

DurhamChapelHillCoolCities

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By Ray Gronberg, The Herald-Sun
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Sierra Club cites efforts to combat global warming It's official: Durham and Chapel Hill are cool cities.

But when Sierra Club activists say that, they aren't necessarily using "cool" as a synonym for "hip." They mean cool literally, in the sense that both cities are pursuing policies meant to combat global warming.

Mayors Bill Bell and Kevin Foy have both signed resolutions committing their governments to trying to achieve a 7 percent reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases by 2012.

"There's a lot of denial going on about global warming," Foy said Tuesday after he and Bell accepted "cool city" certificates from club activists. "We have recognized that it's real ... and we're trying to solve it at the local level."

Sierra Club leaders say Durham and Chapel Hill are just two of the 183 U.S. cities whose mayors have signed the pledge.

During Tuesday's ceremony, Bell said Durham's government has tried to honor its pledge by telling the designers of its planned performing arts center and downtown transit station to make the buildings "as energy efficient as possible," to cut down on fuel use and emissions.

Sierra Club member John Schelp added that the city/county comprehensive plan and the still-unpassed "unified development ordinance" would discourage urban sprawl.

Chapel Hill Town Councilman Bill Strom, who introduced Foy, said Chapel Hill has discouraged road widenings and made its bus system fare-free in hopes of cutting pollution.

The free system is "a remarkable success" that appears likely to serve more than 6 million riders this year, he said.

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