



National League of Cities

How Cities Are “Going Green”

One of NLC’s **key lobbying priorities for 2008 is to support full funding (\$2 billion)** for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.

Why is this important to the seven out of 10 Americans who live in cities and towns?

Municipal governments can have considerable influence over greenhouse gas emissions. Funding from the Grant can help cities and towns leverage more dollars from other sources.

Potential areas for focus include:

- Public buildings and facilities such as sports stadiums, landfills, and waste treatment plants, which either consume large amounts of energy or produce greenhouse gases;
- Building codes to encourage energy efficiency;
- Regulation of automobile parking, roadways and traffic flow, and use of energy-efficient street lights;
- Procurement of “green” products such as recycled paper and fleets of clean energy vehicles (transit, trucks or autos); and
- Use of renewable energy (solar, wind, biogas) as sources for local utilities.

Cities are already taking action to save money; promote new jobs; reduce waste; and support new technology. The grant will allow local leaders to take new actions or build on already successful programs.

Some examples of cities leading the way:

- **Austin’s** *Climate Protection Plan* will “eliminate carbon dioxide emissions from all municipal activities by the year 2020.” It includes powering all city facilities with renewable energy, converting city vehicles to alternative fuels and electric power, and curbing greenhouse gas emissions in every city department. It will also require all new single-family homes to be “zero-net-energy-capable” – running solely on renewable energy like wind and solar, within ten years.
- **Louisville** has a “Partnership for a Green City” with Jefferson County Public Schools and the University of Louisville. The three entities provide a comprehensive environmental program aimed at promoting energy conservation and reducing energy costs. The goal is for all school buildings to be “green” buildings. The partnership harnesses the collective knowledge of three institutions. Students from the Jefferson County school district and the University of Louisville participate in energy audits of buildings and conservation awareness campaigns.
- **Westwood, NJ**, calls itself a “laboratory of innovation in local government” and is the first municipality on the East Coast to use hybrid vehicles in its police department. Based on the first two months of usage, the city estimates it will save \$23,150 a year in gas – just under the purchase price for the vehicle.
- **Gainesville, Fla**, recently passed an ordinance giving a \$300 discount on building permits for certified green projects, as well as free fast-track permitting.

- **Waterbury, Vt**, works with the Waterbury Local Energy Action Partnership to sponsor an annual Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Rally for its residents and local businesses. While neighboring **Worcester** has developed a local carbon offset program called “Offsets You Can See”.
- **Chicago** now has more than one million square feet of planted roofs in the city, including a 38,300-square-foot garden on top of city hall.
- **Bluffton, Ind**, has a partnership with Wal-Mart, which is donating energy-saving light bulbs to homeowners throughout the city as part of the “Brighten Up Bluffton” campaign.
- Juwi International, a manufacturer of wind turbines, recently opened a plant in **Cleveland, Ohio**, part of a proposed project to put wind turbines in Lake Erie. Vestas Wind Systems opened its first wind turbine plant in **Windsor, Colo**.
- **Tucson** is “all about the sun” and is rolling out the green carpet for green jobs, including a new plant just opened by Global Solar Energy to manufacture thin-film solar cells for glass modules.
- **Minneapolis and St. Paul** have an agreement with Toyota, in which the cities each receive \$300,000 over three years and the use of 10 vehicles in exchange for promotional and marketing opportunities for Toyota.
- **Dallas** is purchasing 40 percent of its power from renewable energy; has 16 of its buildings at LEED standards; reduced its energy use by almost five percent a year in the past five years; and required all city computers and new construction contracts to have the Energy Star label to reduce energy usage, among other activities.
- *Clean and Green* is a **Riverside, Calif**, program in which renewable “green” power sources make up 12 percent of the city’s energy portfolio. The city has seven solar photovoltaic (PV) generation stations and nine PV facilities in development. The city also contracts for geothermal power, hydroelectric power, wind power, and landfill gas power. The city’s Tree Power Program distributed more than 20,000 free shade trees to residents. Riverside also implemented *Clean Air Choice* to give consumers “air friendly” information when buying new cars, and has a public access, compressed natural gas (CNG) fast-fill fueling station.
- **Bismarck, ND**, recently added a biomass boiler to heat a new Household Hazardous Waste Center. The city partially funded the biomass boiler through a ND Forest Service grant. Bismarck uses wood items such as tree debris, logs and pallets that have been brought to the landfill as a fuel source to heat the Waste Center and equipment storage building. In 2007, 40 percent of the municipal solid waste volume brought into the Bismarck landfill was either reused or recycled for other purposes and taken out of the waste stream.
- **Richmond, Va**, has been designated a “Cool City” and is focusing on a number of activities through its Parks and Recreation Department.
- **Santa Monica, Calif**, has had a comprehensive Environmentally Preferable Purchasing program in place since 1994. In 2001, the city succeeded in reaching its goal of having 75 percent of its public works vehicle fleet operating on reduced-emission fuels. Currently, 81 percent of the city’s entire vehicle fleet is climate friendly, including more than half of the city’s Big Blue Bus transit fleet.
- The Metro **Denver** Mayors Caucus has developed a strong policy to take action in several areas, including energy efficiency, consumer education and collaboration among more than 37 cities in and around Denver.
- The Cambridge Energy Alliance (CEA) is a city-sponsored non-profit organization dedicated to significantly reducing energy and water use in **Cambridge, Mass**. The program provides privately financed energy audits and building-energy-efficiency and renewable-energy upgrades to anyone interested. The Alliance has partnered with private banks and investment banks that

can offer below-market financing for the upgrades. Loan payments are structured to either match or exceed estimated energy savings. During the next five to six years, CEA seeks to serve 50 percent of all buildings in Cambridge and reduce electricity demand by 15 percent, with comparable reductions in heating and water use.