

Top 10 Greenest Cities in the U.S.

Source: The Mother Nature Network – www.mnn.com

The Mother Nature Network has just published their list of the ten greenest cities in the United States. We are so fortunate in the San Francisco Bay Area to have 3 out of the top 10 in our own backyard!! MNN considered key areas to measure the effectiveness of a municipality's efforts at carbon footprint reduction, including air and water quality, efficient recycling and management of waste, percentage of LEED certified buildings, acres of land devoted to green space, use of renewable energy, and easy access to green products and services.

1 - Portland, Oregon: Number one in sustainability, Portland has been named the most bikable city in the United States for its over 200 miles of dedicated bike lanes. The city offers classes for such do-it-yourself sustainability pursuits as container gardening, cheese making, beekeeping, and chicken-keeping, to name a few. Portland is also home to Powell's Books, one of the few remaining independent booksellers in the United States.

2 - San Francisco, California: San Francisco's mayor Gavin Newsom has declared "The City" as the nation's solar power leader. San Francisco has an innovative recycling program and has its own "artist-in-residence" that uses his work to inspire residents to conserve and recycle. The first U.S. city to ban the use of plastic bags, San Francisco plans to divert 75% of its landfill waste by 2010.

3 - Boston, Massachusetts: In 2008 the city held its first annual Down2Earth conference designed to help educate residents on living a more sustainable lifestyle. Other green efforts include a "Green by 2015" goal aimed at replacing all traditional taxi cabs with hybrid vehicles, recycling trash to power homes, getting more solar panels in operation, and encouraging the use of electric motorbikes for getting around the city.

4 - Oakland, California: The city currently gets 17 percent of its energy from renewable sources, with plans to be both oil-independent and have zero waste by 2020. Oakland has the country's cleanest tap water, access to an abundance of fresh, locally-grown, organic food, and a hydrogen-powered public transit system. The country's oldest wildlife refuge is in Oakland.

5 - Eugene, Oregon: Otherwise known as the Emerald City, Eugene has been in touch with its green self since the 1960s. In 2007 Eugene inaugurated a hybrid public transit system, winning a Sustainable Transport award in 2008. Bicycling is the preferred mode of transportation, with over 30 miles of off-street bike paths and 29 dedicated bike routes, Eugene sports an impressive 150 miles of smog-free transportation throughout the metropolitan area.

6 - Cambridge, Massachusetts: *Prevention Magazine* deemed Cambridge the "best walking city" in 2008. The city is home to research and education powerhouses MIT and Harvard. In 2002 the city implemented a climate protection plan and today most city vehicles are fueled with B20 biodiesel or electricity. All new construction or major renovations must meet LEED standards. The "Compost that Stuff" program collects and processes organic waste from residents, restaurants, bars, and hotels.

7 - Berkeley, California: A recognized leader in innovation in clean energy technology and development, Berkeley also has an abundance of organic and vegetarian restaurants. The city is known as a leader in sustainability.

8 - Seattle, Washington: More than 20 public buildings in the city are LEED-certified or under construction for LEED certification. An incentive program encourages residents to install solar panels, and Sustainable Ballard, a green neighborhood group, offers ongoing workshops teaching folks how to live in better harmony with the environment.

9 - Chicago, Illinois: Chicago adopted a long-range plan for land sustainability as far back as 1909, when pioneering city planner Daniel Hudson developed a land use plan for the lakefront that balanced urban growth and created a permanent greenbelt around the city. Today, the city pursues an aggressive green roof agenda through the Chicago Green Roof Program with more than 2.5 million square feet of city roofs supporting plant life. The city has also recently planted about 500,000 new trees.

10- Austin, Texas: Austin Energy is the country's largest provider of renewable energy. The city has an ambitious goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2020. Austin's green space includes 206 parks, 12 nature preserves, 26 greenbelts, and more than 50 miles of trails.