

Energy Bulletin

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Top 10 sustainability stories of 2006

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The year of 2006 in review from the perspective of sustainability in state and local government, presented in order of importance.

Though we have been doing this blog only since May, so much has gone on since then that we are overwhelmed by the evidence that the nation is experiencing a collective tipping point. As Old Abe used to write--to wit:

1. Climate Change Policy Milestones:

California, led by Gov. Schwarzenegger and the state General Assembly, passed legislation to reduce climate change emissions by 25% by 2020. Soon after British Prime Minister Tony Blair met with Schwarzenegger and others in a climate change task force, and the English government released the Stern Report. The report, from the former chief economist of the World Bank, forecasted that global economic output would be reduced by 5-20 percent if global carbon emissions increase unabated.

2. Boston Requires Green Construction for All Large Buildings:

In the last weeks of December, Mayor Thomas Menino announced a sweeping change to city zoning. The new ordinance requires that all buildings over 50,000 square feet be certified by the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Environment and Energy (LEED) standard. Look for this move to spread similar ordinances across the nation's cities. Previously cities have only required LEED standards for municipal buildings. Boston is making this the law for all large buildings, which should give a jolt to the area's green economy, impacting developers, architects, contractors and product manufacturers.

3. Portland to Institute Green Real Estate Multiple Listing Service (MLS):

Portland will as of 2007 have a green MLS for all residential real estate in the city and surrounding areas. Now homebuyers can look

up and see if their perspective new or existing dream home has energy efficient appliances, super-insulation and renewable energy systems. Seattle and San Francisco are said to be following suit.

4. New York's Sustainability Planning:

Mayor Micheal Bloomberg this fall put the mechanisms in place for the city's first sustainability plan, with the appointment of a Director of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability and a high-level Sustainability Advisory Council. How these city-led multi-stakeholder efforts evolve will determine the fate of everything from the city's nation-leading public transportation, open space and poor air quality, to its economy and competitiveness.

5. Portland Biodiesel Requirement:

Portland (OR) passed a renewable fuels ordinance requiring that the city's gas stations provide 5 percent biodiesel of all diesel fuel sold by July 2007 and 10 percent by 2010. This has stimulated local production of biodiesel start-ups, and will enable local farmers to have a market for biodiesel crops such as as canola, which can be grown in eastern Oregon.

6. Denver Blueprint:

Denver launched an ambitious "Blueprint Denver" in July that lays out how the city can integrate development of its transportation, land use, neighborhoods and economy. Backed by Mayor John Hickenlooper, who gave a sustainability themed state of the city address this summer, the effort is happening in conjunction with neighborhood groups, activists, subject experts and business leaders. The city is coordinating the effort through its offices of planning and sustainability. This is what New York City's plan (see #4 above) could look like in 12 months if Gotham is able to rally behind Mayor Bloomberg's vision.

7. Record Summer Heat Wave:

Global climate change went from theory to actuality during the past 18 months with Katrina and Rita, and then with a deadly heat wave this past summer. The heat wave began in California, killing 139 people and hundreds of thousands of cattle and chickens while nearly shutting the state's electric grid with all-time record demand down before it rolled east into Chicago and New York. New York City and Chicago avoided the high death tolls, but also saw record

electricity demand. How will cities prepare for such future events, which may be even more prolonged and intense?

8. Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle Campaign:

Mayor Will Wynn of Austin, Texas, spearheaded the Plug-in Partners campaign to get cities, states and government agencies to put in orders for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, which can get more than 100 miles per gallon of gasoline. The campaign, which kicked into high gear in Washington, D.C. in January when Mayor Wynn presented on Capitol Hill, saw at least three manufacturers-- Toyota, GM and Nissan--vowing to produce the plug-in hybrid at "some point in the future," possibly even with prototyping in time for January car shows.

9. Oakland (CA) Local Food and Zero Fossil Fuel Goals:

Oakland, California, under the outgoing Mayor Jerry Brown administration, launched two ambitious citywide sustainability goals. The city's sustainability office vowed in its Food System Assessment to procure 30 percent of its food locally, with a major study completed outlining how the Bay Area city can improve local food production, distribution and urban-rural linkages. Led by an 11-member oil independence task force appointed by its city council, "Oaktown" vowed to become fossil fuel free by 2020. The city, ranked as #5 on SustainLane's City rankings, is coming on strong as a leader in green city pioneering.

10. Best Practice Sustainability Knowledge Base Launched for Government:

SustainLane Government went live in October 2006 with a free open-source knowledge base for state and local government. The site, at www.sustainlane.us, has already received more than 65 best practices and ordinances on sustainability. More than 130 U.S. cities, counties and states have joined the site, with Canada's cities and provinces joining in early 2007. SustainLane will also be publishing a book on its US City Rankings in April, 2007, called *How Green Is Your City?: The SustainLane US City Rankings*.

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<http://www.energybulletin.net/newswire.php?id=24167>

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