



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on September 1, 2011

Oklahoma City Leaves ICLEI but Not Agenda 21

In an article posted on the ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability website, on October 13, 2009, ICLEI announced and welcomed the entry of Oklahoma City as its 600th local government member in the United States (illustration at left). Now, two years later, as the awareness of sustainable development, ICLEI and its ties to the United Nations' Local Agenda 21 program have become more known, a backlash of activism has spread across the country leading many cities and towns to withdraw their membership from ICLEI.



ICLEI was founded in 1990, as the "International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives," at the World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future, held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. According to its website, ICLEI [describes](#) itself as "an association of over 1220 local government Members who are committed to sustainable development." Spanning over "70 different countries and represent more than 569,885,000 people," ICLEI facilitates local governments in the implementation of UN Local Agenda 21.

When the city of Edmond, Oklahoma, became an ICLEI member in 2009, the residents of Edmond protested and formed Govern Edmond Locally (GEL), a local committee designed to resist and withdraw Edmond from ICLEI.

Since GEL and other Edmond residents made clear their opposition to ICLEI and sustainable development, the city of [Edmond formally withdrew from ICLEI](#). Since then speculation has surrounded the status of Oklahoma City's membership in ICLEI.

Although Oklahoma City is no longer listed under ICLEI's "[Global Members](#)," there has also been no official announcement stating Oklahoma City's termination in membership.

Oklahoma City's omission from ICLEI's list of "Global Members" suggests that it is no longer an official member.

The New American magazine spoke with Jennifer Gooden, the Sustainability Director for Oklahoma City, who confirmed that the city was no longer a member of ICLEI. When asked as to why Oklahoma City is no longer part of ICLEI she stated that the city had just decided not to renew its membership.

Robert Semands, the spokesman for Govern Edmund Locally (GEL), which played an instrumental role in Edmond's withdrawal from ICLEI, suspects that Oklahoma City's departure from ICLEI may have more to do with what happened in Edmond rather than just a simple decision not to renew official membership.

"We suspect that what we did in Edmond had an effect on Oklahoma City's decision to withdraw from ICLEI," said Mr. Semands.

According to Mr. Semands, whom *The New American* was able to interview, the resistance put up by the residents of Edmond during the city's second meeting on Sustainability may have had a larger



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ripple-effect than originally anticipated.

At the town meeting, person after person testified against ICLEI and cited its ties to Agenda 21.

Present at this venue was Shannon Entz, the Community Development Manager for Edmond, Oklahoma. Her husband also happens to work for Oklahoma City's Planning Department.

Semands believes that she may have tipped off her husband of the opposition to ICLEI and sustainable development, which may have led to Oklahoma City hiring rent-a-cops during one of Oklahoma City's business meetings on sustainable development that was open to the public.

Although allowed to attend, according to those there, they were denied their right of free speech to express their feelings and opposition of ICLEI.

Whatever the reason for Oklahoma City's departure from ICLEI, the city is not yet in the clear.

Semands pointed to the [Consolidated Issues Statement](#), produced by Plan OKC -Oklahoma City's comprehensive plan for sustainable development.

"Their comprehensive plan is still very Agenda 21 orientated," said Semands upon making a cursory examination of the document comparing the language with that used by Agenda 21.

Under Section A, "Land Use Patterns — Citywide," the issues statement lists eleven "trends and current conditions" in Oklahoma City that it views as contrary to the goals of sustainable development. Among the listed trends and conditions was the "Migration from the core to suburbs..." further complaining about how the "Predominant new growth is on urban fringe," which it states is "bypassing undeveloped parcels."

Another supposedly-negative trend that the list includes is the: "Development of 'easy to drive' and 'easy to park' retail on the urban fringe," resulting in a "suburban growth pattern," which it opposes in favor of people living in compact or "high density" areas — such as large cities.

On the following page the Issues Statements lists 20 issues as to what is hindering their desired state of sustainability in Oklahoma City. Point 12 and 13 state:

- The abundance of cheap, available land in Oklahoma City discourages dense development
- The cost of land, nonrenewable energy, and many commonly used construction materials are inexpensive, which provides no incentive to change development patterns and practices.

The American dream of the beautiful house, big front and back yard, white picket fence, and one to two cars is to be replaced with the United Nations' Agenda 21 vision of living in "high density" urban dwellings, where you are restricted in the amount of what you can consume or dispose, where prices on goods and services are higher, and where you will have no mobile freedom or independence to travel as you please.

Withdrawal from ICLEI does not mean that Agenda 21 has been defeated in a local community. Even if a town or city is not an official member of ICLEI, it may still be promoting Agenda 21 and sustainable development, such as the case in Oklahoma City.

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