



Civic Engagement: 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: civic engagement, [commercial recycling](#), [green building](#), [land use and community design](#), and [efficient transportation](#). Case stories were prepared for ten communities to provide more detailed background information. While the information gathered does not reflect the all of the civic engagement programs in California's communities, 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

- A large number of cities and counties engage their residents in discussions about climate change and involve them in developing policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Civic engagement activities include:
 - Informing the public about the science of climate change
 - Informing the public about the agency's actions to address climate change
 - Providing the public with opportunities for input into the agency's climate action plan or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - Encouraging the public to contribute ideas and recommendations to the agency's climate change plan.

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.

Highlights of Local Agency Civic Engagement Activities

- Many local agencies utilize neighborhood or community meetings to gather ideas and options related to climate change. Working with local media and participating in regional public engagement activities is also widespread.

- Virtually all local agencies work with stakeholder groups, such as business groups, neighborhood leaders and civic groups, non-profit groups. Some also work with stakeholders representing immigrant, ethnic, low income residents or communities of color.
- Many local agencies include the community's youth in climate change civic engagement activities.
- The use of task forces is widespread in helping local agencies identify issues to address, develop climate action plans or specific policies, and prioritize items for action.

Opportunities, Constraints and Lessons Learned

- Local agencies can provide practical information to help community members embrace actions to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.
- Most climate change skeptics – those who question whether the earth's climate is changing or who believe that the change is the result of natural causes, not human behavior – support taking many of the actions that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions for other reasons, such as saving money and resources, reducing dependence on foreign oil, and good planning. Be sure they are part of the agency's deliberations.
- Young people are interested in climate change and want to do something about it. Soliciting youth input is a good opportunity to energize young people and encourage them to be involved in local government.
- Because addressing climate change can be overwhelming, breaking into smaller working groups to address specific topics such as transportation, energy efficiency, and education, can make the task more manageable.
- Match the type of civic engagement activity (i.e., providing information, consulting or collaboration) to the goal of the task.
- Providing ideas and opportunities for residents to be part of the climate solution through individual action is more effective than doom and gloom messages.

So, What are Counties and Cities Doing?

Counties and cities that have undertaken activities to promote civic engagement in the context of climate change.

COUNTIES (Click on links to read about that county's activities.)
Monterey Sacramento San Benito San Mateo

CITIES (Click on links to read about that city's activities.)
Belmont Beverly Hills Calistoga Daly City Fremont Hillsborough Huntington Beach Irvine La Mirada Laguna Beach Laguna Hills Los Gatos Manhattan Beach Morgan Hill Mountain View Pasadena Poway Richmond River Bank San Leandro Santa Barbara Santa Rosa South Pasadena Vista Windsor Woodside

Activities in this area may include one or more of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Informing the public about the science of climate change▪ Informing the public about the agency's actions to address climate change▪ Providing the public with opportunities provide input into the agency's climate change plan▪ Encouraging the public to take individual action to address climate change

Counties and cities that have undertaken activities to reach out to the public to further the discussion of climate change.

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

CITIES (Click on links to read about that city's activities.)
Belmont Beverly Hills Calistoga Irvine Los Gatos Manhattan Beach Morgan Hill Mountain View Pasadena River Bank San Leandro Santa Barbara Santa Rosa South Pasadena Vista Woodland

Activities in this area may include one or more of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Neighborhood or community meetings to gather ideas and opinions▪ Outreach through local media▪ Regional public engagement activities

Counties and cities that have undertaken activities to work with key community stakeholders to encourage civic engagement around climate change.

COUNTIES (Click on links to read about that county's activities.)
Monterey San Benito

CITIES (Click on links to read about that city's activities.)
Belmont Beverly Hills Daly City Fremont Irvine La Mirada Laguna Beach Laguna Hills Los Gatos Manhattan Beach Morgan Hill Mountain View Pasadena Poway River Bank San Leandro Santa Barbara Santa Rosa South Pasadena Vista Windsor Woodland Woodside

Activities in this area may include outreach to one or more of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Business Groups▪ Neighborhood leaders and civic groups▪ Nonprofits, including advocacy groups▪ Immigrants▪ Communities of color▪ Low-income residents▪ Youth

Tell us about your agency's programs
Is your city or county's civic engagement program missing from our lists? Let us know what your community is doing to engage the community in climate change activities by completing our Climate Leadership Story Form – Public Engagement .

Learn more about how to engage the community in climate change activities in our forthcoming guide:
<i>Harnessing the Power of Your Community to Address Climate Change: A Local Official's Guide</i>