

Climate Protection Planning in Three Ohio Cities

Leah Ceperley, MPA Candidate

*Graduate Student
 Showcase 2017*

Research Question

What factors contribute to the successful development and implementation of a climate action plan in mid-size Ohio cities?

Background

- Changing climate is a global problem with local impacts.
- National and state leadership in climate protection is lagging.
- Worldwide, cities are responding to climate change by implementing carbon emissions reductions (mitigation) and reducing exposure to vulnerabilities (adaptation).
- Cities in Ohio are vulnerable to increased infrastructure failure, drinking water contamination, declines in agricultural production and access, and increased severity of droughts and flooding.
- Post-industrial cities face the dual challenge of limited financial resources and securing a viable economic and resilient future.

Methodology

- Identified key actors involved in climate and sustainability planning in Dayton, Akron, and Toledo.
- Interviewed by phone a stratified random sample of 15 identified actors.
- Developed case studies for each city.
- Analyzed common themes and unique elements for factors leading to increased action and commitment to sustainability and climate protection planning.

"In southwest Ohio it's a hot potato to talk about climate change and adaptation. 'Green' is acceptable language, and 'extreme weather events' and 'emergency planning'. It is easier to use this language for planning."

Dayton

Three successive policies or resolutions adopted 2007–2016 committing city operations to greenhouse gas reductions and addressing vulnerabilities.

Greenhouse gas reduction policies framed as cost savings; "greening" the city to attract and retain jobs and residents.

An elected city commissioner, city staff person, and the city's Green Team built networks and collaborations between city departments and outside research and technical assistance.



"One of the strengths from the beginning was having multiple players at the table. There has been a project manager from the county, but multiple groups had skin in the game. ... There is a broader base of buy-in from the community."

Toledo

Completed *Going Beyond Green* plan (2014) addressing natural, social, and economic systems. Toxic algal bloom affected regional drinking water has kept focus on regional collaborations.

Broad coalition initiated by local foundation, city and county staff, and large employers. Attracting funding and retaining residents and employers unites the coalition.

Lucas County provides funding and office space for the program manager and support for the Sustainability Commission.

Akron

Akron is the only city in this study to have completed a greenhouse gas emissions study (2005). The city's *GreenPrint* (2009) formalized the city's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

Lacking city leadership, sustainability advocacy is a grassroots effort – now gaining the attention of city staff.

The long-standing mayor of 28 years who initiated climate protection action retired in 2015. A US EPA consent decree to address polluted storm water run-off shifted financial resources and interest to sewer and water systems.

Four mayors served the city in the span of one year (2015-2016), resulting in uncertain political leadership.

"The plan was effective for the first four years. Then it was abandoned due to staffing changes within the city."

Major Findings

Post-industrial Ohio cities face

- lagging state and federal political leadership in carbon emissions reductions and addressing vulnerabilities.
- limited financial resources and varying public support for climate protection.

Factors that strengthen the municipal climate protection "infrastructure"

- Framing climate action policies as economically beneficial and addressing local vulnerabilities.
- The presence of climate protection policy champions and coalitions.
- A commitment to building agency capacity with at least one staff person and financial resources marked for climate protection.

Dayton

2007, Sustainable Practices Policy implemented: energy conservation, waste stream management, renewable energy initiatives in city operations.

2014, Resolution passed supporting Dayton Regional Green initiative: certify green businesses, continue sustainable practices in city operations, create attractive and livable city.

2016, Framework for Sustainability proposed: further commitment to greenhouse gas reductions and addressing vulnerabilities.



Three successive policies/resolutions adopted 2007 – 2016 committing city operations to greenhouse gas reductions and addressing vulnerabilities.

Greenhouse gas reduction policies framed as