

## Torino-to-Portland Dialogues: Planning and Implementing Climate Change Actions

*By Irene García*

*An ever-growing number of cities are turning their growth and climate challenges into an opportunity to rethink their urban metabolism and patterns of development. Urban systems are responsible for high environmental impacts, accounting for more than 70 percent of CO<sub>2</sub> energy-related emissions globally. This can be attributed to the complex systems of cities, where materials flow in a linear way, instead of in a circular one. This raises serious problems such as material depletion, enormous waste generation, and climate change. In 2017–2018, the Transatlantic Climate Cities Lab (TCL) project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States convened peer-to-peer learning workshops with experts and practitioners in the United States and Europe experienced in the visioning, planning, and implementation of climate action agendas. This brief looks at on the key lessons from the exchange of ideas between the cities of Portland, Oregon in the United States and Torino in Italy on these issues.*

*Portland has been a frontrunner in climate-change action in the United States since the 1990s, with a reputation for cross-departmental, cross-sector, and multilevel governance, as well as with positive track record in stakeholder engagement and increasing citizens' awareness and behavioral change. This brief highlights in particular cross-departmental coordination within government as a foundational step to effective climate action planning. It outlines the contexts in both cities and the key transatlantic insights into planning and implementing a climate action plan that resulted from the Torino-Portland peer-to-peer exchange.*

### Starting Point: Torino

Home to the FIAT automobile factory, which opened in 1923, Torino became the industrial capital of Italy. This led to dramatic urbanization and to population growth of the city at an uncontrollable pace, as well as to labor tension and social unrest. In 1969 FIAT reached a peak of 158,000 employees. The end of automobile manufacturing in Torino in 1982 marked the end of an era with more than 100,000 jobs related to the automotive industry lost between 1980 and 1996. A post-industrial cityscape emerged, with approximately 2,500 acres of vacant industrial sites by 1989 and roughly a quarter of its population moving away. The challenges generated by this social and economic transformation were enormous.

Yet, through a collective and sustained process, Torino managed to reinvent itself. Today manufacturing represents less than 25 percent of employment and the city is recognized for its scientific, engineering, and military vocations, as well as for its legacy of social activism, its artistic and cultural heritage, and its progressive political and intellectual tradition. It also started a process of physical transformation with the 1995 Master Plan. This led to:

- Burying major rail lines that divided the city,
- Reclaiming abandoned properties along three axes/corridors,
- Restoring public space and the city center,
- Revitalizing neighborhoods in the periphery, and

## The Transatlantic Climate Cities Lab

GMF launched The Transatlantic Climate Cities Lab with the city of Torino, Italy, supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo of Torino, with the aim of supporting Mayor Chiara Appendino and her administration in the deployment of the city's climate agenda policy. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for the Environment is preparing a Climate Change Action Agenda for the city and had identified several priority action points for 2017–2018, including planning and sustainability, mobility, waste reduction, and clean energy systems.

Over a year GMF worked with Torino to explore urban metabolism in the context of its emerging climate change agenda. Activities prioritized practical exchange with U.S. city leaders from Portland, Oregon and Oakland, California, as well as dialogue with experts from The Netherlands. GMF's Urban and Regional Policy Program (URP) selected Portland and Oakland as the partner cities for the TCL effort due to their previous connections with Torino via GMF's Transatlantic Cities Network.

Overall, the TCL was designed to achieve the following:

- Supporting Torino's climate agenda by providing a new framework for reassessing the functioning of its urban metabolism and the pressures generated by urban development processes and connecting the city to good practices on this field.
  - Curating outcome-based convening to support Torino in translating ideas and best practices into specific projects and initiatives with regard to the city's climate change agenda.
  - Encouraging local team building through peer-to-peer workshops and on-site visits that provided a unique opportunity for stakeholders to step away from their day-to-day routine to get new ideas around sustainability and to engage with each other in a different way than at home.
- To realize these objectives, URP organized three major convenings.
- A kick-off workshop in Torino, on June 22–23, 2017, bringing together representatives from the cities of Torino, Portland, and Oakland as well as experts and practitioners from the United States and Europe to explore sustainable planning strategies, processes, and policies that can support Torino's climate agenda.
  - A city-to-city dialogue, on October 2–6, 2017, in Portland. As a result of the kick-off workshop, GMF and the city of Torino identified several ideas whose implementation could support Torino in the preparation of its Climate Action Plan. Through a city-to-city dialogue organized by GMF, Torino delegates had the opportunity to engage in conversations, receive expert input, and conduct site visits to learn policy and practices related to the city's needs for planning and implementing its Climate Action Plan. Based on the input from the kick-off workshop it was evident that Portland would be an ideal partner for this more in-depth exchange of ideas.
  - A closing workshop for city leaders in Torino, on June 6–8, 2018, bringing six city representatives from Portland to wrap up the discussions. This provided a space for joint input and reflections between the different layers of government in Torino with a stake and competences on the climate and energy agenda, including the mayor, the City Council and Piedmont region.

All of the activities within the TCL project made important contributions to the evolution of Torino's approach to urban metabolism and to its climate agenda.

- Improving public transportation with a new railway station and metro system.

In 2009, a climate component was added to the territorial transformation efforts. The city signed the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy to implement EU energy policy. In 2010, it adopted an Action Plan for Energy (TAPE) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 30 percent below 1991 levels by 2020. To meet this goal, it has taken targeted actions on public and private buildings, industry, transportation, local energy production, district heating, land-use planning, and green public procurement. According to Simone Mangili, from the mayor's office, "thanks to these actions the city has reduced already 22 percent of GHG emission below 1991 levels."

Torino adhered to the Covenant of Mayors Initiative on Climate Change Adaptation in 2015 and drafting a Climate Adaptation Plan has become a priority for the city government. The city is engaging different stakeholders and co-designing workshops to elaborate the guidelines for developing such a plan and it aims to have preliminary results in the summer of 2019.

The final Climate Action Plan will update the City Master Plan by 2021 for a more resilient city and sustainable environment.

## Starting Point: Portland

Portland has not always been headed in the sustainable direction it is headed in today. The city was shaped by river and port functions, small block patterns, and streetcar transportation, up to a point where one common postcard in the 1950s featured the message "Be Careful Crossing the Street in Portland". According to Art Pearce, the city's policy planning group manager, "It took leadership and vision to revitalize, shift the urban pattern of the city of Portland and give it a new identity around equitable and sustainable development."

In the 1970s, Portland put an end to what had once been the world's third-largest interurban streetcar

system. Harbor Drive, a highway built in the 1940s, was removed and replaced with a park. It was the first major U.S. highway to be removed and not replaced. Portland also canceled a proposal for a new freeway and spent the money on a light rail and bus service instead. In the 1980s, it abandoned a centralized steam-heating district system. In 1993, it was the first city in the United States to create a local action plan for cutting carbon and it has been committed to fighting climate change ever since.

Portland's [2015 Climate Action Plan](#) is the fourth iteration of an effort developed and implemented over the past 20 years. It provides a roadmap to achieve an 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, with an interim goal of a 40 percent reduction by 2030. The city has already made remarkable progress towards that goal. While carbon emissions in the United States are up by 8 percent since 1990, Portland and the surrounding Multnomah County have cut total emissions by 21 percent. The city has accomplished these reductions while seeing its population increase by 35 percent and 75,000 jobs created.

The plan identifies 20 objectives to be met by 2030 and more than 100 actions to be completed or to be significantly underway in the next five years. In the [2017 Climate Action Progress Report](#), three projects stood out for their impact. First, since the early 2000s, a 3 percent tax on electricity and natural gas bills is allocated to a non-profit body for climate and energy actions. This invests more than \$100 million each year in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

Second, Portland's project for reducing waste has changed people's behavior regarding recycling and composting. After conducting a two-year pilot project, the city introduced in 2011 a mandatory project, "[The every other week garbage](#)," in which garbage pickup, except for food and yard trimmings, takes place biweekly. People were initially opposed to the project, but after two months they became used to it and it is now very popular. This shows that behavioral change might be easier than thought even with initial opposition. Citizens still had the option to put out extra garbage, but they were charged more

accordingly. The city managed to reduce waste by 35 percent because the project induced people to recycle. The city has now hired behavioral-change psychologists to help it understand messaging better.

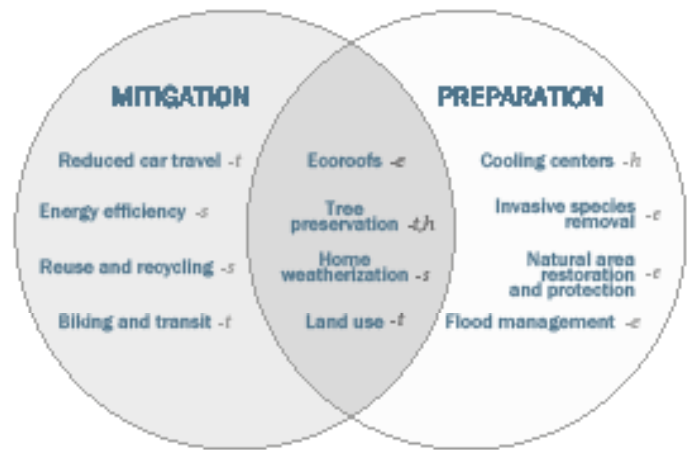
Finally, the [Tilikum Crossing](#) or “Bridge of the People” has connected the west and east part of Portland in sustainable ways since 2015. Carrying only MAX Orange Line trains, buses, streetcars, cyclists, and pedestrians over the Willamette River, it is the first of its kind in the United States.

## Planning for Climate Action

The focus of the Transatlantic Climate Cities Lab was to support Torino’s initiation of climate-action planning processes in the context of an urban metabolism framework. What became clear through the peer-to-peer exchange was that solutions require the cooperation of different levels of government. A fundamental factor in planning and implementing the Climate Action Plan in Portland has been cross-departmental collaboration and joint decision-making. The city’s planning director initiated biweekly or monthly meetings to bring together leaders from different departments so that they would understand each other’s work and develop trust and ownership in each other’s projects. These meetings provided a chance for building relationships and conversation. The staff from different departments work together similarly. Despite changes at the leadership level, this approach has continued over the years, sustaining personal relationships among leaders of different departments.

The importance of internal government coordination in the framing of issues and in developing solutions for climate action was identified a vital. Such coordination is tough in practice for a variety of reasons, including politics, egos, turf, regulation, technical differences, and funding. The Portland example revealed the following opportunities and drivers for successful cross-departmental collaboration and joint decision-making:

**Figure 1. Aligning Climate Priorities through Collaboration**



*f: Transportation & Sustainability & Environmental services; h: Health department*

Source: City of Portland (2017)

### *Align with Department Priorities*

It is crucial to find common ground among different departments and to align their interests and priorities through collaboration. By identifying each department’s duties with regard to climate action, common interests as well as possibilities of collaboration are discovered. During the drafting process of the Climate Action Plan, Portland’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability focused on developing a strategy that complemented and built on, namely the air quality plan, the Masterplan by 2021, the 2009 Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, and the 2008 Crisis and Disaster Management Plan. The bureau also emphasized ensuring that staff and departments knew the role they play in supporting the Climate Action Plan and to leverage them, rather than disrupting them, in its implementation.

### *Create Champions*

It is also crucial to cultivate a sense of ownership by the political leadership and to empower climate



champions at the staff level. Getting the leadership behind change through climate actions is a strategic approach for success. It enables the actions designed and implemented by city representatives to advance the climate agenda. Equally important is to create opportunities for city staff to be the “face” of climate work by offering them opportunities to take ownership and present the work they are doing to a wider audience outside the city government.

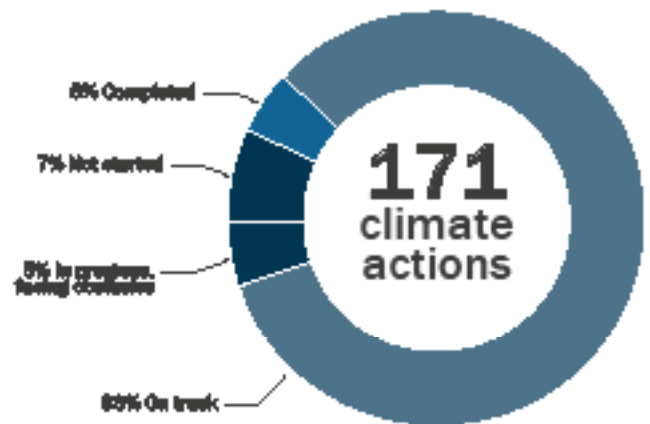
### *Allow for Flexibility*

Equally important is to enable a bottom-up approach that responds to the culture and priorities of each stakeholder. Flexibility is also key in delivering successful collaboration, and in accommodating and aligning priorities, given the high number of departments involved. For example, in the process for conducting the risk and vulnerabilities assessment in the [Climate Change Preparation Strategy](#), three teams from the city bureaus and county departments were formed. The first team consisted mostly of engineers focused on infrastructure and the built environment; the second looked at wildlife and natural resources; and the third focused on public health. By subdividing into several groups, the teams had the chance to develop their own approach to best deliver their conclusions and a comprehensive assessment was achieved.

### *Encourage Risk Taking*

Portland’s Climate Plan is not binding; it is equally operational and aspirational. If some actions do not work, they can be revised and changed. It is not a problem for such a document to have visionary elements even if there is no plan for operationalizing them—this increases opportunities for staff to figure out possible solutions. Incentives are a good way to start and test ideas. As recommended by Susan Anderson, former director of the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, “identify sectors you want to prioritize and target them. Target government investments in exploring strategies: green buildings, eco-roofs, stormwater. Try piloting, incentivizing, and modeling the behavior.” For instance, the 2009

**Figure 2. Progress and Achievements as presented in October 2017**



Source: City of Portland (2017)

Climate Action Plan established an investment fund of at least \$50 million of public and private capital to provide easy access to low-cost financing to residents and businesses for energy performance improvements. Once the city figures out the most effective mechanism to do something and demonstrates the value of it, it can make this a standard and permanent requirement.

### *Track Progress*

The 2015 Climate Action Plan identifies over 170 actions to be completed or significantly underway by 2020. Portland and Multnomah County have worked systematically to implement these actions since the initial plan’s adoption. Nearly all of the actions are already underway, with 142 (83 percent) on track for completion by 2020. Nine have been completed, while 20 have not yet started or face obstacles to implementation. With periodic evaluation the actions are easier to monitor and implement. Moreover, they allow tracking staff’s progress and recognizing their achievements.

## Lessons

Issues like climate change raise the question of how to operate across different agencies and jurisdictions, as well as how to engage different external stakeholders and increase awareness. The main lesson from Portland is that a multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder approach provides opportunities to mobilize different interests and to catalyze action for achieving climate policy objectives. Building on this, three key findings stand out:

### *Recognize the Value of Multi-level Governance*

Each level of government has its own added value, role, mechanisms, and specific responsibilities for ambitious and innovation climate action. Portland enjoys a good reputation regarding multilevel governance. John Wasiutynski, director of the [Multnomah County Office of Sustainability](#), explained the unique political structure in the greater Portland region. The [Metro agency](#) is the regional government, serving the more than 1.5 million people in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties, which encompass Portland and 23 other cities in Oregon.

The three-tier governance—metro, county, and city—has led to divided responsibilities in urban planning. Metro is responsible for overseeing land use and development; metropolitan planning organization for the Portland region; conducting regional research; managing natural areas, parks and trails, and visitor venues; and planning and overseeing the region's solid waste system. Multnomah County is in charge of carrying out social services. The city builds infrastructure, taking care of water, street, sewers, and related systems.

Multnomah County's Office of Sustainability and its Health Department as well as other stakeholders work closely to address the health impacts of climate change. How they handle episodes of heat waves illustrate their cross-department and multilevel collaboration. During heat waves, the Office of Sustainability has worked in several ways to help tackle

the associated problems, especially for vulnerable groups. By collaborating with Health Department, it has monitored hospitals to find out who are in hospital emergency rooms to identify groups that needed priority care. It opened cooling centers for people to shelter from the heat, provided maps and information on its website as well as social media, and translated essential materials into several languages to inform better the larger immigrant communities. The efforts to educate the public have driven more visitors to the office's website and [social media](#), and it then created more posters and [videos](#) for different target groups and with different emphases.

The collaboration structure is now formalized through the County-City Climate Action Plan, where the county and city bring in advisory teams and also community members to develop the plan every five years, which is then submitted for approval to the county and city leaderships.

### *Identify, Engage and Work with Stakeholders*

It is particularly important to integrate the social dimension into the Climate Action Plan, and to do so in a way that actions are not imposed, but rather that people feel their benefits.

The actions outlined in Portland's plan affect differently the diverse people and groups in the city (e.g. low-income people, people with limited English-language skills, small businesses, faith-based communities, bike advocates, neighborhood associations, business associations). Citizens who feel that they might be negatively impacted by a project will often oppose or object to its implementation. For this reason, to ensure an adequate engagement strategy, Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability mapped the different external stakeholders, their influence in the process, and the degree to which they were impacted by the plan. This provided the city with clarity on how the different stakeholders were committed to the plan, their preferred outcomes, best and high values, as well as their loyalties and fear of potential losses. It enabled the city to engage and work with the different stakeholders towards a win-win

solution, and it provided the stakeholders with the opportunity to hold the city accountable.

## *Raise Awareness and Leverage Citizens*

It is necessary to create synergies of collective interests for changing attitudes and behavior. Changing individuals' behavior is fundamental to ensure the implementation of climate policy. Portland's SmartTrips program is good example of how to motivate successfully citizens' behaviors in a more climate-friendly direction.

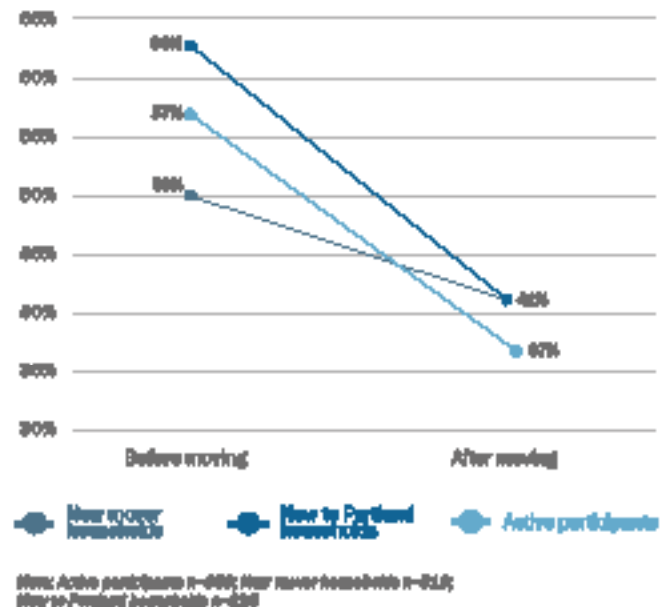
SmartTrips is a marketing program of the Bureau of Transportation, to increase active transportation modes and to promote healthy lifestyles. New residents are sent an individualized packet of transportation resources as soon as they move into Portland. Key components include biking and walking maps; robust and sophisticated online, digital and paper resources; and organized activities that get people to discover how many trips they can easily, conveniently, and safely make without using a car. Through hand-delivered packets and personalized emails to residents who wish to learn more about their transportation options, this individualized marketing has proved to be innovative and highly effective.

Research and experience have showed that awareness of issues and solutions is not enough to motivate people to take an action. However, tactics like making actions easy to take and showing people that many in the community are already taking them can work.

## Applying the Lessons to Torino

Through the Transatlantic Climate Cities Lab process, Torino city officials identified the policy and process elements of Portland's Climate Action Plan that resonated most with their own challenges and priorities to plan and implement their city's own plan. Figure 4 shows the two key principles—visioning and planning, and cross-department collaboration—and the related priorities that Torino's representatives identified for the success of their Climate Action Plan.

**Figure 3. Reduction in the Number of Drive Alone Car Trips, Portland**



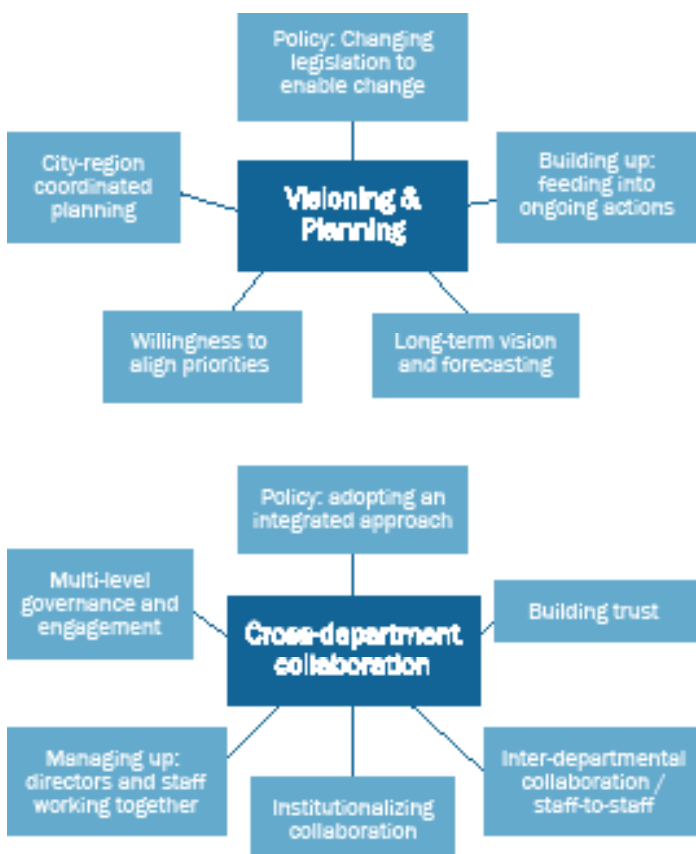
Source: City of Portland (2017)

As a first step, in February 2018 Torino passed a municipal resolution that gives the city a mandate to start a climate action and adaptation planning process involving all of the city's different departments. As a result, a municipal inter-departmental climate working group was created, and includes representatives from the surrounding Piedmont region, showing the mutual engagement of the two entities in drafting their respective strategies for climate change.

According to Simone Mangili, from the mayor's office, "Everybody from mobility and urban planning to public buildings to energy efficiency to the environment sector is included. But also less obvious services like some of our cultural patrimony folks and the civil protection and technology and innovation services. So, we now have a broad mandate to convene the working group, the action planning process can kick off with broad representation across the city."

The goal of the working group is to identify mechanisms for cross-departmental collaboration, to endorse and support its members' actions, and to encourage risk-taking to find solutions.

**Figure 4. Priorities for the success of Torino's Climate Action Plan**



Source: Garcia, I. (2018) Based on inputs from Torino participants.

More specifically, it aims to achieve the following goals.

- Crafting a plan that creates ownership and identify who is making sure Torino's Climate Action Plan is implemented and monitored.
- Improving methods for cross-departmental coordination and building a natural synergy

between departments for planning and implementation.

- Conducting a joint analysis of the sectoral priorities and identifying the actions already under way by the different departments that are in line with the Climate Action Plan priorities. The plan should not be seen as a single document but rather as a combination of all the existing plans for the city.
- Fostering a multi-disciplinary approach. Climate change needs to be considered strategically in every plan. The timing is right for that, at present, the city is in the process of updating its urban master plan, the sustainable urban mobility plan, the civil protection plan and the action plan for energy. The city is also about to launch a strategic green infrastructure plan, and it will receive guidance on air quality levels from the national and regional governments, which will have to be translated at the local level.
- Connecting and articulating the Climate Action Plan into the different existing plans at the city, regional, national and EU levels.
- Raising awareness and fostering attitude change. The goal is to create synergies of collective interests in a way that speaks to citizens and that integrates the social dimension: equity, employment, improving personal development, etc. In a nutshell, to ensure that the Climate Action Plan is not imposed, but rather that people feel they benefit from it.

## Next Steps

Drafting a climate action plan is an ongoing process that does not necessarily have a natural ending. The biggest take-away from the Transatlantic Climate Cities Leadership project is that every department plays a key role in specific issues pertaining to climate. It is the combined efforts that make for a successful plan, and it is very important to figure out how to



align priorities and to work with what departments are already doing.

Over the one-year period of the TCL project, Torino officials went from simple steps, like having a chat, to sharing project and practices and sending periodic updates to getting together for joint planning meetings and establishing a formal inter-departmental climate working group. At the beginning, there was not very much familiarity across sectors as to what the subject area necessarily entailed in terms of working together but the city has been developing the core needed to create a balance approach to its climate action planning process.

Rather thinking about climate action and then reorganizing the different departments' processes, the working group is allowing them to identify the areas where they are already making strong progress and to underline those as priority areas to increase their efforts. As a result, Torino is on track to develop a strategy, or a series of strategies, that are complementary and inclusive rather than dictated by one singular objective.

Torino is often cited as the greenest city in Italy, and it has always been conceived of in a very aesthetic and architectural way. Because of its heritage of green infrastructure, the city can place itself at the forefront of this effort to prepare for the future. The creation of the inter-departmental working group provides a great opportunity to shift the paradigm in Torino's Climate Action Plan—thinking of that green infrastructure in terms of eco-system services, and exploring together what next steps, efforts, and tools are needed to achieve the city's vision and to connect it to the wider picture of mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The views expressed in GMF publications and commentary are the views of the author alone.

## About the Author

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## About GMF

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan. GMF does this by supporting individuals and institutions working in the transatlantic sphere, by convening leaders and members of the policy and business communities, by contributing research and analysis on transatlantic topics, and by providing exchange opportunities to foster renewed commitment to the transatlantic relationship. In addition, GMF supports a number of initiatives to strengthen democracies. Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has offices in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, and Warsaw. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.

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