

D.C. Mayor Unveils Landmark Sustainability Plan, Creates Model for Other Cities to Follow

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"I remain fully committed to the goal I first stated in July of 2011, that we will make the District of Columbia the healthiest, greenest city in the nation...this is my promise to everyone." – Washington, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray, February 20, 2013

Over the next 20 years, the District of Columbia's population is expected to grow by 250,000 residents. During that time, we'll cut our energy use by 50 percent, increase our city's stock of LEED certified buildings and ensure that 100 percent of our waterways are fishable and swimmable, among many other ambitious but attainable goals to improve the health, efficiency and livability of our city. These goals, targets and the corresponding actions were outlined yesterday by D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray when he released the comprehensive [Sustainable DC Plan](#).



In an event featuring Mayor Gray and George Washington University President Steven Knapp, the Sustainable DC Plan was unveiled and celebrated by an audience of more than 150 attendees. After more than 18 months of work and input from nearly 5,000 District residents, the city has created a plan to address its growth in the context of four core challenges: jobs and the economy; health and wellness; equity and diversity; and climate and the environment. The plan identifies how these challenges can turn into opportunities to meet specific goals around seven key themes: the built environment, energy, food, nature, transportation, waste and water. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the plan outlines more than 100 specific actions to meet these goals, including the lead agencies responsible and a timeline for completion.

During his remarks, the Mayor told the audience: "We need to create a healthy green livable city, because it will move us forward together." He then asked the audience, "10 years ago, who would have thought the district would be the leaders in green buildings?" The Mayor went on to highlight the city's noteworthy 2006 LEED policy and the DC Healthy Schools Act ([recipient of the Center for Green Schools' "Best Green School Policy" in 2011](#)). He specifically stressed the importance of expanding healthy local food options for our school children and initiating targeted workforce development programs in our schools. GW President Knapp reiterated a [pledge](#) from the city's university community, and told the Mayor that they share his aspirations and goals: "We stand ready to contribute the expertise of our faculty and the passion of our students to support this plan."

I was fortunate to get to speak with Mayor Gray after the event, and I told him that as a native Washingtonian, I could not be more proud to live in a city with such a robust commitment to improving our future. And I thanked him for his strong focus on schools, children's health and the city's next generation. The Mayor told me he was so pleased to see third-grader Aaron Shane, son of Brendan Shane of the District Department of the Environment, in the audience for this historic announcement.

This made me think of the stark contrast to when I was an elementary school student at DCPS and my mother would bring me to City Council hearings where she would fight for adequate conditions for Washington schools. Thanks to the efforts of strong advocates like my mother, recent policies to require thoughtful decisions about educational facilities, and new commitments through the Sustainable DC Plan, Brendan's son will learn in healthy, high-performing LEED certified schools in a healthier, greener, and more livable community.

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