

Executive Summary

for

The Process Behind the Plan:

How the City of New York
Developed PlaNYC,
Its Comprehensive Long-Term
Sustainability Plan

December 15, 2009

Introduction

In June 2008, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability USA partnered with the City of New York's Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability to research the process that the City undertook to develop PlaNYC, its landmark sustainability plan released on Earth Day 2007. The goal was to create two resources to assist local governments in enhancing local sustainability, born from a year and a half of in-depth research, interviews, and analysis:

1. The Sustainability Planning Toolkit, ICLEI's best practice guidebook on how to develop a sustainability plan (www.icleiusa.org/sustainabilitytoolkit) following ICLEI's Five Milestones for Sustainability.
2. The Process Behind the Plan: a case study to be released in early 2010, detailing the planning process New York City followed to develop PlaNYC. This case study shares the lessons learned from PlaNYC to help other cities, towns, and counties advance the principles of sustainability in their communities through similar action-oriented plans.



Sharing Best Practices to Achieve a Common Goal

Cities around the world are taking unprecedented actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase density, improve transit infrastructure, create public spaces, and protect their fragile environmental resources. To do this, cities need to learn from each other and share ideas.

Why PlaNYC Merits Study and Sharing

PlaNYC provides a vision for the future growth of New York City: how to accommodate one million more people in an already dense city, while at the same time reducing the City's greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent and improving its infrastructure. PlaNYC outlines 10 major goals featuring 127 initiatives, and puts forward the overarching goal to create a "greener, greater New York." The far-reaching PlaNYC has been hailed as a breakthrough in sustainability planning and is considered by local governments around the country to be the gold standard for big-city sustainability plans. PlaNYC is broadly supported by the citizens of New York City and has received praise from local governments around the world who seek to replicate it.

"New York City, and cities around the world, need organizations like ICLEI to help us share our successes and learn from each other to achieve a common goal of leaving our cities better off for our children and grandchildren. More than 70% of greenhouse gas emissions come from cities, and we share a powerful responsibility to work together to reduce the effects of global warming."

– New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg

10 Factors Contributing to PlaNYC's Success

The PlaNYC case study describes how the nation's largest city came together to develop a sweeping plan that guides the City's growth over the next 25 years. The story illustrates a number of factors for success both in the planning process and the plan itself and most notably demonstrates that the planning process for a sustainability plan is as important as the content and quality of the final plan.

ICLEI credits the following 10 factors for the success of PlaNYC:

1. Strong **mayoral leadership** and **cooperation between** the Mayor's Office and City Council
2. A group of dedicated city agency staff performed **in-depth research and analysis**, involving extensive **coordination and collaboration** between the agencies
3. A **methodical, transparent, and inclusive planning process**
4. **Central management and coordination** provided by the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability
5. An external Sustainability Advisory Board to provide **best practice advice and guidance**
6. A **comprehensive public outreach process** to generate broad public support and to help educate the general public about climate change and sustainability issues
7. **Strategic release of the plan** by the Mayor's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, which coordinated its announcements with key stakeholders
8. Inclusion in the plan of an **implementation plan** with a timeline and a funded budget
9. Swift **transition from planning to action**: the City is actively implementing all 127 initiatives
10. **Openness for innovation** and policy-making not driven by politics or business as usual

Seven Private-Sector Principles Adopted by the City of New York during the Bloomberg Administration

When Mayor Michael Bloomberg took office in 2001, his mission was to make government more efficient by “doing more with less,” and by incorporating business principles into the daily operations of city government. According to Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding, Dan Doctoroff, the Mayor imported seven attributes from the private sector into city government: independence, strategy, investment, management, innovation, communication, and accountability.

The Deputy Mayor credits the Mayor’s business-minded management style for his ability to accomplish so much during his previous and current terms, and cites these seven principles as the reasons why bold initiatives like PlaNYC have been successful:

- A City, like a business, needs a long-term strategic plan, and PlaNYC represents the Mayor’s cornerstone strategic plan for the City.
- The Mayor cultivated a culture in City government that empowers staff to innovate by delegating management and trusting staff to handle major initiatives, such as PlaNYC.
- As an independent leader, the Mayor makes decisions based on what is best for the City and not necessarily what makes him popular with the voters, which was essential when contemplating some of the controversial issues such as congestion pricing that are in PlaNYC.
- As a businessman, the Mayor instilled the discipline of performing cost-benefit analyses on all investments in terms of capital projects or new programs. But he does not require City staff to just look at the financial benefits of an investment, he asks them to consider other intangibles such as quality of life improvements.
- The Mayor recognized that good ideas alone cannot accomplish major changes. Staff must communicate and package ideas skillfully and make sure the public is on board with major proposals.
- Finally, the Mayor also believes that City government needs to be held accountable for its actions, going so far as to make public a report on how he is doing compared to his campaign promises.

PlaNYC Achievements Since 2007

PlaNYC isn’t just a vision, or a report that has collected dust. In two years, the City has made remarkable progress toward its sustainability goals and over two-thirds of its initiatives are on-time or ahead of schedule.

Land:

- 21 transit-oriented rezonings with inclusionary zoning approved or in pipeline
- 96 schoolyards opened or under renovation through Schoolyards to Playgrounds initiative
- Over 294,000 trees planted by November 2009
- NYC Office of Environmental Remediation opened

Water:

- 20 stormwater retention pilot projects launched
- Over 13,500 acres of land acquired to protect our upstate water supply

Transportation:

- 31 state-of-good repair projects begun, leveraging \$261 million in Federal stimulus funding
- 200 miles of bike lanes and over 2,000 new bike racks installed
- 76,751 City parking placards reduced

Energy:

- 64 responses received to the City's renewable energy request for expressions of interest
- 260 energy efficiency projects on City government buildings complete or in pipeline

Air:

- 22% of the yellow taxi fleet converted to hybrid vehicles
- 327 tons of NOx per year saved due to retrofits to Staten Island Ferry fleet
- Enacted legislation that will significantly decrease school bus pollution to protect children and drivers

Climate Change:

- 42% initiated or proposed GHG reductions needed to reach citywide target

PlaNYC as a Model for ICLEI's Five Milestones for Sustainability

Taking into account these success factors, ICLEI has used the PlaNYC case study as a model for its Five Milestones for Sustainability process, outlined in its Sustainability Planning Toolkit. The Milestones provide local governments with a straightforward process for developing a high-quality plan and can be used by local governments of different sizes or with varying scopes for their plan. They are as follows:

- **Milestone One:** Conduct a sustainability assessment
- **Milestone Two:** Establish sustainability goals
- **Milestone Three:** Develop a local sustainability plan
- **Milestone Four:** Implement policies and measures
- **Milestone Five:** Evaluate progress and report results

The Sustainability Planning Toolkit defines the step-by-step guidelines for how to develop a sustainability plan and also outlines the key elements of a wide-ranging, action-oriented plan, which include:

- Facts and figures from the sustainability assessment to illustrate the issues being addressed in the plan
- Goals to set a vision and framework for the plan
- Aggressive but achievable initiatives
- Initiatives with clear implementation plans covering timing, funding, and responsibilities
- A narrative that explains how the initiatives in the plan address the challenges
- A matrix illustrating the relationship between the goals and initiatives
- Monitoring and evaluation for tracking progress



Case Study Release

- In early 2010, the full PlaNYC case study will be released by ICLEI USA and available to the public as a free resource. The case study will complement the Sustainability Planning Toolkit.
- To learn more, visit www.icleiusa.org.