

Top Employer Energy Trends

Municipalities Case Study

January 2026

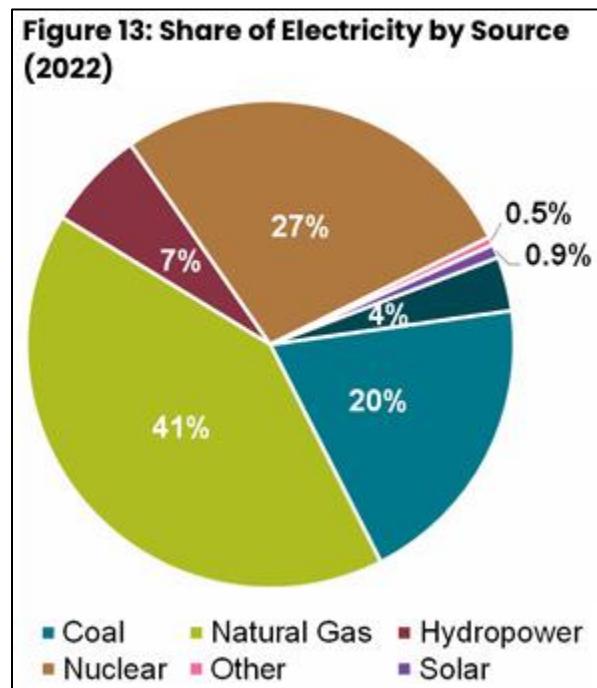
The Highlights*

		
<p>Approximate population in 2025 is 363.8k</p> <p>Committed to using 100% clean and renewable energy sources by 2050</p> <p>As of 2025, the City of Cleveland gets 39% of its electricity from clean energy</p> <p>One of the objectives laid out in the Climate Action Plan is to “Eliminate barriers to providing 100% clean energy by 2045”</p> <p>Committed to cutting citywide GHG emissions 63.3% by 2030, from 2018 levels (Science-Based Target)</p> <p>Aiming to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (Science-Based Target)</p> <p>“Cuyahoga County is home to 13,732 clean energy jobs, approximately 10% of which are clean energy generation and distribution”</p>	<p>Approximate population in 2025 is 939.9k</p> <p>Committed to 100% municipal and residential clean energy procurement by 2030</p> <p>Committed to 25% commercial clean energy procurement by 2030 and 100% by 2050</p> <p>From 2013 to 2022 there has been a -16.5% change in total emissions from residential energy and a -34.6% change in total emissions from commercial & industrial energy combined</p> <p>Committed to achieving a 45% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030</p> <p>From 2013 to 2022 there has been a 6.5% reduction in total emissions</p> <p>Aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050</p>	<p>Approximate population in 2025 was 316.2k</p> <p>Committed to 100% renewable energy for city operations by 2035 using 2022 as the baseline</p> <p>Committed to obtaining 40% of electricity load from clean energy sources by 2030 using 2021 as the baseline</p> <p>16% of Ohio electricity in 2022 was attributed to renewables and nuclear</p> <p>Committed to achieving a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030</p> <p>“Cincinnati’s 2021 community emissions inventory estimates total community-wide emissions of 5.9 MMT CO2e (million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent), representing a 36.6% decrease from the 2006 baseline of 9.3 MMT CO2e”</p> <p>Aiming to achieve 100% carbon neutrality by 2050</p>

Ohio-Relevant Energy Findings

City of Cleveland

- As stated directly in the [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan \(2025\)](#), "clean energy is the foundation upon which the entire CAP is built." When it comes to GHG emissions for an entire city, there are a limited number of factors that the city has control over. However, the energy supply is one of them.
- According to the [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan \(2025\)](#), "energy use (electricity and natural gas) was responsible for the majority of GHG emissions in Cleveland during 2022, which is consistent with previous years." Therefore, to reduce the city's footprint, forms of major energy use will need to be transitioned to cleaner and renewable alternatives to achieve both energy and GHG emissions reduction goals.
- As shown in the figure below, Cleveland's current landscape of electricity sources is vast:



The [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan \(2025\)](#) pie chart clearly depicts that most of the electricity dependence is on natural gas with "the majority (61%) of electricity used in Cleveland coming from fossil fuel sources." At this point in time, "the largest source of carbon-free electricity in the City is nuclear power (27%), with renewable sources – including hydropower, solar, and wind making up 12%." With less utilization of hydropower, solar, and other renewable energy sources, Cleveland is currently relying on sources that are emitting lots of GHGs.

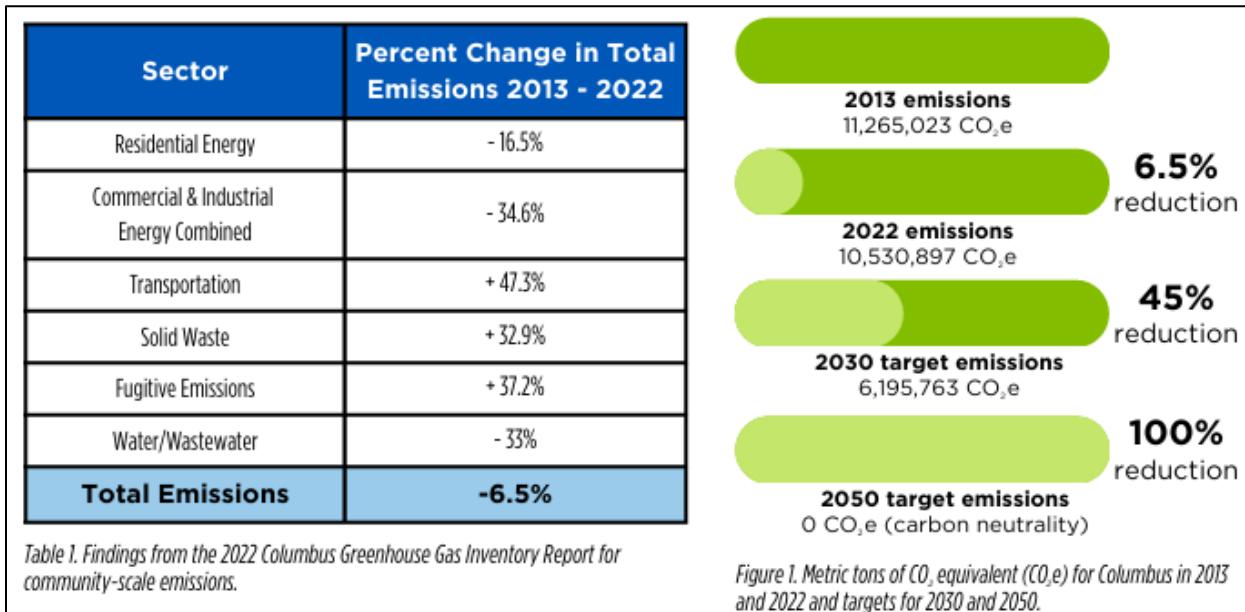
- At present, "energy use makes up 55% of total GHGs in Cleveland" even further indicating the need to switch towards more renewable energy sources. Even so, the challenges are ever evolving. A few of the critical challenges cities across Ohio are facing include the following:

- "The State of Ohio has further rolled back its clean energy standards...dramatically weakening Ohio's renewable portfolio standards and forcing ratepayers to directly subsidize against uncompetitive coal plants (a direct result of House Bill 6)."
- "The Lake Erie Energy Development Company (LEEDCo) suspended its Icebreaker project, which would have installed offshore wind turbines in Lake Erie (the U.S. DOE is not issuing additional funds to it)."
- "It takes multiple years, on average, to connect clean energy to the electricity grid in Ohio, making it difficult to replace fossil fuels with cleaner electricity (unpredictability in pricing has led to price spikes for Clevelanders)."
 - [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan \(2025\)](#), Pg. 115
- As many of these critical issues have been introduced in the past year or so, Cleveland has used the momentum of past successes to continue to strive towards net zero. Key successes include:
 - "Cleveland Public Power (CPP) achieved its Advanced Energy Portfolio Standard goal of getting 25% of its electricity from renewable energy by 2025 during 2021, when it provided more than 26% of its total electricity from hydropower, solar, and wind."
 - "In partnership with Cuyahoga County, CPP opened its 4-megawatt (MW) Brooklyn Landfill Solar Farm in late 2018."
 - "Cleveland has continued to operate its Community Choice Aggregation program to provide 100% Green-e certified clean electricity to FirstEnergy customers. During the first year of its current program, Clevelanders saved over \$13 million, equal to roughly \$250 per enrolled account."
 - "Cuyahoga County, the City of Cleveland, and the City of Painesville received \$129.4 million in Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation funds from U.S. EPA during 2024 for its Municipal Empowerment for Clean Energy and Conservation program. This program proposes to install approximately 63 MW of solar energy and 10 MW of battery storage across Northeast Ohio, including roughly 13 MW on landfills in the City of Cleveland."
*Note: project funding removed due to federal legislation changes in 2025.
 - "The Industrial Heartland Solar Coalition (IHSC), a coalition of 31 communities across eight states led by Cleveland-based Growth Opportunity Partners received a \$156 million grant from U.S. EPA's Solar for All program during 2024. As part of this program, the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are projected to install 4.4 MW of residential rooftop solar for 1,100 low- and moderate-income households and implement an additional 11 MW of community solar for 2,900 households." *Note: project funding removed due to federal legislation changes in 2025.
 - [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan \(2025\)](#), Pg. 116-117

- With numerous goals, objectives, and action items, the City of Cleveland is paving the way to clean energy through numerous avenues to benefit all community members. To learn more about what the City of Cleveland aspires to achieve around clean energy, see pages 119-127 of the [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan](#).

City of Columbus

- As stated in Columbus' [Climate Action Plan \(2021\)](#), "to achieve carbon neutrality, the electric grid emissions will play a very large role in the speed overall GHG emissions are reduced." Without the introduction of more renewable energy sources to the grid, it will be hard for cities like Columbus to achieve targets outlined in their climate action plans (CAPs).
- As part of its [Climate Action Plan \(2021\)](#), Columbus set a target to introduce 10,000 new green jobs by 2030. Although no specific description was provided for the term "green jobs," the preface behind the idea is that climate action could create well-paying jobs. From energy development to waste control, there are opportunities for economic development while at the same time reaching the goals that Columbus laid out in their CAP.
- Being at the heart of Ohio, the City of Columbus set out to "advocate for state policies that align with low carbon, resilient solutions." Critical targets from the [Climate Action Plan \(2021\)](#) include reinstating a 20% renewable portfolio standard by 2030 and establishing an energy code review cycle by 2030. As stated in the CAP, "building codes and renewable energy portfolio standards (RPS) are two important state-level policies that are critical to the CAP which will require diligent efforts to ensure progressive changes are made." Moreover, it was portrayed that "A state level RPS will set goals for the electric utility companies to develop clean energy sources from in-state resources that are carbon free. This is critical as many fossil fuel sources are reaching the end of their expected useful lifespan and will need replaced." With so many fossil fuel energy sources reaching the end of their life cycle, now is the time to build renewable energy infrastructure to replace the outdated methods.
- Within the [Climate Action Plan \(2021\)](#) were plans to increase residential and commercial on-site solar as well as implementing clean energy procurement measures. Under these facets, Columbus set targets to install 500 MW by 2050 (residential) and install 2 GW total by 2050 (commercial). As stated in the CAP, "the business case for solar makes sense - with multiple options for financing a system, the savings from electric utility bills provide payback over the course of the systems lifespan." In addition, "as the City and other entities build more renewable energy systems locally, there will be additional opportunity for local clean energy procurement."
- As of 2024, progress toward Columbus' CAP is as follows:



As shown in the [Climate Action Plan Progress Report \(2024\)](#), there have been significant reductions in emissions relating to residential, commercial, and industrial energy since 2013. With increased emissions across other categories, Columbus can lean into renewable energy projects even more to ensure that their 2030 goals are met.

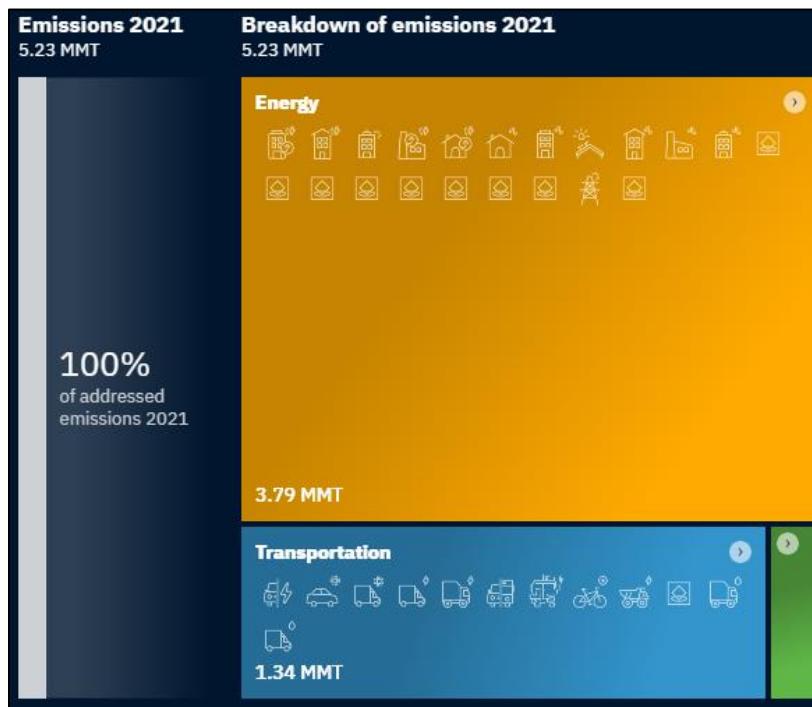
- Other projects of note that are still in progress include the completion of a microgrid and energy prioritization study as well as the development of a community solar plan. As part of the community solar plan, “plans to construct a 5 MW solar array to serve as a subscription-based community solar facility where subscribers through the Division of Power will be eligible for a 20% discount on their power, which will be 100% local renewable energy.” This indicates that cities are continuing to progress on their CAPs even amidst a lack of government support.
 - [Climate Action Plan Progress Report \(2024\)](#), Pg. 5-6

City of Cincinnati

- Looking at the community emissions inventory as a whole, “while there have been reductions across each of the major categories, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to stationary energy sources (buildings, factories, etc.) have been the driving force behind the reductions.” As one of the largest sources of emissions for cities, energy use plays a critical role in both decarbonization and modernization planning. As residents and businesses are reliant on energy for everyday use, it is one of the most direct ways to make positive change.
 - [Green Cincinnati Plan \(2023\)](#), Pg. 29
- One of Cincinnati’s goals pertaining to energy is to reduce building emissions by 30% from 2021 levels by 2030 ([Green Cincinnati Plan \(2023\)](#)). Using a combination of energy efficiency projects to

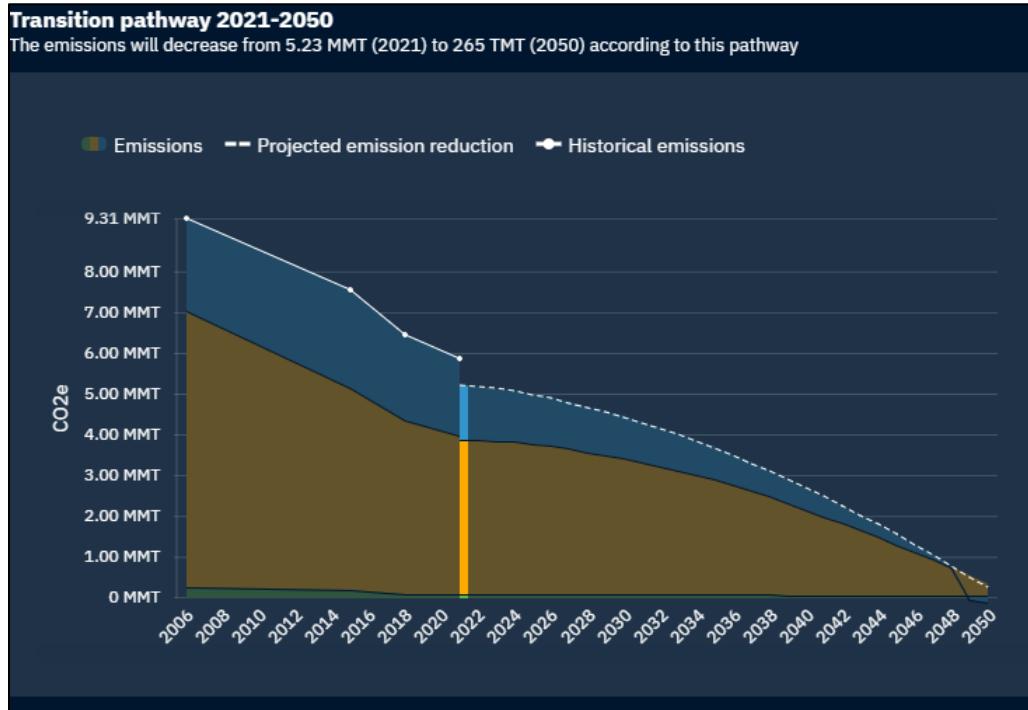
decrease energy usage, electrification projects, and alternative energy sources, Cincinnati seeks to achieve this goal. While energy efficiency and electrification projects are important, without reliable energy sourcing they cannot be realized. Consistent and reliable renewable energy sources could provide reliable energy while also reducing building emissions across the board to successfully achieve the 2030 goal.

- Cincinnati is also hoping to electrify 20,000 households by 2030. There were an estimated 8,219 all-electric homes in Cincinnati in 2021. While electrification is a critical facet of reducing Cincinnati's overall emissions footprint, even more progress can be made if these incoming electric houses are powered by renewable sources. As only 16% of the Ohio electricity generated is by renewables and nuclear, Cincinnati needs to shift to clean energy sources as in-state tax incentives are dwindling.
 - [Green Cincinnati Plan \(2023\)](#). Pg. 62-68
- As depicted in their [Climate View Dashboard](#), Cincinnati's emissions profile consists largely of energy-related emissions. To truly reduce related GHG emissions, dependency on coal-fired and natural-gas fired electricity sources needs to decrease. With limited options within the state, "the city must look beyond its borders to find energy sources and storage options that can help meet its energy needs" ([Green Cincinnati Plan \(2023\)](#)). If there were more renewable energy sources, it is likely that the city of Cincinnati would utilize them for its community members.



Transition pathway 2021-2050

The emissions will decrease from 5.23 MMT (2021) to 265 TMT (2050) according to this pathway



Summary Findings

- All three major Ohio cities have committed to transitioning to 100% clean and renewable energy sources by 2050 at the latest (most are aiming for 2030/2035)
- Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati all have Scope 1 and Scope 2 GHG emissions reduction goals
 - Each city's emissions profile consists largely of emissions created in energy use followed by other categories such as transportation
 - As an extension of their GHG reduction goals, all these cities have committed to becoming net zero or carbon neutral by the year 2050
- The combined population of these major Ohio cities in 2025 surmounts to approximately 1.62 million people
- As a majority of emissions for each city can be contributed to energy consumption, by changing the sources to renewable energy sources, the cities can not only reduce their emissions but also create more healthy communities void of atmospheric pollutants
- There is no doubt that these cities want to buy local renewable energy and use the development to support economic development, but for that to happen the barriers to renewable energy creation need to be lowered
 - As large contributors to Ohio's GDP, these cities can leverage their voices to enact real change and enable job creation right here in the state



***Sources for the Highlights**

- [City of Cleveland Climate Action Plan 2025](#), Pg. 9, 16, 24, 47, 115, 127
- [Columbus Climate Action Plan 2021](#), Pg. 24, 71
- [Columbus Climate Action Plan Progress Report 2024](#), Pg. 1
- [Green Cincinnati Plan 2023](#), Pg. 10, 29, 68, 82