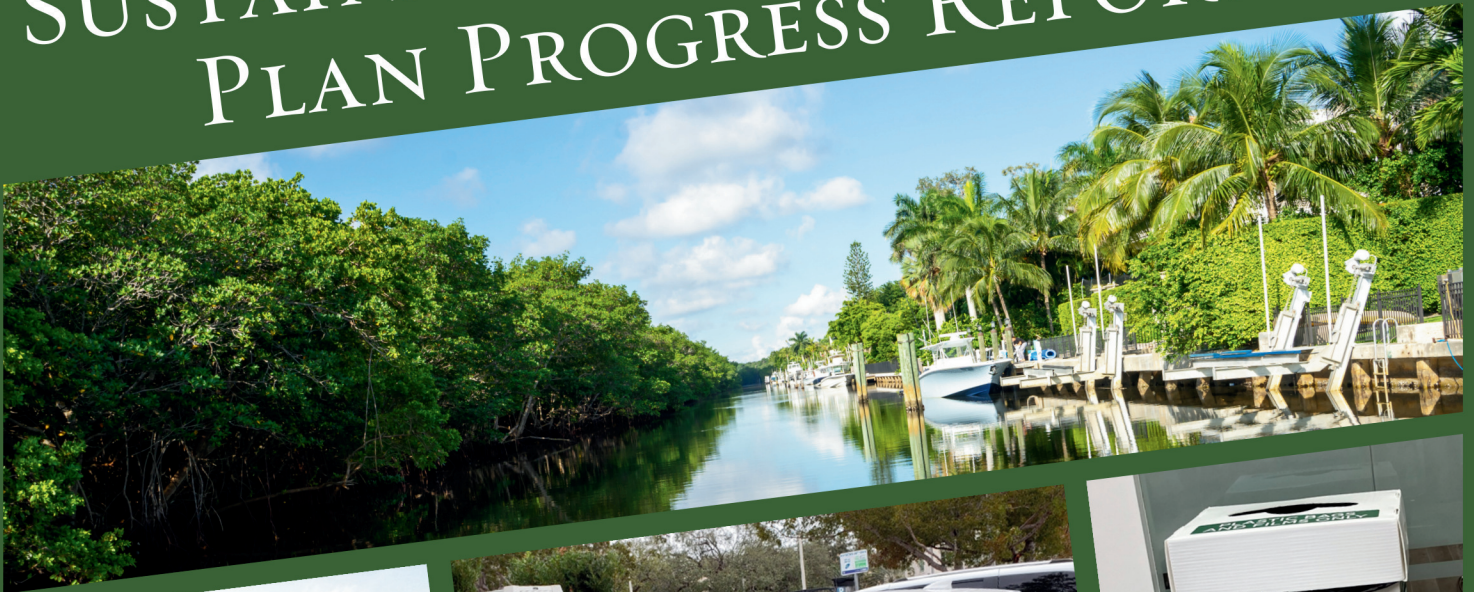




# SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT



**CORAL  
GABLES**<sup>®</sup>  
THE CITY BEAUTIFUL



## OUR PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

The past 10 years have been a historic period of environmental sustainability and resilience for the City of Coral Gables. In 2015 a team of city officials and sustainability professionals established sustainability goals inspired by a commitment to protect our beautiful community, improve our people’s quality of life, and generate positive returns on investment.

To fulfill this commitment, we developed a portfolio of sustainability projects across eight focus areas: energy, water, materials, vehicles, climate, transportation and land use, outreach, and funding.

Since then, the city has been hard at work implementing its Sustainability Management Plan (SMP). In addition to the 25 projects included in the plan, the city has engaged with over 25,000 participants and volunteers in over 150 community events and programs such as invasive species removal days, city beautification efforts, litter cleanups, and recycling drive-thru events through its [Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program](#). In 2022 Coral Gables was awarded the LEED for Cities Gold certification, globally recognizing its comprehensive sustainability achievements.

As of Earth Day 2024, the city is on track to meet or exceed several of its goals including reducing overall electricity use, greenhouse gas emissions, and building water use. While we have yet to meet our fuel reduction goal, Coral Gables has built one of Florida’s largest municipal EV fleets. 12% of the city’s total fleet is electric. Overall, the city’s actions have generated millions of dollars in net benefits, extended new services to citizens, and protected the environment.

This beautiful city will be 100 years old next Spring. Just like George Merrick’s original plan, Coral Gables’ path to sustainability requires continuously renewing its commitment to a vision of a cosmopolitan City in harmony with nature. This document details a decade of sustainability successes, but it is only the beginning of the journey. Coral Gables looks forward to continually improving our performance in the future.

### CORAL GABLES GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

#	Goal	Area	Achievement
1.	Reduce electricity use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025	Energy	Met
2.	Reduce water use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025	Water	Met
3.	Divert single-family residential and municipal operations solid waste 75% by 2020	Materials	Met*
4.	Reduce gasoline and diesel fuel use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025	Fleet	In Progress
5.	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions 20% below 2013 levels by 2025	Climate	Met

\*From 2015 to 2023 100% of waste was being diverted to a Waste to Energy Plant. Due to a fire at the plant, this method of diversion is no longer possible. The city is currently working with Miami-Dade County and Waste Management to find alternative solutions.



## ENERGY

Reduce electricity use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025

Since 2013 the city has grown and still reduced its overall energy use by 14%. We have met our goal of 20% reduction by 2025 when normalizing for growth.

- Energy Efficient Facilities:** City staff has evaluated major building systems (HVAC, lighting, building automation, water heating, and building envelope) for opportunities to implement retrofits that reduce energy consumption. The entire Public Works Maintenance Facility, Merrick House, Venetian Pool, Fire Station 3, portions of City Hall, the 427 building, and Fire Station 2 have converted to LED lighting accounting for 80% of the city by sq ft. In addition, new facilities such as the Police and Fire Headquarters and Minorca Garage achieved LEED Silver certification. All future city facilities will include LED lighting. In 2017, the City Commission appropriated \$600,000 to replace all its 4,098 streetlights with LED fixtures or lamps over four years. The city has been working with Florida Power & Light to convert the remaining 3,516 FPL-owned streetlights in the commercial and residential areas.
- Renewable Energy:** Since 2012, the City has promoted community energy conservation through its participation in the PACE, or Property Assessed Clean Energy program. PACE allows residential or commercial property owners to finance renewable energy, energy efficiency, and storm-hardening upgrades through a voluntary property tax assessment. Also in 2019, the City introduced 11 Solar Powered Charging Benches to its parks, becoming the first city in South Florida to adopt these simple, yet effective quality-of-life improvements. The city is now evaluating solar PV projects on the Minorca Garage, Public Works Maintenance Facility, and the new Coral Gables Diner.



## WATER

Reduce water use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025

From the Coral Gables Waterway to Biscayne Bay, one of the defining characteristics of our city is its water. It has played a big part in our city's history and will play a big role in our future. Meanwhile our drinking water resources, like the rest of South Florida, are increasingly stressed by population growth, saltwater intrusion, and changing precipitation levels. The city has reduced its own water usage by 22% since 2013, and citywide usage is down by 11%.

- Water-efficient Facilities:** The City has upgraded to high-efficiency plumbing fixtures or fittings in most buildings and now requires the use of efficient, low-flow water fixtures when renovating existing facilities, as well as for new construction.
- Water Smart Irrigation:** The city has increased its green spaces to promote healthy living. Maintaining these beautiful spaces has increased water needs for irrigation. While the city added fifteen irrigation accounts since FY2013, water usage dropped by 6% through increased irrigation efficiency. In 2016, we

upgraded nine irrigation systems to use weather-based controllers and flow sensors. The city is also using efficient drip irrigation systems on the Ponce Median, Le Jeune, and the Miracle Mile. A partnership with Miami Dade Water and Sewer helped install 220 smart AMI meters on all the City's irrigation accounts. In addition, the city installed soil sensors at the Youth Center to optimize the irrigation of the play fields. Looking forward, we are evaluating a rainwater harvesting project at the Coral Gables Youth Center that could offset 33% of potable water usage from irrigation.

- **Water Quality:** In partnership with FIU, the city is in year 2 of a comprehensive waterway nutrient analysis and implemented several pilot projects to improve water quality like storm curb filters at Ponce and Downtown. We have also piloted different projects such as floating wetlands and smart sponge technologies to help improve water quality. The city currently has an application with the state to continue the project for a third year.



## MATERIALS

Divert single-family residential and municipal operations solid waste 75% by 2025

The city provides garbage, trash, and recycling collection services for single-family residences across Coral Gables. From 2015 to 2023, 100% of waste was being diverted to a Waste to Energy Plant. However, in February of 2023, a fire broke out at the plant, halting operations. The city is currently working with Miami-Dade County and Waste Management to find alternative solutions.

- **Source Reduction:** The city has established ordinances prohibiting certain single-use materials, cooperating with local businesses to identify reusable, recyclable, or compostable alternatives. In addition, we prohibit their use by special event permittees, city contractors, and in-city facilities.
- **Landfill Diversion:** Waste Management held a Recycling 101 Seminar, and nine household hazardous waste collection events. Coral Gables conducted a preliminary waste audit of residential recyclable materials and found a contamination rate of 8%, which is extremely low compared to other cities/counties in the region. As of October 2018, the city diverts about 18% of all municipal solid waste through recycling and the rest to the waste-to-energy plant in Doral.
- **Hazardous and Electronic Waste Reduction:** As a result of the community collection events, the city has collected and diverted over 604,414 pounds of electronic and household hazardous waste and 41,500 pounds of paper. Internally, the City's IT Department recycled over 16,000 pounds of electronic waste since 2016. We also safely disposed of over 430 pounds of prescription drugs through our disposal program at the Public Safety building that otherwise might have gone to the landfill.



## VEHICLES

Reduce gasoline and diesel fuel use 20% below 2013 levels by 2025

Imported fossil fuels power our transportation, posing risks to security, our economy, and the environment. A leaner fleet, comprised of fuel-efficient, alternatively fueled vehicles will produce more than a quarter of a

million dollars in net benefits for the city by 2025. The city's largest fuel users (police, fire, and heavy-duty vehicles) have had extremely limited options to convert to alternative fuels. The only way to reduce fuel use is to reduce fleet size which wasn't possible in an expanding city. The city is currently looking into electric conversions for police and fire that are expected to hit the market in 2025. While we project these efforts will leave us short of our 20% gasoline and diesel reduction goal (there has been an 8.93% increase in fuel use), the city is tracking several initiatives capable of creating cost-effective cuts to our current fuel budget.

- **Electric Vehicle Fleet & Charging Stations:** The city began building its Green Fleet of EVs in 2016 with 20 Nissan Leafs. With our current total of 72 EVs, Coral Gables has one of the largest municipal EV fleets in Florida. The city has 58 public EV charging points, which has resulted in over 73,000 charging sessions and avoiding more than 1,000,000 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions. The City has identified locations for additional level 2 and level 3 charging stations infrastructure for expansion. We received an FDOT Smart Transportation grant to convert the existing fleet to GEM Freebee vehicles to Tesla Model X in 2024. The City has also applied for FTA no emissions federal funding to convert 4 of our existing diesel trolleys to electric.
- **EV-Ready Development:** A 2019 amendment to the City's zoning code requires EV charging stations for all new construction, except in single-family residences, duplexes, and townhouses. A 2022 update requires at least 5% of parking spaces to have EV charging stations, 15% to be EV-ready, and 20% to be EV-capable. In addition, the remaining 60% of the spaces need to be sleeved for potential future expansion.



## CLIMATE

- Reduce City operations' greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below 2013 levels by 2025

Coral Gables is uniquely vulnerable to the forecasted effects of climate change. Flooding, saltwater intrusion into water supplies, more intense storms, and temperature extremes threaten the area now and will continue to in the future. Our priority is to preserve the classic heritage of the city while safeguarding the health and prosperity of our citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction:** The City recently updated its Greenhouse Gas Inventory to include data for 2019. It shows community-wide emissions down 20% compared to the 2013 baseline.
- **Resilience Planning:** In 2016 the City Commission appropriated \$190,000 to fund a comprehensive vulnerability assessment to understand SLR projects, king tides, and storm surges for categories 1, 3, and 5. The city is developing LIDAR-based risk maps to help identify critical infrastructure vulnerable to flooding. The city also commissioned a white paper to explore various sea level rise adaptation policy options and their legal implications. The City of Coral Gables has a community rating score of 5 which has resulted in a 25% insurance premium discount from the National Flood Insurance Program, saving community members significant amounts on their yearly insurance. To help combat the impacts of Sea Level Rise, we created a mitigation fund in 2017 with a goal of raising \$100 million by 2040 through a community stormwater fee. As of 2023 the fund already had \$16 million.

- **Regional Partnerships:** In 2015, the city signed on as a municipal partner (Resolution 2015-194) of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact (SFRCC). In 2017, the city joined the Seawall Coalition, which serves as the advocacy arm for the not-for-profit First Street Foundation.

## OTHER PROJECTS

- **Tree Canopy:** Coral Gables has been a Tree City USA designee since 1985 and has over 41,000 trees. The canopy provides an estimated \$3.3 million benefit to the community, sequestering over 1,500 mtCO<sub>2</sub>e of greenhouse gas emissions. Our tree succession program began in 2015 to plant 3,000 trees in common areas and swales.
- **Sustainable Buildings:** The city passed a green building requirement in 2016 that requires LEED Silver Certification on all new public and private buildings 20,000 square feet and above. The new Police and Fire Headquarters and Trolley Maintenance Depot meet this standard. The city also utilizes the Envision rating system to guide all new infrastructure projects. Several city staff are credentialed as Envision Sustainability Professionals and the City's Cocoplum I Pump station was Envision verified.
- **Transportation Choices:** In 2016, the city began working on a Multi-modal transportation plan to increase mobility options by making public transit more accessible and convenient, enhancing our urban trails, greenways, sidewalks, bike facilities, and adding traffic-calming devices in our neighborhoods. The Trolley Service provides free transportation for over one million riders each year, the Freebee service provides over 6,000 rides per month, and the city's micro mobility scooter program has enabled 40,000 riders to use scooters each year for their first and last mile of travel. In addition, the city continues to provide free bike racks to interested businesses around the city.
- **Passive Parks:** As a part of the Neighborhood Renaissance Program the City purchased five properties for use as passive parks. These small parks will provide additional green spaces for the City.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Over the past 10 years, the City of Coral Gables has exemplified leadership in sustainability, setting and surpassing ambitious goals aimed at safeguarding our environment, enhancing residents' quality of life, and yielding substantial returns on investment. This remarkable track record stands as a testament to our unwavering dedication to sustainability and resiliency initiatives. Yet, as we reflect on our achievements, we recognize that enduring success in sustainability demands continual commitment and innovation. As we embark on the development of our next sustainability plan, we eagerly seek input from our community members, esteemed experts, and local government stakeholders. By fostering collaboration and inclusivity, we aim to cultivate a forward-thinking roadmap that not only sustains but propels Coral Gables toward a thriving future well beyond the next 10 years. Together, we can chart a course that harmonizes environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and social equity, ensuring a legacy of sustainability that enriches the lives of current and future generations to come.