City Profile: Los Angeles

A part of the study entitled: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions through local government action: Case studies of eight California cities

Deborah Salon and Sinnott Murphy
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Note: The interviews upon which much of the following summary is based were conducted in July 2009. Triggered by the budget crisis, the City of LA has since undergone a major reorganization of departments. In particular, the environment department (formerly EnvironmentLA) has been eliminated entirely, with its functions distributed across other city departments. Where possible, this profile references the current (new) governmental structure. However, we are aware that some out-of-date references to the old governmental structure remain. We have made our best effort to indicate these as such.

1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

1.1 Socio-demographics

With a population of approximately 4 million people and a land area of more than 450 square miles, Los Angeles is the largest city in the State. The city continues to grow, though at a relatively slow rate of about one half of one percent each year. As a point of comparison, the State of California is growing at approximately one percent per year (US Census, 1990, 2000, and 2006-2008).

Los Angeles is famous for Hollywood, traffic, and suburban sprawl. Located in southern California along the coast, it is also a major center of global trade - the twin ports of LA and Long Beach¹ are the port of entry for over 40 percent of total US imports (USDOT 2010).²

Housing in Los Angeles is expensive; the median home value in 2000 was over $600,000, and median housing rental rate was over $1000 per month. Forty percent of households are homeowners, while the remaining sixty percent live in rental properties. Despite the city’s infamy for traffic and sprawl, over half of households in LA live in multifamily housing and more than 10 percent of households do not own a car. 61 percent of Los Angelenos over 16 years of age are employed, and 19 percent live in poverty (US Census, 2006-2008).

Historically, growth in Los Angeles has been in the suburbs. Today, however, the downtown core is growing. In the last 6 years, the population of downtown LA has grown from 5,000 to 50,000. A downtown grocery store has opened for the first time in

₁ Only the Port of LA is within the City of LA’s jurisdiction.
² Measured in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), a standard measure of cargo containers.
almost 60 years, and public transportation is becoming a viable commuting option for many residents as service is expanded.

Approximately three-quarters of the adult population have at least a high school education, and almost a third have completed a bachelor’s degree. The median household income in 2000 was $48,610. Figures 1 and 2 show the breakdowns of commute mode choice and race in Los Angeles. The dominant mode is the car, though 25 percent of commuters use some alternative mode to arrive at their workplace (this includes working at home) (US Census, 2000 and 2006-2008).
1.2 City operations

The City is governed by a directly-elected mayor and a 12-member City Council. In addition to standard municipal operations such as police, the city directly owns and operates its own electric and water utility (LADWP), the Port of Los Angeles, four airports including LAX, a wastewater treatment plant, and an asphalt plant. This means that unlike most local governments, the Los Angeles city government has direct control of a large portion of the environmental footprint of the city.

That being said, almost half of the total carbon dioxide emissions from the city of Los Angeles come from the transportation sector, and these emissions are largely outside of the direct control of city government. Transport sector emissions present a large challenge for the city in meeting its emissions reduction goals.

Figure 3

The City of Los Angeles is currently in the midst of an extreme budget crisis. Before the city government was restructured, the city’s budget shortfall was expected to be $485 million for the 2010-2011 fiscal year (City of Los Angeles, 2010). Unlike national governments, subnational governmental bodies - including states, cities, and counties - need to balance their budgets every year. In order to achieve a balanced budget, the Mayor’s office has reorganized and streamlined many of the city’s departments in recent months.
1.3 The residents of Los Angeles

Los Angeles is an extremely diverse city. As one of our interviewees put it, “Los Angeles is a huge, chaotic bundle of absolutely everything; I believe we have people from every country and every socioeconomic level here.” Despite this diversity, there is a lot of agreement about which issues are important. Public polling consistently shows that the top three issues that residents of LA care about are: public safety, education, and transportation. Environmental issues have consistently ranked fourth. This reflects the high level of environmental awareness within the populace, partially due to the City’s significant and long-standing smog problem. That being said, the city is large, so each area tends to have its own local concerns. In the West Side, traffic is a major concern. In the Port, pollution is a major concern. In the Valley, water use is a big issue right now.

Income levels also influence people’s concerns. People first want to provide for their immediate family, and then they look to their surroundings. Education and health care are priorities. People care about the welfare of the greater community, but many of those at lower income levels do not necessarily have the time or ability to get involved.

One issue that most residents of Los Angeles are concerned about is traffic and everything that goes along with it. People share a sense of not being satisfied with the status quo of LA’s transportation system. They want more public transportation infrastructure, but mostly they hope that others will use it (and decrease congestion on roads).

One of the largest environmental challenges facing LA is water provision. Most of the city’s water comes from outside the local area, delivered through the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the Colorado River Aqueduct, and the California Aqueduct. The need to transport LA’s water long distances (and sometimes uphill!) means that water use in Los Angeles is closely tied to carbon emissions. So, reducing water use also means substantially reducing energy use and the city’s carbon footprint. Although the city has made progress in this area - the city has held water consumption constant since 1989 despite a 15 percent increase in population - room for improvement remains. The LA Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is implementing a variety of incentive programs and awareness campaigns that aim to further reduce water consumption.

2. CLIMATE POLICY IN LOS ANGELES

LA has set a carbon dioxide emissions reduction goal of 35 percent below 1990 emission levels by 2030 (City of Los Angeles 2007). This target is intentionally more stringent than targets being considered nationally/internationally and more stringent than the target set by the State of California in AB32. This reflects a commitment to action on climate change, as well as a desire to exhibit leadership and to ensure that the City of LA retains the flexibility to act how they see is best, rather than potentially being constrained by State or federal legislation in the future. The city has joined numerous national and international climate action groups, including the US Conference of Mayors, the
California Climate Registry, the Clinton Climate Initiative, and the C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group.

The municipal government is already heading in the right direction, with emissions for 2007 that were more than 5 percent lower than they were in 1990, despite a growing city population (City of Los Angeles 2008). Mayor Villaraigosa has suggested that the emissions reduction goal should be met by the city as a whole - not just the municipal government. This will be a significant challenge. The transportation sector poses an especially difficult challenge because LA is the victim of decades of its own patterns of development (lack of transit, relatively low development density), which are just now starting to change.

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the General Plan (last adopted in 1993) are currently independent, with enforcement of the CAP dependent on city departments to accomplish the tasks it lists. The city’s inventories for municipal operations\(^3\) are in the verification stage for 2004-2007, with data being collected for 2008. Los Angeles is using the California Climate Action Registry (CCAR) verification protocol. Similar inventories were completed for 1990 and 1998 before good tools for inventory compilation existed, so these are no longer made available online. Community inventories (i.e. including all activities in the City, rather than focusing only on municipal operations) were also completed for 1990 and 2004. An updated community inventory is planned, but the city has been waiting for the new community-level protocol to be completed by the State.

3. INNOVATIVE CLIMATE-RELATED POLICIES IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is a large city that is very active in the area of environmental and climate policy. In this city profile, we cannot hope to provide a comprehensive summary of all the local policies in LA that affect greenhouse gas emissions, and this is not the intent. Instead, this section highlights the policies that our interviewees identified as particularly innovative. We have organized them into sectors for easy comparison with our other city profiles. For a more comprehensive (but slightly out-of-date) list of LA’s climate-related policies and investments, see the city’s publication entitled *ClimateLA* (2008).

3.1 Transport

One of the main issues that residents of LA are concerned about is transportation - or more specifically, traffic. Although very active on the transportation front, Los Angeles faces a tremendous challenge in trying to rein in transportation emissions due to decades of sprawl and a lack of a strong public transportation system. Many of the local experts we spoke with admitted that the City does not have any policies in place that are likely to substantially reduce transport sector energy use and emissions. The

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\(^3\) This inventory excludes emissions from the “proprietary departments” - LA Department of Water and Power, the Port of LA, and the LA airports.
transportation sector is also critical for reasons other than climate impact: 80% of the air pollution in the Los Angeles basin is from mobile sources.

**ATSAC:** In 1984, the city began to implement the ATSAC system (Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control) in order to control traffic congestion. ATSAC is an advanced light synchronization/real-time traffic control system that is estimated to have substantially reduced both criteria pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions through decreased vehicle idling. As one of our interviewees pointed out, the ATSAC is “a very practical innovation because it does not require people to get out of their vehicles.”

**Transit:** Los Angeles has been working to strengthen its public transit system. Together with Mayor Villaraigosa, the Metropolitan Transit Authority has recently been promoting LA’s 30/10 transit plan, which has gotten a lot of attention nationally. Through an innovative financing arrangement, the plan would enable the completion of 12 major transit improvement projects within 10 years, instead of taking the originally-planned 30 years. The projects would be paid for out of a local half-cent transportation sales tax that was passed by LA County voters in 2008. The federal government would enable the accelerated construction schedule by loaning LA much of the needed money upfront, using future sales tax revenue as collateral. There are some critical steps that need to be taken before the 30/10 plan can become reality - including the passage of two pieces of federal legislation - but there is a lot of forward momentum for the plan. Many observers expect that it will ultimately be approved, and that it will serve as a model and a precedent for similar programs in other cities.

Collectively, the projects slated for accelerated construction under the 30/10 plan are estimated to reduce gasoline use by 10.3 million gallons annually. This translates into a reduction of approximately 90 thousand metric tons of CO2 emissions (City of Los Angeles 2010).

On a smaller scale, the city is working to provide real-time transit information at all Metro and Dash stops.

**Replacing municipal fleets:** The city is transitioning most city vehicles (85%) to alternative-fuel technologies, including all public transit, refuse collection, and street sweeper vehicles. This is being done primarily as a criteria pollutant control measure, but these efforts also have climate change co-benefits. The environmental performance of LA’s municipal fleet will continue to improve as existing capital stock is replaced.

**Regional roll-out of plug-in hybrids:** Los Angeles has taken steps to become one of the first adopters of battery electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles as another tool to meet environmental goals. In June 2010, the city partnered with ECOtality and the US Department of Energy to join their nationwide EV Project, aiming to gain a better understanding of how consumers use electric vehicles and how the electricity sector’s
infrastructure will handle the extra load. In LA, 2000 GM Volts and 1000 Nissan LEAFs will be made available through this program (ECOtality 2010).

3.2 Land use

**Community plans:** Community plans are the product of community charrettes in which residents are asked about their 20-year vision for the future of their community. Together, these community plans will make up the land use element in the next iteration of the LA General Plan. Approximately half of the community plans (30-40 of the 88 total) currently under development in Los Angeles are looking specifically at climate. One Los Angeles community - Arroyo Seco - is developing a Specific Plan for 660 acres of the neighborhood to be LEED-ND (LEED for Neighborhood Development) certified. The plan passed Stage 1 of the LEED-ND certification process in April 2010 (US Green Building Council 2010). If they follow through, they will be one of the first LEED-ND communities in the country.

3.3 Green economy

Economic development is always a central goal for city governments, but in today’s economy, this goal has become even higher priority. In its climate policy, Los Angeles is emphasizing its economic development activities. Here we describe a few of these programs.

**Green business certification program:** The green business certification program is modeled after a Bay Area program and will look at water, waste, energy, and pollution prevention in businesses. The focus will be on restaurants, auto repair shops, offices, and hotels. In December 2009, the City Council formally approved the program, designating the LA Community College District for administration and partnering with the 20-year-old Washington D.C. nonprofit Green Seal to help implement the program. In the months leading up to formal program approval, over 70 LA businesses had expressed interest in green certification by taking the “Green Pledge” (Green Seal 2009).

**Environmentally preferable purchasing policy:** Every large institution in the Los Angeles region now has an environmentally preferable purchasing policy, including the City and County, LA Unified School District, LA Community College District, and the Metropolitan Transit Agency. The City spends $500 million each year in the procurement of goods, and the County serves 10 million people in 88 cities. These policies cover a huge amount of paper, cleaning products, fleet, and light bulb purchases, and will have a tremendous impact as they are fully implemented.

**CleanTech Corridor:** Under Mayor Villaraigosa’s direction, LA’s Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) is repurposing a strip of brownfield parcels downtown along the Los Angeles River as a new green business industrial zone. The site is one of the largest available for industrial use in the LA area. They are using a Silicon Valley model to attract clean/green technology companies, offering a variety of incentives for qualifying companies. These incentives include favorable ground leases, low interest
loans, expedited permitting, and tax credits (CRA/LA 2008). The corridor will also site a research and development facility that is a partnership between the City, LADWP, Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL), and CalTech for clean technology and renewable energy.

**Green Jobs Initiative:** LA’s federal economic recovery funding includes over $700 million for workforce training, at least one third of which is to be used to develop a local green workforce. Los Angeles plans to further supplement this funding with a portion of the EECBG money to help jumpstart workforce training for “Clean Tech” jobs. As part of this effort, the city has partnered with the Apollo Alliance, a local workforce training organization. Apollo will develop training programs, and the City will do its best to make sure the jobs are there for the newly-trained workforce.

### 3.4 Green Building

While many cities have enacted green building ordinances for public sector projects, LA is an early adopter of mandatory private sector green building practices. In 2002, Los Angeles started building its city facilities to LEED standards and put a public sector green building standard on the books. In April 2008 (on Earth Day), a private sector green building ordinance for projects greater than 50,000 square feet was enacted, and a sister policy was subsequently enacted by LA’s Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) specifically for regions with economic blight. This private sector green building ordinance was projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 80,000 tons in 2012 (ENS 2008).

The process of developing the private sector green building ordinance included considering and addressing the concerns of stakeholders regarding the costs of green building and about the city’s capacity to effectively implement the program. Los Angeles succeeded in implementing the private sector policy in spite of these concerns for several reasons. First, because the public sector green building ordinance had been in place for a few years, there was already a small green building industry and market in the city, and some experience addressing cost issues. Second, the policy had broad support: In addition to the Mayor and City Council, the policy also had the support of the LA Business Council. Third, the city has several resources available to developers that help to minimize the costs and speed up the learning curve associated with building green:

1. Tax credits are available for developers to create sustainable affordable housing projects.
2. Through February 2010, developers had access to the city’s Green Team - a group of city staff drawn from many different building-related departments - to promote a collaborative development process for the ordinance and a resource that developers can voice their concerns to. The Green Team suspended their activities in February 2010.
3. The CRA/LA Healthy Neighborhoods Policy includes a sustainable consultation program that provides a set of services with a value of up to $5000 to advise developers on the low- and no-cost ways to transition to greener building.

Finally, starting the ordinance with a 50,000 square foot lower threshold insured that project teams subject to its requirements are sophisticated and able to absorb any additional cost, while transforming the local market and perception of what building in LA means.

City Departments
In most cities, municipal government emissions account for approximately 5 percent of total city emissions. In Los Angeles, however, municipal government operations represent nearly a full third of the city’s total emissions. This is because in addition to regular city operations, the City of LA owns and directly operates the (LA Department of Water and Power), the Port of Los Angeles, and four airports (LAX, ONT, VNY, and PMD). This means that Los Angeles has much more direct control over the city’s emissions than most local governments do. The Mayor is essentially the CEO of all of these companies, giving him direct power to make overarching decisions about emissions reduction.

In addition to the overall climate goals of the city, LA has set specific climate-related goals for each of the major companies under its control. The following short sections summarize what each of these companies is doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3.5 City Operations
*LED Streetlight Program*: Los Angeles is replacing 140,000 of its existing streetlight fixtures and lamps with Light-Emitting Diode (LED) technology. This program will entirely pay for itself through the expected energy savings of approximately 40 percent compared with current technology, and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 40,000 tons of CO2 each year (City of Los Angeles 2010).

*Alternative fuels*: Los Angeles is transitioning most city vehicles (85%) and all public transit, refuse collection, and street sweeper vehicles to alternative fuels of some sort. Depending on the vehicle type, the alternative fuel chosen is either Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), or hybrid electric vehicle technology.

*Waste-to-Energy program*: Los Angeles has had a self-imposed goal of 70% diversion rate by 2020 since 1994. In 2002, the city was already diverting 62% of its waste (Councilman Smith 2005). However, population and economic growth have largely offset gains in diversion, keeping constant the absolute quantity of refuse heading for landfills. To further reduce landfill trash, the city is implementing an integrated waste reduction program - Recovering Energy, Natural Resources, and Economic Benefit from Waste for Los Angeles (RENEW LA) - with an ultimate goal of diversion of more than 90% by 2025. This program is looking at various conversion technologies, including gasification and pyrolysis, anaerobic digestion, composting, autoclaving, and
fermentation, and plans to have the capacity to process 14,500 tons per day of material by 2025 (Councilman Smith 2005).

3.6 Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

*Electricity generation:* LADWP is the largest municipal utility in the country, and in 2009 generated 40 percent of its power from coal. By 2020, the utility has pledged to be entirely coal-free. Renewable electricity generation capacity will be replacing much of what is being lost, and LADWP has specific targets of 20% by the end of 2010 and 40% by 2020, both of which are more stringent than required of it by the California RPS. Because of the substantial size of LADWP, these actions will not only have huge direct impacts, but will also have indirect impacts in the market for renewable energy technologies. LADWP has recently completed a 120 MW wind farm in the Mojave Desert (Pine Tree), and has planned 1.3 GW of solar generating capacity (City of Los Angeles 2008b).

*Energy efficiency:* Through energy efficiency measures such as distributing compact fluorescent bulbs to households, direct installation of efficient lighting in small businesses, and a host of rebate programs to assist households to replace inefficient appliances and windows, the City of LA has been able to save more than 300 GWh in a single year. This equates to slightly more than the output of the entire Pine Tree Wind Farm, and cost only $70 million (versus $500 million for the wind farm).

*Water:* Because much of the water used in Los Angeles is transported over long distances via aqueduct, a large amount of power is used and emissions produced to provide water to the city. Most of this power and the associated emissions are not included in the emissions inventory for the City of Los Angeles because they actually occur outside of the City’s geographic boundary. Nevertheless, LA’s demand for water causes emissions, and reduction in LA’s demand for water has significant emissions reduction potential.

1989 was the peak year of water use in Los Angeles. Since then, a suite of conservation and water use-efficiency programs have held demand steady despite a 15 percent growth in the city’s population. Conservation measures will bring innovation (e.g. smart sprinkler systems). A water fixtures ordinance was recently passed for new construction, requiring water-saving fixtures to be installed, such as faucets that automatically shut off and low-flow toilets. This ordinance alone is projected to save 20 billion gallons of water over 10 years. Various incentive-based demand reduction programs are in force as well, including lawn watering only allowed twice per week, and $1/square foot rebates for drought-resilient yards replacing lawn. In addition, LADWP recently restructured the water rate system to increase rates on the high end, decrease rates on the low end, and lower the base water usage level that qualifies for the low rates. This rate restructuring passed unanimously in the City Council.
Unfortunately for Los Angeles, much of the federal stimulus money is tied directly to energy conservation and does not apply to water conservation projects.

3.7 Port of Los Angeles
The Port of LA has electrified much of its operations, worked toward improving the energy efficiency of its buildings, and begun construction of a 10MW solar generation facility on site to provide local renewable power.

Los Angeles was the first port to electrify berthed ships, which eliminated engine idling while ships were not moving. The city also invested $15 million in a technology assistance program at the Port, which has been used to fund the development and manufacture of short-haul electric trucks to transport containers from ships to transfer stations.

3.8 Los Angeles World Airports
The airports are looking to reduce emissions through actions such as electrification of gates and hangars, and moving toward alternative fuels for much of their ground vehicle fleet.

BOX 1: Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Funds
Los Angeles is receiving $37 million in federal EECBG funds. The city conducted a public outreach process to gather opinions on how these funds should be used. They received input from almost 200 individuals and organizations, and these responses were used to shape the city’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy. To our knowledge, this public engagement approach is unique to Los Angeles in deciding how to spend the EECBG funds.

The money will be used to implement fourteen distinct projects by the City of Los Angeles, the LA Department of Water and Power, and the Port of LA. Five of these projects are strategy development, including development of a regional climate action plan, while the remaining nine are actions that will have a direct effect on energy use in the city. Approximately one-third of the grant money will be used to retrofit municipal buildings. An additional $8.6 million will be used to create opportunities to finance energy efficiency improvements to privately-owned residential and commercial buildings, with an emphasis on improving the efficiency of multi-family affordable housing.

More information on the City of Los Angeles EECBG implementation strategy is available in the LA City Council File on this topic, available on line at http://cityclerk.lacity.org.

4. FACTORS INFLUENCING CLIMATE POLICY IN LOS ANGELES
One of the main things that we aimed to learn in this project is what is motivating cities to take action on the global environmental issue of climate change. We asked all of our interviewees a series of questions about the roles of what we thought would be key factors determining a city’s actions in this arena. We also gave interviewees an opportunity to share additional factors that they saw as determining the fate of climate policy in their city. This section summarizes what we learned for the City of Los Angeles. The main factor categories that we discuss here are political leadership, institutional collaboration and coordination, public engagement, State level action, the scale of the city, and budget and staff resources.

4.1 Political leadership
The current mayor - Mayor Villaraigosa - is politically progressive and is promoting a strong environmental agenda both locally and internationally. The current Los Angeles City Council is also strongly progressive, enabling city leaders to work together to move forward swiftly to improve the city’s environmental performance. As one of our interviewees put it, “Finally all the stars are aligned.” Given this favorable political climate for environmental action, the Mayor has been able to pull a lot of great talent into his administration - both at City Hall as well as at the port, the airports, and LADWP.

4.2 Institutional collaboration and coordination

**Internal:** In a city as large as Los Angeles, cross-departmental coordination of action is critical to environmental success, but challenging to implement. This internal coordination can improve environmental performance in two ways. First, city departments can share ideas and information to encourage or require the environmental-friendliness of city operations. Second, city departments can work together to remove barriers to environmental performance throughout the city by making sure that city ordinances encourage or require adoption of environmentally friendly products and practices.

Toward the first goal, departments formally share ideas and information through the City’s sustainability working group. This group has approximately thirty representatives, each of whom coordinates environmental sustainability practices for his or her city department. The group has monthly meetings and field trips to see what local companies are doing with building sustainability and efficiency into their culture in order to get all departments to think broadly about how to do so. An example of a small initiative that has resulted from this interdepartmental coordination is in the area of information technology. A staff-person from the IT department created a set of guidelines to help the City could reduce energy consumption from personal computers (Los Angeles has 25,000 computers used by staff). Those guidelines have now been incorporated as one element of an environmental management system auditing function that will provide department-heads information on energy consumption (beyond lighting and HVAC systems) at City Hall and other primary city buildings.
The case of permeable pavements represents a successful example of the second type of cross-departmental coordination. According to the LA zoning code, parking spaces and access aisles must be paved in asphalt or concrete, or any material deemed equivalent by the Department of Building and Safety. Despite the popularity of permeable pavements in the environmental community, the Department of Building and Safety had not approved these materials for use in the City of LA. Thus, no projects with permeable paving were being approved. Finally, a motion was made for the Green Team to explore the issue, which led to the Planning Department drafting a zoning administrator’s interpretation to clarify the zoning code, and other critical departments (e.g. the fire department, which had to verify that permeable paving wouldn’t adversely impact the performance of their rigs) to sign off on the new interpretation. Permeable pavements are now allowed.

**External:** Collaboration between the City of LA and regional governmental bodies occurs through many channels, and can be formal or informal. The Mayor has appointees on the Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) board and has a formal working agreement with the County on public health, since the City doesn’t have a public health department. Informal collaboration will often occur through direct communication between City staff and their counterparts at other governmental bodies in the region, such as LA County or the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

One prominent example of formal collaboration on the topic of climate policy in the LA area is the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability. This Collaborative includes LA City and County, the Department of Water and Power, the Metropolitan Water District, the Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Transit Agency, local universities, and the LA Unified School District. The goal of the collaborative is to work together on developing and implementing policies for climate change and sustainability to increase effectiveness and work towards community goals. Their first project is a community-wide greenhouse gas inventory. They will also downscale IPCC models to do regional scenario analysis for informed climate change adaptation decision-making on such things as infrastructure spending. The other reason behind the work of the Collaborative is to get the biggest players coordinated and moving in the right direction. This way, most of the 88 smaller cities in the region - which don’t have the resources or expertise to do this kind of work - can follow their lead.

**4.3 Public participation, education, and outreach**

For the most part, climate policy in Los Angeles appears to be driven from the top. The mayor and members of the city council promoted an ambitious environmental agenda, including action on climate, as part of their progressive political agenda for the city. The voters elected them, and they are now implementing their plans.

Of course, there are opportunities for community stakeholders to participate directly in the policy decision making and implementation process. As in all cities, LA City Council
meetings are a place where local communities can weigh in on policy issues that affect them. Everything the LA City Council does is public, so anyone can come down and submit comment cards to get their ideas to the Council. Both the Mayor and individual LA City Council members also invite input directly from their constituents in a variety of ways (e.g. through websites, phone/mail, and at in-person community events). Because LA is so large, there is also a system of neighborhood councils that covers the majority of the city. The neighborhood council meetings allow local communities to weigh in on policy issues that affect them, and the elected members of each neighborhood council can then bring the opinions of their local constituency to the attention of the City government.

As in other cities, major stakeholders in Los Angeles on climate policy include environmental groups, the business community, developers, educational institutions, and other community groups. Unique to Los Angeles is the Green LA Coalition, which is comprised of more than 100 environmental, environmental justice, and community-based organizations in Los Angeles working to strengthen the environmental movement and to help build the capacity of individual organizations by facilitating partnerships. They have working groups on transportation, the Port, environmental justice, water, climate change, and the green economy.

Los Angeles has developed specific public outreach campaigns and participation opportunities around a few key climate-related policies. One example of this is summarized earlier in this report, where the City solicited ideas and input regarding how they should use their allocated $37 million in federal EECBG funding. Another example was the development of the private sector green building ordinance, where the City engaged stakeholders through public “Green Team” meetings and a series of stakeholder workshops.

In the arena of public education aiming to spur energy-conserving behavior change, Los Angeles city staff admitted that they face a formidable challenge. There are a lot of communities in this city for which success is a single-family home with a lawn and a car or two. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions for LA will mean altering the idea of what it means to live and be successful in Los Angeles; Los Angelenos will need to start to identify with conservation and resource-efficient living. The City hired Occidental College and the Green LA Coalition to develop a public engagement strategy for their climate change and sustainability programs. Their recommendation was to create a unified message that brought the challenge of climate change to a personal level, but to tailor that message to effectively communicate with different communities within the city. It appears that some version of this is now being implemented using a portion of the City’s EECBG funds.

4.4 State laws and other actions
There was a consensus among our interviewees that state-level actions have had little effect on climate policy in Los Angeles. This is because the city’s greenhouse gas
emissions reduction goals and policies are more aggressive than those outlined in AB 32, and therefore the city has not been a target of state action on this issue. As one interviewee put it, “We are thrilled that AB 32 exists and that the whole state is moving towards those goals, but most of our departments are moving towards goals that are more aggressive, so AB 32 isn’t necessarily what we’re tracking our progress by.”

Los Angeles is also experiencing a renewal of growth within the central core of the city. Fifty thousand people now live in the downtown zip codes whereas six years ago there were only five thousand. Because of these recent trends, city staff felt that SB 375 is not likely to be a binding policy constraint for LA. Other interviewees pointed out that SB 375 might even be superceded by new data on the effects of air pollutants on human health, which could trigger increased stringency of local air pollutant regulations. Recent studies have found evidence of significant DNA damage to fetuses at pollutant concentrations below current standards - and LA isn’t yet meeting these current standards. The health impacts on young children could make the case for quick action on emissions and air quality compelling to the general public, possibly resulting in a groundswell of support.

One important concern from our Los Angeles interviews was that most of California’s environmental resources are located in Northern California, including USEPA Region 9 in San Francisco, and Cal EPA and the Energy Commission in Sacramento. Because most regional meetings are held in Northern California, LA is penalized when it has a differing opinion on pieces of legislation being developed because they can’t easily represent their point of view at the meetings. Staff said that while meeting attendance via phone and video is an option, their persistent lack of physical presence is a significant barrier to communication.

4.5 The effect of scale
Because Los Angeles is a large city, policy decisions it makes can have large effects - not only on emissions, but also on markets for environmentally-friendly technologies and products. This creates policy action opportunities in LA that smaller communities simply do not have. For instance, if the Port of LA decides that trucks and ships carrying goods into and out of the port need to operate with lower emissions, that action can change how trucks and ships are designed worldwide. When LADWP invests heavily in renewable electricity generation, this action has the potential to change markets (and reduce prices!) for solar and wind energy technologies. When the City decided to upgrade 140,000 of its streetlights to LED technology, it changed the market and lowered the price of this technology, making these streetlights more affordable for communities everywhere.

In addition to the long reach of its policies, the large size of Los Angeles has a number of other implications for policy adoption and effectiveness. In a larger city like Los Angeles, there are more interest groups seriously involved in policy development and more diversity of opinion among the residents. This means that adopted policies are likely to
trend toward the political center rather than either extreme. In the case of climate policy, this means that action will be taken, but that this action is unlikely to be a radical change from the status quo. The large number of residents also means that small groups of individuals cannot easily impede the progress of policy adoption or implementation - a larger, organized group is necessary to effect change.

One drawback to the size of Los Angeles is in engaging community members on an individual level. In such a large city, residents feel less personally connected to their government, even though institutions like City Council offices and neighborhood councils exist. This means that, as noted earlier in this report, it is especially difficult for large cities such as Los Angeles to successfully implement policies that ask residents to make personal lifestyle changes.

### 4.6 Budget, staff resources, and policy implementation

As is the case for many California cities, the main challenges LA faces in implementing climate policy are money, money, and money. As mentioned earlier in this report, the city is working to close a $500 million budget deficit for the 2010-11 fiscal year, and city governments are absolutely required to balance their budgets every year. Hard choices need to be made, and every aspect of city government is affected.

Nonetheless, our interviewees unanimously reported that these financial constraints aren’t impacting how policy is made in the city. Stringent policies are being passed, but implementation is being streamlined. In some cases, policy implementation is taking longer due to lack of resources. Before the department was disbanded in the city government reorganization of 2010, EnvironmentLA experienced a 25 percent budget (and staff) reduction over the years from 2006-2009, despite increased political support for environmental programs. Other departments are trying to achieve climate change mandates using current staff resources because there is no funding to add staff. The city is looking to focus scarce resources on policy implementation as much as possible, for example, by conducting emissions inventories every couple of years instead of annually.

Another strategy that LA is pursuing (which is common to many cities) is to focus on implementing the climate policies that actually save money first - largely through energy and water conservation. For instance, in implementing the water-efficient fixtures program, the new requirements were married with a series of existing rebates to show that people could use the rebate to save money upfront and conserve.

Some policies have a smaller impact in the current economic climate because of the overall drop in consumption. An example is the private sector green building ordinance - even though the policy stringency is not affected by the economy, fewer projects are being exposed to the new ordinance because there is less development occurring.

That being said, there are some initiatives being pursued in the City that do have substantial costs, and these present a significant challenge in the current fiscal
environment. One example of this is the renewable electricity generation increase within LADWP, which could be offset by reduced demand. One of our interviewees put it this way, “We really need to educate the public on how to conserve and use less power. If we could get people to change their behavior and habits to conserve more, then cost wouldn’t be as significant.”

5. SUMMARY
LA is a city that has taken a strong policy position on climate change. The quantity of greenhouse gas emissions from the City of LA are comparable that of some nations, and the Mayor has led the City to step up to take responsibility. As a city, LA is unique in its direct control of water and electricity provision as well as a major port and four airports. This allows the city to directly affect approximately one-third of its emissions - a much larger percentage than is possible for most other city governments. LA’s size also allows the city to have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions beyond its borders by making climate-friendly products - such as LED streetlights - more available and affordable to others.

The main factors that support climate policy in Los Angeles are strong political support for action, including support from elected officials, city staff, and to a large extent, from the entire population of the City. The main barriers to climate policy implementation in the City are financial - both LA’s city budget crisis and the overall economic downturn - and behavioral/cultural - Los Angelenos will not easily give up living in single family homes and using cars for transportation. The first of these barriers is likely to be temporary. The second, however, presents a far greater challenge. Only time will tell whether Los Angeles city policies (including large investments in renewable energy, water conservation, and public transit) can move LA toward a more climate-friendly future.

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