



Leading the Charge to Green Newton

Protecting and preserving Newton’s natural beauty is a passion of mine. As an avid hiker and snow-shoer, I have come to appreciate our parks, open spaces, and waterways as the treasures they are. Our natural resources are what make Newton a great city to live, work, and play. Yet if we are to ensure our natural resources are protected and for Newton to maintain its vibrancy, we must find ways to do more with less money.

That is why; as mayor, I will continue to honor this commitment with initiatives to minimize financial and environmental impacts of resource use in Newton. Energy and waste management are two areas that present opportunity to achieve savings, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and promote environmental sustainability.

Newton is spending more than \$9 million on utility costs each year just to operate municipal government, including schools – and this amount is projected to increase significantly.ⁱ As utility costs increase, funding will need to be diverted from other critical areas of the budget to adjust for rising costs unless we become more energy efficient and/or reduce consumption.

Of similar concern is waste management. The Citizen’s Advisory Group reports that Newton spends \$6.8 million annually to collect and dispose of residential waste alone.ⁱⁱ To trim these costs and to become more responsible stewards of the environment, the City will be expanding automated trash collection and single-stream recycling, which I support, but we must continually encourage less disposable waste from being generated.

Much work is underway to reduce energy use and GHG emissions in Newton already, especially in the areas of planning and program initiation. With input from numerous boards, committees, and commissions as well as community partners, our city has made progress on improving energy efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint. And while there is no need to devise an entirely new approach to cover old ground, opportunity does exist to better link city efforts with state and federal initiatives, and then build on them.

Steps taken to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions, such as converting schools from oil to gas; switching to more efficient LED lighting for traffic lights; and investing in high efficiency mechanical systems in buildings; among others, are significant.ⁱⁱⁱ However, we have only begun to realize the potential savings and environmental benefits that could be achieved from these endeavors; let alone the economic value our actions will have on our local economy and community. There is much to gain from greening Newton!

I have a strong track record as a leader of environmental issues. I was honored by the Newton Conservators with the Environmentalist of the Year Award in 2001 for my work in this area. Last month, I was awarded a legislative scorecard of 100 percent for a perfect pro-environment voting record from the Massachusetts Audubon Society. I am proud to be recognized by these important organizations, but also know that there is much more to be done. That is why, my plan:

- Emphasizes bold, visionary leadership with a long-term perspective;
- Links Newton with efforts at the state and federal levels;
- Seeks collaborative action of both municipal entities and citizens; and
- Relies on citizen engagement in developing and monitoring programs and plans.

We need a flexible plan for greening Newton that builds on our accomplishments and incorporates new state and federal initiatives. It will need to be visionary, yet supported by attainable goals, allowing our city to thrive in the new energy economy in an environmentally responsible way. And that is exactly what my Greening Newton Plan will do.

My 5-Point Plan for Greening Newton

1. Create a Next Generation Green Plan for Newton.

Newton's Energy Action Plan serves as a basis for devising a longer-range plan for reducing energy use and GHG emissions, especially since the deadline for the City to meet its resource reduction goals is 2010. As mayor, I will create a Next Generation Green Plan that will allow municipal officials to evaluate past efforts in order to establish 2010 performance baselines and set measurable annual and five-year performance goals for resource reduction.

The plan will also create a vision for resource use in the future, not just over the next five or ten years, but over the next fifty years, like the City of Berkeley's Climate Action Plan does.^{iv} The Climate Action Plan covers everything from organic gardening to bike paths and commits to reducing GHG emissions by 80 percent by 2050.^v Like the

Climate Action Plan, mine will be bold and comprehensive, covering all aspects of city government, including schools and parks as well as areas, such as energy, waste management, construction, water, transportation, among others.

To this end, I will continue to engage citizens in the plan's development and implementation process through numerous boards, commissions, and committees all the while ensuring that recommendations contained in both the Energy Action Plan and our Comprehensive Plan are carried out. Furthermore, I will expand the role of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Sustainable Newton to include monitoring and reporting of progress made toward greening Newton.

2. Issue a "Lead by Example" Order.

States have been leading the way in developing clean energy and environmental conservation policies and programs for years. It has only been since the Obama administration has been in power that a commitment at the national level has emerged.

Unlike his predecessor, President Obama understands the relationship between energy, the economy, and the environment, and has made resource reduction a priority of his administration. To that end, he is committing \$59 billion in stimulus funds and \$150 billion from the federal budget to increase domestic production of clean energy, to create new green-sector jobs, and to initiate policies and programs focusing on reducing GHG emissions.^{vi}

As mayor, I will call for a lead by example initiative and ensure full commitment from the mayor's office. The initiative is similar to a statewide initiative championed by Governor Patrick, and will allow us to merge city efforts with state efforts to produce the maximum benefit possible for Newton. Instituting this initiative will ensure the City "leads the way" in resource reduction efforts, and thereby encourage businesses and citizens to adopt responsible, sustainable practices and lifestyles.

Here are some of the areas I will focus on:

Energy Efficiency

As originally proposed in my education plan, I will seek out all federal and state funds available for energy efficiency improvements to schools as well as other municipal facilities. Utility costs rise at a far greater rate than revenue, and even though utility costs make up a small percentage of our overall budget, we cannot afford to overlook opportunities to achieve efficiency savings. New federal stimulus funds are available to retrofit and upgrade municipal facilities to save on energy costs, permitting us to continue our efforts in this area.^{vii} In addition, state financial assistance in the form of grants and loans to municipalities for energy efficiency measures is also available

through the Green Communities Program, which I supported as a State Legislator.^{viii} I will ensure Newton is an active participant in this program and acquire technical assistance and funding to expand and enhance efficiency efforts.

As mayor, I will also ensure Newton continues and completes energy audits of municipal facilities. The NSTAR Retrofit project to retrofit facilities and street lighting has generated nearly \$150,000 in annual energy savings on projects completed over the last seven years.^{ix} Plus, incentives cover up to 90 percent of the project's actual costs, making upgrades cost-effective.^x

Finally, I will make certain capital planning incorporates sustainability and energy efficiency initiatives as either separate projects or imbedded in other capital projects whenever possible.

Waste Management

Waste management (i.e., trash disposal and recycling) is one area that stands to benefit from greater focus from the mayor's office. I support the decision to expand automated trash collection and single-stream recycling as an opportunity to save money and enhance recycling, but I believe there are other opportunities to further increase recycling that we should also explore.

As mayor, I will take steps to:

- Implement a sustainable recycling program in public schools;
- Establish a recycling system in public places; and
- Identify ways to reuse, reduce, and/or recycle resources in all city operations as a means of encouraging recycling for residential households.

We on the East Coast are quite behind the West Coast on organics disposal. Organic waste is produced from things, like discarded fruits and vegetables, coffee grinds, garden and landscape clippings, among other natural sources. It's estimated that as much as 50 percent of waste could be composted rather than buried in landfills.^{xi} As mayor, I will explore ways to optimize disposal of organics by increasing the use of compost generated by the City and encouraging backyard composting of organics.

Land and Resource Preservation

I have a record of accomplishment for protecting our environment. I fought hard to protect Hammond Pond and to preserve Echo Bridge over Hemlock Gorge. As a State Legislator, I crafted legislation that protected open space and historical structures when the Chestnut Hill Waterworks was being developed. Currently, I am the lead sponsor of the Public Lands Protection Act – a bill that would put a “no net loss” provision in place

for the disposition of publicly owned lands. As mayor, I will continue to actively seek federal and state grants as they become available to ensure Newton's resources are preserved.

As mayor, I will also be committed to using sustainable practices in the care of Newton's public land, including parks, golf courses, and public facilities. This will include using organic pest control and minimizing water use whenever possible. To this end, I will also support more options for community gardens as well as extending the outreach of local nonprofits dedicated to the promotion of organic gardening to the community.

Water and Wastewater Management

There are opportunities for Newton to improve water and wastewater management, as well. For example, expanding the residential rain barrel program to promote conservation; retrofitting public areas over time to maximize use of permeable surfaces and to minimize run-off; and performing regular leak detection of the City's piping infrastructure are just some of the things I will pursue as mayor to improve municipal infrastructure and better manage water use.

Green Construction

Energy waste from buildings makes up one-third of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions.^{xii} To reduce emissions, New York City policymakers are reviewing proposals that seek to encourage private building owners to conduct energy audits.^{xiii} If findings show the cost of making recommended improvements could be recouped in energy savings within five years, owners would be required to complete them.^{xiv} To offset the cost of the upgrades, policymakers are also reviewing whether to create a revolving loan fund primed by private investor monies and stimulus funds from energy efficiency and conservation block grants.^{xv} I will continue to monitor new laws, programs, and proposals of municipalities to reduce GHG emissions of buildings like this one in New York City for possible replication in Newton.

A recent change to the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards, will now give municipalities the option of using more stringent energy efficient building codes, so municipalities can meet requirements of the Green Communities Act and qualify for funding.^{xvi} As mayor, I will look for ways to encourage efficient building practices in Newton.

Civic Engagement

As Newton's Chief Executive, the mayor should be an advocate of community and grassroots initiatives, especially those that relate to goals of the City. One grassroots initiative underway in Newton involves forming Household Eco-Teams to conduct household energy audits with the help of trained volunteers to help citizens reduce their

carbon footprint and adopt sustainable lifestyles.^{xvii} As mayor, I will ensure Newton is an active partner in promoting these types of efforts to the community. In addition, I will support and encourage citizen conservation groups and nonprofits that attempt to preserve our natural gems.

3. Declare Newton a Green Zone.

As mayor, I will declare Newton a Green Zone, so we can attract more federal and state incentives for economic development as New Orleans plans to do.^{xviii} Such a bold declaration will illustrate our commitment to becoming greener by encouraging the adoption of responsible resource reduction practices in every aspect of planning and operation. Declaring Newton a Green Zone will also encourage new demand for green products and services; attract builders, architects, and engineers; and drive development of new products that, in turn, will put money into our local economy.

4. Identify and Harness Newton's Energy Resources.

There is tremendous potential for Newton to become a producer of energy. According to our Comprehensive Plan, almost all of the food, water, raw materials, and energy we consumer come from outside Newton.^{xix} Yet this does not have to be the case.

Cities are becoming more creative in harnessing resources, like solar, wind, and tidal power to lesson financial and environmental impacts of resource use. San Francisco, known for its fog, has exceeded expectations in generating power from sunlight after placing solar panels on the roof of its convention center.^{xx} The project has been so successful that plans are in the works to install solar panels on municipal buildings, libraries, and even a wastewater treatment facility.^{xxi}

I believe Newton has the potential to expand its use of solar panels to produce energy, as well. Research conducted by an environmental think-tank found that Massachusetts has the potential to produce as much as 91 percent of its energy from wind and solar panels – enormous potential Newton also likely holds.

Newton South currently boasts one of the largest solar power plants on a public school in New England, and Newton North, once construction is complete, will also have its own solar plant to supply power for the school. If we could install solar panels on more of our municipal buildings, the potential exists to drastically reduce electricity costs and further lesson our environmental impact. And we already have a public-private partnership to lead us in expanding our capacity to harness sunlight through the Sunergy Project. By relying more on solar power, Newton will be better able to meet Governor Patrick's goal of deriving 20 percent of the state's energy from renewable sources by 2020.^{xxii} Newton should be aggressive in getting grants for increasing

energy production from renewable resources, like solar power from existing state programs.

5. Make Newton a Test Site for New, Emerging Technological Advancements.

As mayor, I will actively engage in more collaborative partnerships with universities, businesses, and nonprofits to support Newton in achieving its resource reduction goals. By serving as a test site for emerging technological advancements, Newton could help these partners bring more technologies to market just as the City of Austin is doing.

Municipal officials in Austin are collaborating with university, corporations, and other partners to design a new, clean energy infrastructure, “smart grid”.^{xxiii} The project will allow Austin to modernize its grid, while giving researchers the chance to trial their product in the hopes of expanding it to larger markets, if successful, in the future.

I believe Newton’s strategic location together with leadership and commitment that I will bring to the mayor’s office makes us well-positioned to be an ideal setting for a test site. Participating in projects like these will help put us on the map of the nation’s greenest cities with the prospect of securing more federal and state grants.

Conclusion

Newton was one of ten cities nationwide honored with the Livability Award by the U.S. Conference of Mayors for innovative efforts to better the lives of its citizens in 1996.^{xxiv} Since this time, however, the commitment to inventive action, particularly when it comes to managing resource use has waned. This is not to suggest that no progress has been made, because it has, but it has moved too slowly. In essence, municipal officials have had to sacrifice innovation in order to balance the budget. And, in doing so, have missed out on opportunities that might have allowed us to better maximize our resources today, permitting municipal officials to do more with less money.

We cannot allow more time to pass. Newton can be a leader again. As mayor, I will restore the enthusiasm and pioneering-spirit that helped make us the great City we are today.

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- ⁱ Per the Comptroller's memorandum dated May 9, 2008 cited in the Citizens Advisory Group Final Report, April 14, 2009: <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/CitizenAdvisoryGroup/reports/2009/04-14-09CAGFinalReport.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Citizens Advisory Group, Preliminary Report, November 19, 2008: <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/CitizenAdvisoryGroup/2008/11-19-08CAGRevenueReport.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Citizens Advisory Group Final Report, April 14, 2009: <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/CitizenAdvisoryGroup/reports/2009/04-14-09CAGFinalReport.pdf>
- ^{iv} City of Berkeley Climate Action Draft Plan, Executive Summary, April 2009: <http://www.berkeleyclimateaction.org/docManager/1000000242/BCAP%20Exec%20Summary.pdf>
- ^v Ibid.
- ^{vi} "Obama Lays Out Clean-Energy Plans." *Washington Post* March 24, 2009: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/23/AR2009032301350.html>
- ^{vii} Massachusetts May Use Stimulus Funds to Improve Energy Efficiency of Schools, www.WBZ.com, March 19, 2009, <http://www.edfacilities.org/ne/index.cfm?monthList=3#2966> Note: \$3.2 billion is provided to the U.S. Department of Energy for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program and \$ 3.1 billion for the State Energy Program. School energy efficiency programs are eligible for funding through both programs.
- ^{viii} Green Communities Programs and Technical Assistance, http://www.mass.gov:80/?pageID=eoeewaterterminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Energy%2c+Utilities+%26+Clean+Technologies&L2=Renewable+Energy&L3=Renewable+Portfolio+Standard&L4=Green+Communities&sid=Eoeea&b=terminalcontent&f=doer_rps_gc-programs&csid=Eoeea
- ^{ix} Information provided by the City of Newton, Public Buildings Department
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} Composting Made Easy, December 9, 2007: http://greenliving.suite101.com/article.cfm/composting_made_easy
- ^{xii} "City Plans to Make Older Buildings Refit to Save Energy." *The New York Times* April 22, 2009: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/22/science/earth/22green.html?ref=science>
- ^{xiii} Ibid.
- ^{xiv} Ibid.
- ^{xv} Ibid.
- ^{xvi} Massachusetts increases savings potential from high efficiency building codes, May 19, 2009: <http://www.neep.org/newsroom/MA%20stretch%20code%20FINAL%20Press%20Release.pdf>
- ^{xvii} Ibid.
- ^{xviii} "Some say New Orleans is poised to benefit from Obama's energy policies." *The Times-Picayune* January 18, 2009: http://blog.nola.com/tpmoney/2009/01/some_say_new_orleans_is_poised.html
- ^{xix} City of Newton Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/cdbg/docs/2008-comp-plan.pdf>
- ^{xx} How America's Greenest Cities Got Green, Case Study: Sunroofs in Fog City, February 2, 2008: <http://www.popsci.com/environment/gallery/2008-02/how-americas-greenest-cities-got-green>
- ^{xxi} Ibid.
- ^{xxii} Governor Patrick Lauds Expansion of Renewable Energy Industry and State Use of Solar and Wind Power, April 7, 2008: http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=gov3pressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Agov3&b=pressrelease&f=080407_deer_island_initiative&csid=Agov3
- ^{xxiii} Landmark "Pecan Street Project" Brings Together City of Austin, Austin Energy, University of Texas, Austin Chamber, and Environmental Defense Fund to Design Energy System of the Future, Environmental Defense Fund, December 3, 2008 Press Release: <http://www.edf.org/pressrelease.cfm?contentID=8900>
- ^{xxiv} 1996 City Livability Awards: http://www.usmayors.org/citylivabilityawards/documents/city_livability_awards.html