

# Top 25 Greenest Cities in the U.S.

It takes a lot to be a green city in the U.S. and local governments cannot rely on their citizens to do all the hard work. The real effort comes from the work of government agencies, city wide initiatives and smart developments that can work to improve all areas of green living – from waste and alternative energy to land use and carbon footprints. A recent Corporate Knights study has been designed to find out just how efficient the top US cities are in working towards these measures.



After careful consideration with a strict set of criteria, the following list was compiled highlighting the top 25 cities and their score:

Joint 1st – Portland, Oregon; San Francisco and Seattle (35)

4th Denver (33)

Joint 5th – Albuquerque, Charlotte and Oakland (32)

Joint 8th – Chicago, Columbus, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix and Sacramento (31)

Joint 14th – New York City, San Diego and San Jose (30)

Joint 17th – Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Nashville, Tucson and Washington, D.C. (29)

Joint 23rd – Boston, Los Angeles and Kansas City (28)

The list is not a result of some random system, each city was carefully examined and given a score to indicate how well they had fared and this is the number seen in the brackets. As you can see, in many cases the scores were shared and this simply shows that the cities achieved marks on the same amount of criteria but not necessarily the same ones.

In order to find out just how well American cities were faring in their attempts to become more environmentally aware, a grading system had to be put in place that would measure the different regions and capitals in a fair and objective way. The purpose of this list was not to find out which of the 54 largest cities in America had achieved the most over the year but to highlight the local governments and communities that were making the most effort to clean up their area. The result of this aim was a

specialized checklist.



This checklist consisted of 38 specific elements in several areas of environmental work. The criteria included the following: 'smart growth activities' such as eco-village programs; 'land-use planning programs, policies and zoning', like tax incentives for developments that are environmentally friendly; 'transportation planning policies', such as car pool lanes; 'pollution prevention and recycling measures'; 'energy and resource conservation/efficiency', such as alternative energy; 'sustainable indicators projects' and other government and administrative measures.

Since there were 38 different elements that the cities were tested on, the highest possible score of each city was 38. This means that the four cities in first place did particularly well with a score of 35, as did Denver in 4th on 33, but the three cities in joint 23rd appear to have some work to do. These results can, however, do more than simply separate these specific cities; they can also highlight areas of the country that are doing particularly well or poorly.

There is a clear East-West divide in the results because nine of the twenty-five are western but there are only six eastern cities on the list. Additionally, these eastern cities tend to be nearer the bottom of the list while the top three cities are all on the West Coast – LA being the anomaly of the trend down in joint 23rd. Another interesting fact from these results is that while approximately half of the eligible cities in the West of America made the list, it is a different story in the East. 67 per cent of the eligible north-eastern cities achieved a ranking so perhaps this means, relatively speaking, that they are actually doing pretty well.



In short, the results highlighted by this study are an interesting indication of how specific cities have made efforts to improve their environmental efforts and profile, but they also indicate some interesting geographic patterns. It appears that many cities are putting in a great deal of effort and it will be interesting to see whether these rankings are replicated in the following years or if external factors, such as the economy, mean that there is some movement. In 2013 we could see these eastern cities rising in

the league but for now it appears the Pacific Northwest is the place to be if you are looking for a city with a green conscience.

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