

SUSTAINABILITY

## Pollutive Reactions

by Danielle Miguel



*Urbanization presents new challenges when it comes to environmental health and sustainability. These three American cities have sought to address various forms of pollution through policy, regulation, and community engagement.*

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As cities across the nation look for greener and more eco-friendly approaches to going about daily life, planning teams behind local initiatives confront barriers to making our urban spaces more environmentally friendly, healthy, and sustainable. But along with the push toward green cities, risks from familiar pollutants remain — and these risks have inspired a call for better oversight and legislation. The cause is led by local communities, governments, and NGOs seeking to foster and sustain healthier living environments. Here are some of the ways cities across the country have dealt with pollution problems.

## Richmond, California: Air Pollution

Experiencing the impacts of air pollution, Richmond, California is home to the East Bay's largest oil refinery, Chevron. The refinery releases an abundance of air pollutants daily. Air pollution in the area has led to severe health effects, including some of the highest rates of asthma in the state. Local agencies like the Bay Area Air Quality Management District propose rules to track pollution and reduce emissions. Air pollution in the area has also been addressed through community responses – groups like Communities for a Better Environment want to push for outside parties to police the refineries, instead of relying on audits conducted by the refineries themselves.

## Flint, Michigan: Water Pollution

National headlines have shed light on issues of water management in urban areas. Recognizing the problem of water pollution in large cities like Flint, Michigan, state and local representatives have demonstrated the positive effect that environmental legislation can have on the wellbeing of affected communities. The governor of Michigan and a group of advisors established a set of proposals on how to address the water pollution that resulted from corrosive pipes in the city. The groups' proposals laid out plans to install pipe replacements in the city, inform customers of the lead level status of their pipes, and established a system for annual testing and corrosion control. Attention and engagement at the state level has made Flint's environmental health and urban sustainability a key focus.

## New York, New York: Noise Pollution

Known as the “city that never sleeps,” NYC is a place where life is fast-paced and uninterrupted... until you start to realize you can't get a good night's rest. To combat excessive and unnecessary noise pollution within the city, the New York City Environmental Protection group established noise standards – construction is restricted to certain times of day, household pets must be quiet, and food vending and restaurant music

has to keep volume below a certain level. It's a move that is meant to ensure that the city, despite its dense population, is not constrained to the "menaces to public health, comfort, [and] convenience."

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