



Urban Green Council releases study

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The country's largest city can feasibly reduce its carbon emissions 90% by 2050, according to a study released today by Urban Green Council.

President Obama stressed the importance of building efficiency in his State of the Union, announcing a goal to cut energy waste from homes and businesses in half over the next 20 years. The timely study, 90 By 50, finds that by updating and streamlining the city's buildings and infrastructure, N.Y.C. can meet that goal and more, reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to the levels identified by scientists as necessary to contain climate change. Issued in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and other unprecedented weather events that re-focused attention on building preparedness, 90 By 50 shows the dramatic role urban buildings can play in mitigating climate change.

Buildings are New York City's greatest contributor to carbon pollution, producing 75 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector accounts for another 21 percent. Climate scientists say carbon pollution must be reduced 80 percent worldwide by 2050 to ensure a safe, sustainable environment.

To do the study, a virtual New York City was created using key building types. The model was then adjusted to improve future buildings using currently available technologies like improved insulation, the use of heat pumps, and transportation electrification. The result: a building sector that is essentially free of carbon pollution.

Environmental and urban leaders agree that our current infrastructure is unsustainable but disagree on the feasibility of finding a solution. 90 By 50 is the first study to tactically demonstrate how an American city can tangibly and affordably meet the challenges of climate change.

"The buildings we live in can play a crucial role in the sustainability of society and the planet. This study shows us that an energy-efficient and innovative New York is possible—and necessary. If New York—the complicated nerve center of the country—can do this without breaking the bank, any city in the world can," said Urban Green Council Executive Director Russell Unger.

The study assumes that buildings will remain functionally the same as today, without sacrificing physical comfort. All tactics tested are either currently available or reasonably foreseeable. The cost of the changes is neutral when the economy and other factors are considered.

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