

## Chapter 4: Communicating Progress

This Plan prioritizes community input and government transparency, with guidance from the Communicating Progress working group. The planning process was slower than it would have been without these efforts, but public input has made the Plan more robust, and has encouraged buy-in from residents that will be impacted by the strategies and actions recommended by the Plan. These two priorities of community input and government transparency will continue to be critical as the Plan is implemented. Below is a description of how the County sought input from community residents and organizations throughout the creation of the Plan, made the process transparent, and will continue these efforts during Plan implementation.

### Outreach and Transparency while Developing the Draft Plan

To ensure that this Plan addressed the needs of the community, the County and its partners sought community input in a variety of ways before the draft Plan was released. These included:

- **Press releases and events.** A press event was held to kick off the planning process.<sup>19</sup> County press releases included information about public meetings and updated reports.<sup>20</sup>
- **Climate action website.**<sup>21</sup> The County’s Sustainability Team frequently updated its website outlining the planning process and ways for community residents and organizations to get involved, which included signing up for email updates, taking a survey, requesting a meeting, and becoming a climate ambassador.
- **A brochure describing climate change impacts and opportunities in Erie County.** A climate change brochure is posted on the Climate Action website and has been distributed to all libraries throughout the County, as well as at events and presentations. The brochure was translated into Spanish, Swahili, Burmese, and Arabic to reach a larger group of community residents beyond native English speakers.
- **Email updates.** More than 1400 people signed up to receive regular updates on the Plan, which included information on the overall Plan, invitations to presentations, the opportunity to invite the County to present to local organizations, and notifications of when draft strategies and actions were available for public comment. The email recipients covered nearly every corner of the County.
- **Public presentations.** The County held public presentations that were open to the public at the downtown Library both in-person and online.
- **Private Presentations.** More than seventy-five presentations were given to community groups, municipal officials, not-for-profits, universities, senior centers, and businesses. The County continues to welcome invitations to present on the Plan.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www2.erie.gov/exec/index.php?q=press/public-information-session-about-erie-county%E2%80%99s-community-climate-action-plan-take-place-buffal>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www2.erie.gov/exec/index.php?q=press/erie-county-details-community-climate-action-planning-process-requests-public-participation>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www3.erie.gov/climateaction/>

- **Outreach at public events.** The County Department of Environment and Planning tabled at more than 100 events throughout the County. Through these events, the County intentionally sought to reach a variety of age groups from small children to senior members as well as diversity in race and ethnicity to ensure there were ample opportunities for engagement. These events included the County Parks Department’s Fall Fest and Winter Fest, the Erie County Fair, Kuleta Pamoja at the Johnnie B. Wiley Amateur Athletic Sports Pavilion, the Elmwood Festival of the Arts, Borderlands Music + Arts Festival, and the Lunar New Year Festival.
- **Social Media.** The climate action planning process was promoted on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). Every time part of the plan was ready for review, a notification was sent out via social media. Posts also included informational videos, brochures, and invitations to events.
- **Climate Ambassador Program.** The ambassador program serves as a connection between the community and Erie County. It gives climate-forward community members a chance to learn about our programs and educate groups on the impacts of climate change to gather feedback on what is needed in their communities.<sup>22</sup>

As the Plan was developed, chapter outputs were available for public feedback for thirty days during draft stages on the Climate Action website. Outputs that were available for public feedback were announced via email and through social media posts. All feedback received was presented back to the Working Groups and was incorporated where appropriate.

### Finalizing the Plan

The DRAFT Community Climate Action Plan, released at a public event on March 18, 2023, is open for public comment for 60 days and is available on the County’s Climate Action website.<sup>23</sup> During the comment period, the County will host public meetings, will continue to conduct outreach at local events, and will present to community groups. Various showcase events will be hosted by Erie County, which will include in-person and virtual events across the County.

When the public comment period closes, the County will work with the Task Force to address the suggested changes. The document will then be formatted so that it is easy to read and to include photos and graphics. The final draft of the CCAP will be presented to the County Legislature for adoption.

### Transparency regarding Plan Implementation

As Erie County government has done with its CASP document for internal operations, the County government will issue an annual report regarding the implementation of the action items outlined in this CCAP. This will include feedback on the status of each action by its respective lead department. This update will be posted on the County’s Climate Action website, as well as sent to the County Executive and the County Legislature. A press release will be issued when the

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www3.erie.gov/climateaction/climate-ambassador-program>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.erie.gov/climateaction>

report is posted and the County will use the various outreach methods listed above to let the public know of the report.

\*To insert picture from one of the Events.

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