

3rd Annual Beacon Award Special Session League of California Cities Annual Conference September 7, 2012

Making the Case Locally for Sustainability: Highlights from Small Group Leadership Conversations

Local Sustainability Projects

Fifty participants from cities across California shared brief details about local sustainability projects of which they are especially proud. Projects described include the following.

- Agency building energy efficiency retrofits that save money.
- Pedestrian bridge to open-up downtown.
- Streetlight LED retrofit project.
- Teaching businesses how to be more sustainable.
- Home energy retrofit financing program.
- Working with community to reduce waste and extend life of landfill.
- Tracking energy and fuel use to share actual reductions with community.
- Energy generated from alternative fuels provides revenue.
- LEED gold building constructed to save agency money.
- Promoting local action through annual green expo to educate community about sustainability opportunities.
- Wastewater treatment plant uses cost-effective fuel cells to generate power and methane capture.
- Streamlined solar permitting process makes it simpler to install solar PV systems by residents.
- Created citizens' committee to address sustainability.
- Power purchase agreements for installing solar photovoltaic systems on agency buildings.
- Create safe routes to schools to make walking safer options for children and families.

Messaging Themes that Resonate with the Community

Many table conversations emphasized the same messaging themes, even for distinctly different local projects. Key themes include the following concepts.

- It's all about saving taxpayer money.
 - Communicate that substantial savings have been achieved.
 - Energy efficiency and sustainability projects save money, thus enabling the agency to provide better services for residents.
 - Provide actual numbers, not vague reporting; dollars saved and costs avoided.
 - Buy-in from public for sustainability and green building policy comes from education about cost-effectiveness and cost-avoidance.
- Micro-messaging is a way to tell the story and educate the public about what the agency is doing.
- Sustainability and energy efficiency create new jobs in community.
- Getting traction from press about a project helps educate residents and translates into buy-in by the community.