



CLIMATE  
& ENERGY

### Cities in the Climate Crisis: Energy and urban planning to support 1.5°C alignment

Home to [55% of global population](#) and [80% of GDP](#), cities are responsible for over [70% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions](#), 75% of natural resource consumption – *and* some of the most ambitious and innovative actions to tackle sustainability challenges. Cities hold untapped potential to decarbonize the economy, to invest in more resilient and flexible infrastructure, to prioritize nature-based solutions for urban resilience and to support biodiversity protection, especially through better urban planning. Local governments also have potential to engage and interact with their citizens and urban stakeholders to move together on this transition. Cities are a problem and solution space.

**WWF's Vision:** Cities are recognized as central actors in a climate-resilient and equitable future where people live in harmony with nature. Cities have adequate resources and capacity and are integrated into national and international planning and policy which empower them to not only act, but to innovate and lead towards a 100% renewable, equitable and sustainable future.

**WWF's Commitment:** To increase local political leadership, capacity, entrepreneurship, public engagement and resources to transform cities and support the creation and development of thriving and prosperous cities and empowered citizens, while respecting the ecological limits of our one planet.

**WWF's Goal:** By 2025, cities worldwide act as transformation catalysts, implementing integrated and inclusive action plans in line with 1.5°C, while ensuring urban resilience and unlocking individual and collective climate actions.

### Cities must lead the way

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that unchecked climate change could undo much of the economic and social progress gained since World War II. It stated that 1.5°C of global warming is safer than 2°C with much lower loss of natural and human habitats and impacts on human health and livelihoods. It also showed that cities are particularly vulnerable. Many communities are already suffering the negative consequences of the climate crisis.

The IPCC shows that to retain global warming within 1.5°C, global emissions must peak by 2020 and reduce to net zero by 2050. This is technologically feasible and economically attractive. Exponential technological shifts have happened in the past and will occur in the future. To meet this target, the next shift must ensure dramatic emissions reductions and major increases in carbon sinks. The world and its cities must step boldly onto this path, through implementation of ambitious policy and behaviour change, as well as through systemic shift in financial flows that would improve access for local governments and enable cities to lead on implementing these ambitious changes.

The science is clear – the world must reduce its reliance on fossil fuels to avoid runaway climate change. And cities can lead the way: adopting and ensuring access to renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and recognizing the importance of sustainable, integrated urban planning to facilitate this transition. The building sector is responsible for circa [36% of global energy use](#), so energy- and space-efficient building standards and retrofitting are priorities along with design for material reuse and recycling and shifting to renewables. The transport sector is responsible for circa [25% of carbon emissions](#). In cities, these sectors interact, especially in urban planning. Many cities allocate [40-60% of public spaces](#) to roads and vehicle parking, providing a challenge and opportunity to shift to more sustainable urban planning and transportation thereby facilitating low-carbon, energy-efficient development and physical greening of cities. Sustainable urban mobility requires a shift in the urban transportation pyramid – prioritizing pedestrians and bicycles, followed by public transportation,

support for e-vehicles and car-sharing, and lastly, private vehicles. Tackling private vehicle dependence has multiple benefits: addressing air pollution and congestion, improving equity through accessibility, expanding biodiversity in cities – from cities for cars to cities for people and nature. Cities need to act within their own administrations, and with stakeholders and citizens, for example on consumption-based emissions where these are high, or urban food systems.

## WWF Asks

### Local Governments to:

- Establish local climate goals aligned with the Paris Agreement and 1.5°C maximum warming
- Break from fossil-fuel dependency including in energy, buildings, mobility and food systems and increase access to clean energy
- Encourage compact and connected cities, including by implementing urban and transport planning geared towards energy-efficient, low-carbon transportation modes – prioritize walking, cycling and public transportation
- Ensure that urban planning and infrastructure (e.g. public transport, green spaces, park access) prioritize equity and accessibility to encourage more resilient communities
- Invest in building, construction and urban planning that integrates nature-based solutions to limit impacts on natural areas in and around a city, and to improve urban climate resilience
- Establish sustainable building principles by assessing the full environmental impact of buildings using life-cycle analysis as part of all infrastructure projects
- Adopt sustainable public procurement and circular economy principles to support the broader sustainability transition (e.g. for food, construction, energy and transport)
- Where possible, ensure that local climate strategy and implementation plans encompass consumption-based emissions for a city's inhabitants

### National and Regional Governments to:

- Include local governments in decision-making processes for national climate change targets
- Recognize the special role and capacities of local governments and empower them to act with appropriate legal frameworks, capacity and financing
- Encourage and support policy experimentation by cities willing to lead
- Support roll-out of best practice standards once they have been developed in leading cities

### International Institutions to:

- Recognize the special role and capacities of local governments and find ways to directly engage with them to increase their capacity
- Create structures that enable local governments effective access to climate finance
- Support networking and capacity building for local level governance to enable implementation of best practice climate solutions

## WWF Cities

WWF Cities is an area of collective action and innovation within WWF's Global Climate & Energy Practice and helps coordinate WWF's work with cities around the world, engaging local governments and urban stakeholders to support climate action and its linkages with nature conservation. Our flagship program, the One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) was created in 2011 to highlight the power of cities to advance international climate and sustainability agendas, demonstrating cities' potential to help close the climate ambition gap, with over 500 cities participating thus far. The OPCC assesses and guides cities to maintain global warming below 1.5°C – contributing to the Paris Agreement, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the conservation agenda.

## Contact WWF Cities

Website: [www.panda.org/cities](http://www.panda.org/cities)

Email: [opcc@wwf.se](mailto:opcc@wwf.se)

Twitter: @WWFCities

Facebook & LinkedIn: WWF Cities