

OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS | OCTOBER 18, 2004 ISSUE

GREEN MANHATTAN

*Everywhere should be more like New York.***BY DAVID OWEN**Green Manhattan *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2004 P. 111

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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS about why New York is the greenest city in the United States... Writer says that after college he and his wife settled in a utopian environmental community in New York State. They lived in a small space, without a dishwasher, garbage disposal, a lawn or a car... The utopian community was Manhattan. Most Americans think of New York City as an ecological nightmare, but in comparison with the rest of America, it is a model of environmental responsibility... New York is one of the greenest cities in the world... 82% of Manhattan residents travel to work by public transit. If New York City were granted statehood, it would rank fifty-first in per-capita energy use... The key to new York's environmental benignity is its extreme compactness... Tells about moving to a small town in rural Connecticut. Our move was an ecological catastrophe... New York City's extraordinary energy efficiency arises from the characteristics that make it surreally synthetic... Dense cities are scalable, while sprawling suburbs are not. Discusses the historical and geographic accidents that produced New York's remarkable population density. Compares Los Angeles and Washington D.C. to New York. Tells about the way that Washington's parks and wide boulevards reduce urban vitality by preventing people from moving freely. Mentions Jane Jacobs's "The Death and Life of Great American Cities." Writer contacts a representative of the Sierra Club's Challenge to Sprawl initiative and says that Manhattan meets many of their anti-sprawl suggestions. The

representative agrees, but says that emulating New York is not appealing to the people the Sierra Club is trying to persuade... Environmentalists tend to treat New York as an exception rather than an example. Compares New York to Phoenix. Phoenix, whose population is a little more than twice that of Manhattan, covers more than two hundred times as much land. Discusses the idea that New York's traffic congestion urges drivers to take public transportation. Tells about the blackout of 2003. Much of the blame was placed on New York, but people who live in New York use less than half as much electricity as people who don't. Tells about the high property taxes paid by Con Ed... Discusses energy-efficient building architecture, comparing 4 Times Square (The Conde Nast Building), where The New Yorker's offices are located, to the Rocky Mountain Institute's headquarters in Colorado. If you divided the Conde Nast Building into forty-eight one-story suburban office buildings, added parking and green space, you'd end up consuming at least a hundred and fifty acres of land. The R.M.I.'s famous headquarters is sprawl... Discusses the minimal ecological benefits of recycling... Tells about the environmental damage caused by cars. Mentions David Goodstein's "Out of Gas: The End of the Age of Oil."

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David Owen has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 1991.

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