

May 18, 2026

MEMO TO: David Raatz, Director of Council Services

F R O M: Joshua Edington, Legislative Analyst *JWE*

SUBJECT: **WEBINAR ON HOW CITIES AND STATES ARE LEADING ON CLIMATE SOLUTIONS** (PAF 25-010(27))

I attended a webinar titled “Local Power, Global Impact: How Cities and States Are Leading on Climate Solutions” webinar on May 4, 2026. The webinar was hosted by the Grist media organization and Climate Mayors, a national network of more than 350 city and county mayors, including Mayor Bissen. The webinar was moderated by Grist staff writer Jake Bittle and featured Mayor Lauren McLean of Boise, Idaho; Mayor Justin Bibb of Cleveland, Ohio; and Mayor Eileen Higgins of Miami, Florida. The discussion focused on how local governments are responding to climate-related challenges through housing, transportation, infrastructure, and land-use policies despite reductions in federal support. A video of the webinar has been posted online: <https://vimeo.com/1189390922>.

Federal climate funding and local government challenges

The panel discussed the changing role of the federal government in supporting local climate initiatives.

- Panelists noted that many climate-related grants and funding opportunities have been paused, delayed, or reduced.
- Several speakers emphasized that local governments are increasingly operating without a strong federal partner on climate policy.
- The mayors discussed the challenge of balancing local-government budgets while continuing to address costly climate-related infrastructure and resiliency needs.
- Speakers emphasized that local governments must continue advancing practical climate solutions despite political or financial challenges at the federal and state levels.

Housing, transportation, and land-use strategies

The panelists discussed the relationship among climate policy, housing affordability, and transportation planning.

- Mayor Higgins discussed Miami's efforts to encourage affordable housing near transit corridors to reduce commuting costs and vehicle dependence.
 - Miami is expanding opportunities for accessory-dwelling units and reducing parking requirements to encourage denser housing development.
- Mayor McLean discussed Boise's zoning reforms intended to allow housing closer to employment centers, parks, and services.
 - Boise has developed preapproved ADU designs to simplify permitting and encourage additional housing construction.
- Panelists emphasized that transit-oriented development and increased housing density can reduce energy use and transportation emissions while improving affordability and livability.

Climate adaptation and resiliency infrastructure

The mayors discussed various approaches to addressing climate vulnerabilities in their communities.

- Mayor Higgins discussed Miami's ongoing flooding and sea-level rise concerns, including drainage improvements, pump projects, raised roads, permeable pavement requirements, and bioswale infrastructure.
 - Miami is also planting additional trees and improving municipal buildings' energy efficiency through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards.
- Mayor McClean Discussed Boise's use of geothermal energy to heat buildings and reduce energy consumption.

- Boise is also developing long-term transit and open-space planning efforts intended to reduce urban sprawl and improve walkability.
- Speakers noted that climate-mitigation and -resiliency projects are often expensive and may require long-term infrastructure investments.

Communication and political challenges

Audience members asked how local officials communicate climate initiatives in politically divided environments.

- Mayor Higgins explained that some projects are framed around flooding, resiliency, infrastructure, or cost savings rather than broader climate terminology.
- Speakers discussed efforts to encourage recycling and reduce methane emissions through composting programs.
- Panelists acknowledged challenges associated with electrifying commercial kitchens and restaurants.
- Audience members also raised concerns about the growing energy and water demands associated with artificial intelligence and data centers.

Dream projects and long-term goals

The panelists concluded by discussing long-term climate and infrastructure goals for their communities.

- Mayor Higgins stated that completing Miami's flooding-mitigation projects would be a major long-term goal.
- Mayor McClean discussed expanding access to parks and developing water-recycling infrastructure to preserve potable water supplies.
- The speakers emphasized the importance of designing infrastructure and communities to accommodate future climate conditions and population growth.

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Thank you for the opportunity to attend this informative webinar. If you would like additional information, please contact me at ext. 6119.

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