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Paint The Town Green



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Columbus, OH Sustainability Plan, Columbus GreenSpot via The Planning Tool Exchange

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Foundation, which helps small cities and towns adapt to change while maintaining or enhancing the things they value most. The Orton Family Foundation hosts The Planning Tool Exchange (PlanIt X), a free online database of community planning projects, tools, and resources. We encourage you to browse, comment and contribute to PlanIt X.

Hundreds of communities have trash pick-ups or recycling initiatives, tree planting and

energy conservation. But just a handful are writing comprehensive sustainability plans or reinventing themselves as meccas of green economic development. Kaid Benfield writes frequently on the [NRDC Switchboard](#) blog about some of the best of the best, and here are a few more, along with the tools that have made them successful.

Get Green Columbus »

Local environmental initiatives are often disconnected (how often do the community gardeners, the mayor, and the recycling crew at the landfill all sit down for a cup of organic joe?). In Columbus, Ohio they do – virtually, at least. Get Green Columbus is a well-established initiative that coordinates a wide range of sustainability efforts throughout the city, from the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement to plans for bikeways and green fleets, to incentive programs for LEED and brownfield redevelopment. Coupled with marketing initiatives, website and social media campaigns, and yearly "check-ins" to encourage people to make commitments and report on them, these far-reaching sustainability initiatives have the potential to green up everything from government to the grassroots. [Read more at PlanIt X >>](#)

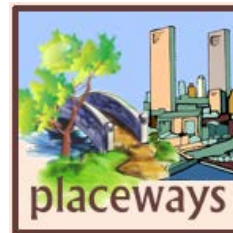
Energize Clinton County »

When the DHL Shipping service picked up and left Clinton County, Ohio, it took with it a hefty chunk of the region's economy. But local organizers saw this crisis as an opportunity for the blue collar community to reinvent itself as a center of green economic development. The decorated Energize Clinton County initiative has helped to establish a unique Green Enterprise Zone, establish

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a Buy Local Campaign, and develop an online tool to help homeowners prioritize energy efficiency improvements, simultaneously improving sustainability and saving money. [Read more at PlanIt X](#)

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Sustainable Jersey »

That's right, New Jersey. Not exactly known as a shining beacon of sustainability, New Jersey is shaking all that conventional wisdom with one of the most impressive statewide sustainability programs around. Communities often don't know where or how to start, in terms of implementing sustainability measures at the local level. Sustainable Jersey solves that problem by providing a comprehensive certification program that helps communities address environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues in an integrated way. The certification system helps communities prioritize actions, and it gives them tools and even funding to help put ideas into practice. With nearly half of New Jersey towns signed up to participate and several other states looking to Sustainable Jersey as a model, this program is one to watch. [Read more at PlanIt X >>](#)

Golden Vision | 2030 »

Golden, Colorado is perhaps the likeliest town of the bunch to have a strong sustainability program. That's why the program featured here is all the more surprising. Golden has had many typical municipal sustainability efforts in place for quite some time, but its Vision 2030 initiative, operated out of the Sustainability Department, takes an even broader view. This wholistic community visioning and planning process sought to engage citizens, help them identify what they treasure about Golden, and then develop comprehensive city plans that would protect the community's "heart and soul." That includes the environment, for sure. But it recognizes that green initiatives can't occur in a vacuum and have to be part of a bigger, citizen-driven vision for the future. [Read more at PlanIt X >>](#)

[Read more about sustainability](#) in the Planning Tool Exchange and [add your own thoughts and examples!](#)

About the Author »



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