



Involving the Public in Climate Change Action – Ten Case Stories

These case stories were compiled in May 2009 in partnership with the California Air Resources Board. Additional climate change information is available at www.ca-ilg.org/climatechange.

1) Community: Monterey County

Population: 408,238

Summary

Monterey County offers homeowners a voluntary green building certification program, StepUp2Green, as an opportunity to have their home green certified. The goal is to create a standardized certification process that will encourage home retrofitting and assure homeowners that they are making improvements that effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Program Highlights

- Members of the Monterey County's business, government, and environmental sustainability communities met regularly, learned about green building, and collaboratively developed the program
- The program reduces greenhouse gas emissions, helps people sell their homes, and thus stimulates the economy
- Standardized inspections protect homeowners from contractors that use improper retrofitting techniques
- By tracking program participation, the county can estimate community-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

Lessons Learned

- Using an incentive based program is crucial.
- It is important to bring participants up to speed, let everyone contribute to achieve a positive result, and encourage community ownership.

Climate Action Connection

Providing reliable and objective information helps residents understand the causes, impacts and solutions to climate change. Involving the public in the development of climate change policies and programs builds community awareness and support for local actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including their co-benefits.

Monterey County's program encourages home retrofits, protects consumers, stimulates the economy by making homes more attractive for resale, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

- While it is important to be inclusive in the public engagement process, at a certain point you have to go with who is interested.

Resources to Learn More

- [Monterey County's StepUp2Green](#)

The Rest of the Story...

The impetus for Monterey County's StepUp2Green home certification program came from realtors and builders on the County Business Council. Individuals in the home industry wanted to explore how to capitalize on the potential for energy savings and creating jobs. Eighteen residents representing the business community, government, and environmental sustainability advocates formed a steering committee to collaboratively develop a voluntary incentive based program to standardize and promote good practices in making area homes more energy efficient.

Program Details

The program provides a checklist that offers homeowners energy, water, and resource saving steps they can take to make their homes more efficient and reduce their green house gas (GHG) emissions. Three different levels of award certification are available to homeowners who take steps to "green" their homes and have these "steps" certified by a trained county inspector. In order to be certified, homeowners must calculate their reductions in GHG emissions, and the county tracks the resulting emissions reductions.

The program also serves as a consumer protection tool since county staff have found when inspecting retrofitted homes that some installations had not been done properly. In addition, all 14 building officials in the county have endorsed the program and helped to ensure that the recommended steps were consistent with local building and zoning codes.

The StepUp2Green program involves county building inspectors and also indirectly assists realtors and builders by helping residents who want to improve their home's marketability when it is put up for sale.

2) Community: San Mateo County

Population: 712,690

Summary

San Mateo County has undertaken a variety of efforts to educate residents, local businesses and employees about climate change and green practices, including an educational website, a “green bag” lunch lecture series, and a green business certification program. It currently is seeking resident input on how to best promote solar and other renewable energy systems for local homes and businesses.

Program Highlights

- The county’s Green Business program has certified over eighty businesses that receive special recognition and promotional materials
- The “Green Bag” lunch lecture series educates county residents and employees about topics such as new technologies for clean transportation
- The county’s Green Portal website includes information for individuals and businesses looking for ways to “go green.”

Lessons Learned

- The broader consensus around the goal, the greater the potential that it will be successful by being accepted and implemented by the broader community.
- Give people the opportunity to be involved around whatever aspect they feel most passionate.

Climate Action Connection

Providing reliable and objective information helps residents understand the causes, impacts, and solutions to climate change. Involving the public in the development of climate change policies and programs builds community awareness and support for local actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including their co-benefits.

By actively involving residents and businesses in developing climate change activities, San Mateo County has successfully promoted support for new programs and activities that individuals and businesses can embrace to reduce their carbon footprint.

Resources to Learn More

- [San Mateo County “Green Portal”](#)
- [San Mateo County “Recycleworks”](#)

The Rest of the Story...

San Mateo County has undertaken a number of activities to educate and motivate individuals and businesses to take action to address climate change. A “Green Team” composed of county agency staff was formed to learn about climate change and sustainability issues from university professors and other experts.

Green Web-Portal, Green Bag Lecture Series, and Green Business Certification

The team has created a “Green Portal” website that includes a wealth of information for individuals and businesses looking for ways to “go green,” reduce waste and carbon emissions, and save money. The site has green tips that anyone can use, a guide to local green events, such as farmers markets, an earth day celebration, and a series of “green bag” lunchtime lectures. Residents are encouraged to contact the Green Team with questions and comments through the Green Portal website.

The “Green Bag” lecture series began in January of 2009. So far, thirty to fifty residents have participated at each session and four or five hundred people are expected to participate in its first year. Speakers address subjects such as the impact of food choices on climate change, chemicals and climate change, and green building. The goal is to help county residents understand the environmental consequences of their actions and to help them make choices that are more environmentally friendly.

The county has certified over eighty businesses in its green business program, which is supported by PG&E and uses standard forms available from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Participating businesses are rewarded with a sticker and other promotional materials, special listing on the ABAG and county websites, and recognition at special events.

In April 2009, the county initiated a “Solar Roundtable” group to explore how the county can promote the installation of solar and other renewable energy systems on homes and businesses in the unincorporated area.

Read San Mateo County climate leadership case stories in [Green Building](#) and [Efficient Transportation](#).

3) Community: Yolo County

Population: 197,658

Summary

Yolo County is holding leadership summits with leaders from all jurisdictions within the county, including cities, schools, and the port to provide information about climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is also working to coordinate greenhouse gas emission reduction plans for each jurisdiction into an integrated regional effort.

Program Highlights

- In December of 2007, Yolo County convened a summit at which sixty local leaders signed a compact to measure current greenhouse gas emissions, set a reduction target, and prepared a plan to reach that target.
- The leadership group meets bi-monthly and functions as a clearinghouse for climate change related information in the county.
- With financial assistance from other agencies, the county supports climate change efforts by offering resources and information to the cities in the county.

Climate Action Connection

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Yolo County assists local agencies in the region by serving as a clearinghouse on climate change information and provides assistance to individual agencies in their respective climate change efforts.

Lessons Learned

- Involving the public in climate change action is hard work; people are interested, but coming up with ways in which people can participate and communicate is not easy.
- Although many climate change efforts focus on new construction, it is important to also reach existing residences and businesses to reduce energy and water use.
- A low carbon diet program that asks residents to lose 5,000 pounds of carbon from their lifestyle, piloted in the county by the City of Davis, may be a program that cities, schools, and other jurisdictions can use to reduce emissions.

Resources to Learn More

- Yolo County's Climate Change Initiative www.yolocounty.org ;under the "Hot Topics" heading, click on "Climate Change Initiative"

The Rest of the Story...

County Convenes Regional Summit

In December of 2007, Yolo County Supervisors and staff convened a leadership summit attended by over sixty leaders from area cities, public schools, U.C. Davis, a Native American tribe, the County Housing Authority, and the Port of West Sacramento. The purpose was to encourage regional leaders to take action on climate change and to explore opportunities for synergy and partnerships between these and other government entities. The group decided to institutionalize as a compact. Each member signed a resolution committing his or her agency to measure its baseline greenhouse gas emissions, set a reduction target, and adopt and implement a plan to reach this target.

The county received funding from the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District to allow county staff to provide assistance to area cities and schools and to connect them to resources and information needed to move forward to address climate change.

Compact As Clearinghouse

The compact functions as a clearinghouse for information related to climate change for elected officials and policymakers. Members meet bi-monthly to share information and learn from invited experts. The goal is to encourage and assist the members to reduce energy use and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Through public officials, the county is trying to reach the greater public. Invited speakers have addressed fleet management, best strategies to reduce GHG emissions, and financing strategies for solarizing homes – with an eye toward learning what is going on in cities and counties elsewhere.

Yolo County also is trying to coordinate with and assist efforts that cities in the county are already making. These efforts include public forums designed to educate residents, to encourage individual actions to address climate change, and to solicit resident input on local agency plans and actions. For example, the county participates in monthly "Green Team" meetings in Woodland and Davis, has supported a series of four public forums on climate change in the Davis, conducted educational seminars in West Sacramento on diesel emissions and green building practices, and put on a green themed festival in Winters.

4) Community: City of Fremont (Alameda County)

Population: 215,000

Summary

The Fremont city council appointed a “green” task force to provide recommendations on how the city could be more sustainable and address climate change. Prior to submittal of the Task Force’s recommendations to the City Council, 150 residents, including youth and adults, helped prioritize the recommendations at a Climate Change Workshop, which helped build community awareness and support for these efforts.

Program Highlights

- The City Council appointed a 7 member green task force to advise city leaders about how to improve the sustainability of city operations, including how to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- About 150 diverse residents, one third of them youth, attended a community event to prioritize the green task force recommendations and signed pledges to reduce their own carbon footprints.
- The City Council adopted many of the recommendations, including setting a GHG reduction goal, buying alternative fuel vehicles, and setting aside funds to develop a climate action plan.

Climate Action Connection

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Engaging youth in community deliberations helps enrich Fremont’s climate action recommendations and educates youth about climate change and sustainability issues.

Lessons Learned

- Young people are interested in climate change and want to do something about it. Soliciting youth input is a good opportunity to get young people energized and involved in local government.
- It is important to be realistic when organizing community workshops, which are labor intensive. Involving youth adds an additional dimension to the effort and may require more staff time than is otherwise necessary for traditional public meetings.
- Be sure to alert participants if they need to bring personal information to community events on sustainability or climate change, such as their utility bills.

- People serving on a task force usually have limited time to volunteer; it helps if staff can do research and provide them with background information to assist in their deliberations.

Resources to Learn More

- Visit the City's [Green Efforts website](#) to view the Green Task Force recommendations and more

The Rest of the Story...

The City of Fremont has been involving residents in updating its General Plan for the last few years. This process included community workshops on different topics, such as climate change. City officials and staff noted a high level of community interest in climate change. In November of 2007, the Mayor and City Council appointed a seven member resident task force to study the issue and make recommendations to the city council about how the city could reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and generally be more sustainable in city policies and actions.

Task Force Created

The task force was composed of ethnically diverse community members who were environmental professionals, environmental advocates, and individuals who were interested in the subject and active in the community. City staff conducted research to provide the task forced members with factual information that would allow them to make well-informed recommendations.

In July of 2008, the green task force and city staff presented their recommendations to the city council. They suggested that the council share the recommendations with the greater community for their input before making any decisions. Using the extensive outreach network that the city staff had developed in the process of inviting residents to be a part of the general plan update, community members were invited to an interactive event in September of 2008. The goals of the event were to get broad community input on the task force recommendations, educate residents about climate change, and encourage them to take action.

Involving City Youth

The city recognized that sustainability and climate change is of interest to many young people. Although it can be challenging to attract high levels of youth participation in public engagement activities, a special effort was made to reach out and invite young people to participate. For example, the city set up a Facebook event page to take advantage of youth interest in social networking. City staff also asked students in an active high school environmental club to do a presentation on how to set up a school

recycling program. These young people invited their peers, and city staff arranged to provide required community service hours to students who attended.

As a result, unlike many traditional public meetings, about a third of the 150 participants were youth. Participants learned about options for “green” action and broke into groups to discuss specific topics such as reducing vehicle miles traveled or educational outreach efforts. They did a “sticky dot” exercise to prioritize lists of recommendations and signed pledges to reduce their carbon footprint. The city plans to continue to engage residents – including youth – as it develops a climate change action plan.

Read Fremont climate leadership case stories on [Green Building](#) and [Land Use & Community Design](#).

5) Community: City of Manhattan Beach (Los Angeles County)

Population: 33,852

Summary

Manhattan Beach established an Environmental Task Force composed of residents and city officials to develop recommendations to the City Council to address a range of environmental challenges, including the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Program Highlights

- Diverse 19-member Task Force includes residents of all ages interested in environmental issues with a wide array of skills and experience, including middle school students and senior citizens
- Task Force holds public meetings and focus groups to gather broader public input.
- Task force recommendations adopted by the city are making an impact.

Lessons Learned

- It is helpful to have residents review what other cities have done to help guide their initial efforts
- Because addressing climate change can be overwhelming, breaking into smaller working groups to address specific topics, such as transportation, energy efficiency, and education, makes the job more manageable
- Having a community based group to help get the word out about what people can do to address climate change is useful. This is especially important for proposed lifestyle or regulatory changes.

Climate Action Connection

Providing reliable and objective information helps residents understand the causes, impacts, and solutions to climate change. Involving the public in the development of climate change policies and programs builds community awareness and support for local actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including their co-benefits.

By working with a community task force, Manhattan Beach was able to gather broad input and adopt regulatory changes that had community support, as well as promote personal lifestyle changes that can reduce greenhouse emissions.

Resources to Learn More

- [City of Manhattan Beach](#) - click on “Going Green”

The Rest of the Story...

Task Force Created

In September 2008, the Manhattan Beach city council appointed 16 residents to serve on an Environmental Task Force. Working alongside two City Council members and a School Board member, the Task Force helps the city tackle a range of environmental issues, including climate change, by vetting ideas and making recommendations for appropriate actions to the City Council.

Members of the Task Force were selected from over thirty applicants based on their passion, relevant expertise, and skill sets. Two slots were set aside for youth members. The Task Force is divided into four sub-committees, each of which has city staff assigned to assist them. A five member sub-committee focuses on how the city and the entire community can reach the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels. The public and press are also invited to monthly Task Force meetings.

In April of 2009, the Task Force engaged the greater public about the city's climate change efforts at an Earth Day festival. To assist them in their deliberations, city staff prepared a handbook for Task Force members with relevant background information. Task Force members also are encouraged to do their own research and share their findings. The city looks to the Task Force to help it choose the best strategy to address climate change, and also plans to hold a larger, town hall style community meeting to engage more residents in considering future climate change actions.

Although the Task Force has existed only for a short time, it has already provided recommendations that were approved by the city council, including new green building requirements and water conservation measures.

6) Community: City of Morgan Hill (Santa Clara County)

Population: 38,000

Summary

Morgan Hill established a “Carbon Diet Club” to encourage residents to “lose” 5,000 pounds of carbon in 30 days. The program engages residents in small groups over a 30-day period to support the lasting behavior changes needed to address climate change.

Program Highlights

- Participating families attend three one-hour facilitated meetings to learn about climate change, calculate their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and form an action plan to reduce their carbon footprint.
- A workbook from the Empowerment Institute and a Toolkit developed by city staff give participants concrete actions to take and a measure of the impact of each action on GHG emissions.
- Small groups of 5-10 households support and encourage each other, similar to a Weightwatchers™ program.

Lessons Learned

- Explore how climate change applies to different groups in the community.
- Reach out to people through congregations, businesses, and schools.
- Offer a free energy audit as a “carrot” to encourage participation.

Resources to Learn More

- [Morgan Hill Carbon Diet](#)
- [Empowerment Institute Low Carbon Diet Workbook](#)

Climate Action Connection

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Morgan Hill's Carbon Diet Program aims to enroll 4,400 households by 2012, which would help the city reach halfway towards its goal of reducing GHG emissions to 25 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.

The Rest of the Story...

Morgan Hill began its Carbon Diet program in September 2007, after recognizing the need to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions. Prior to this, the city had sent out informational inserts to residents, but did not know if residents were changing their behavior. The city adopted the Carbon Diet program as a way to encourage measurable individual action.

Carbon Diet Program Encourages Individual Action

Over a four-week period, participants attend three, one-hour long evening meetings facilitated by city staff. Groups are limited to between five and ten households, since small group interaction allows people to feel more comfortable learning new ideas and makes them more likely to change their behavior. Through workbook activities, a toolkit provided by the city, and facilitated discussions, residents learn about climate change, calculate their GHG emissions, and form an action plan to reduce their annual household emissions by at least 5,000 pounds. They also learn about specific activities and the impact of each, such as installing a water heater blanket to reduce annual carbon emissions by 700 pounds.

By meeting over a period of several weeks, Carbon Dieters are able to check in and report how they are doing at changing their behavior to reduce their carbon footprint, and encourage and support each other in their efforts. The city plans to follow up with participants after a year with a written survey and phone calls to measure how lasting an impact on behavior this program actually had.

One city staff member noted that the reason why climate change is so hard address is that it covers multiple behaviors and encompasses much more than just recycling or any one activity, thus making it difficult to develop a marketing campaign. The carbon diet team approach breaks down those barriers.

As of April 2009, Morgan Hill's Carbon Dieters had lost over 324,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. The long term goal is to enroll 4,400 households in the program, helping the city achieve half of its goal to reduce community-wide GHG emissions by 25 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.

Read the Morgan Hill climate leadership case story on [Green Building](#).

7) Community: City of Mountain View

Population: 69,276

Summary

In early 2008, at the request of the Mountain View city council, over sixty Mountain View residents volunteered to participate in an environmental sustainability task force. They met over a seven-month period and delivered eighty-nine recommendations to the city council on how the city could become more sustainable and reduce levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Program Highlights

- A sixty-eight member volunteer task force and steering committee met for seven months in 2008 and provided eighty-nine recommendations and an action plan to the city council on how to achieve greenhouse gas reductions.
- The task force collaboratively developed an environmental sustainability action plan that was adopted by the city council in March of 2009.
- Interested community members have formed a “Green Mountain View” group to work with the city council and staff to implement some of the environmental task force recommendations.

Climate Action Connection

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Mountain View tapped into the passion and creativity of community residents to develop its climate action plan.

Lessons Learned

- Make everything as transparent as possible. Providing all materials on the website and in a timely fashion helps promote full transparency.
- Include as many avenues of participation as possible, both in person, on the web, and via email.
- Find ways to make the process available to people who may otherwise have difficulty participating, such as people who are not native English speakers, youth, and the elderly.
- Offer ample opportunity for anyone to be engaged – the seven month process provided a lengthy opportunity for community members to make their voices heard.

Resources to Learn More

- [Mountain View Environmental Sustainability Program](#) - click on the “Environmental Sustainability” link on the left under “City News and Events”

The Rest of the Story...

Recognizing the need to involve residents in order to successfully reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions community-wide, in early 2008, the Mountain View city council asked residents to volunteer to serve on an Environmental Sustainability Task Force and steering committee. All sixty-eight residents who volunteered were appointed to the task force or steering committee.

Task Force’s Public Process

The Task Force split into eleven working groups in order to be able to study specific issues thoroughly. In the process of crafting, refining, and prioritizing recommendations on how to reduce GHG emissions and create a sustainable community, they met dozens of times over a seven month period. This included twenty publicly noticed meetings that involved more than seventy-five residents.

City staff observed that the large task force worked smoothly and effectively. It was a self-selecting group of community residents who were interested in the topic, reflecting a mix of backgrounds and ethnicities, including Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, Russian, as well as youth participants. Some of the non-native English speakers reached out to their faith communities and, through other networks, to encourage broad participation from all segments of the city. A translator enabled non-English speakers to participate in the public meetings and the effort was publicized in multiple languages spoken in the city. The city youth coordinator reached out to schools and youth groups to encourage youth participation.

Eighty-nine Recommendations Offered

The Task Force offered eighty-nine recommendations in a 300-page report to the city council. An environmental consulting firm working with the city described it as one of the best resident driven report they had ever seen.

The city council formed a subcommittee to work with the task force to prioritize the eighty-nine recommendations. An environmental sustainability action plan that lays out a road map for city actions over the next eighteen months includes 25 of the eighty-nine recommendations for action during this initial period. Thirteen actions to be implemented in 2008-2009 were approved for funding by the city council in June 2009. Community members have formed a “Green Mountain View” group that meets monthly

to work with city council and staff to implement many of the environmental task force recommendations.

8) Community: City of Pasadena (Los Angeles County)

Population: 146,518

Summary

The City of Pasadena appointed a resident environmental advisory commission that meets monthly with city staff and the public. The city also organizes events to increase awareness of the importance of climate change and other environmental efforts among all residents, including a two-day Green Pasadena Leadership Summit that involved six hundred residents in developing the city's "Green Action Plan."

Program Highlights

- The City Council appointed nine residents to serve on an environmental advisory commission that meets monthly with city staff to monitor the progress of the city's Green City Action Plan and to serve as a forum for public engagement.
- The city partnered with a nonprofit organization to organize a weekend-long Green Pasadena Leadership Summit to educate the community about the city's green action plan and get thoughtful input on the plan from a broad cross section of residents.
- The city conducts public outreach on climate change, including community meetings on specific topics such as green building seminars, solar energy workshops, and various types of water conservation workshops, as well as presentations and surveys at an annual earth day event that draws over 5,000 people.

Climate Action Connection

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Seeking public input on city climate action strategies and providing practical information to residents promotes community acceptance and action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Lessons Learned

- Educating residents about the personal, community, and environmental benefits of actions such as recycling, reducing energy use, and incorporating "green" building works better than "doom and gloom" messages.
- It is important is to engage and inform people about how to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

- There is a tremendous desire for action and specific information among residents on addressing climate change. Residents need practical information to help them embrace actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Resources to Learn More

- [Pasadena Green City website](#)
- [Green Practices Information for Pasadena City Staff](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Pasadena's "Green Team" was formed in 2006 and consists of city employees with the responsibility of developing a green city action plan. The team was asked to review the 2006 United Nation Urban Environmental Accords, which lists twenty-one actions cities can take to become more sustainable.

Green City Action Plan

The Green Team worked for six months to prepare a green city action plan that included over seventy initiatives for achieving urban sustainability. When the plan was presented to the city council in September of 2006, many residents showed up in support, and the plan was unanimously adopted. The City Council soon appointed a nine member environmental advisory commission and asked them to meet monthly with city staff to monitor the progress of the plan and to provide a forum for the public to provide input on environmental issues.

Green Pasadena Leadership Summit

In June 2007, the city joined with the nonprofit group Green Technology to create the Green Pasadena Leadership Summit, a weekend event designed to increase community awareness of the green city action plan, to engage residents in dialogue to measure their support, and to get help in prioritizing the seventy initiatives. The Mayor appointed a task force of thirty community leaders from the faith, education, and business sectors to help plan the event and target outreach to all parts of the community.

The six hundred residents who attended the Leadership Summit participated in education workshops and a ninety-minute facilitated session to rank the importance of each action item in the plan. The summit was an opportunity for the city to consider future "green" directions and for the public to see how they could remain actively engaged in the process.

9) Community: City of San Carlos (San Mateo County)

Population: 28,221

Summary

San Carlos offers a number of ways community members can participate in the city's efforts to address climate change. A subcommittee of the Citizens General Plan Advisory Committee is participating in the development of a climate action plan that will be integrated with the city's General Plan update. Two community forums involved diverse community members in the planning processes and engaged them in dialogue and choice exercises to prioritize potential climate change actions.

Program Highlights

- Over two hundred youth and adults in San Carlos participated in two community workshops to assist creating a 28-point climate action plan for the city.
- Climate action items are prioritized to identify those that have the most potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the least impact on the city's general fund.
- Residents concerned about climate change and the environment established a community task force, San Carlos Green, to collaborate with the city on green actions.
- The San Carlos Chamber of Commerce created a green business task force to promote green business practices in the monthly Chamber newsletter.

Lessons Learned

- Use different techniques to get the word out (e-mail, web site, posters, newsletters) and involve different types of groups; have evening meetings where possible to maximize participation.
- Community participation is important in addressing climate change since city operations only generate 1-3 percent of the total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Just because something happens in the city, doesn't mean the city has to be in the lead. Observed one city official, "If other people are willing to be in front of the parade, let's let them do it."

Climate Action Connection

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San Carlos is a charter member of the Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Climate Protection Initiative, working with all forty-two cities and counties in Silicon Valley to create Greenhouse Gas Inventories, Climate Action Plans and a purchasing pool to make clean energy more affordable in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Resources to Learn More

- [San Carlos Green Program](#)
- [San Carlos Green Community Task Force](#)
- [Bay Area Green Business Certification Program](#)

The Rest of the Story...

The original goals of San Carlos's efforts to develop a city green program were to include different sectors of the community, educate the public about climate change including how residents could reduce their collective carbon footprint, and ensure that all of the relevant stakeholders were involved in discussions about how to achieve the city's goals to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

City Involves the Community to Develop Climate Action Plan

To support the city's efforts, a group of interested residents formed a nonprofit task force called San Carlos Green. City staff asked them to reach out to the community at-large to educate and involve more people. The city also asked the local Chamber of Commerce to create a green business task force and to include a green column in its newsletter that is sent to eight hundred local businesses. The city collaborates with a variety of other local and regional groups and organizations to supplement limited city resources and to obtain expert assistance.

San Carlos calculated its community-wide carbon footprint and developed a 28-point climate action plan. The plan was developed with community participation, including input from over two hundred youth and adults who attended two community forums. Consultants facilitated small group discussions at the forums, as well as sticker voting exercises to enable participants to thoughtfully prioritize climate action items and to identify new items. A key consideration in evaluating the options was the potential financial impact on the city's budget. At a time when city budgets are being cut, it was important to be realistic and prioritize items that have the greatest potential impact on reducing carbon emissions with the least impact on the city's budget.

Working with the Business Community

The city's efforts to work with the business community have also been successful. By leveraging collaborative relationships, twenty local businesses are enrolled in San Mateo County's Green Business Certification program (part of the Association of Bay Area Government's Bay Area Green Business Certification Program), more than any other city in the county. The city suggests to local business owners that although the program may cost money initially, in the long run it will save more money and may give them a visible competitive edge. The San Carlos Chamber of Commerce recently teamed up with

Sustainable San Mateo County to create a local green business tradeshow at the local library which has since been repeated in several neighboring cities.

10) Community: City of South Pasadena (Los Angeles County)

Population: 24,574

Summary

South Pasadena encourages residents to become involved with the city's efforts to raise awareness and stimulate action on climate change by serving on a city commission, collaborating on a bicycle master plan, and volunteering to plan the annual Green Living Expo/ Clean Air Car Show/ Film Festival.

Program Highlights

- Over 30 local residents, including city officials and youth commissioners, meet monthly to plan an event now in its third year that draws 5,000-8,000 people annually to learn about climate change and a variety of green practices.
- Residents serve on the city's Natural Resources and Environmental Commission, which recently proposed a green purchasing policy for city agencies.
- Over 100 residents participated in creating and revising a master plan for bicycling in the city.

Lessons Learned

- Understand your target audience and be able to provide information to different people who may not understand the complicated terms and concepts involved in climate change. Be able to talk about it in non-technical terms.
- Let people know how climate change affects them individually, such as by talking about how air pollution affects their children's and pet's health.
- When designing an event to raise awareness about climate change, try to offer a variety of things so you can cast a wider net and attract more participants; offer a comprehensive event that includes the entire family.

Climate Action Connection

Providing reliable and objective information helps residents understand the causes, impacts and solutions to climate change, as well as the co-benefits of actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Involving the public in the development of climate change policies and programs builds community awareness and support for local actions address this issue.

Community involvement in South Pasadena has enriched the city's efforts to address climate change and provide information to residents.

Resources to Learn More

- [South Pasadena Planning Department's "Think Green"](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Many Opportunities to Get Involved

Residents in South Pasadena have several options to get involved in efforts to address climate change and to help educate and inspire their neighbors to take action.

Annual Event Highlights Climate Change and Sustainability Information

The city holds a popular free Clean Air Car Show/ Green Living Expo/ Film Festival, which has drawn growing numbers of attendees each year. At the second annual event in 2008, about 8,000 people from the region attended. The event offered an array of activities for the whole family.

The event's success is due in no small part to the dedicated group of over thirty residents who meet monthly to plan and organize it. Small groups are formed to discuss specific topics. Organizers have included youth commissioners, elected city officials, state agency representatives, representatives of the local gas utility, and community members interested in environmental issues.

The goal of the event is to inform the public about how to reduce their carbon footprint and to make them aware of the implications of not doing so. It also provides them the resources to take individual action to address climate change. A variety of activities and presentations are available for attendees who are knowledgeable about environmental issues and want the latest information and those who are new to the topic. The event includes a car show, film and lectures, demonstrations on installing home solar systems, xeriscaping, and creating water-wise gardens.

Residents Involved in City Commissions

Residents also volunteer to serve a three-year term on the city's Natural Resources and Environmental Commission. Commissioners advise the city on a variety of environmental efforts. For example, the commission recently proposed a green purchasing policy for city operations that is currently under review.

Over one hundred South Pasadena residents participated in creating the city's bicycle master plan. Originally drafted in 1998 and currently undergoing revision, this plan is the result of parents expressing concerns to the Mayor about the need for safe routes to school and safe places for their children to ride their bikes. An ad hoc committee appointed by the city council is working to update the plan.