



Land Use & Community Design: Snapshot of Local Agency Programs and Policies 2009

About the Snapshot

In spring 2009, the Institute for Local Government's California Climate Action Network surveyed cities and counties to gather information about activities, policies and programs in five areas related to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions: land use and community design, [green building](#), [commercial recycling](#), [efficient transportation](#), and [civic engagement](#). Case stories were prepared for ten communities to provide more detailed background information. While the information gathered does not reflect all of the California land use and community design activities that promote sustainability and address climate change, it does provide a snap shot of trends, opportunities, constraints and lessons learned.

This project was conducted in partnership with the California Air Resources Board.

Snapshot Summary

- Cities and counties throughout California are responding to climate change through their local policies and programs for land use and community design.
- Local agencies are addressing climate change in their general plans and through their environmental review process.
- Many communities are beginning to evaluate greenhouse gas emissions associated with land use and community design, either individually or regionally.
- A number of previously adopted land use and zoning policies, such as those that promote in-fill development, transit oriented development and community-wide bicycle plans, are also recognized as ways of responding to climate change by reducing vehicle miles travelled.

Land use and climate change

Well-planned communities with a balance of housing, jobs, shopping, schools and recreation give people the option of walking, biking or using transit rather than driving. This results in lower greenhouse gas emissions and also promotes physical activity and more vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities.

Highlights of Local Agency Land Use and Community Design Activities

- The number of new developments that incorporate pedestrian and bicycle friendly features is increasing.
- Some communities are requiring new developments to be built to LEED for Neighborhood Development standards.

- Many cities and counties are encouraging or requiring landscape designs that use less water, provide shade, and reduce pavement runoff to be incorporated into new developments.
- Numerous counties and cities that have undertaken actions to support inter-agency or regional efforts to reduce land use-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Opportunities, Constraints and Lessons Learned

- Virtually all of the existing policies and programs to promote sustainable development (i.e., in-fill, mixed use, and transit-oriented development) also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions through land use and community design is tied to making transportation patterns more efficient, which reduces vehicle miles travelled.
- Opportunities and constraints to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are different for built-out communities compared to those that are expanding.
- Engaging the public in discussions related to land use and community design efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is critical for building public understanding, support and acceptance of new policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Currently, calculating greenhouse gas emissions associated with different types of development patterns is more of an art than a science.

So, What are Counties and Cities Doing?

Counties and cities that have undertaken land use and/or design-related actions to help reduce locally generated greenhouse gases.

COUNTIES (Click on links to read about that county's activities.)
Monterey Sacramento San Diego San Mateo Santa Cruz Tehama

CITIES (Click on links to read about that city's activities.)
Belmont Beverly Hills Calistoga Fremont Hillsborough Irvine Livermore Los Gatos Manhattan Beach Morgan Hill Pasadena Paso Robles Petaluma Richmond San Leandro Santa Clarita Santa Rosa Vista Windsor Woodland

Activities in this area may include one or more of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Incorporated climate change considerations in the General Plan▪ Incorporated greenhouse gas emission considerations into the local environmental review process▪ Adopted policies to promote compact development in new and/or existing neighborhoods▪ Established a local ordinance or policy to encourage bicycling and walking▪ Adopted policies to reduce the “urban heat island” effect from paving and building materials▪ Adopted policies to reduce the volume of water runoff from development in an effort to decrease the amount of runoff that must be pumped and/or treated▪ Adopted policies to reduce water consumption from landscaping associated with development



Counties and cities that have established land use-related policies or programs to help reduce locally generated greenhouse gases.

COUNTIES (Click on links to read about that county's activities.)
Monterey Sacramento San Diego San Mateo Santa Cruz Tehama

CITIES (Click on links to read about that city's activities.)
Beverly Hills Calistoga Daly City Fremont Irvine Livermore Los Gatos Manhattan Beach Morgan Hill Pasadena Paso Robles Petaluma Richmond San Leandro Santa Clarita Santa Rosa Vista Windsor Woodland

Activities in this area may include one or more of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Programs or policies to encourage or require mixed-use development▪ Programs or policies to encourage or require transit-oriented development▪ Programs or policies to encourage or require in-fill development▪ Community-wide bicycle plan or requirements for individual developments to incorporate bicycle facilities▪ Community-wide pedestrian plan or requirements for individual developments to design streets for multi-modal mobility▪ New developments to be built to the LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) standard



Counties and cities that have undertaken actions to support inter-agency or regional efforts to reduce land use-related greenhouse gas emissions.

COUNTIES

(Click on links to read about that county's activities.)

Monterey
[Sacramento](#)
[San Diego](#)
San Mateo
Santa Cruz

CITIES

(Click on links to read about that city's activities.)

Apple Valley
Calistoga
Daly City
[Fremont](#)
Irvine
[Livermore](#)
Los Gatos
Pasadena
Paso Robles
[Petaluma](#)
Richmond
San Leandro
Santa Clarita
Santa Rosa
[Vista](#)
[Windsor](#)

Activities in this area may include outreach to one or more of the following:

- Partnered with other local agencies to inventory greenhouse gas emissions associated with land use and development in the community
- Joined a collaborative partnership with other local agencies to develop and implement land use or community design strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Proposed changes to the General Plan or other local plans based on the results of a regional blueprint or other long-range, regional planning effort to develop a climate-friendly growth scenario