

# CURRENTS

AN ENERGY NEWSLETTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

## California Cities and Sustainability: A Progress Report

May/June 2000

by Peter Asmus

The precise definition of “sustainability” varies as people try to integrate a broad array of policies and programs that affect a community’s future under a single umbrella. At its core, however, “sustainability” translates into policies that help design, build and operate communities in ways that make the best use of energy and natural resources for present and future generations.

Applicable to more than just new development, “sustainability” also recognizes the impacts that local governments have on humanity – as well as all other species and the environment – in all of its activities, including purchasing of everyday products and services. Living up to this ideal is a difficult challenge.

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CITY OF OAKLAND / CITY HALL

## With New Buy, Oakland Will Become World's Largest Green Power City

### Mayor Jerry Brown Talks with Peter Asmus

The list of California local governments using green power sources for at least part of their electricity supply will expand this summer. And if Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown has anything to do about it, Oakland will become the world’s largest green powered city.

Oakland has its sights on the City of Santa Monica, which currently holds the title as the world’s biggest municipal green power purchase – 5 megawatts, equivalent to the amount of electricity consumed by

5,000 to 6,000 homes. With its green-power purchase of 9 megawatts, Oakland can earn the honor of being the world’s largest all-renewable city.

Approximately 30 local governments in California now purchase a portion of their municipal electricity needs from non-polluting, renewable green power sources. Santa Monica, for example, purchased 100% of its power from geothermal steam generation facilities sold by Tustin-based Commonwealth Energy. The latest to switch is the City of Santa Barbara, which plans to buy 80% of

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# Brown Talks about Oakland's Green Power

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its electricity from Cleen 'n Green, which buys from a variety of independent renewable energy generators that sell into a state green power pool run by the Cupertino-based Applied Power Exchange.

## ■ Brown Talks Green

In a recent interview at his office, Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown sounded determined to approve a municipal purchase of green electricity ASAP. Brown hopes to sign off on a power purchase contract to buy Oakland green electricity from one of the six bidders who responded to a November 1999 Request For Proposal.

"In a deregulated world, local governments should be showing some initiative. I want to make sure that Oakland is assuming its responsibilities when it comes to the environment and taking advantage of new and cleaner energy technologies," Brown said.

"As a general rule of thumb, local government is caught up in more mundane activities. The political process reacts to the media narratives of the day. Something that will carry the headlines week-to-week. Issues such as sustainability or alternative energy sources – reducing our tremendous impact on nature,

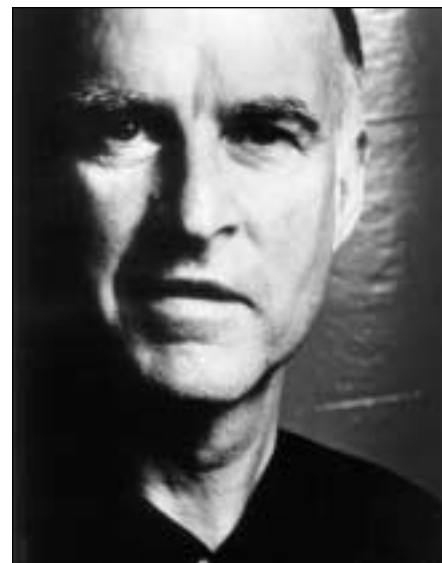
the environment – that's just not news. That's the challenge for contemporary society, whether it be at the national, international, or local level of governance," Brown added.

Ironically, the clean power plants that Brown would like Oakland to purchase electricity from probably would not be around today if not for the forward-looking policies enacted when he was California's governor in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was generous tax credits, long-term standard offer utility power purchase contracts and a mapping of the state's renewable resources that all propelled California into the global lead for solar, wind, geothermal and biomass technologies.

"I definitely have always thought that renewable energy was the wave of the future," reminisced Brown. "When I was governor, I thought the industry was coming into its own much faster than it actually did. Our energy policy in California was a response to the anti-nuclear movement and the environmental movement, which was just coming into its own."

Today, wind power is the fastest growing power source in the world, a fact that seemed to surprise Brown.

"Wind power is probably the cleanest," he answered when asked



JANET ORSI

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown

about his favorite renewable resource, though he observed that he hoped Oakland could take advantage of both solar photovoltaic and fuel cell technologies.

## ■ Oakland Landmark

When informed that Oakland's new 9 megawatt purchase would make it the world's largest all-renewable city – as well as the \$200,000 annual price premium over the generic electricity that the City currently buys from Pacific Gas & Electric – Brown remarked, "I think we should go to the City Council and approve paying the premium to go 100% green. Then, we should lobby for greater reliance on energy efficiency measures."

As an example, Brown pointed to a heater vent behind his desk located below a large window wall with panels that could be opened to regulate the temperature, a highly inefficient way to stay comfortable.

"They say this is a historical building and therefore nothing can be done about increasing efficiency," said Brown. "Well, I don't believe it."

## Get the News in Time, Online

The Local Government Commission often receives information about upcoming funding opportunities and workshops with very little lead time. As a bi-monthly publication, *Currents* is not ideally suited for getting out last-minute information. Posting that information on the LGC web site helps, but only for regular visitors.

To remedy this problem, the LGC has initiated an "E-Mail Action Alert" service to send last-minute announcements for workshops, funding and other energy-related programs that may be of interest to local governments. If you are interested in participating in this free service, please e-mail Pat Stoner at [pstoner@lgc.org](mailto:pstoner@lgc.org) to get on the list.

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# California Cities Seek Sustainability

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Because cities and counties make day-to-day decisions on economic development, community design and environmental protection, they are the key players when it comes to implementing actions that build upon energy efficiency's wide array of environmental and economic benefits.

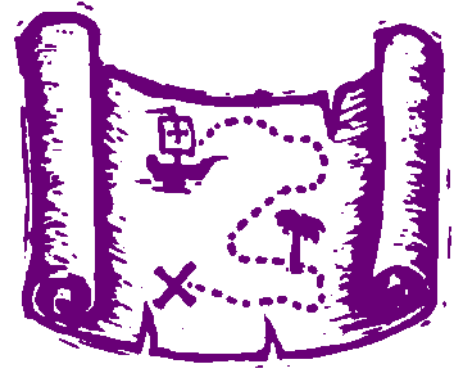
"Building sustainable communities requires a proactive, localized and highly participatory approach that depends upon the unique role and capabilities of local government," said Abby Young, Executive Director of the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives.

Because local governments play a critical role in developing long-term sustainability, world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro created Local Agenda 21, a global action plan for sustainability.

***Because local governments will play a critical role in developing sustainability, world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit created Local Agenda 21, a global action plan for sustainability. To date, 1,800 local authorities in 64 countries are preparing Local Agenda 21 plans.***

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Four of the 17 U.S. local governments that have adopted sustainability initiatives meeting Local Agenda 21 criteria are located in California. Among them is San Jose, whose leaders have been talking about sustainability since 1980.



## ■ San Jose

In April, the San Jose City Council approved moving forward with the second phase of a green building program that is being integrated into other existing and recently launched efforts to become more sustainable.

"We now have to decide what exact direction we are going to take," said City Councilmember Linda Lezotte, chairwoman of the city's Green Building Task Force. The task force identified over 100 different activities that could encourage construction of green buildings.

"At first, our green building program will be voluntary," she added. "If you as a developer go beyond the energy efficiency standards included in Title 24, for example, we may grant you an accelerated permit approval process. We will also be considering offering tax credits or other forms of assistance, such as hooking up builders with a lender. I really believe that the incentives are just as critical as our policies."

San Jose plans to create a resource center which will include information to help builders buy green products from pre-approved lists of vendors selling everything from green power to highly efficient HVAC systems.

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## Handbook for Cutting Costs and Global Warming Now Available

**T**he Planning and Conservation League Foundation has recently published a global warming handbook for citizen activists, local government officials, and others interested in climate-protecting, cost-effective, energy conservation strategies that can be implemented at the municipal level.

***Cost-Saving Solutions To Save Energy and Promote Clean Air: A Handbook for Your City*** explains how cities and counties can save energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the quality of life in the community, and cut costs. The guide is organized by areas of interest, such as transportation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction, and land use planning. It offers ideas, implementation plans, action checklists, case studies, Web resources, and contact information. ***Solutions*** also includes information that will help local governments comply with ever-changing federal laws and state regulations.

The guidebook costs \$10 and can be ordered by writing the PCL Foundation's publications office, 926 J St., Suite 612, Sacramento, CA 95814. To order the report online, visit [www.pcl.org](http://www.pcl.org). For more information, call ☎(916) 444-8726, or e-mail to [pclmail@pcl.org](mailto:pclmail@pcl.org).

# LEAP Update: An Energetic Team Approach

The Local Government Commission and ADM Associates, Inc. have been implementing the Local Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) since 1998. The last issue of *Currents* outlined LEAP's accomplishments in 1999. This issue focuses on the players involved in LEAP's successes.

## ■ The LEAP Team

For 20 years, the *Local Government Commission* has worked with local government leaders to help them find local solutions to problems of national significance. The LGC has focused on the areas of energy conservation, renewable energy, recycling and reuse, pollution prevention, and land use strategies for more livable communities. It regularly produces guidebooks, workshops and conferences as part of its services.

With LEAP, the LGC integrates its energy efficiency and livable communities programs.



Established in 1979, *ADM Associates* is an energy and economics consulting firm which has successfully completed contracts with the California Energy Commission, the U.S. Department of Energy, and many investor-owned and municipal utilities in California and beyond. ADM has strong capabilities in analyzing commercial and residential end-use loads and in developing and evaluating energy efficiency programs.

ADM conducts energy use comparisons for the LEAP analyses, and developed LEAP-1, the plan analysis tool which enables local governments to integrate energy efficiency in their planning processes.

LEAP has also been fortunate to work with Michael Corbett of *Town Planners* to redesign some of the development plans it has analyzed. Corbett designed and developed the world-famous, resource conserving Village Homes community in Davis, CA.

*The Western Center for Urban Forest Research and Education* (WCUFRE) has also been an integral part of the LEAP team. WCUFRE developed tree selection and planting guidelines for the San Joaquin Valley in 1998 and the southern coastal area in 1999, and will be developing similar guidelines for inland southern California this year. WCUFRE is part of the U.S. Forest Service, and is housed on the UC Davis campus.

## ■ New Energy Hotline Number

Please note that the LGC has consolidated our energy and land use hot lines. The number to call is ☎(800) 290-8202.

# Mayor Brown: Oakland Gets Green Power

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## ■ Public Awareness and Responsibility

"Energy no longer seems to be an issue. Energy is of such low cost that it is not even on the list of concerns of most citizens," Brown noted.

"This point was drilled home to me the other day. I have a very large kitchen. When I bought a commercial scale refrigerator and stove, I asked about the energy efficiency rating and the sales people didn't even know. Not only that, but nobody had ever asked them that question. This firm is the largest restaurant supply store in the East Bay!"

"To the extent that Oakland can take the lead, we will. When I was governor, we had a 55% tax credit for solar and energy conservation. Those kind of incentives don't exist anymore – at least not at that magnitude. There are some tax credits and incentives at both the national and state level, but they are quite modest compared to what used to be available," he lamented.

Still, Brown insisted that local governments need to take the lead to inspire other consumers to take some personal responsibility for developing a more sustainable energy future.

## ■ For More Information

More information about Oakland's sustainability plans is available at: [www.ci.oakland.ca.us/government/government2.html](http://www.ci.oakland.ca.us/government/government2.html)

To contact the Mayor's Office:

One Frank Ogawa Plaza, 3rd floor  
Oakland, CA 94612

e-mail: [officeofthemayor@oaklandnet.com](mailto:officeofthemayor@oaklandnet.com)

☎(510) 238-3141

See page 5 for news about green power plans in other Northern California cities.

# Northern California Cities Explore Green Power

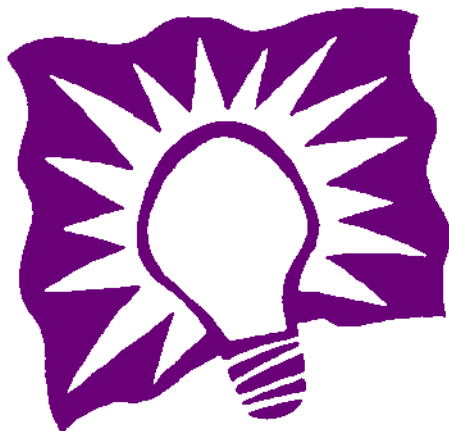
**A** growing number of local governments are testing the green power market to see how they can help develop a more sustainable energy supply that reduces environmental impacts and perhaps boosts economic development by installing distributed generation or other green sources within city limits.

## ■ City of Santa Cruz

**T**he Santa Cruz City Council voted to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for renewable electricity services at its April 11th meeting. Expected to be released in June, the RFP will identify vendors interested in providing Santa Cruz with renewable electric power, as well as the full range of service options available – such as power supply and delivery, scheduling, metering, meter reading/data management, and billing.

The City may also request proposals on other value added services, such as distributed generation technologies and the marketing of green power to the public.

The City of Santa Cruz already operates two green electricity gen-



eration facilities. Its landfill collects landfill gases and generates electric power, which is sold into the power grid. The City wastewater treatment plant collects methane digester gas and generates electric power, used in operating the plant. Santa Cruz is also in the initial design stages for a photovoltaic solar electric system to be installed on the downtown City Hall Annex next fiscal year.

## ■ City of San Jose

**T**he City of San Jose was one of the first local governments to switch power suppliers, choosing New Energy Ventures in 1998. While the firm

promised a 5%-rate reduction from the standard prices offered by Pacific Gas & Electric for generic electricity, annual savings to date have amounted to \$80,000, or a 0.13% price discount.

In April, city staff recommended that the City explore green energy options that might cost less than what New Energy Ventures has been offering – and would consist of non-polluting renewable energy. The City will release an RFP this spring asking bidders to provide cost estimates for a 100% green electricity purchase, but leaving the door open to a mix of power sources. Proposals will be reviewed in May, with a final decision on a new supplier currently scheduled to be made in June.

A key component of San Jose's approach is teaming up with other nonprofits and local governments to educate local constituents about why buying green power is so important.

"The public is more inclined to listen to the recommendation from local government to buy green electricity if the local government itself has some or switched all of its electricity accounts to a green provider," said Rita Norton of San Jose's Environmental Services Division.

## ■ City of Petaluma

**P**etaluma is also exploring the idea of issuing an RFP for green power purchases. Though currently purchasing green power through the Association of Bay Area Governments, the City would like to go 100% green and perhaps add solar energy to its power supply mix. Petaluma also wants to maximize energy efficiency in its facilities.

## *Free Renewable Power Workshops for Local Governments in May*

**I**f you are reading this in time, you may still be able to register for one of the May workshops designed to help local governments interested in purchasing or promoting green power in their communities. The series' first workshop was held in Santa Monica on April 7th. The May workshops are scheduled for:

Oakland	May 4
San Diego	May 12
Arcata	May 18

See the March/April 2000 issue of *Currents* or visit [www.lgc.org](http://www.lgc.org) for more details. For more information or to register, call Pat Stoner at ☎(916) 448-1198 or e-mail [pstoner@lgc.org](mailto:pstoner@lgc.org).

# Ten Things Local Governments Can Do to Cut Global Warming Pollution

**V**ehicle and power plant emissions cause both smog and global-warming pollution. Garbage crowds landfills and also releases global warming gases. Here are ten steps your community can take to help reduce this pollution (examples in parentheses).

**1 Green your fleet:** retire old and underused vehicles; purchase fuel-efficient vehicles; purchase smaller vehicles; use car-pooling, telecommuting and mass transit for employee travel. (Denver's Green Fleets Executive Order)

**2 Switch to light-emitting diodes (LED):** 80 to 90% less energy use results in short pay back periods. LEDs are available for traffic lights, crossing signals and are in testing for street lights.

**3 Reduce, reuse, recycle:** goods made from recycled materials use less energy, and landfills which release greenhouse gas emissions fill up less quickly.



**4 Curb the car:** open a "one-stop commute shop" to provide information and services on alternatives to driving alone. (Tampa's Downtown Commuter Center)

**5 Make local government buildings energy-efficient:** serve as an example for your community and save money besides. (San Diego retrofitted 50 buildings and saves \$2,800,000 annually.)

**6 Buy green power:** municipalities can use electric utility deregulation to advance less polluting renewable power such as solar, geothermal, and wind. (Santa Monica is the first city in the nation to use 100% renewable energy to power its facilities.)

**7 Stop sprawl:** creating an urban growth boundary controls where new development goes. Uncontrolled sprawl requires costly outlays for miles of roads and sewers, and new police and fire services typically costing more than the revenues generated. (San Jose adopted its Greenline to protect the city from undue investments in new infrastructure, preserve open space, and direct resources to existing neighborhoods.)

**8 Turn your landfill into an asset:** recover landfill methane to generate electricity. (Sacramento County's landfill gas to energy project is described in the March/April 2000 issue of *Currents*.)

**9 Pass building codes for energy efficiency:** insulation, low-flow plumbing, efficient appliances and lighting, and weather stripping reduce energy use and costs. (Berkeley Residential and Commercial Energy Conservation Ordinances mandate basic conservation improvements at time of sale.)

**10 Be an efficient buyer:** specify energy efficiency in purchasing policies to cut energy costs by 25% to 50%. (Portland, OR requires Energy Star purchasing, with projected annual savings of \$35,000.)

These ideas come from the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. For more details, contact ICLEI at 15 Shattuck Sq., Berkeley, CA 94704, ☎(510) 540-8843, e-mail to [iclei\\_usa@iclei.org](mailto:iclei_usa@iclei.org), or visit on the web at [www.iclei.org/us](http://www.iclei.org/us).

## Climate Change Resource Now Available Online

**A** new selection about climate change has been added to the "Hot Topic" menu on the Local Government Environmental Assistance Network's web site. The "Climate Change" area provides information about the process of climate change, its possible effects on local governments, and actions that local governments can take to help mitigate climate change.



Specific sections include an easy-to-understand issue summary, recent climate change news, regulatory and legislative updates, and references to on-line publications and helpful Web sites.

From the network's home page, select "Climate Change" from the "Hot Topics" pull-down menu ([www.lgean.org/html/hottopics2.cfm](http://www.lgean.org/html/hottopics2.cfm)).

# Sustainability

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Lezotte also hoped that a private sector partner will be found to build a state-of-the-art green building demonstration project.

"I am also personally committed to including a green building component, in the form of greater energy efficiency, in our new Civic Center and Civic Plaza. But I am also concerned about re-using buildings. It is critical that we upgrade energy efficiency when we retrofit," she said.

Another way to boost San Jose's sustainability is to remove palm trees. "They use a lot of water, don't really provide shade and, on top of that, their fronds end up in landfills and take forever to break down," Lezotte said.

For more information:  
[www.ci.sj.ca.us/esd/gbhome.htm](http://www.ci.sj.ca.us/esd/gbhome.htm)

## ■ Santa Monica

**A**nother city with a major focus on sustainability is Santa Monica, which established its Sustainable City Program in 1993. Five years after implementation, the benefits include:

- ✧ Solid waste diverted from landfills rose from 13.8% to 35.7%,
- ✧ Water use was reduced by 13.3% between 1990 and 1998, and
- ✧ Emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change were reduced by 5.2% between 1990 and 1998.

Since 1995, however, many of these successes have been reversed due to the city's population growth and a surge of economic development.

Susan Munves, the city's Conservation Coordinator, is optimistic

## Definitions of "Sustainability"

Local Agenda 21 defines sustainability as: "Development today must not undermine the development and environment needs of present and future generations."

According to the President's Council on Sustainable Development: "Steps toward a more sustainable future include developing community-driven planning and collaborative regional planning; improving community and decreasing sprawl; and creating strong, diversified local economies while increasing jobs and other economic opportunities." (1996)

about a range of new opportunities for Santa Monica to regain momentum on the sustainability front.

"We think energy efficiency is incredibly important to become more sustainable. And we are just now starting to integrate energy efficiency into our sustainability plans," Munves said.

Among the new initiatives are plans to offer energy efficiency services to the Pico neighborhood, a low-income community, as well as the development of new affordable housing that will be nearly energy self-sufficient as a result of the installation of high efficiency appliances, a gas-fired cogeneration power plant and solar photovoltaic panels.

"We hadn't really done much since the early 1980s, when we launched a home weatherization program. Deregulation of electricity, and the emergence of public goods charges, really galvanized us into action," Munves said.

The most exciting opportunity in Santa Monica right now comes with the purchase of 11.5 acres of prime real estate from the Rand Corporation.

"The land is in the heart of downtown. We are entertaining the possibility of creating an energy district that would include our City Hall and a new Civic Center," said Munves.

Incorporating leading-edge efficiency technologies would be a cornerstone of any centralized heating and cooling district created by the city.

"We think that a shortage of energy capacity will soon be an issue in Southern California. Reliability is already an issue. We will therefore need to be as energy-efficient as possible to not only meet our power needs, but to reduce greenhouse gases contributing to global climate change and to improve air quality," said Munves.

For more details: [www.greenbuildings.santa-monica.org](http://www.greenbuildings.santa-monica.org)

## ■ Citizens in Santa Cruz

**S**anta Cruz County is another community with sustainability programs. ACTION Santa Cruz (The Agenda 21 Community Team In Operation Now) has sponsored round tables that have attracted hundreds of people from all walks of life. A consensus sustainability plan emerged after three years of discussions.

This effort is unique because local citizens, rather than local government staff, are spearheading the move toward sustainability goals. The County Board of Supervisors has indicated it will strongly consider adopting a sustainability plan that places a heavy emphasis on energy efficiency.

## Public Utilities Commission Cancels CBEE

**O**n March 31, the California Public Utilities Commission said goodbye to the California Board for Energy Efficiency (CBEE) after three years of work.

The CBEE advised the utilities commission on matters concerning administration of public goods charge energy efficiency funding, primarily on program administration and funding levels. The CBEE was charged with helping to transition administration of these funds from investor-owned utilities (IOU) to some other entity or entities.

The need for the CBEE was diminished after the commission decided to leave administration with the IOUs until 2001.

## Energy Efficiency Increases Worker Productivity and Saves Money

**S**ome sustainability benefits are surprising. The Rocky Mountain Institute has linked 6% to 16% worker productivity gains to designing energy-efficient offices that offer increased worker comfort. A 1% productivity increase can result in savings that exceed the value of a local government's or business' monthly energy bill, according to the Institute.

### *Did You Know?*

***If every household in the United States replaced four incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, we could save as much energy as removing 7 million cars from the roads.***

source: Alliance to Save Energy ([www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org))

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

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