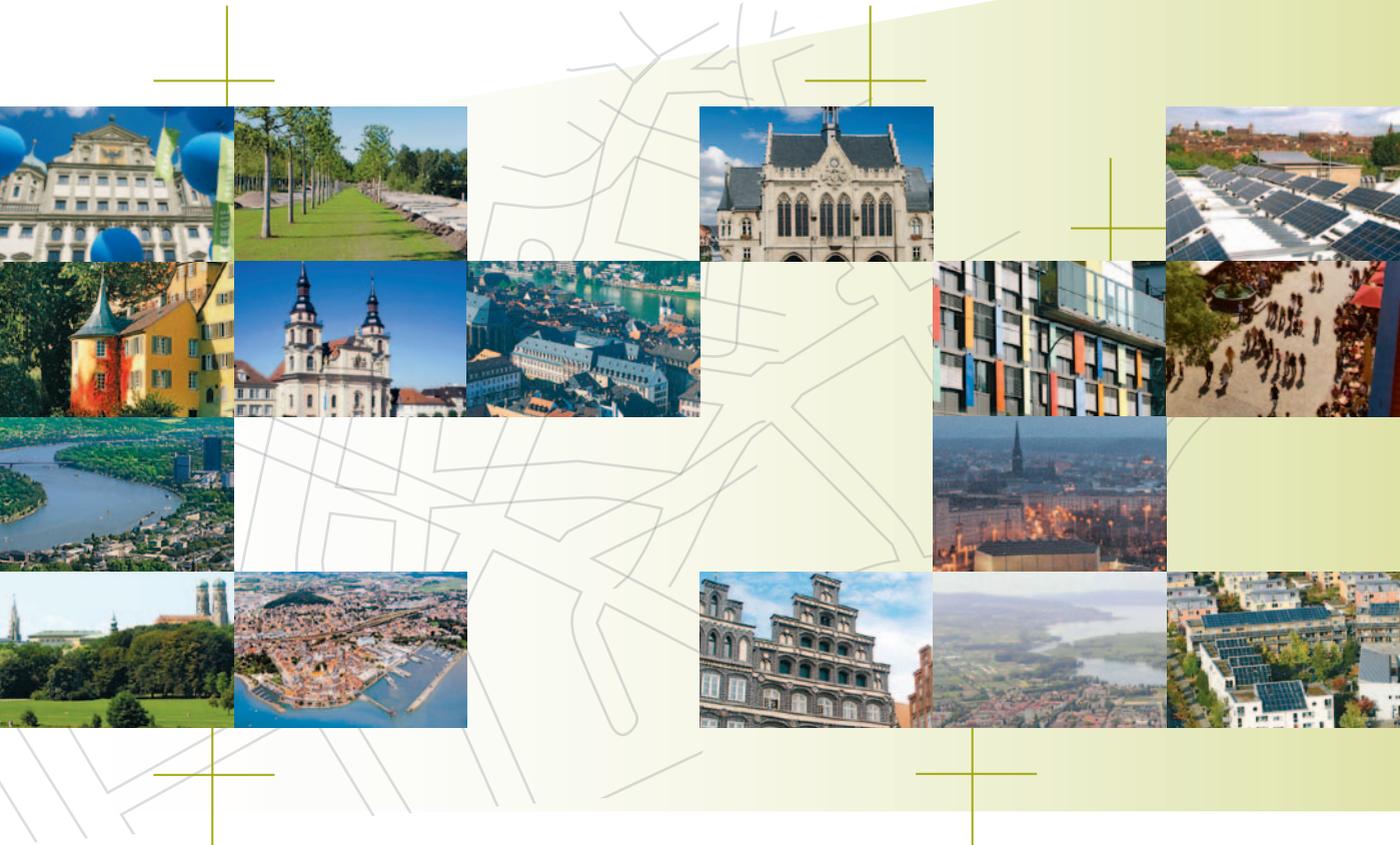


Strategic Cornerstones for Sustainable Development in Municipalities



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Ludwigsburg



Nuremberg



Background

At the invitation of the German Council for Sustainable Development, Lord Mayors and political representatives of various cities in the Federal Republic of Germany have begun meeting who, in special ways, are beacons of commitment to the notion of sustainability and to dialogue on the strategic issues facing the “Sustainable City”. In particular, the participants swap notes on their own approaches as local and state officials and tackle the issue of how local sustainability policy can gain in standing and importance in federal policies.

The outcome of the meeting is strategic cornerstones for sustainable development in municipalities agreed as commitments and recommendations of the Lord Mayors involved and as a basis for calls for action by policy makers.

The German Council for Sustainable Development facilitated the dialogue process. The content is exclusively the result of the discussions held by the Lord Mayors.

Munich



Norderstedt

Walk the Talk: Lord Mayors for Sustainable Development

We, the Lord Mayors of Augsburg, Bonn, Erfurt, Freiburg, Friedrichshafen, Hanover, Heidelberg, Constance, Leipzig, Ludwigsburg, Lüneburg, Munich, Norderstedt, Nuremberg, Ravensburg and Tübingen, align our policies to the principles of sustainability. It is our conviction that sustainable urban development, which addresses ecological, economic and social issues on equal terms and operates on the basis of intergenerationally just finances, is the best foundation for the future of our cities. Given the excellent experience gained from measures undertaken to date, we seek to continue down our path and further expand on the approaches. We want to help turn a new page in sustainability policy.

By providing them with advice and suggestions based on our past experience, we strive to assist those cities and municipalities and their representatives that, in their policies, seek to place even more focus on moving towards sustainable development. It is for this reason that we have formulated cornerstones for sustainable development.

Our four cornerstones

We, as Lord Mayors, hereby declare that we commit ourselves to assuming holistic responsibility comprising the following:

- I. Sustainability must be conceived by people: concrete, spirited, hands-on, with a perspective, and together with people who are now already increasingly embracing the notion of sustainability.

For this reason, we set store by dialogue, participation and the assumption of responsibility and give sustainability a face through concrete local projects.

- II. Sustainability entails not consuming more resources—including financial ones—than are available.

For this reason, we champion a balanced budget and the reduction of debt for the benefit of generations to come, and we call for the municipalities to be given structural relief.

- III. Sustainable development requires integrating departments and factual issues into a broader picture.

For this reason, we have to ensure that sustainability becomes a matter for all senior decision-makers and integrate this cross-cutting task into policies and administration.





IV. The potential to implement sustainable development can only materialise if all governmental levels pull together.

For this reason, we want greater coordination between the municipalities, the Laender, the Federal Government and the European Union.

We call upon the Federal Government and the Laender to strengthen the political framework in order to enable a future-proof development of the municipalities and, with us, to jointly advance sustainable development in federal policies. This includes redressing the disturbing situation surrounding municipal funding caused by shifts of responsibilities without adequate matching funding by providing a fair municipal funding system which realigns municipality income and spending. For the good of a successful economic, social, environmental and fiscal policy, we also call for all political levels to engage in stronger partnerships and network together on equal terms.

We call upon those vested with global sustainability strategies to pay due consideration to and strengthen the vital role played by the municipalities.

Time to take action

We invite all mayors in Germany, all other political levels and the general public to support our cornerstones. We are aware that many have already made such a move. We look forward to welcoming as many fellow advocates as possible to help us, in conjunction with the German Council for Sustainable Development, make our initiative even more effective. Anyone who is serious about the notion of sustainability must harness it for the future of the cities.

We hold in high regard the manifold sustainability initiatives, such as the commitment to Local Agenda 21 or the intensive international dialogues and networks (European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign, Covenant of Mayors, Energie Cités, Alianza del Clima, to name but a few). We want to capitalise on these activities and give municipal sustainability policy in Germany a new boost, even though we have thoroughly different focal points and pursue diverse approaches. What brings us together is our personal assumption of responsibility. There are no blueprints and no easy fixes for sustainable development. But one thing is certain: nothing will work without political leaders demonstrating best practices, stirring commitment and persevering initiatives.



I. Participation and Public Involvement

Sustainable development cannot and must not be enacted top-down. It must be lived and can only live from the commitment within civil society.

We trust in the knowledge, experiences and ideas of people in our cities. By the same token, we enable people to take part in the political process and thus create trust by showing that we value such knowledge. For us, parliamentary democracy, but also local as well as national petitions and referendums, constitute the basis for participative approaches. We view the municipal level as the place where democracy can most immediately be lived and experienced, and as the most appropriate place to test and lastingly implement direct democratic elements. We therefore not only facilitate participation but also call for involvement and the assumption of responsibility. True participation requires commitment on the part of the general public. Those participating should share responsibility for implementation, outcomes and efficacy.

Leipzig



Tübingen

In concrete terms, participation and public involvement, to us, imply the following elements:

1. Promote self-initiative and involvement

We involve the populace in key urban policy issues and all major investments. In this regard, we inform them in detail and in good time and make the procedures, bases, objectives and effects of decisions publicly known. We lead by example and construct processes transparently by updating the public on which proposals have been reviewed and, after that, providing feedback on the outcomes of the decisions taken. When involving the general public, we set store by a balanced composition and appropriate procedures. In doing so, we clearly and unequivocally cite both the means and boundaries of participation.

We seek to help people take their issues in the local community into their own hands—not as a substitute for government services that are not provided but as a value in itself. We want to help this self-initiative to evolve. In concrete terms, this means that we establish clear responsibilities for sustainability management and public involvement. We promote the competencies of our employees accordingly.

2. Courage to experiment

The means to participate must take different shapes. As divergent the municipal constitutions are and as divergent the local political and social situation is, the conceivable approaches, actions and ideas relating to sustainability are just as diverse.

It is meaningful to give individual actions an institutional framework. One means of doing this is to appoint citizens to advisory councils which deal with sustainability matters. This enables political participation in civil society to gain continuity. Structural and substantive support must be provided to ensure that the citizens' work is qualified.

3. Give companies a role

Participation and dialogue must also shape the interaction with trade, industry and businesses. We therefore include chambers, business associations and federations as well as individual companies located in our cities into the sustainability process.

In concrete terms, this means that, in the vital fields of sustainable urban development, we continue to develop dialogue with business owners and relevant industries to encourage their self-initiative. Through this approach, we foster cooperation between the various interest groups in future-proof, expedient projects. For the good of corporate social responsibility (CSR), we work hand in hand with companies to establish forms of sustainable economic management.



4. Urban visions—firm up collective development

Together with the populace as well as local businesses and associations, we are developing a future vision of our city and firming it up on an ongoing basis. Climate protection is of particular significance in this context. We know that we must significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. For this reason, we are working in strategies and programmes to achieve the greatest possible reduction in CO₂ emissions, the long-term goal being CO₂ neutrality. We will gradually adapt our urban infrastructures and architectural fabric to these requirements. Model and pilot projects will play a crucial role in this respect so that—beginning with new, individual residential neighbourhoods followed by existing neighbourhoods and subsequently entire districts—the city can be remodelled into sustainable structures and areas.

We utilise instruments such as the European Energy Award and others, for example the methods recommended by the Covenant of Mayors, in order to merge our measures into a systematic energy and climate protection policy.

We are determined to assume a leadership role in municipal climate protection and develop a comprehensive, long-term urban vision which goes beyond that of individual measures.

Bonn



Augsburg

II. Sustainability in Municipal Finances

Fiscal sustainability also exists. It has two facets: on the one hand, a sustainable policy must be financially viable or be founded on self-sufficient economic effects. On the other hand, financial resources must be conserved just as much as ecological resources and, in many instances, must first be restored. For this reason, a balanced budget and debt reduction for the good of future generations form the core objectives of urban policy.

These objectives demand massive efforts on the part of the municipalities. However, they also require structural relief. We expect the Federal Government and the Laender to establish the conditions to secure stable and lasting municipality funding.

In concrete terms, sustainable municipal funding to us means:

1. **Align expenses and income**

We want to strike an appropriate and future-proof balance between municipal expenses and income. This, however, cannot be achieved solely at municipal level. Sustainable development in municipalities entails the principles of connectivity and subsidiarity as well as securing appropriate shares of state tax income. We find it unacceptable that municipalities should continue to be required to take charge of and finance tasks that lie in the hands of the Federal Government, especially those in the social domain, when municipalities are unable to influence their development and their rising financial burden exceeds the means available to the municipalities. Against this backdrop, we call for an earnest review of tasks. Moreover, new tasks should only then be assigned to the municipalities if the funding of such tasks can be lastingly guaranteed. To ensure this, a regulation is required, e.g. along the lines of the model used in Austria, according to which tasks can only be assigned to the municipalities if a funding solution is agreed together with the municipalities or,

Lüneburg



Constance

otherwise, the federal level initiating the assignment of the tasks takes on the full funding. Besides this, secure sources of income are required for the municipalities; this also includes the right of municipalities to a source of tax revenues based upon economic ability, as guaranteed in Art. 28, Para. 2 of the Basic Law.

2. Plan long-term

We pay due consideration to sustainability aspects both for income and expenses.

We advocate comprehensive and consistent criticism of tasks and the development of new efficient working methods and forms of cooperation. In years that produce high levels of tax revenue, we do not downscale our consolidation efforts but continue to add to them.

We utilise existing municipal means to further the preservation of natural resources and use of innovative technologies, and, in doing so, also achieve financial savings in many cases.

Short-funded public budgets require consistent performance review for a budgetary approach to financial resources. For this reason, we formulate quantified goals for the city budget and use review indicators.

3. Establish cost transparency

Within the bounds of what we can do at municipal level, we want to contribute towards prices telling the economic, ecological and social truth. Cost transparency enables long-term and realistic planning. This especially holds true for construction or infrastructure projects, the procurement of IT devices or motor vehicles and other durable consumer goods. In addition to current procurement and investment costs, the long-term costs of the entire life cycle of a measure should be factored in more strongly. Intergenerative “hidden costs” should be discernible and therefore avoidable.

In concrete terms, this means that we review the lifetime costs of all major investment projects and incorporate these in our decisions.

Moreover, we encourage the Federal Government and the Laender to work hand in hand with the municipalities to develop respective instruments and test them on concrete examples which can be applied in practice.

4. Develop and test auditing methods

Sustainability audits should, in future, safeguard the budgetary handling of financial and natural resources. In concrete terms, this means, for us, that we want to audit the sustainability of all new and material measures and, by addressing the issue of processes and outcomes, engage in a meeting of minds with all governmental levels. We encourage the federal and state institutions to develop suitable instruments in cooperation with the leading municipal associations.

III. Sustainability as a Cross-Cutting Municipal Task

All policy areas are vital to sustainable development. Looking to tomorrow requires a mindset which transcends departmental policy and marries businesses, the ecology and social affairs into one vision for tomorrow.

In the day-to-day administrative work involved in performing urban services and tasks, this principle is expressed in the duty of every area to comprehend and implement sustainability as a cross-cutting task. This is, as we know, easy to say, but only the greatest of commitment will see it effectively organised and managed. We also know, however, that those who try in earnest reap the external benefits through the creation of a more attractive city and the internal benefits through increased employee motivation.

In concrete terms, this, to us, means:

- 1. Making sustainability a matter for all senior decision-makers**
Responsibility for the subject of sustainability must rest with those at the top of the political chain for the effectiveness of the matter to be safeguarded. From here, sustainability activities must be coordinated within the administration and a link found to those with political responsibility in the Council as well as civil society and the business community. We ensure that the administrative services for sustainability and the personnel responsibilities are clearly discernible. Sustainability as a cross-cutting task also implies that we nurture employees' skills in structuring sustainable development.
- 2. Aligning municipal companies to the model of sustainability**
Sustainability as a municipal task goes beyond the basics of modern administrative techniques. It is vital that every department, every association, every company and every person in the city understands what role they each must play in the city's

Hanover



future-proof development. The task of structuring and organising this falls to us as Lord Mayors.

For this reason, we align enterprises run by the municipality, public utilities and other municipal companies to the model of sustainability. We champion our companies assuming their social responsibility to a greater degree.

3. Improving the management

Every municipal administration should be a first mover. Various areas in procurement, education, the promotion of honorary posts and the regional sustainable economy lend themselves to this role.

Using tried and trusted methods, we align our public procurement system to social, economic and ecological criteria, which enables us to embed the notion of sustainability in all technical planning, concepts and measures performed by the administration. To facilitate a sustainable procurement policy, we urge the Federal Government to simplify and make more efficient the confusing and diverse information used on product labels required for the socially responsible and eco-compatible manufacture of products. Labels, information and exemplary decisions should simplify and not exacerbate sustainable procurement processes.

At the same time, we call upon the EU, the Federal Government and the Laender to improve legal certainty in practice for the implementation of sustainable procurement.

Ravensburg



Freiburg

IV. Coordination of the Sustainability Activities performed by the Municipalities, Laender, Federal Government and the European Union

The improved and more effective coordination of all levels—ranging from the municipalities to the EU—presents a major opportunity but momentous responsibility alike. However, this cannot be achieved through formal administrative guidelines but only through the active will of all involved to work hand in hand and swap notes on effective and successful strategies.

In concrete terms, this, to us, means:

1. **Reaching a healthy balance between “bottom-up” and “top-down”**

The national sustainability strategy and respective EU strategy are what we gear ourselves to when determining the direction of urban action concepts. The municipalities need to be integrated more into the development of strategies. Local self-administration is a vital political asset and its significance should be afforded greater consideration in the national sustainability policy.

2. **Working together on measuring sustainability**

We relish the task of documenting the sustainability of urban development on the basis of benchmarks and of providing specific quantifiables on obstacles, conflicts and progress as part of a permanent monitoring process. To this end, we are prepared to incorporate those indicators of the national sustainability strategy and (if available) of the Laender strategies into our municipal sustainability strategies for which it is meaningful to draw a municipal balance but which should not generate excessive bureaucratic work. The Federal Government and the Laender should involve the municipalities more actively in the furthering of their goals and indicators.

3. **Pursuing the political guideline of sustainability more seriously**

We are willing to adopt the strategies of the Laender as well as the national sustainability strategy as our own guideline. In return, however, we expect the Federal Government and the Laender to align their policies more closely to this guideline than before. They should design statutory regulations, fiscal policy and funding programmes more than ever before along the lines of a sustainable development of our country and our cities and having due regard to intergenerationally just funding. We suggest improving the exchange of experiences and the provision of information on all sides. Sustainability requires all those concerned working in partnership.





Friedrichshafen



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Horst Frank, Lord Mayor of the City of Constance
Dr. Kurt Gribl, Lord Mayor of the City of Augsburg
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