

with local dimensions. The policy landscape for U.S. cities and climate change is in no way confined to the USMCPA (one example being the longevity of the work of ICLEI's CCP campaign). In addition, from 2005 to 2007, many actors were active in the global warming policy arena, from local to international levels (see Selin and VanDeveer 2007). This study focuses primarily on U.S. cities and climate change anchored by the USMCPA, as the agreement presents a valuable focal point from which to consider the rapid engagement of U.S. cities on the climate change issue from 2005 to 2007.

### Interactions and Influence: Key Policy Network Actors

The engagement was influenced by a decentralized cooperative policy network of five key actors: (1) Mayor Nickels and the Seattle Office of Sustainability and the Environment, (2) the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCOM), (3) ICLEI and the CCP Campaign, (4) the Sierra Club Cool Cities Campaign, and (5) Mayor Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City, Utah. All five actors have been investigated for their catalyzing contributions that served to spur municipal engagement on the climate change issue. They are described in greater detail in table 6.1.

**TABLE 6.1**  
**Key Policy Network Actors**

Actor	Description
Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle	Creator of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement
USCOM	The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan association of U.S. cities with a population of 30,000 or more. The conference endorsed the USMCPA in June 2005 and created the U.S. Mayors Council on Climate Protection in 2006.
ICLEI/CCP	ICLEI is a nonprofit membership association of local governments committed to furthering worldwide sustainability development. In 1993, the organization launched the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, a city-centered effort to address climate change from the local level.
Sierra Club Cool Cities Campaign	The Sierra Club, one of the country's oldest environmental organizations, launched the Cool Cities Campaign in October 2005 to increase participation in the USMCPA and to provide a platform for citizen involvement with the climate change issue.
Mayor Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City	Notable leader in the area of cities and global warming, organized catalyzing conferences with ICLEI and the Sundance Preserve, an environmental nonprofit organization led by Robert Redford

Source: Warden 2007.

These actors were linked through a shared urgency about the climate change issue, a shared mission to engage cities in action, and the mutual desire to see the federal government generate a robust regulatory action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The result was an informal, decentralized policy network. Network-based policy structures have been described as “characterized by high levels of interdependence involving multiple organizations, where formal lines of authority are blurred and where diverse policy actors are knitted together to focus on common problems” (Schneider and others 2003, 143–44).

A collection of conferences, summits, and interactions by and among the key policy network actors served as catalysts in two significant ways. The activities contributed to the premise that cities play a central role in addressing the climate change challenge. The gatherings served as points of “contagion” and reinforced the policy network’s shared mission.

The inaugural Sundance Summit: A Mayors’ Gathering on Climate Protection was held in July 2005. The event was cohosted by ICLEI, Salt Lake City mayor Rocky Anderson, and actor and director Robert Redford (his nonprofit conference organization is called Sundance Preserve). In addition to Redford, former vice president Al Gore was in attendance. Several participants identified the summit as a valuable platform for creating both awareness of the issue and generating interaction among stakeholders; the second Sundance Summit took place in the fall of 2006 and similarly fostered generative and generous exchange among attendees, which furthered municipal engagement on the climate change issue (Warden 2007).

In 2006, ICLEI held a separate mayoral summit in Alaska titled “Strengthening Our Cities: Mayors Responding to Global Climate Change, Anchorage.” In attendance were more than 30 mayors from 17 states (Municipality of Anchorage 2006). The Alaskan backdrop was a powerful platform to host a conference on climate change; mayors visited a native village facing relocation because of the effects of global warming.

Also in 2006, USCOM held an event titled “Emergency Summit on Energy and the Environment” in May as a response to rising energy costs. Nearly 40 mayors as well as some of the key policy network actors (Michelle Wyman of ICLEI and Anderson, a keynote speaker) were present. The attendees, who also included experts on the global warming issue, gathered to discuss national energy policy and the role of cities in taking action.

A month later, the U.S. Mayors Council on Climate Protection was formed at the conference’s annual June meeting. Mayor Greg Nickels and Mayor James Brainard of Carmel, Indiana, were appointed cochairs of the council. In September 2006, the conference held a second summit focusing on the environment. In January 2007, USCOM held their annual winter meeting in Washington, D.C., with a plenary session on global warming. It was here that

Mayor Nickels, as cochair of the council presented a request for a \$4 billion energy and environmental block grant from Congress (USCOM 2007). The mayors presented a unified voice in addressing the federal level of government.

The Cool Cities Campaign, a separate Sierra Club initiative inspired by the USMCPA, was launched in October 2005, just four months after the mayors agreement was endorsed by USCOM. The campaign's mission was to encourage mayors to join the USMCPA, to highlight the successes of participating mayors, and to encourage citizens to hold their mayors and cities accountable for their commitments (O'Malley 2005).

This collection of interactive municipal gatherings and activities served to further engage mayors and their cities on the global warming in tandem with the USMCPA. Participants identified an acquired sense of municipal self-efficacy toward tackling the problem, inspiration from other cities to take action, and the formation of valuable networks among municipal actors as valuable outcomes of these gatherings (Warden 2007).

Municipal engagement was also fostered by the design of the mayors agreement, which was basic, flexible, and nonbinding: Download the form from the website, sign it, and submit it. Soon after, the name of city and the name of the mayor would be posted on Seattle's promotional website for the agreement. Some mayors were required to gain approval from their city councils; other mayors signed it and submitted it on their own accord. There were no follow-up requirements or accountability mechanisms. The flexibility of the agreement meant that cities could develop their own approach to participation and in some cases their own interpretations of what the agreement meant (Warden 2007). Participation was easy, and the cost was low.

### **The Context for Engagement**

Municipal engagement was also nurtured by a fertile societal context; the issue of climate change caused by global warming was rising on the agenda of the U.S. collective consciousness. Although the federal government remained inactive in terms of regulatory policies, global warming became a pressing concern in the public and private sectors. A shift was taking place from "Should we do anything?" to "What should we do?" (Selin and VanDeveer 2007, 4).

Following the Kyoto Protocol ratification in February 2005, multiple contextual elements emerged that served to emphasize the urgency of the need to address global warming. The issue received extensive press with cover stories in prominent news outlets such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Economist*. During the fall of 2005, the *New York Times* ran a series of print and online articles, along-

side a multimedia presentation titled “The Big Melt” on the *New York Times* website, depicting the multifaceted issues surrounding global warming and the melting Arctic (Kraus and others 2005; Myers and others 2005; Revkin 2006). Other magazines, such as *Vanity Fair*, followed suit with “green” editions, often mentioning both Mayor Nickels and the mayors agreement.

In 2006, the documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, featuring Al Gore, told the global warming story and explained the climate science (Guggenheim 2006). At the conclusion of the film, Gore praised cities for taking action on the issue and provided a list of the hundreds of mayors who had signed on to the initiative by the time of filming. The USMCPA generated direct, ongoing press coverage as well, with sustained media coverage nationally and internationally.

The energy crisis in the spring of 2006 contributed to municipal awareness of the issue, one example being a mayoral summit on energy and the environment hosted by USCOM. Other contextual catalysts included a campaign to place the polar bear, whose threatened existence became symbolic of the dangers of global warming, on the endangered species list. In 2006, “carbon neutral” was voted “word of the year” by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*.

Notable celebrities and established corporations had solutions for global warming high on their agendas. Richard Branson of Virgin Records pledged \$3 billion to alternative fuels research. General Electric launched its pro-environment “Eco-magination” campaign, which linked the company’s mission to the concept of sustainability.

Leading energy corporations, such as Duke Energy, formed the U.S. Climate Action Partnership to present a unified business voice to Congress on the need for greenhouse gas regulation. Former President Clinton, through the Clinton Foundation, launched the Clinton Climate Initiative in September 2006. This initiative reinforced not only the urgency of the issue, but also the discourse that placed cities at the core of the solution; the initiative’s focus was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the 40 largest cities in the world. Hurricane Katrina propelled the concept of an “extreme weather event,” often mentioned as a future consequence of global warming, to the forefront of the national consciousness. Nearly a year after the hurricane, an overwhelming majority of respondents to a Zogby America telephone poll (74 percent) said they were now more convinced that global warming was real than they were two years earlier (Zogby International 2006).

A congressional investigation to address charges that federal officials had manipulated climate science findings in governmental reports to decrease the severity of the global warming issue made headline news. In the fall of 2006, Nicholas Stern, noted British economist and former chief economist of the World Bank, released a report commissioned by the British prime minister that concluded the cost of global inaction on global warming would be devastating (Stern 2006).

Rounding out this two-year awareness-generating period, the first installment of the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report was released in February 2007, which created an even greater consensus on the scientific aspects of the issue (IPCC 2007). The report, and the lead-up during the few months before its release, generated more press on the problem. Global warming was less thought of as a “creeping problem.” It was here.

This broad collection of influential contextual factors, or the “effective context” (Stokols 1996), contributed to a more fertile environment for mayors and cities across the United States to engage. From a decision-making perspective, a “policy window” was open (Kingdon 1995).

## The Nature of Cities

In addition to the open “policy window,” the catalyzing activities of the key policy network actors, and the simple design of the USMCPA, common municipal themes also served as catalysts for engagement. The sharing of useful information between cities and a spirit of friendly competition triggered municipal engagement across the United States.

When questioned for this study, city representatives often cited a moral imperative to help other cities by sharing information on how best to address climate change. This recurring and prominent practice has been conceptualized under the concept of *city solidarity*, or camaraderie among cities. Additionally, these findings were supported by responses from key informants from leading green cities who described a duty to help other cities take action (Warden 2007).

Friendly competition to be the greenest city also served to further amplify engagement (Warden 2007). In this study, the phrase *green capital* has been applied to describe the desired outcome of friendly competition. The greener city may promote itself as such when striving to keep its city healthy in terms of business and resident retention. As promotional benefits accrue from engagement on the global warming issue, a positive green image creates incentive for that city and other cities to be green. Green action—in this case, engagement to address climate change—spread as cities promoted themselves (and were promoted by policy actors), competed with each other, and inspired other cities to go green.

For the mayors agreement, city solidarity and green capital fueled a self-replicating policy effort through the sharing of information and friendly competition. Participation was amplified as the media publicized mayoral and municipal activity to address climate change and as the collective consciousness of the United States became more aware of global warming.