

**Georgia Climate Summit
Speaking Notes – 5/6/08
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Climate Change and Atlanta

CC is not about saving the planet. It's about saving us.

CC has focused the public attention on addressing our environmental impact in a way that no other issue has been able to. CC also affects nearly every other environmental issue: deforestation, toxic pollution, over-fishing, energy production, etc.). And CC will be affected by the ways that we deal with those issues as well.

Because of the focusing power of CC and major media coverage such as Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, **there is public support** to tackle CC; now is the time to act.

An indication of **leadership** is what our elected officials do before the public is willing to support them: MSF signed the U.S Mayor's climate protection agreement in 2005; that was a year before Al Gore's movie brought CC to the mainstream.

In October of 2006, Atlanta hosted the **2nd National U.S. Conference of Mayor's Summit on Energy and the Environment**. The Summit focused on implementing the

2030 Challenge to make all new buildings carbon-neutral by the year 2030. The idea is simple: if buildings produce 39% of greenhouse gases, we can significantly reduce our GHG footprint by 2030 simply by designing and building carbon neutral buildings.

If we can reduce GHGs by nearly 40% by changing the way that we design and build buildings, how much more can we reduce our GHGs by changing the way we design and build the cities and communities within which those buildings are built?

This is where public policy comes in to determine:

- Greenspace / Urban forests
- Land use
- Energy production
- Government purchasing policies
- Fuel efficiency of municipal fleet vehicles
- Water use and treatment practices
- Public education campaigns.
- Street design
- Building standards
- Waste management policies
- Transportation options

(By the way, most of these topics are addressed in the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement because they all come back to climate change.)

(Transition to Story)

Addressing Climate Change and seeing firsthand the interconnectedness of all of these issues led MSF to the challenge of Sustainability. In 2006, she determined that she couldn't just stop at CC, she had to address the Sustainability of Atlanta as a city. In 2007, a funder approached the Mayor and offered to fund the Sustainable Atlanta initiative.

- She asked me to step outside of City Govt. to lead SA.
- **1st Step: Best Practice Research** (34 cities, 10 Deep Dives) → **Lead by example** (Take a leadership position, just start aiming for sustainability; citizens look to government for leadership.)
 - Sounds obvious but many of the countries top cities in terms of Sustainability started off by trying to mandate green practices without fully understanding them and had to back track.
 - We spent the 1st year developing a **high impact list of projects** for the City Government and concluded that phase with the hiring of MS as the Director of Sust for the city. She will now be in charge of implementing all of those recommendations.
 - During this phase we also began benchmarking the City's GHG footprint so that we will be able to measure and report the improvements that will result from the high impact projects that Mandy is implementing. For this we've been working closely with **Dr. Valerie Thomas** and her team here at Georgia Tech in the Industrial Systems Engineering and the School of Public Policy.

They've been wonderful and we look forward to continuing to work with them as we measure the city's progress. We also understand that Marilyn Brown and others in the School of Public Policy have been working on Air Quality in Major Metropolitan areas in the U.S., and we are hoping to get involved with her work, as well.

- **Other Academic Institutions.** Emory has also played a large role in our initiative, and we are meeting with faculty from Georgia State and the Atlanta University Center to get them involved as well. Dr. Michael Battle, the president of the Interdenominational Theological Center is also the chair of our Advisory Board.
- **Phase 2:** We are now turning our attention to using the city's example and the Mayor's leadership to engage the rest of the stakeholders in Atlanta to make Atlanta a world class sustainable city. **That is our vision: That Atlanta will be a world class sustainable city.** We will start by addressing the city's:
 - Green building standards
 - Waste management practices
 - Water conservation policies
- We will also work to **educate and engage** all of Atlanta's stakeholders from the individual citizen to the multi-national corporations.
 - One of the biggest challenges that we face is communicating the importance of initiatives that address climate change and environmental

degradation to all stakeholders (example: Atlanta Recycles Day protestors advocating for more money to be spent on Police in their neighborhoods.- **Crime and Grime**)

- Demonstrating the Value with compelling interest and dollars.
- Finally, we want to make Atlanta a Mecca for **green industries and businesses**.

This is where we are starting and we've got a long way to go. But the important thing is that we are going; we are on the path to becoming a world-class sustainable and climate sensitive city.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the most important finding in our research for any representatives of governments here: **Lead by example**. You don't have to wait for permission to do it, and **good public policy will flow from it**.

Appendix:

Resources for Cities and municipalities:

- ICLEI: <http://www.iclei.org/> (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives)
- CIFAL: <http://www.cifalatlanta.org/> (International Training Centers for Local Authorities)