

# Local Government - Leading by Example

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Local governments have the power to affect the main sources of pollution directly linked to climate change: energy use, transportation, and waste. They are uniquely positioned to influence citizen behaviors that directly affect climate change such as transportation options, energy consumption patterns, and general consumer decisions.

While this report refers primarily to cities, the information presented in this fact sheet is relevant for both cities and counties.

## **Responsibilities of Local Governments Key to Climate Action**

- Responsible for issuing buildings and development permits.
- Responsible for residential and commercial land-use decisions that profoundly influence energy use in the transportation sector.
- Authority to determine the availability of public transit.
- Authority to set building codes that influence energy efficiency.
- Authority over waste disposal.

## **Land Use Management and Urban Forestry**

**Sprawl** is caused by designing communities with increasing distances traveled to work, school, and services. Increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) means more air and global warming pollution. Sprawl consumes open spaces, destroys natural habitat, and degrades water quality.

### **Urban Forestry**

- Plant shade trees in and around local government parking lots and facilities.
- Maintain healthy urban forests and street trees.
- Encourage residents to plant shade trees.

### **Land Use Management**

- Co-locate facilities to reduce travel time and maximize building use.
- Utilize brownfields and abandoned lots where possible.
- Preserve open space.
- Promote high density and in-fill development through incentives.
- Discourage sprawl through impact and permit fees.

## **Transportation Planning**

Vehicles are a leading cause of global warming, responsible for one-third of US greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

### **Government Measures**

- Encourage car-pooling and van-pooling by employees.
- Encourage telecommuting for municipal employees.
- Restrict idling of municipal vehicles.
- Station police officers on bicycles.
- Retire fuel inefficient vehicles and purchase fuel efficient ones.

### **Community Promotion Measures**

- Encourage employers to have trip reduction programs (car pooling, etc.).
- Restrict idling at public facilities.

- Improve traffic synchronization.
- Encourage community purchase of high efficiency vehicles.
- Implement bike and pedestrian infrastructure programs.
- Make cities pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- Install park & ride facilities and provide car sharing programs.

### **Energy Efficient Cities**

#### **Government Measures**

- Install energy efficient exit sign lighting.
- Perform energy-efficient building lighting retrofits.
- Institute a “lights out when not at use” policy.
- Install building/office occupancy sensors.
- Purchase only Energy Star equipment at bulk prices.
- Conduct an energy audit of facilities.
- Implement an energy tracking and management systems.
- Retrofit HVAC.
- Install reflective roofing.
- Improve water pumping efficiencies.
- Install energy efficient traffic and street lights.
- Reduce hours street lights operate.
- Set energy efficient standards for new municipal construction and major renovations.

#### **Community Measures**

- Adopt energy building codes.
- Conduct an energy efficiency campaigns targeted at businesses and residents.
- Promote purchase of Energy Star appliances through sales tax reduction.
- Promote water conservation.
- Give incentives for construction of energy efficient structures.
- Support local businesses in their transition to energy efficient technology and practices.
- Promote the use of audits, provide incentive programs for private developers to provide higher energy efficiency standards,
- Establish energy efficiency standards in city building codes.
- Encourage small and local businesses to save money by undertaking energy savings measures.
- Support residents in increasing their energy efficiency at home is by supporting residential home efficiency upgrades.
- Establish local policies to promote renewable energy.
- Provide lower-income weatherization assistance.
- Address split-incentives in renter occupied homes.
- Create home size restrictions.
- Tax large residential energy consumers.
- Promote energy and water efficiency by smart metering, price signals and price structuring.

### **Recycling and Waste Reduction**

#### **Government Measures**

- Require recycling within all government departments.
- Establish system for reuse or recycling of construction and demolition materials for government construction projects.

- Implement solid waste reduction programs for facilities.
- Implement environmentally preferable purchasing programs.

### **Community Measures**

- Encourage recycling by residents and businesses.
- Set aggressive recycling targets and goals.
- Establish system for reuse or recycling of construction and demolition materials.

### **Education and Outreach**

#### **Municipal Measures**

- Educate city staff about reducing global warming pollution and its importance to their work and the city's mission.

#### **Community Measure**

- Help educate the public, schools, other jurisdictions, professional associations, business, and industry about reducing global warming pollution.

### **Top Cost Effective Actions to Reduce GHG**

- **Education:** Effectively communicate to city's staff the importance and impact of taking actions to reduce GHG is key to the success of all following measures.
- **Clean Fleets and Fuel:** From restricting the idling of city vehicles to purchase of most fuel efficient vehicles possible, cities can reduce emissions and costs from its one its largest pollution sources - transportation.
- **Recycling:** Waste prevention and recycling reduces GHG by saving the energy embodied in the manufacturing of the product. Reducing the volume of waste reduces solid waste collection fees.
- **Switch to LEDs or CFLs:** Use in traffic signals and exit lights, lighting of municipal buildings.
- **Turn out Lights at Night and When Not in Use:** Significant savings in electricity use can be realized through staff education, timers, and occupancy sensors.
- **Purchase Energy Efficient Equipment:** Buy only Energy Star rated equipment.
- **Light Roofs:** When possible, repaint metal roofs with light-colored paint to reflect sunlight.
- **Plant Trees:** Homes on tree-lined streets have lower heating and cooling costs.

### **Lessons Learned**

**Resources for Coordination and Tracking:** The City shows its commitment to climate protection by designating staff with formal duties and empowerment to work on the city's climate protection plan.

### **Integration of Climate Protection into Long-Term Planning.**

**A Strong Local Elected Champion:** An elected leader must keep this issue on the agenda to ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to implementing the city's climate action plan.

**A Network of People and Governments who Share a Commitment to Action:** Climate action is more effective when government entities collaborate on cross-border actions.

### **Climate Protection Benefits**

**Saves Taxpayer Dollars:** Actions that reduce global warming pollution also reduce electricity and fuel use, minimizing energy costs for citizens, businesses, and local governments.

**Builds the Local Economy and Creates Jobs:** Decreasing energy costs and providing new energy services and technologies give local governments and private firms a competitive edge. Demand for

energy efficient products and services and for new or alternative energy technologies expands local businesses and creates local jobs.

**Improves Air Quality and Public Health:** Reducing global warming pollution also helps cities comply with federal air quality regulations and preserves federal funding for local projects. Encouraging residents to walk or ride bikes instead of driving cars will increase their physical well-being.

**Improves Community Livability:** Cutting global warming pollution includes measures that also reduce car dependency and traffic congestion and contribute to more efficient land use patterns and walkable neighborhoods. These types of measures build a more livable community.

**Connects City with National Leaders and Resources:** Local leaders who now make the commitment to advance climate protection measures are linking their communities to the cutting edge of sustainability.

**Creates a Legacy of Leadership:** Taking action on climate change provides tangible benefits for citizens today and ensures that future generations will have access to the resources that support healthy, prosperous, and livable communities.

### **Milestones of Developing a Local Climate Protection Action Plan**

- **Conduct a Baseline Inventory of global warming pollutants** produced by government and the community. This inventory provides a benchmark against which improvements can be measured and identifies the activities that contribute to GHG emissions. Data is collected about energy management, recycling and waste reduction, transportation, and land use.
- **Establish a target to lower emissions** to create a tangible goal and metric to guide the planning and implementation of the community's action plan. The target in the US Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement is to reduce emissions by a minimum of 7% below 1990 levels by 2012.
- **Develop a local Climate Action Plan (CAP) to implement actions that reduce global warming pollutants.** The CAP includes an implementation time line for reduction measures, costs and financing mechanisms, assignment to city departments, and actions the city must implement to achieve its target. The majority of measures fall into four categories: energy management, transportation, waste reduction, and land use. Common measures include energy efficiency improvements to municipal buildings and water treatment facilities, streetlight retrofits, public transit improvements, and installation of renewable power applications.
- **Implement the local CAP.** Successful implementation of action identified in the local CAP depends on such factors as management and staffing, financing, a realistic time line, and stakeholder involvement in appropriate aspects of the Plan to build community support.
- **Measure, verify, and report performance.** Verification of progress ensures integrity and accuracy in the city's efforts to achieve the GHG reduction target. Tracking progress builds political support, informs the process, and often drives further city investment to advance climate protection.

Resources: US Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement: Climate Action Handbook ([www.coolmayors.com](http://www.coolmayors.com)).

Louise Gorenflo prepared this fact sheet to encourage civic involvement in community problem-solving. Contributions made to The Learning Community are tax deductible. You may send your contributions to or request information from The Learning Community at 184 Hood Drive, Crossville TN 38555 (484-2633.)