



coolcities

Solving global warming one city at a time

Green Buildings for Cool Cities Activist Toolkit

Welcome to the next phase of the Cool Cities campaign, a national partnership between Sierra Club and the U.S. Green Building Council! Together, we will bring energy-efficient green buildings to “Cool” communities across the country. This activist toolkit is designed to assist for you to form a powerful local partnership with US Green Building Council (USGBC) to implement green building in your community.

We know that the quickest, most affordable clean energy solution to global warming is to use energy more efficiently. Considering that the operation, heating and cooling of buildings contribute nearly 40 percent of global warming emissions and consume over 70 percent of electricity use in the United States, Sierra Club has set a major goal to reduce energy use in new homes and buildings by 100 percent and in existing buildings by 50 percent by 2030.

To achieve these goals, we need to greatly expand the demand and market for energy-efficient buildings, and implement a wide range of policies that support green buildings. That's why the Cool Cities program is teaming up with the USGBC on the "Green Building for Cool Cities" project.

The toolkit includes:

- ✓ Green Building Basics
- ✓ Partnering with your local USGBC Chapter
- ✓ Organizing How-to's
- ✓ 2010 Events

Green Buildings for Cool Cities

Because energy use in buildings contributes to nearly 40 percent of global warming emissions and over 70 percent of electricity use in the U.S., greening our buildings is the key to protecting our climate and recharging our economy.

Green buildings efficiently use energy, water, and other natural resources, protect occupant health, improve employee productivity, and reduce pollution. Compared to structures built to standard construction methods, green buildings can reduce energy consumption by 26% and greenhouse gas emissions by 33%. Investments in green buildings pay dividends, on average resulting in 6.6% improvement on return on investment, 8% reduction in operating costs, and a 7.5% increase in building value.

The LEED green building certification program, developed by the USGBC, is the most widely recognized green building standard. LEED recognizes excellence in a variety of areas, including energy efficiency, sustainable site development, water savings, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

In recent years, thousands of buildings in the United States have achieved LEED certification. As of October 2009, more than 200 localities across the U.S. are recognizing LEED as an effective tool for benchmarking the performance of their green building policies, and 2,995 local government projects are currently pursuing this certification.

The Sierra Club and USGBC have created an administrative policy guide on green buildings for local communities. [Download the guide here.](#)

Organizing your Cool Cities/USGBC Partnership Campaign

1. Like Sierra Club, the USGBC is comprised of local chapters and affiliates whose members focus on state and local issues. The local chapters (over 77 in the country) are usually organized and run by volunteers. USGBC members are often technical experts and building professionals. Find your local USGBC and set a meeting with your new partners:
<http://www.usgbc.org/Chapters/ChapterList.aspx?CMSPageID=1751>
2. [Review the guide to local green building.](#)
3. Find out which green building policies are already in place in your community.
4. Choose an objective from [the guide](#) to implement in you community in 2010.
5. Together, create a plan. Answer these questions to create a clear picture and expectations for everyone involved. Be strategic, specific, and assign tasks.
6. Determine who has the power to implement your goal? Mayor? City Council?
7. Broaden your coalition to build your campaign's power and influence. Because a local campaign representing diverse interests is more effective than the view of one organization or person, invite partners from different communities to participate. Potential partners may include: building trades, labor organizations, builders, colleges/universities, faith organizations, low income housing groups, civil rights organizations, civic groups (League of Women Voters, Habitat for Humanity, local businesses, neighborhood associations, apartment management companies, realtors, architects (like local American Institute of Architects groups), green organizations, companies that make or service energy efficient products or renewable energy.

*******IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING COMPLIANCE*******

The funds used to pay for the Cool Cities campaign are education-only, non-political, non-legislative monies (known as "501c3" in IRS lingo). It is mandatory that all publicly released materials (your media advisory, news release and news conference remarks primarily) be approved by the Club's Compliance department. Please email all media materials to compliance.review@sierraclub.org at least 72 hours before they are sent to the media.

Educate and Advocate to the Public and Public Officials

Meeting with your mayor

Before the meeting with your mayor, find out if your mayor supports the idea of green buildings. If your group does not know, use this meeting to find out where he or she stands. Gather information about

existing green building initiatives in your community and praise these first steps even if the initiatives are relatively modest. Use the guide to local green building as a reference point.

To prepare, decide who will attend, create an agenda, and assign parts of the agenda to each participant. A basic agenda includes introductions, praising your mayor's previous good "green" work, an explanation of why you are there, and making the "ask". The mark of a successful meeting is leaving with a series of next steps and a clear timeline.

Your "ask" will be the specific green building initiative that is your campaign's goal. Be sure to share information from the guide on this initiative. If possible, bring a letter of support signed by your various coalition partners, copies of locally published letters to the editor, fact sheets, and model initiatives from the guide.

After the meeting, send a follow-up thank you letter or e-mail to your mayor and appropriate staff. Ask your mayor to respond with his/her plan to take action.

In order to educate the public and public officials about the benefit of green building, you should plan to engage in several activities in 2010. Participate in national webinars and conference calls organized by national Cool Cities and USGBC staff. In addition, you will want to organize a few high profile local events. If possible, obtain and publicize local green building performance data such as energy emissions reduced, money saved, etc.

Green Building Presentations (*Winter 2010*)

These presentations are an online collection or power point presentation of innovative energy efficient buildings in your community and all over the country. Offer the event at a public library, a local church, college, or in a LEED certified green building

- Partner with the local USGBC chapter.
- Highlight energy efficient buildings from your community and state
- Advertise for this just as you would any other event.
- Ask everyone who attends to sign in so you have a record of participants and potential new volunteers. Always get e-mail addresses.
- Have some sort of action people can take during the tour- signing a postcard or letter of support for energy efficient buildings in your community.
- Send an e-mail to everyone who came, inviting them to follow-up activities like workshops, presentations, etc.

Green Building Tours (*Spring 2010*)

One major event plan for should include at least one local tour of green buildings for the public officials and media. Partner with the local USGBC chapter to coordinate a tour of local energy efficient buildings. Ask the owners of the facility or your USGBC contact to lead the tour for each building. Invite coalition partners, your mayor, city staff, and other community members to attend.

Sierra Club and USGBC will be providing guidance for this Spring Green Building Tour event.

Working with the media (*Year Round*)

Educate the public and your mayor through letters to the editor, opinion editorials (crediting both Sierra Club and USGBC in the by line), and inviting your local paper, TV, and radio stations to cover your events. Also, get your workshops and tours on the community calendar of your local paper.

Never underestimate the power of “internal” media like e-mails, newsletters, blogs, social networking sites and websites. This is a great way to work with your coalition partners. Look for themes you can tie your message to, including holidays, seasons, and current local events.

Energy Efficient Green Building Workshops/Fair (*Summer and Fall 2010*)

Host one or host a series, but make sure the focus is on energy efficiency. Work with USGBC, coalition partners, and even your city to develop these workshops/fairs. If this is a series of events, vary the locations by having each workshop in a new energy efficient building or in a different part of your city. Always invite your mayor to attend.

Cool Cities Contacts

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Resources

Visit the Green Building forum for more green building information:
<http://coolcities.us/ccforum/viewforum.php?f=30>

Register for Cool Cities and energy efficient building updates:
<https://coolcities.us//getInvolved.php>.

Green Building Policy Document:
<http://coolcities.us/resources/Energy%20Efficiency/GreenBuildingPolicy.pdf>