



# THRIVE INDIANAPOLIS



Annual Report 2023



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**@SustainIndy**

As youth advocates embarking on a journey to redefine the narrative of Indianapolis's environmental future, we feel compelled to reflect on the carriers of change pushing for climate action in our city. In 2016 an ensemble of young environmentalists from ages 9 to 20 crafted a Climate Resilience and Recovery resolution. Through their perseverance and partnership with our municipal government, this ensemble of youth environmentalists helped Indianapolis become the largest city in the country at the time to pass a youth-led climate action resolution. From the immense benefit our city has gained with youth involvement on this topic, one message is clear:

## EMPOWER YOUTH VOICES.

As we look ahead to the future of Indianapolis and our collective efforts to combat the climate crisis, as a community we must harness the **tenacity, hope, resilience, innovation, vigor, and engagement** of our youth. Groups like Confront the Climate Crisis, a youth-led advocacy organization, have focused their efforts on climate education, hosting youth-centered climate rallies at the statehouse and urging legislators to focus on environmental policies. Earth Charter Indiana, an intergenerational climate justice organization, has empowered young adults to access environmental journalism through the Youth Environmental Press Team. These organizations show that the State of Indiana has been filled with powerful climate movements all connecting at the heart of our state, Indianapolis.

From improving waste disposal programs, increasing use of public transportation, or educating each other about the importance of environmental action, there are countless ways, outlined in this report, that our community can solve the pressing environmental issues of today. By listening to youth voices, valuing our perspectives, and providing meaningful opportunities for involvement, we can all build a more resilient and sustainable Indianapolis for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Raina Maiga  
Co-Executive & Legislative Director  
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Purdue Polytechnic High School '25



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# TRACKING OUR PROGRESS

Based on the work of community stakeholders, city departments, and other partners, the below action items were achieved in 2023. These achievements contribute to 12 action items accomplished to date. As more are completed, they will be recorded at [thriveindianapolis.com](https://thriveindianapolis.com).

“Develop and deploy a more robust stormwater and water quality education program, including addressing chemicals in landscaping, by 2022.”

Starting in 2022, City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works engaged White River Alliance to utilize the Clear Choices Clean Water campaign. Clear Choices is a nationally award-winning program that seeks to increase awareness about the daily choices we can make as individuals to improve water quality and conserve water supplies.



“Host six in-person educational opportunities for Marion County residents to increase awareness of benefits of EV ownership by 2020.”

In fall 2023, the third Highly EVolved Showcase marks the completion of 6 in-person and virtual electric vehicle educational events. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person events scheduled for 2020 and 2021 pivoted to virtual settings. Recordings of the EV charging and fleet electrification workshops are available at [youtube.com/SustainIndy](https://youtube.com/SustainIndy).





### Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
# of green buildings (i.e. LEED certified or Energy Star Rated)* <sup>1</sup>	259*	2018	451	498
# of buildings disclosing energy use annually <sup>2</sup>	--	--	283	1,000
# of publicly available EV charging stations <sup>3</sup>	170	2018	277	300

\*Baseline increased by 10 buildings from the originally reported figure after optimizing the data collection process.

### Affordable Workforce Housing

In 2023, Indy DMD contributed to the creation of over 800 units of affordable and workforce housing in Indianapolis. **This included 97 new affordable homeownership opportunities and 100 new permanent supportive housing units for households experiencing homelessness.** Among the significant developments was the Forty-Six Flats project, receiving \$2.75 million in housing grants from the City and featuring 173 affordable housing units on the south side. Additionally, Hanna Commons, a 55-unit supportive housing project, opened with \$1.4 million in housing grants from Indy DMD, aiming to address homelessness with on-site supportive services. These initiatives totaled millions of dollars in investment towards expanding affordable housing options in the city.



Allisonville Road. The development includes amenities such as a community gathering space, a fitness area, sidewalks, and leased space for local businesses, nonprofits, and neighborhood groups. The City contributed \$2.75 million to the project, developed by House Investments LLP, in addition to a payment in lieu of taxes from nonprofit Partnership for Affordable Housing Inc.



## City Hires Dedicated Climate Resilience Staff



In late 2023, Department of Public Works (DPW) director, Brandon Herget, announced the 2024 DPW budget. The 2024 budget emphasized the need to prioritize climate-related threats to the city's infrastructure. Herget announced that DPW aims to hire five climate-dedicated employees, focusing on, stormwater, forestry, and monitoring stormwater infrastructure. **Continuing to monitor stormwater infrastructure is especially important when it comes to climate adaptation;** Indy's stormwater system was built in the early 20th century and was not designed for the increased storm and flooding events that happen in modern times. Due to climate change, Indiana is expected to see an increase of 6-8% of precipitation, leading to potential flooding risks. Maintaining stormwater infrastructure is essential for resident safety during weather events and avoiding costly replacement.. Among other urban forestry duties, staff in the forestry department will address the influx in downed trees as a result of increased severe storms.

## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Lane miles swept <sup>4</sup>	19,399.71	2019	68,105	--
Tonnage removed from street sweeping <sup>5</sup>	5,706.27	2019	16,044	--
Square feet of rain garden <sup>6</sup>	83,975	2016	166,838.0	--

<sup>4</sup>data reported is cumulative since relaunch of city program



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
# of companies receiving a tax abatement incentive committing to pay a living wage* <sup>7</sup>	12	2018	19	--
# of green jobs listed with Project Indy <sup>8</sup>	222	2019	522	--
# of Pathway to Employment participants who transitioned to a wrap-around, such as full-time employment or secured housing. <sup>9</sup>	52	2019	60	--

\*derived from Thrive Indianapolis metric “% of large corporations committing to paying a family sustaining wage to all employees”

## Non-Profit Green Bank Launched in Indiana



As part of Thrive Indianapolis, the City of Indianapolis Office of Sustainability, in partnership with The Energy Foundation, the McKinney Family Foundation, Elevate Energy, and the Natural Resources Defense Council engaged Public Sector Consultants in the spring of 2022 to conduct an environmental scan

to identify opportunities to develop a green bank in Indiana. **The collaboration led to the formation of the Indiana Energy Independence Fund (IEIF), Indiana’s first nonprofit green bank, in January 2023**, which was seed-funded by the McKinney Family Foundation with a matching grant from the Builders Vision Foundation. This funding provided operating support to hire IEIF’s founding executive director in August 2023. IEIF moved quickly to position Indiana to participate in future funding allocations from the Inflation Reduction Act’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Additionally, IEIF has successfully negotiated a partnership with Inclusive Prosperity Capital to launch its Smart-E residential loan program in Indianapolis and statewide, starting in Q2 2024. IEIF is similarly finalizing a partnership agreement with the National Energy Improvement Fund to launch a commercial clean energy financing offering in 2024. Please visit [energyindependencefund.org](https://energyindependencefund.org).



## Alley House Takes Gold in Solar Decathlon

Out of 38 teams across the country, a team of Ball State University graduate students won the 2023 Solar Decathlon competition for their entry of Alley House, an affordable housing duplex that is net-positive energy and built better than building code standards. Alley House was built on the city's east side in the Englewood neighborhood, and Englewood's Community Development Corporation (a nonprofit focused on neighborhood revitalization) partnered with the students on the project. **In addition to being completely solar powered, the property also features heat pumps, a native plant garden, natural materials, passive cooling, rainwater capture, high thermal insulation, and EV chargers.** Alley House hopes to serve as a model for future environmentally friendly affordable housing projects. It is currently occupied by two families who are renting-to-own their homes.



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Operation Night Light streetlight additions <sup>10</sup>	175	2018	208	--
Actual reductions in energy consumption due to conversions from Operation Night Light <sup>11</sup>	805,240 kWh	2018	47.1M * kWh	--

\*data reported is cumulative since launch of city program





## Courthouse LEED Certification



The newly constructed 430,000 square foot Courthouse at the Community Justice Campus in the Twin Aire neighborhood was certified LEED-Silver in 2023. It joins the Assessment and Intervention Center (AIC) on the campus as the only city-owned certified green properties in Indianapolis. **The LEED certification process took into account factors including bicycle facilities, heat island reduction, water use reduction, enhanced commissioning, construction waste management, and indoor air quality.** The Courthouse joins a growing list of LEED certifications in Marion County, currently at 451 buildings, up from 259 in 2018 and just 47 away from the Thrive 2025 target.

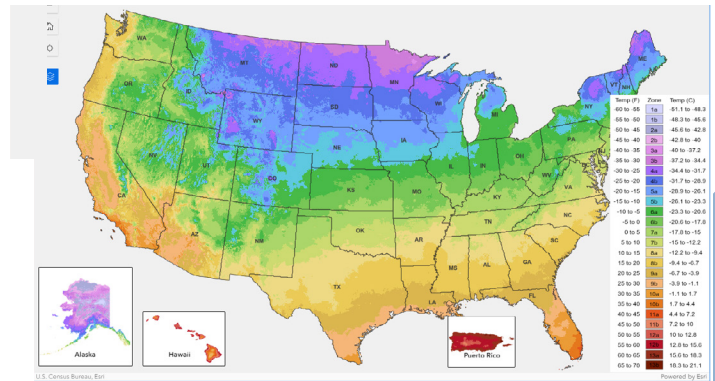




# FOOD AND URBAN AGRICULTURE

## USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Change

Plant hardiness zones are used to advise farmers, foresters, and gardeners on what types of crops and plants can successfully grow in an area. In November of 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture determined that most of Indiana, including Indianapolis, moved from zone 6a planting guidelines to zone 6b. Other parts, such as the northwest area near Chicago and the southern part of the state near the Kentucky border, also changed hardiness zones. The last time Indiana had a change in hardiness zones was in 2012. **This change in hardiness zones results from changing climate; Indiana continues to experience fewer subzero temperature days each year.** Growers are not expected to see a major change right away, but trees and shrubs are going to be the most affected by this changing climate.



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Fresh Bucks used at local farmers markets and grocers coalition stores <sup>12</sup>	\$6,180 at 7 locations	2020	\$42,114 at 17 locations	--
SNAP used at local farmers markets and grocers coalition stores <sup>13</sup>	\$55,645 at 7 locations	2020	\$5,840,222 at 16 locations	--
SNAP/WIC certified grocers coalition stores <sup>14</sup>	2 locations	2019	24 locations	--
# of active urban farms and community gardens <sup>15</sup>	103	2019	171	--



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
# of youth participating in summer and after school recreational programs <sup>16</sup>	210,322	2018	285,495	213,932
Trees planted toward 30,000 goal by 2025 to increase canopy, reduce runoff, and mitigate against the urban heat island, particularly in those neighborhoods in most need <sup>17*</sup>	0	2018	39,896	30,000

\*5% of trees were non-native species

### 30,000th Tree Celebration



The spring of 2023 marked the celebration of the 30,000th native species tree planted in public spaces since 2018. This achievement is ahead of schedule (before 2025) and is only possible thanks to the work of the Indianapolis Department of Public Works (Urban Forestry & Land Stewardship divisions), Indy Parks and Recreation, Citizens Energy Group, AES Indiana, Downtown Indy, IUPUI, and Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc.!

Thanks to KIB's Key Neighborhood Identification Tool (KNIT) score system, all these trees are being planted in the neighborhoods that need (and want) them most -- making communities more resilient to our changing climate due to decreased temperatures, increased stormwater retention, and cleaner air.



## Clear Choices Clean Water Program

Through a variety of both social media and in person community education activities, the City of Indianapolis has followed Clear Choices Clean Water (a nationally recognized program that raises awareness about impact on waterways) guidelines and helped community members make better choices for Indianapolis area waterways. **Indianapolis’s Department of Public Works educated community members on a variety of topics that impact waterways, such as pet waste, litter, and fertilizer runoff.** Over 500 Indianapolis elementary school students participated in hands-on educational activities at Indianapolis parks that showcased how different human actions impact waterways. Organizations throughout the Indianapolis area have worked to educate community members on waterways in the greater Indianapolis area in many ways, including releasing a White River Report card that showcases how different areas of the White River are doing, scoring the river on a variety of different metrics. Please visit [indiana.clearchoicescleanwater.org](http://indiana.clearchoicescleanwater.org).



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Through the Engery Benchmarking program, promote initiatives that improve water conservation with 1,000 participating businesses by 2022 <sup>18</sup>	--	2018	183	1,000
Total acreage in parks and along greenways managed ecologically <sup>19</sup>	1,591	2016	1,620	--



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
% of residents with health insurance <sup>20</sup>	85.2%	2016	90%*	100%

\*data reported from 2018 Community Health Survey Results, still relevant in 2022

## Electric Tools for Parks Maintenance



In 2023, Indianapolis Department of Public Works operations division introduced new electric maintenance equipment aimed at reducing carbon emissions in the city. **The equipment offers an environmentally cleaner alternative for maintaining green spaces in parks and trails and is strategically used during Knozone Action Days— designated periods when air quality may become unhealthy, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.** On action days, Hoosiers are advised to make small changes to protect the air they breathe, recognizing their impact on air quality at a community level.



The Department of Public Works has taken this responsibility seriously by proactively implementing measures to mitigate air pollution and protect public health during these days. To join the effort, you can take the Knozone Action Day pledge here: [knozone.com/pledge](https://knozone.com/pledge).



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Miles of bike lanes <sup>21</sup>	104	2017	118.5	200
# of EVs registered in Indianapolis <sup>22</sup>	760	2017	4,343	3,040

## Indiana Pacers Bikeshare E-bike Announcement

In October 2023, the Indiana Pacers Bikeshare program made an exciting announcement, revealing plans for a significant expansion featuring 250 new electric bicycles. The investment was made possible through partnerships with the Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene & Marilyn Glick, the Herbert Simon Family Foundation, the City of Indianapolis, and Pacers Sports & Entertainment.

E-bikes can make it easier to cover longer distances and navigate hilly areas, making riding bikes a more accessible transportation option. The initiative marks a substantial step forward in supporting sustainable and accessible transportation options within Indianapolis. For those who prefer, traditional bikes will still be available. For more information, please visit [pacersbikeshare.org](https://pacersbikeshare.org).



Photo courtesy of Indiana Pacers Bikeshare



## Take A Free Ride

In April 2023, the City of Indianapolis launched the Take a Free Ride program, offering 100 complimentary Pacers Bikeshare annual passes to interested Indy residents. This initiative was funded by the Office of Sustainability through a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant from the Federal Highway Administration. The goal of the 6-month study was to deepen the city’s understanding of bike sharing and how cost could impact riding habits. **Participants in the free-ride program not**

**only enjoyed complimentary bike rides for a year but also provided crucial data on riding habits and transportation needs.** By riding bikes, and providing this data, Hoosiers were able to help support and create a cleaner, healthier, and more mobile city.



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Miles of greenways and trails <sup>23</sup>	99	2018	121.8	--
Cultural Trail miles, bikes and docking stations <sup>24</sup>	8 miles 29 stations 251 bikes	2018	8 miles 50 stations 150 bikes	--



## Tracking Our Progress

	BASELINE DATA	BASELINE YEAR	2023 DATA	2025 TARGET
<b>OUTPUT METRICS (reported annually)</b>				
Total tons of materials recycled <sup>25</sup>	16,336	2017	15,574	16,696
ITSC* projects completed <sup>26</sup>	0	2018	172	--
Students impacted by ITSC* <sup>27</sup>	0	2018	101,958	--

\*Indiana Thriving Schools Challenge

## Environmental Sustainability Committee Recycling and Composting Series

The Environmental Sustainability Committee of the City-County Council met in 2023 (February, April, and July) on the topics of recycling and composting. This three-meeting series was aired to the public on Channel 16 and online via indy.gov. The recordings are available at [Environmental Sustainability Committee \(granicus.com\)](https://www.granicus.com).

The April meeting focused on the topic of economic development and featured partners from the commodity and recycling industries. The July meeting focused on public education and reviewed various strategies for reaching the public concerning proper recycling and composting techniques. For more information, please visit [indy.gov/activity/environmental-sustainability-committee](https://indy.gov/activity/environmental-sustainability-committee). For more information about recycling and composting, please visit [indy.gov/recycle](https://indy.gov/recycle).





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- <sup>2</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Sustainability. (2023).
- <sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Energy. (2023). Alternative Fuel Data Center Station Locator Tool. Retrieved from <https://afdc.energy.gov/stations/#/find/nearest>
- <sup>4</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works. (2023). Email Coorespondence with Jerry Scarbrough on February 14, 2023.
- <sup>5</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works. (2023). Email Coorespondence with Jerry Scarbrough on February 14, 2023.
- <sup>6</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Land Stewardship. (2023); Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Inc. (2023).
- <sup>7</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development (2023). Personal Communication with Ryan Hunt on April 10, 2024.
- <sup>8</sup>EmployIndy, Project Indy (2023). Email Coorespondence with Erika Cheney and Vanessa Harris on April 3, 2024.
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- <sup>10</sup>AES Indiana (2023). Email Correspondence with Theresa Mendoza (DPW) on February 15, 2024.
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- <sup>12</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Public Health and Safety, Community Nutrition and Food Policy Division (2023). Email Correspondence with Milele Kennedy and Katherine Bowles in April 1, 2024.
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- <sup>14</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Public Health and Safety, Community Nutrition and Food Policy Division (2023). Email Correspondence with Milele Kennedy and Katherine Bowles in April 1, 2024.
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- <sup>16</sup>Indy Parks (2023). Email Correspondence with Joenne Pope on Feb. 22, 2023.
- <sup>17</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works (2023). Tree City USA, 2023.
- <sup>18</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Sustainability (2023).
- <sup>19</sup>City of Indianapolis, Office of Land Stewardship (2023). Email Correspondence with Don Miller on Mar. 6, 2024.
- <sup>20</sup>2018 Community Health Assessment Survey Report, Marion County, Indiana. Marion County Public Health Department, Epidemiology Department DR3813; Indianapolis, IN. 2019.
- <sup>21</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works (2023). Email Correspondence with Gretchen Zortman on Feb. 13, 2024.
- <sup>22</sup>Indiana Office of Every Development (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov/oed/resources-and-information-center/vehicle-fuel-dashboard/>.
- <sup>23</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works. (2023). Email Correspondence with Gretchen Zortman on Feb. 13, 2024.
- <sup>24</sup>Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Inc. (2023). Email Correspondence with Kären Haley on. Jan. 11, 2023.
- <sup>25</sup>City of Indianapolis, Department of Public Works. (2022). Email Correspondence with Shawn Brock on Mar. 10, 2023.
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- <sup>27</sup>Earth Charter Indiana. (2022). Retrieved from <https://indianathrivingschools.org/>.