

Cambridge Climate Protection Action Committee

CPAC BULLETIN

December 2012

MEETING: The next meeting of the Climate Protection Action Committee is scheduled for December 13, 6:00 pm, City Hall Annex, 2nd floor meeting room. The [agenda](#) will be posted on the Community Development Department website. The featured topic this month is waste management, recycling, and composting.

EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **Vulnerability Assessment** – Tuesday, December 18, 9:00 to 11:00 am, City Hall Annex, 2nd floor meeting room. The first meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee and Expert Advisory Panel for the Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment will be held. For more information, [click here](#).
- **BuildingEnergy 13** – March 5-7, Seaport World Trade Center, Boston. Sponsored by NESEA. This is the leading regional conference on sustainable buildings and clean energy in the Northeast. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Green Streets** – This initiative encourages people throughout Cambridge (and Somerville and surrounding cities and towns) to use a green form of transportation (transit, bicycle, walk, skate) on a designated day of the month and to wear a green-colored item of attire. The goal is to make Cambridge and neighboring cities safer, quieter, and friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists, and to minimize the use and impact of cars. Generally, the designated day is the last Friday of the month. Check the [Cambridge Green Streets Initiative website](#) for more info and incentives.
- **350.Org** - 350 Massachusetts is a volunteer-led, campaign-focused initiative connecting and organizing a strong grassroots coalition to address climate change and build a just and secure future beyond fossil fuels. Meetings are held every two weeks. Upcoming dates are November 20, December 4, and December 18 in 2012, and January 15, 19, and 29 in 2013. All meetings are held at First Church Cambridge, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA and begin at 6PM for potluck and networking, with the general meeting and working groups at 7PM. More info at www.350MA.org.

NEWS

- **Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment** - The City's climate change vulnerability assessment is kicking into high gear. The assessment will run through the end of 2013 and will look at the risks of increasing temperatures, more extreme storm events, and storm surge flooding associated with sea level rise to infrastructure, people, the local economy, and public health. The City Manager has appointed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and an Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) to assist City staff on the project. The first meeting of the TAC and EAP will be held jointly on December 18, 9:00 to 11:00 am at City Hall Annex. The City has engaged a team of consultants led by Kleinfelder, a Cambridge-based architecture, engineering, and sustainability services firm, to perform the assessment. The vulnerability assessment will serve as the technical foundation for a climate change adaptation/resilience plan that will follow. A [project webpage](#) has been set up; to be placed on a project email list for periodic updates, contact John Bolduc at jbalduc@cambridgema.gov.

- **Harvard Sustainability Report** – Harvard University issued its first [Sustainability Report](#), which catalogs the institution’s initiatives and progress to reduce Harvard’s environmental impact. Harvard set a goal to reduce its campus-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2006 levels by 2016. Highlights of the report include: the university’s greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 16% since 2006, taking into account new construction; 23% of electricity comes from renewable or alternative sources; laboratories account for almost 50% of energy use; there are 78 LEED certified green buildings and another 23 registered for certification; food waste in undergraduate dining halls has dropped 46% since Spring 2005; 79% of commuters to the Cambridge and Allston campuses walk, bike, or take transit; daily per capita trash generation on campus has decreased 60% since fiscal year 1996 to 0.84 pounds per person per day.
- **Curbside Composting Report** – The Public Works Department has completed a feasibility study on establishing a curbside residential food scrap and composting program. The study was supported by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Based on the report, the [City Manager has recommended to the City Council](#) that a one-year pilot program covering about 800 households be conducted. If the pilot is successful, then the City would phase in a citywide service. The feasibility study is available [here](#).
- **Mass. Cranberries Affected by Climate Change** – Climate change is making Massachusetts a less hospitable place for cranberry cultivation. According to Michael Hogan, CEO of the large Massachusetts grower Makepeace, said “We’re having warmer springs, we’re having higher incidences of pests and fungus and we’re having warmer falls when we need to have cooler nights.” These changes cause growers to use more water for irrigation in the hotter summers and to deal with more fruit rot from fungus and diseases. The warmer nights in the fall make it harder for the berries to develop their characteristic deep red color. Some growers have begun to move some of their production to cooler climates. Makepeace is considering Chile. [[Marketplace, 11/19/12](#)]
- **Global CO2 Levels Reach New High** – According to the [World Meteorological Organization \(WMO\)](#) of the United Nations, greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere continue to climb and reach new record levels. Between 1990 and 2011, the warming of the global climate by the combined effect of the various greenhouse gases (GHGs) has increased by 30 percent. Because GHGs such as carbon dioxide (CO2) are long lived and because the Earth can only absorb about half of what is emitted by human activities, the concentration of CO2 and other gases builds up in the atmosphere, trapping more heat. According to the WMO, carbon dioxide concentrations have reached 390.9 parts per million, which compares to pre-industrial levels of 280 ppm. The combined effect of the three main GHGs – carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – is the CO2 equivalent of 473 ppm in 2011.
- **Natural Gas Leaks** – Researchers from Boston University report in an article in [Environmental Pollution](#) that they identified 3356 leaks of natural gas from the streets of Boston. Natural gas is methane, one of the long-lived greenhouse gases. It is about 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide in trapping heat in the atmosphere. The natural gas leaks from the underground distribution system that supplies buildings and facilities. The researchers drove over all 785 miles of roads in the city with natural gas detection equipment. Leakage of natural gas contributes to climate change. It can also affect tree growth when it occurs near root systems. [[WBUR, 11/20/12](#)]

RESOURCES & IDEAS

- **Job – WalkBoston Program Director** – WalkBoston is seeking a program director to work on sustainable transportation. For more information, click [here](#).
- **Climate Modeling 101** – If you have to know how climate modeling works, the National Academies of Science has set up a web-based primer on the topic; click [here](#).

- **Green Building Portal** – GBIG.org is the U.S. Green Building Council’s new portal for green building information and data. It provides lists and maps of green building projects, activities, and resources.
- **NYC CO2 Video** – New York City has made a [video to illustrate how much carbon dioxide](#) activities in the city emit to the atmosphere every year.
- **NYC Municipal Building Energy Use Visualization** – New York City was the first municipal government to comprehensively disclose its building energy use in the U.S. An ordinance has gone into effect requiring all buildings, public and private, over a certain size to annually disclose their energy use to provide essential information to the marketplace. [A visualization was produced depicting the carbon dioxide emissions associated with energy use in municipal buildings.](#)
- **World Bank Climate Report** – The World Bank produced a report, titled [Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided](#), on what it will be like to live in a world that is 4 degrees centigrade (approximately 7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial levels. The World Bank believes it is possible to avoid this scenario with action.
- **Arctic Report Card** – Climate change is being felt and seen at a faster rate in the Arctic than other parts of the planet. The annual [Arctic Report Card](#) reflects the research of scientists from 15 countries in the Arctic zone and is coordinated by the National Oceans and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- **Cambridge Solar Map** – The [Cambridge Solar Tool](#) provides a web-based interactive tool to find out the potential for installing solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops in the city. The tool also evaluates the financial feasibility of installations and makes comparisons to alternative investments. The tool is designed by Modern Development Studio and based on the research of the [MIT Sustainable Design Lab](#) led by Dr. Christoph Reinhart. The City’s [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#) program can assist interested property owners with finding installers and understanding the financial aspects.
- **Opt Out of Unwanted Mail** - Do you get unwanted mail from retailers, credit card companies, or cable/phone companies? You can opt out of mailings from over 4000 companies with Catalog Choice and help reduce waste. For example, you can stop getting weekly circulars from Global Direct, they will honor opt-out requests, so add them to “your choices”. Just register for FREE at <https://cambridge.catalogchoice.org> to create an account to start cleaning out your mailbox. To date, over 3700 Cambridge residents have signed up and opted out of nearly 25,000 different unwanted mailings!
- **Check Out Watt Meters at the Library** – Cambridge residents can borrow a “kill-a-watt” meter from the Main Public Library to measure how much electricity their home appliances and devices use. The meters come with a guide on how to use them and information on how to save energy. The meter kits and guide were developed by the [Sprouts of Hope](#) group based at the King Open School.
- **MBTA Rider Tools** – The MBTA has a number of [rider tools](#) that help riders to anticipate arrival times of buses, subways, and commuter trains and to receive alerts of delays. These tools can be used on iPhones, Android phones, text messages, emails, and the Web. There is also a trip planning tool.
- **NSTAR Green** – Residential and small business electric customers of NSTAR can opt to purchase renewable electricity generated by wind energy farms. To sign up for the service, visit the [NSTAR website](#).
- **Cambridge Energy Alliance** – The [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#), a program of the City of Cambridge Community Development Department helps residents, businesses, and organizations to obtain energy efficiency and renewable energy services. You can sign up for energy audits and ask questions through the energy advisor service.
- **Sustainable Business Leader Program** - SBLP is a comprehensive certification program that supports local businesses in improving their environmental business practices and reducing their carbon footprint. For more information please visit the [SBLP website](#) or email to katrina@sbnboston.org.

- **MCAN Low Carbon Living Program** – The [Massachusetts Climate Action Network](#) works with its local member organizations to develop teams of 5 to 8 households to assess their household carbon footprints and undertake actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The program is based on the Low Carbon Diet workbook and involves 3 to 4 meetings.
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About the CPAC Bulletin:

The Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC) is a City of Cambridge advisory body appointed by the City Manager to assist in the implementation of the Cambridge Climate Protection Plan. Please forward this bulletin to other interested people. Anyone who would like to be added to the email distribution list should contact John Bolduc at jbolduc@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-4628. For more information about Cambridge climate protection activities, see <http://www.cambridgema.gov/climate>. Recent issues of the CPAC Bulletin are posted on the webpage.