

2025 Sustainability Report

*Presented June 1, 2026,
Covering the 2025 Calendar Year*



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Cover image: Orland Grassland in Orland Park by Jason Sokol

Executive Summary

The Forest Preserves of Cook County

is implementing sustainability strategies that minimize our contributions to climate change, mitigate the impact of climate change in Cook County and embrace adaptive land management methods to ensure that the land in our care continues to thrive.

Faced with the impacts of climate change, the Forest Preserves' Sustainability & Climate Resiliency Plan and this annual report documents how harnessing nature's benefits within the Forest Preserves addresses the critical land, air and water issues of our time. With more than 70,000 acres of woodlands, wetlands and prairies, the Forest Preserves offers natural benefits like stormwater mitigation, green infrastructure, carbon sequestration, protection for biodiversity, and nature-based solutions to climate change. As climate shifts and environmental hazards intensify, these preserved lands are critically important.

The Forest Preserves' sustainability efforts include reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from operations, as well as ecological restoration, land acquisition and conservation efforts that protect our natural areas from the impacts of a changing climate. We are experiencing hotter temperatures, increased flooding, erosion, stormwater runoff, disruption of native ecological habitats, increased threats to native species, and public and ecological health impacts. Climate changes stress wildlife, people and all beings. Occurrences of new diseases, poor air quality, and climate-related illnesses are on the rise. These changes are reshaping our preserves, threatening critical habitats, and endangering species.



Wandering Glider by Carolyn Markel - Orland Grassland

The challenges are profound and the ecosystems provide services, benefits and solutions. We can restrain climate change by storing carbon in native ecosystems and restoring degraded lands for all the benefits that nature and healthy forests provide for us and our way of life.

Sustainability work continues throughout the organization, and key points to summarize 2025 are:

- 18,552 acres under active restoration management, progressing toward the Next Century Conservation Plan's 30,000-acre goal. A 9.6% increase from '24.
- The organization is on track to meet all GHG reduction targets for 2030 and 2050.
- GHG emissions are projected to be reduced by 75% by 2030.
- For the first time, annually reporting on the land emissions removals, showing the key role forests and trees play in mitigating climate change.

Sincerely,

Renee Patten | Sustainability Coordinator
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Climate Goals Progress

Goals

2050 | Net Zero GHG Emissions in Facilities

2030 | GHG reduction by 45% in facilities

2030 | 100% renewable energy for building electricity

2045 | Climate Resilient & Adaptable Lands

Climate Resilient & Adaptable Lands includes acquiring 21,000 acres of land for open space and nature protection, restoring 30,000 acres of land to the highest level of ecological health and continuing management of acres previously restored.



Deer Grove East near Palatine

Progress

- **Land** - The net GHG balance of forests and trees is -96,840 Mt CO₂e per year.
- **Buildings & Facilities** are consistently the largest contributor to emissions. Emissions rose in 2025 and remain below historical levels. Most of the increase is attributed to an emergency power issue. A continued focus on facility upgrades, renewable energy and transitioning heating off fossil-fuels are critical to meet goals.
- **Vehicle Fleet** emissions increased in 2025 and remain below historical levels. The increase is attributed to additional vehicles and fuel to support a new department regional facility.
- **Solid Waste** has the least contribution overall and has had the lowest emissions of this sector since recording began (excluding 2020). This is attributed to incremental progress with increased recycling and composting collection, and reduced recycling contamination.



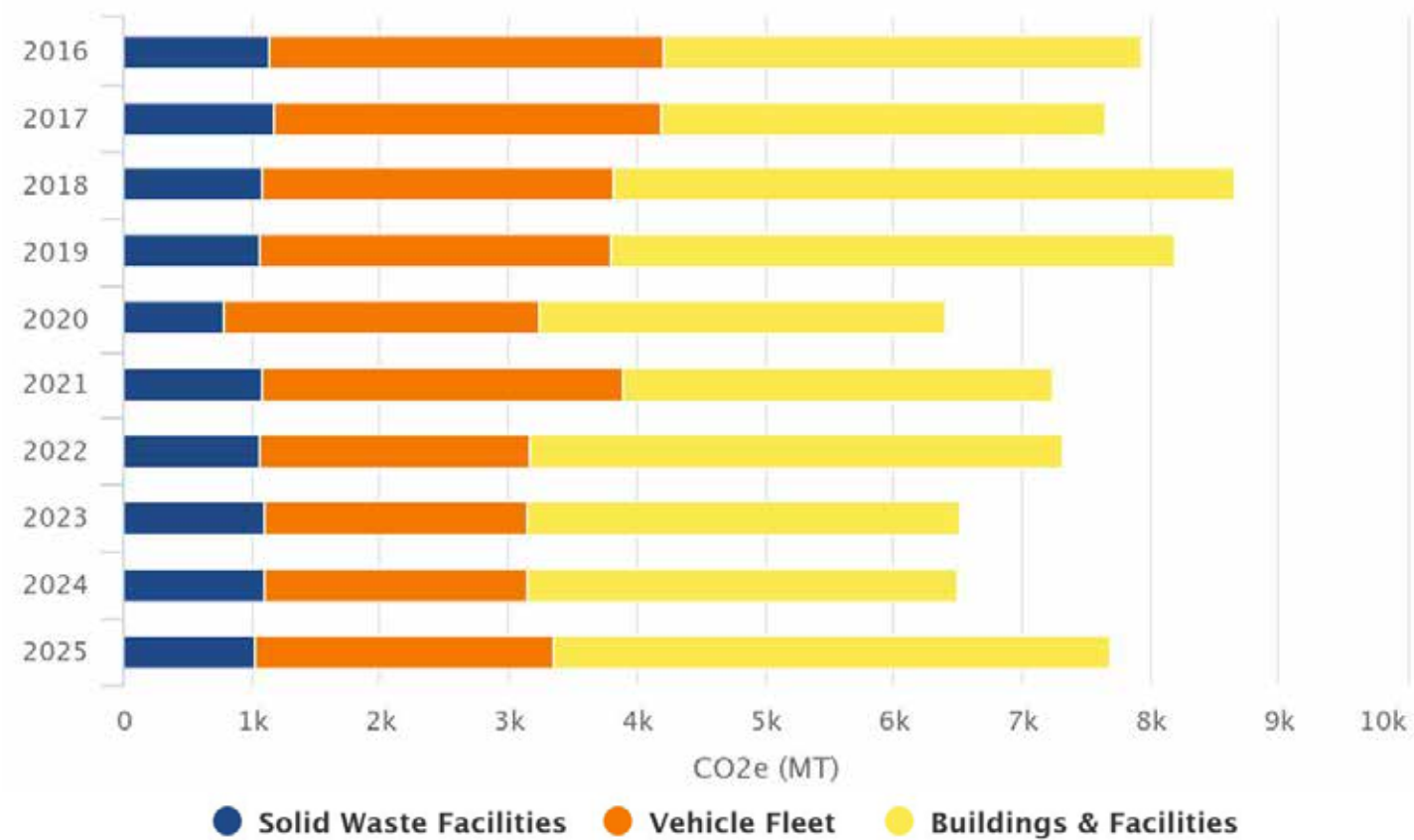
Fossil Fuel Free - Solar and Geothermal
Salt Creek Landscape Maintenance HQ - North Riverside



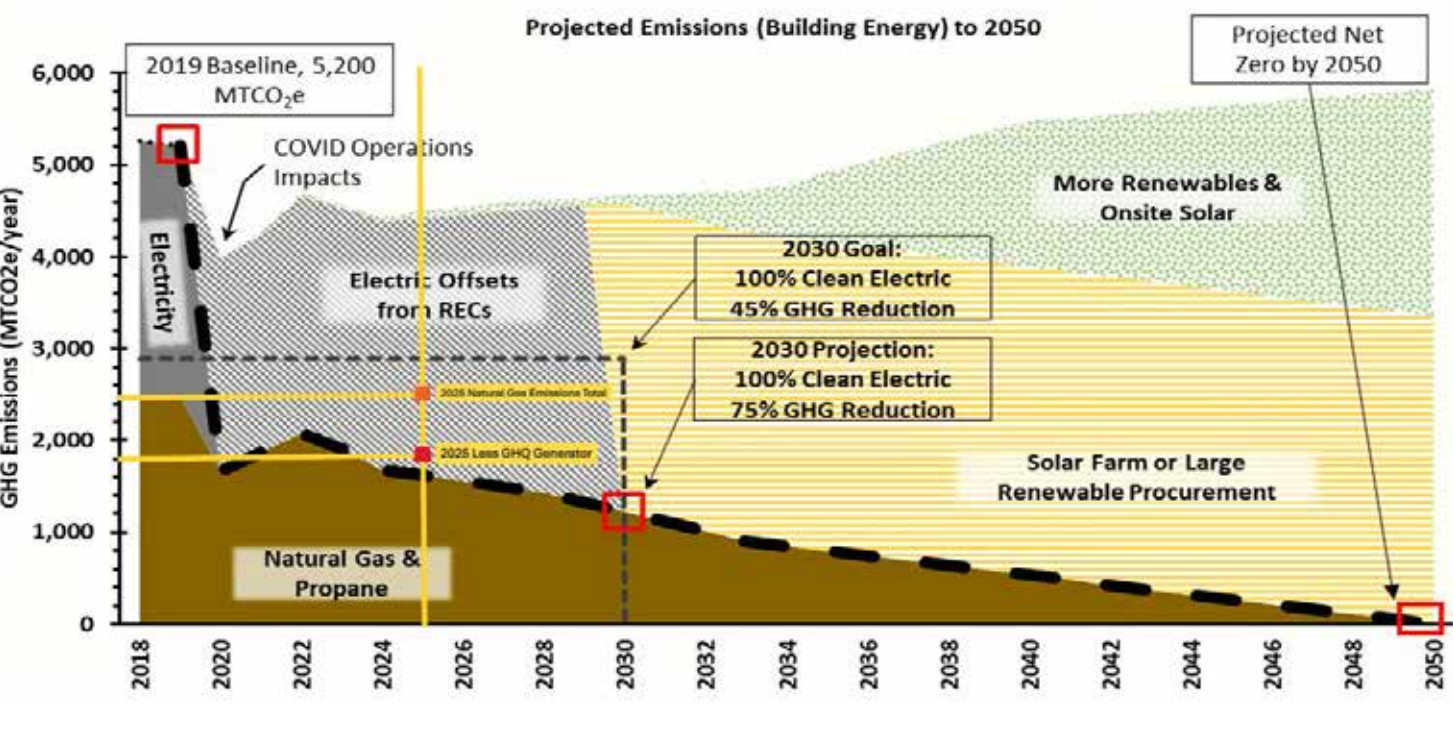
All Electric General Headquarters - River Forest

Annual Inventory Comparison by Sector

Comparison of Mt CO2e by sector in the Forest Preserves and year overall official inventories.



Building Energy Emissions Path to Net Zero



Accomplishments

	Green Stormwater Infrastructure & Nature Based Solutions • Permeable Parking Lots, Rain Gardens, Bioswales • Ecological Restoration: reducing runoff with plants • Large-scale naturalized stormwater reservoirs/preserves
	Sustainable Landscape Maintenance • Beautification along with vegetation management • Installation and management strategy using rhizomatous sedge plugs
	Fossil-Fuel Free, Electric Building • Retrofitted General Headquarters • New Salt Creek Landscape Maintenance Headquarters
	Green Building Standards • Sustainability benchmarks for new construction and major renovations
	Garbage Can Reduction Program • Fewer overflowing bins and cleaner spaces
	Recycling Improvements • Contamination rate improved by ~45%
	Composting Programs • 2.1 tons collected and diverted from landfills
	New Membership • Midwest Climate Collaborative
	Dark Sky Volunteer Monitoring Program • 600+ volunteer data observations showing how the Palos • Urban Night Sky Place is protecting the nighttime environment

Focus Area Progress Snapshots

This section provides a high-level snapshot of our Green Team's progress across key focus areas. All focus area priorities are on track or actively underway.

Focus Area	Ongoing Strategic Priorities	Planned priorities for the next 12 months
Energy & Buildings	- Improve facilities for sustainability and efficiency to cut energy and fossil fuel use. - Implement the Clean Energy Action Plan & Framework. - Continue renewable energy credits.	- Integrate building automation systems. - Seek retro-commissioning opportunities. - Determine solar and renewable energy feasibility.
Transportation	Transition to clean alternatives by replacing fossil fuel equipment and upgrading to electric, hybrid and propane vehicles, including retrofits and retiring gas/diesel models.	- Electrification of vehicles, equipment and charging infrastructure. - Improved reporting and data systems.
Zero Waste	Reduce waste contamination; expand composting, reuse and recycling.	- Garbage Can Reduction Program - Composting Improvements
Ecological Resilience	- Expand volunteer capacity to support preserves and programs. - Acquire and restore land for open space and conservation. - Maintain previously restored areas.	- Amplify seed production and diversity through the Seed Nursery Program. - Reduce the impact of and increase resiliency to increased flooding.
Learning & Engagement	- Host sustainability workshops & events. - Update sustainability guides, permits and web resources.	- Sustainability and climate reporting. - Staff education and events.
Internal Operations	- Maintain Palos Preserves as the world's largest Urban Night Sky Place. - Seeking funding. - Continue green policies and practices.	- Continuous improvements to green purchasing and sustainable procurement. - Composting pilot for permitted events.

Appendices

Appendix A-2025 Calendar Year Data

Vehicle Fleet

Inventory Record	Scope	CO ₂ (MT)	CH ₄ (MT)	N ₂ O (MT)	Mt CO ₂ e (MT)	Fuel Type	Annual Fuel Use	Annual Miles Traveled (VMT)
2025 Electric Vehicle Energy	Scope 2	0.89	0.00	0.00	0.90	Electricity	2157.928	
2025 On Road Gasoline	Scope 1	1644.17	0.02	0.00	1645.11	Gasoline	187262.86	2532947
2025 On Road Propane	Scope 1	152.55	0.01	0.02	157.23	LPG	26347.72	303658
2025 On Road Diesel	Scope 1	525.33	0.00	0.00	526.18	Diesel	51452.46	195405

Buildings & Facilities

Inventory Record	Scope	CO ₂ (MT)	CH ₄ (MT)	N ₂ O (MT)	Mt CO ₂ e (MT)	Fuel Type	Quantity
Diesel In Boundary (Emergency Power)	Scope 1	667.15	0.10	0.01	671.63	Distillate Fuel Oil No. 2	65365.38 (gal)
Natural Gas In Boundary	Scope 1	1718.10	0.16	0.00	1723.50	Natural Gas	324047.71 (therms)
Propane Buildings In Boundary	Scope 1	148.06	0.03	0.00	149.50	Propane	26473.2 (gal)
Electricity In Boundary	Scope 2	1788.31	0.14	0.02	1797.41		4326179.7 (kWh)

Land-Use Change and Forestry

Inventory Record	Scope	Canopy Area of Trees Outside Forest (hectares)	Net Carbon Flux (MT CO ₂ e / year)	Canopy Area
Disturbed Forest: Harvest/Other	Scope 1	133	4934	133
Forest to Wetland	Scope 1	88	-751	88
Trees outside of forests: Tree Canopy Loss	Scope 1	188	9231	188
Non-Forest to Forest (Afforestation)	Scope 1	147	-815	147
Forest to Cropland	Scope 1	18	136	18
Forest to Grassland	Scope 1	16	88	16
Forest to Settlement/Other	Scope 1	34	446	34
Forest to Other Non-Forest	Scope 1	0	11	0
Trees outside of forests: Tree Canopy Maintained or Gained	Scope 1	1707	-19416	1707
Undisturbed Forests	Scope 1	17077	-90704	17077

Solid Waste

Inventory Record	Scope	CO ₂ (MT)	CH ₄ (MT)	N ₂ O (MT)	Mt CO ₂ e (MT)	Total Waste Generated	Percentage Mixed MSW
Waste Generation In Boundary	Scope 3		36.63		1025.77	1570.42	100

Appendix B-Annual Inventory Comparison by Sector

Comparison of Mt CO2e by sector and year over all official inventories.

Year	Buildings & Facilities	Vehicle Fleet	Solid Waste Facilities
2016	3,724	3,076	1,131
2017	3,457	3,023	1,166
2018	4,843	2,747	1,073
2019	4,400	2,731	1,069
2020	3,166	2,454	785
2021	3,353	2,806	1,078
2022	4,154	2,101	1,064
2023	3,388	2,036	1,103
2024	3,353	2,049	1,093
2025	4,342	2,329	1,025

Appendix C-Accounting Protocols

The FPCC District-Wide GHG inventory is in ICLEI's ClearPath Software. ICLEI's calculation methodology is based on the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) with IPCC 5th Assessment 100 Year Values Global Warming Potential values. The foundation of ICLEI's SBT calculation methodology is based on the OPCC calculation methodology. While the methodology is based on the OPCC, it is adapted to fit a diverse network of local governments.

Offsets are not part of the calculation and won't be included in overall emissions reduction target achievements.

Boundaries

- Organization: The inventory covers FPCC facilities and land for staff and public use for the area of Cook County.
- Operational:
 - Includes electric, natural gas, propane, and diesel building energy consumption.
 - Includes transportation electricity.
 - Includes land-use change & forestry.
 - Includes waste generated by the organization and collected from public use.
 - Doesn't include energy production or wastewater.

Scope Breakdown

- **Scope 1:** Purchased gases (natural gas, propane LPG); land-use change & forestry. Not included: employee business travel.
- **Scope 2:** Purchased and consumed electricity. On-road transportation (gasoline, propane LPG, diesel, electricity). Not included: Off-road transportation (gasoline, propane LPG, diesel).
- **Scope 3:** Waste generation (generated and collected). Not included: contracted services, software, shipping & transport logistics, procurement & supply chain, employee commuting, transportation by the public at facilities, fugitive emissions from natural gas distribution, wastewater treatment/collection, water treatment/delivery.

For More Information

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fpdcc.com/nature/sustainability-and-climate-change

