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Renewables and Energy Efficiency Post-IRA

<https://daneclimateaction.org/what-you-can-do/Federal-Funding-for-Business>

The recently passed federal budget bill dealt a blow to America's clean energy future by eliminating key tax credits and rebates established under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and other past bills. These credits helped families and businesses adopt solar panels, heat pumps, electric vehicles, and home energy efficiency upgrades. But while this legislation is a setback, it is not the end of the road. There are still powerful tools and incentives available to accelerate your transition to a cleaner, more efficient energy future.

For starters, these federal credits are not gone yet! The following credits and rebates are still available if you act by the noted deadlines:

- **Electric Vehicles:** The tax credits for new and used EV purchases are still good until September 30, 2025 (<https://insideevs.com/news/764531/ev-tax-credit-ending-september/>).
- **Home and Business EV Chargers:** Federal tax credits for installing EV chargers or other alternative fuel refueling technology are available until June 30, 2026.
- **Home Solar:** You can still get 30% off the cost of solar panel equipment and installation through December 31, 2025 (<https://www.energysage.com/solar/solar-tax-credit-explained/>).
- **Home Efficiency Upgrades:** Installation of equipment like heat pumps and high-efficiency water heaters can still get you a rebate of up to \$3,200, if you complete installation this calendar year (<https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/energy-efficient-home-improvement-credit>).

- **Commercial Efficiency Upgrades:** Energy Efficient Commercial Buildings Tax Deduction (Section 179D) credits are still available through June 30, 2026.
- **Commercial Clean Energy Projects:** Commercial clean energy investment tax credits (Section 48 and 48E) are available through at least 2026, with additional restrictions after 2025. End dates for credits depend on the specific project, whether geothermal, solar or wind, or energy storage.

In Wisconsin, Focus on Energy (www.focusonenergy.com) remains a vital resource. This statewide program—supported by your utility—offers rebates, technical support, and expert guidance to help residents and businesses improve energy efficiency and invest in clean energy solutions. From insulation and smart thermostats to solar panel installations and efficient HVAC systems, Focus on Energy makes it easier and more affordable to reduce your energy use and utility bills—regardless of changes in federal policy.

The falling cost of solar, battery storage, and energy-efficient appliances also means the economics of clean energy remain strong. Even without federal support, long-term savings on utility bills, protection from volatile fossil fuel prices, and increased home value still make energy upgrades a smart investment. And for small businesses and nonprofits, some mission-aligned lenders and green banks continue to offer tailored financing to keep projects moving.

Lastly, collective action is more important than ever. Joining a solar co-op, organizing with neighbors for group retrofits, participating in utility-led efficiency or renewable initiatives, or lobbying local officials to fill the gap left by the IRA cuts can amplify your impact. Clean energy momentum is strong—and while this bill slows federal progress, it can't stop the clean energy transition already underway in communities across Wisconsin and beyond.

Moving Fitchburg Forestry Forward – Community Survey

<https://www.fitchburgwi.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=2457>

The City of Fitchburg has received grant funding from the Wisconsin DNR to develop a Strategic Urban Forestry Management Plan—and we need your input!

The “Moving Fitchburg Forestry Forward” project aims to produce a strategic urban forestry management plan by the end of the year. The plan will outline what urban forestry resources the City of Fitchburg currently has, identify goals and objectives for the urban forestry program, and create a plan on how to accomplish these goals and objectives. The plan must be vertically integrated with relevant City of Fitchburg plans and policies such as Fitchburg's Parks and Open Space Plan, Fitchburg's Comprehensive Plan, the City's Mission, Vision, and Values, and the Forest Management Plan for McGaw



Community Park. An important part is understanding the City of Fitchburg’s capacity to manage and retain urban tree canopy on public and private property.

Fitchburg residents are invited to share their thoughts and experiences with trees by completing a short survey, available from July 15 to August 15.

Take the survey online:

English Version: <https://forms.office.com/r/W25w0rJBi5>

Spanish Version: <https://forms.office.com/r/Un32e2RqKW>

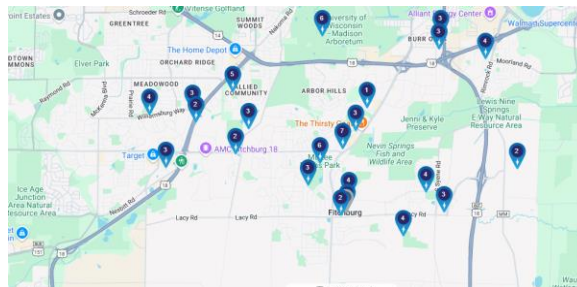
Paper copies are available at the Clerk’s desk in City Hall and at the Senior Center. The survey takes about 10 minutes, and your feedback is essential to help shape the future of Fitchburg’s trees and green spaces. Thank you for being part of the process.

BCycle Expansion Rolls Into Its Final Phase

<https://www.fitchburgchamber.com/cvb/bcycle-in-fitchburg/>

Fitchburg’s electric bike share program expansion has just completed! Launched in 2022 with local support and boosted in 2023 by a Wisconsin DOT Transportation Alternatives Program grant, the city’s BCycle network has grown steadily over the past few years. In July 2025, the final phase of this grant-funded expansion occurred, with four new stations installed: Huegel-Jamestown Park, Staybridge Suites Fitchburg, the south end of McKee Farms Park, and the bike path crossing E Cheryl Pkwy just next to the Rusty Bee Lounge. These four stations help to round out a network that connects parks, neighborhoods, businesses, and regional trails like the Cannonball Path, Badger State Trail and Capital City Trail.

This growing bike share system supports Fitchburg’s ongoing commitment to biking as a sustainable, everyday transportation option—and builds on our status as a **Silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community**, recognized by the League of American Bicyclists. It’s also a perfect complement to the Fitchburg Chamber’s [Bike the ‘Burg Challenge](#), which encourages residents and visitors alike to explore trails and local businesses by bike. Whether you’re commuting, running errands, or just out for fun, BCycle makes it easier to leave the car at home. You can view the full station map on [BCycle’s website](#), and learn more about using BCycle in Fitchburg from the [Fitchburg Chamber](#) or the [city’s BCycle page](#).



A Ghost in the Making: A Call to Protect Our Pollinators

<http://www.rustypatched.com/the-film>

Have you met the Rusty-patched bumblebee—once a common sight across Dane County, now a ghost of its former self? The powerful short documentary *A Ghost in the Making: Searching for the Rusty-patched Bumble Bee* follows naturalist-photographer Clay Bolt on a mission to find this endangered species in the wild.



Produced alongside the Xerces Society, the film illustrates how this once-abundant pollinator has vanished from 87% of its historical range, highlighting threats from habitat loss, pesticides, disease, and climate shifts. Bolt's journey culminates in a poignant moment right here in Wisconsin—an intimate reminder that nature's balance is in our hands.

Why does this matter to us in Fitchburg? Rusty-patched bumblebees, along with hundreds of other native pollinators, rely heavily on diverse wildflower habitats—ones we can help restore. Throughout Dane County, community initiatives from the UW–Madison Arboretum's prairie restorations, to neighborhood monarch corridors, to local initiatives like “leave your leaves” in Fall and “Low-Mow May” in Spring, are already making a difference. By planting native wildflowers such as echinacea, goldenrod, wild bergamot, and butterfly milkweed, you can bolster local ecosystems and provide vital forage for bees and butterflies. Whether in your backyard, front lawn, or community garden, choosing pesticide-free native plantings contributes to a vibrant, thriving landscape—and a meaningful legacy for future generations.

See the infographic on the following page, or these and other resources for identifying valuable native plants and learning which might be right for you:

- [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – Wisconsin Recommended Species](#)
- [University of Wisconsin Arboretum – Native Plant Sale Species Information](#)
- [Paul Goggin \(UW Stevens Point\) – Guide to Native Plants](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Native Plant Resources](#)

Join us in celebrating and protecting our local biodiversity. Host a screening of *A Ghost in the Making* at your library, school, or community center—it's an inspiring conversation starter. And if you're a gardener or business owner, consider supporting native pollinator projects by planting wildflowers or sponsoring habitat plantings. Together, we can ensure that what once seemed like a ghost in our meadows becomes a hallmark of recovery and stewardship in our home region.

Pollinator Plantings

Want to attract rusty-patched bumblebees and their pollinator friends? Try adding these Wisconsin wildflowers to your yard, or others from the resources above:



Wild Bergamot / Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa*) – Loved by bumblebees; blooms mid to late summer



Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) – Excellent pollinator plant, especially for butterflies as the name suggests



Wild Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) – Early bloomer (w/ prairie smoke, pasqueflower), host for endangered butterflies too



Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) – Early blooming tree/shrub, popular with pollinators and birds



Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpureum*) – Enjoyed by a variety of insects, drought tolerant thanks to deep roots



Black-/Brown-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) – Flowers attract butterflies and bees, seeds attract birds

Fitchburg Expands Its EV Fleet

<https://www.facebook.com/FitchburgWI/posts/pfbid02XP3vr1TK3oq5kjKY6qME45WWLAriarpC3yEH6CNaw1xRoB3RNhWiKRU3nwGjQNnol>

The City of Fitchburg continues to drive forward on its sustainability commitments with the recent expansion of its electric vehicle (EV) fleet to 10 total vehicles. The EV fleet now boasts 6 trucks and 3 sedans, as well as a plug-in hybrid minivan. These purchases directly support the City's [2019 Clean Energy Resolution](#), which outlines a goal of transitioning to 25% renewable electricity for City operations by 2025 and 100% by 2030, and achieving a 50% per-capita total fossil fuel reduction by 2050. By replacing gas-powered vehicles with EVs, Fitchburg is reducing its municipal greenhouse gas emissions while setting an example for clean transportation leadership in the region.



The City's electric vehicle purchases also align with the City's recently-approved [Sustainability Plan](#), as well as promising long-term savings through reduced fuel and maintenance costs. As EV technology continues to advance, the City's proactive investments show how local governments can lead by example—cutting emissions, saving taxpayer dollars, and modeling the clean energy future Fitchburg is working to build. These investments are one piece of a larger strategy that includes clean energy, climate resilience, and environmental stewardship across all sectors of municipal operations.

Smart Summer Tips

Water Savings

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-summer-infographic>

With hot weather in full swing, it's tempting to run the sprinklers every day to keep things looking green. But during peak summer months, outdoor water use can double or even triple—and much of that water never even reaches plant roots. The good news is that with a few small changes, you can keep your garden thriving *and* use less water.

The best time to water is early in the morning or late in the evening, when the sun's not blazing and evaporation is low. Adding mulch around your plants helps the soil hold onto moisture longer, meaning you don't have to water as often. Even checking for small leaks at your outdoor faucets or along hoses can prevent hundreds of gallons from being wasted over the

season. And consider giving your lawn a break—it's okay (and natural!) for grass to go dormant and a bit brown during dry spells. It'll recover with the next rainfall. Want to go a step further? Rain barrels are a smart way to capture and reuse water for your landscaping needs.

Energy Savings

<https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/spring-and-summer-energy-saving-tips>

Summer can send energy bills soaring, especially when air conditioners and fans are working overtime. But with a few simple habits and low-cost fixes, you can stay comfortable and cut your electricity use at the same time. Saving energy isn't just good for your wallet—it also helps reduce demand on the grid and lowers greenhouse gas emissions during peak season.

Start by raising your thermostat just a few degrees. Even setting it to 75°F when you're home—and higher when you're away—can make a noticeable difference. Use ceiling fans to circulate cool air more efficiently (just remember to turn them off when you leave the room). During the day, keep blinds or curtains closed on sunny windows to block heat from coming in. You can also delay running appliances like dishwashers, ovens, or dryers until the cooler evening hours. And if you haven't already, switching to LED bulbs and smart power strips can help trim electricity use year-round.

Looking for even more? A home energy assessment or tune-up can point out more savings opportunities. Even small upgrades, like sealing gaps around doors and windows or adding insulation to your attic, can pay off—both in summer and through the cold months ahead.

Keeping Cool in a Warming World

<https://www.ready.gov/heat>

As summers get hotter and more intense, staying cool isn't just about personal comfort—it's a matter of community resilience. Urban areas can be several degrees warmer than surrounding countryside due to what's known as the "urban heat island" effect, where buildings and pavement absorb and re-radiate heat. But the good news is that trees, shade, and green spaces offer natural ways to bring temperatures down while improving air quality and livability.



Planting trees or supporting local tree-planting efforts is one of the most effective steps we can take. A mature tree can cool its surroundings by several degrees while also providing habitat and reducing runoff. You can also make a difference at home by shading sunny windows with shrubs or awnings, and swapping out dark surfaces—like black mulch or asphalt—for lighter, more reflective materials. During heat waves, choose shaded walking or biking routes, and check in on elderly neighbors or those without air conditioning. Climate-smart design isn't just for big cities—every tree and every patch of shade counts.

July-August Events and Observances



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- d. Click  (to subscribe/unsubscribe to emails) and/or  (to subscribe/unsubscribe) next to the lists to which you wish to subscribe / unsubscribe (e.g. “Green Fitchburg” is the mailing list for environmentally friendly suggestions or events)

Please contact Phil Grupe, Sustainability Specialist, at phil.grupe@fitchburgwi.gov or (608) 270-4259, if you have any questions, comments, and/or suggestions for future Green E-News topics.

