

Improving the sustainability of US cities: new report

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A new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine offers a road map and recommendations to help U.S. cities work toward sustainability, measurably improving their residents' economic, social, and environmental well-being. The report draws upon lessons learned from nine cities' efforts to improve sustainability - Los Angeles; New York City; Vancouver, B.C.; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Grand Rapids and Flint, Michigan. The cities were chosen to span a range of sizes, regions, histories, and economies.

The report recommends that every U.S. city develop a [sustainability](#) plan that not only accounts for its own unique characteristics but also adapts strategies that have led to measurable improvements in other cities with similar economic, environmental, and social contexts.

"Given that 80 percent of the U.S. population now lives in urban areas, cities are pivotal in efforts to improve sustainability," said Linda Katehi, chair of the committee that wrote the report, and chancellor emerita of the University of California, Davis. "While there is no cookie-cutter approach, the innovative methods now being developed in some cities should be helpful to others."

The report examines the nine cities' experiences and extracts lessons from them that should be applied in other cities, such as:

- Sustainability planning should take a city's regional and national

context into account. Actions in support of sustainability in one area should not be taken at the expense of another; urban leaders should integrate sustainability policies and strategies across scales, from block to neighborhood to city, region, state, and nation.

- Cities' efforts to improve sustainability should include policies to reduce inequality. This aspect of sustainability planning is often overlooked but is essential to improving quality of life both for those with the fewest resources and opportunities and for a city's entire population.
- City planners should be aware of the rapid pace of factors working against sustainability - such as climate change, scarce resources, and economic shifts—and prioritize sustainability initiatives with appropriate urgency.

The [report](#) also offers a [road map](#) that cities can use to guide their efforts, walking planners through the process from planning and adopting principles, to design and implementation, to assessing impacts and learning from outcomes.

More information: [www.nap.edu/catalog/23551/path ... ities-for-the-united](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/23551/path...ities-for-the-united)

Provided by National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

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