



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD**

**FY 2025**

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## SUMMARY OF REPORT

We are pleased to share a summary of what the Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) has achieved over the past year. We've made progress on several items in our work plan and look forward to continuing our efforts to support the City Council. A key focus has been actions that help implement Raleigh's Community Climate Action Plan.

The EAB recognizes that the City Departments have a lot of important environmental and climate action work happening throughout the community. There are different approaches throughout the departments on getting the word out. The EAB recommends that the City look at multi-faceted strategies to tell the story of the work of Raleigh's Community Climate Action Plan, including focusing on different messaging techniques to reach residents of various backgrounds.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The EAB is an all-volunteer board created by the City Council in 2006. The City Council deemed it in the public interest and affirmed the importance of protecting the environment by creating the board that provides the Council with expert and comprehensive advice on various matters related to environmental quality and safety.

## EAB RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Heat and Urban Forestry**

During its September and October meetings, the Board heard presentations from multiple city departments on the related topics of heat and urban forestry. Following discussion, the board developed the following recommendation:

The Environmental Advisory Board strongly supports protection of the City's green spaces and tree canopy area. Planted areas reduce urban heat, carbon emissions, and stormwater runoff. Green spaces and trees promote climate resilience, wildlife habitat, human health, and beauty in the City of Oaks.

Specifically, the board recommends the City:

- Continue to support and increase tree planting efforts in those areas most affected by heat and canopy loss in the rights of way and on City-owned property by building on the Street Tree Equity Project and the development of the Leaf Out initiative, which focuses on the protection, expansion, and care of the City's tree canopy. Look for opportunities to create and expand public-private partnerships to grow Raleigh's canopy on private property, with a focus on affordable housing.
- Explore, as part of the new Comprehensive Plan, facilitating and incentivizing vegetated spaces and green buffers in new development. In addition to tree canopy, green space plays a vital role in urban heat, flooding and other mitigation and community benefits.
- Fund and execute regular data updates on both heat and tree cover, updating on a five-year cycle. The next heat map update should take place in 2026, the next tree canopy update in 2028. This data in turn would be used to evaluate and adjust funding, strategy, and priorities as needed.

- Take a holistic approach to heat mitigation. Consider heat not just from the street itself, but also other heat-producing/absorbing areas and surfaces. Focus on tree planting and shade in areas frequented by pedestrians.
- Include a focus on access to small “pocket” parks in the Comprehensive Plan process. These small parks can significantly expand access to public spaces within walking distance, including elements such as play areas, contemplative space, and shade.

## **Stormwater**

During its December meeting, the Board received a presentation from multiple Stormwater staff. Following discussion in January, the board developed the following recommendation:

The Environmental Advisory Board strongly supports efforts that strengthen and expand stormwater management efforts in the City. This improves the city’s resilience to climate change and major weather events.

Specifically, the Board recommends:

- Supports the City applying to become a cooperating technical partner with FEMA for delegated floodplain mapping, which will allow for more accurate mapping and frequent map updates.
- Supports the development of a Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) master plan, including a holistic look at topics such as studying opportunities for incentives for use of GSI within the development code.
- Supports floodplain mitigation funding, including:
  - Supporting additional funding for hazard mitigation for voluntary buyouts or other floodproofing measures.
  - When granted FEMA delegation status, supporting funding for floodplain mapping on five-year update schedule.

## **Transportation**

The Environmental Advisory Board strongly supports efforts that improve alternatives to driving in the City. This reduces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants generated by motor vehicles and improves community health outcomes. Specifically, the Board:

- Recommends that staff and City Council find ways of providing ongoing additional annual funding for the city’s e-bike voucher program, which enables residents to switch to a more sustainable form of transportation.
- Supports providing additional resources for outreach for transportation-related initiatives.
- Encourages a more comprehensive and direct community engagement in all districts in specific areas and spaces such as faith centers, transit facilities, around this study in various and diverse ways, i.e. open houses and in data collection.
- Supports the Active Mobility Study and encourages City Council to adopt and implement the policy and funding recommendations that emerged from the study.

## EAB ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The board worked through multiple work plan items in FY2025. In addition to the recommendations that came from those board discussions, the EAB also:

- Selected the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Award Winners. The awards celebration was held on April 25, 2025, during the Earth Day celebration at Dix Park. The Board's invited partner board members to serve with them in a jury night to select the winners in March. There has been a record-breaking number of applications for the past two years.
- Received presentations from the following City departments, divisions, and offices:
  - Transportation (on pavement coatings to reduce urban heat)
  - Information Technology (on heat mapping work)
  - Sustainability (on heat mitigation)
  - Urban Forestry (on heat and overall tree canopy efforts)
  - Stormwater (on floodplain management, water quality, and green stormwater infrastructure)
  - Transportation (on pedestrian and bicycle mobility)

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

### 2025 Environmental Awards



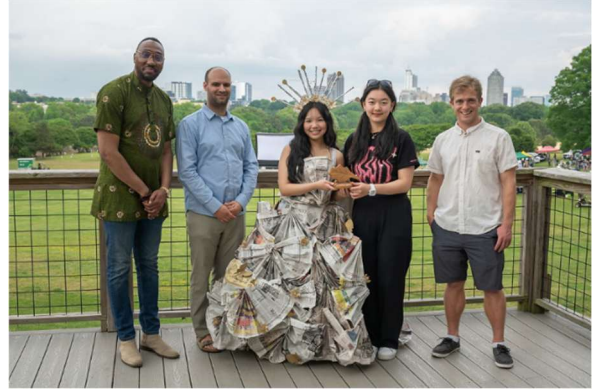
The Raleigh Environmental Awards celebrate the best in climate action, community engagement, and corporate stewardship in our community. The City's Office of Sustainability supports the work of the EAB. Staff partner with the EAB to host the annual awards. Each year, the EAB recognizes organizations, businesses, projects and individuals that demonstrate positive environmental benefits and engage the community, mitigate climate change, contribute to environmental justice, and show the business case for environmental stewardship. In 2025, the Environmental Awards had a record-breaking number of applications, showcasing our community's increasing investment and engagement in climate action work.

The EAB held a jury day in March 2025, and invited other Boards and Commissions to assist in the selection process of the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Award Winners. The Annual Awards Celebration was held on April 25, 2025, at a large Earth Day event at Dorothea Dix Park with more than 1,000 people in attendance.

These winners represent the hard work of dozens of community members to make Raleigh a healthier, greener, and more sustainable city; and represent our community's dedication to climate action, environmental stewardship, innovation and education.

In addition to the Environmental Awards, the Office of Sustainability partners with the Transportation Department, Stormwater Management Division, Raleigh Water, Solid Waste Services, and the Office of Strategy and Innovation on the following awards and contests:

- Commute Smart Award (Transportation)
- Capture it! Stormwater Arts Contest (Stormwater)
- Drinking Watershed Protection Award (Raleigh Water)
- Trashion Competition (Solid Waste Services)
- Dare to be Green Award (Strategy and Innovation)



The individuals and organizations recognized have made incredible contributions to preserve and enhance Raleigh's natural environment. This year's winners show a broad range of environmental actions and commitment to environmental stewardship.

### **Other Topics**

The Board supported other City efforts, including the Sir Walter Raleigh Awards, by designating a board representative. The Board also continues to communicate with the public about environmental issues and to promote City activities such as the Environmental Awards and Earth Day.

### **Environmental Advisory Board, June 2025**

Scott Greenman, Chair

Denzel Burnside, Vice Chair

Jess Anastes

Lamya Badr

Robert Bennett

Jeb Bullard

Vincent Potter

Sana Siddiqui

Coleen Sullins