RANK

23 /100

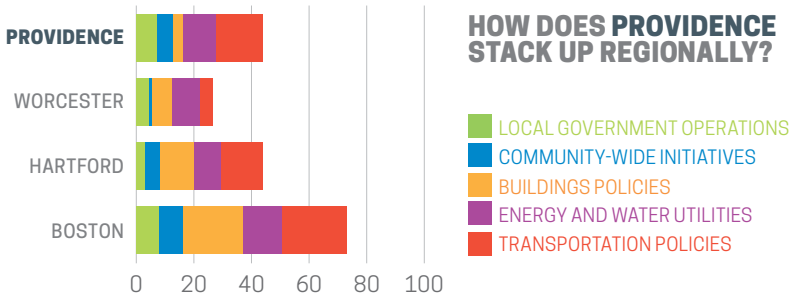
OVERALL SCORE

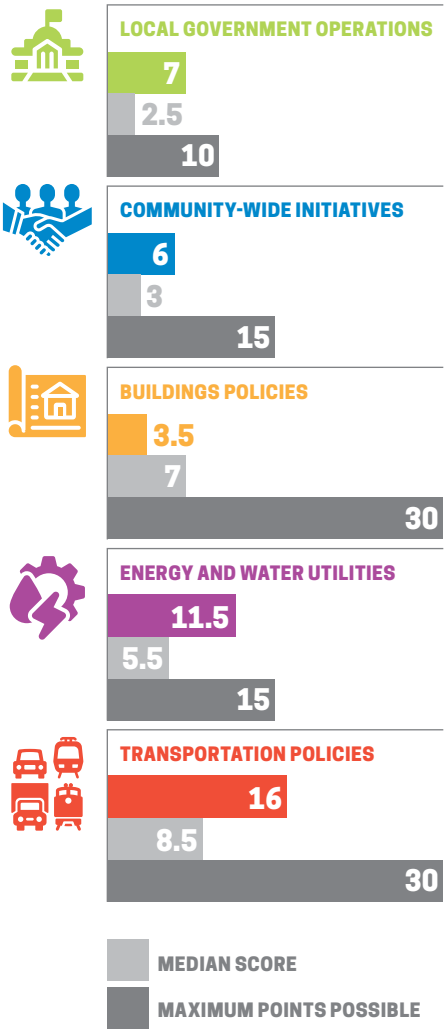
44 /100

2020 CITY CLEAN ENERGY SCORECARD

Providence

Providence was one of four cities to earn full credit for equity-driven approaches to clean energy planning, implementation, and evaluation; its exemplary performance was due to the activities of the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee as well as the equity objectives in the Climate Justice Plan. Otherwise, Providence had its best performance in the energy and water utilities category, in part due to city efforts to remove barriers to, as well as develop a plan for, community choice aggregation. The city still has several options for improving its score, with the most room for improvement in the buildings policies category.





LOCAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS (7 OF 10 POINTS)

Providence has greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction and clean energy goals for local government operations. Based on past years of emissions data, ACEEE projects the city will achieve its local government operations carbon neutrality by 2040 goal. Providence benchmarks the energy use of all municipal buildings and conducts energy retrofits using a whole-building approach. The city also integrates clean energy into its procurement and construction strategies by purchasing high-efficiency vehicles, converts streetlights to LEDs, and installs renewable energy systems on municipal facilities.

COMMUNITY-WIDE INITIATIVES (6 OF 15 POINTS)

Providence's GHG emissions reduction and renewable energy goals coupled with its equity-driven planning efforts set the vision for a clean energy future. To advance equity-driven planning and implementation, the city created the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee to lead the city's climate planning engagement process. Further, the Climate Justice Plan includes seven key climate equity indicators and over 50 strategies that seek to create an equitable, low-carbon future. Based on past years of emissions data, ACEEE projects the city will not achieve its community-wide GHG emissions reduction goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. To mitigate the urban heat island effect, the city aims to increase the urban tree canopy to 30% by 2020.

BUILDINGS POLICIES (3.5 OF 30 POINTS)

Rhode Island requires all jurisdictions to comply with the State Energy Conservation Code, which references the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code. The codes are not stringent relative to those in effect in other cities, and Providence does not advocate for more stringent state energy codes. The city offers several incentives to spur clean energy investment. City-offered Building Operator Certification trainings help grow the energy efficiency workforce. Providence can achieve greater energy reduction in its building sector by adopting energy efficiency policies (such as benchmarking requirements) for existing buildings.

ENERGY AND WATER UTILITIES (11.5 OF 15 POINTS)

Compared to other utilities, Narragansett Electric shows high savings as a percentage of sales for electric efficiency programs and moderate savings as a percentage of sales for natural gas efficiency programs. The utility offers energy efficiency programs for low-income customers and multifamily properties. Providence is encouraging the decarbonization of the electric grid; for example, the city is developing a community choice aggregation plan. Multiple efforts aim to increase the energy and water efficiency of water services and wastewater treatment plants.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES (16 OF 30 POINTS)

Providence's Climate Justice Plan includes goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled 43% by 2035 and 80% by 2050. The plan also includes mode shift targets for transit and bicycling modes. Relative to other cities, Providence's transit system is moderately accessible but underfunded; ensuring continued financial support for service and operations will be crucial in a post-COVID world. Providence's zoning code promotes transit-oriented development and institutes parking maximums. Providence can promote sustainable transportation by offering incentives for the purchase of efficient vehicles and adopting policies to encourage energy efficiency in freight movement.

ACEEE
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy