

## Estes Sustainability Report Examined: Institutional Factors Part 2

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We continue our dive into some of the 51 recommendations of the Environmental Sustainability Task Force (ESTF) report, continuing backwards from the final section of the report, Institutional Factors. In the last article we included, among other recommendations, branding our town as a sustainable destination, and making it far more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. In part 2 we look at the recommendations in that final section to develop Climate Action Policy (#47), strengthen the framework for funding sustainability (#50) and establish a Clean Energy Plan (#51). The report and a link to make comments can be found on the Town of Estes Park website. (<https://estespark.colorado.gov/estf>)

### Develop Climate Action Policy

The report suggests provisions which include reducing emissions “in transportation, electricity usage and generation, building, and waste management.” The suggested provisions include high priority response to wildfire, flooding, and habitat degradation. In our opinion, the goal of the Town should be to become net zero energy use, and be a sustainable community for centuries to come.

The report suggests directing Town departments to expedite initiatives. Examples of this would include incentives to award contracts for project proposals that include sustainability; incentivizing contractors to build smaller, greener and improve insulation of buildings by reducing tap fees and permit fees for increased sustainability in their projects; and providing businesses with incentives to install solar and transform their fleets to electric vehicles (EVs). The Town should encourage shuttles to the airport to go all electric.

The report recommends adopting sustainability policies and practices for Town operations and facilities. For example, expediting the Town’s transition to an EV fleet; eliminating 2-cycle, gas powered tools like chainsaws, leaf blowers, lawn mowers and replacing them with electric/battery operated versions; and eliminating single use plastics in all town facilities and functions.

The report recommends directing Estes Power and Communications to adopt a clean energy, sustainability, and pollution reduction plan. This would include powering all town buildings with solar; encouraging other power authorities to adopt solar; encouraging the Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) to develop a hydropower battery back-up by using Mary’s Lake as a back-up battery storage system. The benefits would include maintaining the healthy air quality we enjoy in the Estes Valley. The resulting reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions is necessary to slow the changes in climate contributing to extreme weather events, like the drought causing wildfires which are occurring with alarming frequency far earlier than just a decade or two ago.

The report calls for our community to look to the Colorado Climate Action Plan (<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1261>) and to follow the accompanying “roadmap”. ([https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jzLvFcrDryhhs9ZkT\\_UXkQM\\_0LiYZfq/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jzLvFcrDryhhs9ZkT_UXkQM_0LiYZfq/view)) And it recommends close coordination with the Larimer County Climate Smart initiatives ([https://www.larimer.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2021/2102lar\\_report\\_climate\\_smart\\_summary\\_f2\\_web.pdf](https://www.larimer.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2021/2102lar_report_climate_smart_summary_f2_web.pdf)). Coordinating our actions locally, regionally, and statewide will help make the work of averting climate crisis easier by building on the foundations of already established science, policies that work (like the success of the recycling program in Loveland) and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

### Strengthen the Framework for Funding Sustainability

Strengthening the framework for funding sustainability will be an important part of Estes Park’s success in this endeavor. The report points specifically to a bond issued in Durango in 2021 to demonstrate “how the terms of municipal and district bonds can infuse sustainability into project execution.” (<https://www.durangoherald.com/articles/sustainability-will-be-key-in-awarding-9-r-bond-projects/>) We advocated in our Earth Day 2022 article for funding the suggested new (or reclassified)

Town staff positions of Environmental Sustainability Manager and Grant Development Manager. Especially now, in the wake of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, substantial sums are available in the form of state and federal grants. Residents, visitors and businesses would benefit from projects funded through grants, and from the commitment to enhanced services and programs ensured by having sustainability managed full-time by the Town.

#### Establish a Clean Energy Plan

Finally, the Institutional Factors section of the ESTF report recommends establishing an Estes Clean Energy Plan. This final section of the report includes very detailed information about clean energy incentive programs available from other electric utilities. (<https://www.lpea.coop/rebates>) “La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) has an extensive program with building efficiency audits and rebates for building efficiency improvements and for beneficial electrification, including HVAC heat pumps, hot-water heat pumps, and induction ranges/cooktops. It provides rebates for electric outdoor equipment (e.g., snow blower, lawn mower, leaf blower, chainsaw + battery), to help replace serious air pollution and noise sources. For electric mobility, it has rebates for e-bikes and provides free home level-2 electric vehicle smart chargers (or rebates if purchased); rebates also are offered for commercial and public-use EV charging stations.”

ESTF recommends implementing a portfolio of incentive programs; preparing an emissions inventory for the Estes Valley; and organizing and investing in distributed energy generation and storage, which includes solar installations and encouraging the replacement of diesel school buses with electric ones.

In January of this year we wrote about the Larimer County Climate Smart initiatives (<https://www.eptail.com/2022/01/26/together-we-build-local-government-sustainability-initiatives/>) “Say one drinks beverages out of aluminum cans. Maybe one per day. If that can is recycled that is 365 cans per year that do not end up in the landfill. If everyone in the population of Larimer County, 369,377 people as of 2021, were to recycle one can per day for a year, that would add up to 134,822,605 cans. Nearly one hundred thirty-five million. Our small actions, when added together with those of our neighbors, can make a big difference.” We think that this bears repeating, as our ability to impact planetary health with our small individual actions can make a big difference. Making sustainability easy and attainable for individuals, residents, visitors, and businesses should be a prime focus of our town.

Get involved! Saturday afternoon, 1-5 pm May 21<sup>st</sup> is a Climate Change Symposium hosted by Estes Valley Watershed Coalition at the Ridgeline Hotel. Register for the free event: <https://www.evwatershed.org/events/climate-change-and-what-to-do-about-it-a-symposium> On the morning of May 24<sup>th</sup> at 10am the Estes Park League of Women Voters has a hands-on recycling presentation at the American Legion. ([https://www.lwv-estespark.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=706933&module\\_id=388579](https://www.lwv-estespark.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=706933&module_id=388579)) Tuesday May 24 at 6pm the American Legion hosts a solar presentation “Light Up the Legion” as they prepare to make a difference by installing a solar array.

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