

# SUSTAINABLE SANTA MONICA



## SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD

FOURTH ANNUAL  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

The Sustainable City Plan was created to enhance our resources, prevent harm to the natural environment and human health, and benefit the social and economic well-being of the community for the sake of current and future generations.

# SOME OF OUR SUSTAINABILITY SUCCESSES 2008

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION:

**Better Buildings:** The mixed-use Santa Monica Civic Center Parking Structure received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The 882 parking space structure includes 9,000 square feet of commercial retail space and a solar photovoltaic roof canopy that generates 181 kilowatts of solar electricity.

**Solar Success:** Solar capacity in the city has doubled since the launch of Solar Santa Monica. To date, there are 139 grid connected solar projects in the city representing 926 kilowatts of solar capacity.

**Compost Collection:** The city's food waste composting program kept more than 1 million pounds of food waste from Santa Monica restaurants out of the landfill last year.

**Post-Consumer Paper:** The city purchases 100% post-consumer recycled content copy paper for municipal operations. Annually, this saves an estimated 1.2 million gallons of water, 158,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> and leaves 1,700 trees standing in the forests.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH:

**Household Help:** Residents using the Household Hazardous Waste Center kept more than 137,000 pounds of hazardous materials and almost 19,000 pounds of household batteries out of the landfills.

**Resource Reuse:** The Santa Monica Urban Runoff and Recycling Facility (SMURRF) captured and treated more than 33 million gallons of water for reuse in irrigation and toilet flushing.

**Market Madness:** More than 1 million people annually visit four thriving farmers' markets that provide access to fresh, locally grown and organic produce!

**Container Campaign:** More than 630 local food vendors successfully implemented the citywide ban on all non-recyclable plastic take-out containers.

## TRANSPORTATION:

**Prosperous Partnership:** A pilot transportation collaboration between Big Blue Bus and Santa Monica College reduced 1.6 million car trips in the first year thus reducing traffic and greenhouse gas emissions.

**Biking is Big:** This year the bike valet program parked more than 20,000 bikes for free at community events around the city!

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

**Local Leadership:** Over 30 Santa Monica businesses were recognized for their exceptional commitment to sustainable practices through the Green Business Certification Program and the Sustainable Quality Awards.

**Going Green:** An additional 20 businesses took steps to become more sustainable as part of the Sustainable Works Business Greening Program.

## OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE:

**Pavement to Parks:** The Beach Green project converted 83 spaces in the beach parking lot into .62 acres of public park space!

**Total Trees:** The size of the community forest grew 2% this year.

**Outstanding Open Space:** Santa Monica's open space system now includes 245 acres of state beach and 26 community parks.

## HOUSING:

**Housing Hope:** The city added 118 units of affordable housing last year! And 389 more affordable housing units are in the process of being developed.

**Affecting Affordability:** The city's progressive legal protections, such as the just-cause eviction protections in rent controlled units, have helped to keep 39% of the controlled units affordable to low and very-low income tenants.

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION:

**Creating Community:** More than 2,000 people took an active role in shaping the future of Santa Monica by participating in the update of the Land Use and Circulation Elements.

**Environmental Education:** More than 680 people took the next step towards integrating sustainable practices in the urban environment by participating in the Sustainable Works Community Greening Program.

**People Participate:** More than 15,000 people participated in this year's Santa Monica Festival, 20,000 people attended the AltCar and AltBuild Expos, and attendance at GLOW was 200,000!

## HUMAN DIGNITY:

**Community Care:** The Community Development Grants Program provided over \$7.6 million to support local family, disability, employment and homeless services.

**New Neighborhood:** The Neighborhood Resource Officer program was launched this year placing community-oriented police officers in 8 districts throughout the city.

# SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD



## RESOURCE CONSERVATION

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	C	C+	C	C+
Effort	A	A	A-	A-

Goals: Decrease consumption of non-local, non-renewable, non-recyclable energy, water, materials and fuels / Promote renewable resource use

Santa Monica is a leader in programs and policies related to resource conservation. Residents and businesses prioritize resource use reduction, but greater effort is needed to meet Sustainable City Plan targets. Solid waste generation exceeds the Sustainable City Plan ceiling and continues to increase. Solid waste diversion improved this year to 68% and is approaching the 70% target. Total water use is down by 6% and the percent of locally obtained water improved. This trend is expected to continue as MTBE remediation work begins. Despite aggressive energy conservation measures, electricity and natural gas use have increased. Currently 18% of citywide energy is from renewable sources. Solar Santa Monica continues to deploy energy efficiency, solar power and clean distributed generation in the community. There are 139 grid connected solar projects in the city representing 926 kilowatts of solar capacity. The city continues to purchase 100% renewable power for municipal operations and the commitment to green building resulted in the Civic Center Parking Structure receiving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Despite the increases in solid waste generation and energy use, the grade improvement reflects successes in municipal sustainable procurement, citywide solid waste diversion, water use reduction, and green building.



## ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC HEALTH

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	B	B-	C	C
Effort	A	A	A-	A-

Goals: Minimize or eliminate the use of hazardous and toxic materials and the levels of pollutants entering the air, soil and water

Last year Santa Monica voters passed the Clean Beaches and Ocean parcel tax to fund the Watershed Management Plan. Implementation of this comprehensive 20-year approach to improving water quality in the Santa Monica Bay began this year. Despite efforts to eliminate flow to the beach, there was a 31% increase in the number of posted beach warnings during the dry season. Research is underway to identify the cause of beach postings. In an effort to reduce marine debris, the city implemented a ban on the use of all non-recyclable plastic take-out containers. The Council also authorized staff to develop a ban on plastic bags. The amount of urban runoff captured and treated at the Santa Monica Urban Runoff and Recycling Facility increased 9% to 33 million gallons. The cumulative number of households properly disposing of hazardous waste at the Household Hazardous Waste Center increased from 36% to 43 percent. The amount of e-waste collected citywide doubled from 21 tons last year to 42 tons this year. Four thriving farmers' markets, one of which is regularly a zero-waste event, provide access to fresh, locally grown and organic produce. Despite these successes, the grade remains consistent because the city is far from reaching its targets for Santa Monica Bay health.



## TRANSPORTATION

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	C-	C	C+	C+
Effort	A	A	A	A

Goals: Maximize mobility and access / Reduce traffic and pollution associated with transportation

Santa Monica is a leading advocate for regional transportation planning, including the Exposition Light Rail which is an important part of the regional strategy to enhance mobility and relieve congestion. Between 2004 and 2007, ridership on the 100% alternatively fueled Big Blue Bus increased by 2.3 percent. This is higher than the national average and translates into half a million more trips every year. This year Big Blue Bus and Santa Monica College collaborated on a pilot bus transit program that reduced 1.6 million car trips. The city continues to encourage ridesharing. Average Vehicle Ridership (AVR) locally increased from 1.59 last year to 1.6 this year and exceeds the Sustainable City Plan target of 1.5. This year the bike valet program parked more than 20,000 bikes for free at community events around the city. Additionally, 85% of the city's municipal fleet is fueled by alternative fuels. However, dependency on single occupant vehicles and traffic remain significant issues in the community. The Land Use and Circulation Element Framework contains specific strategies to address both. Despite a strong commitment to local and regional transportation solutions, the grade remains consistent because the city is far from reaching its transportation related goals.

# SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	B	B	B	<b>B</b>
Effort	C+	B+	A-	<b>A-</b>

Goals: Nurture a diverse, stable local economy that supports the basic needs of community members / Increase sustainable business practices

Santa Monica's economy remains strong and diverse with growth in the tourism, finance, and information sectors. The local economy remains resilient with no sector representing more than 25% of total economic activity. To build on this success, the city is developing a Strategy for a Sustainable Local Economy to attract and retain businesses that support economic development, social responsibility and environmental stewardship. The city, Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and Sustainable Works continue to collaborate on programs that recognize local businesses. Over 30 Santa Monica businesses were recognized for their exceptional commitment to sustainable practices through the Green Business Certification Program and the Sustainable Quality Awards. An additional 20 businesses participated in the Sustainable Works Business Greening Program. The rising cost of living and an unbalanced ratio of jobs to housing make it difficult for people to live near their workplace, exacerbating traffic and parking problems. Santa Monica's jobs/housing balance rose to 1.55 this year, a further move away from the 1.0 target established in the Sustainable City Plan. Despite the continued strength of the local economy and growth in local green business, the grade remains consistent due to the challenges presented by cost of living and the jobs housing balance.



## OPEN SPACE & LAND USE

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	B+	A-	A-	<b>A-</b>
Effort	A	A	A	<b>A</b>

Goals: Develop and maintain a diverse open space system that supports the community and the natural environment / Create mixed-use urban villages

Santa Monica's open space system includes 245 acres of state beach and 26 community parks. Park accessibility continues to be good with 90% of residents living within ½ mile of open space. The expansion of the city's open space over the last decade is notable. This year, the Beach Green project converted 83 parking spaces in the beach lot into .62 acres of usable park space. The new beach park provides places for active and passive recreation and the bio-filter stops pollutants before they enter Santa Monica Bay. Santa Monica's urban forest has grown by 2% and has diversified the average age and species of the trees. The city continues to promote progressive land use policy. A number of mixed-use development projects that combine housing, office and retail space have been built to help reduce traffic and parking congestion and encourage walking and transit use. The consistent grade reflects the city's commitment to maintaining a sufficient and diverse open space system as well as efforts to create land use and transportation policies that promote mixed-use, transit-oriented development.



## HOUSING

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	D-	D	D	<b>C</b>
Effort	A	A	A	<b>A</b>

Goals: Provide a mix of affordable, livable and green housing types for people of all socio-economic, cultural and household groups

All rent-controlled units retain the protections given by the Rent Control Law including just-cause eviction protections. However, the affordability of more than half of the city's rent controlled housing units has been lost due to state-mandated vacancy decontrol in 1999. The controlled housing stock affordable to low and very-low income residents continues to decrease from 86% before state-mandated vacancy decontrol to 39% in 2007. The city's progressive legal protections have helped to keep 39% of the controlled units affordable to low and very-low income tenants. While state-mandated decontrol continues to diminish the affordability of the rent controlled housing stock, California voters confirmed public support for rent control by rejecting Proposition 98 in the state-wide June election. In addition to preserving the existing stock of affordable rental units, the city is investing in the development of new affordable housing. The city works with private nonprofit developers to build affordable housing for low and moderate income households, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and families. This year 118 units of affordable housing were completed and 389 units were in development. Despite the continued loss of housing affordability, the grade improvement reflects the accomplishments being made in retaining existing and providing additional affordable housing units.

# SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	B+	A-	A-	A-
Effort	A	A	A	A

Goals: Community members participate actively and effectively in civic affairs and community improvement efforts

Santa Monica residents actively participate in civic affairs and engage in community events. There are five active neighborhood organizations and five active business improvement districts in the community. More than 2,000 people took an active role in shaping the future of Santa Monica by participating in the update of the Land Use and Circulation Elements. This year, 680 people took the next step towards a sustainable lifestyle by participating in the Sustainable Works Community Greening Program. More than 15,000 people participated in the Santa Monica Festival and 20,000 people attended the AltCar and AltBuild Expos. About 200,000 people attended GLOW and 600,000 people annually visit Bergamot Station which is Southern California's largest art gallery complex and cultural center. Attendance at these events highlights Santa Monica's community and cultural vitality. The consistent grade reflects significant community participation in major community events and civic affairs.



## HUMAN DIGNITY

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Grade	N/A	B-	B-	B-
Effort	A	A	A	A

Goals: All community members are able to meet their needs, have adequate access to housing, health care, education, employment, and are empowered to enhance the quality of their lives

Santa Monica is very proactive in supporting the ability of its residents to meet their basic needs and live with dignity. The Community Development Grants Program provides over \$7.6 million annually to support local family, disability, employment and homeless services. Santa Monica residents report feeling safe in their communities and feel empowered to meet their basic needs. The Santa Monica Police Department launched the Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO) program this year placing community oriented officers in 8 districts throughout the city. The NRO is the direct link between the Police Department and any one living, working or visiting the area. The Gang Violence Action Partners work collaboratively to address gang violence in the community. Of the 25 commitments identified to address the underlying causes of gang violence, 85% have been completed. This year, Council approved the Action Plan to Address Homelessness - a visionary plan to transform Santa Monica to a place where effective action and compassion end the impact of homelessness. The consistent grade reflects the continued leadership role the city has taken in ensuring that all residents are able to meet their basic needs.

## THE SUSTAINABLE CITY REPORT CARD

The Sustainable City Plan sets very aggressive goals for a sustainable city and Santa Monica has received national recognition for its sustainability efforts. This report card describes how we are doing at meeting our aggressive sustainable city goals and highlights areas of success and challenges that face our community in eight goal areas.

### GRADING

The primary grade given for each goal area reflects the progress on the part of the community to reach the adopted SCP goals. The grade is based on analysis of indicator data and evaluation of progress toward meeting the targets for each of the goal areas. To better understand this grade, it is important to consider the aggressive vision of sustainability adopted by the community and the extent to which regional conditions and factors are influential. The effort grade for each goal area reflects the level of effort and commitment in the community that is currently focused on achieving the goals.

# BACKGROUND

On September 20, 1994 Santa Monica's City Council adopted the city's first Sustainable City Program 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 evolved in the fourteen years since its adoption and has been responsible for many positive changes in the community. In 2003, City Council adopted an expanded version of the program called the Sustainable City Plan (SCP), which was developed by a diverse group of community stakeholders and lays out far reaching sustainability goals for the community. (visit [www.sustainablesm.org](http://www.sustainablesm.org) to view the SCP).



# MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY

The SCP includes a number of indicators that have been developed to measure progress toward meeting community sustainability goals. This indicator data is easily available on the **Sustainable City Progress Report** website at [www.sustainablesm.org/scpr](http://www.sustainablesm.org/scpr). The indicator data presents a comprehensive picture of our progress toward, and challenges to, becoming a sustainable community. The Progress Report website is the definitive resource for community decision makers and residents.

The summaries and grades reflect the specific indicator data for each of the SCP goal areas. We encourage you to look at this data yourself at [www.sustainablesm.org/scpr](http://www.sustainablesm.org/scpr) and begin to use the website to help with your decision-making. In order to become a more sustainable community all community members must be educated and empowered to achieve our goals.

If you have questions please contact the city's **Office of Sustainability and the Environment** at 310-458-2213 or [environment@smgov.net](mailto:environment@smgov.net).

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT [www.sustainablesm.org](http://www.sustainablesm.org)

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Photographs provided by Greg Peterson, David Cowan, Amy Williams and City Staff

