture Nature.

Meeting that 2039 goal would cut Easton's overall greenhouse emissions by about 4 percent, according to Nurture Nature.

Easton has taken steps toward its goal, as well, including by purchasing 100 percent wind-generated electricity for municipal services from Constellation Energy Group, under a bulk-purchase program through the Pennsylvania Municipal League, Mayor Sal Panto Jr. said.

The next steps are to work with the city's Environmental Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to develop the action plan, Panto said. He envisions scheduling some meetings after the summer.

"We'll obviously look for some outside assistance, but primarily it'll be to develop the climate action plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions," Panto said Friday. "It'll be more of a community committee than a consultant. The thing we have to do is get the public involved in helping us reach those goals."

Working under a contract with the city, Nurture Nature used transportation, electricity and natural gas usage data to determine Easton generated 13 metric tons of carbon dioxide per capita in 2016. The totals were 203,727 metric tons from transportation and natural gas and 147,172 from electricity, or about 350,900 metric tons in all.

A 2017 recheck found a 1.86 percent reduction to 12.8 metric tons of carbon dioxide per capita.

The Nurture Nature Center outlined strategies for residents to help the city meet its reduction goals, including:

- Be aware of consumption.
- Change behaviors: walk/bike instead of drive; source local products; reduce waste.
- Make energy efficiency upgrades at home.
- Purchase electricity from renewable sources.
- Plant trees on your property.
- Install solar panels.
- Consider driving an electric car.

[Easton Greenhouse Gas Emissions presentation to city council May 23, 2018](#) by [Anonymous arnc2g2N](#) on Scribd

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