

The American Cities Summit: Topic A Primary Sources

Increasing the Sustainability of Cities

Here are primary sources that your moderator or legal chair thought would be helpful in gaining an understanding of the topic. These are by no means all of the sources available, just sources we wanted to highlight.

Source 1: Portland Sustainability Policies and Plans

This link contains information of current sustainability plans enacted by Portland, Oregon. The city has been a major player in sustainability since the 70s. Throughout this link you can find the city's Climate Action Plan, Energy Efficiency Reporting Mechanisms for Commercial Buildings, Green Building Plans as well as Recycling programs. While many of these programs have proven effective in Portland, it is important to recognize that every city will have different abilities and needs.

Therefore, any program modeled after one of these should be flexible to work for cities that exist in different areas across the country.

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/401431>

Source 2: Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan

Vancouver is considered on the forefront of the world when it comes to sustainable development so their results can be used to help predict what we may experience. In 2008, British Columbia, the province in which Vancouver is located, instituted a carbon tax that saw the use of fossil fuels decrease. This was the first time a carbon tax was implemented in North America and it has proven successful, allowing the province to cut the income and corporate tax rates while reducing greenhouse emissions. The Vancouver Greenest City plan builds upon this success, including decreasing waste, expanding public transit and increasing green jobs. Although not represented on this body, Vancouver can serve as a model for other cities in the United States.

<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/greenest-city-action-plan-implementation-update-2017.pdf>

Source 3: EPA Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2015, the three largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions were Electricity (29%), Transportation (27%), and Industry (21%). While total greenhouse gas emissions fluctuate year to year, the United States has decreased its overall emissions in the last 2 decades. In order for delegates to develop more sustainable cities, they must be able to intelligently target the major sources of greenhouse emissions and reduce them.

<https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

Source 4: Statement by President Trump Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord

Even though cities have quite a bit of autonomy when it comes to their own sustainability policies, much work is done by the federal government, thus it is important to know the position of the current administration in order to understand the success of programs implemented by cities. In 2017, the President withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord. While his withdrawal is controversial, the current administration largely believes that if cuts to emissions happen, they should come from innovations made by the private sector, not government mandate.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/01/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord>

Source 5: General Motors Sustainability Accomplishments

Engaging the private sector is also important for creating sustainable cities. General Motors has been involved in efforts to become more sustainable. Importantly, they have reduced the weight of many of their vehicles, which has allowed a reduction in the use of gas and therefore fewer emissions. Additionally, they have also installed LED lights. There are more efficient, saving money for the private and public sector as well as reducing emissions.

http://www.gmsustainability.com/_pdf/landing/highlights.pdf

Source 6: Measuring the Greenness of Cities: A New Methodology for an Urban Sustainability Index (USI)

Unlike many other cities in this conference, Detroit is relatively new to the sustainability game thus its plans and actions can be viewed as what many cities might have to go through when starting up a sustainability plan. This plan summarizes efforts to begin constructing a sustainability plan and index in Detroit. It would be prudent for delegates to understand and develop accurate measures for sustainability in order to craft the most sustainable and cost effective programs.

http://graham.umich.edu/media/files/DetroitSustainabilityBieri_Report.pdf