



Clayton Climate Smart Community Public Information Session

Do-it-Yourself Easy Fixes (The Low-Hanging Fruit)

Please find below a list of over 100 action steps you can take around your home to help Clayton become a more climate smart community.

1. Reduce, Recycle and Reuse. Any way you can reduce your waste, reuse, and recycle will lower the impact on land fills and potential waste being distributed.
2. Walk or bike around the village. Great exercise! Great for the climate! Great for your piece of mind!
3. Shop local. Support local businesses. Great for the local economy! Less carbon foot print!
4. Use ENERGY STAR compact LED light bulbs. Do not exceed the manufacturer's recommended wattage for the fixture. ENERGY STAR LED bulbs last longer and uses 90% less electricity than incandescent bulbs.
5. Use natural lighting. Open curtains and shades during the day instead of using lighting. Consider skylights and solar tubes during remodeling or new construction design. This allows the maximum use of natural daylight for heat and light.
6. Plan your lighting. Not every room needs the same amount of general light. Plan within a room to provide general background lighting and supplementary task lighting. A good lighting plan can reduce lighting costs and still provide all the light you need.
7. Position lights properly. Try to illuminate the entire activity area without creating distracting glares or shadows. To do this, position your light source closer to the area you want lit. This saves energy by not over-lighting an unused area.
8. Control outdoor lighting. To assure only dusk-to-dawn operation of your outdoor lights, control your fixtures with a photocell, timer or solar lights.
9. Turn off lights. Turn off lights when not in use, even for short periods of time. Turning lights off and on uses less energy than if they are left on all the time.
10. Adjust light level. Higher light settings use more energy, so save energy by using dimmer controls, high/low switches or three-way bulbs to adjust the level of light to

exactly what you need.

11. Install a timer on indoor lights. Use timers to turn lights on and off to help regulate use.
12. Keep bulbs and fixtures clean. Dirt and dust reduce light output and efficiency. For safety reasons, don't clean bulbs and fixtures when they're hot or plugged in.
13. Repair dripping faucets promptly. If the faucet leaks hot water, the energy used to heat it is costing you money. (One drop a second can waste up to 48 gallons a week!)
14. Cook with small appliances. Cook with your toaster oven, electric skillet and slow cooker for specialized jobs. Small appliances use less energy.
15. Use the microwave. Cooking with your microwave oven rather than a standard oven or range shortens cooking times, saving energy. It also creates less heat and humidity in your home.
16. Clean or replace air filters. Replace filters on exhaust hoods, furnaces, humidifiers, vacuums, etc. Clogged filters impair performance.
17. Run cold water for disposal. Hot water requires energy to warm the water. Cold water saves energy and solidifies grease, moving it more easily through the garbage disposal and pipes.
18. Install water saving devices. Use low-flow showerheads on all showers and faucet aerators on all faucets to reduce your hot water use.
19. Purchase ENERGY STAR appliances. When buying a new refrigerator or freezer, look for the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR refrigerators and freezers can save you hundreds of dollars on your electric bill over the life of the appliance. Remember, older refrigerators and freezers use two to three times more electricity than ones that are 10 years old or less. Select the right size. Determine your household's needs before purchasing a refrigerator or freezer. One that is too large wastes energy.
20. Only use one refrigerator or freezer. You can spend up to \$120 in electricity per year using a second refrigerator or freezer. If you want to use a second refrigerator or freezer during holidays or for special occasions, turn it on one to two days before you need it.
21. Don't set the temperature colder than necessary. Set the refrigerator temperature between 36° F and 42° F. Set the freezer control so the temperature is between -5° F and +6° F. A small thermometer placed in the refrigerator or freezer will help

you set it correctly.

22. Clean the unit. Clean dust off the condenser coils, fins, evaporator pan and motor once or twice a year. A clean unit runs more efficiently. Unplug the unit and clean with a vacuum cleaner or long-handled brush.
23. Defrost a manual-defrost unit regularly. Frost makes your unit work harder and wastes energy. Don't allow more than one-quarter inch of frost to build up.
24. Stay away from direct heat. Place the refrigerator or freezer away from direct sunlight and other heat sources such as ovens or ranges. Heat will cause the unit to use more energy to stay cold.
25. Do not place the unit in unheated space. Don't place your refrigerator or automatic defrost freezer in a garage, porch or other unheated space. If the temperature drops below 60° F, the unit will be less efficient and cost more money to operate. Or, the compressor may stop running, causing the temperature inside the freezer compartment to rise.
26. Check the seals. Refrigerator and freezer doors should seal tightly. Loose seals cause your unit to work harder and use more energy. If you can move a dollar bill through the closed door, the seal is not tight enough. Get the seals replaced or replace the unit if it is an older model.
27. Always wait until you have a full load before running your dishwasher. Full loads use the same amount of hot water and energy as smaller loads. Run fewer loads - save energy.
28. Use short cycles. Select the shortest cycle that properly cleans your dishes. Shorter cycles use less hot water and less energy.
29. Skip rinsing the dishes. Rinsing dishes before loading them into the dishwasher wastes energy. If you do rinse, use cold water.
30. Clean the filter. If your dishwasher has a filter screen, clean it regularly. A clean appliance runs more efficiently.
31. Reduce the heat. Begin cooking on a higher heat setting until liquid begins to boil. Then, lower the temperature and simmer the food until fully cooked. A fast boil doesn't cook faster than a slow boil, but it does use more energy.
32. Consider an induction oven/stovetop. It cost less to operate, cooks faster, and offers better temperature control.

33. Put a lid on it. Cook food and boil water in a covered container whenever possible. This traps the heat inside and requires less energy.
34. Don't peek in the oven. Resist the urge to open the oven door while baking. Every time you peek, the temperature drops 25° F and requires additional energy to bring the temperature back up.
35. Use retained heat. Turn off cook tops or ovens a few minutes before food has completed cooking. Retained heat finishes the job using less energy.
36. Make sure the oven seals tightly. Make sure the seal on the oven door is tight. Even a small gap allows heat to escape and wastes energy. If you can move a dollar bill through the closed door, the seal is not tight enough and should be replaced.
37. Check the oven temperature. Test the oven temperature to be sure that the setting matches the actual temperature. If the actual temperature is too high, you will use more energy than needed. Also, your food may not turn out how you anticipate.
38. Wash laundry in warm or cold water. Washing laundry with warm or cold water works your water heater less. Use hot water only when the greatest cleaning is needed.
39. Adjust the water level. If you have a washer that allows you to control the load's water level, adjust the level according to laundry load size. You can save energy by using less hot water for small loads.
40. Run full loads. Always run a full load in your washer or dryer. Running a partial load uses the same amount of energy as a full load – but you get less done. Running full loads allows you to run your washer or dryer less often.
41. Rinse in cold water. Rinse water temperature has no effect on cleaning. Rinsing with cold water saves money by heating less water.
42. Place the washer close to the water heater. Water loses heat as it flows through pipes. When the washer is located near the water heater, hot water doesn't have to travel as far to reach the washer, and less heat is lost. Insulating the pipes between the water heater and washer helps retain heat, too.
43. Don't dry clothes naturally, and if you use a dryer not excessively. Drying laundry excessively uses more energy than is needed, and is hard on fabrics. If you purchase a dryer, get one with an electronic sensor that shuts off the dryer when clothes are dry.

44. Clean the lint filter. After each load, clean the filter to keep the dryer running efficiently. Also, periodically check the air vent and hose for clogging. Keeping the air vent and hose free of lint prevents a fire hazard.
45. Purchase the correct size appliance. Consider your family's hot water needs. If your water heater is too large, it uses more energy than needed. If it is too small, you may run out of hot water.
46. Install your water heater near the kitchen. The kitchen is where you use the hottest water. When the water heater is located near the kitchen, hot water doesn't have to travel as far and less heat is lost.
47. Insulate water pipes. Use half-inch foam or pipe tape for insulation wherever pipes are exposed. On cold water pipes, insulate four to five feet nearest to the water heater. Pipe insulation can save you up to \$25 annually.
48. Set the water temperature to 120° F. It takes less energy to heat water to a lower temperature. If you have an electric water heater, you'll have to remove the cover plate of the thermostat to adjust the temperature. For safety reasons, remember to turn off the water heater at the circuit breaker/fuse before changing the temperature.
49. Install a heat loop or in-line trap. If you add a new water heater to your home, consider having a heat loop or in-line trap installed. These mechanisms can be inexpensive to install and keep hot water from moving into the piping system when you are not using hot water. Ask your plumbing contractor for details.
50. Reduce deposits and build-ups. Drain a bucket of water from the bottom of the water heater once or twice a year to reduce mineral deposits and sediment build-up. This increases water heater efficiency. Don't drain the water heater, though, if you've used it for a year or more and have never drained it. The faucet may have corroded shut and could break if you force it open. Before draining the water from an electric water heater, turn off the water heater at the circuit breaker/fuse.
51. Install a water softener. If you have hard water, install a water softener to prevent mineral deposits from coating the elements. This helps prolong water heater life and saves energy and money.
52. Use a humidifier. Humidity makes you feel warmer in colder months. With the proper humidity level, you'll be able to turn your thermostat down to a lower temperature, save energy and still feel comfortable. About 20 percent to 40 percent relative humidity is recommended.
53. Remove moisture with a dehumidifier. Use a dehumidifier in warm, humid months. Less humidity helps you feel cooler, allowing you to use a higher air conditioner setting to save energy. A dehumidifier works best when air can circulate freely

through it. Place it away from walls and bulky furniture.

54. Check for frost build-up on dehumidifiers. If your unit is running in temperatures less than 70° F, check it occasionally to see if frost is building up on the coils. If so, turn the unit off until the frost melts and the room is warmer.
55. Clean the unit. Dust or vacuum the dehumidifier at least once a year before you plug it in. A clean unit runs more efficiently.
56. Purchase an ENERGY STAR dehumidifier. ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers use 10 percent to 20 percent less energy than conventional models but still offer the same features – effective moisture removal, quiet operation and durability.
57. Choose the right size HVAC equipment. Oversized equipment costs more expensive and less efficient. A qualified heating contractor can determine the size of the equipment needed for your home. The contractor uses the size and configuration of your home to determine proper size.
58. Consider a home energy audit. All New York homeowners of one-to-four family homes can get a no-cost energy assessment through NYSERDA.
NYSERDA.ny.gov.
59. Consider switching to geothermal, heat pumps/mini-splits. NYSERDA has clean energy incentives available to help off-set the costs. ENERGY STAR heat pumps/mini-splits instead of room air conditioners or furnaces are 3-4 times more efficient. Plus, if you install solar panels, they can significantly reduce your electricity use.
60. Maintain the furnace. Clean your furnace filters monthly or replace if necessary. A clean unit runs more efficiently.
61. Use insulation. Insulate your attic to an R-value of 38 for a gas-heated home and 50 for an electrically heated home; your walls to an R-value of 19; and your sill box (upper portion of your basement walls) to an R-value of 10. Proper insulation allows you to use less energy to keep your home warm.
62. Insulate around windows and doors. Weather-strip and/or caulk all areas of noticeable leaks around windows and doors. Removable caulking is a good option for windows that you open in summer but not in winter.
63. Change your thermostat settings. In the winter, set your thermostat at 60° F when you are sleeping or gone. Set the thermostat to 68° F when you are at home. This can save 10 percent or more on your heating bills every winter.
64. Turn down the thermostat when away. If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, turn your thermostat down to save energy but never lower than 40°

F. If you have delicate houseplants, keep the setting at 50° F or higher.

65. Let the sun in. The sun's energy can have a noticeable effect on the temperature in your home, especially from windows facing south and west. Keep window shades and drapes open during winter months to let in the sun's radiant heat. Close them at night.
66. Warm with a space heater. A portable space heater can heat a single room without using your furnace to heat the whole house. Using a space heater to heat all or most of your home costs more. Always follow the manufacturer's safety instructions when operating space heaters. Do not use propane or other gas fired portable heaters inside.
67. Use the fireplace sparingly. Many older natural fireplaces are inefficient drawing more heat out of the house than they produce. Close the flue to eliminate drafts when not in use.
68. Consider fireplace inserts, doors or covers. If you use your fireplace often, consider these products to help reduce the heat loss in your home when using the fireplace. You save money on your heating bills while still being able to enjoy your fireplace.
69. Control air flow. If you are building a home, replacing heating equipment or remodeling, talk to your heating contractor about the options available to ensure proper air flow. Controlling air flow into and out of your home ensures energy efficiency, comfort and low energy costs.
70. For cooling, keep the sun out. Closing blinds, shades and drapes on the sunny side of your home during the day will help keep the house cooler, causing the air conditioner to use less energy in bringing the temperature to a comfortable level.
71. Cool only the rooms in use. Close unused rooms to keep cooled air in areas where it is most needed. Don't run fans if you're not in the room. It wastes energy.
72. Replace coils. To maximize efficiency, change the indoor and outdoor compressor coils when replacing an older central air conditioner.
73. Keep the thermostat clear of heat. Don't position heat-producing devices such as lamps and TVs close to your thermostat. Heat from these devices could cause the thermostat to read a temperature higher than the true room temperature. This may lead to excessive cooling and wasted energy.
74. Get your unit tuned up. Have your central air conditioner tuned up by a qualified HVAC contractor every other year. This can help the unit operate more efficiently

and may prevent failures in the middle of peak cooling season.

75. Keep the condenser and filter clean. Keep leaves, grass and other debris away from the outside condenser. Also, clean the filter monthly and replace it as needed. (Your central AC uses the same filter as your furnace.) A clean condenser and filter help the unit run more efficiently.
76. Change your thermostat settings. Save 10 percent or more on your summer cooling costs by setting the thermostat to 76° F when at home and higher when you go away. Cooling the house when you return costs less than keeping it cool all the time. The same in reverse for heating your home.
77. Don't make more heat. Delay chores that produce heat and moisture until the cooler parts of the day or evening. Limit dishwashing, laundering and cooking on hot, humid days. These activities make your room more uncomfortable and require your air conditioner to work harder.
78. Turn off electronics you are not using. Don't leave electronics, such as televisions, stereos and computers, on if you don't need them – they produce heat. Extra heat requires more energy to power the air conditioner and increases cooling costs.
79. Keep vents clear. Keep furniture and drapes away from air vents. This allows the cool air to move out into the rooms and keeps your air conditioner from running more than necessary.
80. Ventilate your attic. Reduce heat build-up in your attic by installing proper ventilation. This helps keep your house cooler during the summer.
81. Keep the air conditioner out of the sun. Locate your room air conditioner on the shady side of your home and avoid the south and west sides of the house. It will operate more efficiently in a cooler location. Placing the air conditioner in direct sunlight causes it to work harder to cool your home.
82. Use a timer. Set the plug-in timer to turn off the air conditioner when you leave home and to turn it on just before you return.
83. Purchase a unit with varying fan speeds. Use a room air conditioner with fan speed control. This allows faster cooling when needed and quieter, more efficient operation at other times.
84. Keep the unit centrally located. To allow better air circulation, install your room air conditioner in the window or area of the wall that is nearest to the middle of the space being cooled.

85. Seal the unit. Once a room air conditioner is in place, seal the space around it with rope caulk or some other sealant to prevent warm outside air from leaking in.
86. Don't set the thermostat at high initially. When you first turn on your room air conditioner, set the thermostat at normal or medium. Setting it any colder won't cool the room any faster.
87. Close the fresh-air vent. Make sure the fresh-air vent is closed when the room air conditioner is operating so you aren't cooling outside air. Open the vent when the outside air is cooler to let in fresh air.
88. Remove the unit at the end of the cooling season. Take your room air conditioner out of the window when the cooling season is over. If you must leave the unit in place, cover the outside of the unit with a weatherproof cover and fill any cracks around the unit with removable caulk.
89. Use fans with your air conditioner. Fans help reduce energy costs by circulating the cool air from your air conditioner. This allows you to raise the temperature and still be comfortable. Use oscillating fans for greater circulation.
90. Use ceiling fans for air circulation. In hot weather, set the ceiling fan direction to blow air down. The air moving across your skin creates a cooling effect, allowing you to raise the temperature on your thermostat and still feel cool. In cold weather, set the fan to blow toward the ceiling. This pushes warm air away from the ceiling and evenly distributes heat in the room.
91. Use a whole-house fan. These fans are mounted in the attic and ventilate your entire home. Be sure to open some windows before turning on a whole-house fan. A qualified heating contractor can help you determine if you need a whole house fan.
92. Maintain your fan. Keep your fan in good working order. Check the manufacturer's recommendations for care and maintenance. This helps control the operating costs.
93. Purchase ENERGY STAR windows. When installing new windows, select, at a minimum, double-paned (double-glazed) thermal windows. With existing single-paned windows, make sure you use storm windows during the winter months.
94. Purchase efficient equipment. Look for ENERGY STAR office equipment, such as computers, printers and fax machines. They use less energy than standard office equipment.
95. Don't let the computer run all day. Only power on the computer, monitor, printer and fax machine when you need them. Don't leave them on after you're finished working. Computers and other office equipment still use energy in sleep mode.

96. Composting your organic waste will reduce the amount put into landfills, and if you're a gardener you can use it around your home.
97. Let your grass grow a little longer, or transition to more garden area. Less mowing = more pollinators and less energy usage.
98. Plant flowers, trees, fruits and vegetables. It brightens up your outdoors and improves your landscape.
99. Plant more native species in your yard.
100. Let your mowed clippings become mulch instead of bagging. It reduces trips to the landfill and creates a more organic lawn.
101. Collect rainwater to water gardens and conserve water in general.
102. Take shorter showers.
103. Eat locally grown foods (<https://www.jcnylocalfoods.org/>)
104. Try eating less meat. For example, "Meatless Mondays."
105. Batch cooked meals- use the oven as little as possible and try to cook meals in batches when possible to save time and energy.
106. Use reusable water bottles and coffee mugs rather than single use plastic.
107. Use battery powered lawn mowers, leaf blowers, etc. Less noise, less of a carbon footprint.
108. Buy used items instead of new.
109. Use washable cloth napkins instead of one-use paper napkins.
110. Stop buying paper towels and opt for more sustainable options, washable rags, etc.
111. Cultivate a gifting economy, when you are done with something offer it to others before throwing it out.
112. Eliminate (to the best of your ability) single use items and switch to reusable.
113. Opt for sustainable products as much as possible - support sustainable brands.

- 114. Buy in bulk when possible and when there won't be waste associated with buying in bulk.
- 115. Use technology (especially AI) mindfully. (<https://www.npr.org/2024/07/12/g-s1-9545/ai-brings-soaring-emissions-for-google-and-microsoft-a-major-contributor-to-climate-change>)
- 116. Be prepared for storms (<https://www.jeffersoncountyny.gov/departments/PublicHealth/PrepareJeffersonCountyNYApp>)
- 117. Learn about the climate system and projected changes. (<https://glisa.umich.edu/summary-climate-information/>)
- 118. Pick up trash on your walks. A clean community is a climate smart community!

Thank you for helping us become a more climate smart community!

- Coming Soon -

Save the River's Winter Environmental Conference - 1/25/25

April 2025 - Earth Day/Arbor Day Family Event

Clayton Climate Smart Community Task Force:

Lori Arnot, Lauren Darcy, Mikael Ann Hoover, Bridgett McCann, Lori Orvis, Cierra Williams, Cecilia Wirth, Bridget Wright, Trustee Mike Kinnie, Mayor Nancy Hyde.

A special thanks to the Village of Clayton, Save the River, Thousand Islands Land Trust, Jefferson County Public Health, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County and New York State Climate Smart Community.

State Support for Local Climate Action:

Climate Smart Communities (CSC) is a New York State program that helps local governments take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The program offers grants, rebates for electric vehicles, and free technical assistance. The Village of Clayton is one of over 400 Climate Smart Communities in New York State.

This "Low Hanging Fruit" list is based on ideas from the Clayton Climate Smart Community Taskforce, 2024, and the results of a collaborative partnership between the community members of Sackets Harbor and students in the Environmental Communication option in Environmental Studies at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY., 2008. https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/2024/03/3-sackets_harbor_lwrp_amdmt_draft_app_j-m_Local-adoption.pdf