

Gavin Newsom **the world's greenest mayor**



Mayor Newsom joins in the vegetable planting in front of City Hall, as part of the former lawn is replaced with a modern day version of the World War II victory gardens.

San Francisco has long held a reputation for innovation, progressive values, and shaking up the status quo. Gavin Newsom upholds the city's status as a trailblazer with his bold environmental initiatives. From his much-publicized plastic bag ban to the food garden recently installed in front of City Hall, Mayor Newsom is a role model for mayors around the world.

Earlier this spring, Gavin Newsom stood at a podium on a stage in the Nob Hill Masonic Center to address the 7th International Ecocity Conference. Surveying the gathered scientists, urban planners, professors, architects, business owners, and environmental activists, Newsom urged moving away from

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Newsom (left) with the city's director of the environment, Jared Blumenfeld.

describing the problem of climate change and toward taking action, even if it involves making some mistakes along the way. "We must manifest our collective ideals," he said. "Support those willing to change things and willing to learn from mistakes."

Starting with cities

Why the urgency? As Jared Blumenfeld, director of San Francisco's Department of the Environment, explains, we cannot separate the acceleration of climate change from the daily activities of urban centers. "As of 2005, for the first time in human history, more people live in cities than live in rural areas," says Blumenfeld. Seventy-five percent of

the world's CO₂ emissions come from cities. So cities are the area of action. If we can figure out ways to help people change their behavior, if cities can implement new approaches for transportation and energy use, then you're going to have a tremendous impact on this issue."

It's a message that Newsom, San Francisco's mayor since 2004, has spread across the country. In 2005, he hosted the annual United Nations World Environment Day, on which mayors from 66 international cities signed the Urban Environmental Accords-Green Cities Declaration in San Francisco, site of the 1945 ceremony that established the U.N. charter.

Inspiring innovation

In June, Newsom's commencement speech to graduates at Redwood High School in Larkspur, California, stressed the need for the next generation to embrace failure as the first step toward innovation and lasting change. Most important, Newsom has carried his message about the need for innovation



Meet Mayor Newsom

Learn how San Francisco is going green

to the city's Board of Supervisors, who voted in June to pass yet another of the mayor's many environmental policy initiatives. The latest, the Solar Incentive Rebate Program, leads the

World environment day 2005



Since 1987, the United Nations Environment Program's (UNEP) World Environment Day celebration has been hosted by a different city each year. The 2005 event in San Francisco, attended by 66 mayors from around the globe, was the first time the festivities were held in the U.S.

Organic Bouquet, sister company of *Organic Style* magazine, was a sponsor and the official florist, festooning the indoor and outdoor areas with flowers. CEO Gerald Prolman also commissioned legendary gospel singer Edwin Hawkins to compose the event's theme song, "**United Nations, Together We Can.**" (Click to hear the song.) Organic Bouquet arranged a live performance of the song by a 300-person mass choir. Prolman presented the song to Mayor Gavin Newsom and UNEP executive director Klaus Toepfer, who designated it the official UNEP World Environment Day song for 2005.

As part of the weeklong celebration, Organic Bouquet organized the world's first symposium on sustainable floral production, attended by growers, NGOs, United Nations and government officials, agricultural certifiers, retailers, and other interested parties. Veriflora®, the sustainable floral certification inspired and initiated by Organic Bouquet, was introduced at this event.

nation in providing rebates and tax incentives to private households and businesses seeking to install solar technology.

By many measures, San Francisco

is one of the greenest cities in the U.S., if not the world. Newsom ticks off the programs and statistics that have earned the city its leadership role (*see the sidebar below*).

“These programs are easy,” Newsom emphasizes. “I tell people that so far, we’re just working the margins.”

One bold program Newsom is considering would be to replace

payroll taxes on local businesses with a carbon-based tax. “Why not trade a tax on something we want—jobs—for something we don’t want—pollution? There are still

san francisco

The City that knows how



Recycling San Francisco recycles 70 percent of its garbage, keeping disposable waste out of local landfills where it would otherwise create methane—an especially potent greenhouse gas. “No other city comes close,” says Newsom, referring to the national average rate of 32 percent municipal recycling.

◀ Green buildings San Francisco’s ambitious Green Building Ordinance requires Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards of energy efficiency, water conservation, and other measures set forth by the U.S. Green Building Council for all new commercial buildings over 5,000 square feet and residential buildings over 75 feet high, as well as remodeling projects larger than 25,000 square feet. (At left, the new federal building at 7th and Mission Streets complies with LEED green building standards.)

Low-emission fleet More than 65 percent of the city’s municipal

fleet—buses, ambulances, fire engines, police cars, garbage trucks, and other service vehicles—run on either electricity or biodiesel. “We want to incorporate plug-in hybrids and higher quality biofuels. Our goal is to forgo gasoline entirely and have a 100 percent zero-emission fleet by 2020,” says Newsom. “We’ve got fire chiefs and city officials from around the country coming to us to ask how it works.”

Energy audits “How can you reduce your carbon footprint if you don’t know what it is?” the mayor asks, underscoring the importance of third-party verification in the fight to stop climate change. “We registered San Francisco’s carbon footprint with the California Climate Action Registry, the gold standard of climate accounting. And any citizen can dial 311 and get someone from our office to come out and do an energy audit on their home or business. Or go online to sf.solarmap.org to find out the solar potential of your home or

business. You’ve got to be able to validate your results, to see what’s working and what isn’t.”



▲ Innovations Newsom recently announced a \$1 million pilot program to turn brown grease from restaurants into biodiesel fuel. The mayor is also promoting a pilot program to tap into the bay’s tidal power near the Golden Gate Bridge. Recently, he began forming a residential wind power task force to look at urban wind energy possibilities in the city. And San Francisco was the first city in the nation to ban non-biodegradable plastic checkout bags at large supermarkets and chain pharmacies.

For a list of San Francisco’s environmental programs, visit sfenvironment.org.

aWorld of inspiration

Mayor Newsom and environmental director Jared Blumenfeld are quick to point out that slowing down climate change is not a competition. If another city comes up with a new program, they want to learn about it. Here are some of the innovations in other world cities that have inspired the mayor and his team:

Reykjavik, Iceland The city relies on hydropower and geothermal energy for its heat, electricity, and hot water needs. “Their ability to leverage local, nontraditional energy sources has inspired us to to examine the power of the bay’s tides,” says Blumenfeld.

London, England Former mayor Ken Livingstone imposed a congestion/emission tax on cars driving into the city’s central business area. Cars with the highest emissions, such as 4 x 4s and high-powered sports cars, are hit with the highest rates, while those with the lowest emissions (hybrids and electric vehicles) can drive free.



GRANT DOUGALL

◀ **Copenhagen, Denmark** Some 36 percent of this city’s residents bike to work. The city recently doubled its cycling budget, with more money going toward improving bike paths and overall biking infrastructure.

Singapore Extensive land-use planning has earned this island city-state a reputation as Asia’s leader at controlling industrial pollution and congestion while conserving local fresh water sources and an old-growth tropical rainforest, and integrating green design into new high-rise developments.

Berlin, Germany Mayor Newsom often says that he’d like San Francisco to “become the Berlin of the U.S.,” a reference to the German city as a leader in the solar technology industry.

some details to be worked out, but I’ve got a proposal on my desk. I want to get this on the ballot as soon as possible.”

Bringing people together

Whether it’s a case of prohibiting the city and county of San Francisco from purchasing bottled water with city money or buying an all-electric Tesla automobile, Newsom is willing to lead by example. “We’re going to need everyone to join in—the private sector, the federal government, the fiscal conservatives, and the progressive environmentalists,” he says. “It’s actually an exciting time. We live in an exciting region where everyone has great ideas. That’s my job—finding those groundbreaking ideas and doing my best to help them along.”

Want to take some quick and easy steps to protect the environment?

Go to simplesteps.org, where the Natural Resources Defense Council breaks it down according to how much time people want to spend—a minute, a morning, or a month.