

Fact Sheet on Sustainable Cities and Counties

These facts were compiled as a media resource to accompany the launch of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability's Sustainability Planning Toolkit, available exclusively to ICLEI members at www.icleiusa.org/sustainabilitytoolkit. For more information on local climate and sustainability action, as well as success stories from U.S. cities and counties, browse the ICLEI USA website at www.icleiusa.org.

- A 2009 [Living Cities survey](#) of the 40 largest U.S. cities found the following:
 - 4/5 report that sustainability is among their top five priorities. Only about one in six says it is not.
 - Approximately one-half of big cities are either currently creating sustainability plans, or have finished one within the past year. Approximately one-quarter finished their plans earlier.
 - Approximately three-quarters of big cities have, or will soon have, detailed plans on how they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Their targets vary, but not widely: Nearly all call for an emissions cut of between 10-20% in the next five to 10 years.
- A fall 2008 survey of ICLEI USA's local government members (cities, towns, and counties of all sizes) found similar results:
 - 31% rate the development of a sustainability plan as Very Important, and 26% rate it as Important.
 - 28% rate the development of a climate adaptation plan as Very Important, and 26% rate it as Important.
 - Of the top priorities local governments identified for their climate protection work, 95% cite potential cost savings (in terms of reduced energy costs), 90% are eager to realize greenhouse gas reductions, and 75% are interested in pursuing green jobs creation.
- As of December 2009, ICLEI USA has identified 56 U.S. local governments—from big cities to small towns, and both ICLEI members and nonmembers—that either have an existing sustainability plan or are developing one; 139 U.S. local governments either have an existing climate action plan or are developing one.*

- At present, [600 U.S. cities and counties](#), in all 50 states, are members of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA (with more than 1,100 local governments worldwide), and are committed to climate, energy, and sustainability action. ICLEI member local governments represent nearly 30% of the total U.S. population.
- The [STAR Community Index](#), to be launched in 2010, is a national, consensus-based framework for gauging the sustainability and livability of U.S. communities. STAR will become the definitive means by which local governments measure and “certify” their sustainability achievements. It is being developed through a partnership between ICLEI USA, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the Center for American Progress. What LEED certification has become for buildings, STAR will become for entire communities.
- The [Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#), an ICLEI USA partner, is a network of 65 sustainability directors from cities and counties in the U.S. and Canada who connect to learn from each other in order to accelerate their ambitious sustainability goals.
- ICLEI’s 2008 report, [A Comparative Analysis of Sustainable Community Frameworks](#), examines the ways local governments have defined and measured sustainability for themselves, and found extensive variability.

* Data collection on local government sustainability and climate action plans is an ongoing process; these figures will continue to rise.