

SUSTAINABLE SANTA MONICA



SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD

FIRST ANNUAL
SEPTEMBER 20, 2005

Eleven years ago Santa Monica launched the Sustainable City Plan (SCP), a visionary plan for the community's future. Santa Monica is now an internationally recognized sustainability leader and was recently honored as one of the top sustainable cities in the United States. This inaugural Sustainable City Report Card (to be published annually each September) presents a snapshot of Santa Monica's progress toward meeting its aggressive Sustainable City Plan goals.

BACKGROUND

On September 20, 1994 Santa Monica's City Council adopted the city's first Sustainable City Program. This progressive program was initially proposed by the city's Task Force on the Environment to ensure that Santa Monica can continue to meet its current environmental, economic and social needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. The program has grown and evolved in the eleven years since its adoption and has been responsible for many positive changes in the community. On February 11, 2003, City Council adopted an updated and expanded version of the program called the Sustainable City Plan, which was developed by a diverse group of community stakeholders and lays out far reaching sustainability goals for the community in eight goal areas ([visit www.smepd.org](http://www.smepd.org) to view the SCP).

MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY

The SCP includes a number of indicators that have been developed to measure progress toward meeting the goals in each area. This indicator data is now easily available on a new Sustainable City Progress Report web site at www.smepd.org/scpr. Taken together the indicator data present a comprehensive picture of our progress toward, and challenges to becoming a sustainable community.

The Progress Report web site is the definitive resource for community decision makers and residents. The web site will be constantly updated as new indicator data becomes available in order to provide the most current information to aid decision-making.

SANTA MONICA RECOGNIZED FOR LEADERSHIP

In June 2005 at a United Nations event in San Francisco, Santa Monica was ranked in the top five cities in the country for sustainability in the SustainLane U.S. Cities Rankings (<http://www.sustainlane.com>). The evaluators noted that if it weren't for Southern California's poor air quality and lack of regional public transportation infrastructure, Santa Monica would have ranked in the top two.

EXAMPLES OF SANTA MONICA'S SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES:

- In 1999 Santa Monica became the first city in the U.S. to power all of its facilities with renewable electricity.
- The city's groundbreaking environmental purchasing and toxics reduction policies have been replicated throughout the U.S. and as far away as Europe, Japan and the Philippines.
- Santa Monica's efforts to protect the bay, provide organic gardens and salad bars in local schools, and promote green construction, to name just a few, have all been lauded as exemplary and farsighted examples for other cities to follow.

SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD

While Santa Monica has received much well deserved attention and praise for its sustainability efforts, it has, with the adoption of the Sustainable City Plan, set very aggressive goals for itself in eight goal areas. This report card describes how we are doing at meeting these goals and highlights areas of success and challenges that face our city.

GRADING

The grade given for each goal area reflects the progress on the part of the entire community to reach the adopted SCP goals in that area, based primarily on analysis of the indicator data for that goal area. A secondary grade is given in parentheses for each goal area which reflects the level of effort and commitment in the community that is currently focused on achieving the goals.

A NOTE ON GRADES

The primary grades in each area are based on a systematic analysis of indicator data and evaluations of progress toward meeting the targets that were developed for each of the SCP goal areas. To better understand the context of this grade, it is important to consider the vision of sustainability adopted by the community as reflected in the aggressive set of SCP goals, and the extent to which regional conditions and factors will influence them. These regional impacts are particularly evident in the Transportation, Economic Development and Housing goal areas.

REPORT CARD



RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Grade: C

(Level of effort: A)

City actions have reduced greenhouse gases, substantially increased diversion of waste from landfills and have helped slow increases in community resource use and waste generation over the past decade. Aggressive green building efforts may help to continue this progress in the future. Santa Monica's waste diversion and recycling programs are among the most advanced and successful in the nation. However, water and energy use and waste generation are on the rise in all sectors of the community. High daytime populations of workers and visitors to Santa Monica as well as the strength of the local economy and increased development have likely fueled these increases. It will require concerted efforts by residents, businesses and community institutions to reverse these trends in the coming years.



ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC HEALTH

Grade: B

(Level of effort: A)

Efforts by local environmental organizations and regulations at the local, state and federal level have all combined to help reduce sources of pollution to Santa Monica Bay and reduce mobile and non-mobile sources of air pollution. Santa Monica residents have excellent access to fresh, locally grown and organic foods. Under city programs, the use of toxic chemicals in parks and public buildings has plunged, and its fleet of alternative fueled vehicles contribute to cleaner air. However, gaps remain. For instance, the city is still well short of meeting its aggressive targets for beach closures and pollution, regional air pollution is on the rise again after decades of improvement, and persistent toxic chemicals are prevalent in thousands of products that all of us use and encounter every day.



TRANSPORTATION

Grade: C-

(Level of effort: B+)

Traffic and parking remain intractable problems in Santa Monica, as they are throughout Southern California. The city's alternative transportation infrastructure is mixed. On the plus side the Big Blue Bus system is one of the top bus lines in the nation and has generated significant ridership increases over the last decade (although ridership has slipped slightly in the past two years). Santa Monica is taking a leadership role in regional transportation planning including advocacy for the construction of the Exposition light rail line. However, the city must rapidly enhance its current inadequate network of bicycle paths and lanes to meet SCP targets. The most positive note in this area is that despite regional deficiency of alternative transportation options, Santa Monica's very successful promotion of ridesharing among people who work in the city is reducing traffic and parking impacts related to weekday commuting.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Grade: B

(Level of effort: C+)

Santa Monica's economy is diverse and strong, offering a variety of employment opportunities and generally strong wages for community members. Income disparity in the city steadily narrowed from 1990 to 2000. There is a burgeoning group of Santa Monica businesses that have incorporated sustainable practices into their operations and the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and Sustainable Works have recently joined together to further promote sustainable business in the city. Economic negatives include a rising cost of living, exceeding those in surrounding communities and the region, and an unbalanced ratio of jobs to housing. This condition makes it difficult for people to live near their workplace, exacerbating local and regional traffic and parking problems.



OPEN SPACE & LAND USE

Grade: B+ (Level of effort: A)

In spite of the very limited availability of unused land in the city, Santa Monica has materially increased the amount and diversity of open space resources in the past decade. Additional parks and open space (including Virginia Avenue Park, Airport Park and the Civic Center) are scheduled to come online in the near future, addressing the continued shortage of parks and playing fields to meet the demand in the community. Thousands of tree plantings have expanded the size of the community forest by over 20% since 1997. Park accessibility is excellent, with almost 90% of residents living within 1/2 mile of a park or open space. Recent development activity has been almost exclusively mixed-use, combining housing, office and retail space, which can help to reduce traffic and parking congestion and encourage walking and transit use.



HOUSING

Grade: D- (Level of effort: A)

Lack of affordable housing remains the most persistent obstacle to achieving our sustainability goals. In spite of major increases in the development of new and rehabilitated affordable housing units in the city, the availability of affordable housing for residents in all income levels has severely declined due to the effects of vacancy decontrol coupled with recent skyrocketing property values. The lack of affordable housing means that people face ever-greater obstacles to living and working in Santa Monica. This situation may impact the ability of local businesses, schools and organizations to attract employees and may contribute to increased regional traffic, parking and related pollution impacts.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Grade: B+ (Level of effort: B+)

Santa Monica residents are very involved in and committed to their community. Citizen participation is strong in both civic affairs and at community events. Volunteering rates among residents are solid and are increasing. Voter participation rates among residents typically exceed L.A. County, state and federal averages (although voter participation dipped somewhat in 2004). Resident awareness of sustainability has also increased dramatically in the last few years, and this increased awareness is reflected in much of the public input received in recent community meetings or the city's General Plan updates.



HUMAN DIGNITY

Grade: N/A (Level of effort: A)

A grade has not been provided because data to measure progress in this goal area are either unavailable or are so recent that trends cannot be determined. However, Santa Monica has historically been very proactive in supporting the ability of its residents to meet their basic needs and live with dignity. In addition, the city has recently taken a leadership role in addressing homelessness at the regional level. The city's Community Development Program provides over \$9 million annually to support 70 local family, disability, homeless and employment services. Ongoing challenges in the Human Dignity area include homelessness and gang related violence among at-risk youth.

As noted above, the summaries and grades presented in this report card reflect the analysis of the specific indicator data for each of the SCP goal areas. We encourage you to look at this data yourself at www.smepd.org/scpr and begin to use the web site as a tool to help with your decision-making. In order to become a more sustainable community all community members must come together to achieve our goals

If you have questions or comments about this report card, the Sustainable City Progress Report or the Sustainable City Plan please contact the city's [Environmental Programs Division](http://www.smepd.org) at 310 458 2213 or email at environment@smgov.net.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT www.smepd.org