



**AIA**  
New York

## **AIA New York Position Statement: Sustainability and the Environment**

In 2014, U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions totaled 6,870 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, a per capita total of 17 metric tons for each resident of the United States. Seven years before, in 2008, the national total tonnage of carbon dioxide equivalents was eight percent greater.<sup>1</sup> Our nation's performance in the matter of GHG emissions has been one of slow, but progressive, improvement in the reduction of harmful man-made impacts on our environment. Nevertheless, AIANY members believe we can, collectively, do better.

GHG emissions in New York City in 2014 totaled 49.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, an average of 5.8 metric tons per capita.<sup>2</sup> Due to our extensive transit system and low private-vehicle use, the energy used in buildings accounts for 73% of those citywide emissions, well above the national average of 40% attributed to buildings.<sup>3</sup> Our city has committed to reducing GHG emissions 80 percent by 2050 (the 80x50 initiative), to having the cleanest air of any U.S. city, to sending zero waste to landfills by 2030, to investing in contaminated land remediation, and to ensuring that all New Yorkers have more access to parks. In its role as a leading global city, New York City has been a strong voice in the international fight against climate change leading up to the adoption of the United Nations COP21 Agreement at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015.

### **The American Institute of Architects**

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Although many of New York's sustainability measures are established through our local government, federal agencies, such as the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), play a key role in regulating and impacting policy that affects our city directly. The presidential administration will have a significant influence on the continuation of policies and programs carried out by these agencies.

The EPA has created a number of comprehensive federal laws, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, and the Clean Power Plan. Currently under litigation, the Clean Power Plan would result in significant reductions in GHG emissions at a national level. Through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a cooperative effort among northeast and mid-Atlantic states to reduce GHG emissions, New York State is set to exceed the targets of the Clean Power Plan.

DOE sets efficiency standards for everything from lightbulbs to heaters and washing machines, and has taken a proactive role in the creation of stringent energy codes and strategies for achieving energy efficiency. DOE's Energy Information Administration maintains a significant amount of data about energy use and carbon emissions, and their Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey is a vital resource for designers who seek benchmarking data. DOE promotes advanced technologies via the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy and the National Laboratories, both of which are actively involved in projects that advance energy efficiency. The Federal Energy Management Program assists the federal portfolio in achieving energy reductions and develops tools used widely in the industry. In addition, DOE has developed a suite of efforts, such as the Better Buildings Challenge, that assist localities in achieving energy efficiency targets.

Other agencies that currently play a role in establishing policies affecting the environment include the Department of General Services, a leader in green building for the U.S. government's portfolio; the Defense Department, which administers a

portfolio of buildings and grounds with large GHG emissions and environmental impacts in the U.S. and around the world; the Department of Transportation, which helps establish and implement national priorities on transportation and infrastructure; the Department of State, which sets American policy with respect to climate change; the Department of Commerce, which, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provides data, tools, and information to help people understand and prepare for climate change; the Department of Health and Human Services, which can regulate the use of toxins in building materials and promote active design in the built environment; the Department of Housing and Urban Development; the National Bureau of Standards; and the National Science Foundation.

## Principles

- Human activities, including the burning of fossil fuels, are primarily responsible for the rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that contribute to climate change and lead to extreme weather events and sea-level rise.
- AIANY supports the Paris Agreement, which sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.
- AIANY supports regulations and best practices to reduce GHG emissions.
- AIANY supports maintaining and extending the efficiency standards for appliances and other energy codes established by the DOE.
- Research into innovation in clean energy is essential to addressing global climate change and is integral to job creation in the U.S.
- New York City is, and should continue to be, a national leader on urban sustainability, green building, energy efficiency, and resiliency policies. We support the city's 80x50 initiative to reduce carbon reductions 80% by 2050 through a broad suite of programs and policies.
- Sustainability is an integral component of the design process and should be fully integrated with all aspects of a building, including form, function, site, structure, systems, and construction. The local, state, and federal governments should serve as leaders and examples to follow with regards to the construction of energy-efficient buildings and green retrofitting.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Climate Change Indicators: U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions' (2016), Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

<sup>2</sup> 'Inventory of New York City Greenhouse Gas Emissions' (2016), New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability [http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sustainability/downloads/pdf/publications/NYC\\_GHG\\_Inventory\\_2014.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sustainability/downloads/pdf/publications/NYC_GHG_Inventory_2014.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 'One City Built to Last Technical Working Group Report' (2016), New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability [http://www.nyc.gov/html/gbee/downloads/pdf/TWGreport\\_2ndEdition\\_sm.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/gbee/downloads/pdf/TWGreport_2ndEdition_sm.pdf)