

What would a sustainable Los Angeles look like? Most agree that we want L.A. to have air that doesn't make us sick; we could do with a lot less traffic and better transit; we want clean, reliable power and water; we should fight pollution hotspots; and we want well-paying jobs that can sustain our communities into the future. But how do we make more progress on these fronts?

No matter how earnestly we want something to happen, unless we define a goal and measure progress toward it, it tends to languish. That's why, together with environmental researchers at UCLA's [Institute of the Environment and Sustainability](#), some colleagues and I at the [Emmett Center](#) released today our vision for the Los Angeles of 2021. **Vision 2021 LA: A Model Environmental Sustainability Agenda for Los Angeles' Next Mayor and City Council** (PDF [here](#)) lays out key sustainability goals that the City can meet over the next eight years, along with clearly defined actions and measurable indicators to gauge the City's progress. Our aim was to be ambitious but realistic, and specific enough to be able to hold leaders accountable for successes and failures. The driving vision is to make Los Angeles into the greenest major city in America and, in so doing, strengthen it for decades to come.

Why focus on 2021? Eight years covers the next two mayoral terms. In March, L.A. will elect its next Mayor and a slate of City Council representatives who will help shape the City's environmental future. We hope to provoke a meaningful conversation with the candidates about where L.A. is going and how to get there. Two mayoral candidates are quoted giving reactions to our plan [here](#).

Our recommendations range from the bold (get L.A.'s Department of Water and Power off of coal; draw roughly a third of our water from local sources) to the nitty-gritty (divert at least 87 percent of waste from landfills). They cover eleven interrelated areas, from air quality to food, energy, transportation, environmental justice, and beyond. (More detail after the jump.) We call for more energy-efficient buildings and for the reduction of our contributions to climate change through transformation of our water supply, energy supply, and transportation fuels. We challenge the City to produce 40% of its electricity from renewable sources.

To help equip us for a hotter future in which climate change alters everything from mountain fires to the coastline, we call for the Mayor to lead a Climate Preparedness Strategy that addresses these challenges and protects our most vulnerable populations. One recommendation that would advance both energy efficiency and climate preparedness is our call to add four million square feet of cool roofs, which stay cooler than traditional roofs, keep building and neighborhood temperatures down, save energy, and save money.

On water, Los Angeles can become far more self-reliant by capturing stormwater, recycling wastewater, reducing water use, and better managing groundwater. By 2021, we should reduce per capita water usage to 100 gallons per day through changes big and small, like embracing low-water plants and repairing aging, leaking pipes.

To help reduce the disproportionate impacts of pollution, we support (among other actions) the establishment of pilot “Green Zones” in neighborhoods that face toxic hotspots. In Green Zones, sensitive land uses like schools would be safeguarded, new and expanded pollution sources restricted, and economic redevelopment programs developed to attract new green businesses.

Our plan reflects input from over forty community leaders working in neighborhoods across the City. We recognize that the measures we recommend are not sufficient, alone, to transform L.A. in all the ways we would want. We do not address many important urban issues, such as economic wellbeing. But our plan would set the City on the path to sustainability and strengthen our base for economic growth.

Think we got something wrong? Terrific. Comment here. Talk to your friends, family, and neighbors about why you disagree. Most importantly, make your views known to the candidates. Ask them to commit to going beyond election-cycle platitudes in discussing what they would do to make L.A. more healthful, prosperous, and secure now and into the future.

We will urge the mayoral and council candidates to use **Vision 2021 LA** as a basis for developing their environmental platforms. At the upcoming LA mayoral December 15th debate on environmental issues, we will ask each candidate whether he or she would commit to implementing its measures.

There is a lot at stake. L.A. can embrace a green economy and transform its gray infrastructure in ways that inspire other cities around the nation and the world to do the same. By 2021, we want to be well on our way. So let's get going.