



CITY OF ASPEN

# ASPEN SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

2025

# ASPEN SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

The City of Aspen developed the Aspen Sustainability Action Plan as a roadmap of the goals, objectives, and action items for us to accomplish our science-based targets of

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**REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS  
(GHG) BY 63.4% BY 2030 AND 100% BY 2050.**

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This plan looks at what the City of Aspen can achieve or plan for in the next five to seven years. This document will be updated regularly as we accomplish items and adapt to changing science, climatological conditions, and national dynamics. This document was last updated in February 2025.

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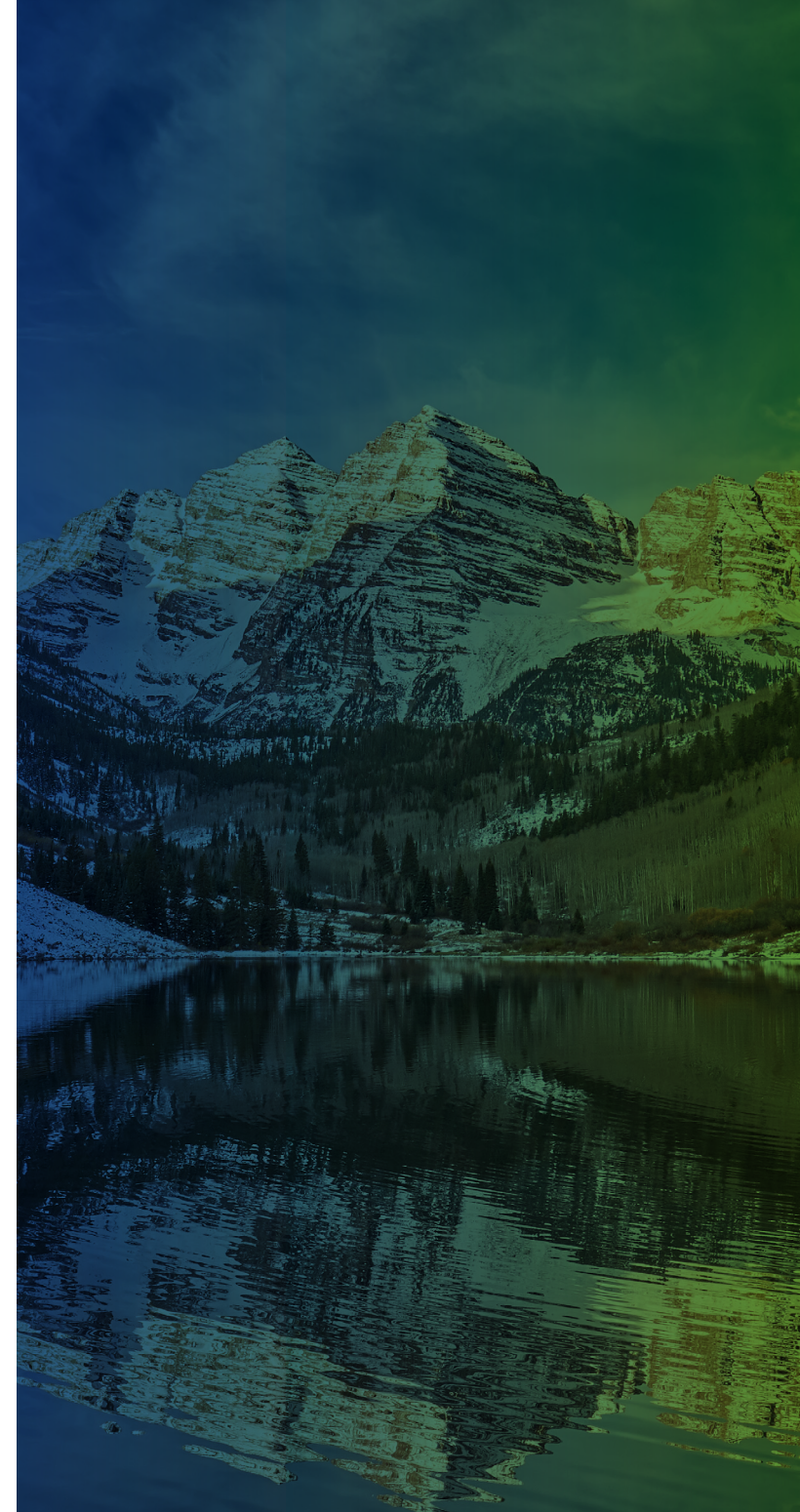
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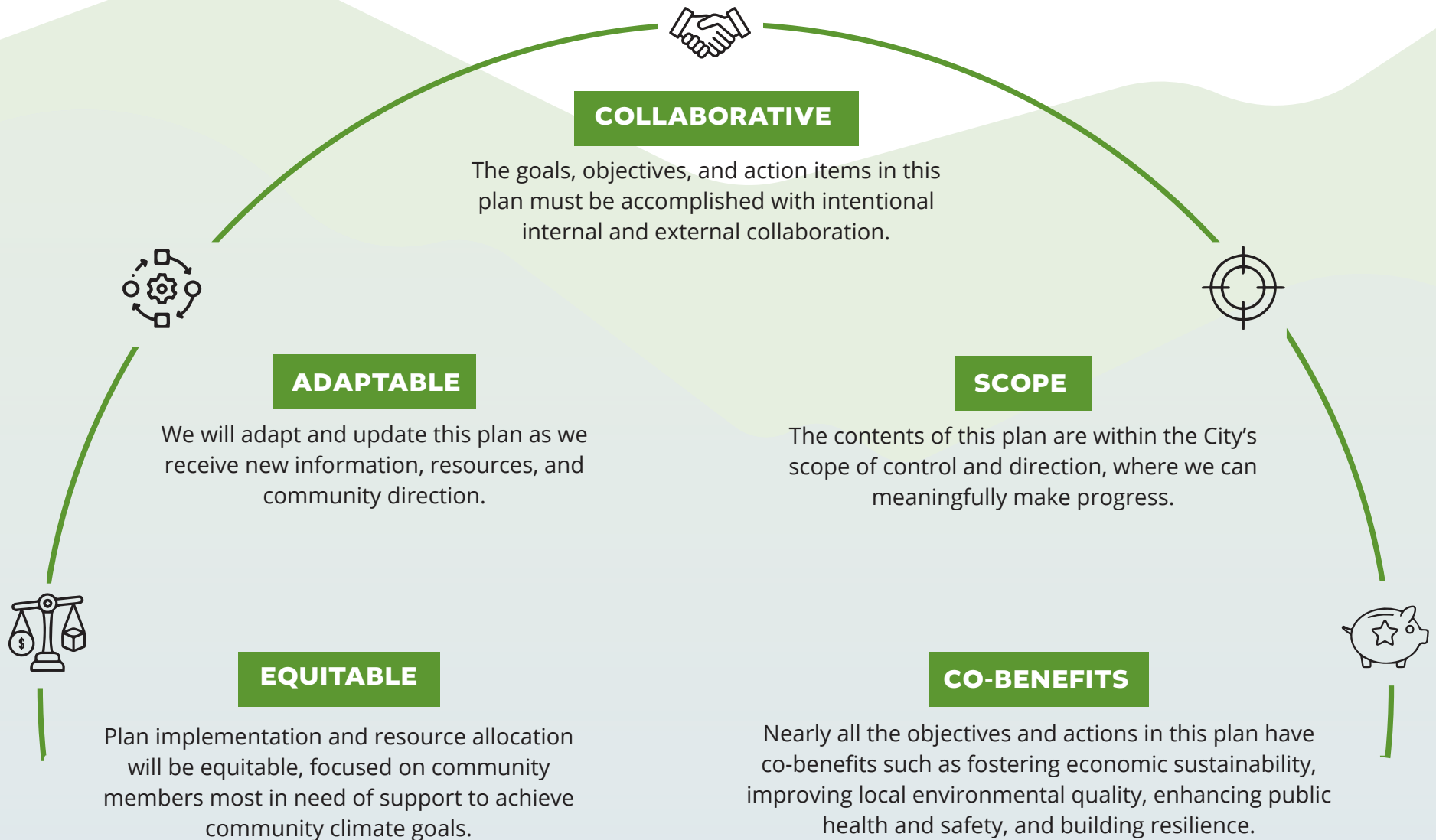
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# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These are values on which the City of Aspen developed and will implement this plan.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION IS KEY.

Greenhouse gas emissions know no boundaries. The Roaring Fork Valley has both unique challenges and opportunities we'll need to tackle as a region to be successful.

## WE NEED THE COMMUNITY'S INPUT ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT AND CONTINUOUSLY UPDATE THIS PLAN.



Reaching the City's climate goals requires decarbonizing the Roaring Fork Valley's electrical grid, maximizing efficiency, switching from non-renewable fuels to clean electricity and other sources, and eliminating the landfill disposal of recyclable and reusable materials. While these actions are clear, we need the community and region's input on how we build programs, offer support, provide resources, and change policies. Getting the community's input and feedback will be a vital component of implementing this plan.

## WE NEED TO WORK FAST AND SMART.



We are facing a climate crisis, and we need to work quickly to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Simultaneously, we need to ensure that our progress is driven thoughtfully, intelligently and leaving no one behind.

## INCORPORATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE.

As the City adjusts to new climate realities facing the Roaring Fork Valley, we look to solutions that will strengthen our local and regional environment and prepare us to bounce forward when faced with climate change impacts.

**We will measure the success of this plan in two ways:**

**1**

By seeing year over year reductions in our emissions inventories.

**2**

By accomplishing action items, which will be reported in annual sustainability reports.

# GROUND SETTING

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Aspen has been committed to protecting the health, prosperity, and safety of its residents and environment through **sustainability efforts for more than 30 years.**

More info:  
Appendix (pg. 28)

## WHERE WE'RE GOING

Aspen's 2023 GHG inventory was created as part of a regional GHG inventory with partners Pitkin County, Town of Basalt, and Town of Snowmass Village. It takes regional solutions to drive down emissions locally.

Importantly, the 2023 GHG inventory does not reflect many of the sustainability wins achieved in 2024 which include the renewable energy successes of Holy Cross Energy ( 90% renewable at the end of 2024), building code updates, organics diversion, and numerous electrification initiatives.

The Aspen Sustainability Action Plan is the blueprint for what's next.

**We need your help to implement it.**

## WHERE WE ARE

Aspen's 2023 Greenhouse Gas Inventory reflects broader trends in the region where increased development and economy (primarily led by tourism) has led to an increase in overall emissions.

# VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The picture of what a bright climate future looks like for the community of Aspen if we work together includes:

## NATURE

Local flora and fauna thriving throughout the Valley.

## ENVIRONMENT

Investing in environment and ecosystems with a focus on water, snowpack, and wildfire risks, as well as ongoing adaptation to environmental challenges.

## COMMUNITY

Community members and visitors alike sharing the same sustainability ethos.

## BUILDINGS

Buildings are designed with indoor waste storage to protect people and local wildlife.

Building occupants enjoying efficient, comfortable spaces ideal for work, living, and recreation.

New buildings incorporating locally sourced and processed recycled materials.

Buildings are powered by 100% renewable energy from regional sources.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Offering ample and convenient charging for zero-emission vehicles.

## WASTE

Providing access to composting, recycling, and reusable materials to all community members.

Waste materials are diverted from landfills to be recycled, reused, or repurposed.

## BIKE PATHS & TRAILS

Offering multimodal corridors for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists thus providing safe and sustainable infrastructure for any types of traveler.

## TRANSPORTATION

Providing accessible and efficient zero-emissions transit options throughout the valley.

# WHY A SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN?



We're facing a climate emergency and need to act, and governments need to work quickly to mitigate climate change. Business-as-usual operations are not responsive to the emergency.

Human activity is responsible for the warming of our planet. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, the accumulation of gases in our atmosphere caused the global surface temperature to reach 1.1°C above 1850-1900's levels, between 2011-2020.

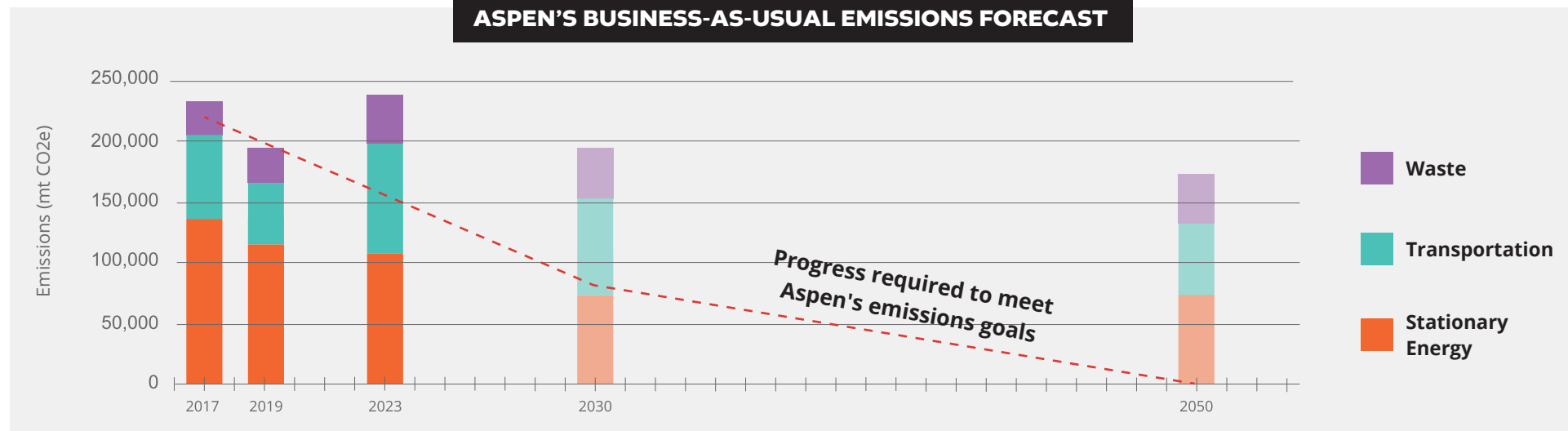
Aspen's emissions are contributing to this climate reality and we're already experiencing impacts such as warmer temperatures, shifting rain and snow patterns, and more precipitation arriving as rain rather than snow. As a community that relies on its environment as part of its appeal for recreation and tourism, we have a responsibility to protect our resources through the reduction of our emissions.



The average number of consecutive frost-free days in Aspen has *increased by forty-six days since 1940 and by thirty days since 1980*, representing the loss of more than a month of winter in less than a lifetime.

Source: <https://www.agci.org/>

**ASPEN'S BUSINESS-AS-USUAL EMISSIONS FORECAST**



Source: 2023 City of Aspen Community-wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report





**We have science-based targets to measure GHG reduction.**

Aspen updated longstanding climate goals in 2022 with new science-based targets which are more representative of its fair share of global emission reduction needed to fight the worst impacts of climate change. Aspen’s commitment to Race to Zero and adoption of science-based targets position local climate action amongst global efforts to draw-down emissions:

**63.4%**

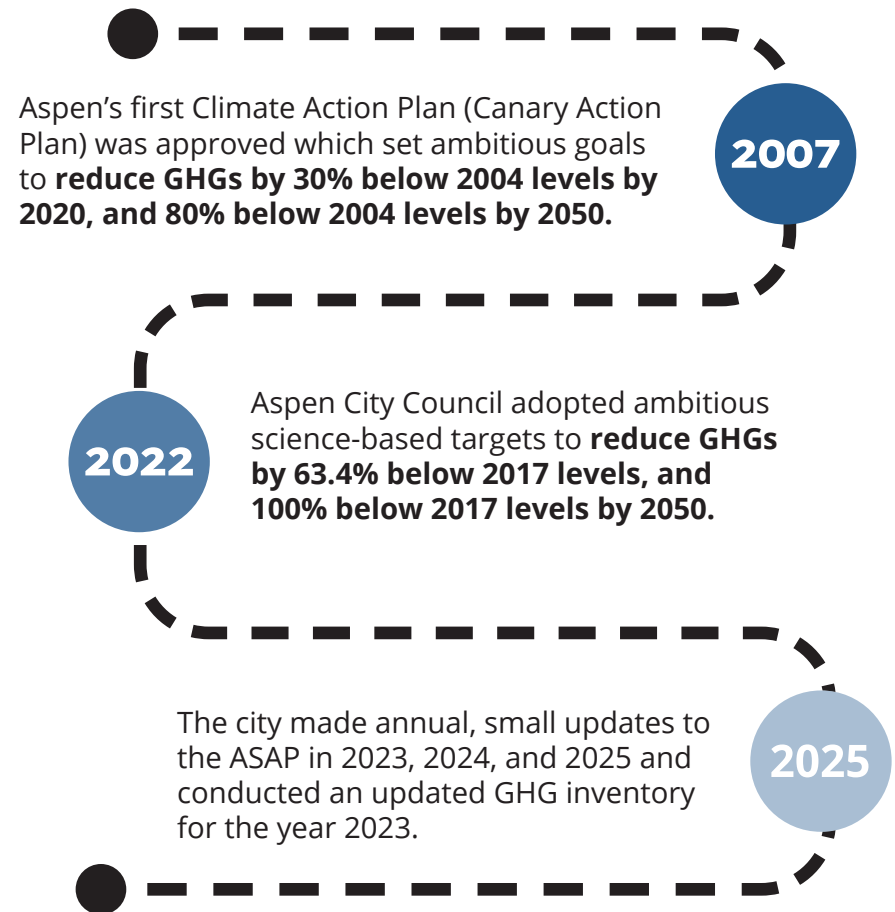
reduction of 2017 GHG levels by 2030

**100%**

reduction of 2017 GHG levels (net-zero) by 2050

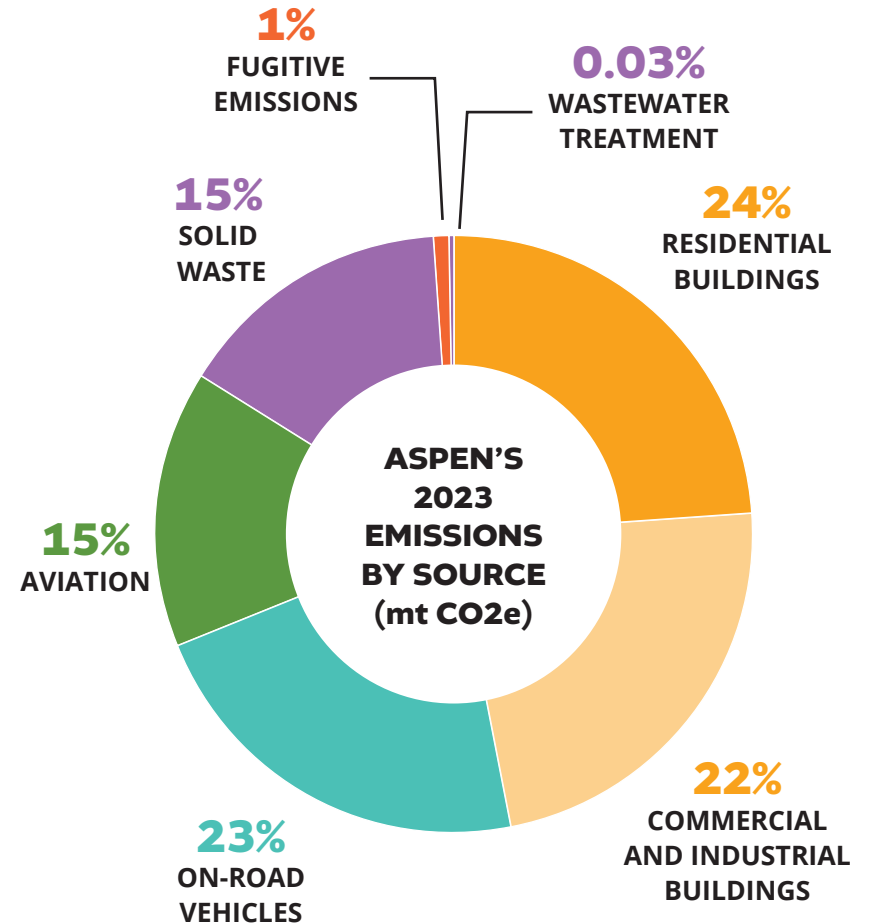


**We need an updated, adaptable roadmap to act on climate and reach our community’s science-based targets.**



# SUMMARY OF THIS PLAN

The Aspen Sustainability Action Plan provides recommendations in five high-impact sectors that are based on extensive analysis, modeling, deliberation, stakeholder input, and community engagement to ensure buy-in and feasibility.



Source: City of Aspen 2023 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standalone Report (published in February 2025).

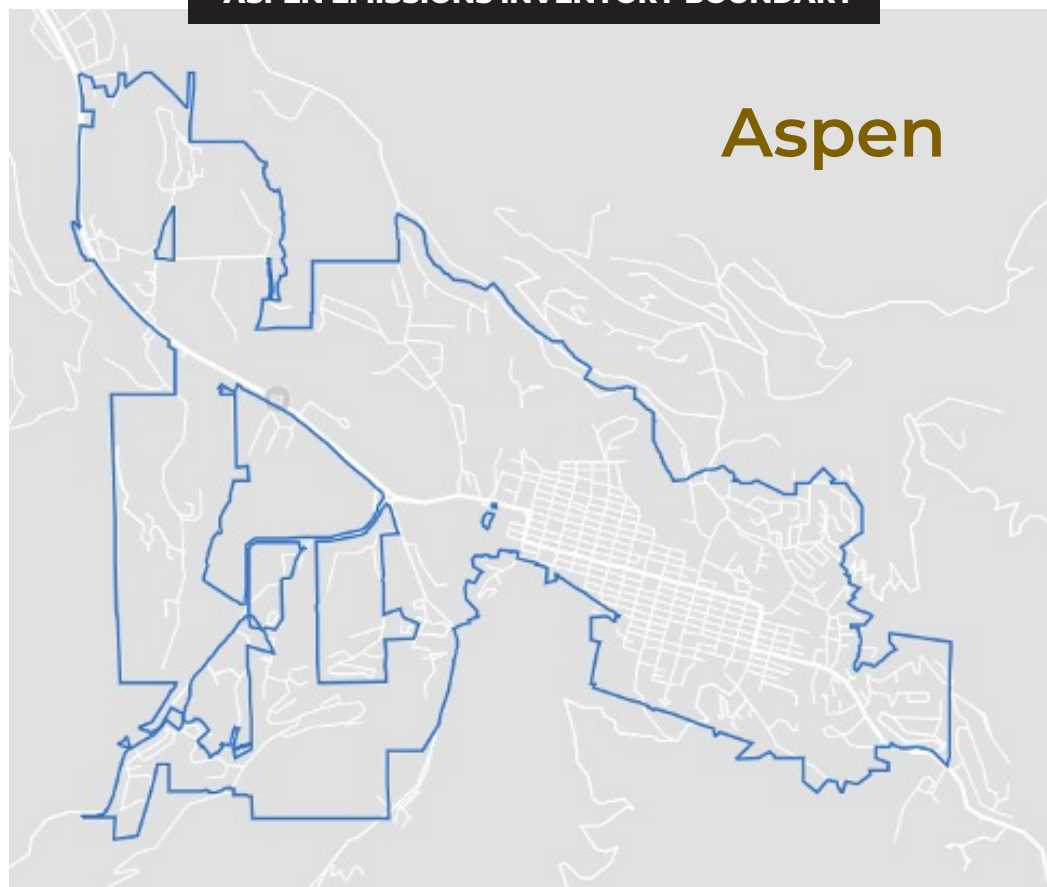
The City of Aspen performs Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories (GHG inventories) of both its community wide emissions and municipal operations every 3 years. The 2023 is the latest inventory depicting Aspen's community-wide emissions footprint. The next inventory will be compiled in 2027.

# ASPEN'S GHG EMISSIONS

This roadmap is guided by data outlined in the 2023 City of Aspen Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Inventory which is a semi-annual (every 3 years) inventory performed in partnership with Pitkin County and neighboring jurisdictions Town of Basalt and Snowmass Village. According to global protocols, emissions are classified by sectors which include residential and commercial stationary energy use, transportation, and solid waste. These sectors are further categorized by the source of emissions (electricity, natural gas, landfill, etc.). Additionally, this inventory includes aviation and wastewater treatment data. For the first time since performing GHG inventories since 2004, the carbon removal potential of trees and vegetation are considered.

The 2023 GHG Inventory shows an increase in emissions from the 2019 GHG Inventory. The report reflects national/regional trends occurring in Aspen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic where resort destinations have experienced population growth and increased economy leading to increased emissions. The 2023 GHG Inventory does not record emissions reductions from high impact projects introduced in 2024. However, it highlights an important milestone in building sector emissions reductions where emissions decreased by 1% from 2019 totals.

## ASPEN EMISSIONS INVENTORY BOUNDARY



The Aspen emissions inventory boundary (EIB) mirrors the city's legal limits. A graphical representation of the EIB for Aspen is seen above.



# ENERGY SUPPLY

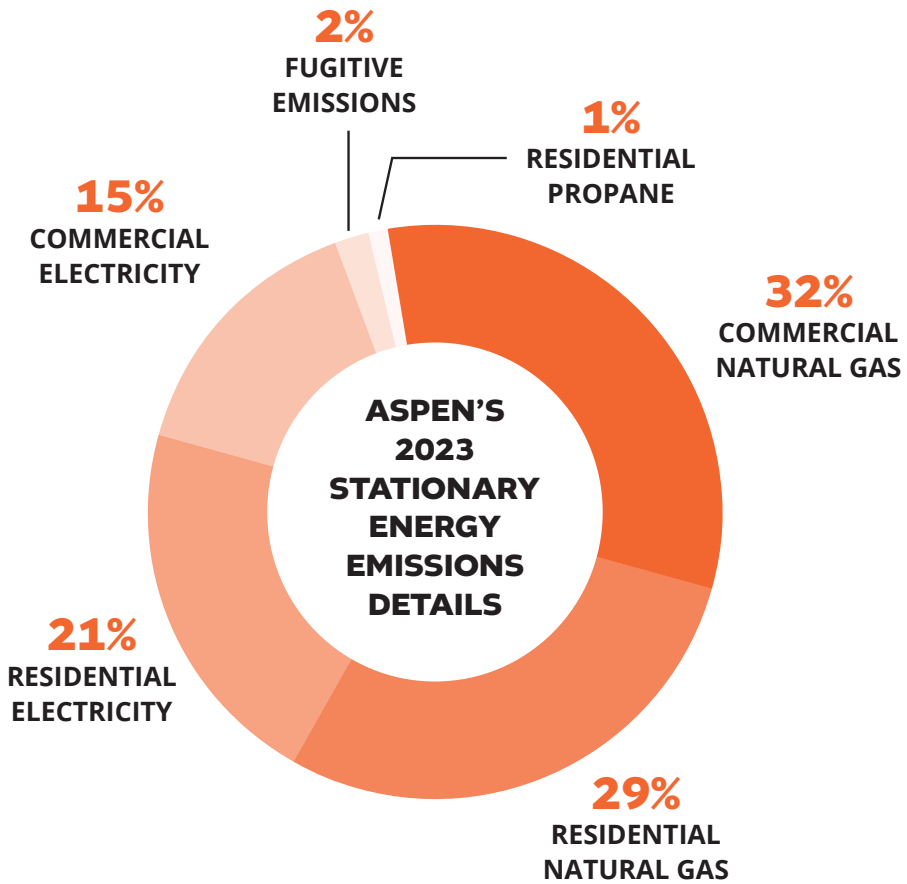
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Aspen community is powered by three utilities. Aspen's utility-sourced energy supply is approximately 30% electricity from Aspen Electric and Holy Cross Energy and 70% gas predominately from Black Hills Energy.
- The City of Aspen's Utilities provides electricity from 100% renewable energy. Holy Cross Energy plans to provide electricity from 100% renewable energy by 2030.
- These utilities' clean electricity supply positions Aspen to reduce GHG emissions through electrification.
- There is still opportunity for more local renewable energy. Due to the costs involved with upgrading infrastructure and geographic restraints, this would require full commitment from city council and voters.

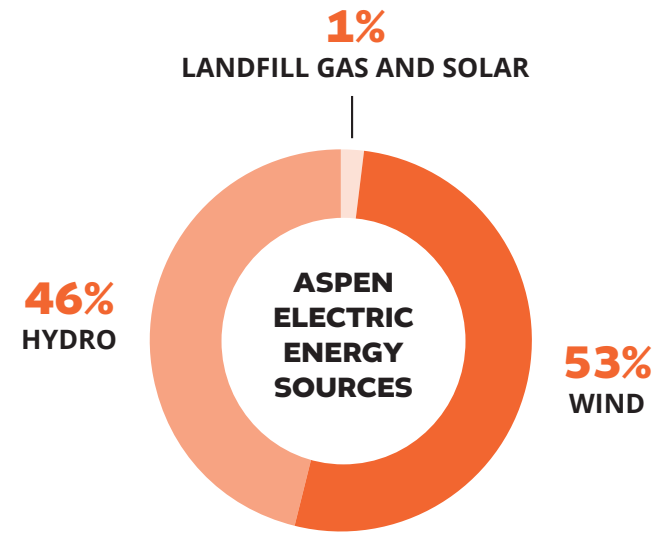
## SECTOR GOALS

- All utilities serving the Aspen community will procure energy supply solely through renewable energy resources by 2050.
- Balance increased demand for electricity with energy conservation and efficiency.
- Support the development of infrastructure to enable electrification.

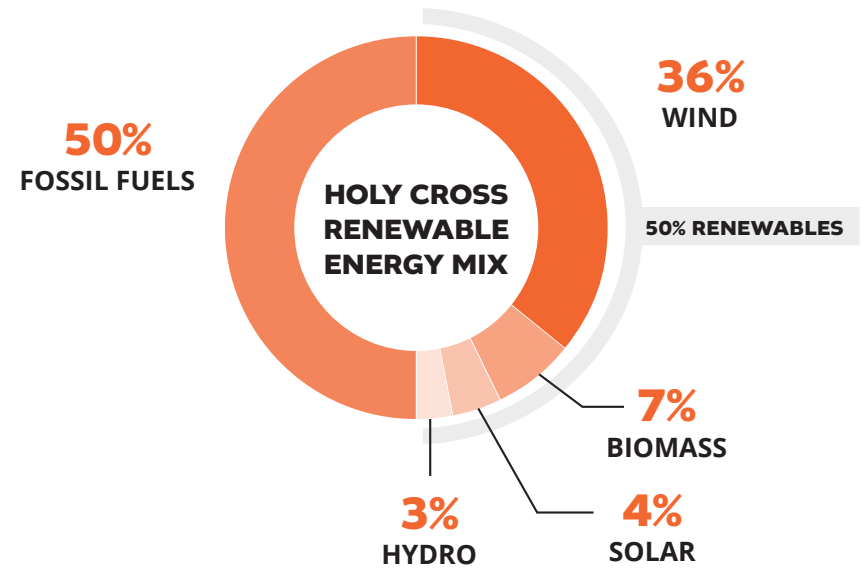




Source: City of Aspen 2023 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standalone Report (published in February 2025).



Source: Aspen Electric, 2023, [aspen.gov/1202/Renewable-Energy](https://www.aspen.gov/1202/Renewable-Energy)



Source: Holy Cross Energy. 2022 Energy By Fuel Source [https://www.holycross.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HCE\\_PowerSupplyRoadmap2023\\_upload.pdf](https://www.holycross.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HCE_PowerSupplyRoadmap2023_upload.pdf)

## Energy Objectives (EO)

### EO1

**Continue to encourage Holy Cross Energy, and Black Hills Energy to decarbonize Aspen's energy supply by 2050.**

- 1 Identify gaps and support opportunities to help Holy Cross Energy, Black Hills Energy, MEAN, and other regional utilities to move towards and continue 100% renewable energy.
- 2 Participate in regional and state collaboratives of governments, businesses, and utilities (e.g. MEAN) to drive clean energy transition.
- 3 Support policies that retire, convert or sell fossil-fuel plants serving the area.
- 4 Assess opportunities including rate assessments, grants, and incoming technologies, to help utilities and customers prepare for electrification.

### EO2

**Support efforts to maximize local and regional production of renewable energy.**

- 5 Explore opportunities for consumers to purchase and generate renewable energy including the development of micro and utility-scale renewables.
- 6 Support distributed and utility-scale energy storage to address the intermittency of wind and solar resources as well as grid delivery.
- 7 Assess local codes and policies to enable renewable energy development.
- 8 Encourage regional renewable energy development.

### EO3

**Support relevant federal and state energy policies through active legislative and regulatory engagement.**

- 9 Through continued engagement with community members, elected officials, and partner organizations, Aspen will advance relevant energy related policy to the benefit of the community. Given the dynamic nature of the policy landscape, Aspen will continue a formal process for prioritizing and advocating on key issues including grants and expanded rebates.



# BUILDINGS

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Low income community members should be able to realize costs savings, and health and comfort benefits of low emissions buildings.
- Energy and water conservation and efficiency, electrification, and reducing embodied carbon\* drive building emission reductions.
- Cost, available technology, workforce, and feasibility may determine the speed and scale of building decarbonization.
- Aspen should ensure an equitable transition to electrification for customers.

## SECTOR GOALS

- Increase efficiency and reduce energy and water consumption in buildings.
- Electrify buildings when feasible.
- Develop goals and pathways to reduce embodied carbon.
- Ensure decarbonization plans consider utility costs and energy transformations, and an equitable transition for customers
- Align city development regulations to support building and energy sector goals.

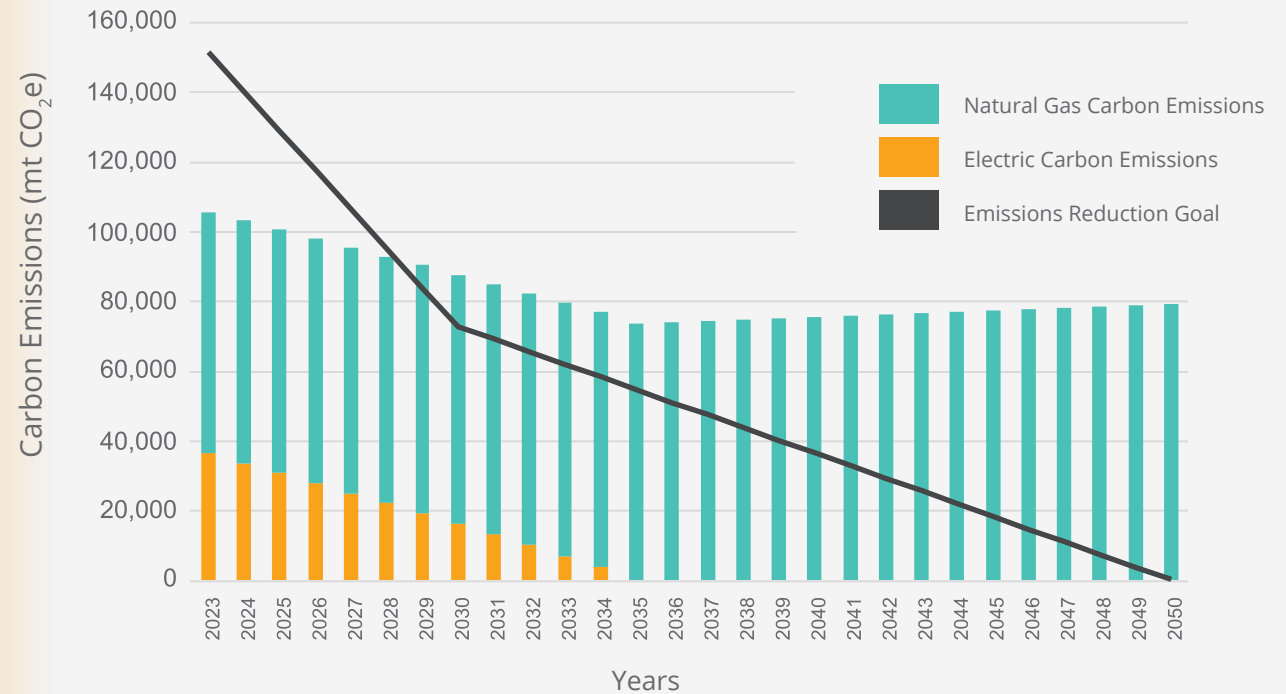


\* *Embodied carbon refers to the greenhouse gas emissions arising from the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance, and disposal of building materials.*

- CARBON LEADERSHIP FORUM

Buildings account for **47%** of our community's greenhouse gas emissions, so action in this sector is especially important and impactful.

**BUSINESS AS USUAL EMISSIONS FROM BUILDINGS**



Source: Group 14 Engineering, Building Performance Standards Stakeholder Group Meeting, published in January 2023.





## Building Objectives (BO)

## Action Items

### BO1

**Support and incentivize high-efficiency and low energy and water consumption buildings.**

- 1 Model best practices in city of Aspen facilities.
- 2 Implement benchmarking and explore opportunities to include additional building types and sizes.
- 3 Develop and implement a building performance standard that aligns with the city's climate goals and provides resources for support.
- 4 Work with community partners to support a sustainable workforce.
- 5 Investigate additional policies and programs, especially those to decarbonize residential buildings, such as requiring energy performance disclosure at point of sale.
- 6 Evaluate sub-metering requirements for buildings and implement if beneficial.

### BO2

**Support equitable and feasible electrification in residential and commercial properties.**

- 7 Develop building performance standards that drive electrification over time.
- 8 Develop programs and pathways that incentivize electrification and remove barriers and adopt building and energy codes that promote electrification.
- 9 Encourage and incentivize high-efficiency electric options for heating and cooling.
- 10 Identify barriers to electrification and build collaborative solutions for those that the city can control.

### BO3

**Mandate no- to low-carbon standards for new construction and major remodels including considerations for energy use and embodied carbon.**

- 11 Integrate space and water heating and cooling equipment standards into building codes.
- 12 Develop roadmap for building performance standard-compatible, all-electric, highly efficient building and energy codes.
- 13 Limit GHGs from future development using equitable controlled growth.
- 14 Explore incentives and requirements to address embodied carbon.

### BO4

**Support utility rates optimization.**

- 15 Support the adaptation of the City of Aspen's Electric Utility rates as necessary to incentivize and balance current and future priorities.

### BO5

**Support relevant federal and state buildings policies through active legislative and regulatory engagement.**

- 16 Through continued engagement with community members, elected officials, and partner organizations, Aspen will advance relevant buildings-related policy to the benefit of the community. Given the dynamic nature of the policy landscape, Aspen will continue a formal process for prioritizing and advocating on key issues.



# VEHICLES & TRANSPORTATION

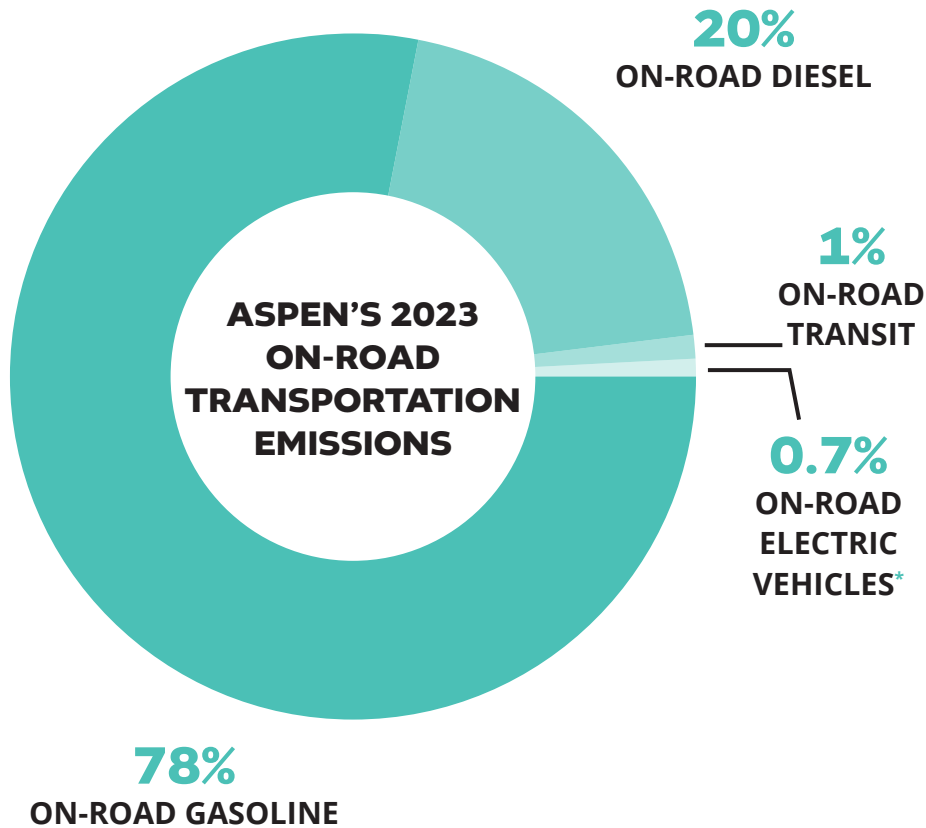
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The city's goal is for residents and visitors to use mass transit, walk, run, or bike as a first choice for transportation over driving. However, if one must drive, then electric and low/zero emission vehicles are the preferred option.
- Aspen is working on policy and building the infrastructure to support large scale adoption of EVs.
- Collaboration across city departments and community partners is key to transportation sector emissions reductions.
- Beyond saving the community time and money, low and zero-emission transportation offerings and programs need to remove accessibility barriers.

## SECTOR GOALS

- Reduce solo vehicle miles traveled, both locally and regionally.
- Promote public (mass) transit and mobility-as-a-service, which describes more connected and on-demand mobility services.
- Incentivize electric and zero-emission vehicle adoption for individuals and fleets, including support charging infrastructure development.





Source: City of Aspen 2023 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standalone Report (published in February 2025).



\* EVs are listed as having a 0.4% emissions footprint due to vehicles being charged on non-renewable resources. This represents a slight improvement from 0.5% in the 2019/2020 inventory.





## Transportation Objectives (TO)      Action Items

### TO1

**Reduce vehicle miles traveled by promoting alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles including active, shared, and public transportation.**

- 1 Collaborate with employers to subsidize transit and mobility options for employees.
- 2 Further support the development of bicycle infrastructure (e.g., more bike and shared lanes in key locations, bike parking, and solutions to key locational conflict/hazard areas).
- 3 Enable the growth of on-demand mobility services (e.g., ridesharing, bike-sharing, car-sharing, etc.) for the first- and last-mile of transit connections and/or full trips.
- 4 Advocate for pedestrian and bicycle safety in ongoing and future projects.
- 5 Support and research policies to disincentivize single-occupant vehicle travel.

### TO2

**Enhance first- and last-mile connectivity to transit.**

- 6 Support expansion of feeder transit networks to increase access to primary transit stops (e.g., circulators, on-demand mobility).
- 7 Support and expand mobility offerings for the first- and last-mile and/or full trips.

### TO3

**Promote the adoption of electric and zero-emissions vehicles for individuals and fleets.**

- 8 Support opportunities for equal access to charging (e.g. public charging, and multifamily housing charging).
- 9 Facilitate partnerships to create electric vehicle charging hubs for taxis and other fleets.
- 10 Prioritize electric vehicle charging stations in visible, accessible locations.
- 11 Communicate wins and share lessons learned from internal fleet electrification efforts with the wider community.

### TO4

**Support relevant federal and state transportation policies through active legislative and regulatory engagement.**

- 12 Through continued engagement with community members, elected officials, and partner organizations, Aspen will advance relevant energy-related policy to the benefit of the community. Given the dynamic nature of the policy landscape, Aspen will continue a formal process for prioritizing and advocating on key issues.



# WASTE

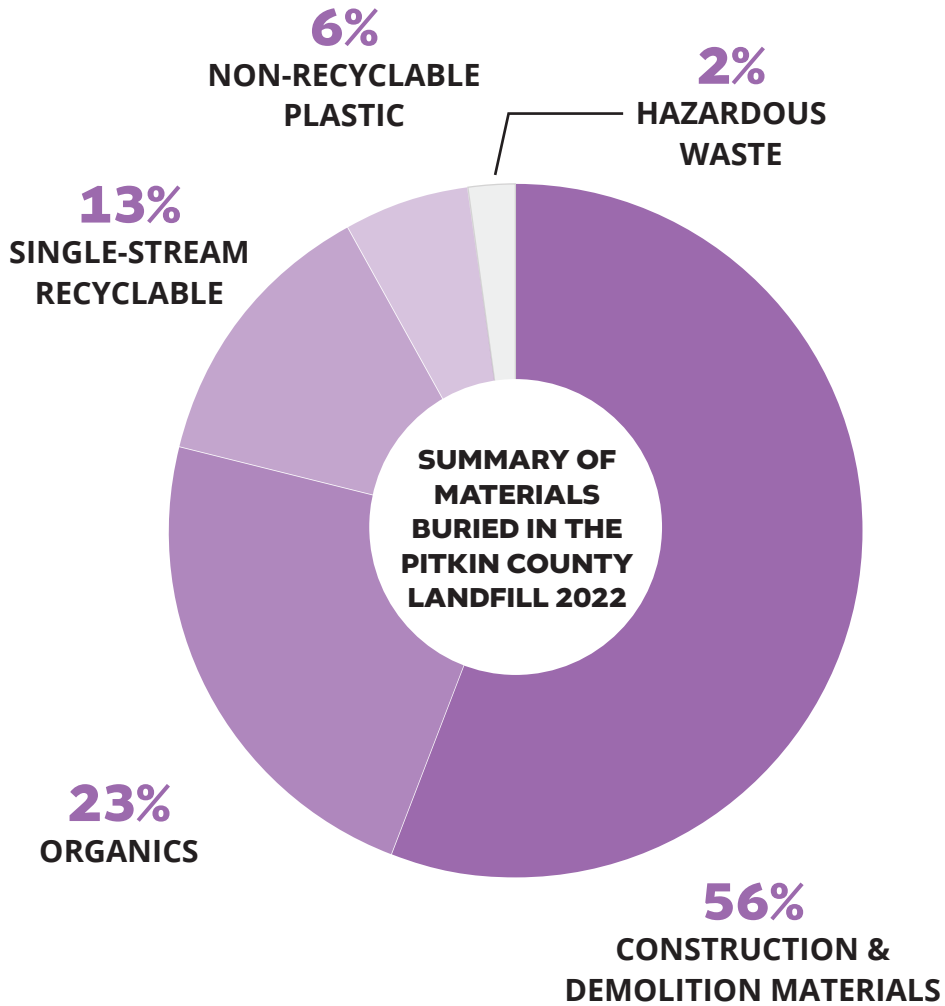
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Landfilling resources adds to Aspen's GHG emissions and shortens the usable life of the landfill. Once the Pitkin County Landfill is full, waste will need to be trucked outside the Roaring Fork Valley for disposal, furthering emissions from the long-distance hauling. However, there are several opportunities for Aspen to divert various waste streams, reducing the environmental impact and extending the lifespan of the landfill.

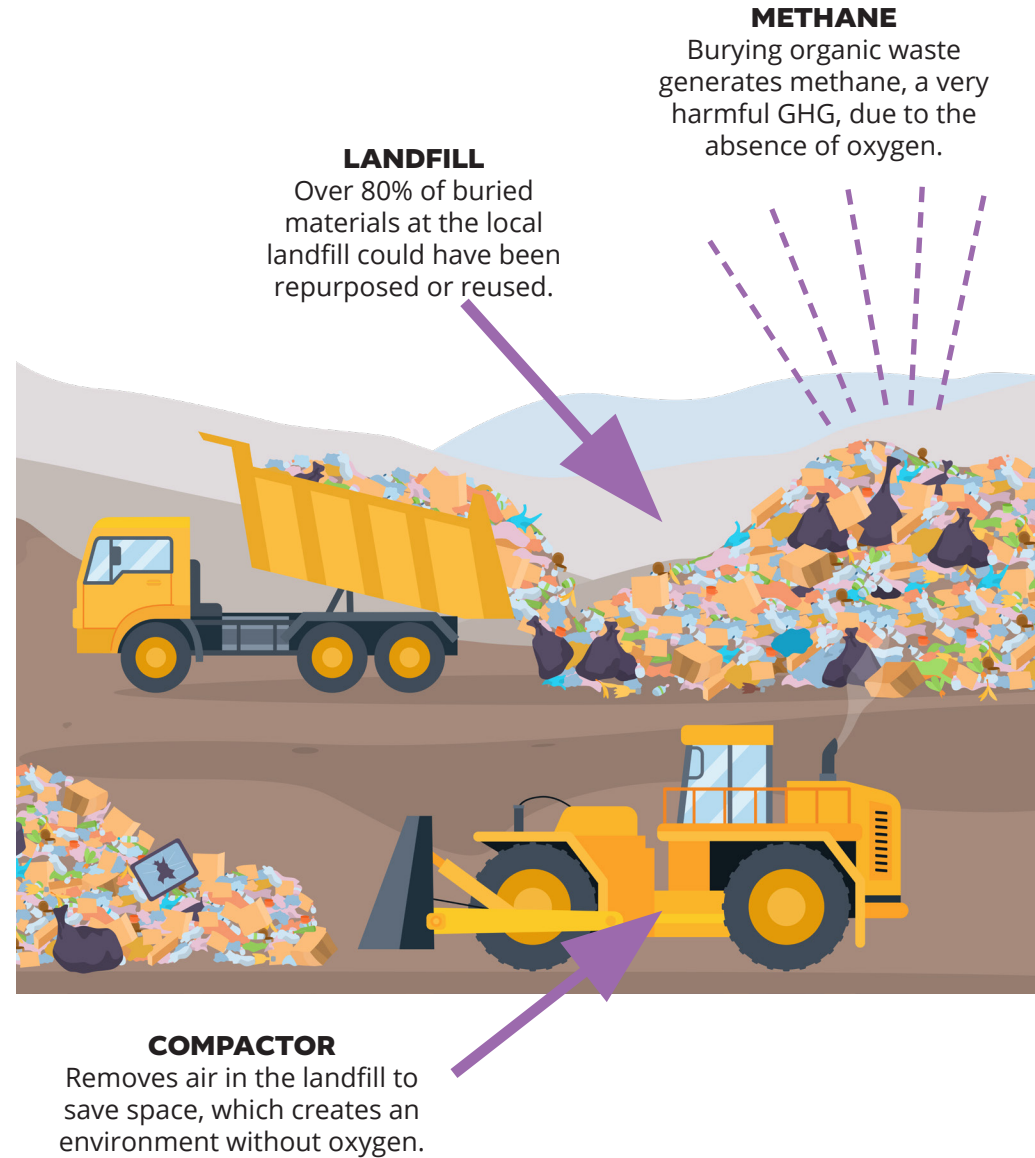
## SECTOR GOALS

- Reduce organic material going from Aspen to the landfill by 25% by 2025 and by 100% by 2050.
- Reduce construction and demolition debris buried in the landfill by 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.
- Divert 70% of all solid waste from the landfill by 2050.





Source: Pitkin County Solid Waste Center, 2022 Waste Characterization Study





## Waste Objectives (WO) Action Items

### WO1

**Decrease municipal solid waste generation.**

- 1 Implement City of Aspen ordinance changes related to resource reduction, reuse, and recycling of our every day materials.
- 2 Enforce regulations related to waste avoidance, diversion, and reduction.
- 3 Incentivize waste diversion practices, such as composting, recycling, and reusing materials.
- 4 Educate and inform the community about systems, ordinances, practices, and rules regarding waste diversion, such as composting, recycling, and reusing materials.

### WO2

**Decrease construction and demolition debris generation.**

- 5 Implement the city's construction and demolition diversion ordinance and enhance codes and programs to promote and incentivize reuse of building materials through deconstruction practices
- 6 Establish recycled content standards in all construction activity.
- 7 Align with City, Pitkin County, and regional waste codes that promote recycling and reuse of building materials.

### WO3

**Support relevant waste-related federal and state policies through active legislative and regulatory engagement.**

- 8 Through continued engagement with community members, elected officials, and partner organizations, Aspen will advance relevant waste-related policy to the benefit of the community. Given the dynamic nature of the policy landscape, Aspen will continue a formal process for prioritizing and advocating on key issues.

### WO4

**Reduce vehicle emissions from solid waste haulers.**

- 9 Incentivize and support GHG reductions through route optimization and zero-emission technology.



# AVIATION & AIRPORT

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

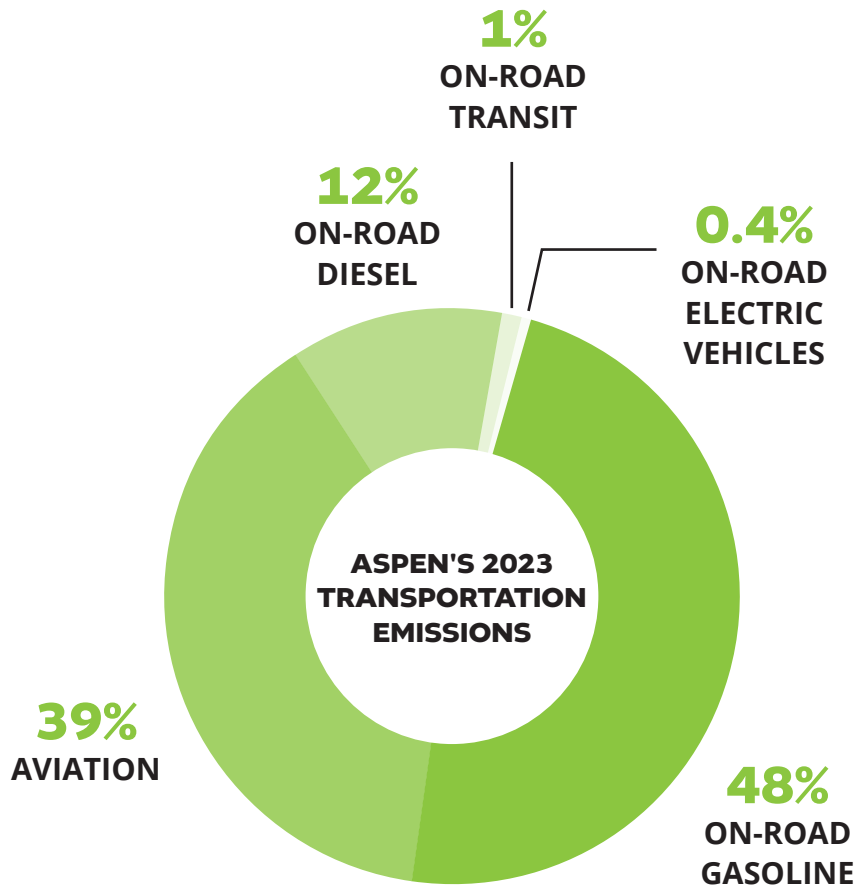
- Within the transportation sector, aviation is the greatest emitter, accounting for 39% of transportation emissions in 2023.
- Aspen/Pitkin County Airport (also known as Sardy Field) is the state's third busiest airport.
- Pitkin County manages the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport and local governments have limited control over aviation emissions primarily due to federal rules.
- The Climate Action Office's role is to collaborate with Pitkin County and encourage sustainable action in acknowledgment of Aspen's role as a destination for tourism and air traffic emissions.
- Due to limitations caused by federal regulation, the greatest opportunity for emissions reductions at the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport is through aircraft operator and tenant emissions.

## SECTOR GOALS

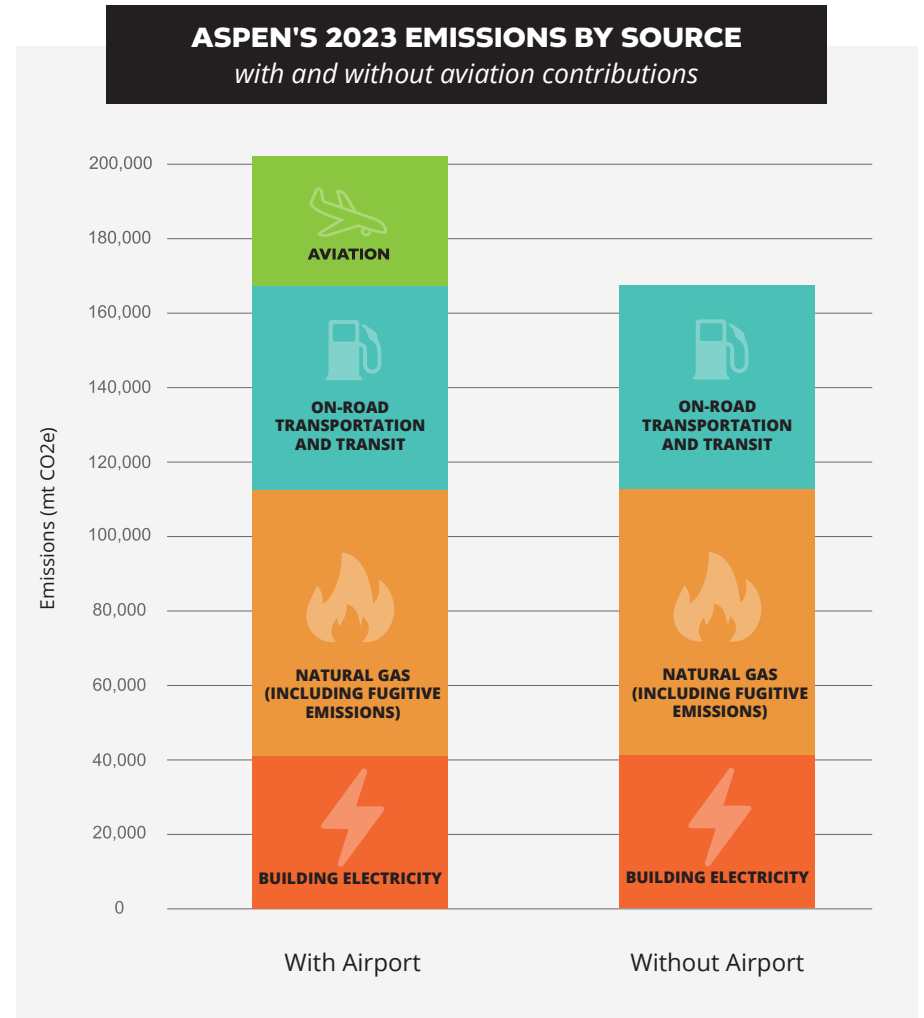
- Support policy and initiatives that reduces airport and aircraft emissions.
- Work with Pitkin County and key partners on driving sustainable tourism practices and education.
- Support sustainable mass transit connection between the city and the airport.







Source: City of Aspen 2023 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standalone Report (published in February 2025).



## Aviation Objectives (AO)

## Action Items

### AO1

**Encourage the reduction of airport controlled GHGs.**

- 1 Support the use of electric vehicles or other zero-emissions vehicles for ground support vehicles and ground support equipment.
- 2 Encourage taxi and airport shuttles to electrify fleet vehicles.
- 3 Support Pitkin County in efforts to incorporate net zero design into future Aspen/Pitkin County Airport development.

### AO2

**Encourage the reduction of aircraft and aviation related GHGs.**

- 4 Promote and incentivize the use of sustainable aviation fuels in aircraft servicing the local airport.

### AO3

**Encourage passengers to use transit and mobility services to access the airport.**

- 5 Encourage rental car companies to have electric vehicle options and support infrastructure development.

### AO4

**Support relevant aviation and airport-related federal and state policies through active legislative and regulatory engagement.**

- 6 Through continued engagement with community members, elected officials, and partner organizations, advance relevant aviation and airport-related policy to the benefit of the community.

# CONCLUSION

Aspen's average annual temperatures are increasing, and according to projections, this trend is expected to continue.<sup>1</sup>

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***Without prioritizing the current climate challenge, hotter springs and summers will lead to more frequent wildfires and increased demand for our limited water supply.***

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It is critical that we respond to the climate challenges now. The City of Aspen believes that we all have a responsibility to preserve the habitats of our local plant and animal species, our water supply, and the outdoor recreational activities that make this community unique.

**We look forward to our continued work with the community so that we can successfully reach our zero-carbon goal by 2050.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/climate-at-a-glance/county/time-series>



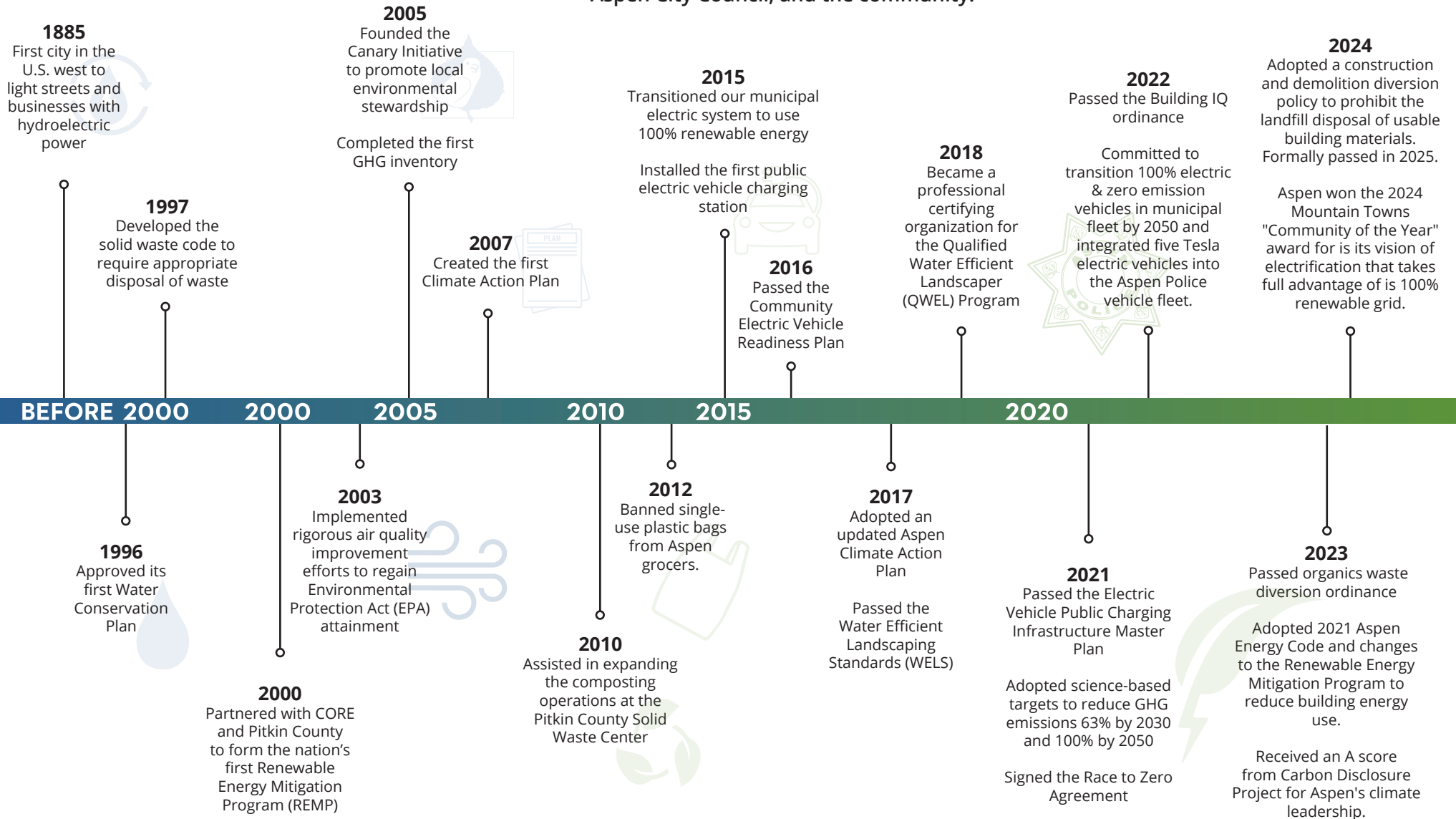
**The Aspen Sustainability Action Plan's successful implementation is contingent on collaboration and feedback from the community and our regional partnerships.**

**The City of Aspen will update this plan annually, prioritizing the feedback that we receive from readers like you, and continuing to center equity in climate solutions.**

**Please email [climate@aspen.gov](mailto:climate@aspen.gov) with feedback and questions.**

# ASPEN'S CLIMATE ACTION HISTORY

As one of the first cities in the United States to establish a climate division, the City of Aspen prides itself on working for decades to pave a path towards a more sustainable world. This timeline represents some key moments in the history of the City of Aspen's climate action accomplishments. These wins would not be possible without the collaboration and support from all City of Aspen departments, regional partnerships, Aspen City Council, and the community.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2025 Aspen Sustainability Action Plan is an initiative of the City of Aspen in partnership with the Roaring Fork Valley Community. The updated plan builds on the work that was done with the partner organizations listed in this section. The authors of this document thank both Council and the community for their support of the plan's successful implementation.

## **WE THANK THESE ORGANIZATIONS FOR SUPPORTING THE PREPARATION OF THIS PLAN:**

Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES)  
Aspen Chamber Resort Association (ACRA)  
Aspen Global Change Institute  
Aspen Skiing Company  
Black Hills Energy  
City of Aspen Departments  
Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE)  
Institute for Market Transformation  
Holy Cross Energy  
Pitkin County  
Pitkin County Solid Waste Center  
Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA)  
Town of Basalt  
Town of Carbondale  
Town of Snowmass Village  
We-Cycle  
350.org

## **ASPEN'S CLIMATE EFFORTS LEVERAGE SUCCESSES AND COMMITMENTS AT THE STATE, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.**

### **REGIONAL PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

Pitkin County  
Town of Snowmass Village  
Town of Basalt  
Eagle County  
Town of Carbondale  
City of Glenwood Springs  
Garfield County

### **OTHER PARTNERS:**

Compact of Colorado Communities  
Colorado Communities for Climate Action  
Global Covenant of Mayors  
America's Pledge/We are Still In  
Climate Mayors  
Carbon Disclosure Project  
International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives USA and Carbon  
Urban Sustainability Directors Network



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