Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
Alliance des villes des Grands Lacs et du Saint-Laurent

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

INTRODUCING THE 'GREEN CITTS' PROGRAM

The *Green CiTTS (Cities Transforming Towards Sustainability)* program showcases the actions of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cities in moving the entire region towards a sustainable future, and provides support to cities to go even further down the path towards sustainability.

Through the *Green CiTTS* program, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) provides support to member cities to switch to more sustainable practices in twenty areas across a broad set of municipal operations and responsibilities (see *Green CiTTS* program actions, below).

In its inaugural year, the *Green CiTTS* program will be centered on the reduction of storm water runoff. With support from the Joyce Foundation, and in partnership with American Rivers and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the *Green CiTTS* program will provide support to cities by sharing best practices, offering training, entering into research partnerships, raising funding for municipal projects, presenting special awards and reporting annually on progress.

GREEN CITTS FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS

The objectives of the *Green CiTTS* program are to

- *Protect Water Resources and Coastal Areas*
- *Promote Low-Carbon Energy Generation and Consumption*
- *Adopt Green Land Use and Building Design, and*
- *Encourage Green Economic Development*

These objectives will be achieved by Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities through their gradual adoption and expansion of the 20 actions listed below:

1. *Protect Water Resources and Coastal Areas*
   - 1.1. Adopt and expand water conservation, water leakage prevention, and water recycling measures /Sign onto GLSLCI's Water Conservation Framework
   - 1.2. Work towards eliminating CSOs and storm water runoff, and continuously improve the quality of sewage discharges.
   - 1.3. Promote pollution prevention and the reduction of toxic chemicals and pesticides entering waterways.
   - 1.4. Sign onto GLSLCI's Pharmaceuticals Framework and advocate for producer responsibility for the disposal of pharmaceuticals

GREEN CITTS FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS (CONT'D)

2. *Promote Low-Carbon Energy Generation and Consumption*
   - 2.1. Increase the proportion of renewable energy vs. conventional carbon-based sources of energy consumed through municipal operations
   - 2.2. Expand the number of low carbon or electric vehicles in municipal fleets
   - 2.3. Use municipally-owned utilities and facilities to promote renewable energy generation and co-generation, eg. at landfills and sewage treatment operations.
   - 2.4. Institute energy conservation measures in municipal operations, and promote energy conservation by businesses and the public-at-large.
   - 2.5. Expand public transit access and/or awareness, where applicable
   - 2.6. Support multi-modal transportation of goods, particularly the expansion of rail and maritime transportation.

3. *Adopt Green Land Use and Building Design*
   - 3.1. Adopt high density urban planning where applicable
   - 3.2. Integrate low-impact urban design into all land-use planning decisions, to reduce storm water entering lakes and river, including green roofs, pervious roads, culverts, swales, buffer strips, downspout disconnections, etc.
   - 3.3. Encourage energy efficient, green building design or retrofits in all publicly-owned buildings and offer incentives for private buildings.
   - 3.4. Plan land use to maximize pedestrian access and non-motorized modes of transportation, and use of public transit, where applicable.
   - 3.5. Take actions to naturalize coastlines
   - 3.6. Improve beaches by promoting innovative beach management practices, explore alternative water testing methods to protect public health and reduce the number of days with swimming bans

4. *Encourage Green Economic Development*
   - 4.1. Adapt procurement policy to promote the application of green technologies and the growth of green jobs
   - 4.2. Support green technology development through collaborative research
   - 4.3. Promote green tourism
   - 4.4. Use investments in local infrastructure to support green technology innovation

GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP

Many member municipalities of the Cities Initiative are already leaders in promoting sustainability by adopting green practices in their own operations, and encouraging and involving businesses and the public-at-large to do their part as well.

Here is a sampling of actions by communities contributing to the four objectives of the *Green CiTTS* program. Many other actions are underway. To find out more, please visit our website at www.glslcities.org/initiatives/greencities.cfm.

I Protecting our Water Resources and Coastlines

The ***City of Thunder Bay*** installed ultraviolet light (UV) technology at its sewage treatment plant, eliminating the discharge of over 12,000 kilograms of chlorine. The City is also using its plant to generate energy. The plant recently installed a 600kW low emissions Toromont CAT generator, a cogeneration engine used to produce electricity from biogas. The engine will burn all the available biogas produced for the sewage sludge digestion process to produce electricity which will be consumed on site.

The ***City of Toronto****'s* Wet Weather Flow Master Plan is a 25-year plan to protect the environment and improve the health of watercourses and the waterfront and recognizes rainwater as a resource. With an estimated cost of $1 billion over 25 years ($40 million per year), its goal is to reduce the adverse effects of runoff generated when it rains or snows. Between 2003 and 2008, $97 million was spent on implementing various components of the plan. Projects undertaken to date include basement flooding projects, stream restoration projects, conveyance controls, and land acquisition for source water protection.

II Promoting Low-Carbon Energy Generation and Consumption

With funding support from the US Department of Energy, the ***City of Chicago*** is deploying 554 alternative fuel and hybrid vehicles in public and private fleets and is installing 153 alternative fuelling and electric vehicle charging stations throughout the region. Participating fleets include local taxi companies, utility companies, and municipalities, refuse haulers and car sharing programs. The combined benefits of these projects will reduce harmful vehicle emissions by an estimated 448 metric tons per year, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 7,600 metric tons per year, displace 3.08 million gasoline gallon equivalents of petroleum per year, and result in 77 created and/or retained jobs. The greenhouse gas emissions benefits of this project are equivalent to removing 1,390 cars per year.

Having reached its target of attaining the city's power from 20% renewable sources in 2008, ***Grand Rapids*** Mayor George Heartwell has now committed to the target of 100% renewables by 2020. The municipal government has reduced energy consumption by almost 15%. Grand Rapids was inducted into the Green Power Partnership program by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The city has developed a comprehensive Energy Efficiency and Conservation strategy and Greenhouse Gas Emission inventory. Most recently, Grand Rapids was a recipient of the Siemens Sustainable Community Award.

The ***City of Montreal*** is supporting zero carbon transit, by integrating alternative transportation into its Transportation Plan. The city's *Review 2008-2009* highlights a $324 million investment in public transit. Projects under the Transportation Plan include expansion of bicycle parking, the extension of bicycle trails, repairs to sidewalks for pedestrians, and" pedestrianization" of some streets. Montreal's 'Bixi' program, a free bicycle service, is now internationally known.

III Adopting Green Land Use and Building Design

The ***City of Rochester***'s Project Green is replacing vacant properties with vast swaths of green space. Over the next 20 years, more than three dozen city blocks will be converted into a "green infrastructure" of open space that can be used for such purposes as community gardens, urban farms, parks and renewable-energy generating facilities. These green spaces will be connected by a network of pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly "green corridors". Other elements of Project Green include the installation of roof-top gardens, historic preservation, focused investment and strategic development of the city's downtown and waterways.

The ***City of Quebec*** has demonstrated an innovative approach to planning by building eco-neighborhoods in the city. These eco-neighborhoods will be built according to green standards. Buildings will be made of sustainable materials and will use new technologies such as geothermic and solar energies for better energy efficiency. They will be multi-functional neighborhoods where goods, services, institutions and other services will be in close proximity. Land use will be pedestrian-focused and will support the use of public transit.

'Green Schools' is a partnership between the ***City and Milwaukee*** Public Schools (MPS) to transform school playgrounds by removing asphalt and replacing it with green spaces of trees and turf. As part of 'Green Schools', 10 schools received green retrofits that removed a total of 77,100 square feet of asphalt. 'Green Schools' will reduce storm water runoff from selected MPS schools, transform asphalt into playable surfaces and provide valuable shade and cooler temperatures for children to play.

IV Encouraging Green Economic Development

'Trois-Rivières sur Saint-Laurent', in the ***City of Trois Rivières***, is a large scale urban renewal project. Situated at the confluence of the St. Lawrence River and the Saint-Maurice River, a site of some 340,000 square meters, this vast, formerly industrial land, is now being redeveloped into an eco-technology park mixed with residential and commercial development. This major project aims to create an appealing and lively environment that attracts researchers and generates green jobs.