

## How Cities Can Save Our Planet

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that within 12 years, because of rising temperatures, "drought could endanger 400 million city-dwellers." Seth Schultz, founder and CEO of Urban Breakthroughs, a climate consultancy, reports that "cities account for 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and house half the global population." Schultz says, "there is no viable solution to the climate crisis without cities in the center of it."

Cities are open to the exchange of information, knowledge, and best practices. C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, a network of 94 cities, has committed to the Paris Agreement goals at the local level.

After attending two global conferences of mayors on the climate crisis – Local Governments for Sustainability and C40 World Mayors Summit – Mayor Jim Kenney, in October 2019, launched the Climate Collaborative of Greater Philadelphia along with business and law firm leaders.

"Our administration," Mayor Kenney said, "has committed the city to cutting citywide carbon pollution 80 percent and achieving a 100 percent carbon-free electricity grid by 2050, as well as powering all city buildings on 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030." In 2019, 40 Philadelphia-area organizations, including seven colleges and universities and PECO, joined the Collaborative. <https://phillyclimatecollab.com/>

The University of Pennsylvania, the largest employer in the Philadelphia region, is working on projects to increase its own sustainability, to divest from fossil fuels, and to provide knowledge and advice to cities, industries, and other organizations. To help provide financing for cities, the Penn Institute for Urban Research (IUR) launched the City Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Initiative (C2IFI), a clearing-house for mayors, dedicated to matching cities with international finance.

Wharton's Risk Center partnered with the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy, the Penn Program on Regulation, and the Faculty Senate, on a project entitled *30 Solutions to Climate Risks*. This group recommended actions that can be taken by industries and cities in areas most at risk.

Insurers and mortgage lenders could accurately price products according to climate risk, thus putting the burden directly on property owners and "encouraging adaptation and retreat" from coastal communities. In addition, the global insurance sector, holding an estimated \$25 trillion in assets under management, could redirect capital flows toward low-carbon technologies.

To decrease emissions from air travel and autos, cities could stop encouraging airlines to develop new routes and could cooperate to develop more intercity rail and bus routes. In the future, state and local governments might withhold municipal services to communities vulnerable to climate change, particularly if Congress legislates the climate crisis as a national emergency. <https://thepenngazette.com/the-new-climate-advocates/>

Elsewhere on the planet, electric utilities are working on sourcing energy entirely from solar and wind. According to *The Guardian*, "UK homes will soon be able to plug into community wind and solar farms from anywhere in the country through Co-op Energy, the first energy tariff to offer clean electricity exclusively from community projects." (For more current information on the climate crisis, read *The Guardian*.)

*This is Eisenfeld's second article about the Climate Crisis. The first one, published in the Center City Quarterly Winter 2019 issue, introduced the topic and discussed what experts say individuals can do: Use your voting power, do not invest in big producers of greenhouse gas emissions or companies that finance them, limit beef consumption, install solar panels, decrease driving or switch to a more fuel-efficient vehicle, limit air travel, reduce use of appliances and devices, plant a garden, and eat locally sourced food.*

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