

INTRODUCED: January 12, 2026

A RESOLUTION No. 2026-R003

As Amended

To commit to working with the City’s Administration to ~~[development and implement]~~ develop a [comprehensive] City-wide energy efficiency program that [reduces the] advances equitable reductions in energy burden [and cost of living for vulnerable households, supports small businesses, assists in the preservation of housing and the stabilization of neighborhoods, and makes meaningful], accelerates progress [towards the City’s climate goals] toward Richmond’s 2050 net-zero goals, and institutionalizes interdepartmental coordination across housing, utilities, and community development.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patrons – Ms. Lynch, Mr. Breton, Vice President Jordan, Ms. Abubaker,  
Ms. Gibson and President Newbille

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Approved as to form and legality  
by the City Attorney  
\_\_\_\_\_

PUBLIC HEARING: JAN 26 2026 AT 6 P.M.

WHEREAS, ~~[the]~~ Upon information and belief of Council ~~[recognizes the ongoing housing affordability crisis facing residents, in part due to rising home prices and a lack of affordable units available to rent or own, especially for low-income residents]~~, Richmond residents are facing rising housing and energy costs that place increasing financial pressure on low-income households, renters, and residents of older housing stock; and

AYES: \_\_\_\_\_ NOES: \_\_\_\_\_ ABSTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_

ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_ REJECTED: \_\_\_\_\_ STRICKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

~~[WHEREAS, the Council understands that Virginia residents are at the forefront of increasing energy demands and rising energy costs, driven by the rapid growth of data centers, population growth, economic development, and increased reliance on natural gas, among other things; and]~~

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of [the] Council, approximately 28,000 households in Richmond, or nearly one-third of all households, are energy-burdened, [defined by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy as spending over 6% of their income on energy costs, compared to an average household spending of 3.1 percent; and

~~WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 2020-R024, adopted June 8, 2020, the Council recognized the effects of global warming caused by human activity and established a climate action goal to achieve a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from the 2008 baseline; and~~

~~WHEREAS, by Ordinance No. 2020-236, adopted December 14, 2020, Council adopted “Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth” as the Master Plan of the City including Goal 14 that outlines a vision for Inclusive Housing that protects mixed income communities from displacement by preserving existing housing units both renter and owner occupied throughout the city; and~~

~~WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 2021-R049, adopted September 13, 2021, Council declared the existence of a climate and ecological emergency; and~~

~~WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 2021-R032, adopted June 14, 2021, Council expressed its support for achieving equity and justice in access to resources and opportunities through the implementation of the City of Richmond’s Equity Agenda; and~~

~~WHEREAS, Resolution No. 2021-R032, recognized, among other things, that racial inequity is the result of structural racism that is embedded in our historical, political, cultural, social, and economic systems and institutions]~~ meaning households spend a disproportionate share of their income on energy costs; and

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 2023-R005, adopted February 13, 2023, Council adopted the City of Richmond RVAgreen 2050: Climate Equity Action Plan 2030, hereinafter known as “RVAgreen 2050 plan,” as the official sustainability plan for the City; and ~~[established targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent by 2030 and to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050]~~ identifies improving energy efficiency in residential and commercial buildings as a key strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower energy costs; and

~~[WHEREAS, the RVAgreen 2050 plan identified that an estimated 16.8 percent of the City’s greenhouse gas emissions are from the residential energy sector and an estimated 27.7 percent of the City’s greenhouse gas emissions are from the commercial energy sector]; and~~

WHEREAS, a key objective of the RVAgreen2050 plan is “BE-2: Maximize energy efficiency, performance and resilience in all existing buildings,” including both residential programs to reduce energy burden and commercial programs; and

~~[WHEREAS, Mayor Avula’s seven pillars for a thriving Richmond include “Thriving neighborhoods (that meet our housing needs),” ensuring residents from all income levels “can afford good housing in safe neighborhoods with strong public amenities,” and “A thriving and sustainable built environment (planned for future generations)” with a “Shift toward a net zero greenhouse emission local economy”]; and]~~

WHEREAS, the RVAgreen 2050 Plan, established “BE-2: Maximize energy efficiency, performance, and resilience in all existing buildings” as a key objective, including Strategy BE-

2.1, which calls for facilitating energy efficiency upgrades through community-based programs, advocacy, partnerships, and low and no-cost financial options — all of which are identified as ready for implementation; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, energy burden disproportionately affects neighborhoods that have [~~faceted structural racism through redlining, discriminatory zoning, and related forms of historical disinvestment~~] experienced historic disinvestment and structural inequities; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, energy efficiency retrofits can [~~help preserve existing housing and stabilize neighborhoods by reducing the cost of staying in homes, preventing displacement~~] reduce utility costs, improve housing conditions, and help stabilize neighborhoods by lowering the cost of remaining in homes; and

WHEREAS, small businesses and nonprofits provide critical community support, jobs, and local leadership, and, upon information and belief of Council, are struggling to keep up with rising energy costs and face rising energy costs that threaten their stability and ability to serve their communities; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, nearly 18,000 rental households are energy-burdened, and multi-family apartment complexes are commonly classified as commercial buildings and should be targeted for energy efficiency upgrades; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades can reduce energy burden by up to 25 percent and can save households hundreds of dollars annually on their energy bills when those reductions are direct savings on utilities or reduce rental rate increases; and

~~[WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, improvements in energy efficiency improve the health and quality of life for occupants, for example, by maintaining comfortable temperatures, reducing indoor air pollution, and addressing moisture issues such as mold, and that these health and quality of life outcomes have proven to provide spillover benefits including reduced absenteeism from school and work; and]~~

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes the potential benefit of fully utilizing existing funds from state, federal, and utility energy efficiency programs by providing more flexible funding sources that can fill the gaps of other efficiency and weatherization programs; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, a City-funded energy efficiency program can allow for installation of the most energy-efficient (and therefore cost-effective) equipment, such as heat pumps, that may not be permitted by other more restrictive funding sources; and

~~[WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, project: HOMES, the sole implementer of the federal Weatherization Assistance Program (“WAP”) funds in Richmond, has a typical wait time of 1.5 years for WAP services, and often has to defer service due to lack of funds that meet a home’s specific needs; and]~~

~~WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, several gas utilities, including Charlottesville's municipal gas utility, Columbia Gas, Washington Gas, Baltimore Gas & Electric, and Dominion Energy South Carolina, offer some kind of energy efficiency program such as attic insulation rebates; and~~

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond has not funded its gas efficiency program (City Code Sec. 28-110 (c)) and its current language (City Code Sec. 28-110(d)) could encourage continued investment in fossil fuel appliances; and

~~WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, while improvements to reduce the lost and unaccounted for gas from the operation of the City's gas utility have occurred, there is still an opportunity to further reduce as much as practical to align with the City's goal of net-zero emissions; and~~

~~WHEREAS, upon information and belief of Council, energy efficiency retrofits reduce safety hazards with repairs to structural deficiencies in floors, roofs, electrical systems, and more; and~~

~~WHEREAS, the August 2025 allocation of funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to the Healthy Homes Program is a welcome step forward, but upon information and belief of Council, the City requires consistent, year over year, funding to reach its housing and sustainability goals, allowing for expansion of staff capacity and the ability to serve a higher number of homes and businesses.]~~

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby commits to working with the City's Administration to ~~[development and implement, to the extent permitted by law, a comprehensive energy efficiency program that reduces the energy burden and cost of living for vulnerable households, supports small businesses, assists in the preservation of housing and the stabilization of neighborhoods, and makes meaningful progress towards the City's climate goals.]~~ establish a City-wide energy efficiency program that advances equitable reductions in energy burden, accelerates progress toward Richmond's 2050 new-zero goals, and institutionalizes interdepartmental coordination across housing, utilities, and community development, within 180 days after adoption of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That such City-wide energy efficiency program should be aligned with the primary goal of reducing energy burden for income-qualified households with the understanding that advancement of any deliverables are contingent on funding and adequate resources; and the initial structure of such program shall include, at a minimum:

1. A review of the rules and regulations promulgated under sections 28-110(c) and 28-110(d) of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020), as amended;

2. A framework for enhancing interdepartmental coordination on energy efficiency priorities across housing, permitting, utilities, and community services;

3. A review of ongoing grant work and options for potential scaling of successful projects or programs arising from those initiatives;

4. Proposed standard language that can be used for energy efficiency and resilience requirements in Community Benefits Agreements;

5. A proposal to incorporate energy resilience infrastructure into community centers and fire stations;

6. Identification of program targets and funding pathways sufficient to serve households and small businesses annually; and

7. A plan to localize the Commonwealth's "Virginia Energy Connects" program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council hereby commits to working with the City's Administration and local nonprofits to create [~~an equitable~~] a plan that implements a funding program to [~~help~~] leverage existing funding sources to meet the above goal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council hereby commits to working with City's Administration on legislative and funding opportunities, to the extent permitted by law, to identify new funding sources to support this [~~accelerated~~] expanded energy efficiency work in the City.

**DATE:** January 5, 2026

**TO:** The Honorable Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

**THROUGH:** Will Perkins, Senior Legislative Services Manager

**FROM:** The Honorable Stephanie Lynch, Councilmember 5<sup>th</sup> District

**RE:** To commit to working with the City's Administration to develop and implement a comprehensive energy efficiency program that reduces the energy burden and cost of living for vulnerable households, supports small businesses, assists in the preservation of housing and the stabilization of neighborhoods, and makes meaningful progress towards the City's climate goals.

**CNL-2025-0025**

**PURPOSE:** This resolution commits Council to develop and fund an energy efficiency program, in partnership with the City Administration, the City's Office of Sustainability, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Public Utilities, and Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, local nonprofits like project:HOMES and Viridiant, and others as necessary. The program will be designed to reduce energy burden and cost of living for households on the front lines of climate change and rising energy costs, support small businesses, preserve housing and stabilize neighborhoods, and make meaningful progress towards the Mayor's focus areas across the city, including affordable housing, climate equity, and building thriving neighborhoods.

**BACKGROUND:** In 2023, the City of Richmond declared a housing crisis, citing rising home prices and a lack of affordable units available to rent or own. Energy costs are also rising across the state, in part due to a surge in demand driven by data centers. Residential energy rates increased 20% statewide from 2021-2025, and additional increases are expected.

Roughly 1 in 3 Richmond households (over 28,000 in total) have a high energy burden, meaning that over 6 percent of their household income is spent on energy costs like electricity, natural gas, or propane. For low-income residents, that number rises to over 17 percent. Energy burden and rising costs disproportionately affect neighborhoods that have faced structural racism through

redlining, discriminatory zoning, and related forms of historical disinvestment; in Richmond, census tracts with majority Black and Brown households have some of the highest energy burdens. Weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades can reduce energy burden and save households hundreds of dollars annually on their energy bills. In addition to cost benefits, energy efficiency upgrades can improve and stabilize existing housing stock and provide health and quality of life benefits.

Federal sources for weatherization and energy are at risk, making strong state and local programs even more essential. Existing state funding sources for weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades include the Virginia Energy Assistance Program (EAP), Weatherization Deferral Repair (WDR) program, and utility programs. Richmond Gas Works does not currently offer any energy efficiency funding or incentives. Richmond's Healthy Homes program also provides moderate repairs to improve the sustainability, health, and affordability of residents' homes. However, these funds and programs alone are not sufficient to meet the deep needs in Richmond. State and utility funding sources have strict requirements, and without additional, more flexible funding sources, it is challenging for service providers to braid together sufficient funds for some projects. This results in dollars left on the table that could have been used to benefit Richmond residents. Additional capacity to perform repairs and retrofits is also needed, which requires reliable, continuous funding to enable expansion of staff. Finally, policies and programs tailored towards serving renters are needed, since renters typically do not control building repairs or retrofits. Richmond needs a comprehensive, continuous energy efficiency program to achieve objective BE-2 RVAGreen2050, "Maximize energy efficiency, performance, and resilience in all existing buildings."

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Councilmembers engaged the Community Climate Collaborative, Sierra Club Falls of the James Group, and project:Homes in drafting this resolution.

**ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:**

- Resolution No. 2021-R032, adopted June 14, 2021, to express the City's support for achieving equity and justice in access to resources and opportunities through the implementation of the City of Richmond's Equity Agenda.

- Resolution No. 2021-R049, adopted September 13, 2021, to declare the existence of a climate and ecological emergency that threatens the city of Richmond, the surrounding region, the Commonwealth of Virginia, civilization, humanity, and the natural world.
- Resolution No. 2023-R005, adopted February 13, 2023, to adopt the City of Richmond RVAgreen 2050: Climate Equity Action Plan 2030 as the official sustainability plan for the City of Richmond in accordance with Res. No. 2021-R049, adopted Sept. 13, 2021 including this strategy: “BE-2: Maximize energy efficiency, performance and resilience in all existing buildings,” including both residential programs to reduce energy burden and commercial programs.
- Chapter 5 of the City’s Master Plan entitled “Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth” - Goal 14 outlines a vision for Inclusive Housing that protects mixed-income communities from displacement by preserving existing housing units - both renter- and owner-occupied - throughout the city.
- Mayor Avula’s Pillars: “Thriving neighborhoods (that meet our housing needs)”, ensuring residents from all income levels “can afford good housing in safe neighborhoods with strong public amenities,” and "A thriving and sustainable built environment" that leads a "shift toward a net zero greenhouse emission local economy";

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Council staff estimate funds are sufficient in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget to fulfill the requests of this resolution.

**DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon Adoption

**REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE:** January 12, 2026

**CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE:** January 26, 2026

**REQUESTED AGENDA:** Consent

**RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE:** Land Use, Housing, and Transportation

**AFFECTED AGENCIES:** Office of Sustainability; Department of Public Utilities, Department of Housing and Community Development, and Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.:** N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:** N/A

**STAFF:** Will Perkins, Senior Legislative Services Manager, (804-382-7811)

## MOTION

To amend Resolution No. 2026-R003, which commits Council to working with the City's Administration to development and implement a comprehensive energy efficiency program that reduces the energy burden and cost of living for vulnerable households, supports small businesses, assists in the preservation of housing and the stabilization of neighborhoods, and makes meaningful progress towards the City's climate goals, to modify the requirements of the energy efficiency program and to implement a timeframe within which such program must be established.