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Cownie calls for federal money to aid local environmental efforts

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Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie has called for \$2 billion in new federal spending annually to help local governments pay for an array of environmental initiatives.

Cownie made the pitch to about 20 residents today inside the new shelter located at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, 1640 Garfield Ave.

The outline of climate change and environmental initiatives endorsed by Cownie comes from **Climate Communities** and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, two organizations that advocate for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The groups hope to recruit 500 local officials from around the country to back the plan this month.

"Everybody on the face of this Earth is looking at the United States to step out and lead on these initiatives," said Cownie, who has made environmentalism one of the signature issues of his time as mayor.

Beyond environmental benefits, Cownie said the initiatives also save local governments money, an especially important factor amid the nation's financial crisis.

The blueprint calls upon the 111th Congress and President-elect Barack Obama to provide more money to local governments for various programs that promote renewable energy, expand the size of hybrid automobile fleets, reduce carbon emissions from public buildings and strengthen urban forestry programs, among other initiatives.

"Let's hope there is a will on the part of our elected officials to move some of these recommendations forward to start making a difference," Cownie said. "We know that over the next 10, 20, 30, 40 years that we need to change a lot of the ways that we do business."
