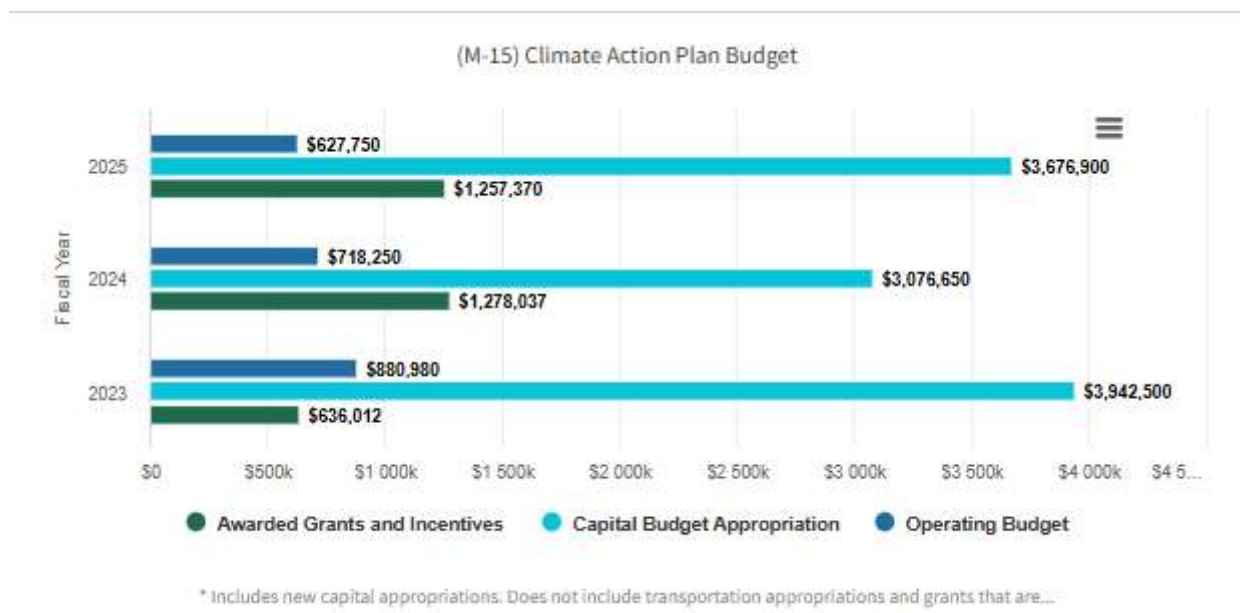


Mayor and Council Questions and Staff Responses (April 28, 2025)

Question from Councilmember Myles regarding Item 8, Presentation of the Annual Climate Action Plan Update.

Question. How much of annual budget directly/indirectly related??

Response. The graph below shows the trends for FY 2023 - FY 2025 operating and CIP annual appropriations and grants awarded that directly/indirectly relate to the CAP (excluding Vision Zero/Bike/Pedestrian transportation initiatives that are tracked separately but support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions). The FY 2025 budget included more than \$4.3 million for CAP initiatives, such as continued food waste composting program, facility energy audits and improvements, LED streetlight replacement, storm drain rehabilitation, stormwater management facility improvements, stream restoration, EV charging infrastructure, and an expanded stormwater incentive program that includes the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, expanded RainScapes Rebates, and competitive watershed grants.



Questions from Mayor Ashton regarding Item 8, Presentation of the Annual Climate Action Plan Update.

Question 1. Can the team share an update on the status of the streamlined SolarApp permit process implementation?

Response: Community Planning and Development Services is working on implementing the Solar App+ pilot in the next few months. They are finalizing workflows in MGO Connect and targeting implementation by the end of FY 2025.

Question 2. What percent of Rockville residents have received the County electrification grants? I previously asked about creating a program for Rockville and the team recommended we watch to see how Rockville residents can benefit from the County program that was being set up. So far it looks like only three homes have benefited. How many Rockville residents have applied? What percent of the total grantees does Rockville represent?

Response: Staff will reach out to Montgomery County to discuss the performance of the Electrify MC program and discuss ways to improve Rockville participation levels, then provide a more direct response to this question. Utilizing the program requires several phases including setting up an energy audit for the contractor to develop a proposal of potential projects which include energy efficiency measures to ensure a new HVAC system is properly sized for an insulated energy efficient home. The program connects participants to Pepco's home energy rebate program. The process takes time and it may be that several more applications are underway now. Economic uncertainty and higher electricity prices may play a role this year in levels of participation.

Question 3. I did not see the update on composting include that the City will be pursuing a 4th composting site. This is called for in the climate action plan and was discussed in our FY26 budget process.

Response: Per the Mayor and Council's guidance at the FY 2026 budget discussions, staff will explore a location for a fourth compost drop-off site. The CAP dashboard will be updated to reflect this in next steps. The CAP does not target a specific number of compost sites. Staff will continue to monitor community interest to right size the program, but does not anticipate the need to grow beyond a fourth location.

Question 4. Curbside composting: Has the City considered partnering to bring a reduced price composting pick-up offering to residents who opt-in? Falls Church takes this approach. Perhaps we can get a better price if we help negotiate for a group of residents and they can direct pay? Can you please share an update on the County curbside composting pilot? <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/trash-recycling/programs/foodwaste/food-scraps-pilot.html>

Response: Staff evaluated the Falls Church compost programs that includes both a voluntary drop-off program and a privately contracted curbside opt-in program. The curbside program costs residents \$8 per month or \$88 per year for 7-gallon weekly service, or \$15 per month or \$165 per year for 12-gallon weekly service. Falls Church pays the remaining 60% of the curbside

cost. There is a one-time fee of \$18 for 7-gallon bin, or \$35 for 12-gallon bin to cover the setup and bin. This contractor curbside program would require additional program funds and staff resources for program management. Even though in some models residents pay the private contractor directly, city involvement would require compliance with procurement rules and would prevent direct partnerships with an individual contractor without solicitation. Therefore, the voluntary drop-off approach was pursued so that it would be available to all residents utilizing existing resources. Residents, HOAs, apartments and neighborhoods can already voluntarily pool together to work with a private compost contractor for a bulk discounted opt-in program. Some private contractors list this option on their websites (<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/trash-recycling/programs/foodwaste/index.html>).

Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is piloting single family residential curbside food scraps collections in three neighborhoods in north Bethesda, Potomac and Silver Spring. The County's FY 2026 budget reports that 1,535 households participated in the program. Staff is reaching out to DEP for more information on this pilot.

Question 5. A lot of food is discarded at schools. Do we know which schools do and don't have composting within Rockville? Can we find out?

Response: Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) oversees waste management for the public school system. The MCPS [recycling and waste reduction webpage](#) does not reference a food waste composting program. Staff will reach out to the MCPS for more information on participating schools, then provide a more direct response to this question.

Montgomery County's Commercial Food Scraps Recycling Partnership Program assists businesses and organizations that generate larger quantities of pre-consumer food scraps to recycle those food scraps. Through this program, the County provides technical assistance, training, education and support to collect, transport and process food scraps for recycling into compost – a beneficial soil amendment. Staff is aware that the following Rockville properties have or are currently participating in Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection's compost program:

- Ingleside at King Farm
- Montgomery College - Rockville Campus
- Montgomery County Public Schools - Department of Family and Community Partnerships

Question 6. The team has done a great job on pursuing grants that have saved the City money. Thank YOU. Can the team explore Direct Pay reimbursement to help us continue to reach our goals in the event that grant opportunities decrease?

Response: Yes, the team has researched Direct Pay and participated in several trainings regarding Direct Pay reimbursements. We have reached out to Finance to start to prepare. Direct Pay only applies in cases in which the project is not 100% funded by grants in order to

avoid double coverage of reimbursements. Direct Pay project submissions occur in the calendar year after a purchase is made around tax season. Thus far none of our projects have met the criteria for Direct Pay but we plan to pursue it for eligible projects in the future.

Question 7. Has the team gotten all of the current grants to a place to ensure we lock them in?

Response: Staff is only aware of one DPW grant that is in jeopardy of not moving forward. The city has completed the grant agreements, partnership letters, applications and reports to secure all the other awarded grants. The grant that is uncertain is a federal Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) grant awarded to the Maryland Clean Energy Center for EV charging. Rockville is one of the many grant partners and the grant supports fast chargers at the Swim and Fitness Center.

Question 8. I have raised the idea of partnering and doing a roadshow with HOAs to help raise awareness about green transitions in collaboration with Montgomery County Green Bank. I am willing to help collaborate to move this forward, but first would like to know whether staff is pursuing.

Response: Through our participation in the Housing Action Team and inspired by the Human Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) and the Environment Commission, staff has been considering planning an energy forum for landlords and property managers. Details have yet to be finalized, but we plan to connect with the County on this effort too. It would be great to collaborate on these efforts to connect more members of the community with the current opportunities available. Montgomery Energy Connection webpage (<https://montgomeryenergyconnection.org/>) is a good place to direct residents to seek a place to start.

Question 9. We were working to see what we can do to support green transitions in public/affordable housing entities, starting with RHE. Given some of the Federal transitions, where does this stand? I think there are still things that can be done to help in collaborate with the Montgomery County Greenbank and Maryland Clean Energy Center. I see the update on page 21, but wanted more clarity on how this is moving forward.

Response: Staff is providing ongoing support to RHE and connecting them with project opportunities as they arise, mostly focusing on state grant funding at this time. RHE submitted a grant application with Citizen Energy to Maryland Energy Administration to fully fund electric vehicle charging stations at David Scull. If awarded, this grant would help backfill a federal grant through MCEC which has an uncertain status. In the fall, City staff connected RHE with the Montgomery County Green Bank who assisted in applying for a County electrification grant's eligibility phase which ultimately was unsuccessful.

The City was awarded funding for four sets of additional chargers to be installed curbside adjacent to Scarborough Square, Park Terrace Apartments, Rollins Park apartments, and East Rockville near affordable multi-family buildings through a federal grant via Maryland

Department of Transportation and is partnering with Montgomery County on that project. The County is finalizing their overall project agreements and the next step is to develop sub-agreements with the City similar to how the City partnered with Pepco on curbside charging.

Environmental Management staff has begun participating in the Housing Action Team – the internal team meeting with landlords and tenants to assist and support in resolving issues with several multi-unit properties and low-income properties. Environmental staff is participating to help connect property managers and owners with available energy efficiency or other climate-related funding and grant programs at the local (MCEC, Green Bank, County grants) and state level (MEA or DHCD).

Staff is monitoring federal climate and energy funding status in the meantime.

Question 10. What can be done to accelerate the LED light conversion to City facilities in order to reduce costs long-term and take advantage of rebates?

Response: Staff is pursuing an opportunity to accelerate LED light conversions at up to five city facilities in 2025. The FY 2025 amended budget includes a \$92,000 project to implement LED lighting upgrades at Thomas Farm Community Center (TFCC) with a \$63,000 MEA grant. Staff has learned of the availability of higher Pepco incentives for certain small electric accounts and the option to assign the Pepco incentives directly to the contractor to reduce the upfront cost. This will allow the city to leverage the existing budget and accelerate energy efficiency lighting upgrades at four more facilities (F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, Croydon Creek Nature Center, Fleet Maintenance Facility and portions of the Police Station) to maximize energy savings and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Question 11. Has the contract for the LED streetlight conversion been awarded? The update notes it will be awarded in early 2025 on page 27. Now that we are mid-year, please confirm that this is moving forward. Thank the team for all of the work to convert 1900 lights thus far.

Response: The Phase 2 contract for LED streetlight conversion was awarded by Mayor and Council on March 24, 2025. It includes approximately 650 lights and has a 6-month duration. Phase 3 is intended to be advertised prior to the end of calendar year 2025.

Question 12. Can we pursue a policy approach/resolution whereby when we replace a roof or do a major upgrade at a facility, that we will consider solar/geothermal similar to the EV resolution where we consider EV for new vehicle purchases and explain why we don't if EV is not selected? I would like to propose this.

Response: The Mayor and Council have already adopted a resolution in 2013 with a 15% electricity reduction goal and a 20% renewable energy generation goal as part of the Maryland Smart Energy Communities partnership with the Maryland Energy Administration. Staff is working towards these goals. Recent roof replacements at City Hall and Lincoln Park Community Center in 2025 are opening up new opportunities for solar rooftop installations. Staff will develop a Request for Proposals in July 2025 for solar rooftop/canopy installations

through either a capital investment or solar power purchase agreement. Solar feasibility assessments funded by EPA and MEA identified the following sites for future consideration: 6 Taft Court, Rothgeb Maintenance Facility, Lincoln Park Community Center, the Swim and Fitness Center, City Hall, Senior Center, Recreation Services, and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre.

Question 13. For Thomas Farm, solar was not recommended and we have geothermal. What percent of our electricity usage is being offset/covered by geothermal? What is the feasibility of parking lot solar to help get closer to net zero?

Response: Thomas Farm Community Center (TFCC) was constructed in FY 2009 and includes a geothermal heating and cooling system with 42 wells, 75 tons of cooling capacity and 68 tons of heating capacity. Using a conversion factor provided by the Maryland Energy Administration for an average of the heating and cooling tonnage, this yields approximately 461 Megawatt hours (MWh) per year toward the City's renewable energy goal. In FY 2024, TFCC used 401.77 MWh of electricity and 23.29 metric cubic feet (MCF) of natural gas. The City evaluated the parking lot for solar canopies in 2012 and 2024 and identified site constraints related to a natural gas easement and pervious pavement. A Transco easement for an underground gas pipeline runs under a portion of the parking lot and the grass area along Fallsgrove Drive. The easement prohibits permanent structures and construction activities to ensure pipelines safety and maintenance.

Question 14. Some properties that were included as NA because of historic designation. Who decides whether historic designation would not allow for solar/geothermal? Can this be a policy question brought to M&C, HDC, and planning? See page 32. In some of the historic places, like Glenview, we also have a large expansive parking lot, that would not impact the building.

Response: Glenview Mansion was initially excluded for renewable due to its historic status since this technology would require down time affecting public use and installing this equipment would cause impacts to the structure of the building and may have special requirements. However, as technology and techniques evolve this site can be re-examined. The historic setting for the Civic Center Park includes the parking lots for the Glenview Mansion and the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre. This could be a potential policy question brought before the M&C, HDC and planning.

Question 15. When are the 2025 results from the solar/geothermal analysis planned to be delivered based on our contract. The narrative on page 32 only notes 2025. Please provide dates/quarter?

Response: City staff just received a revised draft of the preliminary solar feasibility assessments for five city facilities from the consultant. Staff expects the report will be finalized by the end of 4th Quarter FY2025. Staff will develop a Request for Proposals in July 2025 for solar rooftop/canopy installations through either a capital investment or solar power purchase agreement for the five facilities in this report (Swim and Fitness Center, City Hall, Senior Center, Recreation Services Building, and F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre) plus three others completed by

different solar assessments (Lincoln Park Community Center, Taft Center, and Rothgeb Maintenance Facility).

Question 16. Can we please have a flyer that raises awareness about the variety of programs: flood mitigation, rainscapes, solar co-op, weatherization grant program (via CDBG), MC electrification grant, and encourages people to sign-up for the sustainability newsletter?

Response: The next update of the Environment and Sustainability email newsletter flier will feature the additional programs referenced above and can be provided to elected officials for outreach upon request. The city promotes these programs in a variety of ways, including the website, fliers, posters, postcards with QR codes, social media, Rockville Reports, Climate Solutions Speakers Series and event tabling. Other program handouts currently available include: Flood Mitigation Assistance Program postcard, RainScapes postcard and the Solar Co-op Flier. Since city, county, state and utility programs change frequently, the full list of programs and links is available on the Climate and Energy Incentives Website:

<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2546/Climate-and-Energy-Incentives>

Question 17. How many water main breaks did we have this past year? Climate Change does play a role in these issues in infrastructure.

Response: There were 44 water main breaks last year.

Question 18. Can you provide more details on where we stand on total greenhouse gas emissions?

Response: The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments produces the greenhouse gas emissions inventory for member jurisdictions. Due to the many sources for data including utilities and transportation models, inventories lag behind about 3 years. MWCOG anticipates the next round of inventories for calendar year 2023 will be released in 2025. Staff has not seen a preliminary draft and MWCOG has not specified a timeframe for the finalized municipal inventories.

Question 19. The state of Maryland has air quality and environmental justice mapping tools. How is the City using these tools? What communities have the greatest need for improvement? The Federal transitions have impacted the tracking of the environmental justice tool for underserved communities. Is there any discussion with the state of Maryland on a long term plan?

Response: Staff is concerned to see the federal rollback in support for environmental justice. Staff has used the Maryland tools as justification for grant applications and for submitting projects in certain areas. The tool provides a way to quantify certain disadvantages or environmental burdens in a uniform manner across census tracts. Still, Rockville has found that local knowledge and our own mapping of affordable housing and multi-family has been even more critical for prioritizing project proposals. Many of our communities have more fine-grained demographics that do not sort into census tracts. Federal tools are saved by private sector organizations in backed-up locations on the internet if they are needed. Although the Justice 40

order no longer applies to federal funding, the City continues to prioritize disadvantaged communities in our implementation, particularly with the community EV charger grants.

Question 20. The County recently passed their building energy performance standards. Can you share what the City will need to do to comply and align for our buildings and whether that has an impact on our current timeline? <https://mocoshow.com/2025/02/25/montgomery-county-council-approves-building-energy-performance-standards/>

Response: Staff has been monitoring changes to the Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS) applicable to Rockville facilities and is working with a consultant to develop a strategy for implementation at City Hall, Swim and Fitness Center, Senior Center and 6 Taft Court (pending occupancy and future renovation of the south wing). Maryland's BEPS regulation was finalized in December of 2024 and Montgomery County's BEPS regulation was adopted in February of 2025. In addition, the General Assembly passed legislation on April 7, 2025 that will impact the application of State BEPS in Montgomery County. House Bill 49, Environment - Building Energy Performance Standards - Alterations and Analysis, revised the State's Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS) law previously adopted in 2022. The bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to certify the County's BEPS program and waive the requirement for covered buildings in Montgomery County to comply with the statewide program, meaning these buildings will only need to comply with the County's BEPS program moving forward. The bill is pending the Governor's signature.

A preliminary review of 2024 benchmarking data and Montgomery County BEPS Energy Use Intensity (EUI) Standards for the following facilities:

- Senior Center: Preliminary estimates indicate that this facility should comply with Interim and Final Standards if it maintains existing patterns of energy consumption.
- City Hall: Additional energy efficiency and renewable energy measures will be evaluated by a consultant for BEPS compliance in FY 2026.
- Rockville Swim and Fitness Center: A consultant conducted an energy audit in FY 2025 and will be reviewing the new BEPS requirements in FY 2025/2026 to help the city develop a compliance strategy that involve energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.
- 6 Taft Court: To be determined. The facility has not been occupied and does not have a full year of energy data to determine BEPS requirements.

Question 21. MML is accepting legislative action requests. Does the sustainability team have any suggestions for state law changes/updates/proposals?

Response: Staff is reviewing the legislation from the last session and will coordinate with local partners and the Environment Commission for future suggestions during the City's legislative priority process.

Question 22. How is the BRT planning coming along to support public transportation?

Response: The design phase of the Veirs Mill BRT is almost complete and MCDOT will proceed with construction in fall of 2025. The MD 355 BRT is still at the 35% phase of design and MCDOT is pursuing an RFP for a progressive design-build with an anticipated final design to start in early 2026.

Question 23. 2023 and 2024 saw great progress on the EV conversions following our plan and EV resolution. Keep up the good work. I hope that we can get the City senior bus.

Response: Public Works submitted a grant application to the Maryland Energy Administration for electric senior buses in February of 2025 that is pending review.

Question 24. Page 50, are we taking a renewed look at outreach approaches now that we have discussed Engage Rockville?

Response: Staff is continuously evaluating and rethinking outreach approaches and has begun new efforts in 2025 including special volunteer events such as the Pull for the Planet garlic mustard pulls and a new email newsletter, Sustainability Scoop, focused on engaging property managers of businesses, HOAs, multifamily housing, and places of worship in climate action and pollution prevention. We have also begun coordinating closely with PIO to develop outreach plans for major projects like the Flood Resiliency Master Plan that will use the Engage Rockville platform as the primary hub for outreach and engagement.