

COOL CITIES: “U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement”

Cities are taking the lead with the “U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement” initiated by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels. Introduced on February 16, 2005—the same day that the Kyoto Protocol international global warming treaty took effect in 141 nations—the agreement is gathering support around the country and has earned the backing of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Getting your village to become part of the fight against carbon dioxide (CO₂) pollution is as simple as the four steps outlined below. These steps are modeled on the Cities for Climate Protection program, an initiative run by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). See iclei.org

Step 1: Take the “Cool Cities” Pledge

The first step towards curbing CO₂ pollution in your community is for your village to sign the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. This agreement sets the goal of reducing citywide global warming CO₂ pollution to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

Step 2: Conduct a Global Warming Emissions Inventory

The next step is to conduct an inventory of your village’s current CO₂ emissions. This information will identify the village’s major CO₂ sources (and the greatest opportunities for reductions), and will provide a baseline to judge the village’s progress towards its goal. Villages can receive technical assistance from a variety of sources including state and federal agencies as well as ICLEI through its Cities for Climate Protection program.

Step 3: Create a Solutions Plan

After your village completes its emissions inventory, develop a solutions plan that can reduce emissions while lowering energy costs for your village. While every village’s energy solutions plan will be unique, there are three important strategies: **Green Vehicle Fleets**, **Energy Efficiency**, and **Renewable Energy**. In some combination, these solutions will form the foundation of your village’s comprehensive energy-saving plan.

Step 4: Implement and Monitor Progress

Of course, a plan alone cannot cut CO₂ pollution. It is essential to put the plan into action and monitor its progress periodically.

Green Vehicle Solutions

Improving automobile fuel economy is the biggest single step to curbing CO₂ pollution, since every gallon of gasoline burned creates 28 pounds of heat-trapping carbon dioxide pollution.

Solution #1—Green Fleets

From police departments and school districts to administrative agencies and taxi services, green fleets are a winning solution. [Source: greenfleets.org] For a general overview and step-by-step advice for writing a green fleets ordinance, go to greenfleets.org/stepone.html. See Denver’s ordinance at www.greenfleets.org/denverrevised.html

Solution #2—Hybrid Vehicle Incentives

In addition to purchasing hybrid vehicles for village fleets, local governments can encourage citizens and businesses to buy hybrid vehicles with a wide range of incentives. Some municipalities are already providing incentives such as free parking for hybrid vehicles and lower registration fees and taxes.

Solution #3—Clean Buses

Residents have long had to endure the sight and smell of black smoke belching from dirty diesel-engine buses. Now many cities are replacing these polluting old buses with buses that run on cleaner compressed natural gas (CNG) or with hybrid-electric diesel engines. Details on the city of Houston’s green fleets program are available at: houstontx.gov/mayor/press/20050408.html. Learn about Charlotte’s progress and email Charlotte’s Fleet Environmental Analyst David Friday at dfriday@ci.charlotte.nc.us. Visit Marion County Public Affairs department’s web site at marioncountyfl.org.

Energy Efficiency Solutions

The policies outlined below represent some of the most effective steps currently being taken.

Solution #1—Making New Buildings More Energy Efficient

Incorporating energy efficiency requirements into municipal building codes increases the overall energy efficiency of new buildings. Many cities have chosen to adopt the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

standards created by the United States Green Building Council (usgbc.org). LEED standards provide energy efficient design guidelines for a variety of building types and developments. Read about Scottsdale's green building program at scottsdaleaz.gov/greenbuilding.

Solution #2—Energy Efficiency Retrofits to Existing Buildings

The U.S. Green Building Council has also developed LEED standards for existing buildings. The standards provide guidance on improving the energy efficiency of building operations and other systems without making major changes to the interior and exterior of the building.

Solution #3—Energy Efficient Street Lighting

By replacing traditional light fixtures with super-efficient light emitting diode (LED) bulbs, cities are reaping energy and cost savings. LED signals require less maintenance than conventional lighting. Read Salt Lake City's plan at slcgov.com/environment/actionplan.htm

Solution #4—Public Benefit Funds

If your local government has a municipal utility, it can set up a local Public Benefits Fund (PBF), where a small surcharge on consumer energy bills is used to create a fund to finance energy efficiency projects in the utility service area, thus lowering the overall energy costs for consumers.

Solution #5—Combined Heat and Power

Villages and businesses can also benefit from energy efficient combined heat and power (CHP) systems. In Twin Falls, Idaho, in an innovative financing agreement, the school district signed an energy savings performance contract with Minnesota-based Honeywell Corporation. Under a performance contract, a private company pays to make energy efficient improvements and is then reimbursed with the money saved through lower energy bills over the lifetime of the project. See newsite.schoolfacilities.com/cd_1695.aspx. During the long, cold Minnesota winters, the majority of the buildings in downtown Saint Paul stay warm using District Energy's energy-efficient combined heat and power (CHP) system. The system uses heat drawn from a biomass-fired power plant located in the city. See details of its CHP system at districtenergy.com/currentactivities/chp.html

Renewable Energy Solutions

By harnessing natural sources of energy like the sun and the wind, renewable energy sources can replace our reliance power plants that rely on fossil fuels. Currently, dirty fossil fuel power plants account for over a third of the nation's total global warming emissions.

Solution #1—Renewable Energy Standards

A renewable energy standard requires an increase in the percentage of electricity from clean, renewable energy sources (such as wind and solar power) in a city or utility area by a specific target date. Phase these standards over time so that renewable energy capacity can be built and incorporated into the necessary energy management and reliability plans.

Solution #2—Solar and Wind Installations

Some municipalities are moving forward by financing the construction of renewable energy projects. In some cases, cities are working with local municipal utilities to construct wind turbines. In other cases, cities are working with privately owned utilities and renewable energy developers to construct solar arrays on city buildings, schools, and homes. See Fort Collins' Electric Energy Supply Policy at ci.fort-collins.co.us/utilities/energypolicy.php. Last year, the citizens of Columbia, Missouri approved a plan requiring the city to increase its use of renewable energy sources, like wind and solar power, over the next 20 years. See dsireusa.org/documents/Incentives/MO04R.htm.

Learn more at waverlyia.com

Solution #3—City Utility Contracts

Some municipalities are incorporating renewable energy requirements into their contract renewals with privately owned local utilities.

Summary to Re-Energizing Your City

1. Join the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to reduce global warming pollution
2. Green your city's vehicle fleets with hybrid and other cleaner cars
3. Modernize city buildings with moneysaving energy efficiency technology
4. Invest in clean and safe, renewable energy

LEARN MORE: sierraclub.org/coolcities

MORE COOL CITY SOLUTION RESOURCES

Several organizations have compiled useful resources for energy saving actions for cities. The following online documents will give you many ideas and case studies:

Climate Action Handbook by ICLEI, with support from the City of Seattle and U.S. Conference of Mayors

<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/climate/docs/ClimateActionHandbook.pdf>

Mayors Agreement Q & A

http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/environment/usm/CPA-FAQ_01-20-06-FINAL.pdf

Sierra Club's Rocky Mountain Chapter's report, "Sustainable Cities: Best Practices in Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency, Austin, Chicago, Fort Collins & Portland"

<http://www.rmc.sierraclub.org/energy/library/sustainablecities.pdf>

Massachusetts Climate Action Network "Early Action Items"

<http://www.massclimateaction.org/MCANdocspdf/Early%20Action%20Items.pdf>

Apollo Alliance and ICLEI's "High Performance Cities: A Guide to Energy-Saving Policies for Urban Areas"

<http://www.apolloalliance.org/docUploads/apollo%2Dfinal%2Epdf>

"Selected Best Practices for Successful City Energy Initiatives, U.S. Mayors Conference

http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/documents/bestenergy2001.pdf