

**City of Evanston**  
**Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award Project Submittal:**  
**Evanston Climate Action Plan**

The City of Evanston's Climate Action Plan and development process is a great example of a meaningful project that addresses environmental sustainability issues in a Great Lakes community. The process undertaken is widely replicable for smaller communities facing constraints in funding and resources. When implemented, the resulting plan will benefit all residents of Evanston by saving taxpayer dollars, building upon the local economy and creating jobs, improving air quality and public health and contributing to greater community livability.

**Creating a Climate for Change**

In October 2006, the City of Evanston unanimously voted to sign the US Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. After a community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory was completed, the City of Evanston partnered with a local coalition of citizens' groups to jointly develop a climate action plan through a citizen-based process. Nine taskforces were formed, each co-chaired by a City staff and two community members, to address the following focus areas: transportation and land use, energy efficiency and buildings, renewable energy resources, waste reduction and recycling, forestry, prairie and carbon offsets, food production and distribution, policy and research, education and engagement and communications and public relations. One year after the process was launched, Evanston's plan, having received input from over 300 community members, was completed. The Evanston Climate Action Plan (ECAP) was unanimously accepted by City Council on November 10, 2008.

The ECAP includes over 200 strategies for reducing Evanston's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These strategies focus largely on leveraging existing resources, low-cost measures and community-wide participation. The ECAP not only addresses the leading, easy to measure sources of community emissions - energy use, transportation and waste - but also addresses resources that don't factor into the community's emission inventory, yet still play an important role in climate change, such as food, water and education.

Additionally, the plan addresses the economic disparities that may prevent community-wide participation in the reduction of Evanston's GHG emissions. Recognizing that those that would benefit most can't afford energy efficiency upgrades or renewable energy technologies, a unique carbon offset fund was created to connect low-income households and non-profit agencies to resources that will lower their carbon footprint. The fund is managed by the Evanston Community Foundation and contributions can be made to the fund through an online Evanston-based carbon footprint calculator. Community members can calculate their carbon footprint, learn strategies to reduce it, and if determined they can't reduce their footprint through lifestyle changes, can purchase "offsets" that are deposited into the Evanston Community Foundation's Climate Action Fund. Instead of contributing to a fund that finances carbon reduction projects half-way around the world, Evanston community members are financing carbon reduction projects in their community.

By signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, conducting a GHG emissions inventory and developing a climate action plan, Evanston has taken the first steps in addressing climate change at the local level. Instead of hiring consultants to develop its plan, the City of Evanston turned to the community and its staff to develop a plan that required no additional funds to create and, by involving the community and City staff in the process, ensured community and City support for the resulting plan.

A copy of the ECAP and Evanston GHG emissions inventory can be downloaded at [www.cityofevanston.org/green](http://www.cityofevanston.org/green).