

Cool Cities

and the Elmhurst League's Long-term Involvement with Cool Cities

Not familiar with Cool Cities? The ECCC mission is to address the difficult problem of climate change by bringing about a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through education, outreach, and community action. Membership consists of citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations, congregations/clergy, government and schools working together on their mission.

How is the LWV involved with Cool Cities? When hundreds of people lined up on a rainy October night in Elmhurst to see *An Inconvenient Truth*, the LWV knew they had a genuinely interested community. The film had not been shown during its commercial run but, when an entire theater sold out for the League's only screening in 2006, theater managers decided to cancel another movie and show it to 100 additional people on a second screen.

After the film, LWV had a local science teacher give a short talk on what individuals can do to stop global warming. That teacher was a determined environmentalist and a Republican committeeman. LWV knew they had to work on this issue.

Elmhurst LWV followed up in April with a public program on the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement presented by area Sierra Club members. Equipped with a clear understanding of the Cool Cities initiative, the League formally adopted it as a local action item for 2007-2008 under LWV environmental positions that have been in place since the 1960's.

Other community groups and institutions were working on their own educational programs and sustainability efforts. Sierra Club and LWV joined forces over the summer of 2007 to assemble a coalition of those groups to persuade the city's mayor to sign the agreement. In October of 2007, Mayor Thomas Marcucci signed the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. This agreement was a pledge by mayors to reduce global warming pollution in their cities by 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2012. The city of Elmhurst accomplished their goal!

DuPage County made an important commitment to sustainability at their September 11, 2012, board meeting by approving the Illinois Cool County Resolution. DuPage was the first county to sign the initiative, becoming a Cool County. To read the agreement, go to <http://illinoiscoolcities.org/cities/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/DuPage-Cool-Counties-Resolution5.pdf>

Looking forward, the 2015 agreement asks cities to:

- urge the federal and state government to enact policies and programs to reduce US dependence on fossil fuel and accelerate development of clean technologies
- urge US Congress to pass greenhouse gas reduction legislation that includes clear timetables and emissions limits

- achieve a reduction in pollution by 2 percent or better per year from 2009 baseline levels

The agreement offers suggestions on how cities can hit the 2 percent target, some of which Elmhurst already has done, like establishing itself as a bike-friendly community, aggregating electricity, hosting a farmers market, making recycling a priority, and increasing fuel efficiency of the city's vehicles. Other suggestions are also included.