

May 2008

The Greening of Boston

City takes action to reduce threat of climate change and bring efficiencies to operations

Popular Science magazine recently ranked the 50 “greenest cities” based on factors such as their use of alternative energy, transit and carpooling, green building techniques and waste recycling. The City of Boston ranked third in the survey which may have surprised many in the area. Portland, OR and San Francisco, CA ranked one and two respectively and Cambridge, MA was sixth.

A closer look at the greening of Boston has identified a series of policies that have been instituted to make Boston a more environmentally sustainable city over time. Energy policies applied to city operations were adopted through an Executive Order of the Mayor issued in April 2007. Selected city policies by category are shown below.

Renewable Energy

- Require that renewal energy sources be used for 11.7% of total consumption
- Solar panels installed on the roofs of 3 schools and in FY09, solar panels will be installed on four city buildings

Energy Conservation

- Combined heat and power units were installed in 26 schools resulting in an \$8M annually in avoided cost savings
- Installed light emitting diode (LED) bulbs in all traffic signal lights that are 90% more energy efficient
- Capital spending for energy efficient HVAC retrofit for municipal buildings
- Installed demonstration green roof project on City Hall balconies

Green Buildings

- Use zoning (Article 80B) to require private development projects over 50,000 sq. ft. to follow the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards
- New or renovated municipal buildings are required to meet Silver LEED standards
- New projects to exceed basic standard for energy performance by 14% and major renovations to exceed standard by 7%

Alternative Fuels

- All new city vehicles are required to be hybrid or other alternative fuel vehicles
- Diesel fuel for city vehicles shall be at least 5% biodiesel

Climate Action

- Established goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 7% below 1990 levels by 2012
- Long-term goal to reduce emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050
- Plant 100,000 trees in Boston by 2020

Recycling

- Recycling of all materials will be increased by 10% by 2012
- New single stream recycling pilot in South End increased recycling by 143% and decreased trash by 19% in four months