

HOW GREEN IS MY TOWN? Green Town Checklist

OVERALL POLICY

1. Does your town have an established (i.e., proposed, debated and passed) comprehensive environmental policy? **GreenPoint:** *An effective policy announces the town's commitment to action, and sets out its goals and implementation strategies. It should cover energy, green procurement green cleaning, building/development, land management, water conservation, transportation, recycling, environmental toxins and communications.*

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

2. Does your town actively solicit the participation of the business community in addressing environmental issues?

3. Do retailers in your town take back recyclable products they sell?

GreenPoint: *The true "cost" of a product includes the price of disposal. Retailers have the opportunity to take a leadership role in local recycling efforts by embracing and promoting recycling programs for the products they sell.*

4. Has your town mandated, or do retailers in your town encourage the use of re-useable shopping bags? **GreenPoint:** *Many business owners have decided to eliminate plastic bags from their retail operations, and have substituted either 100% recycled paper or biodegradable plastic bags made from renewable resources.*

5. Do food establishments in your town prohibit the use of polystyrene foam food containers, or does the town restrict their use? **GreenPoint:** *a polystyrene container may eventually disintegrate into tiny pieces, but it will **never** become actual food for bacteria or fungi, our environmental decomposers. Discarded polystyrene cups and food containers stay in the environment forever.*

6. Do cleaning establishments in your town offer non-perchloroethylene ("perc") methods for dry cleaning? **GreenPoint:** *Human health problems associated with exposure to perc include nervous system damage, liver and kidney damage, several types of cancer and reproductive impacts (perc passes easily from the mother to the fetus).*

7. Does your town have a farmers' market? **GreenPoint:** *Farmers' markets provide a direct connection between the people who grow food and the people who consume it.*

COMMUNICATIONS

8. Does your town have an Office or Director of Environmental Affairs?

GreenPoint: *The OEA should have both the responsibility and authority to coordinate local governmental efforts, and to develop and maintain effective communications between residents and local decision makers, as well as with surrounding municipalities.*

9. Does your town require the use of “green” printing techniques (chlorine-free recycled paper, printed both sides using soy-based inks) for all documents?

GreenPoint: *“Green printing” refers to new trends in printing and print design which reduce waste, reduce toxins, reduce use of trees, and use recycled materials.*

10. Does your town provide a practical mechanism for communication of its environmental policies to employees? **GreenPoint:** *Establishing an environmental task force made up of representatives from various departments can facilitate communications and provide a venue for necessary feedback.*

11. Does your town have an effective method of communicating its environmental policies to residents? **GreenPoint:** *The challenge for local governments is not necessarily how to get citizens involved but how to accomplish multiple environmental goals on limited budgets and manage public expectations at the same time.*

12. Does your town maintain a town website or web pages with all environmental information, regulations, etc? **GreenPoint:** *We recommend the creation of a distinct site or section dedicated to environmental issues where local governments, businesses, educators, students and citizens can easily access information and become active participants in local programs.*

ENERGY:

13. Has your town had an energy audit performed on all town-owned facilities?

GreenPoint: *An **energy audit** is a method of determining exactly where and how a building’s energy is being used, and what opportunities exist for improvement. The energy audit provides the baseline of information against which future improvements can be measured.*

14. Has your town mandated energy reductions with percentages and/or dates?

GreenPoint: *Municipalities can use the results of an energy audit to set targets for reduction and timetables for implementation.*

15. Does your town utilize or invest in sustainable energy sources, such as solar, wind, bio-fuel and/or biomass? **GreenPoint:** *Municipal options for sustainable energy are rapidly expanding as new technologies are developed and new companies come to market with solutions. See web site.*

16. Does your town expedite planning and approval of small, distributed renewable energy systems such as solar or wind farms? **GreenPoint:** *Widespread deployment of small, distributed energy systems would decrease our reliance on polluting centralized power plants, avoid continued dependence on fossil fuels and reduce the need for nuclear power plants, but local decision makers need to amend codes and establish procedures to speed their implementation.*

17. Has your town mandated the installation of electronic thermostats in town buildings? **GreenPoint:** *Efficient electronic thermostats are inexpensive to install and can be programmed to save energy.*

18. Has your town replaced interior and exterior lighting fixtures and bulbs with energy-efficient models?

19. Has your town adopted an effective outdoor lighting code for government, commercial and residential installations? **GreenPoint:** *Properly designed light fixtures and lighting codes can help reduce the expense and the amount of energy used to keep public and private areas lighted at night. They can also minimize glare for motorists and pedestrians, prevent light from trespassing into private areas, and improve habitat for wildlife.*

ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS

20. Does your town provide regular "toxics" collection days for residents? **GreenPoint:** *An effective toxics collection program consists of an educational outreach campaign conducted through print and electronic media, the establishment of a regular and frequent schedule of collection days, and the convenient siting of collection locations to encourage resident participation.*

21. Does your town have a policy to mandate the use of only no- or low-VOC paints and adhesives? **GreenPoint:** *Most commercial paints, stains, finishes, and adhesives contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other toxic additives that have been linked to significant health and environmental problems.*

22. Does your town follow a healthy carpet installation policy, using only natural fiber padding and low VOC adhesives? **GreenPoint:** *Chemicals such as formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, are used in the manufacture of most commercial carpet and padding materials, and the adhesives used to cement carpet to floors often contain toxic solvents with very high VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) levels.*

23. Does your town have an IPM policy for indoor pest control? **GreenPoint:** *Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a concept that encourages the use of least toxic alternatives first, and the use of more toxic alternatives only after other methods have failed. The*

weakness of the IPM concept is that it usually relies on the efforts and decisions of individuals who are trained and experienced in the use of pesticides.

24. Does your town remove and replace playground equipment made from treated wood? **GreenPoint:** *The chemicals formerly used for this purpose — chromium, copper and arsenic (CCA) — are classified as pesticides, and have been shown to be toxic to humans.*

GREEN CLEANING

25. Does your town have a policy requiring the exclusive use of green cleaning products? **GreenPoint:** *Many traditional cleaning products contain toxic chemicals that pollute the environment during their manufacture, contaminate indoor air when used, and degrade the environment after disposal.*

26. Does your town prohibit the use of anti-bacterial products containing triclosan? **GreenPoint:** *Many products which are labeled "anti-bacterial" or "anti-microbial" contain triclosan, a chemical that has been shown to have significant health and environmental impacts.*

27. Does your town prohibit the use of artificial air fresheners in town-owned or managed facilities? **GreenPoint:** *Many of the chemicals contained in commercial air freshening products contain, among other things, phthalates (pronounced "thay-lates") — a class of hazardous chemicals known to cause hormonal abnormalities, birth defects, and reproductive problems.*

28. Does your town use micro fiber cloths for cleaning? **GreenPoint:** *Microfiber can be used to clean camera lenses, eyeglasses, furniture, mirrors, floors and almost anything else, using only hot water. Thanks to the unique design of the fibers, no chemical cleaning products are needed.*

GREEN PROCUREMENT:

29. Does your town have a comprehensive Green Purchasing Policy?

30. Does the policy cover:

- lifecycle costs
- the sustainability of materials
- the recyclability of products
- transportation and packaging costs
- the environmental and health impacts of products?

31. Does your town belong to a local green purchasing network? **GreenPoint:** *Green purchasing networks allow cities and towns to reduce transportation costs and reduce greenhouse gases by purchasing goods from local vendors.*

LAND MANAGEMENT

32. Does your town have a policy to prohibit the use of turf pesticides on town land, including public parks? **GreenPoint:** *Turf pesticides have been associated with environmental contamination and significant human health problems, including certain cancers, neurological and developmental problems, reproductive harm and birth defects. Children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to these problems.*

33. Does your town purchase only energy-efficient, non-polluting landscaping equipment, or to require the use of such equipment by contractors?

34. Does your town operate a municipal composting facility? **GreenPoint:** *Composting — nature's original recycling system — is a cost-effective means of handling organic waste and an essential part of any successful solid waste management plan.*

35. Does your town manage (and require contractors to manage) storm water runoff and soil erosion to minimize or prevent runoff from residential properties, agricultural areas and/or construction sites? **GreenPoint:** *Controlling storm water runoff and preventing erosion keeps pollutants out of rivers, streams and bays, and protects wildlife habitat and drinking water supplies.*

36. Does your town have a tree protection and planting policy? **GreenPoint:** *Trees provide shade, habitat for wildlife, and help reduce noise and visual pollution. They add value to neighborhoods, mitigate runoff and erosion, and help reduce global warming by removing carbon dioxide from the air.*

37. Does your town prohibit the installation of synthetic turf fields on town property? **GreenPoint:** *Synthetic turf fields present several problems from both an environmental and human health perspective. See web site for more details.*

38. Does your town provide space for community gardens? **GreenPoint:** *Community gardens provide an opportunity for apartment dwellers and others without open space of their own to maintain vegetable and flower gardens on publicly-owned land. It demonstrates community support for sustainable living and can reduce maintenance costs for municipalities.*

RECYCLING

39. Does your town mandate recycling of bottles, cans, cardboard and paper from town offices, and discourage the use of plastic water bottles and polystyrene foam food containers by employees? **GreenPoint:** *Instilling a culture of conservation and recycling throughout town government sets an example for the community, and encourages residents to do their part at home.*

40. Does your town provide curbside recycling of paper, cans, bottles, and cardboard for residents? **GreenPoint:** *Increasing public awareness of environmental responsibility provides municipalities with an opportunity to revisit their existing programs, tighten up rules and increase enforcement.*

41. Does your town have a recycling program for batteries and e-waste? **GreenPoint:** *Consumer electronics typically contain toxins such as lead, cadmium, chromium, mercury, beryllium, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and brominated flame retardants. Batteries contain cadmium, copper, zinc, lead, manganese, nickel, and lithium.*

42. Does your town provide curbside pickup of leaves and garden waste for residents? **GreenPoint:** *Thousands of towns are now recycling leaves for compost, or at least requiring their collection in biodegradable plastic or paper bags. Many are also providing residents with information about backyard composting, further reducing program costs.*

43. Does your town provide recycling receptacles in commercial areas and parks? **GreenPoint:** *Successful municipal recycling efforts depend on an educated community, a sense of shared purpose and strong public support for the goals of the program. The placement of convenient, well-marked receptacles in downtown retail areas and town parks is a key component in building awareness and support.*

44. Does your town provide a facility for recycling used goods? **GreenPoint:** *One of the best ways to reduce the solid waste stream in communities is to encourage and actively support the re-use of serviceable goods: bicycles, books, dishes, lighting fixtures, cooking utensils, toys, games, tools, small appliances, furniture and household knickknacks.*

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING / DEVELOPMENT

45. Has your town amended building codes to mandate or encourage the construction of Energy Star or LEED-certified homes and commercial and municipal buildings? **GreenPoint:** *Almost one-third of all the energy used in the United States goes to heat, cool and illuminate buildings.*

46. Does your town provide tax breaks, expedited permitting, higher floor area ratios or other special incentives for green building projects and renovations?

GreenPoint: Tax reductions, increased building allotment and faster permitting processes for green buildings can help drive new development.

47. Does your town encourage the construction of green roofs for commercial, industrial and municipal buildings? **GreenPoint:** Research conducted in Canada demonstrated that a typical one-story building with a six-inch thick green roof could reduce heat loss by 26% and reduce heat gain by 95% compared to a traditional roof.

48. Does your town encourage mixed-use zoning? **GreenPoint:** Mixed-use zoning helps reduce traffic congestion, preserves open space and natural resources, and builds communities. It has also been shown to help revitalize downtown areas and spur economic growth.

49. Does your town have a policy to encourage adaptive re-use over virgin development? **GreenPoint:** Adaptive Reuse (AR) refers to the practice of converting older residential and commercial buildings to new uses including apartments, lofts, office space, retail space and even small hotels.

50. Does your town have a policy prohibiting the siting of cell towers in residential neighborhoods, or near schools, daycare centers or other areas where children spend time? **GreenPoint:** Studies show that long-term exposure to non-ionizing or radio-frequency radiation can pose significant health risks, especially for children.

51. Does your town have a policy to preserve and protect open space? **GreenPoint:** open space can provide opportunities for sports and recreation, for citizens to escape from the pressures of everyday life, for wildlife to find habitat and refuge, and for plants and soil to assist in the removal of toxins from our environment.

52. Has your town adopted zoning requirements for the use of permeable paving in commercial parking lots and walkways, and encourage its use in residential driveways? **GreenPoint:** Permeable paving is a method of paving low-traffic roads, walkways and parking lots in a way that permits air and water to move through the surface, reducing surface runoff from stormwater and other sources.

TRANSPORTATION

53. Does your town provide or encourage the use of public transportation? **GreenPoint:** Fare reductions (or free rides) during off-peak hours will attract new riders. Improved station and waiting facilities, clean equipment, courteous service, convenient scheduling and easy access to retail shopping areas have all been shown to increase ridership.

54. Does your town provide preferred parking for electric vehicles?

GreenPoint: *Simple signage and parking lines painted green designate the special reserved parking areas for energy-efficient cars, providing a de facto showroom of hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles. Some municipalities have even waived parking fees entirely for hybrid vehicles.*

55. Does your town have a policy mandating or encouraging the purchase of alternative fuel vehicles? **GreenPoint:** *The latest buzz in hybrid vehicles is the **Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV)**, a hybrid vehicle with larger batteries that can be recharged by connecting a plug to an electric power source, such as a standard home outlet. For the low-mileage trips typically required for municipal vehicles, the electric motor can provide most of the power needed between charges.*

56. Does your town require pollution control devices on all its diesel vehicles?

GreenPoint: *Diesel exhaust is a significant component of greenhouse gases, containing a complex mixture of chemicals and fine particles of soot. Human exposure to this mixture has been shown to exacerbate asthmatic symptoms or even cause asthma, and many of the chemicals contained in diesel exhaust have been identified as known carcinogens.*

57. Does your town provide residents with easy access to downtown retail

areas? **GreenPoint:** *The paucity of public transportation systems in most towns, combined with typical patterns of residential suburban housing, makes the automobile a fact of life we will need to accommodate for at least the near future. Innovative parking solutions should be part of an overall master plan for redeveloping downtown areas.*

58. Does your town provide bicycle and walking paths and sufficient bicycle

parking? **GreenPoint:** *If bicycles in your town are chained to lamp-posts or street signs, it's probably because your bike parking is insufficient.*

59. Does your town impose and actively enforce a legal limit on idling of

vehicles? **GreenPoint:** *The unnecessary idling of vehicles contributes significantly to dangerous air pollutants, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and fine particulate matter. Vehicle exhaust contains many known carcinogens, asthmagens, endocrine disruptors and neurotoxins.*

60. Does your town have and enforce a “No-Idling” policy for all town-owned

vehicles? **GreenPoint:** *Municipalities are free to adopt and enforce their own internal no-idling policies for town-owned vehicles and vehicles working under municipal contracts.*

WATER CONSERVATION

61. Has your town implemented effective water conservation measures at parks

and town facilities? **GreenPoint:** *Conserving water at the municipal level sets an example for*

residents, helps decrease capital expenditure for water delivery and wastewater treatment systems and cuts energy costs.

62. Does your town encourage and/or mandate water conservation by residents, including a prohibition on the routine washing of sidewalks and driveways?

GreenPoint: *Successful residential water conservation programs usually consist of several components: Public education, rebates for water-efficient plumbing equipment, "conservation rate" pricing (increasing prices to reduce demand), building code requirements for new buildings, rainwater harvesting, leak detection and repair and residential water-use audits.*

63. Has your town installed water-conserving plumbing fixtures in town buildings?

GreenPoint: *In a typical office building, toilets account for almost 70% of water usage. Replacing a conventional 5-gallon-per-flush toilet with a 1.6 gallon-per-flush model can reduce water consumption by more than half.*

64. Does your town permit and encourage the construction of private "greywater" and rainwater systems? **GreenPoint:** *"Greywater" is the waste water produced from baths, showers, and clothes washers: many municipalities are realizing that harnessing greywater could bring real results in both water and cost savings.*