

CHAPTER 1: WHY GREEN DELRAY BEACH

Delray Beach has already made a number of major commitments to a greener future. This includes leadership steps such as signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, joining the Sierra Club Cool Cities program and making a commitment to become a certified community under the Florida Green Building Coalition's Green Local Government Standard.

Since these high level commitments have already been made, it may not seem relevant to ask the question "why". The City's leadership has put the city on a greener path and in some respects, actions simply need to be taken in line with those commitments. However, to expedite the journey from intention to action, the question "why" needs to be asked again.

There are three main reasons for a City such as Delray Beach to pursue a greener direction: economic reasons, environmental reasons and political reasons. Each of these is explored briefly below:

ECONOMIC REASONS

There is a deep-rooted perception in many individuals and organizations that environmental programs always result in higher costs. But this perception ignores three fundamental truths about going green:

1. By definition, environmental programs make communities less wasteful, more efficient, and healthier. Cities across the State of Florida and in every part of the United States have repeatedly found this can be less expensive than becoming more wasteful, less efficient and less healthy.
2. Inefficient habits cost money: Many organizational practices result from habit and the belief that "this is how we do things here". Yet exploring these habits can reveal surprising cost savings. Two simple examples are purchasing more fuel efficient vehicles, or switching to energy efficient technology. These simple changes can save millions of dollars in operating costs for Cities, large and small.
3. There is a green cost continuum: Some green actions may cost more, but others may be less costly immediately (such as purchase of remanufactured printer cartridges), or may require upfront investments with lower operating costs over time (such as retrofitting lights to more energy efficient versions), or be more expensive upfront but result in lower repurchase costs (such as buying durable goods instead of disposable)

Cities across the nation have found that well structured green programs have helped save millions of dollars, particularly in the area of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction.

Examples include:

- In 2007, the first year of its energy management program, Fayetteville, Ark., saved \$300,000 in energy costs due to emphasis on energy conservation. One of its initiatives was the installation of thermostats that cost about \$100 and paid for themselves in the month. (See [Ref 1.1](#))
- The City of Ann Arbor, Mich., received a \$630,000 grant from the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority to fund LED retrofits for 1,400 downtown lights. The energy-saving installations will save the city over \$100,000 per year.
- In Nashua, N.H., officials replaced light fixtures to improve energy efficiency at Street and Traffic Buildings for an annual saving of \$42,000. In addition, lighting upgrades and motion sensors at City Hall delivered an annual savings of \$6,500. New windows and frames in City Clerk offices alone lowered annual energy costs by 30%.

(See [Ref 1.2](#) for ICLEI website)

ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS

As Delray Beach grows, the environmental impact of its citizens and businesses may grow with it. However by implementing many of the green recommendations in this report, the City can meaningfully reduce its environmental impacts while improving citizen livability and reducing long term risks. The majority of environmental recommendations in this report all help achieve one or more of the following environmental objectives:

- *Incorporate Sustainability into Urban Planning & Design*
- *Encourage Water Efficiency & Conservation*
- *Reduce Greenhouse Gases through Energy Efficiency & Green Building*
- *Reduce Greenhouse Gases through Fuel Efficiency & Transportation*
- *Implement Green Purchasing*
- *Reduce Waste & Increase Recycling*
- *Encourage Green Economic Development*
- *Improve Indoor & Outdoor Environmental Quality*

A more *sustainable urban planning and design* strategy will reduce pressure on land resources and higher urban density, resulting in lower local air and noise pollution from transportation and lower greenhouse gases overall.

A focus on *water efficiency and conservation* will reduce demands on water resources and wetlands that are threatened in Florida due to development and population growth.

A focus on *reducing greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and green building* will reduce Delray Beach's use of fossil fuel energy in the power plants that create electricity for our use. This reduction in fossil fuel use will reduce particulate air emissions and also limit the creation of greenhouse gases responsible for global warming and climate change. Climate change is a particularly critical environmental concern for Delray Beach since the sea-level rise associated with global warming has potentially very serious consequences for low-lying coastal cities such as ours.

A focus on *reducing greenhouse gases through fuel efficiency and transportation* will reduce local air pollution and greenhouse gases. It can also improve citizen livability through use of innovative vehicles and convenient public transportation options. Reducing greenhouse gases will help Delray Beach mitigate the potential impacts from climate change including hurricanes and sea level rise. (See [Ref 1.3](#))

A transition to *green purchasing* can help reduce pressure on forests through recycled content purchases, reduce energy and greenhouse gases through energy efficient product purchases, and reduce City employee and citizen exposure to harsh chemicals by purchasing less toxic product alternatives.

A *reduction in waste and increase in recycling* can help reduce Delray Beach's contribution to the landfills operated by Palm Beach County's Solid Waste Authority. By increasing recycling rates, the City can also help enable recovery and reuse of valuable raw materials rather than letting them disappear into the landfills.

A plan for *Green Economic Development* can spur innovation, job creation and differentiation. As the City continues to evolve and grow, the creation of a green economic development plan can help the Delray Beach stand out as an innovator in this new area of civic and political leadership.

Improving Indoor & Outdoor Environmental Quality can help reduce air pollution and release of pesticides and harsh chemicals into our community.

POLITICAL REASONS

In the current political context, no government body can ignore environmental issues – particularly those related to energy, climate change and green building. There is a new green political reality where green issues have risen toward the top of the agenda.

On November 4th 2008, President-Elect Obama stated that one of the major challenges to our future included a “planet in peril”. As such, the Obama Administration has acted quickly to bring environmental issues to the top of the political agenda. Key green elements of an Obama environmental plan that is already being circulated include:

- *Energy Efficiency.* Major increases in funding to improve the efficiency of government, commercial, and residential buildings as well as the industrial sector.
- *Renewable Energy.* Broad support for new development of both small-and large-scale projects in solar, wind, geothermal, advanced biofuels, etc.
- *Grid Modernization.* From upgrades to our transmission and distribution system to installation of smart energy meters for households and businesses.
- *Mass Transit.* Funding "ready-to-go" projects, such as the \$16 billion in projects that could break ground in 2009, according to the American Public Transportation Association. This will include a range of programs to accelerate transition to low-emissions personal and commercial vehicles including electric and plug-in hybrids.

(See [Ref 1.4](#))

Prior to the elevation of political interest in green issues at the national level with Obama’s election, in 2007 Governor Charlie Crist signed three climate change related Executive Orders in Florida (See [Ref 1.5](#)):

- Executive Order 07-126 set greenhouse gas reduction targets for state agencies and departments and adopted the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED standards for all new state government facilities and all existing buildings owned by the Department of Management Services.
- Executive Order 07-126 required state-owned vehicles to be more fuel efficient and to use ethanol and biodiesel fuels when available.
- Executive Order 07-127 requests that the Florida Public Service Commission initiate rulemaking to 1) require that utilities produce at least 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources and 2) authorize statewide net metering.
- Executive Order 07-128 creates the Florida Governor’s Action Team on Energy and Climate Change to develop an Energy and Climate Change Action Plan to recommend ways to meet the new greenhouse gas reduction targets

At the City Level, by end November 2008 over 900 U.S. mayors had signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Delray Beach was one of the early signatories to this agreement, and as such had publicly agreed, in 2006, to “reduce global warming pollution by taking actions in the City’s own operations and communities”. (See [Ref 1.6](#))

If Delray Beach makes the transition to greater implementation of green initiatives it has started, and follows the commitments it has already made, substantial political and economic benefits are likely to be achieved. This report is designed to help the City achieve those benefits, by accelerating the shift from green commitment to green action.

REFERENCES

- Ref 1.1 - [Fayetteville, Arkansas Sustainability Position](#)
- Ref 1.2 - [ICLEI](#)
- Ref 1.3 - [NASA Research on Climate Change](#)
- Ref 1.4 - [The Green Stimulus Plan](#)
- Ref 1.5 - [Florida Executive Orders](#)
- Ref 1.6 – [U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement](#)

Note: All references are available as clickable links within this electronic document and available online at <http://www.SustainableDelray.org/report.htm>

