



Climate Initiative & Resilience Plan: Communication Strategy

Situation Analysis

The Dubuque 50% by 2030 Community Climate Action & Resiliency Plan is an initiative by the Sustainability Department in the City of Dubuque. The plan is a non-binding, voluntary effort to identify opportunities to reduce Dubuque’s community greenhouse gas emissions to promote improved health, economic prosperity, and improved quality of life. To reach this goal, the department seeks to inform officials during goal setting and budget decisions, showcase success stories, inform businesses and individuals about emission and cost-saving options, provide a roadmap that can be added to or adjusted, and expose where Dubuque’s greenhouse gas emissions are primarily produced. To meet this goal, the sustainability department needs cooperation and efforts from the community.

The Sustainability Department in Dubuque is seeking methods to expand community knowledge of the program. The Department head, Gina Bell, has experienced success engaging a small group of community members who are passionate about sustainability. She experiences difficulties engaging members of the community beyond the small group. To expand community knowledge of the program, the department should focus on marketing techniques to educate the community at the local level.

In summary, the 50% by 2030 Community Climate Action & Resiliency Plan is a comprehensive plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions amid the global climate emergency. To complete this mission, the Sustainability Department must engage more community members

in sustainability efforts. This document outlines a plan of action for increasing community knowledge of the program through marketing techniques in local businesses.

Organization Analysis

In addition to curbing carbon emissions, Dubuque's climate plan aims to raise public awareness about sustainability. Sustainable Dubuque has made substantial work towards the climate plan, by implementing projects and city initiatives. One of these movements is the Bee Branch Project, which manages flood mitigation and builds green space within Dubuque. Sustainable Dubuque has also adapted public transportation to reflect community needs, which increased ridership by 16% over five years. Recently, Dubuque hired Amanda Lewis as the Climate Action Coordinator to ensure the climate plan receives adequate attention and resources. The Climate Action Coordinator manages Sustainable Dubuque's initiatives and advocates for the city's climate needs.

Dubuque has faced obstacles in its mission. The biggest threat to Dubuque's climate plan is human activity and disinterest in adopting sustainable methods. As outlined on The City of Dubuque website, the most significant contributors to emissions in 2022 were commercial and industrial buildings, transportation energy consumption, and residential energy usage. (City of Dubuque). Reducing emissions within each of these sectors necessitates a proactive commitment from the community, which Dubuque currently lacks. Individuals are reluctant to swap the convenience of personal vehicles for public transportation, while businesses lack the motivation to adopt sustainable energy practices. Additionally, citizens of Dubuque are generally uninformed about the climate plan and are unaware of how their actions are specifically harmful to Dubuque. Without citizen effort and awareness, Dubuque cannot decrease emissions in its largest sectors, and therefore cannot achieve the climate plan. The City of Dubuque must

effectively encourage the public to implement environmentally friendly practices and convince the community that they can create tangible change.

In 2023, Gina Bell and the mayor of Dubuque attended the COP28 conference in the United Arab Emirates to learn about sustainability practices. The invitation was a huge accomplishment for Dubuque, as the city was recognized for its work with the climate plan. Some critics argued that attending a climate conference in Dubai is hypocritical, however, Dubuque's participation in the event was an overall success for the city's reputation (Kettering and Kruse).

At the local level, Dubuque's climate plan needs more visibility. Most of the news written about sustainability in Dubuque covers the city's trip to Dubai, rather than the actual climate plan. According to Gina Bell, the city has a group of dedicated individuals who show up to city hall meetings in support of a more sustainable Dubuque, however, the city would like to see larger participation. Dubuque's website has a clear section for the sustainability initiative, but it is unclear how aware the general population is of the initiative.

The climate plan receives some public pushback online. Some members of the Dubuque community are unsupportive of the sustainability plan, as they view climate change as a political issue. These critics do not believe taxpayer dollars should be used for sustainability missions and have been vocal about their concerns on Facebook. To combat these concerns, particularly when it comes to skeptical business owners, we can stress that promoting this action plan comes at no cost to them. Sustainability practices will have long-term benefits when placed in practice. We will focus on spreading awareness and a sense of togetherness within the Dubuque community, rather than rhetoric focused on climate change.

This plan is designed to enhance the exposure of the climate plan by leveraging local businesses' influence. The City of Dubuque has a robust local business sector that is involved in the community. Our mission is to work with these entities to promote the sustainability plan. Furthermore, by partnering with Sustainable Dubuque, local businesses may become more inclined to adopt sustainable practices and recognize their role in safeguarding the city. Local businesses will play a pivotal role in driving the success of the City of Dubuque's climate plan.

Identifying Publics: Small Retailers and Local Food Services

Interacting with small retailers and local food service establishments will be a key part of disseminating information about the plan to the community. Close to 20% of Dubuque residents work in the retail and food service industries, so these publics are key demographics to reach out to, as they make up a large part of the Dubuque community (Data USA). By exchanging information and tailoring messages on sustainability practices, we can foster a collective commitment to a sustainability plan for the entire Dubuque Community.

Small retailers: Small retailers within Dubuque are an important public to reach, as practicing sustainability within these businesses not only promotes sustainable values to those who work there but also to everyone who interacts with that business. By promoting the Climate Action Plan within local businesses, and promoting sustainable practices to these retailers, the Action Plan can spread to more people throughout Dubuque. To reach out to this group, going through channels like business social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), as well as reaching out to managers and store owners is a good way to make the connection and start a dialogue that will hopefully lead to more sustainable practices for that business and promotion for the Action plan within the business.

Local food services: Another important demographic to engage with is local restaurants and food services. Encouraging these establishments to adopt the climate action plan and embrace sustainable practices can yield significant benefits for their operations. Implementing sustainable practices such as promoting the use of reusable cups at coffee shops and opting for reusable utensils over single-use plastic alternatives like straws, forks, and spoons can lead to financial gains for businesses. Local restaurants and food services have extensive interactions with the public in the Dubuque area, giving them a platform to enhance their sustainability efforts and disseminate sustainable messaging. By advocating for the climate action plan within these establishments, Dubuque can spread awareness and local food retailers can become more mindful of sustainable practices that will benefit them monetarily.

Partnering with local businesses will be able to spread messaging around the action plan to a wider range of people. Engaging with the public is essential for the successful dissemination and implementation of the climate action plan within the Dubuque community.

Key message for small retailers

- Sustainability practices can offer a competitive advantage.

Key message for local food services

- Active sustainability efforts can promote customer loyalty.
- Sustainability efforts can bring in a new customer base.

Goals/Objectives/Tactics

Goal: Increase local business awareness and support of the Climate Plan

- **Objective:** Get five local businesses to support the Climate Plan through pamphlets and window clings
- **Strategy/Tactics:** Provide free fliers to local businesses to hand out to customers at check-out. We can also put a sign in the window of local businesses that support the Climate Plan to signal to customers that the shop supports sustainability.

Goal: Reduce plastic waste in Dubuque

- **Objective:** Encourage sustainability by getting five local retailers to place plastic bags behind the counter rather than out for people to take.
- **Strategy/Tactics:** Encourage local businesses to sell reusable bags, only give out plastic bags upon request, or even charge a small fee to customers who want plastic bags.

Goal: Reduce plastic cup waste in Dubuque

- **Objective:** Encourage sustainability through convincing five businesses to adopt a small, discounted rate for customers bringing in their own mugs.
- **Strategy/Tactics:** Encourage local food vendors to charge a small fee for plastic cups, or a discount for customers who bring in their own mugs for to-go drinks. Encourage local food vendors to provide reusable mugs to dine-in customers rather than defaulting to plastic.

Goal: Increase web traffic on the Sustainable Dubuque website

- **Objective:** Increase page views on the Sustainable Dubuque web page to 5-10% higher than previous quarter.

- **Strategy/Tactics:** Place small fliers in local restaurants and stores that have a QR code on the Sustainable Dubuque website. Use community cork boards or lamp posts to post the flier.

In-Depth Strategies and Tactics

Goal/Objective: Increase local business awareness and support of the Climate Plan

- **Communication Based Strategy:** Raise general public knowledge of the Climate Action Plan through people viewing information about it at local establishments
- **Tactics:** Provide free fliers to local businesses to hand out to customers at check-out. We can also put a sign in the window of local businesses that support the Climate Plan to signal to customers that the shop supports sustainability. These tactics will help show the public that small businesses in Dubuque support the Climate Action Plan, and will also help disseminate information about the plan through the community.

Goal/Objective: Reduce plastic waste in Dubuque

- **Action Based Strategy:** Partner with small businesses in Dubuque to reduce their use of single use plastics, as well as encourage their consumers to reduce their plastic waste
- **Tactics: Encourage** local businesses to sell reusable bags, only give out plastic bags upon request, or even charge a small fee to customers who want plastic bags. While this could be a hard sell for some businesses, practicing sustainability and committing to sustainable practices can be very beneficial to small businesses. According to [Forbes](#), meeting demands for eco-friendly products not only improves public health and the environment, but also increases positive brand awareness within your community (Forbes). While getting started using more sustainable practices could be a challenge for small businesses, the payoff could outweigh the initial costs.

Goal/Objective: Increase web traffic on the Sustainable Dubuque website to 15% higher than January/February page views

- **Communication Based Strategy:** Increase awareness of the Climate Action Plan through directing consumers at small businesses to the Sustainable Dubuque website and information about the Climate Action Plan
- **Tactics:** Place small fliers in local restaurants and stores that have a QR code on the Sustainable Dubuque website. Use community cork boards or lamp posts to post the flier. Most small businesses have display boards or counter space to display these handouts, and in having these readily available with information about the action plan, as well as links and QR codes available, it makes information about the action plan accessible and will help spread this information to more people in the Dubuque community.

Resources

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