

Richmond's FY2025 budget is an opportunity to advance the city's commitment to equity and justice by upholding the vision of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution that passed unanimously in September 2021. This is also the final Budget Year to fund projects outlined in RVAgreen 2050 that fall within the 2022-2025 timeline, rather than the 2026-2030 timeline. This includes developing green building standards, minimizing waste, prioritizing connectivity through trails and streetscapes, increasing the city's capacity to enhance green spaces, and updating policies to compensate community members for public planning processes.

The City of Richmond has committed to implementing RVAgreen 2050 and needs to provide additional funding and staffing across Departments to achieve citywide goals adopted by the mayor and City Council. So far, Richmond has achieved 12% of all action items in the Climate Equity Action Plan. We are making progress, but we are falling behind our goal to reduce 45% of emissions by 2030. The inaction of the city will have enormous economic and social costs and leave under-resourced communities even more vulnerable.

We will not achieve our climate and equity goals without this funding.

Below is a priority list of all RVAgreen action items that fall within the 2022-2025 timeline. To stay on track, the FY2025 budget must include funding for these initiatives.

Let's finish the job!

## Priority Budget Recommendations:

### **Buildings & Energy**

Develop green building standards for new facilities, including public input on facility siting and net-zero design standards (BE-1.2 iii) [\$100,000].

*Ordinance/policy required*

### **Community**

Create a permanent grant program for non-profits, similar to the Neighborhood Climate Resilience Grant Program (C-2.1 i and ii) [\$1M annually]

### **Environment**

Transfer the Extension Office to the Office Of Sustainability with full funding to enhance the OOS's work on Urban Agriculture, and better align the Extension's support for Housing initiatives within the Planning & Economic Development Portfolio [\$50,000 annually]

### **Transportation & Mobility**

Ensure the City's Green Fleet Action Plan is followed.

### **Waste Reduction and Recovery**

Expand the city's composting program with additional staffing and drop-off locations and provide residents with at-home composting bins [+1 Compost Program manager r; \$150,000 annually including benefits; plus \$50,000 annual programming dollars]

### **Emissions**

Stop allocating money in the CIP for "new business" to gas infrastructure and reallocate Richmond Gas Works' \$500K 'New Business' stipend towards an energy efficiency program focused on residential building weatherization. [ \$0 dollars]

## Additional Budget Recommendations:

### Buildings & Energy

- Ensure that natural gas is deprioritized (or removed) as an option for Plan Review, SUPs, etc
- Install battery storage and solar arrays on all new city facilities [Project and Project Status Dependent- \$1-3M annually]
- Add solar and batteries on all eligible facilities getting a new roof.
- Add solar and batteries in all locations in need of a new generator.
- Provide funding to enable sustainability and resiliency requirements during plan review and approvals by training plan reviewers and building inspectors and cultivating the department's capacity to enforce the letter and spirit of building energy code provisions (BE-4.3 ii) [+1 OOS Team Member; \$150,000 annually including benefits]
- Replace all end-of-life fossil fuel heating, cooling, and water heaters with modern air source heat pumps.

### Community

- Mandate that all new affordable housing funding with city dollars are net-zero or, at a minimum, include renewable energy, are fully electrified, and adhere to resilience and sustainability requirements (C-1.1 i) and the current International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) (not Virginia's outdated code standards), [Implementation: \$100,000] *Policy required*
- Develop a community benefit agreement template for City development projects with frontline communities and provide information and assistance to developers on how to use it and engage communities (C-1.4 ii) [staff time] *Policy required*
- Establish a citywide policy and payment structure or system for compensating community members for their time and expertise in the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating climate action and resilience solutions(C-2.2 i) [staff time, implementation dollars by Department] *Policy required*

### Environment

- Purchase two additional bucket trucks for the Urban Forestry Division to complete the backlog of RVA311 requests and ongoing maintenance needed to keep up with demands. [\$225,000]
- Create a Superintendent of Urban Forestry position to oversee and manage tree planting, pruning, removal, pest management, and tree preservation activities. This person will oversee arborists and help keep up with 311 requests, removal/retention, hazards, and assessing complaints. They will also manage contracts and budgeting for Urban Forestry. [\$95,000 annually including benefits]

- Create a permanent office/position within the Department of Parks & Recreation to manage partnership and volunteer programs (ENV-1.2 ii) [+1 Team Member; \$150,000 annually including benefits]
- Dedicate an annual funding source for watering and maintenance, and require a two-year minimum of watering by the city's contractor. *Policy required.*
- Increase funding for staff training and certification for herbicidal use for invasive species eradication.
- Replace all end-of-life hand-held, and gas-powered tools such as leaf blowers, mowers, trimmers, and chainsaws with battery-powered tools.
- Increase the city's planting budget to achieve canopy goals set in the Richmond 300 Master plan.
- Increase visibility and accessibility of the Richmond Grows Gardens urban agriculture program. Partner with food justice community organizations and include an apprenticeship training program. Increase funding for staffing, maintenance, and materials. Encourage cultivation of native plants (ENV-1.3 i) [+1 Team Member; \$150,000 annually including benefits; plus \$50,000 annual programming dollars]
- Engage the community and use data to equitably identify and prioritize extreme precipitation and flooding resilience projects using the Stormwater Capital Projects Ranking Matrix and additional resources. Increase transparency and accessibility of data and decision-making (ENV-3.1 i) [DPW staff time]
- The Department of Public Works and/or DPU fund community-engaged Stormwater BMPs in formerly redlined neighborhoods within public green space in South Richmond. (500k) yearly.
- The Office of Community Wealth Building with the Department of Social Services (SNAPET & TANF) fund community urban agriculture and solar power installation training and workforce development in formerly redlined neighborhoods in South Richmond (250k).

### **Transportation & Mobility**

- Purchase EVs for budgeted new light-duty car and truck acquisitions. Halt the purchase of gasoline vehicles and allocate funding to build charging infrastructure for the city's EV fleet.
- Enforce VA Code and Richmond's 2011 Anti-Idle Policies among City employee drivers and optimize vehicle routing for fuel savings (TM-1.1 ii) [DPW staff time] *Policy enforcement*
- Ensure the Fall Line Trail is a vibrant, sustainable destination that maximizes pervious pavement, incorporates solar and green infrastructure, and promotes economic development [\$500,000 annual for project duration]

- Adopt an ordinance to require the city to use the Envision framework for all new city infrastructure projects (TM-1.4 ii) [\$50,000 for community engagement; DPW staff time]
- Provide funding for GRTC's Zero Fare initiative.
- Invest in sidewalk connectivity and maintenance to address trip hazards as well as protected bike lane networks and first/last mile connections (especially on Richmond's Southside)
- Increase crosswalks and pedestrian call buttons at light signals on arterial roads.
- Invest in "healthy streets", green spaces, and parks,
- Increase safety and access for pedestrians and transit users, including more bus shelters and benches
- Initiate pilot studies for dedicated bus lanes, and special pedestrian and bike-only events on weekend days on community streets.

### **Waste Reduction and Recovery**

- Make compost and mulch available to city properties, residents, and small businesses (WR-3.1 iii) [\$50,000 annually] *Potential policy requirement*
- Pass an ordinance to impose a tax on plastic bags, the phasing out of polystyrene containers, and a balloon release ban, per state-enabling legislation (WR-4.1 iii) [OOS staff time] *Policy required*
- Increase funding for the Clean City Commission to create a geographically and demographically representative task force to mobilize support for the adoption of key state and local waste management legislation (e.g. banning plastic bags), work with institutions to remove single-use plastics, and examine policies that minimize other large waste streams. (WR-4.1 i) [\$10,000]

### **Emissions**

- Stop subsidizing new gas connections.
- Implement an Energy Efficiency Program. Explore how Richmond Gas Works can help residents, particularly low-income and underserved populations, electrify their homes through various investments (such as neighborhood electrification) and financing mechanisms (such as on-bill financing). Ordinance/policy required
- Repair instead of replacing leak-prone pipes.
- Explore converting Richmond Gas Works into a sustainable energy utility to align the utility with the City's emissions, health, and equity goals by using a diverse array of resources including solar, solar+storage, micro-wind, solar fields, and networked geothermal to ensure system resilience. Ordinance/policy required
- Support a just transition to help workers impacted by the clean energy transition.

### **Other:**

- Incentivize new grocery stores in Richmond neighborhoods that lack healthy food access.
- Increase funding and staffing in the OOS to achieve RVAgreen 2050 implementation in a reasonable timeline [+2 Team Members; \$300,000 annually including benefits]
- Provide the new Urban Forester with staffing and funding to meet the health and environmental needs of the community [+2 Team Members; \$300,000 annually including benefits]
- Prioritize funding for the implementation of the combined sewer system improvement projects included in the City's interim and final plans at the Virginia 2024 General Assembly.
- Create new green jobs and incentives for real estate developers to electrify their utilities and appliances, and utilize/implement solar (especially important with the expansion of growth nodes from Richmond 300)
- Adopt a socially responsible business and banking policy.

**To date, the following Richmond organizations endorse the Clean Energy and Climate Justice FY2025 Policy and Budget Recommendations:**

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
 Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
 Green Action!  
 Green New Deal Virginia  
 GreenUR  
 Richmond for All  
 Richmond Tree Stewards  
 RVA Rapid Transit  
 Sierra Club, Falls of the James Group  
 Southside Releaf  
 Sunrise Movement Richmond  
 Th!rd Act RVA  
 Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action  
 Virginia Interfaith Power & Light