

# What Can One City Do?

In 2008, Naema Omar decided to improve her 80-year-old house in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States, and make it **energy-efficient**. Firstly, to keep the heat inside in the winter, she filled the space inside the walls with **insulation**. This is usually made from chemicals, but in her house, she used something new—insulation made from recycled blue jeans and other clothes. Secondly, she replaced the windows. And lastly, she put in energy-efficient LED **lightbulbs** that use only a tiny amount of electricity. They also last 50 times longer than traditional lightbulbs.

Naema was able to do this because the Cambridge City Council had created the Cambridge Energy Alliance (CEA) the year before to encourage energy efficiency and solar power. CEA's goal was to help residents and businesses save money and reduce the city's carbon **emissions**.

The city council had started to work on reducing global warming as early as 1999. In May that year, it had voted to join Cities for Climate Protection, an international group of communities that work to reduce environmental damage from fossil fuels.

First, the council needed to study the situation. So, surveys and research were conducted, and they showed that more than 80 percent of the **carbon dioxide** produced in Cambridge was coming from buildings—not from cars.

Next, it decided to make the buildings

energy-efficient. In addition to saving energy and reducing emissions, the objective was to create new jobs for local people: workers were needed to put in insulation, install energy-efficient doors and windows, and make other energy improvements on buildings.

Soon after that, however, the city council realized that eco-friendly insulation and lighting are much more expensive than the usual kind, and many people in Cambridge couldn't afford them. That's why it created the CEA and encouraged every resident and business to contact them. And that's what Naema did.

First of all, individuals or businesses can ask the CEA, which, since 2011 has been part of the city's Community Development Department, to come and look at their house or office building. Then the CEA makes a plan to save 15 to 30 percent on heating, gas, water, and electricity. Finally, it helps people take out a loan to pay for the improvements. The money that people save by being more efficient should be enough to pay back the money they borrowed.

So, it looks like one city can do a lot, if it wants to!

**energy-efficient** using little energy

**insulation** material used in construction to keep heat inside

**lightbulbs** glass containers that produce light when

electricity passes through them

**emissions** gases released into the atmosphere

**carbon dioxide** a gas that contributes to global warming

The design of the Cambridge Public Library makes it an energy-efficient building.



**A** Skim the article and check the best description of its topic.

- 1. The article is about how the city of Cambridge has been helping people conserve energy.
- 2. The article is about the life of 80-year-old Naema Omar, a resident of Cambridge.
- 3. The article is about how Naema Omar started working for the Cambridge Energy Alliance.

**B** Match each group or organization to its description.

1. Cambridge City Council	a. a group of communities working together
2. Cambridge Energy Alliance	b. a group existing within a larger organization
3. Cities for Climate Protection	c. an organization set up to encourage energy efficiency
4. Community Development Department	d. a government organization responsible for a city

**C** Read the article again. Number the events in the correct order.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Naema Omar contacted the Cambridge Energy Alliance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Cambridge City Council created the Cambridge Energy Alliance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Cambridge City Council joined Cities for Climate Protection.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Cambridge City Council studied the results of research into carbon dioxide emissions in the city.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Cambridge City Council decided to make the city buildings energy-efficient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. The Cambridge Energy Alliance became part of the Community Development Department.

**D** Complete the sentences with the cause or the effect.

1. Naema Omar's house wasn't energy-efficient, so \_\_\_\_\_
2. The city council decided to make buildings energy-efficient because \_\_\_\_\_
3. The city council realized that people needed help to make their homes energy-efficient, so \_\_\_\_\_
4. People save money by being energy-efficient, so \_\_\_\_\_

**E** Read the article again. Find all the expressions that show sequence and write them in order.

**Starting point:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Following points:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, (soon) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Concluding point:** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_