

Portland Offers Useful Tools for Sustainability Planning



For the past 30 years, the city of Portland has diligently pursued the planning and integration of renewable energy and conservation practices into city operations to create a more sustainable city government.

The city approaches the word “sustainability” with two concepts in mind:

- Everything is connected—if one part of the system is stressed, other parts will be disrupted; and
- Everything residents do today affects tomorrow—how they get to work, what kind of car they drive, what they recycle or throw away, what kind of food they eat, and what kind of buildings they inhabit.

It Began with Smart Planning

Since the early 1970s, Portland’s citizens and elected officials have taken actions to adopt local plans and policies to promote sustainable development. For example, Portland has focused on increasing density and alternative transportation infrastructure in key locations, enabling citizens to use multiple efficient transportation options, such as bicycling and public transit.

In the 1980s, Portland adopted local energy conservation and recycling policies, cleaned up local rivers and beaches, and restricted downtown parking to improve air quality. A light rail network was built by redirecting federal funds from freeways.

In 1993, Portland became the first city in the nation to plan ways for reducing greenhouse gas emissions related to global warming. Revised in 2001 to include new targets, the Local Action Plan on Global Warming provides a framework for promoting the many efforts related to sustainable development in Portland. The plan includes the Kyoto Protocol goal of ten percent reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions below 1990 levels by 2010.

Sustainable Principles Guide City’s Work

In 1994, Portland’s City Council adopted the Sustainable City Principles to guide the work of elected officials and staff. Several related goals and programs were established, including:

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GREEN

Global Warming

- Reduce city government greenhouse gas emissions to 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2010, and 80 percent by 2050.

Energy

- Invest in all energy-efficiency measures with paybacks of ten years or less.
- When available, procure products that meet or exceed Energy Star criteria for energy efficiency.
- Power all city facilities with 100 percent renewable energy by 2010.

Paper Use

- Reduce paper consumption by 15 percent below FY 03-04 levels by 2008.
- All paper products purchased by the city must meet minimum EPA procurement and recovered materials guidelines, including chlorine free and 30 percent post consumer recycled content.
- Ten percent of all paper products purchased by the city must exceed EPA procurement and recovered materials guidelines, such as 100 percent post consumer recycled content.

Procurement

- Comply with purchasing guidelines developed by the Sustainable Procurement Strategy. A joint city of Portland and Multnomah County effort, this strategy was adopted in 2002 and includes three major goals:
 - Complete a review and procurement policy update of at least three to five major commodity areas annually for the next five years resulting in improvements in 15 to 25 major commodity areas. Each review and update should result in commodity or contract specific guidelines and/or specification, policy, rule and/or code changes.
 - Monitor sustainable product availability within select commodity areas and rigorously address possible opportunities for use by the city of Portland and Multnomah County.
 - Design and implement an employee education program in conjunction with the city of Portland Office of Sustainable Development and Multnomah County Department of Business and Community Services.

Toxics Reduction

- By using the Precautionary Principle as a framework, replace toxic substance, materials and products of concern with viable least-toxic alternatives by 2020.
- Use integrated pest management techniques to reduce pesticides use in Portland's parks and natural areas.

Green Building

- New city facilities must meet LEED for New Construction (NC) Gold standards. Existing city buildings must meet LEED for Existing Buildings (EB) Silver standard.
- Tenant improvements to city facilities must meet LEED for Commercial Interiors (CI) Silver standard and/or be certified according to the OSD's green building Tenant Improvement Guide certification guidelines.
- All new roofs and roof replacements must be eeroofs, with the remaining roofing Energy Star-rated.

Waste Prevention and Recycling

- Achieve a recycling rate of 85 percent by 2015.
- Decrease overall waste stream volume, including recycling.

Peak Oil

- Strive to reduce oil and natural gas consumption (community-wide goal = 50 percent by 2030).
- Expand non-fossil fuel transportation options and use of alternative fuels.

The Sustainable City Government Partnership

Two city offices (Energy and Solid Waste & Recycling) were combined in 2000 to create the Office of Sustainable Development to help facilitate the city's work on sustainability issues. In December 2006, the Portland City Council passed a resolution to create the Sustainable City Government Partnership. The goal of the partnership is to foster a collaborative effort to integrate sustainable practices and resource efficiency into municipal operations. The partnership promotes the city's goals for a sustainable government and strengthens existing policies and efforts with the help of employee and bureau-level innovation.

The director of the Office of Sustainable Development and the city's chief administrative officer (CAO) coordinate the partnership. Bureau directors must:

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GREEN



GREEN BUILDING

- The Portland Building now has an “ecorooft” with more than 14,000 plants to help reduce stormwater runoff and increase the building’s insulation.

Portland’s Sustainability Planning

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1. Appoint a bureau sustainability liaison who has direct access to bureau management decision makers and has experience or skills in developing or implementing strategic plans; and
2. Adopt, implement and update a bureau specific sustainability plan and progress report; and
3. Contribute to an annual citywide sustainability report on progress.

A Model for Community and Individual Efforts

The sustainability programs and partnerships that the city of Portland has nurtured have produced success with environmental issues and city operations. More importantly, this operational structure encourages city employees to extend the resource conservation practices learned in the workplace back to their neighborhoods. The result: a new green economy for our region, creating new jobs, healthy homes, and thriving communities. ■

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