

Cambridge Climate Emergency Congress

Background information and Links

The purpose of the Congress is to recommend ways for the community and city of Cambridge to respond more effectively to climate change. This document explains the science behind the climate emergency as well as the local, national, and global responses to the emergency to date.

This document was prepared by the Steering Committee for the Congress to help delegates understand the climate emergency and the issues before the Congress. The steering committee takes full responsibility for the contents. Any inaccuracies or misstatements are our mistake and we apologize in advance.

We have tried to use simple, easy to understand language. However, the science and the issues are complicated. We don't expect everyone to understand all of it by Saturday and it is not necessary that you understand all of it right away in order to participate in the Congress. Key points have been highlighted in **bold** letters. Links to more information are provided at the end of the document.

Science informs us and can help us to respond intelligently, but it does not tell us what to do. As citizens we must take responsibility and act, informed by the best available information, to preserve our lives and property and to protect the future for our descendants.

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Session 1: Problem, Consequences and Causes

This session deals with the problem of climate change itself, the consequences of the climate emergency, and the causes of the climate emergency.

Climate Change: The problem

Science tells us that climate change is mostly a problem of carbon pollution. Although the Earth's climate has been gradually warming since the last [ice age](#), about 20,000 years ago, recently we have seen a lot of warming. Some of the warmest years on record in the last 150 years have occurred in the last 10 years. Scientists believe this additional warming is caused by human activity, mostly the burning of [fossil fuels](#) like oil, coal and natural gas, which all contain carbon. As our economies and populations grow, we are also increasing the amount of pollution we release into the air every day.

[Oil](#), for example, was made from the bodies of tiny organisms that lived millions of years ago on the earth. Like most living things, these fossil fuels contain a lot of [carbon](#), the chemical element that makes up most of our own bodies' structure. When carbon is burned, it combines with oxygen, energy is released, and the end product, carbon dioxide is usually released into the air. This happens when vehicles burn gasoline and diesel to move

around, when power plants burn coal or natural gas to generate electricity, or when we burn oil, natural gas or wood to heat our homes.

Carbon dioxide and other [greenhouse gases](#) trap heat in the earth's [atmosphere](#). Some of the light from the sun that reaches the earth is converted into lower frequencies of light which we can't see, called [infrared](#). Some of this infrared light is absorbed by carbon dioxide and other chemicals in the air, causing the air to become warmer. This is called the [greenhouse effect](#), because the atmosphere acts like a greenhouse, by trapping some of the heat from the sun. In general the greenhouse effect has been a good thing. Without it, the earth's atmosphere would be much colder than it is now, and most of the earth would be covered in ice. However, too much heating is not good. A much warmer atmosphere would cause many problems as detailed below.

Another carbon based chemical, [methane](#), is a main contributor to global warming. Large quantities of methane are released by dairy and meat farms when cows digest grass and other plants.

Carbon in the earth's atmosphere is part of a [cycle](#). Plants absorb carbon when they grow, and animals emit carbon when we breathe. Large amounts of carbon are absorbed and emitted by the oceans and soils, as well as plants. Before people started burning large amounts of fossil fuels, this cycle was roughly in balance so that the same amount of carbon came back out of the atmosphere as went into it. Because we are adding extra carbon that was buried for millions of years underground, more carbon is now going into the atmosphere than is coming out. Although the amount we are adding is small compared to the amount already there, the problem is that the extra carbon is building up over time.

In the case of the atmosphere, we have to find ways to bring the carbon cycle back into balance. To fix climate change, we may have to find ways to remove large amounts of carbon from the air. Removing carbon from the atmosphere is called [carbon sequestration](#). It is a difficult problem, and no good solutions exist for it yet, though several techniques are being explored.

Some of the carbon pollution and other greenhouse gases stay in the atmosphere for a long time. It takes time for the extra heating they cause to affect the climate. The carbon pollution we release into the air today will take many years to cause enough extra warming for us to notice. But once they are up there, these pollutants continue to warm the air for decades or even centuries. So the warming we are seeing today is the result of smaller amounts of carbon that have been released in the past. The ever larger amounts we are emitting now and into the future will cause even more drastic effects later in this century and beyond. Scientists tell us that we need to drastically reduce the amount of greenhouse pollution we are adding to the atmosphere starting right now in order to avoid some of the worst effects of climate change in the near future.

By the time these more drastic changes are seen and felt, it will be very difficult or maybe impossible to stop or reverse them. This is why climate scientists from all over the world have sounded the alarm and why the Cambridge City Council has recognized that there is a climate emergency.

Climate Change: Consequences

Science has given us precise answers and robust conclusions... We now know the serious

impacts of climate change which would accrue as a result of inaction.

The record of global action at mitigation has been very weak, even though the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was agreed upon in 1992....

We in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change do not prescribe any specific action, but action is a must.

--Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The warming of the earth's atmosphere has many consequences, and the longer it continues, the worse those consequences will get. In the last several years, the climate has changed more rapidly than most scientists expected, and many scientists are now concerned that unless we act quickly we may not be able to reverse or slow climate change enough to avoid some of the worst consequences. Nobody knows exactly what will happen, but scientists are predicting the following consequences:

1. [Warmer weather](#) - Although in Cambridge we may be tempted to think of warmer temperatures as a good thing, it's not that simple. Many people would suffer discomfort and even death from higher temperatures. Warmer temperatures also bring other health effects including the spread of new diseases.
2. Ocean changes - As the atmosphere warms up, some of that heat is transferred to the oceans. This is a slow process but it is already happening. As the oceans warm up they expand, causing sea levels to rise. The oceans also absorb some of the extra carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, causing the water to become more [acidic](#), which harms marine life including fish and coral reefs.
3. Weather changes - Warmer weather and warmer oceans means more powerful tropical storms, more frequent major floods and heavier rainfalls, all of which could negatively affect Cambridge and New England in general.
4. Melting ice - The world's population depends heavily on [glaciers](#), large sheets of ice in tall mountain ranges. Each spring when some of the ice melts, rivers swell, and most of the water is diverted to irrigation for growing food and providing drinking water in Asia, Europe and North and South America. But these glaciers are not being replenished during the winters, and will eventually disappear, endangering the food supply.
5. Rising sea levels - In the next few decades storm surge flooding made worse by higher sea levels will reach new areas that are currently protected. Such floods are likely to occur much more frequently, potentially causing serious property damage and endangering populations. **Boston is among the east-coast cities in the U.S. found to be especially**

vulnerable to increased flooding, according to a report commissioned by the World Wildlife Federation and Allianz, a global insurer and financial services company.

Climate Change: Causes

During the late eighteenth century, countries like England, the United States and others began to change. Instead of relying on manual labor, newly invented machines, first [steam engines](#), and later, [internal combustion](#) engines, were used to do the heavy lifting. First coal and later oil and natural gas began to be used in large quantities to provide the fuel for these machines. This period of our history is referred to as [The Industrial Revolution](#).

Later, automobiles and airplanes were invented and became widely used. Electricity became widely available and was and still is mostly generated by burning coal. These and many other changes have brought a tremendous amount of wealth, comfort and convenience to our lives. It is hard to imagine living without these conveniences.

Unfortunately, until recently, people were not generally aware that the burning of fossil fuels in large quantities could lead to a warming of the earth's atmosphere. Now that we are aware of the problem it is hard for us to fix because so many aspects of our lives depend on burning large quantities of fossil fuels. Fortunately the problem is not impossible to solve, but it requires that we address the many causes, or sources of carbon:

1. Energy - Most of the carbon is released from coal, oil, and gas burning power plants.

Fortunately it is now possible to get all the energy we need from [wind](#), [solar](#) and [geothermal](#) power sources. These sources of energy are called [renewable](#) because unlike fossil fuels they don't run out. Also unlike fossil fuel they don't involve burning carbon and so don't add to global warming. However, switching to renewable sources will take time and cost money. One way we can immediately improve the situation is to use less energy to accomplish the same task: improving our [energy efficiency](#). This can be done by better [insulating](#) out buildings, using newer appliances, better light bulbs and other things that provide the same benefits but use less energy.

2. Transportation - A lot of carbon is released from cars, trucks, airplanes, buses, trains, boats and other gas burning vehicles. By switching to more efficient and renewable [electric-powered vehicles](#) we can reduce our pollution over time, but we can also immediately improve the situation by relying less on automobiles and driving alone and shifting to walking, biking, carpooling, and public transit.

3. Consumption - Trade is great because it allows us to own and consume things we cannot make ourselves. However, especially in the United States we use up a lot of energy to transport the goods we use and consume from all over the world. In doing so we may be causing more pollution than if we made those goods locally. Also, by buying lots of things because they are cheap, we cause more carbon to go into the air than necessary. A possible solution is to limit our consumption and switch to buying products that produce less carbon pollution.

4. Food - Farming and forestation. One important way to remove carbon from the atmosphere is to grow large trees. Unfortunately, to make room for our growing population, we've been cutting down more large trees than are being grown world wide. Another way to take large amounts of carbon from the air is to hold it in the soil. Unfortunately, factory farms that grow corn to feed animals *release* carbon from the soil. Solutions include managing soils so they hold more carbon and shifting our diets away from

corn fed beef. Other practices, like switching to more locally produced food products may help reduce carbon pollution, although that argument isn't completely settled yet.

Session 2: The Response so far

This session will deal with the response to climate change, both at the local level and at the state/national/international levels.

Cambridge's Response

Cambridge joined the ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection Program in 1999, and is now part of a network of over 1,000 local governments globally. In December 2002, the City Council adopted the [Climate Protection Plan](#). The plan, which was developed by the City Manager-appointed Climate Protection Task Force and City staff, set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2010. One hundred individual actions were recommended to achieve the goal and most of the actions were implemented.

However, as of December 2009, Cambridge's greenhouse gas emissions are 27% above 1990 levels.

In 2003, the city manager convened a standing Climate Protection Action Committee ([CPAC](#)). This committee continues to advise the city manager on actions to take based on the latest available science and potential solutions.

In May of 2009, the Cambridge City Council approved a resolution recognizing a [climate emergency](#). A [public hearing](#) was held in September of 2009. At the hearing several citizens called for a conference on how to respond to the emergency. This congress, sponsored by Mayor Simmons and organized with the help of a committee of citizens and city staff was the result.

Massachusetts' Response

In August 2008, Massachusetts enacted the [Global Warming Solutions Act](#) (GWSA), making the Commonwealth one of the first states in the nation to move forward with a comprehensive program to address Climate Change.

The GWSA sets the following greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals for Massachusetts:

- A reduction of between 10 percent and 25 percent below statewide 1990 GHG emission levels by 2020; and
- A reduction of 80 percent below statewide 1990 GHG emission levels by 2050.

Among other things, the GWSA established a [Climate Change Adaption Advisory Committee](#), which is charged with studying and making recommendations regarding strategies for adapting to climate change. This committee's report is due to be presented to the state legislature by December 31st, 2009.

There are many other local and regional initiatives taking place across the state. More information can be found in the References and Links section.

America's Response

Although the US was part of the negotiations that lead to the global climate change [United Nations](#) (UN) treaty, popularly known as the [Kyoto Protocol](#) in 1997, the treaty was not ratified by the US Congress. The Kyoto Protocol set goals for carbon dioxide (or GHG, "greenhouse gas") emissions reductions, but the US has not adopted those or any other national emissions reductions goals to date.

In June of 2009 the US House of Representatives passed a bill that, if it becomes law, would set limits on how much carbon dioxide can be emitted. A similar bill is currently being debated in the Senate but neither bill would achieve the emissions reductions called for by scientists in the 2007 IPCC report.

The US is participating in the new UN conference on climate change taking place in Copenhagen this month, known as [COP15](#). That conference is no longer expected to generate a new treaty on climate change but the hope is that it will lead to preliminary agreement so that a treaty can be negotiated in 2010.

Many states and coalitions of states are taking action on their own, such as the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) (RGGI) in 10 northeastern states including Massachusetts. [California](#) in particular has been very aggressive, and since it is large enough to be the world's 10th largest economy its impact is very significant.

Global Response

Despite the Kyoto treaty, the world as a whole has not reduced, but rather increased carbon emissions over the last 10 years. Growing economies like China and India are rapidly industrializing, that is, they are becoming more like the US. That is good for their citizens who are leading wealthier, more comfortable lives, but it is bad for the world as a whole because it will lead to even more climate changes more quickly. Meanwhile, the lesser developed countries which contributed least to carbon emissions are suffering more from the effects such as shortage of fresh water, more severe weather events (hurricanes, droughts, floods) and rising sea level. The hope is that COP15 will lead eventually to a new treaty and stronger commitments from all the nations to reduce their carbon emissions.

Regardless of when and how the world comes together on the issue of climate change, the front line of efforts to protect the climate will continue to be at the local level where people work, live and play. It will fall to communities and individuals to find specific ways to carry out the actions that reduce carbon emissions from buildings and local transportation, waste generation, and overall consumption. That's why it is important that we all become more aware of the issue and engage with our community and local government on how to respond.

Session 3: Brainstorming, new solutions and new commitment

This session will deal with generating new ideas and commitment for responding to climate change more effectively and more quickly.

There are many things that we could do differently as a community that would help reduce our contribution to polluting the earth. When brainstorming, all ideas are on the table. The questions below are only provided as a starting point to get you going.

1. What can we do as individual citizens to reduce our impact?

2. What can we do as a community to reduce our impact? - As individuals our impact is of course tiny, but when we work together with our neighbors, we can multiply the effect. What do you think your community or organization can do? How can local communities and organizations work together to do more?

3. What does the City need to do? - The city government has made many changes and is planning many more that will help Cambridge be more efficient and reduce local emissions. But many more actions are needed and become possible if people support them.

4. What can we do to create a more sustainable city? - What changes can we make to our city so that we are more self-sufficient, creating new jobs and keeping more of our money circulating locally?

5. What can we do to be more resilient? - Climate change is already happening, and it will affect us as a city. What can we do to better protect ourselves from floods, storms and sea level rise?

6. What can we do to serve as an example to others? - Cambridge is a unique city in the world. We bring together people from all parts of the country and the world to live here and to study at two of the top universities in the world. What we do in Cambridge can serve as an example to other cities and towns all over the world, spreading the effects of our actions.

7. What can we do to affect national policy? - The US has not been a leader on climate change. Cambridge is taking a leadership role on the issue. How can we as a city act to encourage, support and inspire greater leadership from our national government?

References and Links

[Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](http://www.ipcc.ch/) - The IPCC report is the definitive source for the scientific underpinnings of the climate emergency's causes, effects and potential response. <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

[Update on Climate Science since IPCC 2009 Report](http://www.copenhagendiagnosis.org) <http://www.copenhagendiagnosis.org>

[Economics of Climate Stabilization](http://www.sei-us.org/climate-and-energy/economics350.html) (Stockholm Environmental Institute)

<http://www.sei-us.org/climate-and-energy/economics350.html>

[Investments for Climate Stabilization \(McKinsey & Co.\)](http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/publications/Carbon_Productivity/index.asp)

http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/publications/Carbon_Productivity/index.asp

[Cambridge Climate Protection Plan \(2002\)](#)

www.cambridgema.gov/climate

<http://www.lesley.edu/services/operations/green/index.html>

[Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection \(MassDEP\)](#) - The MassDEP website on climate provides useful background information and details what the state is doing about climate change. <http://www.mass.gov/dep/air/climate/>

Cambridge Initiatives

[Cambridge Energy Alliance](#) <http://www.cambridgeenergyalliance.org>

[Home Energy Efficiency Team](#) <http://www.heetma.com/index.php>

[Green Streets](#) <http://www.gogreenstreets.org/>

[Green Decade/Cambridge](#) <http://www.greencambridge.org>

[City Sprouts](#) <http://www.citysprouts.org>

[TROMP](#) <http://www.trompcambridge.com/index.php>

[Cambridge Climate Research Associates](#) <http://ecoethics.net/hsev/2001-2002/index.htm>

[Cambridge-Climate Social Networking Site](#) <http://cambridge-climate.ning.com>

[Harvard University Sustainability Initiatives](#): <http://www.greencampus.harvard.edu>

[MIT Energy Initiative](#): <http://mit.edu/mitei>

[Lesley University Sustainability](#)

[Initiative](#): <http://www.lesley.edu/services/operations/green/index.html>

Massachusetts Initiatives

[Massachusetts Climate Action Network \(MCAN\)](#) <http://www.massclimateaction.org>

[Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition \(MAGJC\)](#) <http://www.magjc.org>

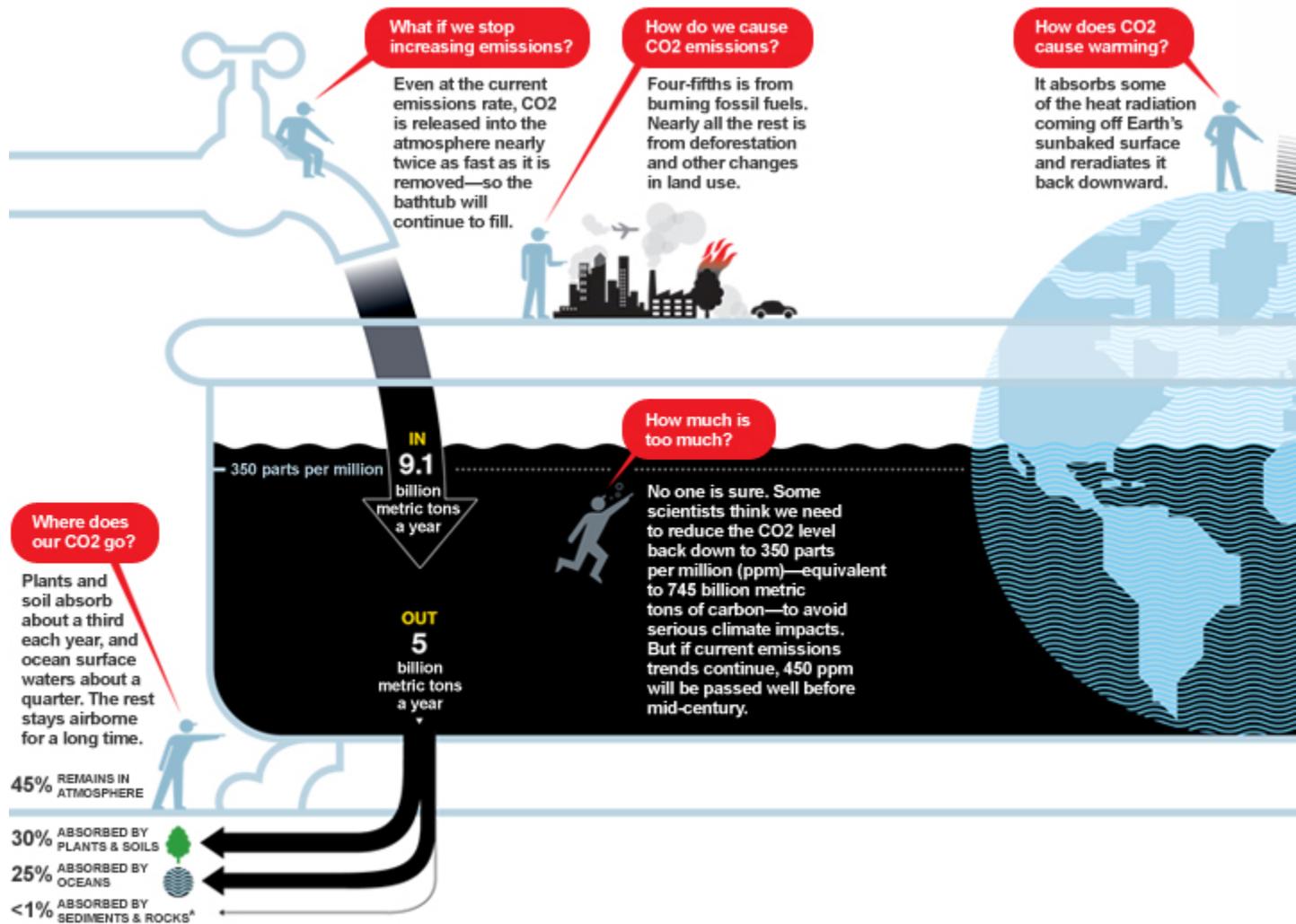
[United States Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) - The EPA website on climate change. <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/policy/index.html>

[Nature GeoScience issue on carbon sequestration](#) - Articles on the latest techniques for removing carbon from the atmosphere

<http://www.nature.com/ngeo/focus/carbon-sequestration/index.html>

[National Geographic Bathtub Analogy](#) - The picture is reproduced below:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/big-idea/05/carbon-bath>



* PERCENTAGES DO NOT ADD UP TO 100 BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Current & Past Responses to Climate Change in Cambridge

Citizens, businesses, institutions, and City government have initiated a broad array of actions in response to concern about global climate change. This summary attempts to categorize these responses and illustrate with examples, but does not provide a comprehensive list.

Responses by Citizens and Organizations

Cambridge Energy Alliance – CEA is a non-profit organization established in 2007 by the City and private foundations to bring about energy efficiency upgrades in existing buildings of all types throughout Cambridge.

Green Buildings – Cambridge institutions and developers were early adopters of the LEED green building standards created by the US Green Building Council. Dozens of buildings have been certified under LEED in Cambridge.

Green Campuses - Harvard, MIT, and Lesley have all developed inventories of their greenhouse gas emissions and made commitments to reduce their carbon footprints. Harvard has adopted a goal to reduce GHG emissions by 30% below 2006 levels by 2016. The Harvard Office of Sustainability operates from the President's office and provides a wide range of green services to schools, dorms, and offices. MIT's campus energy task force is working to make their facilities more efficient through physical improvements and changes in occupant behavior. Lesley University participates in the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment.

Business Action – Major employers have adopted goals and taken action to reduce GHG emissions through various strategies such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, green building design, recycling, and transportation demand management. They include Genzyme, Novartis, Camp Dresser McKee, Cambridge Health Alliance, Pfizer, and Biogen. Many small businesses are participating in programs such as the Sustainable Business Leadership Program of the Sustainable Business Network, Boston Green Tourism, the Green Restaurant Association, and the DPW business composting program. Many large and small employers are working with the Cambridge Energy Alliance.

Cambridge Housing Authority – The Cambridge Housing Authority has been a leader in energy efficiency for several years. It houses a little under 10% of the Cambridge population through its housing units and housing voucher program. The authority has been making efficiency improvements to building envelopes and heating systems, including

conversion of all-electric buildings to more efficient natural gas systems. The authority has also pioneered the use of power purchase agreements to install third-party owned solar photovoltaic systems to produce electricity. The single largest solar PV array in Cambridge is located at Washington Elms.

NSTAR – NSTAR is the private utility supplying electricity and natural gas to Cambridge customers. Under state law, NSTAR is required to provide energy efficiency incentives and assistance to ratepayers. Typically, these programs have affected a small percentage of energy consumption, however, the programs are expected to triple in size in 2010 as a result of new state legislation. NSTAR also created the NSTAR Green program which gives residential and small commercial ratepayers the option to purchase “green electricity” produced by wind energy in New York and Maine.

R&D – Cambridge has been a hub for technological research and development. The MIT Energy Initiative was launched in 2006 to prioritize research and development that could transform the global energy system. Numerous student-led initiatives have been formed to support and encourage work on clean energy including the Generator and the MIT Energy Club. Cambridge also hosts a cluster of several dozen clean energy firms that are developing new technologies and products for the generation, transmission, and consumption of energy. The institutions and the clean energy companies are attracting federal grants and private investment.

Community Initiatives – Numerous citizen organizations have been formed to advocate and support efforts on climate change, clean energy, and greater sustainability. The [Hone Energy Efficiency Team](#) (HEET) was started by a group of Cambridgeport residents. HEET organizes energy efficiency “barnraisings”. The *Energy Smackdown* involved a competition between Cambridge, Arlington, and Medford where households competed to be the most energy efficient, with their exploits shown on community cable TV and the Internet. *Green Teams* have been formed consisting of friends and neighbors who gather to jointly discuss and review living habits to reduce their ecological impacts. [Green Streets](#) is a citizen campaign that asks residents on the last Friday of each month to travel by means other than single-occupancy vehicles. [Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light](#) is a statewide organization helping places of worship to improve their energy efficiency and use more clean energy; six Cambridge congregations participate. *Green Decade Cambridge* was formed to advocate around issues involving the Climate Protection Plan. *Greenport* is a citizen group working to make the Cambridgeport neighborhood more sustainable. [City Sprouts](#) works in all 12 Cambridge elementary schools to give students experience of where their food comes from.

Carsharing - ZipCar was started in Cambridge and has since spread across the U.S. and to Canada and the United Kingdom. The car sharing service reduces the need for many residents and businesses to own automobiles.

Municipal Responses

Greening Municipal Operations

Green Buildings – The City follows the LEED standards for all new construction and major renovations. Two buildings have been LEED certified and 5 more are in the process of being certified.

Energy Management – The City Manager appointed an interdepartmental energy management work group to improve energy efficiency in City buildings. Through the DPW, a Web-based energy information system was created to track energy use in City buildings. Energy audits and efficiency upgrades have been conducted. All traffic signals have been converted to more efficient LED technology. An employee energy awareness program called GreenSense has been created to foster more efficient energy use behavior.

Green Fleet – All departmental requests for vehicles must go through a Green Fleet review process. Three options must be compared on the basis of fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions. Departments are expected to choose the most efficient/least emitting vehicle that meets their functional needs. The City also provides incentives to municipal employees to commute to work other than by driving alone.

Renewable Energy – The City Council set a goal that 20% of municipal electricity consumption be supplied by renewable energy sources. Currently a small portion is supplied by solar PV panels on some buildings and about 10% is offset with renewable energy certificates. The City is also assessing the feasibility of larger scale solar installations and small hydropower generators.

Leadership

The City has made commitments to action on climate change through its participation in ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, the US Mayors Climate Agreement, and the National League of Cities. The Cambridge Energy Alliance has inspired similar initiatives including the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance, the Southeast Energy Alliance, and the Mumbai Energy Alliance among others.

Planning & Regulatory Programs

Climate Protection Plan – The Climate Protection Plan was approved by the City Council in December 2002 and set a goal to reduce GHG emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010. The Climate Protection Action Committee was established by the City Manager as a standing advisory committee on the implementation of the plan.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements – Under the Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance, the City plans and installs improvements to its streetscape to encourage bicycle use and walking. Biking has doubled in the last 5 years and Cambridge is consistently named one of the most walkable communities in the nation.

Green Building Zoning – The Green Building Zoning Task Force has made recommendations concerning wind turbines, removal of zoning impediments to green design, and requirements for new development to be certifiable under LEED. The zoning amendment allowing wind turbines to be installed was approved in September 2009. The remaining recommendations are expected to come before the City Council this winter.

Stretch Energy Code – The state Board of Building Regulations and Standards recently created an option for towns and cities to adopt more stringent energy efficiency requirements, called the Stretch Energy Code. The City Council is currently considering adoption of these higher standards for buildings.

PTDM – The Parking & Transportation Demand Management Ordinance sets requirements for commercial property owners to provide services to employees and tenants that will reduce commuting by single occupancy vehicles. Property owners who create any new parking must prepare plans that show how they will provide public transit pass subsidies, bicycle facilities, guaranteed ride home programs, shuttle bus services, and other programs. They must also monitor and report results.

Green Jobs – The Green Jobs Task Force has been working to develop recommendations to expand workforce training opportunities in fields related to the emerging green economy. The first green jobs grants are being issued by the City for workforce training programs.

City Services

Recycling & Commercial Composting – The DPW has provided curbside recycling services for all residents. About a third of residential waste is recycled in Cambridge. The Compost that Stuff program offers composting services to Cambridge businesses including restaurants and florists. Over 40 businesses are currently participating.

CitySmart Pilot – The Community Development Department, with support from a federal grant, is piloting a program to modify residential transportation choices toward more sustainable options by providing targeted information. The program was first offered in the Cambridgeport neighborhood. Expansion of the program to other neighborhoods is planned. Similar programs in other communities have succeeded in shifting modes of transportation to non-single occupancy options by about 10%.

EZ Ride – Through the Charles River Transportation Management Association, the City supports the EZ Ride shuttle bus service that connects North Station to Central Square.

Green Affordable Housing – The City has a robust affordable housing program that works with three non-profits and the Cambridge Housing Authority to build and retain affordable housing. The program now follows the Enterprise Green Communities green affordable housing criteria when building projects. Several developments have achieved high energy efficiency and utilize renewable energy systems.

Urban Forestry – The DPW Urban Forestry program plants and maintains street and park trees, which reduce the urban heat island effect and reduce energy use in buildings through shading.