

Andreas Addison responses:

1. How would you work to implement the proposals outlined in RVA Green 2050 and the Climate Equity Action Plan 2030? Would you take a different approach to climate planning, or continue the RVA Green 2050 program?

So far, Richmond has completed 12% of RVA Green 2050 goals. There are objectives we still need to achieve within the 2022-2025 timeline and plan for the 2026-2030 timeline that span across Planning & Development Review, operations, finance, capital improvements, and policy. The good news is that the plan clearly outlines steps to meet our goal, whether it's a policy, personnel, or funding requirement. The Office of Sustainability implemented a progress tracker TRAC-E (Tracking Realtime Action on Climate Equity) to build transparency and highlight which sections of the plan have not been completed. This is an incredible tool to ensure the hard work community members invested in creating this master plan does not collect dust. If we don't act and fund these initiatives, we will fall behind our goal to reduce 45% of emissions by 2030 and leave under-resourced communities even more vulnerable. The bottom line is this – we must fully fund RVA Green 2050 with staffing across departments to achieve these goals.

2. What proposals would you make to support the Office of Sustainability, and how would you encourage other city departments to adopt sustainable, carbon-neutral and environmentally beneficial practices?

I helped establish the Office of Sustainability (OOS) and strengthened the office with additional funding to make the office permanent with dedicated staff. OOS now has a team of eight talented individuals advancing climate justice in Richmond. Too many decisions we make as a city are done in silos, especially with how we build in Richmond. One way of doing that is moving OOS to the mayor's cabinet because of their work across all departments. From start to finish, we need to ensure sustainability is part of the culture and decision-making processes at City Hall, such as developing green building standards for new city-owned facilities, electrifying our fleet, adding EV charging stations, reducing waste, and transitioning to energy-efficient operations.

The city is also set to finalize its Sustainable Design Standards which will drive sustainability improvements like water conservation, transportation connectivity, and

renewable energy in infrastructure and construction projects. My administration is committed to 100% adherence in how we build and plan for growth in Richmond. The mayor and City Council can also work to match grant dollars in the budget to expand the Neighborhood Climate Resilience Grant to meet the demand from the community to implement projects. Lastly, OOS is doing a great job of securing federal grants and building relationships with agency leadership such as the EPA, USDA, and DOE for additional funding and capacity building. We need to transition temporary contractors to full-time staff so we can build on these wins and have continuity in climate action work in City Hall.

3. How would you manage the competing needs of DPU gas system customers and city carbon emissions reductions? Would you support a study on the future of the system and ways to move away from natural gas?

I created the Public Utilities and Services Commission to create greater transparency and accountability around our utilities. Part of the Commission's role is to make recommendations and guide the mayor and City Council about DPU operations, service changes, fiscal responsibility, and transitioning Richmond away from natural gas. Richmonders should not subsidize new gas hookups for developers and county residents. Nearly 90% of the 8th and 9th districts are above the average energy burden. Those dollars can be redirected towards critical home repairs, weatherization, and energy efficiency programs for residents. Right now, a quarter of low-income households have an energy burden above 16%. As we've seen with other historic patterns regarding housing policies – primarily redlining, urban renewal, and racial covenants – Black (28%) and Latino households (24%) have higher utility bills. We can continue to partner with organizations like project:HOMES, Viridian, and the Community Climate Collaborative to conduct free energy audits, weatherize homes, and map the greatest energy burdens across the city

4. The city recently restarted its Urban Forestry Commission and formed a Public Utilities and Service Commission. How would you approach working with these oversight commissions?

I established the Public Utilities and Services Commission and helped re-establish the Urban Forestry Commission to provide transparency, technical guidance, and

recommendations to the mayor and City Council on critical issues impacting our energy resources and green spaces – both impacting our footprint. It's important for the mayor to respect the work and time of community members as they step into these leadership roles for the city. Meaning, City Hall must listen to their recommendations and be accountable with our decisions. A recent example where harm was caused is the labor of the Civilian Review Board Task Force whose recommendations and work was ignored by the administration. This erasure discourages civic participation in local government when we absolutely need residents to inform how we move forward as a city. It's also vital that we shift to an equitable practice with our commissions that allows for greater participation and compensates people for their time. We still need more representation from Southside residents and Black and Brown community leaders on the Public Utilities and Services Commission and Urban Forestry Commission. I'd like to supplement that effort by appointing members in my role as mayor to achieve equity on these commissions, elevate the importance of their work in communications, and work closely with non-voting members of those commissions – directors and staff from DPW, Community Development, Urban Forestry Division, and OOS.

5. How would you manage Richmond's heat islands and the growing threat of extreme heat in the city?

Richmond's greatest heat islands are in neighborhoods impacted by redlining and industrial zoning, often with major roads and highways. These areas have more impervious surfaces than vegetation, and housing with limited or no air conditioning posing a health risk. Research shows Black Richmonders disproportionately experience heat-related illnesses due to a lack of shade from trees and bus shelters, few cooling centers, or simply from being outside longer from work or unhoused. We need to mitigate heat and provide immediate access to cooling through the following:

- Increasing the number of cooling centers in the city along bus routes and walking paths. We need to prioritize areas where there are inadequate walkways or no sidewalks, so the walk to a cooling center doesn't make the journey even more unbearable and difficult.
- Preserving existing canopy cover and plant more trees. Cutting down stands of mature trees does a disservice to residents who depend on those ecological services, including shade. And when the city plants trees, we need to include in

our annual budget watering and arbor care to ensure those young trees survive the first three years. Well-placed trees can reduce residential heating and cooling costs by up to 30%, reducing the energy burden on our residents.

- Expanding overall green spaces is also critical. This includes community gardens and rain gardens, green streets, and vegetative solutions in public areas and on private property to reduce temperatures, with the added benefit of capturing rainwater to help minimize flooding.
- Transitioning to cool pavement and permeable surfaces also needs to be part of our planning. Not only will this radiate less heat at the ground level, it will help reduce runoff during rain events. The work done by Department of Utilities and the RVAH20 team with the James River Association to green libraries is an example of what should be replicated with all public facilities.
- Greenlining neighborhoods. The legacy of discriminatory housing and land use policies from systemic racism is how we arrived where we are today. I support greenlining neighborhoods – the intentional practice of increasing investments in neighborhoods impacted by redlining and other environmental harm to expand economic opportunities. Community members who will have a harder time bouncing back from a severe storm or disaster are those we must prioritize in our planning. This means that investments for frontline communities must be at the front of the line for funding and resources.

There are multiple tools at our disposal that map out where we need to prioritize funding, resources, and people power, including our RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Index.

6. How would you prioritize addressing the causes and mitigating the effects of climate change in the context of all the other things city government has to do?

The climate crisis will exacerbate existing social inequities stemming from redlining, urban renewal, industrial zoning, and chronic disinvestment. It is not separate from the social determinants of health that determine the quality of life or life expectancy of a person – housing, health care, education, environment, and economic security. Climate justice is rooted in disrupting generational poverty and addressing the root causes of these systemic issues. Climate action is intrinsically linked to community safety, food insecurity, access to jobs, housing, child care, transportation, and education. Our

environmental justice framework as a city must center on the health and livelihood of our residents — the ability to work, receive care, have safe housing, get around, and access a quality education — at every stage of life.