



HOW GREEN IS MY TOWN?

50 Ways Local Communities Can Lead the Way on Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Health

For links to government and non-profit resources and communities with outstanding programs, please visit www.HowGreenIsMyTown.org.

GREEN TOWN OVERVIEW

1. Has your town adopted a comprehensive Environmental and Sustainability Policy?

Green Point: An effective policy announces the town's commitment to action and sets out its goals and implementation strategies, as well as providing a focus for the efforts of employees and departments, community groups, business organizations and individual activists.

2. Has your town established an Office of Sustainability and Environmental Affairs?

Green Point: Towns and villages that have an Office or Department of Sustainability and Environmental Affairs, and/or a Chief Sustainability Officer who oversees the efforts of the town, are more likely to do better on a broad spectrum of issues than those without.

3. Has your town implemented an effective method of communicating your policies to employees and residents?

Green Point: Most residents get their information from websites or social media. Website pages should be up to date and easy to locate. Several forms of social media should be used to promote your events.

ENERGY

4. Has your town mandated energy reductions with stated goals and timetables?

Green Point: Municipalities can use the results of an energy audit to set targets for reduction and timetables for implementation.

5. Has your town had an energy audit performed on all municipal facilities?

Green Point: An energy audit can help you determine exactly where and how a building's energy is being used, and what opportunities exist for improvement.

6. Does your town utilize or invest in sustainable energy sources, such as solar, wind and geo-thermal systems?

Green Point: *Municipal options for sustainable energy are rapidly expanding as new technologies are developed and new companies come to market with solutions. See the web site for resources and links.*

7. Does your town facilitate the development of small, distributed renewable energy systems such as solar or wind farms?

Green Point: *Widespread deployment of small, distributed energy systems will decrease our reliance on centralized power plants, avoid continued dependence on fossil fuels and reduce the need for new power plants. Local decision makers can amend codes and establish procedures to speed their implementation.*

8. Does your town have an environmentally-friendly lighting code?

Green Point: *Municipal lighting codes can help save energy, minimize glare for motorists and pedestrians, prevent light from trespassing into homes and private areas, and improve habitat for wildlife.*

GREEN PURCHASING

9. Does your town have a comprehensive Green Purchasing Policy covering:

- lifecycle costs
- sustainability of materials
- recyclability of components
- transportation costs
- potential health impacts of products

10. Does your town require suppliers to package their products in biodegradable packaging materials?

Green Point: *Municipal procurement contracts and purchase orders can clearly state that materials packed in non-recyclable packaging will not be accepted.*

11. Does your town belong to a local green purchasing network?

Green Point: *Green purchasing networks allow cities and towns to reduce costs and greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing goods in bulk from local vendors.*

12. Does your town follow sustainable printing guidelines?

Green Point: *Using soy inks, printing on both sides of the paper and carefully planning the number of copies needed can help reduce costs, save paper and reduce toxins entering the environment.*

TRANSPORTATION

13. Does your town actively encourage the use of public transportation?

Green Point: Improved station and waiting facilities, clean equipment, courteous service, convenient scheduling and easy access to retail shopping areas have all been shown to increase ridership.

14. Does your town provide preferred parking for electric vehicles?

Green Point: Simple signage designating special parking areas for energy-efficient cars provides a de facto showroom of hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles. Some municipalities have even waived parking fees entirely.

15. Does your town purchase alternative fuel vehicles whenever possible?

Green Point: Other than police and emergency vehicles, most cars and trucks for town use are available in alternative-fuel models.

16. Does your town provide sufficient, protected and monitored bicycle parking?

Green Point: Providing safe and secure parking for bicycles will encourage ridership, cutting vehicle emissions. If bicycles in your town are chained to lamp-posts or street signs, it's probably because bike parking is insufficient.

17. Does your town impose and actively enforce a legal limit on the idling of vehicles, including a "No Idling" policy for town-owned vehicles?

Green Point: Harmful air-polluting vehicle emissions include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and fine particulate matter as well as carcinogens, astmagens, endocrine disruptors and neurotoxins.

GREEN BUILDINGS

18. Does your town encourage the construction of green building projects and renovations?

Green Point: Tax reductions, increased building allotment and faster permitting processes for green buildings can help drive new, sustainable development.

19. Does your town actively encourage mixed-use zoning projects?

Green Point: Mixed-use zoning helps reduce traffic congestion, preserves open space and natural resources, and builds communities. It has also been shown to help revitalize downtown areas and spur economic growth.

20. Does your town actively encourage adaptive re-use over virgin development?

Green Point: Adaptive Reuse (AR) refers to the practice of converting older residential and commercial buildings to new uses including apartments, lofts, office space, retail space and even small hotels.

21. Does your town encourage the construction and installation of green roofs?

Green Point: A typical one-story building with a six-inch thick green roof could reduce heat loss by 26% and reduce heat gain by 95% compared to a traditional roof.

22. Does your town have a policy mandating the use of healthy building materials in all town-owned buildings?

Green Point: *Paints, stains and adhesives often contain toxic solvents with very high VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) levels. Formaldehyde, a carcinogen, is commonly found in carpeting, paneling and furniture.*

23. Does your town have a policy regarding wireless technology, including cell towers, distributed antenna systems, smart meters and wireless routers?

Green Point: *Studies show that long-term exposure to non-ionizing or radio-frequency radiation (RFR) emitted from wireless devices can pose significant health risks, especially for vulnerable populations including pregnant women, children and people with implanted medical devices.*

LAND MANAGEMENT

24. Does your town have a policy to preserve and protect open space?

Green Point: *Open space can provide opportunities for sports and recreation, for citizens to escape from the pressures of everyday life, for wildlife to find habitat and refuge, and for plants and soil to assist in the removal of toxins from our environment, including CO2 capture.*

25. Does your town have a tree protection and planting policy?

Green Point: *Trees provide shade, habitat for wildlife, and help reduce noise and visual pollution. They add value to neighborhoods, mitigate runoff and erosion, and help reduce global warming by removing carbon dioxide from the air.*

26. Does your town prohibit the use of turf pesticides on town land, including public parks?

Green Point: *Turf pesticides have been associated with environmental contamination and significant human health problems, including certain cancers, neurological and developmental problems, reproductive harm and birth defects. Children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to pesticide exposures.*

27. Does your town encourage the upgrading of grass playing fields over the installation of synthetic turf fields, and prohibit the use of recycled crumb rubber on playgrounds?

Green Point: *Synthetic turf fields present several problems from both an environmental and human health perspective. See website for more details.*

28. Does your town purchase non-polluting landscaping equipment, or require the use of such equipment by contractors?

Green Point: *According to the EPA, emissions from landscape equipment (mowers, blowers, trimmers, etc.) are often greater than those from a car, per hour of operation. Small gasoline-powered two-cycle engines are the most polluting.*

29. Does your town operate a municipal composting facility?

Green Point: *Composting — nature's original recycling system — is a cost-effective means of handling organic waste and an essential part of any successful solid waste management plan.*

30. Does your town provide space for community gardens?

Green Point: Community gardens provide an opportunity for apartment dwellers and others to maintain vegetable and flower gardens on publicly-owned land.

WATER MANAGEMENT

31. Does your town enforce effective water conservation policies?

Green Point: Successful residential water conservation programs can include public education, rebates for water-efficient plumbing fixtures, "conservation rate" pricing, building code requirements for new buildings, rainwater harvesting, leak detection and repair, and residential water-use audits.

32. Does your town utilize water-conserving plumbing fixtures in all town buildings?

Green Point: In a typical office building, toilets account for almost 70% of water usage. Replacing a conventional 5-gallon-per-flush toilet with a 1.6 gallon-per-flush model can reduce water consumption by more than half.

33. Does your town permit and encourage the construction of private "greywater" and rainwater systems?

Green Point: "Greywater" is the waste water produced from baths, showers, dishwashers and washing machines. Many municipalities are realizing that harnessing greywater could bring significant results in both conservation and cost savings.

34. Does your town mandate strict storm water control measures, including the use of permeable paving when replacing sidewalks, driveways and parking lots?

Green Point: Permeable paving is a method of paving low-traffic roads, walkways and parking lots in a way that permits air and water to move through the surface, reducing surface runoff from storm water and other sources.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

35. Does your town participate in a Zero Waste initiative?

Green Point: The goal of Zero Waste is to encourage industry to take responsibility for the entire lifecycle of their products, and reward achievers through purchasing and market development incentives.

36. Does your town have an effective recycling program that is fully embraced by the community?

Green Point: Residents need to be encouraged to participate as partners in recycling efforts, and recycling education programs should stress the need for community support to ensure their success.

37. Does your town have a special recycling program for e-waste?

Green Point: Consumer electronics typically contain toxins such as lead, cadmium, chromium, mercury, beryllium, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and brominated flame retardants. Batteries contain cadmium, copper, zinc, lead, manganese, nickel, and lithium.

38. Does your town provide curbside pickup of leaves and garden waste for residents?

Green Point: Thousands of towns are now recycling leaves for compost, or at least requiring their collection in paper or biodegradable plastic bags. Many are also providing residents with information about backyard composting, further reducing program costs.

39. Does your town have a program to facilitate recycling of used but serviceable goods?

Green Point: One of the best ways to reduce the solid waste stream in communities is to encourage and actively support the re-use of serviceable goods: bicycles, books, dishes, lighting fixtures, cooking utensils, toys, games, tools, small appliances, furniture and household knickknacks.

40. Does your town provide frequent "toxics" collection days for residents, including prescription drugs?

Green Point: Effective municipal programs include frequent collection days, mobile toxic collection trucks, and permanent drop-off centers for residents who are moving or undergoing renovations, which is when most consumers discard unused or partially-used toxic products that require special disposal.

CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

41. Does your town have a policy requiring the exclusive use of bio-based green cleaning products?

Green Point: Traditional petroleum-based cleaning products contain toxic chemicals that pollute the environment during their manufacture, contaminate indoor air when used, and degrade the environment after disposal.

42. Does your town have an Integrated Pest Management ("IPM") policy for controlling indoor pests?

Green Point: Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a voluntary protocol that encourages the use of least toxic alternatives first, and the use of more toxic alternatives only after other methods have failed.

43. Does your town prohibit the purchase and use of artificial air fresheners in municipal facilities?

Green Point: Many of the chemicals contained in commercial air freshening products contain phthalates — a class of hazardous chemicals that can disrupt endocrine systems — as well as carcinogens and reproductive toxicants from petroleum solvents.

44. Does your town prohibit the purchase and use of anti-bacterial products containing triclosan?

Green Point: Many products labeled "anti-bacterial" or "anti-microbial" contain triclosan (also known as triclocarban or microban), a chemical that the EPA has banned for use in hand soaps, but is still used in many other products.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

45. Does your town actively solicit the participation of the business community in addressing environmental and sustainability issues?

Green Point: Companies that want to thrive in the future are sensitive to consumer demand for environmentally-responsible products and services, and willing to participate as full and active partners in the community's efforts to be green.

46. Does your town prohibit the use of single-use plastic bags, and encourage the use of reusable shopping bags?

Green Point: Plastic bags are made from non-renewable resources (oil, natural gas and other chemicals), and can take up to a thousand years to break down in the environment. They litter our streets, clog our storm drains and landfills, and end up in oceans, lakes, rivers and bays where they present many hazards for marine ecosystems.

47. Does your town prohibit the use of polystyrene foam food containers?

Green Point: These days even the giant fast-food chains understand consumers want their food in environmentally-friendly packaging.

48. Does your town have a farmers' market?

Green Point: Farmers' markets provide a direct connection between the people who grow food and the people who consume it. It is also an opportunity to promote the community's efforts on climate, sustainability and environmental health.

49. Do retailers in your town take back recyclable products they sell?

Green Point: The true "cost" of a product includes the price of disposal. Retailers have the opportunity to take a leadership role in local recycling efforts by embracing and promoting recycling programs for the products they sell.

50. Do dry cleaning establishments in your town offer non-perchloroethylene ("perc") methods for cleaning clothes?

Green Point: Perc is associated with increased risks of cancer and reproductive effects, and is a major groundwater pollutant. The use of liquid CO₂ or water-based methods in dry cleaning are effective, safe and non-polluting.

For an interactive online checklist, please click the "Interactive Playlist" icon on the bottom of the home page at www.HowGreenIsMyTown.org.

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