



GLOBAL COVENANT
of MAYORS for
CLIMATE & ENERGY



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BAHÍA DE BANDERAS AIMS TO INSPIRE WITH AN AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

The popular tourist destination of Bahía de Banderas (Mexico) joined the Global Covenant of Mayors in June 2019. The municipality's new administration is rolling out a range of environmental and ecological initiatives, and sees the GCoM as a way to support these measures through advice and benchmarking.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bahía de Banderas (Bay of the Flags in English) is a quickly growing municipality situated on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, in the state of Nayarit. Founded in 1989, the municipality has an economy based on tourism, sea fishing, and agriculture, and is famed for its rich biodiversity. Being a tourist destination whose population is growing, the municipality faces an increasing pressure on services.

In the past, there was no overarching plan to tackle environmental issues in the municipality. The new administration has established a Subdepartment of Environment and Ecology, tasking it with

developing an ambitious ecological strategy that will protect biodiversity and lower harmful emissions, while achieving growth and improving quality of life for locals.

Bahía de Banderas joined the Global Covenant of Mayors to gain guidance on urban policy and to receive help with recording and reporting on data. The chance to learn from other cities that have faced similar challenges was also an attractive element of membership. The municipality's aim is to soon be in a position to share their experiences with new cities looking for advice on achieving their environmental goals.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Up until recently, the municipality did not have a Department of Environment and Ecology or any equivalent, with no responsible staff appointed to oversee environmental issues. The Subdepartment of Environment and Ecology has now been established in the municipality, alongside supporting regulations and objectives.

Bahía de Banderas also lacked information on climate emissions and general environmental indicators. Without this information, it was exceedingly difficult to develop policies that could positively impact the municipality. To rectify the situation, the municipality has carried out a “physical diagnosis” of the area, paving the way for an Ecological Planning Programme to lay out municipal land use. The environmental and climate policy set by the municipality is also more ambitious than that demanded at the state level.

Another challenge faced has been the lack of economic resources to carry out climate projects. It is foreseen that the Global Covenant of Mayors will help the municipality to identify potential resources and to follow international best practices on securing financing for climate projects.

The municipality has taken steps to involve citizens in their planning processes, running awareness-raising campaigns and holding public consultations, both of which included addressing misinformation, particularly as it relates to climate change and environmental initiatives. Residents tend to be sceptical towards local initiatives, so gaining their trust will be a continued challenge. Reaching out to citizens is seen as a fundamental pillar of the municipality's strategy, with input sought from both rural and urban dwellers.

It is further foreseen that reporting climate achievements with international standards will enable residents to visualise the environmental progress being achieved by the municipality, allowing them to see how the steps being taken are benefitting communities, contributing to urban resilience and improving quality of life.

Recognising that environmental issues are cross-cutting, the Mayor has declared his intention to involve each department in achieving strategic sustainability goals. Technical support and guidance has also been sought from universities and private consultants.



As a destination popular for tourists, Bahía de Banderas is transforming itself into a Sustainable Tourism Development Zone. By doing so, it wishes to attract tourists that seek out sustainable destinations.

Bahía de Banderas is additionally a member of the National Association of Municipal Institutes of Planning (Asociación de IMPLANES), through which more than 60 cities in Mexico share tools, literature, new financing mechanisms, and the results of academic and scientific investigation.



RESULTS AND IMPACT

Bahía de Banderas has recently started on their Global Covenant of Mayors journey, having joined the movement in June 2019.

The municipality is taking a long-term view of environmental threats, elaborating a series of planning documents to address current and potential challenges. These include: the Municipal Climate Action Programme, which assesses the vulnerability of the municipality and identifies adaptation measures; the Municipal Land Management Plan, which incorporates preventive criteria for climate change; and the Urban Municipal Development Plan, which includes preventative measures to increase urban resilience.



The municipality is also devising a Local Ecological Management Programme, which sets out the criteria for ecological regulation.

Perhaps the most meaningful step taken has been the creation of the Subdepartment of Environment and Ecology, a body which was previously lacking among administrative departments.

To ensure that these plans and programmes continue to take effect beyond the three years the administration will be in office, the municipality has created the Municipal Planning Institute (under the acronym IMPLAN). This institute helps with the development of the Master Urban Development Plan and gives technical support to the administration in a range of environmental fields, from air quality measurements to information on the sewerage system.

Concrete actions undertaken include the changing of much of the electric lighting in the municipality

to LED, and the commissioning of studies that will lay the ground work for the roll out of solar panels and other forms of renewable energy.

The municipality hopes to use membership in the Global Covenant of Mayors as a springboard to better raise awareness of issues surrounding climate, energy and urban resilience with key sectors within the city, such as public associations, developers and entrepreneurs.

Bahía de Banderas has additionally joined the ADAPTUR project, which focuses on adaptation to climate change in the tourist sector. GIZ, the German development agency, is running the project in association with the Mexican Secretary of Tourism.

By joining the Global Covenant of Mayors, it is hoped that the municipality will better be able to execute strategies that improve quality of life, strengthen the economy, and protect the environment of Bahía de Banderas.



LESSONS LEARNED



Having a multidisciplinary team is important, both as policy makers and representatives of the administration. Climate change is a cross-cutting issue that requires a wide-range of knowledge. The greater diversity of backgrounds, the more holistic the solutions proposed.



Continuity of the planning instruments has been a focus for Bahía de Banderas. Ensuring that the actions defined for the short, medium and long terms remain measurable, comparable, and ambitiously renew themselves over time – regardless of the administration in power – is fundamental to making real progress. This was achieved through the creation of IMPLAN.



Bahía de Banderas has spent a great deal of effort in soliciting feedback from the public. Having significant public participation was a fundamental part of the municipality's approach to policy making. Listening to the opinions of the citizens in terms of what is needed and wanted for the municipality not only fosters greater buy-in to municipal plans, but can provide new ideas and focal areas.



Technical support and guidance was sought from universities, private consultancies, and other knowledgeable bodies. Drawing on this knowledge-base has been a great boost to the municipality's policy making.



THE IUC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme enables cities in different global regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of research and innovation, community groups and citizens. Through engaging in the IUC, cities will have the chance to share and exchange knowledge with their international counterparts, building a greener, more prosperous future. The IUC programme is an opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, set ambitious targets, forge lasting partnerships, test new solutions, and boost their city's international profile. Its activities will support the achievement of policy objectives as well as major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

THE GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE & ENERGY

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) is an international alliance of local governments with a shared vision of a world where urban leaders and their partners accelerate ambitious, measurable climate and energy initiatives that lead to a just, low-emission and climate resilient future. The GCoM enables cities, local governments, and the networks that support them to move from ambition to action. It elevates climate leadership and facilitates partnerships at the crossroads of research, data, finance, and communications. The GCoM emphasises climate change mitigation, adaptation, and access to clean and affordable energy.

The GCoM supports locally-relevant solutions in sectors where cities can have the greatest impact. GCoM cities register, implement, and monitor their strategic action plans and make information on their efforts publicly available.



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