

# Sustainability for Low Income Communities

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## Why sustainability and low income communities?

"...Even more troubling, our research found that relatively few cities' programs are incorporating working families and poor people into their sustainability plans. For example, new transit programs like new rail lines or bike paths tend to move residents of higher-income neighborhoods to the urban core, rather than offering service to neglected neighborhoods.... A lack of attention to inequality is particularly unfortunate, as the "greening" of cities may represent a rare opportunity to address the troubling poverty and unemployment that continue to plague neighborhoods in nearly all American cities. Also, it is precisely in low-income areas that sustainability plans can have the most dramatic impacts..."

Green Cities Report, May 2009  
Living Cities <http://www.livingcities.org/leadership/trends/green/>

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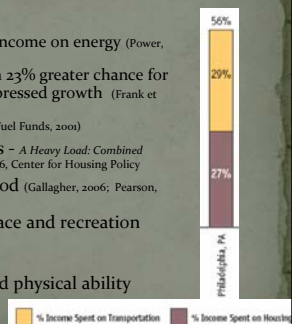
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## Problems to address

- Heating and cooling costs
  - Low Income: spend 16-25% of income on energy (Power, 2005)
  - Without assistance, LI children 23% greater chance for being at nutritional risk for depressed growth (Frank et al., 2006)
  - Fire and other hazards (National Fuel Funds, 2001)
- Transportation access and costs - *A Heavy Load: Combined Burden of Housing and Transportation Costs*, 2006, Center for Housing Policy
- Access to healthy, affordable food (Gallagher, 2006; Pearson, 2005)
- Access to safe, quality green space and recreation (Mitchell & Popham, 2008)
- Jobs
- Meeting needs based on age and physical ability



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## What does “sustainability” mean?

“Sustainability means using, developing and protecting resources at a rate and in a manner that enables people to meet their current needs and also provides that future generations can meet their own needs. Sustainability requires simultaneously meeting environmental, economic and community needs”  
(State of Oregon, Executive Order 00-07, 2000)

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## Examples – Sustainable South Bronx

- Environmental Justice and Sustainable focus
- Greening the Ghetto (greenway, green roofs, stewards)
- Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training Academy (BEST)
- BEST Eco
- BEST for Buildings



Photo from [www.ssbx.org](http://www.ssbx.org)

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## Becoming sustainable - guides

- STAR Community Index  
(<http://www.icleiusa.org/star>)
- Whole Measures  
(<http://www.measuresofhealth.net/>)
- LEED-ND ([www.usgbc.org/leed/nd/](http://www.usgbc.org/leed/nd/) )
- Sustainable Sites Initiative  
(<http://www.sustainablesites.org/>)



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## Becoming sustainable - tools

- Sustainability Plans – needs teeth!
- Comprehensive/Master plans
- Building codes
- Zoning codes
- Weatherization efforts
- Landscaping and lighting plans
- Transportation plans
- Health Impact Assessments

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## Final thoughts

- No one blueprint
- Evidence about success of interventions varies
- Timescale? Resources? Interest? Partners?
- Importance of communication and media variety – to funders, policy makers, stakeholders, advocates
- Involve the community/communities early

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## Questions?

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