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Buildings Called Key Source of City's Greenhouse Gases

By [DIANE CARDWELL](#)

Laying the groundwork for a plan to reduce the production of greenhouse gases in the city, the Bloomberg administration released a study yesterday showing that New York's roughly 950,000 buildings are responsible for a vast majority of the city's carbon dioxide emissions.

In sharp contrast to the national average of about 32 percent, the city's buildings are responsible for 79 percent of the greenhouse gases produced by the city and are being cut each year, according to the study, conducted by the city's Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability. Transportation systems, including mass transit, cars and trucks, are responsible for most of the remaining 21 percent of the emissions, which are considered a major factor in [global warming](#).

The release of the inventory marked the first concrete step in Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s ambitious effort to set the city on a greener path as it plans for the addition of one million residents by 2030. In December, Mr. Bloomberg outlined goals to help guide the city's growth in a more environmentally sound way, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent.

"Even though New Yorkers already generate less than a third of the carbon emissions that the average American does, we can and we must do more," Mr. Bloomberg said in announcing the results of the study at a news conference in Lower Manhattan.

Officials said that the inventory was a critical tool in understanding the sources of the city's emissions so that they could better devise strategies to reduce them. Still, they declined to provide details on how they would accomplish their goals, saying that the mayor would reveal his proposals on Earth Day, April 22.

"We know that we have to dramatically rethink the way we work with buildings," said [Daniel L. Doctoroff](#), the deputy mayor who is overseeing the 2030 plan. "We know that on-road vehicles produce 18 percent of carbon emissions from this city. We have to deal with that problem if we are going to reach the 30 percent reduction."

Mr. Doctoroff said later that he had expected buildings to produce closer to 60 to 70 percent of the total, meaning that vehicles account for a smaller part of emissions in the study than officials originally estimated. Even so, many environmental advocates and business leaders say that it will be nearly impossible to ease traffic congestion, which has both environmental and economic consequences, without enacting some sort of pricing restrictions in the busiest parts of the city.

Both Mr. Doctoroff and the mayor avoided any discussion of congestion pricing, dodging the subject when asked about it by reporters. There is support within the administration for such a plan, but it was unclear yesterday whether Mr. Bloomberg, who has in the past declared it a political no-fly zone, has been persuaded

to back it.

The report did offer some clues to approaches the city might pursue. According to the report, which broke out a separate analysis of government emissions, the city has already managed to reduce its emissions by roughly 446,000 metric tons a year. Its efforts have included using cleaner fuels, buying energy-efficient equipment, planting street trees and increasing the use of alternative fuel and hybrid vehicles.

That, the report said, shows that these methods are effective and support "similar actions across the private sector."

Based on 2005, when the city's total greenhouse gas emissions were 58.3 million metric tons, officials said that New York was responsible for 1 percent of the country's emissions, putting it on a par with countries like Portugal and Ireland. But the report noted that its levels were relatively low when measured per capita, coming in at 7.1 metric tons per person, well below San Francisco, at 11.2 metric tons, and the national average, at 24.5.

The report said that this is because less energy is needed to heat, light, cool and fuel buildings in the city because they are more densely packed and homes are below average in size. In addition, the city's public transit system allows fewer New Yorkers to drive.

Mr. Bloomberg also announced that the city would play host to a meeting about climate change in May, with mayors from more than 30 of the world's largest cities, including London; Paris; Tokyo; Moscow; Istanbul; and São Paulo, Brazil. The meeting is being organized by the Partnership for New York City, a business group, and the Clinton Climate Initiative, a project of the William J. Clinton Foundation.

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