

## GLOBAL WARMING: LOCAL SOLUTIONS

“If you think technology or industry or Martians will save us, you’re nuts.  
It depends on what each one of us does.”

*Peter Raven, Director, Missouri Botanical Garden, on global warming*

Each of us is responsible for what our government does to ensure the survival of Earth as a habitable planet. The exhortation to “Think Globally, Act Locally” has never been more urgent.

### **Every city must take responsibility for greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction.**

Here are suggestions for easy, inexpensive first steps in cities that cannot yet commit to larger efforts and expenditures. When these beginning efforts save money, it will be much easier to move forward with actions that require more planning and investment. Fortunately, almost every action that reduces energy use also cuts long-term costs and improves health and community livability.

### **Immediately and at little or no cost, any city government can:**

- Establish a committee or task force to study and plan for what can be done now and what can be done in later phases of purchasing, retrofitting, expansion, and legislation.
- Discover what energy-saving practices are already in place. Reinforce and/or expand them.
- Educate employees about energy efficiency. Ask local environmental groups for help.
- Reinforce education with policies and actions. You might:
  - Tour the Alberici Headquarters building, among the greenest buildings in the world.*
  - Devise a reward system by which employees are rewarded for responsible behavior.*
  - Initiate ways for employees to earn points that determine a year-end “green bonus”.*
- Reprogram the thermostats: up/down by two degrees (more at night).
- Implement a “lights out” program: Rooms dark when not in use. Buildings dark at night.
- Switch old T12 fluorescent lights to the newer, more efficient T8 lights.
- Switch incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs).
  - Provide for community recycling of CFLs.*
- Switch to LEDs (light emitting diodes) for traffic lights and exit signs.
  - When adding streetlights or park lighting, consider the new super-efficient LED possibilities.*
- Unplug computers or flip the power strip. Computers continue to use power when switched off.
- Appoint someone in every department to monitor lights, thermostats and computers.
- Switch the default setting on the copy machine to *two-sided*.
- Establish policies requiring the use of both sides of each sheet of paper at least 80% of the time.
- Buy 100% recycled paper.
- Discontinue purchase of bottled water for employees and city functions.
- Recycle everything possible. Make recycling mandatory and convenient.
- Share vehicles. When replacing city vehicles, buy plug-in electric or hybrids.
  - Question the notion that currently available biofuels are the avenue to reducing GHGs.*
- Make “no idling” an absolute for city vehicles: a 30-second limit unless stopped in traffic.

- Improve sidewalks and bike paths.
- Make public transportation more user-friendly with benches, shelters and good signage.
- Reward employees who walk, bike or take public transportation to work.
  - Consider a 1/2 hour later starting time or points toward the “green bonus”.*
- Provide “preferred parking” for electric cars and hybrids that are truly green.
- Use train, bus or carpool when city officials and employees travel to regional meetings.
- Use native plants when landscaping. Plant trees.
- Create prairies rather than lawns when possible. Mow as seldom as possible.
- Don't pave anything that can be left permeable or partially permeable.
- Don't let developers remove trees needlessly. Encourage green space.
- Revise the local occupancy permit code to require R-38 attic insulation.
- Begin work to modify the local building code to require energy-efficient new buildings.
- Delay the remodeling or building of new city structures until the information and money is available to make them certifiably green.
- Instigate a two-pronged public service campaign to educate your citizens about:
  - (1) *what the city is doing to curb GHG emissions and how it's saving taxpayer money.*
  - (2) *how businesses and households can save money and reduce GHG emissions that contribute to global warming.*

When awareness and support is sufficient, the mayor should sign the **U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement**<sup>1</sup> and begin building a long term plan. The process will be greatly simplified by joining **ICLEI**<sup>2</sup> (Local Governments for Sustainability) to obtain software and other assistance for inventorying the city's greenhouse emissions and developing a formal Climate Action Plan. Membership carries annual dues (there are 10 levels based on population). Examples: \$600 for a city up to 50,000 and \$2,750 for a city of 300,001 to 500,000. To inquire about membership, cost, services and resources contact [membership-usa@iclei.org](mailto:membership-usa@iclei.org).

### Online resources for now and later:

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement: [www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/agreement](http://www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/agreement)

Cool Mayors: [www.coolmayors.org](http://www.coolmayors.org)

Cool Cities (Sierra Club): [www.coolcities.us](http://www.coolcities.us)

<sup>2</sup>Local Governments for Sustainability: [www.iclei.org/usa](http://www.iclei.org/usa)

Energy Star: [www.energystar.gov/](http://www.energystar.gov/)

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (DOE): [www1.eere.energy.gov](http://www1.eere.energy.gov)

Energy Information Administration: [www.eia.doe.gov/](http://www.eia.doe.gov/)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: [www.epa.gov/climatechange/](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/)

American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy: [www.aceee.org/buildings](http://www.aceee.org/buildings)

Union of Concerned Scientists: [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org)

Pew Center on Climate Change: [www.pewclimate.org](http://www.pewclimate.org)

Natural Resources Defense Council: [www.nrdc.org/greenliving](http://www.nrdc.org/greenliving)

This information has been compiled by the  
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