

SAFE Cities Resources for Local Elected Officials, Staff, and Volunteers on Local Government Advisory Boards

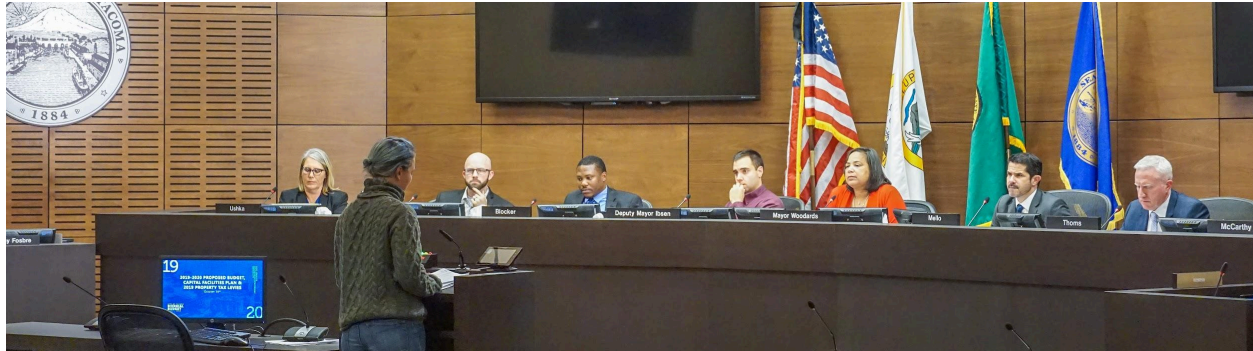


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Welcome!

The goal of these resources is to help elected officials and staff learn more about the SAFE Cities movement, what SAFE Cities at Stand.earth does to support communities working to pass SAFE Cities policies, and what SAFE Cities can look like in your community. We have some bookmarks in the document to help with navigation as well as external links. You can also download this document. We will keep updating these resources over time.

Whether you have already joined the [SAFE Cities movement](#) or are exploring what the movement is about, we are glad you are here. Get in touch at SAFE@stand.earth.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What is SAFE Cities?	
Why should your community be part of this movement?	
How does SAFE Cities connect to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (the Treaty)?	
What kinds of policies are SAFE Cities policies?	4
SAFE Cities Policies Explainer and Examples	
Template Resolution on SAFE Cities and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty	
Making the Case for Phasing Out Fossil Fuels at the Local Level by Building SAFE Cities and Communities: Health, Jobs, and Financial Risk.....	10

Introduction: What is SAFE Cities?

SAFE Cities, which translates to communities Standing Against Fossil Fuel Expansion, is a growing international movement of neighbors, local groups, elected officials, and local government staff working to keep their communities safe from fossil fuels. SAFE Cities staff at Stand.earth work to help communities pass SAFE policies that protect public health and safety and global climate by phasing out fossil fuels and accelerating a just transition to a clean energy economy. At the same time, SAFE connects these local efforts to limit fossil fuels to a global call for action, the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) (or the Treaty). More on this below.

The SAFE Cities resolutions and actionable ordinances being passed in communities do what the Paris Climate Accord and too many climate action plans and emergency declarations don't do: Specifically name fossil fuels as a problem and commit to stopping their expansion and phasing out their use.

SAFE policies can limit fossil fuel growth in many different ways, from preventing new infrastructure for refining, export, all oil and gas extraction, storage, transport and more, to stopping the permitting of gas stations to passing construction codes that drive significant electrification, to making purchasing agreements to ensure all new transit vehicles are electric. For more on the types of SAFE Cities policies, please check out the [explainers and examples here](#).

While rules are different between the US and Canada and within parts of both countries, local governments in many parts of both have the authority to adopt at least some SAFE Cities policies, directly or indirectly. SAFE Cities staff at Stand.earth is here to help them do that with guidance, resources, and organizing support.

Together, we can protect our communities and build a climate safe future.

Why should your community be part of this movement?

The need for the SAFE movement in North America is clear in terms of climate, local health and safety, equity, and economic security.

In terms of climate, 85% of new oil and gas production worldwide in the next five years is planned in the US and Canada. If all new planned production is carried out, [we will shoot way past a 1.5°C global temperature rise](#).

Locally it is also clear why we need action. Air pollution, both indoor and outdoor, is directly impacted by local policies. Children who grow up in homes with gas stoves have a 42% higher chance of developing asthma symptoms. In early 2021, a study came out that said 8.7 million people die annually from air pollution from fossil fuels. That's roughly on par with deaths from smoking.

The vast majority of fossil fuel infrastructure, operations, and pollution is located in and near neighborhoods where residents are low income, Indigenous, people of color, or otherwise marginalized. The [impacts](#) include higher incidence of premature and low-birth weight babies, heart disease, cancer, respiratory disease, etc. The Coronavirus pandemic laid bare these disparities even more, as research showed the correlation between exposure to fossil fuel air pollution and poor outcomes from Covid-19.

The more we look the more we know how deadly fossil fuels are. Local leaders are compelled to use all the powers they have to protect their community's health and safety by stopping fossil fuel expansion and phasing out fossil fuels. Increasingly we also see the risks to local economies of investing in the collapsing fossil fuel industry versus the growing renewables economy. Please see more in **Making the Case**.

Where did SAFE Cities start?

The SAFE Cities approach grew out of action in Whatcom County, Washington. After years of resisting proposed fossil fuel export projects, oil train expansions, and worrying about rumors of industry's planned oil pipelines, gas pipelines and propane train expansions, local community members, working alongside RE Sources and Stand.earth, developed a new strategy. They convinced leaders in the county government to enact a temporary moratorium on unrefined fossil fuel infrastructure in 2016. The Whatcom County Council extended the moratorium several times, allowing the community to develop robust long term policies to protect local health and safety and global climate, and then the County Council made the policy permanent in 2021.

This local rule-making approach has been implemented in several communities across the US, in Canada, and a few outside North America. Please see more in **What Kinds of Policies are SAFE Cities Policies? Explainers and Examples**.

How does SAFE Cities connect to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (the Treaty)?

To solve the climate crisis and protect local health and safety, we need both global and local action. The [Treaty](#) commits countries to stop the expansion of fossil fuels and to make a just transition to a clean, safe, renewable energy economy. Local governments calling on their national leadership to pass the Treaty while also passing actionable, local SAFE Cities policies is extremely powerful and also gives people tools to protect their communities and the climate without having to wait for national or international action. The combination of taking local action while calling for national and international action drives change at the scale needed.

More information on SAFE Cities is available at our [website](#). Please email us at SAFE@stand.earth with questions and if you'd like support bringing SAFE Cities to your community.

What Kinds of Policies are SAFE Cities Policies? Explainers and Examples

Below are the main types of SAFE Cities resolutions and policies. Under each type we have an explainer and examples from local jurisdictions that have passed them. *This is a set of examples rather than a comprehensive list.* You can find more examples on [our map](#).

Here are hallmarks of SAFE Cities legislation:

- A focus on stopping fossil fuel infrastructure expansion and phasing out fossil fuels.
- Resolutions include language about the need to move off fossil fuels.
- Ordinances and bylaws are built around requirements rather than voluntary or incentivized measures.
- Policies apply across the jurisdiction rather than only to public buildings, fleets, or operations (with the exception of public transit).

Has your community passed a policy that you think meets these but it's not on the map? Please send us an email at SAFE@stand.earth to introduce us to the policy and include a link to the policy, a news article, or another way for us to learn more. We are adding new policies to the map all the time!

Communities are continually exploring new ways to protect local health and safety and global climate. We may add new types of resolutions and policies as these develop.

Table of Contents for Explainers and Examples

Resolutions/Safe Cities Commitment/Treaty Endorsement	5
Temporary Restrictions On New Or Expanded Fossil Fuel Infrastructure	5
Permanent Restrictions On New Or Expanded Fossil Fuel Infrastructure	6
Electrification Policies	6
Template Resolution on SAFE Cities and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (the Treaty)	8

Resolutions/SAFE Cities Commitment/Treaty Endorsement

Explainer

Governments can pass non-binding resolutions that show their commitment to limiting fossil fuel infrastructure and phasing out fossil fuels. These can be a specific SAFE Cities Commitment that includes a deadline for staff presenting options for actionable policies, a Climate Emergency Declaration Plan or Climate Action Plan with an explicit commitment to limiting fossil fuel infrastructure growth or phasing out fossil fuels, or an endorsement of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (the Treaty). All of these are initial SAFE Cities steps. To protect local health and safety and global climate, local governments also need to pass ordinances, bylaws, or other binding and actionable policies that specifically limit fossil fuel infrastructure growth or phase out fossil fuels.

Examples

- Puyallup Tribe of Indians (2019): [Resolution](#)
- King County, WA, US Climate Action Plan (2020): [Plan](#)
- Vancouver, BC, Canada Treaty Endorsement (2020): [News Article](#) [Policy](#)
- Barcelona, Spain Treaty Endorsement (2021): [News Article](#)
- Los Angeles, CA, US Treaty Endorsement (2021): [Press Release](#)
- Santa Ana, CA, US SAFE Cities Commitment, Treaty Endorsement, and Commitment to limit or stop exposure to lead and other toxic pollutants through remediation and cleanup efforts, connecting climate and environmental justice (2021): [Press Release](#) [News Article](#)
- [Template Resolution](#) that includes a SAFE Commitment, a Treaty Endorsement, and a Climate Emergency Declaration. The full text of this template is at the end of this section.

Temporary Restrictions on New or Expanded Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

Explainer

Communities facing new or expanded fossil fuel infrastructure can pass temporary restrictions to give them protection while a longer term plan can be developed. Temporary moratoria can be a blanket stoppage of new fossil fuel infrastructure or can apply to one or more of the following: bulk fossil fuel storage, pipelines, refineries, power plants, pipes and/or compressors, oil train terminals, extraction equipment, fossil fuel loading and unloading, all oil and gas extraction, and new gas stations. Temporary moratoria are often renewed multiple times while permanent policy is being developed.

Examples

- Whatcom County, WA, US Temporary moratorium on unrefined fossil fuel infrastructure (2016); [Report](#) This became [permanent in 2021](#).
- Tacoma, WA, US Temporary moratorium on new fossil fuel facilities (2017): [Report](#)

- Broomfield, CO, US Temporary moratorium on oil and gas operations (2019): [News article](#)
- Boulder County, CO, US Temporary moratorium on oil and gas development (2019): [News article](#)

Permanent Restrictions on New or Expanded Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

Explainer

Communities facing new or expanded fossil fuel infrastructure can pass permanent restrictions to give them long term protection with or without passing a temporary moratorium first. Permanent restrictions can apply to one or more of the following: bulk fossil fuel storage, pipelines, refineries, power plants, pipes and/or compressors, oil train terminals, extraction equipment, fossil fuel loading and unloading, all oil and gas extraction, and new gas stations.

Examples

- Vancouver, BC, Canada Prohibition on coal shipping and storage (2013): News Article [Policy](#)
- Santa Cruz County, CA, US Prohibition on all oil and gas development (2014): [News Article](#)
- South Portland, ME, US Prohibition on fossil fuel loading (2014): [News Article](#)
- Hoquiam, WA, US Prohibition on bulk oil storage (2015): [Report](#) [Memorandum](#) [Minutes](#)
- Aberdeen, WA, US Prohibition on crude oil storage and handling (2016): [Report](#) [Policy](#)
- Vancouver, WA, US Prohibition on new or expanded fossil fuel storage (2016): [Press Release](#) [Policy](#)
- Portland, OR, US Prohibition on bulk storage expansion (2016): [News Article](#)
- Baltimore, MD, US Prohibition on new crude oil train terminals (2018): [Report](#)
- Port of Vancouver, WA, US Prohibition on new bulk fossil fuel terminals (2019): [News article](#)
- Culver City, CA, US Prohibition on new oil and gas extraction (2020): [Report](#)
- King County, WA, US Prohibition on new storage (2020): [Press release](#)
- Richmond, CA, US Prohibition on coal shipping (2020): [News Article](#)
- Petaluma, CA, US Prohibition on new gas stations (2021): [News article](#)
- Whatcom County, WA, US Permanent moratorium on unrefined fossil fuel infrastructure (2021), making Whatcom County the first place in the US to use land-use code amendments to permanently prohibit new refineries, fossil fuel transshipment facilities, new piers, and wharfs or coal facilities [News article](#) [Essay](#)

Electrification Policies

Explainer

Policies like reach, stretch, and step codes that require significant electrification of new construction, existing buildings, or transit are important SAFE Cities policies. For new construction, the electrification

must require electric space heating and ideally also includes water heating, cooking (the number one source of indoor air pollution from gas), and fireplaces. For retrofitting existing buildings, the policy should require conversion to electric appliances over time as appliances need replacing. For jurisdictions that can not directly pass these policies, policies that indirectly achieve significant decreases in fossil fuel use, such as those being passed on new construction in British Columbia, Canada, are also SAFE Cities policies. Policies that only pertain to municipal buildings are not SAFE policies. For public transit the policy must require that all new transit vehicles purchases are 100% electric. For each of these kinds of policies, there must be requirements. Voluntary or incentivized measures – while good first steps – are not SAFE Cities policies.

Examples

- Vancouver, BC, Canada new building electrification (2016): [Building plan](#)
 - Berkeley, CA, US new building electrification (2019): [Policy](#)
 - Mountain View, CA, US new building electrification (2019): [Policy](#)
 - New York City, NY, US existing building electrification (2019): [Policy](#)
 - Vancouver, BC, Canada existing building and transportation electrification (2020): [News article](#)
 - Sacramento, CA, US ordinance for new building electrification and a resolution establishing a framework for existing building electrification and directing the evaluation of water conservation and equitable electrification [Ordinance](#) [Resolution](#)
-

Template Resolution on SAFE Cities and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (the Treaty)

A RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY, COMMITTING TO POLICIES OPPOSING FOSSIL FUEL EXPANSION AND ACCELERATING THE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION AS PART OF THE SAFE CITIES MOVEMENT, AND ENDORSING THE CALL FOR A GLOBAL FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.

WHEREAS, our entire community [is/will be] impacted by the health and safety risks of fossil fuel expansion, and particularly those who also face socioeconomic and health inequities, including youth, elders, Indigenous people, people of color, low-income people, those experiencing mental and physical disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and people with health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure and expanded reliance on fossil fuels exposes communities to untenable risks to the public's health and safety at the local and global levels; and

WHEREAS, the economic opportunities presented by a clean energy transition far outweigh the opportunities presented by an economy supported by expanding fossil fuel use and extraction; and

WHEREAS, our community is committed to a just energy transition and to appropriate investments that offset the impacts of evolving industries and employment as well as ambitious investments in the green infrastructure and industries that will create jobs, decarbonize our economy, and reduce future climate change; and

(not applicable everywhere) WHEREAS, pursuant to the [state, regional, or national] [governing document], the general police powers granted to [city, county, or other local jurisdiction] empower and authorize [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] to adopt land use controls to provide for the regulation of land uses within the [city, county, or other local jurisdiction] and to provide that such uses shall be consistent with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, the [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] fully recognizes the limits to its authority over [transportation of certain goods or other activities] imposed by [laws/statutes of appropriate national governing document], and finds that this action is within its authority; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] declares [or “reaffirms our declaration” if a declaration has been made earlier by the jurisdiction] that a climate and ecological emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] opposes the rollback of climate policy at any level of government, affirms its ongoing commitment to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, and pledges to meet its proportionate greenhouse gas reductions under the Paris Climate Agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] endorses the call for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that will end new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C, and accelerate equitable transition plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] urges the [nation] government to support the initiative for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the [government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] intends to implement policies limiting or preventing fossil fuel expansion and promoting electrification as part of the SAFE Cities movement because of the inherent dangers to the public’s health and safety in extraction, transport, storage, and combustion of fossil fuels; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the [staff or appropriate department of government of city, county, or other jurisdiction] are directed/requested to explore and develop SAFE Cities policy recommendations within 90 days in keeping with our local law-making power that limit fossil fuel infrastructure expansion and promote electrification and a clean energy future in order to protect public health and safety.

Making the Case for Phasing Out Fossil Fuels at the Local Level by Building SAFE Cities and Communities: Health, Jobs, and Financial Risk

Right now, local governments are deeply and rightly concerned with managing the twin public health and economic crises brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Investing in a green recovery and phasing out fossil fuels has the ability to address both, while also serving as a tangible next steps for municipalities' climate action plans or climate emergency declarations.

It's clear that tackling air pollution is essential to reducing people's vulnerability to COVID-19, and reducing fossil fuel production and combustion is essential to improving air quality. At the same time, local governments have a huge opportunity to create jobs and accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy by investing in green 'shovel-ready' projects.

In many places across the U.S., Canada, and around the globe, local governments are already playing a crucial leadership role by deploying their local land use powers to pass SAFE policies that accelerate the clean energy transition while systematically stopping fossil fuel expansion. Policies range from preventing fossil fuel companies from acquiring the local permits they need to build any bulk fossil fuel project, to mandating all-electric homes, to banning the construction of new gas stations within city limits – and much more.

This movement, geared toward keeping communities safe from explosions, spills, and pollution, means that instead of investing limited resources in evaluating fossil fuel projects one by one, local government leaders are freed up to build the clean energy infrastructure that we so desperately need. **This [essay from SAFE Cities team member Nathan Taft in Grist](#) is a great explainer on the power of the SAFE Cities approach and includes details several of the critical wins so far in the movement.**

This briefing note includes more details and references on the health risks and economic benefits of enacting policies to keep communities safe from fossil fuel expansion.

To learn more about local government leadership in action or to pass policies in your own community to restrict fossil fuel expansion, visit Stand.earth's SAFE Cities website at: <https://www.stand.earth/safe>

Cleaner Air Saves Lives

It's clear that tackling air pollution is essential to improving people's overall health and reducing their vulnerability to COVID-19, and limiting fossil fuel production and combustion is a key way to improve air quality and community safety.

Fossil fuels and air pollution deaths

- **Fossil fuel pollution causes deaths on par with smoking.** [New research](#) has estimated annual deaths from fossil fuel air pollution in 2018 to be 8.7 million, more than twice earlier estimates, which were already striking. A [Marketplace piece on the study](#) notes this puts deaths from fossil fuels pollution roughly on par with those from smoking. Gernot Wagner, a climate and environmental economist at New York University quoted in the piece said, "We are doing lots of things to avoid deaths from COVID-19. One of the worst things we could be doing is stimulating our economy with measures that then lead to more deaths on the fossil fuel front."
- The vast majority of fossil fuel infrastructure, operations, and pollution is in communities and neighborhoods where residents are low income, Indigenous, people of color, or otherwise marginalized. The [impacts](#) include higher incidence of premature and low-birth weight babies, heart disease, cancer, respiratory disease, etc.
- [**In California alone, air pollution from fossil fuels causes an estimated 12,000 deaths every year.**](#)
- **Studies have linked fine pollution particles called PM_{2.5} to many other detrimental health effects**, including aggravated asthma and decreased lung function, according to the [U.S. EPA](#). Fossil fuel refining and automobile exhaust are major sources of PM_{2.5}

Air pollution and Covid-19

- [Research at Harvard University](#) shows a strong relationship between exposure to air pollution and mortality from COVID-19. For every slight increase in the pollutant PM_{2.5} there is an 8% increase in the death rate from COVID-19. Environmental racism ensures that communities of color are more likely to be exposed to this pollutant long term.
- **Black and Latino people are especially vulnerable to COVID, and are more likely to live in communities with higher air pollution.** Articles from the [Guardian](#) and the [New York Times](#) show the much higher death rate from COVID-19 for Black people across the nation and for Black and Latino people in New York City. The [Environmental Working Group](#) says: "Studies have clearly established that communities of color are disproportionately exposed

to sharply higher levels of long-term air pollution because they are closer to congested streets and highways, as well as refineries and power plants. [A 2011 study](#) by researchers at the University of Southern California and the RAND Corporation found that African Americans in California were 2.5 times more likely to go to the hospital as a result of air pollution. That may help explain why African Americans make up a disproportionate share of COVID-19 deaths in many areas.”

Gas threatens indoor air quality and community safety

- **Gas appliances lead to toxic indoor air.** [A UCLA study](#) commissioned by the Sierra Club showed that exhaust from gas appliances produces carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide exposures that exceed national and California standards in 90% of the homes modeled. Growing up in a house with gas stoves [increases a child's risk of developing asthma symptoms by 42%](#). An aerosol scientist recently recorded [dramatic, sustained increases in carbon dioxide levels](#) throughout his home from cooking with a gas stove. Higher than normal carbon dioxide levels are bad for human health and likely are markers for numerous other pollutants.
- **The impact from gas appliances is worse in smaller households, especially smaller apartments, disproportionately harming low-income people.** As the [Sierra Club](#) put it, “the air quality inside nearly every apartment [with a gas stove] was so bad that it would be illegal if measured outside.”
- **Gas infrastructure increases health and safety risks to communities.** [Storage wells, operating pipelines](#), and [cut pipelines](#) threaten community health and safety in California and across the country, and [gas leaks and explosions threaten first responders](#) as well as occupants. [The former chief of the San Francisco Fire Department Joanne Hayes-White co-wrote an opinion post with San Francisco Supervisor Rafael Mandelman](#) on the reasons it's time to get off gas. Among them are the **more than 75 gas leaks or emergencies reported every hour in California alone.**

Job Opportunities in a Green Recovery

By investing in home electrification, home insulation, transportation electrification, and renewable energy capacity, municipal leaders can help create good, lasting jobs while improving their constituents' health and quality of life.

- **All-electric new home construction could be a net job creator.** A [study by Inclusive Economics and UCLA's Luskin Center for Innovation](#) on the job impacts of switching to all-electric for new construction shows job growth in the construction industry rather than job losses. As the [Sierra Club](#) puts it, “The analysis reveals that electrifying 100% of California’s

existing and new buildings by 2045 would create over 100,000 full-time equivalent jobs, even after accounting for losses in the fossil fuel industry.”

- **Fossil fuel industry jobs pay less and are more dangerous.** This [primer from the NAACP](#) outlines how jobs created by the fossil fuel industry pay less and involve more risks, including high rates of exposure to toxins versus new energy economy jobs.
- **Investments in green energy yield more jobs.** As a Spring 2020 piece in [the Verge](#) notes, “renewables like solar and wind create more jobs per unit of energy delivered than coal or natural gas, a [2010 study](#) published in the journal Energy Policy found. While \$1 million in stimulus spending on oil and natural gas generated roughly five jobs, the same amount would result in 13 to 14 jobs in wind and solar, a [2009 report](#) found.”
- **“When this first started, they said jobs would leave and all that. And jobs have not left, and also the industry keeps profiting. With this moratorium in place, it’s just protecting the people of Whatcom County and the environment.”** – [Whatcom County Councilmember Carol Frazey speaking about their unrefined fossil fuel export moratorium](#). Instead, Whatcom has added hundreds of jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors over the time that the moratorium has been in place.
- **There is a demand for workers in the new energy economy.** Job sites show [high demand for workers with expertise in electric heating and cooling systems](#).
- **Communities can help workers transition to the new energy economy.** [Providing training and retraining programs](#) for workers is a critical step to ensuring a just transition.

Financial Risks from a Dying Industry

The world is moving to a new energy economy and fossil fuel companies are declining. Phasing out fossil fuels is the right move for communities and workers.

- **Energy companies have vastly underperformed the rest of the stock market since the late 1980s.** In 1980 fossil fuel companies made up most of the S&P’s top 10 list, but in 2018, only ExxonMobil was in the top 10. In September of 2019, there was not a single fossil fuel company left on the list.
- **Economies built on fossil fuels face worsening prospects.** The Province of Alberta, home to the Canadian Tar Sands and one of the most significant oil producers in the world, has

recently had a GDP higher than the entire US as well as all other Canadian provinces. However, a recent survey shows Albertans are feeling [less economically optimistic than other Canadians](#). Amit Sahasrabudhe, a vice president at the Royal Bank of Canada, says it's likely because of the downturn in oil and gas prices.

- **Investment is moving to green energy.** In this piece in [Politico](#), “Blackrock’s Brian Deese says the world remains ‘at the front end of an historic trend in investor preferences toward sustainability.’” The switch to cleaner, renewable energy is not letting up. Supporting workers and a healthy, resilient economy means training and retraining workers to succeed in the growing new energy economy not the dying fossil fuel economy.
- **Taxpayers are often on the hook when fossil fuel projects fail.** There are tens of thousands of [failing and abandoned oil and gas wells all over California](#), for example, and it could take [\\$550 million in taxpayer funds](#), and potentially much more, to plug them so they don’t pose immediate threats to public health and groundwater in California communities. [Bill McKibben talks about this on a global scale in the New Yorker](#). Peoples Gas in Chicago is behind schedule and over budget for [replacing the city’s leaking gas lines](#), and the transition to electrification may make the system obsolete.

Growing the fossil fuel industry is wrong for communities in terms of health and safety, a green recovery, long term job growth, financial health, and climate. The benefits of communities passing SAFE Cities policies to stop fossil fuel expansion and make a just transition to clean, renewable energy are very clear.