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THE GREEN PLAYBOOK SUPPORTS LOCAL ACTION FOR GLOBAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

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By Cecilia Matta

In the surge of concern over global warming, a Seattle-convened team has created web-based resource www.greenplaybook.org to empower local governments to fight climate change.

Acting on the premise that three-fourths of all greenhouse gases come from American towns and cities, the Playbook focuses on how municipalities can make changes in three key areas—green buildings, green neighborhoods and infrastructure—to dramatically reduce their emissions.

A Commitment to Exceed Expectations

To develop this first phase of the Playbook, the City of Seattle and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) recruited more than 20 partners to create the strategic action plan for local governments committed to the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, to meet or beat the targets of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to address climate disruption,

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suggests a seven percent reduction of U.S. greenhouse gas emission from 1990 levels by 2012. More than 700 mayors and county leaders in the United States have now signed on to the Climate Protection Agreement.

Leading the Way

Lynne Barker, sustainable communities planner for the City of Seattle, helped propose the initiative to the USGBC and Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels in 2005. Barker, the co-chair of the USGBC committee that launched LEED, the green building rating system, in 1996, has a background in the building industry, where she developed Sellen Construction Company's sustainable building program in 1995.

Barker shared that other cities often contact the City of Seattle and her office for help with sustainability plans. "It can be overwhelming for cities, so we tried to develop a tool to answer questions and to advance green building. We can now point them to the playbook, and say, 'Here's what to do.'"

A Successful Debut

Organizers targeted two key events to give the Playbook an auspicious debut in early November. In Seattle, the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Summit got the first look, as leading mayors presented Playbook tools to their assembled colleagues, noting the success of specific strategies in their cities. Playbook planners also unveiled their information-rich website at the USGBC's Greenbuild International Conference and Expo, attended by more than 22,000 building industry constructors, designers and manufacturers interested in energy-efficient, sustainable structures.

Playbook organizers are currently focused on disseminating the Playbook to the 700-plus signatories on the U.S. Mayors Climate Agreement.

The Playbook website will function "as a live document, a dynamic website that integrates emerging interests and disciplines for green buildings, green neighborhoods and green infrastructure," said Barker. She emphasized that Playbook partners want to "develop a public policy framework, a 'Green Urbanism' framework that green cities and local governments can embrace." The Playbook provides an "Action Planning Model" for local governments to take rapid and effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. From talking points

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to how-to resources employed by municipalities across the country, the Playbook outlines strategic actions that go beyond climate protection, to promote energy independence, economic development and healthier communities.

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