

NYC becoming a greener apple

BY LEVI GIBIAN FISHMAN • Special to amNewYork

With its densely packed eight-million-plus residents, scores of buildings and extensive mass transit system, New York City has a unique carbon footprint. While total greenhouse gas emissions are below the national average, pollution is concentrated in a tight area, which is not optimal for healthy living.

In an effort to boost the quality of life, city leaders have enacted laws and implemented programs to spruce up the environment. We take a look at a few key areas.



(RJ MICKELSON/AMNY)

• Transportation

"Most car trips in Manhattan are less than five miles," said Caroline Samponaro, director of bicycle advocacy for Transportation Alternatives. That's why the proposed bike-share program is an important part of the city's transportation plan. "It gives people more options, and it's great that this option is non-polluting and environmentally friendly."

Bike sharing, which allows commuters to borrow and return bicycles from kiosks, has been shown to reduce dependency on other forms of transit.

New York City's plan, though not the first, would be the biggest in the U.S. While a vendor to implement the program has not been chosen, Samponaro said the city is planning to roll out phase one of the program, which would include 10,000 bikes, in April 2012.

• Air

The air in New York City is cleaner today than it was in 1970, said Michael Seilback, vice president of Public Policy and Communications for the American Lung Association in New York, but we are "not out of the woods."

Emissions from idling trucks and buildings that use heating oils high in sulfur continue to pollute the air.

The city has proposed rules that would begin to phase out the dirtiest forms of fuel.

This should "reduce 90 percent of air pollution" during the next 20 years, Seilback said.



(RJ MICKELSON/AMNY)



(RJ MICKELSON/AMNY)

• Buildings

"Buildings have an enormous impact on the environment; building codes should reflect that," said Laurie Kerr, senior policy advisor in the mayor's Long Term Planning and Sustainability Office.

More than 80 percent of the city's carbon emissions come from buildings, which is twice the national average proportionally.

In 2008, the city put

together the Green Code Task Force, which came up with 111 proposals to make the city more environmentally friendly. Since February 2010, 20 proposals have been adopted.

The city also passed the Greener, Greater Buildings Plan in 2009, a package of bills that should save the city about \$750 million a year, create 18,000 new jobs and reduce carbon emissions by 5 percent by 2030.

• Water

The city's sewage system carries both storm water and wastewater to sewage treatment plants, where it is treated before being discharged into local waterways. But when the city is hit with a heavy rainfall, the pipes can't accommodate the water, and the excess must be discharged directly into rivers and canals.

This runoff is "responsible for over 90 percent of the pol-

lution in New York City waterways," said Paul Galley, executive director of Riverkeepers, an environmental watchdog group.

But the city, he said, is trying to "write a new story" with its burgeoning NYC Green Infrastructure program, which funds projects, such as rain barrels and green roofs that help take the rainwater out of the sewer system and reduce pollution in the city's waterways.



(OFFICE OF THE MAYOR)

Bloomberg announced his plan Thursday to eliminate outdated fuel in NYC buildings by 2030.

Mike: Dirtiest fuels banned by 2030

BY SHEILA ANNE FEENEY
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All New York City buildings must stop using the nastiest types of fuel oil by 2030, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Thursday.

One percent of the buildings in the Big Apple create 86 percent of the city's soot pollution — more than all vehicles on the road — because they burn an out-of-date, low-quality fuel, the mayor said.

The new regulations, "will do more than congestion pricing" to clean up the air, the mayor said, referring to his rejected proposal to charge drivers entering Manhattan.

But Bloomberg appeared to still have hope for resurrecting congestion pricing, which was squashed by Albany politicians fearful of the wrath of outer-borough voters. "The problems persist and we still have to do something about it," he said.

Bloomberg's speech was in conjunction with his annual progress report on "PlaNYC," a project aimed at preparing the city for a million new residents, ameliorating climate change and improving quality of life while fortifying the economy.

86

percent of the city's soot comes from just 1 percent of its buildings.

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