



Commentary by Rip Rapson:

City Energy Project Gives Cities Tools to Establish Vital, Self-Sustaining Markets for Energy Efficiency

Kresge CEO cites urgency of changing trajectory on carbon as initiative gets underway.

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We at The Kresge Foundation are proud to join with our colleagues at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies in support of the City Energy Project, a landmark initiative designed to create healthier, more prosperous American cities by targeting their largest source of energy use and climate pollution: buildings.

Each of our institutions was inspired by the concept for slightly different reasons. I'd like to explain why Kresge – a foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity in America's cities – felt compelled to help bring the City Energy Project to life.

Late last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assigned global society a carbon budget we must stay within if we hope to avoid a level of turmoil that would overwhelm even the most sophisticated resilience plans.¹

We've spent more than half that budget already, and our current rate of emissions puts us on track to hit the ceiling – that is, to have released all the carbon we ever can – in 2040. The trajectory has to change.

Politically, technically, emotionally, it's an unnatural act for us to behave in the here and now in ways that take their bearings from a distant horizon. But climate change has set in motion forces that will forever change the nature of life in America's cities. We must act.

At Kresge we believe that some of the most promising opportunities for making change in cities exist at the intersections of sectors and disciplines. The City Energy Project is aimed at precisely those intersections. It

is built on the deliberate collaboration of city officials, property owners, bankers, building scientists, academics and a range of other stakeholders working both within and across the participating cities.

The City Energy Project gives cities the tools they need to build on-ramps for private investors to access the energy efficiency potential buried in their existing building stock, establishing vital, self-sustaining markets for energy efficiency.

The City Energy Project will reduce the energy demand of America's urban building stock. If it is successful, however, it will do more than that. The project will improve cities' economic competitiveness by reducing the cost of doing business and increasing building-asset values. It will make buildings healthier, more comfortable places to live and work. It will reduce local air pollution and help cities protect their residents during power outages and other disturbances. It will drive job growth in the building performance and retrofit industry.

Over the longer term, it will set cities on the right trajectory to achieve their climate commitments, helping us stay within the carbon budget outlined by the IPCC. The City Energy Project is a construct that allows cities to advance simultaneously near-term priorities and long-term imperatives.

Our thanks to our partners at the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Institute for Market Transformation, who are leading the project. Our congratulations to the leadership of the cities of Atlanta; Boston; Chicago; Denver; Houston; Kansas City, Mo.; Los Angeles; Orlando, Fla.; Philadelphia; and Salt Lake City. We look forward to seeing and learning how you all achieve these goals.

([See news story about the City Energy Project.](#))

¹[Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report](#), *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policymakers*. Sept. 27, 2013.