



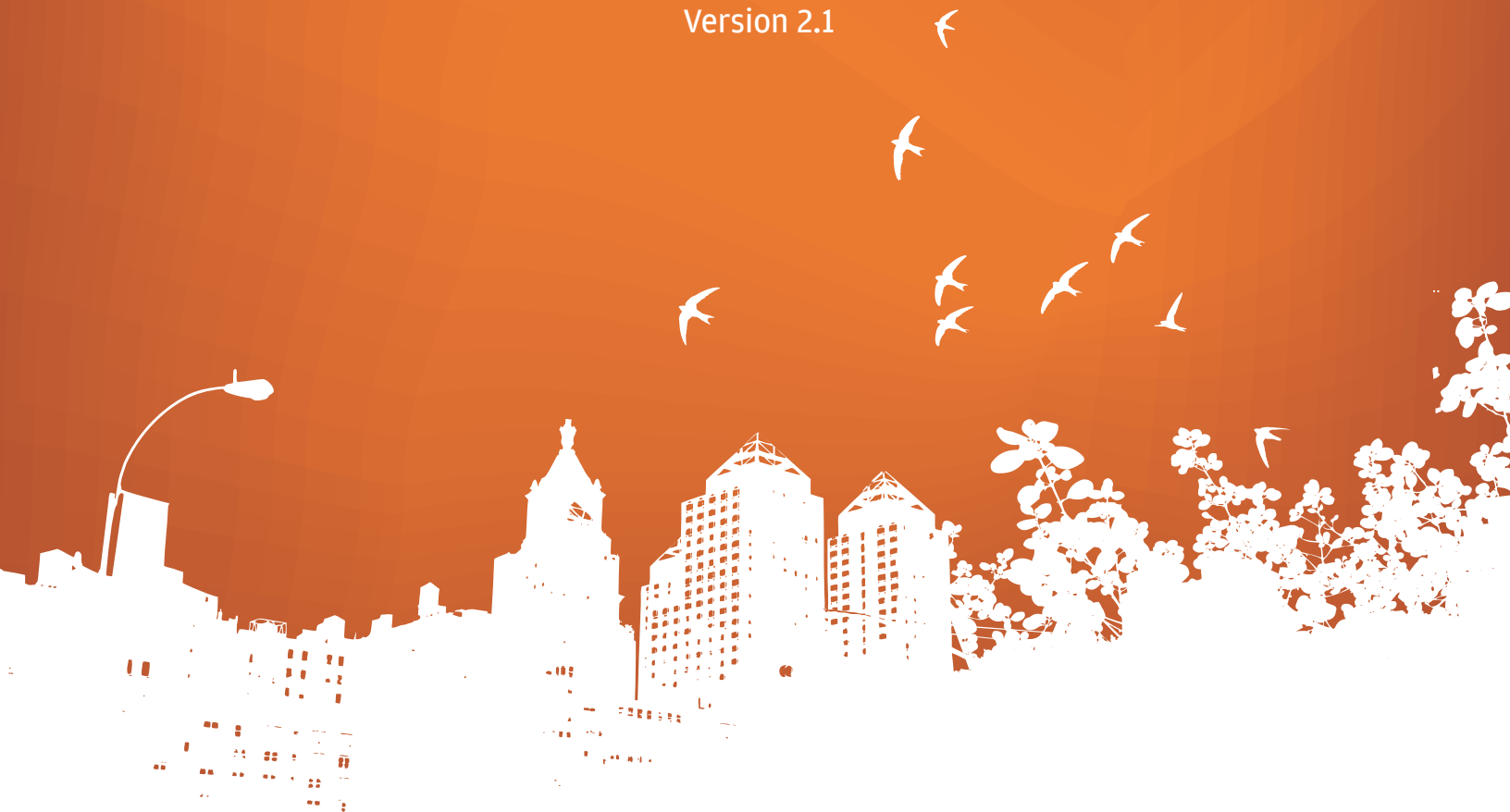
INSTITUTE FOR  
Sustainable  
Communities

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

# Creating, Leading, & Managing Change

A Resource Guide for Local Sustainability Leaders

Version 2.1





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Produced with Support from our Founding Partner

**SIEMENS**

and



THE KRESGE FOUNDATION



## Acknowledgements

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The ISC team that researched, wrote, and reviewed this Guide include Nathaly Agosto Filión, Mike Crowley, Sarah McKearnan, Steve Nicholas and Rebecca Webber. Simeon Chapin designed the Guide and accompanying materials.

In researching and producing the Resource Guide, ISC consulted with a majority of sustainability practitioners that participated in the Urban Sustainability Leadership Academy as well as with more than a dozen leading sustainability practitioners from across North America.

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### About the Institute for Sustainable Communities

Since its founding in 1991 by former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, ISC has led 80 transformative, community-driven projects in 24 countries. ISC specializes in developing and delivering highly successful training and technical assistance programs that improve the effectiveness of communities and the leaders and institutions that support them.

### About the Sustainable Communities Leadership Academy

The Sustainable Communities Leadership Academy (SCLA) is a peer-learning, training and technical assistance program designed to help communities advance, accelerate and scale-up local solutions to the global challenges of climate protection and sustainable development. The Academy's mission is to build the capacity of practitioners, institutions and communities to take more, and more effective, action to increase resource efficiency, reduce climate pollution, create new business development and job opportunities, and bolster resilience to local climate impacts.

### We welcome your feedback!

This Resource Guide is a work-in-progress. It will be maintained as a web-based resource and updated to provide valuable resources to senior-level sustainability leaders working to achieve results in sustainable practices throughout their local governments and communities. If you have comments on the Guide, or ideas for how to improve it, please send them to Michael Crowley at the Institute for Sustainable Communities at [mcrowley@iscvt.org](mailto:mcrowley@iscvt.org).

This Resource Guide was printed on 100% recycled paper.



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Institutionalizing  
Sustainability

Leaning on  
Leverage Points

Building  
Relationships

Delivering &  
Demonstrating Value

Integrating Across  
the Community

Sustaining & Financing  
Sustainability



## Introduction & Overview

### The Purpose of this Resource Guide

This Resource Guide complements the Urban Sustainability Leadership Academy (USLA) on Creating, Leading, and Managing Change—a unique training and peer learning workshop for senior-level sustainability directors and managers designed and delivered by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) on June 6-8, 2012 in Denver, CO. The purpose of the USLA is to strengthen the capacity of sustainability directors and managers to develop and implement a wide range of sustainability initiatives, and to institutionalize sustainability in their municipalities, and in the broader communities within which they work. Toward this end, the USLA is focused on showcasing effective leadership tools, frameworks, and strategies, and sharing the stories of successful leaders.

Five years ago there were perhaps a few dozen people across the U.S. and Canada who held the position of sustainability director; today, there are several hundred such positions, at least – and the profession continues to grow rapidly. This expanding cadre of local government sustainability leaders is hungry for customized training, technical assistance and professional development opportunities; relatively new practitioners are especially interested in opportunities to be with, and learn from, their more experienced counterparts in other communities. New resources are emerging, including the Urban Sustainability Director’s Network (USDN), and regional spin-offs of that network are emerging throughout the country. The USDN, a network of approximately 100 local government sustainability directors, has helped define the field by working toward a national professional development strategy (see Leadership Toolkit, page 31, for some initial outcomes of this work).

The USLA, including this Resource Guide, supports and advances this work. In the following pages, we:

- provide a summary of interviews on leadership with over 100 USLA participants;
- distill the views, perspectives, and advice from experienced sustainability directors (affectionately referred to as the “wily veterans”) (page 7);
- review the results of three, high-quality surveys of sustainability directors across the U.S. (page 28);
- offer an evolving list of some of the best tools, strategies, frameworks, and books on sustainability leadership (page 31); and
- provide in-depth case studies on sustainability leadership in a local government context (page 55).

### What do we mean by creating, leading, and managing change?

Local government sustainability directors and managers throughout North America have a monumental mission: not just to foster “random acts of sustainability,” but to *institutionalize* sustainability in their municipalities and communities. Their ultimate goal is to integrate sustainability principles and goals into *everything* that their local governments do – from the kind of buildings they build and cars they drive to the ways in which they seek to build and grow the economy; in other words, to make sustainability part of the



government's corporate culture and standard operating procedures. And, as if that wasn't challenging enough, most have a broader mandate to catalyze sustainability *community-wide* – to partner with residents, households, neighborhoods, businesses and other major institutions to integrate sustainability goals and practices into what *they* do, in ways that enhance the long-term, economic, environment and social health of the whole community and region.

To make the task even more daunting, most sustainability directors have little if any formal authority, and small budgets and staffs, to work with. To better understand what it takes to succeed in this context, ISC interviewed several participants attending this USLA workshop, participants from the first and second USLA workshops (offered in July and November, 2011), as well as several “veteran” sustainability directors from across North America. These interviews revealed five main themes, each addressing an essential piece of a holistic leadership approach: Building Relationships; Delivering and Demonstrating Value; Leaning on Leverage Points; Integrating Across the Community; and Sustaining & Financing Sustainability.



***Building Relationships.*** Sustainability directors cannot be effective in a vacuum. Rather, they need to work across multiple departments and constituencies and persuade stakeholders to make what in some cases may be significant changes. To achieve these objectives, sustainability directors need excellent collaboration skills and the ability to build trust and credibility. Successful directors get to know people personally, and prioritize ways to be of service, rather than relying solely on advocacy. They let people come to their own conclusions about sustainability, but inspire in them a shared vision of the future.

***Delivering and Demonstrating Value.*** All sustainability directors must deliver unique value to their governments and demonstrate the viability of their work to the community. While it can be tempting to begin by aiming high through ambitious policies or programs, the most effective efforts start first at a manageable scale. This can simultaneously demonstrate the value of sustainability projects on the ground, build capacity and confidence, and gain visibility among implementation partners.



***Leaning on Leverage Points.*** To maximize impact, most sustainability leaders closely monitor the most influential aspects of government and the community. Identified here as “leverage points,” these areas provide opportunities to multiply the effect of sustainability efforts by tapping into existing momentum and priorities. For some, this strategy may include becoming involved in setting new economic priorities such as downtown revitalization. Finding and acting on leverage points requires the ability to identify common themes between sustainability objectives and a community's priorities, and the ability to join the decision-making process.

***Integrating Across the Community.*** Sustainability is most effective when it is integrated into a government and community's visioning process and infused into daily life. Integration can be achieved through practical means such as adopting policies, codes, and accountability systems, or through cross-sector activities that bring departments or sectors together for a common cause. Many sustainability



directors work toward integration by helping stakeholders identify and build programs, and then move toward a support role as the programs take root.



***Sustaining & Financing Sustainability.*** Over time, sustainability offices can be exposed to a number of potentially destabilizing forces, including changes in administration, budget cuts, and shifts in political priorities. Today, many directors rely on the Department of Energy’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) to fund their programs. These grants are set to expire soon, forcing many to seek alternative means to sustain their work. While these forces can be difficult for everyone in government, it is possible to position the sustainability office as a stabilizing force that is beneficial to all. Many offices have found success through entrepreneurial means, helping others in the government to innovate new, high-value programs. Others have developed organizational models that integrate their function and value deeper into the core of government operations.







# Perspectives From The Field







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## Perspectives from the Field

### *Observations and Lessons Learned by the “Wily Veterans”*

To illustrate leading approaches and perspectives related to the USLA leadership themes (see page 3), we summarized the feedback and insights that ISC collected by interviewing leading, long-term sustainability directors, affectionately referred to here as the “wily veterans.” Asked about significant stories, lessons learned, and what they “wish they had known” when they started their tenures, these practitioners shared valuable insights for all sustainability directors.

#### **Building Relationships**

According to **Bob Doppelt**, director of The Resource Innovation Group (TRIG), and a leading researcher on sustainability in local government, many new sustainability practitioners have strong technical backgrounds, which can lead them to prioritize technical solutions first. Yet, Doppelt says, without first understanding the mindset of an organization, purely technical solutions are inadequate. Numerous others who we interviewed echoed this notion, suggesting that getting to know an organization’s key players on a personal level allows for more systemic change. By building relationships first, successful practitioners gain the trust of their colleagues, acquire new insights, and identify opportunities that would be impossible to recognize otherwise.

“If I had not deferred to their expertise, if I had just been all high and mighty about the approach, they could have quickly spurned that and not have been cooperative. You’ve got to become very strategic about how those relationships are built.”

- *John Coleman*

When **John Coleman** began his tenure as Sustainability Director for the City of Fayetteville, Arkansas, he knew that he was starting at a disadvantage. He was tasked with improving the energy efficiency of city buildings, which were operated mostly by lifelong maintenance personnel. He realized that if he were to start by going to their offices with suggestions for improvements, it would be an immediate affront to their many years of work and experience.

Coleman recalls, “If I had not deferred to their expertise, if I had just been all high and mighty about the approach, they could have quickly spurned that and not have been cooperative. You’ve got to become very strategic about how those relationships are built.”

His strategy was therefore to listen first, defer to their expertise, and discover how he could be of *service* to his colleagues. Coleman quickly discovered that the first priority of the maintenance staff was to reduce the burden of maintaining aging, inefficient HVAC equipment. Seeing an opportunity, he helped to secure a performance contract to replace the equipment. With an old burden removed, maintenance staff recognized that Coleman could secure funding for their projects. He also effectively guided his colleagues to draw their own conclusions about what sustainability could mean to them—namely, an innovative means to address maintenance issues while improving efficiency.



When it came time to recognize the project's success, Coleman gave all of the credit to the maintenance staff. This move provided them with a well-deserved sense of pride and ownership over the work, and a willingness to champion the cause of sustainability into the future.

According to **Mandy Mahoney**, former Sustainability Director for the City of Atlanta, Georgia, providing this type of credit is crucial. "The system changes because people change," she says. "It's not about taking the credit, but making the unsung heroes get the credit that they need to feel supported." She has found that this strategy often energizes people to "go forth and spread that sustainability religion to other people." She adds: "If you just stay within the little sustainability office, you'll never get system-wide change."

In her efforts to build relationships, **Gayle Prest**, Sustainability Director for the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota, says that "because you're asking people to do things differently, you're not necessarily going to be well loved." She finds that she's often in the odd position of talking to people in higher positions in government about things that she'd like them to do. She believes the key to her success is ensuring that they know that she's "willing to get [her] hands dirty and help them figure stuff out. Writing policies or setting up awkward meetings, or meeting with elected official on certain things. I'm willing to get in there."

“The system changes because people change. It's not about taking credit, but making the unsung heroes get the credit that they need to feel supported.”

- **Mandy Mahony**

**Leslie Ethen**, Sustainability Director at the City of Tucson, Arizona tells of a similar situation where she was caught up in a power struggle between the City Manager's office and another major department. "I couldn't rely on my position in the City Manager's office to get things done because it would just look like ... top-down control," she recalls. "I had to start from the bottom up." She began by working with the department to identify sustainability strategies that they'd like to pursue, but were constrained, either by lack of resources or political opposition. She made it clear that she "wasn't there to tell them what to do," but rather, she was "there to be a resource." After several small collaborations, Ethen was able to establish trust and work largely outside of political tensions.

### Delivering and Demonstrating Value

**Susan Anderson**, Sustainability Director for Portland, Oregon, advises practitioners to "think of yourself like a small business that is doing needs assessments of your customers." Mahoney agrees, adding that this practice requires the agility of an entrepreneur; she says, "Do good, build it up, then expand."

The most common starting point is through small pilot projects, which build the institutional capacity for larger initiatives. Coleman learned this lesson the hard way. "I really wanted to make a splash when I got here," he said. He began by writing city-wide policies on issues like procurement. Yet, the policies were not effective because he had not yet laid the groundwork for their adoption. It was then that he started working on smaller initiatives, such as helping to install occupancy sensors in bathrooms. He recalls, "I was almost annoyed or bothered by working on the really small initiatives. But those things ultimately led to much larger initiatives." His advice: "Work on really small things in the beginning with much larger goals down the road. Don't just jump straight to



trying to create some policy that you think will have a huge impact because some other city has done the same thing.”

Mahoney adds that the most effective way to create sustainability champions is to be strategic about where to start. “The most important advice that was ever given to me was from Gayle Prest before I took the job,” she says. “Her recommendation was to go where there was already momentum and go where there was support from individuals.”

Taking this advice, Mahoney would only pursue projects that had clear resources and political support. This allowed her to gain early wins and credibility more quickly. “More people were able to shift away from [thinking], ‘oh, those crazy green people,’ to ‘wow, they can actually help me.’ And it just built over time.”

Anderson learned that partners across the city needed her good ideas and found the most success by offering “winnable games.” She advises, “bring [your partners] things that they can achieve in a year, even if they’re kind of boutique items. They want to be able to show that they’ve completed something quickly. By giving them opportunities to be in front of the press and have their name out there doing good things, then you’ll be able to get their support for the long-range things that you’re trying to do.”

“By giving them opportunities to be in front of the press and have their name out there doing good things, then you’ll be able to get their support for the long-range things that you’re trying to do.”

- Susan Anderson

**Jim Hunt**, Chief of Environmental & Energy Services for the City of Boston, Massachusetts, recognized that “municipal finances across the country are strapped” and cities are “constantly being asked to do more with less.” In addition, he found that sustainability is sometimes seen in competition with key services such as education, police, and fire service. Given these circumstances, Hunt strives to add value rather than compete for resources. A key step was to hire a dedicated energy management staff. With the big picture in mind, they aggregated utility accounts, engaged in bulk energy purchasing, and implemented energy conservation measures. With utility costs reduced by 30% as a result of their efforts, the city is now able to purchase 12% wind energy annually.

Mahoney followed a similar path by implementing a utility consumption tracking program. Prior to her arrival, the city simply paid its bills every month with no feedback to the facilities staff regarding consumption. By providing measureable data, Mahoney was able to set utility reduction goals and prioritize problem buildings. For her “it was about empowering people to understand the data, then being able to use it to make choices.” By making data visible, and connecting it to management systems, “a much larger base of employees had ownership and alignment around sustainability and it’s become much more part of the culture at city hall.”

### Leaning on Leverage Points

With a budget crisis looming, **Andrew Watterson**, former Sustainability Director for the City of Cleveland, Ohio, found the most leverage by working to reduce the city’s biggest costs. Seeking out directors that empowered him to “ask the right questions,” he focused almost exclusively on



delivering cost savings. Impressed by what Watterson had accomplished, the city's Mayor made the unusual move of appointing Watterson, who was still working under the utility director, to sit on the city's budget committee. He leveraged his position further to make the case for sustainability not just as a city budget solution, but as an economic engine. Seeing the value of this work, the Mayor appointed Watterson to his cabinet, elevating the role of sustainability in the city.

**Adam Freed**, Deputy Director of the Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) in New York, New York, found policy leverage by utilizing air pollution data. Using particulate matter readings from 150 air quality monitors throughout the city, fuel oil combustion in buildings was identified as a primary contributor of exposure to air pollution. The analysis found that 85% of all particulate matter from buildings in New York is the result of combustion from just the 1% of buildings that burn No. 4 and No. 6 fuel oil. Working with the New York City Department of Health, this information was used to quantify the health and health care costs of burning the oil. They found that the oil was responsible for approximately 3,000 deaths, 2,000 hospital admissions for lung and heart conditions, and about 6,000 emergency room visits for asthma every year. With overwhelming evidence of air pollution and health hazards, OLTPS and the Department of Environmental Protection—which regulates heating oil—were able to persuade the Mayor to support a rule to phase out No. 4 and No. 6 oil.

Anderson's approach is to translate the value of sustainability across disciplines. Asserting, "we don't do anything on our own—we do everything in partnership," she has made it a basic practice to demonstrate the value of collaboration, often without even mentioning the word "sustainability." Recognizing that sustainability "means something different to everybody," she explains, "I talk about the things that people really care about, depending on who they are. So if it's business people I might talk about how Portland needs to a leader in sustainable technologies. Or it might be kids' health or helping low-income families save money." The key point, according to Anderson, is to integrate sustainability by "translating the work you are doing into things that people really care about."

### Integration Strategies

The "wily veterans" agree that to achieve long-term systemic transformation, sustainability must be integrated across city government. Hunt has made this principle central to his approach, actively seeking out and elevating leaders in various parts of city government. When developing a city-wide green building program, Hunt found that Boston Public Schools (BPS) had a little-known energy management office that had been in existence for 10 years. He soon connected this office to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and together they created Boston's broader energy management strategy.

“The way this was really going to work was if all these departments saw sustainability not as separate from their jobs but as the ultimate goal of their jobs.”

- Gayle Prest

Prest, an experienced environmental planner, took a similar approach. She made it clear to the Mayor that she did not want to build a sustainability fiefdom. She said, "the way this was really going to work was if all these departments saw sustainability not as separate from their jobs but as the ultimate goal of their jobs." Prest reflects this philosophy in her annual report. "In my annual report I don't allow any department to be named. It's always the city. Psychologically, this breaks



down department roles.” When the report receives press attention, she ensures that City Council Members and key staffers are quoted. This combination works. “Staffers realized that people were taking this seriously, and they wanted to get involved. In the first 18 months they saw it as something that was serious, not a silly pet project.”

According to Mahoney, integration across systems is “multi-pronged; there’s never a silver bullet for anything.” For example, when she heard that the director of IT was interested in tele-working as a safeguard against potential pandemics, she saw a synergy with her carbon reduction goals. Mahoney then connected IT with Human Resources, who saw the project as good way to implement a flexible work policy, while preventing carbon emissions.

“We needed to change our tone to say, there are potential risks, here’s what they are, here’s what we’re doing about them, and our future is clear and bright because we’re taking these things on strategically.”

- Sadhu Johnston

While Mahoney has had many successes with crosscutting initiatives, she admits that it’s work that “you do during the course of doing something else.” She adds, “If it’s your first priority, it’s not going to happen. It’s a tool, it’s a tactic. It’s almost like you’re an artist and you’ve got to figure out what you need to create a great work of art.”

**Sadhu Johnston**, Deputy City Manager for the city of Vancouver, British Columbia, has focused on the impacts that climate change has on the functioning of city departments. By connecting increases in extreme weather events—from heat waves to snowstorms—to on-the-ground impacts and adaptation needs, he has helped city staff take climate risks more seriously and better understand the need for greenhouse gas reduction. A key strategy for Johnston is to emphasize the ways in which staff have been personally affected by climate change in their jobs, whether it’s an increase in the number of potholes that need to be fixed, or the need to spend more on snow plowing, in response to more frequent and severe snowstorms. If you disregard people’s personal experiences, says Johnston, you run the risk of “people just being reactive” to climate change concerns, without “thinking about the fact that it’s all connected” to their day-to-day jobs.

Yet, Johnston also emphasizes the need for positive messaging around the value of sustainability. Reflecting on the climate action plan that he managed when at the City of Chicago, Illinois, he says that he learned that an overreliance on the “doom and gloom” of climate change was counterproductive. While focusing on realistic impacts is critical, in order to get cooperation, he realized he needed to show the value inherent in sustainability. “We needed to change our tone to say, ‘there are potential risks, here’s what they are, here’s what we’re doing about them, and our future is clear and bright because we’re taking these things on strategically.’”

### **Sustaining & Financing Sustainability**

Sustainability, Mahoney says, is “about doing things in a totally different way.” She reflects that this can be especially challenging when working with government staff, who can be “highly demoralized because it is a tough environment to work in.” One trick, she says, is to “recognize that a lot of this is an experiment. Don’t lose faith when something doesn’t work.”



For Hunt, to persevere means to follow through, from strategy to implementation. He warns that, particularly in the area of sustainability, there's a constant temptation and pressure to get distracted by new innovations. "Keeping your eye on the prize is always a challenge," he says. "It's human nature to go after what's new, what's sexy—the green bling, if you will. And it's good to do that, but don't do it at the expense of some of the more cost effective, core, sustainable strategies."

“ Keeping your eye on the prize is always a challenge. It's human nature to go after what's new, what's sexy—the green bling, if you will. And it's good to do that, but don't do it at the expense of some of the more cost effective, core, sustainable strategies. ”

- *Jim Hunt*

Now fully in implementation mode, Prest has found that she spends less time with department directors than she used to. "Now, I hang out with a lot more division directors or managers because they're the ones that are actually trying to figure out how to do something and they're the ones that can slip in a slight ordinance change or a slight modification without having to go up the food chain." The change has allowed her to stay focused on achieving results rather than political positioning.







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## WILY VETERAN SNAPSHOT:



# Leslie Ethen

Director,  
Office of Conservation and Sustainable  
Development

*City of Tucson, AZ*

Years on the Job: 5  
Number of Staff: 4  
Reports to: Assistant City Manager

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## Proudest Accomplishment

### Tucson's Framework for Advancing Sustainability

In the absence of a defined mandate from the City Manager, and with an overload of requests from the City Council, Leslie Ethen created Tucson's *Framework for Advancing Sustainability* to establish city-wide priorities for sustainability. The framework also promoted regional collaboration between the city and other regional entities, and has set the stage for a long-term strategic sustainability program.

Ethen organized the framework by first compiling and categorizing all of the city's existing sustainability commitments. They formed three basic focus areas:

- 1) **Practices** – improving internal operations to model sustainable practices;
- 2) **Policies** – incorporating sustainability principles and goals into plans, funding decisions, and policies that impact the broader community; and
- 3) **Partnerships** – working with other entities and the community at large to address those issues that require community-wide action, specifically climate change mitigation and adaptation.

For each of the focus areas, the framework detailed:

- Broad **goals** concerning the values the City wishes to promote;
- Specific policy **guidance** from the Mayor and Council;
- **Targets** indicating desired long-term performance within the focus area;
- **Initiatives** to address each element of Mayor and Council policy guidance; and
- Potential quantitative success **indicators** for each initiative.<sup>1</sup>

An important element of the framework was the creation of a Climate Change Advisory Committee. While most city advisory committees in Tucson are comprised of ward-based political appointees,

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: The City of Tucson's Framework for Advancing Sustainability. Page 3.  
[http://www.tucsonaz.gov/ocsd/docs/CMS1\\_032816.pdf](http://www.tucsonaz.gov/ocsd/docs/CMS1_032816.pdf)



Ethen ensured that the Climate Change Advisory Committee included a broad range of climate-related expertise and community leaders dedicated to the work.

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## Greatest Challenge

### Budget Cuts and Specific Funding Dependence

Like many sustainability directors, Ethen is responsible for implementing her city's Federal Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) projects. While these funds were a much needed stimulus for Tucson and its sustainability efforts, it has now become Ethen's major source of funding and, as a consequence, has driven most of her programming. This has led her away from other initiatives and priorities outlined in the framework, and left her program vulnerable once the grant expires. Ethen is on the look-out for alternative funding sources, and for creative ways to parlay her successes under the EECBG to make a winning business case for continued sustainability action.

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## Top Advice for Other Practitioners

### Take Your Time

Ethen loves her role as a sustainability director. She reveals, "A lot of what has allowed us to build [our program] is that we've gone really slowly. It's easy to jump in and say I'm going to do 'X, Y and Z', and push forward without realizing that you might not have the resources to follow through, or that you might be creating concern in another department, with an elected official, or with the community." Taking five years to build her internal action team, Ethen's slow process avoided knee-jerk reactions from stakeholders, and achieved greater buy-in. "Not having a mandate was a challenge," she explains, "but we took it as an opportunity to find out what's really important to other departments."

**"Sustainability is such a cross-cutting topic that no matter what you're working on, you're going to be affecting things in other departments. You have to be cognizant of that and respectful of that relationship."**

### Keep an Open Mind

The foundation of Ethen's work has been to build relationships, and she has found success by first keeping an open mind. "Sustainability is such a cross-cutting topic that no matter what you're working on, you're going to be affecting things in other departments," she says. "You have to be cognizant of that and respectful of that relationship."

### Work Toward a Common Understanding

Ethen has discovered first-hand that sustainability is defined differently, depending on who you talk to. Although it takes time, Ethen advises others to work toward a common understanding of sustainability with key players such as the City Manager, Mayor, and City Council. She remarks, "if you don't have [an agreed upon purpose] to fall back on, you end up flailing around with ideas, concepts, and projects. Regardless of how well staffed you are, you have to pick some key focus areas or you tend not to get a whole lot done."







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## WILY VETERAN SNAPSHOT:



# Jim Hunt

Chief,  
Environmental and Energy Services

*City of Boston, MA*

Years on the Job: 6  
Number of Staff: Oversees Boston's Environment Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Inspectional Services Department (building department)

Reports to: Mayor

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## Proudest Accomplishment

### Renew Boston Residential Program (Ongoing Initiative)

The State of Massachusetts has a well developed program—Mass Save—that provides a 75% subsidy for energy retrofits. While the subsidy has helped many families improve their home's energy efficiency and save money, Jim Hunt and his team recognized that most low-income families could not afford the program's required 25% retrofit cost match.

Hunt helped allocate funds from Boston's Department of Energy (DOE), Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) to provide an additional 25% subsidy to low-income families—a move that allowed them to access Mass Save's energy retrofits at no cost. Dubbed "Renew Boston", this program also addressed the challenge of generating interest and participation in the program in Boston's multi-lingual, low income neighborhoods.

According to Hunt, the program to date has completed over 600 retrofits to targeted low income residences, which has contributed to the creation of over 150 new jobs.

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## Greatest Challenges

### Staying Focused on Core Strategies

Hunt has found that there are many pressures to pursue new, cutting-edge innovations instead of remaining focused on "bread and butter," cost-effective sustainability strategies, such as improving energy efficiency, conserving water, and minimizing waste. Solar energy for example, may be, "a great renewable energy technology," says Hunt. "But for a City to invest a lot of time and energy in solar may not make as much sense as investing in a more cost-effective strategy such as energy efficiency. It doesn't make a lot of sense to put a solar panel on a building that's very inefficient."



“Keeping your eye on the prize is always a challenge,” he continues. “It’s human nature to go after what’s new, what’s sexy. The ‘green bling,’ if you will. And it’s good to do that, but don’t do it at the expense of some of the more cost effective, core strategies.”

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## Top Advice For Other Practitioners

### Get to know your city; get to know your players.

Any organization, whether it’s a business or the government, has unique power structures controlled by key players. “Get to know those people, get to know the power structure,” Hunt advises. Relationships matter, he says, because, “when you need to get something done, you have to pick up the phone and call someone. It’s helpful if you’ve gotten to know that person.”

“It’s human nature to go after what’s new, what’s sexy. The ‘green bling,’ if you will. And it’s good to do that, but don’t do it at the expense of some of the more cost effective, core strategies.”

Hunt recommends that sustainability directors in all cities get to know two key players. The first is the budget manager. “It’s important to know how your budget and capital budget process works,” he says, because the early victories can save money.” The goal, he says, should be to “prove your worth through cost-effective sustainability strategies that can ultimately add to the bottom line over time.” If you know your budget manager personally, it will be easier to make this case.

The second key player is the facilities manager. “If you’re working on a new project related to energy, you will need an experienced professional to oversee it,” Hunt points out. The facilities department is usually the lead agency for that role.

The goal, according to Hunt, is to build trust across the government to make it easier to move projects forward.

### Measure Your Progress

Cost-effective strategies usually form the foundation of local government sustainability programs. To justify financing these projects, Hunt says, it’s important to measure your progress and demonstrate cost-effectiveness on a project-by-project basis.

To build his own team’s capacity to pursue and demonstrate cost savings from smart energy account management, as well as energy efficiency projects, Hunt created a dedicated energy management staff. They aggregate utility accounts (thereby saving administrative costs), engage in bulk energy purchasing (thereby reducing per unit costs), and implement energy conservation measures. To date, these efforts have reduced government energy consumption by 30%.



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## WILY VETERAN SNAPSHOT:



# Sadhu Johnson

## Deputy City Manager

*City of Vancouver, BC, Canada*

**Years on the Job:** 2  
**Number of Staff:** Vancouver's Sustainability Team, whose director reports to Johnson has 17 staff  
**Reports to:** City Manager

Sadhu Johnson currently serves as the Deputy City Manager of the City of Vancouver, where he oversees the city's work in the areas of sustainability, economic development and emergency management. Prior to coming to Vancouver in 2009, Johnson led Chicago's sustainability initiatives, first as the Commissioner of the city's Department of Environment, and then as Mayor Richard Daley's Chief Environmental Officer. Johnson was also the Executive Director of the Cleveland Building Coalition.

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## Proudest Accomplishments

### Planning for Climate Disruption

Johnson orchestrated a two year process to develop Chicago's Climate Action Plan. The plan is known for its thorough review of potential local impacts from climate change, and its integration of mitigation and adaptation measures into one climate strategy.

### Reducing Construction Waste and Spurring Job Growth

Johnson spearheaded passage of an ordinance that requires a 50% recycling rate for construction and demolition waste. He also helped launch a new partnership with local non-profits to train formerly-incarcerated individuals in deconstruction techniques, and provide them with temporary jobs helping to deconstruct city facilities.

### Engaging the Public

Johnson is now leading an effort to make Vancouver the greenest city in the world by 2020. As part of a comprehensive public engagement campaign called "Talk Green Vancouver," more than 35,000 people have volunteered ideas for sustainability actions on line and voted for their favorites. The winning proposals were presented, by their proponents, directly to the Mayor and city councilors.

"I've worked hard in all these efforts to address each of the three legs of that sustainability stool," says Johnson. "Instead of always approaching green problems with green solutions, I've tried to find ways to achieve job creation, economic development and other things that make our cities great places to live."



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## Greatest Challenge

### Engaging Residents in Changing Lifestyles

Figuring out how to elicit more sustainable behaviors among city residents is one challenge that has sometimes been vexing for Johnson. “Whether you are trying to get people to recycle or reduce their water use or compost, people are just busy, and it can be very hard to achieve high levels of participation in these programs,” he observes. “It’s just not a focus for many people.”

One key to tackling this challenge, he suggests, is to think deeply about what motivates people, and create incentives that align with those motivations. A RecycleBank program he promoted in Chicago gives people rewards based on how much and what types of things they recycle. In Vancouver, he helped revamp solid waste collection to make composting easy and convenient.

“I’ve tried to use each of the three legs of that sustainability stool. Instead of just approaching green problems with green solutions, I’ve tried to find ways of achieving job creation, economic development and other things that make our cities great places to live.”

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## Top Advice for Other Practitioners

### Be a “Server-Leader”

Johnson has always invested his time in finding champions within departments across the city, and supporting the sustainability work they are doing in their respective roles. He notes that this is an essential strategy for magnifying the impact you can have, since there is so much work to be done and often so few resources to accomplish it. “I encourage people to give me a heads up about challenges they are having,” he says. “That way I know how I can help them be more successful.”

### Be Strategic About Where You Sit

Sustainability directors work in very hierarchical bureaucracies, Johnson says, and where and how they are positioned can have major impacts on what they can achieve. While one often has limited control over where one’s program is located, the important thing is to be as strategic as you can, making a good case for an organizational structure that helps you succeed. This doesn’t always mean striving to reach the apex of the hierarchy. “If an election is coming and you’re expecting a big change in leadership, embedding yourself in the organization to weather the storm can be the right move to ensure your program’s sustainability,” Johnson observes.

### External Partnerships can Power Great Leaps Forward

“We didn’t have a clear idea of what we were going to create when we set out to do a climate plan for Chicago,” Johnson recounts, “but we reached out to involve a community partner, and they really helped to shape what we were able to achieve.” With help from the Global Philanthropy Partnership, Chicago built a network of interested local funders, leveraging more than \$1 million for the process. Through its external Climate Change Task Force, the city also involved community leaders directly in shaping the plan’s content. Johnson is an ardent proponent of cultivating relationships outside the city bureaucracy – whether with non-profit organizations, foundations, or trade associations – and involving them directly in sustainability work.





## WILY VETERAN SNAPSHOT



# Dave Newport

Director, Environmental Center

*University of Colorado, Boulder*

Years on the Job: 5  
Number of Staff: 10  
Reports to: Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
and the UC Student Government

In 1998, Dave Newport was elected Chair of the Alachua County (Florida) Board of County Commissioners. While serving on the Commission, Newport worked to advance numerous sustainability efforts including a revision of the comprehensive plan that included strong sustainability components. Newport also partnered with the National Association of Counties to integrate sustainability measures into policies and programs at state and national levels. In 1999, he became the Director of the Office of Sustainability at the University of Florida. Then in 2006, he was hired as the Director of the Environmental Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

## Proudest Accomplishments

### Earning the Sierra Club's #1 Green Campus Ranking

Under Dave Newport's leadership, the University of Colorado at Boulder received the #1 ranking in the Sierra Club's 2009 Green Schools ranking. The ranking covers eight categories: efficiency, energy, food, academics, purchasing, transportation, waste management, and administration. UC Boulder scored especially well in sustainable transportation and waste management.

### Co-Creating the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System

Newport is on the Steering Committee for the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. Sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, STARS has emerged as "the gold standard for sustainability assessment in higher education," according to the Chronicle of Higher Education.

“My heart is proudest every May when I stand at commencement and watch our best and brightest students graduate and go forward to change the world. Once a year, I cry like a baby watching them go.”



### Commencement Every Year

While Newport's success is measurable, it is driven by his dedication to educating the next generation of environmentalists. He says, "my heart is proudest every May when I stand at commencement and watch our best and brightest students graduate and go forward to change the world. Once a year, I cry like a baby watching them go."

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## Greatest Challenge

### Integrating Social Justice and Equity

Since Newport started working on sustainability in the early 1990s he has struggled to truly address social justice and equity issues in ongoing sustainability programs, so that they are "intrinsic, not add-ons or omitted entirely." "When we get that right it is magic—but more often it's difficult and elusive," he says.

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## Top Advice For Other Practitioners

### Never Give Up on People

Newport says, "I have seen some of my most ardent antagonists... become some of sustainability's most fervent advocates." "The fact that people do change is very good news for sustainability professionals," he says, "because that's the core what we do—create behavior change." The single most important thing that Newport has learned along the way: "Never give up on people."





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## WILY VETERAN SNAPSHOT:



# Gayle Prest

Director,  
Minneapolis Sustainability

*City of Minneapolis, MN*

Years on the Job: 8  
Number of Staff: 2  
Reports to: City Coordinator

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## Proudest Accomplishment

### Creating a Sustainability Program

In 2003, the City of Minneapolis hosted two public roundtables focused on developing long-term, city-wide sustainability goals. Gayle Prest, who at the time oversaw the city's environmental compliance division, recognized the outcomes from the roundtables weren't very accessible to the average person. "The roundtables came up with things that were too wonky, things which people couldn't relate to, like the number of microbes in the water system," she recalls. Prest then made a commitment to help the city adopt goals that the public could relate to; an effort that eventually led her to become Minneapolis' first sustainability director in 2006.

When Prest began developing sustainability goals for the city she found that she had to start from the beginning. "We were all wondering what sustainability was; no one had the vision," she says. Seeing an opportunity, Prest played a big role in defining sustainability for the city. "The big hole made it easy for me to say, 'this is the way to do it!'"

Once the goals were formally adopted by the city, the focus changed to implementation. Recognizing the need to integrate sustainability across departments and agencies, she distributed the reporting of performance measures across the city government. "We don't have a sustainability plan—I love that. I was worried that it would be too burdensome of a document that no one would read," she says. "Instead City Council adopted targets and we have to report back annually in an easy to understand manner; we set expectations and accountability and we look at revisions every two years. It's much more important and effective to integrate sustainability into updates of existing transportation, storm water, and affordable housing plans."

[For more on the creation of the Minneapolis sustainability program, see the case study, "Measuring Sustainability in Minneapolis," page 100]



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## Greatest Challenges

### Prioritizing and Managing Expectations

Prest has dedicated significant time to building long-term relationships across departments. “There aren’t too many employees here that must successfully interact with so many different departments” she says. Yet, Prest has struggled to balance the requests and expectations of stakeholders with her organization’s capacity to grow. With only two full time sustainability staff, the idea isn’t to create a new bureaucracy, but rather to make sustainability a part of every department and employee’s job. Prest acknowledges that the ability to prioritize stakeholder requests is an important skill that she is still developing.

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## Top Advice for Other Practitioners

### Celebrate Successes & Share Credit Widely

Prest emphasizes the importance of celebrating successes. For example, when the City’s first sustainability report was made public, she ensured that it was covered generously by the press. Yet, she warns never to be the focus of the story. Her advice is to make sure that other city leaders such as city council members, the mayor, or key staff, are given center stage. This strategy has built internal champions in the city, and increased buy-in for sustainability efforts. Many initiatives are now being driven by other departments and policies makers—with no sustainability staff assistance required.

“We don’t have a sustainability plan—I love that. City Council adopted targets and we have to report back annually; we set expectations and accountability.”

### Recognize You’re Not Always Going to be Loved

Like all sustainability directors, Prest often finds herself advocating for new thinking and action. “I’m talking to people that get paid a lot more than me about what I want them to do and—with constrained resources—that’s not always going to be appreciated,” says Prest. For younger and newer practitioners, Prest acknowledges that this work can be “brutal.” She advises that a good way to gain traction is to offer as much support to others as possible through activities such as writing policies, meeting with elected officials, or setting up “awkward” meetings. By offering to “get her hands dirty” she has earned the trust of her colleagues, and helped them to gain the confidence that change is possible.







## Andrew Watterson

Chief of Sustainability

*City of Cleveland, OH*

Years on the Job: 6  
Number of Staff: 5  
Reports to: Mayor

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### Proudest Accomplishment

#### Sustainable Cleveland 2019 Summit

In 2009, after he implemented many successful, cost effective sustainability measures throughout the Cleveland city government, Watterson was tapped by Mayor Frank Jackson to organize the Sustainable Cleveland 2019 Summit, a three-day open forum focused on integrating sustainability into Cleveland's economic development strategy.

A 10-year initiative, the summit is convened annually on different themes, including "vital neighborhoods," "local foods," "energy efficiency," and "sustainable mobility." Participation at the summit has been strong since its inception in 2009, with roughly 700 attendees each year and 350 people who actively participate in year-round working groups. Watterson reflects, "I've had a handful of people come up to me and say that they got their job, or started their company, or quit their job, or did what they wanted to do in their lives because of the summit. Those stories for me are just incredibly inspiring."

[For more on the Sustainable Cleveland 2019 summit, see the case study, "Sustainable Cleveland 2019: Leadership Toward an Integrated Economic Future," page 58]

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### Greatest Challenge

#### Rising out of the "Crisis of the Day"

Like most places, the government and community of Cleveland faces some tough economic challenges. As a result, Watterson has found that many in Cleveland have difficulty "rising out of the 'crisis of the day'" and shifting from reactive, to proactive thinking. "If you focus solely on problems," he explains, "you're not going to find the solutions that are going to prepare you for tomorrow."

Watterson carefully organized the mission and scope of his office so that it wouldn't be caught up in the city's day to day operations. With healthy boundaries, Watterson is able to direct his staff to stay



creative. “If you address problems all the time your brain acts differently,” he says. “Anytime that you think about something that’s negative your brain shuts down and you go into fight or flight mode. If you think about something positive your brain opens up and you can figure out solutions.”

Watterson encourages other city departments and community groups to follow suit. While the Sustainable Cleveland 2019 Challenge provides an annual forum for innovation and creative thinking, he still finds it difficult to break the day to day crisis mode culture. “That’s always been a challenge in Cleveland,” he says. “It’s just that culture shift. Getting people to actually spend resources towards preparing for the future has been really difficult.”

“If you address problems all the time your brain acts differently. Anytime that you think about something that’s negative your brain shuts down and you go into fight or flight mode. If you think about something positive your brain opens up and you can figure out solutions.”

[For more on creating innovative environments, see the book review “Where Good Ideas Come From,” page 50]

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## Top Advice for Other Practitioners

### Focus on Cost and Revenue Centers

Watterson recommends mapping government cost and revenue centers (the utilities and water departments in Watterson’s case) and seeking out department directors who empower you to, “ask the right questions.” This has worked well for Watterson, who has consistently found projects that saved money, while earning the trust of government colleagues. He contends, “If you can get some champions in your operational cost centers then you are going to be able to get a long way down the road.”

### Shift from “Rowing” to “Steering”

When it comes to sustainability, Watterson observed that a “command and control” approach won’t get you very far; there are simply too many interrelated initiatives and priorities to pursue alone. Instead, he has empowered others to pursue their own initiatives and focused on aligning efforts with the city’s sustainability goals. While this strategy often yields results that may not be directly in line with his vision, Watterson contends the net result is stronger. He says, “The goal should be to shift from rowing to steering. Spend real time on organizing in such a way that allows others to do the work for you. The more you can spread the rowers out, the faster you’ll be able to succeed.”





## Core Competencies of Sustainability Professionals

### A Summary of Three Field Surveys

Three recent surveys have investigated the core competencies needed by sustainability professionals in the United States and abroad. The surveys collectively include the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, and provide a useful glimpse of the development needs of the sustainability profession. We have summarized these surveys below.

#### *The Urban Sustainability Director's Network*

The Urban Sustainability Director's Network (USDN) is a network of 100 local government sustainability directors dedicated to "accelerating the achievement of ambitious city sustainability goals." In early 2011, they partnered with the Innovation Network for Communities (INC) to develop and circulate a professional development survey of their membership. 81 members responded. INC provided the following summary of survey results:

#### **Profile of USDN position/office:**

- Most (49) work within a city department (rather than for elected official or city manager) but the focus of the departments vary widely (e.g., public works, community development, planning, facilities).
- 54 have formal position descriptions and 40 have their performance reviewed through a standard government employee review process.
- About half have 3 or fewer staff reporting to them; 17 have no staff.
- Sustainability offices are growing. 46 reported their staff had grown in past year; 39 expect to hire in next 1-2 years.
- As expected, sustainability directors perform a wide range of functions (and more may be on the way), but most spend much of their time on planning and directly managing sustainability initiatives/programs.
- Budgets that USDN members control vary widely in amount and source. Some have no money; others direct staff/programs amounting to tens of millions of dollars. Many have funds entirely or nearly all from federal programs.

#### **Skills/Knowledge**

Although respondents identified many skills and knowledge areas that matter for success in the job, several rise to the top:

- Facilitation of collaboration processes
- Strategic planning or other organization planning
- Leadership
- Public administration & policy
- Social behavior change
- Design of government initiatives/programs



- Energy management (renewables, building efficiency, etc.)

And respondents had strong views about which delivery methods were more effective:

- On the job
- Peer learning and exchange
- Workshops, seminars, academies, boot camps

### *International Society of Sustainability Professionals*

The International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP) is a “nonprofit, member-driven association for professionals who are committed to making sustainability standard practice.” ISSP members represent the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. In 2009, ISSP evaluated “critical competencies” of sustainability directors by surveying nearly 400 professionals working in the field. The results are summarized in the “Sustainability Professional: 2010 Competency Survey Report”<sup>1</sup>

The survey found two major issue categories for sustainability professionals: 1) promoting an understanding of the value of sustainability, and 2) dealing with climate change and related energy fields. Most respondents expected that climate and energy issues would rise in significance in the coming years, and, correspondingly, less time will be required making the case for sustainability.

When asked to describe in their own words the top skills needed for success in the field, respondents overwhelmingly cited good communication skills as most important. When asked to rate “hard skills” needed for success, “strategic planning; systems thinking; and project management,” were the top three. The top three soft skills included “communication with stakeholders; problem-solving; and inspiring and motivating others.”

### *Acre Resources Limited*

Acre Resources is an international recruitment and executive search firm specializing in the corporate responsibility, energy efficiency, carbon, environmental and health & safety markets. In February of 2011, they published a study, “The Emergence of the Chief Sustainability Officer,”<sup>2</sup> focused on sustainability professionals in the private sector. Describing the skill set of Chief Sustainability Officers (CSO) as “unusually rounded,” the report found that CSOs are “hired for their combination of knowledge of operational and business issues, their understanding of change management, and their ability to make things happen within an organization.” They defined typical skills of a CSO as follows:

- **Strategic skills.** The CSO will have the ability to analyze operational and product risk as well as consumer and shareholder drivers leading to new opportunities in changing markets. They will be able to understand technology innovation, knowing how and when to take advantage of it.
- **Commercial understanding.** It is essential that the CSO can express a vision that articulates the impact on the company’s financial statements and is able to relate that knowledge to the business in key areas. They will be well versed in commercial language

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sustainabilityprofessionals.org/sustainability-professional-2010-competency-survey-report>

<sup>2</sup> [http://acre-resources.com/downloads/The\\_Emergence\\_of\\_the\\_CS0.pdf](http://acre-resources.com/downloads/The_Emergence_of_the_CS0.pdf)



and analytical tools. They can expect to be able to form a close relationship with the FD/CFO.

- **Policy engagement.** Government policy will be a key driver for the future. The CSO needs to be effective at engaging with policy makers to shape policy and understand how policy frameworks will unfold. Being able to see the big picture is a key skill.
- **People skills.** The ability to take the organization 'with them' is a critical skill. As in all businesses the financial success of a strategy to navigate into the future cannot be guaranteed. The CSO, like the CEO, will need to be able to inspire the organization to travel on a brave new voyage.
- **Communication skills.** To manage a company's reputation, the CSO must know how to communicate with stakeholders and be able to tailor messages specific to shareholders, lenders, employees, neighbors, governments and members of the value chain.





# Leadership Toolkit





# Leadership Toolkit

The following is a select collection of tools, advice from fellow practitioners, and books that we have found to be useful for local government sustainability leaders in catalyzing, leading and managing sustainability offices, programs, and initiatives.

- Leadership Tools ..... 33**
  - Tools for Trust ..... 33
  - Influence Maps ..... 35
  - Bob Doppelt’s 5-D Model of Change ..... 36
  - Appreciative Inquiry ..... 37
  - Mutual Interest Negotiation ..... 39
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  - Where Good Ideas Come From* ..... 50
  - The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life Into a Science of Sustainability* ..... 52
  - The Power of Sustainable Thinking: How to Create a Positive Future for Climate, the Planet, Your Organization, and Your Life* ..... 53
  - Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* ..... 53
  - Thinking in Systems: A Primer*..... 54
  - The Sustainability Champion’s Guidebook: How to Transform Your Company*..... 54



# Leadership Tools

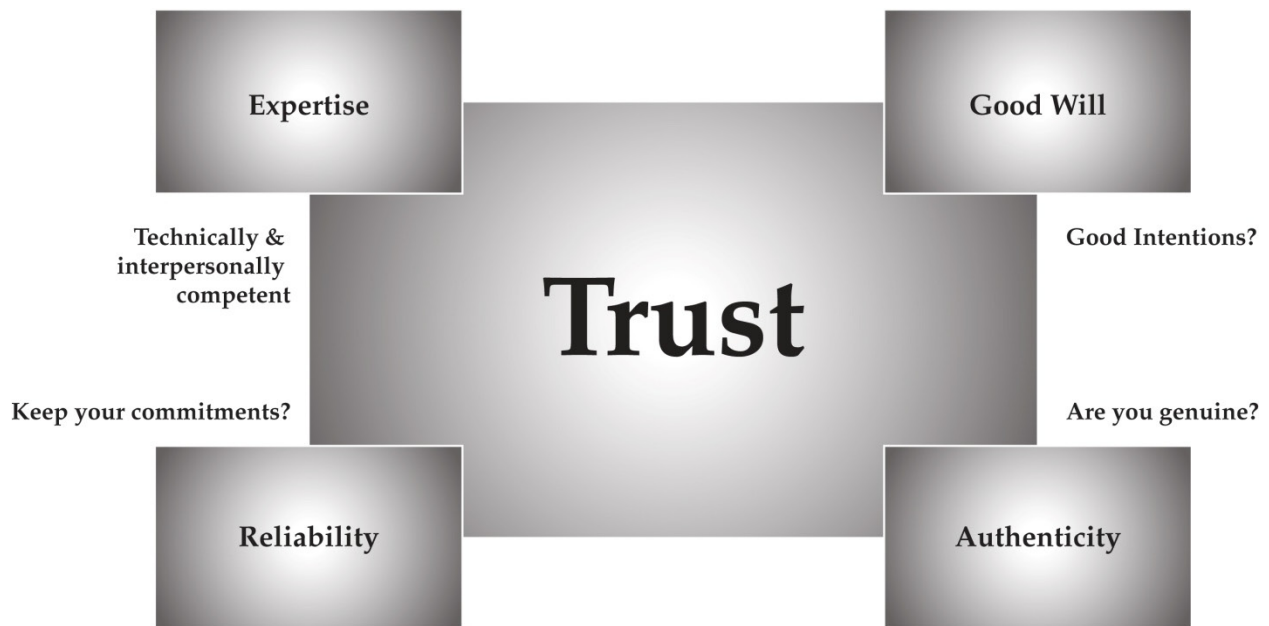


## THE FOUR CORNERSTONES OF TRUST

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a nonprofit organization dedicated to negotiation and dispute resolution, has developed the “Four Cornerstones of Trust” matrix for building trust and credibility among any stakeholder groups. The matrix assumes four fundamental traits of trustworthy people:

1. **Expertise** – Are you technically and interpersonally competent? Can you support your positions with good data, and do you understand your audience?
2. **Reliability** – Do you keep your commitments?
3. **Good Will** – Do you have good intentions? Do you have the best interest of everybody at heart?
4. **Authenticity** – Do you have a genuine agenda?

FIGURE 1: FOUR CORNERSTONES OF TRUST



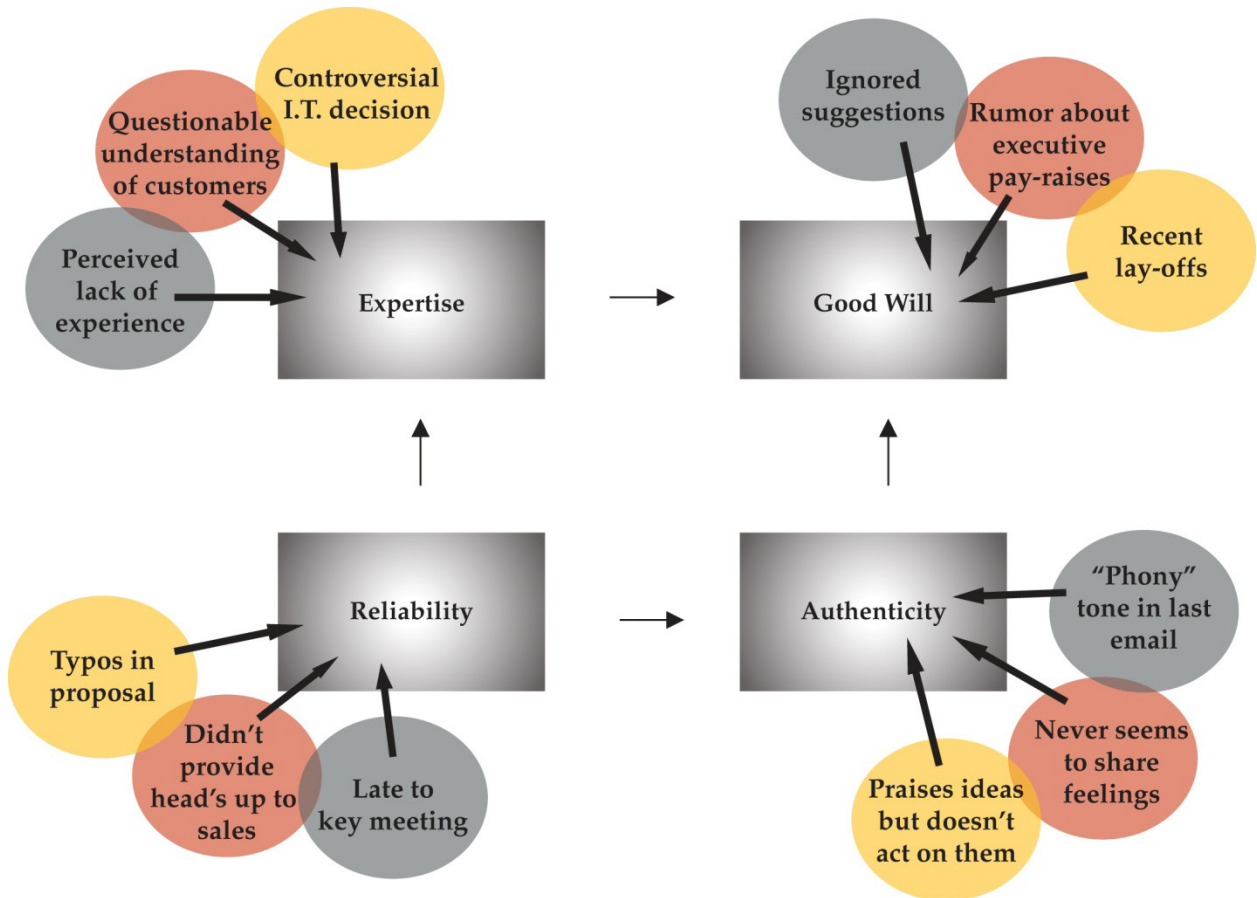
The matrix presents elements of professional trust on the left side, and personal trust on the right side; a healthy balance of these attributes places practitioners in the center of the matrix. CBI observes that most professionals are more adept at building professional trust. Personal trust often suffers because practitioners can be less skilled at reading social cues in professional settings. To help illustrate common pitfalls to trust building, CBI developed a map of common reasons for loss of





trust (see figure 2). CBI encourages practitioners to construct their own trust maps to help identify reasons for problematic relationships.

FIGURE 2: MAPPING LOSS OF TRUST





## INFLUENCE MAPS

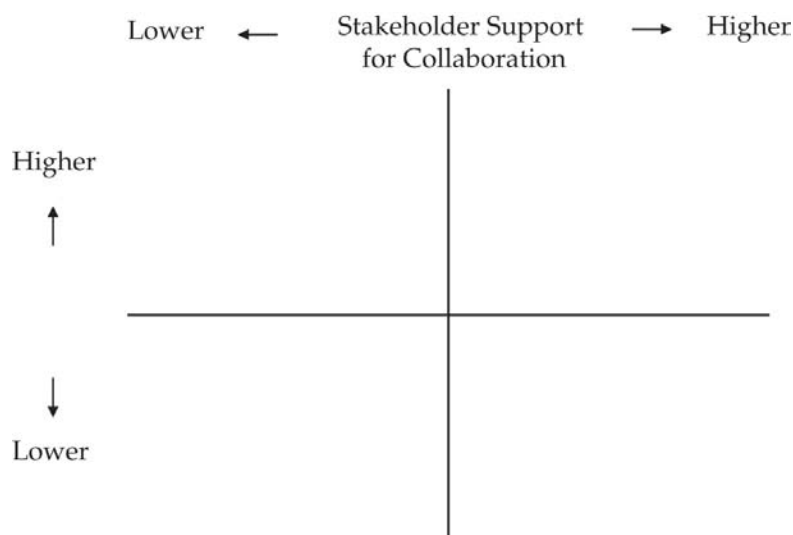
Influence maps are used to evaluate the collaborative potential of stakeholders, uncover key issues, understand the range of stakeholder viewpoints, and identify options for collaboration. The following mapping tools were designed by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI).

The stakeholder chart (Figure 3) allows you to compare key interests, incentives to collaborate, and collaboration process options for stakeholders. Results are then mapped to help gauge stakeholders' influence and support for collaboration (Figure 4). This process map can help to determine which stakeholders are ready to collaborate, which ones are not, and how you might provide value through collaboration. Taking the time to understand your stakeholders will avoid breakdowns in trust (see Advice from Fellow Practitioners on Building Relationships below) and uncover synergies among programs that otherwise would not be evident.

**FIGURE 3: STAKEHOLDER CHART**

	Key Interests	Incentives to Collaborate	Collaboration Process Options
Stakeholder 1			
Stakeholder 2			
Stakeholder 3			

**FIGURE 4: MAPPING STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**





## BOB DOPPELT'S 5-D MODEL OF CHANGE

Bob Doppelt, Executive Director of The Resource Innovation Group in Eugene, OR, has developed a “5-D” model of change. Based on the “transtheoretical” model of change, which assesses individuals’ readiness to act on new, healthy behaviors, the “5-D” model assesses individuals’ mindsets and actions toward sustainability. It includes five stages of personal change toward sustainability, and offers tools and strategies for moving people toward becoming “sustainable thinkers.”

The stages include:

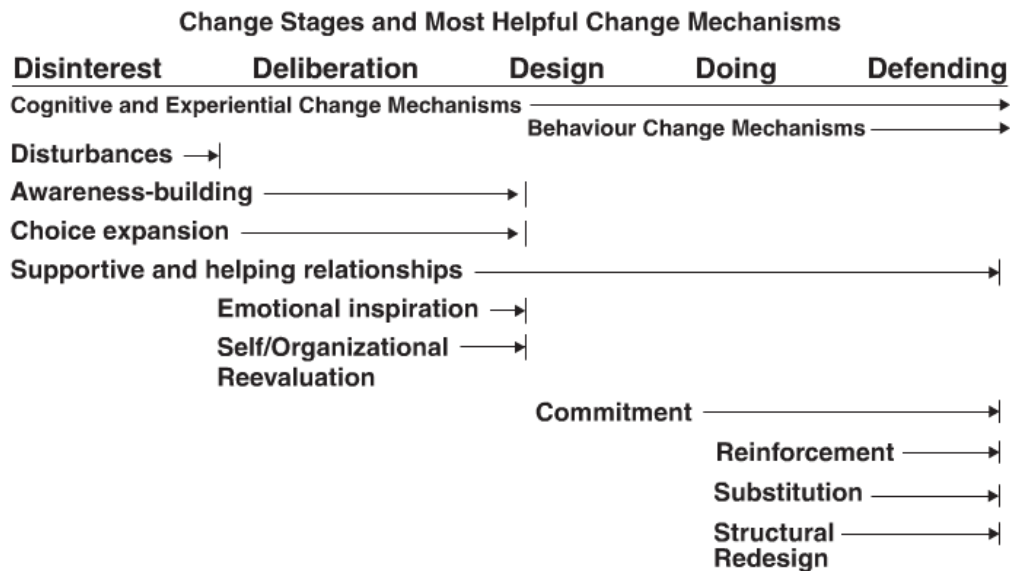
1. **Disinterest.** People in this stage often feel that a change is too big to make, even if there is evidence that change would be beneficial. “The four Rs:” reluctance, rebellion, resignation, and rationalization describe people in this stage. Moving away from disinterest requires recognizing one’s current assumptions and the behaviors they generate, and consciously challenging illogical beliefs.
2. **Deliberation.** Deliberators often have some awareness of the risks associated with sustainability issues, and are beginning to weigh their core values against the downsides of acting. They generally begin to act if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs by two to one.
3. **Design.** People in the design stage have made a commitment to act and have begun to plan ways to alter their behavior. The most successful designs include public commitments and goals that define when and where a specific change will be made.
4. **Doing.** The doing stage involves the act of changing. While this stage is often defined by uplifting feelings, it also presents new technical or logistical barriers. Maintaining momentum during this stage requires specific strategies for overcoming barriers, a renewed focus on goals, and a positive outlook.
5. **Defending.** Defending occurs after significant actions have been implemented. This stage is focused on making those changes stick and become routine amidst continual obstacles. Successful defending requires longer-term commitments and major “structural redesign” in one’s life.

In order to progress through each stage, Doppelt observes that three “keys to change” are needed: 1) sufficient tension must exist between desires and current reality; 2) People need to feel that they have the capacity, or efficacy, to reduce the tension; and 3) the perceived benefits of reducing the tension must outweigh the obstacles by a factor of two to one.

In conjunction with the three “keys to change,” Doppelt provides change mechanisms that have been shown to advance people through each stage (see figure 5). Each change mechanism is tailored to a specific stage, and must be used appropriately. For example, Doppelt warned that attempting to persuade someone in the early stages of change to commit to an immediate action may result in them taking a step backwards towards disinterest.



**FIGURE 5: CHANGE STAGES AND MOST HELPFUL CHANGE MECHANISMS**



For more information on the 5-D stages of change and other models for changing mindsets, see Doppelt’s book, “The Power of Sustainable Thinking: How to Create a Positive Future for the Climate, the Planet, Your Organization, and Your Life.” Earthscan, 2008. [reviewed below]



### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a change management framework that focuses on positive aspects of organizations. It takes an “affirmative approach,” assuming that “every organization has something that works well, and those strengths can be a starting point for creating positive change.” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 3)

AI differs sharply from conventional “deficit-based approaches,” which focus on diagnosing weaknesses, then recommending solutions. Proponents of AI believe that because managers are often trained in this mode, their creativity can be limited. This can be especially problematic for sustainability directors, who are frequently tasked with devising innovative, long-range, and cross-cutting solutions to sustainability. By starting with a recognition of what works well, AI can be a powerful tool for galvanizing the momentum and creative potential needed to move beyond problem-solving and toward innovation.

AI was applied successfully for Sustainable Cleveland 2019, an annual summit focused on building a green economy in Cleveland, OH. The summit brings together hundreds of community members annually to focus on Cleveland’s positive assets and to develop creative action for sustainability. As a result of the summit, Cleveland enlisted over 300 volunteers working in 20 focus groups on topics such as energy efficiency, local food, and zero waste. [For more information on Sustainable Cleveland 2019, see the case study, “Sustainable Cleveland 2019: Leadership Toward an Integrated Economic Future,” page 58]

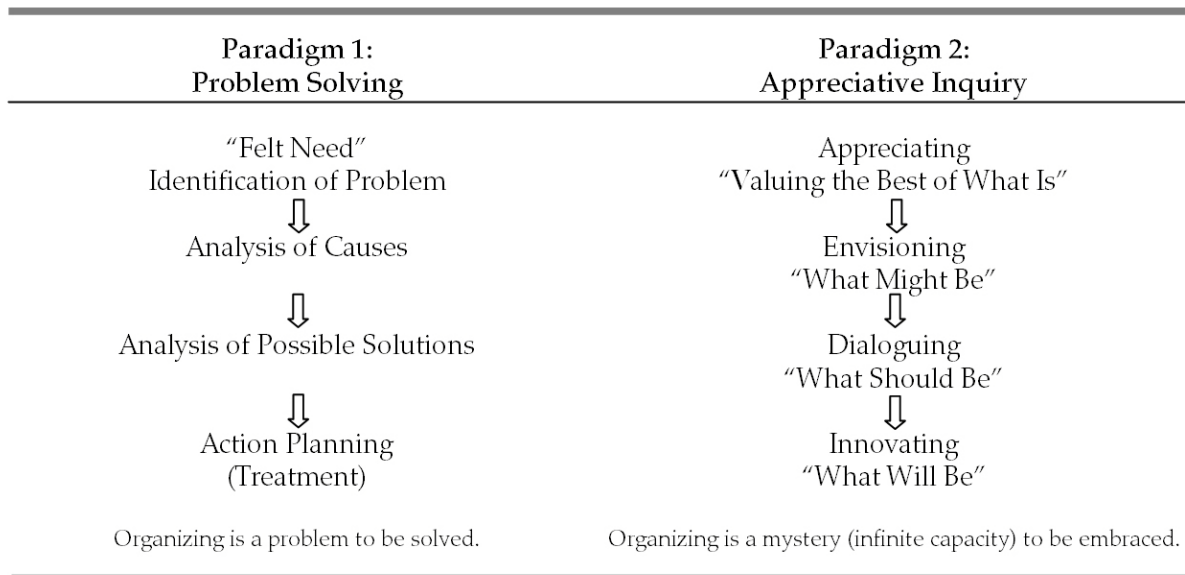


The basic framework for AI includes four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny:

- **Discovery Phase:** Individuals are asked to engage in small interviews around a chosen topic—such as innovation or customer satisfaction—and reflect on “what gives life” to the organization. The goal is to “appreciate” what works well.
- **Dream Phase:** In the dream phase, individuals identify key themes that underlie an organization’s successes. The process is designed to allow individuals to “dream” about future possibilities and establish a shared vision for the future.
- **Design Phase:** In the design phase, individuals begin to outline pathways toward a shared vision. To guide the process, individuals are asked to co-construct a “statement of intention” that combines “what has worked in the past... with what new ideas are envisioned for the future.” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 7) The statement “signals what the organization wants more of.”
- **Destiny Phase:** In the destiny phase, the organization makes a commitment to actions that move the organization “closer to the ideal.” AI assumes that these actions are more likely to succeed because “the ideals are grounded in realities,” which empowers the organization to “make things happen” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008)

The table below contrasts AI’s approach with a conventional “problem-solving” approach.

**FIGURE 6: TWO PARADIGMS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**



Source: Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry (2008)





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## MUTUAL INTEREST NEGOTIATION

Mutual interest negotiation is a method of joint problem-solving that focuses on underlying interests rather than the outward political positions of stakeholders. It can be used to guide the process of building partnerships across city government stakeholders that result in fair (majority of interests being met), wise (based on credible information), and stable (stands the test of time and adaptable to change) outcomes.

The CBI has provided the following questions for stakeholders that can be used to work toward mutual interest negotiation.

- Why are you engaging a stakeholder?
  - What are your interests / why is engagement important to you?
  - Do you understand your stakeholders' interests?
- What if we did work together?
  - What collaboration options are available to you and your stakeholders? How might you brainstorm ideas together?
- What makes collaboration options fair?
  - How can the majority of interests be met?
- What might go wrong?
  - What surprises can you predict during implementation?





# The Mutual Gains Approach to Negotiation



**THE MUTUAL GAINS APPROACH** to negotiation (MGA) is a process model, based on experimental findings and hundreds of real-world cases, that lays out four steps for negotiating better outcomes while protecting relationships and reputation. A central tenet of the model, and the robust theory that underlies it, is that a vast majority of negotiations in the real world involve parties who have more than one goal or concern in mind and more than one issue that can be addressed in the agreement they reach. The model allows parties to improve their chances of creating an agreement superior to existing alternatives.

MGA is not the same as “Win-Win” (the idea that all parties must, or will, feel delighted at the end of the negotiation) and does not focus on “being nice” or “finding common ground.” Rather, it emphasizes careful analysis and good process management. The four steps in the model are:

## Preparation

Prepare by understanding interests and alternatives. More specifically, estimate your BATNA and how other parties see theirs (BATNA stands for “Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement”). Having a good alternative to agreement increases your power at the table. At the same time, *work to understand your own side’s interests as well as the interests of the other parties.* Interests are the kinds of things that a person or organization cares about, in ranked order.

Good negotiators listen for the interests behind positions or the demands that are made. For instance, “I won’t pay more than ninety thousand” is a position; the interests behind the position might include limiting the size of the down payment; a fear that the product or service might prove unreliable; and assumptions about the interest rates attached to future payments. The party might also be failing to articulate other non-financial interests that are nonetheless important.

## Value Creation

Create value by inventing without committing. Based on the interests uncovered or shared, parties should declare a period of “inventing without committing” during which they advance options by asking “what if...?” By floating different options and “packages”—bundles of options across issues—parties can discover additional in-

terests, create options that had not previously been imagined, and generate opportunities for joint gain by trading across issues they value differently.

## Value Distribution

At some point in a negotiation, parties have to decide on a final agreement. The more value they have created, the easier this will be, but research suggests that parties default very easily into positional bargaining when they try to finalize details of agreements. Parties should divide value by finding objective criteria that all parties can use to justify their “fair share” of the value created.

By identifying criteria or principles that support or guide difficult allocation decisions, parties at the negotiating table can help the groups or organizations they represent to understand why the final package is not only supportable, but fundamentally “fair.” This improves the stability of agreements, increases the chances of effective implementation, and protects relationships.

## Follow Through

Follow through by imagining future challenges and their solutions. Parties near the end of difficult negotiations—or those who will “hand off” the agreement to others for implementation—often forget to strengthen the agreement by imagining the kinds of things that could derail it or produce future conflicts or uncertainty.

While it is difficult to focus on potential future challenges, it is wise to include specific provisions in the final document that focus on monitoring the status of commitments; communicating regularly; resolving conflicts or confusions that arise; aligning incentives and resources with the commitments required; and helping other parties who may become a de facto part of implementing the agreement. Including these provisions makes the agreement more robust and greatly assists the parties who will have to live with it and by it.

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*The Consensus Building Institute is a not-for-profit organization created by leading practitioners and theory builders in the fields of negotiation and dispute resolution. CBI works with leaders, advocates, experts, and communities to promote effective negotiations, build consensus, and resolve conflicts.*

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## TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE ASSESSMENTS

Triple bottom line (TBL) assessments evaluate programs from the perspective of economic, social, and environmental benefits, expanding the traditional “bottom-line” approach, which values profit only in dollar terms. Integrating TBL into decision-making processes has allowed sustainability directors to successfully introduce and embed sustainability principles into an organization.

### Eugene, OR

The City of Eugene, OR has created a TBL tool, which has been used across departments to guide decision-making. The output of the tool is a chart that provides a positive, negative, or neutral result for each bottom line area (see figure 7 below). While Eugene’s TBL tool is not meant to dictate a particular course of action, it provides policy makers and staff with a greater awareness of some of the trade-offs, benefits, and consequences associated with a proposal, leading to more mindful decision-making.

FIGURE 7: TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE TOOL

<b>Triple Bottom Line Tool - short form</b>				
<i>This tool is intended to support quick triple bottom line analyses. It may be appropriate for preliminary studies, scoping efforts, and/or as a screen for highlighting and describing potential.</i>				
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Environmental Health</b>	<b>Economic Prosperity</b>	<b>Social Equity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
[Scoring: + Positive overall 0 Neutral overall < Negative overall]	How would this proposal affect environmental health and our ability to effectively address climate change?	How would this proposal affect the local economy and what are its costs to the community, now and over the long term? How does the proposal support responsible stewardship of public resources?	How would this proposal affect community relationships, effective government, social justice and overall livability? Does the proposal account for differing impacts on community members (vulnerable populations, specific neighborhoods, distinct groups, other)?	Is special leadership required? Are risks manageable? Have organizational impacts and connections been considered?
<i>Your text goes here</i>	+	0	<	<i>Etc., etc.</i>

Source: City of Eugene / Sustainable Eugene<sup>1</sup>.

### Ann Arbor, MI

While not officially a TBL tool, the City of Ann Arbor has developed a framework to ensure that the city fully considers the environmental and economic impacts of its capital investments (in its current form the tool does not directly consider social equity impacts). The tool was developed in support of Ann Arbor’s 2012-2017 Capital Improvement Program. The goal was to see if a core set of metrics could be developed—and agreed upon by staff in 14 asset areas—where each project is reviewed against these measures to help the city identify priority projects.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=730&PageID=4572&cached=true&mode=2&userID=2>





Topic areas include how well a project furthers (or does not further) one or more of the City's environmental goals; how innovative it is, if it builds partnerships; how well it supports master plan objectives; how it impacts energy costs or furthers renewable energy goals; if it is likely to receive funding; what impact it will have on economic development/retention, and so on. For each metric, the City has provided a range of answers each with a corresponding "scoring" number on a 10-point scale. Without explicit social equity goals Ann Arbor's decision matrix is not a complete triple bottom line tool. However, they have been continually exploring how to better integrate equity issues into their municipal decision-making and move further toward true TBL.

### **Boston, MA**

In early 2011, the Boston Redevelopment Authority developed a triple bottom line calculator in partnership with the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and the cities of Atlanta and Calgary. It built from Boston's previous work to analyze the impact of ARRA-funded projects. The tool was designed in large part by HDR Decision Economics, Inc. using their Sustainable Return on Investment (SROI) process. The resulting TBL Calculator represents a more quantitative approach to measuring and assessing the social, environmental, and economic impacts of capital improvement projects as compared with the Eugene and Ann Arbor frameworks. The model was developed to be easily transferable to other U.S. Cities; USDN member cities are currently testing the TBL Calculator and it will become publicly available at a later date.



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## **FUNDING STRATEGIES**

### **Carbon Credits**

In the absence of Federal greenhouse gas emissions reduction legislation, some cities have taken advantage of the voluntary carbon market. Strong voluntary standards have emerged that, despite being unregulated, are beginning to provide some market regularity. The most well-known standards include: the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS), Verified Emissions Reductions + (VER+), "Green-e Climate", the California Climate Action Registry (CCAR), the Voluntary Offset Standard (VOS), International Standards Organization standard 140464 (a project design standard), and the Australian government's Greenhouse Friendly certification.<sup>2</sup> An example of how cities have been able to participate in carbon markets includes Portland, OR's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, who sold more than \$1.5 million in carbon credits resulting from a traffic signal improvement project to the Climate Trust of Oregon. The Climate Trust of Oregon then retired the credits instead of selling them back to the market.

### **Clean Energy and Revolving Loan Funds**

Many sustainability practitioners are exploring clean energy and revolving loan fund programs to help advance their projects. These funds are administered in a variety of ways, based on the needs and circumstances of particular areas. In Asheville, NC, for example, the City Council recently approved the "Green Capital Improvement Program" (Green CIP) to further capitalize on the savings possible through sustainability measures. The Green CIP reinvests savings from municipal energy efficiency and retrofitting projects into similar upcoming projects, in the form of a \$5M

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Ecosystem Marketplace, Voluntary Over-the-Counter (OTC) Offset Market.  
[http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/pages/dynamic/web.page.php?section=carbon\\_market&page\\_name=otc\\_market](http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/pages/dynamic/web.page.php?section=carbon_market&page_name=otc_market)



revolving loan fund. Through the Green CIP, the city can borrow up to \$1.5M against the fund to help finance large projects.<sup>3</sup>

### Partnerships with Local Nonprofits

Some cities have partnered with local nonprofits to attract foundation grants. For example, the city of Chicago, IL, who partnered with the Global Philanthropy Partnership (GPP). Together, they raised approximately \$1 million from several foundations to support the Chicago Climate Action Plan (CCAP). The city of Fayetteville, AR, has successfully partnered the Watershed Conservation Resource Center on an EPA grant for creek restoration; the Treadwell Institute to administer a \$250k community revolving loan fund for energy efficiency projects; the University of Arkansas; national Center for Reliable Electric Power Transmission (NCREPT) to test smart grid technology; and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) to help administer a U.S. Department of Housing and Development Sustainable Cities grant.

### Seed Funding

Some cities have provided city-based seed funding to help launch environmental nonprofits. An example includes: Seed funding for Clean Energy Works of Portland, OR. City support helped proponents win a large DOE Better Buildings grant, which enabled them to expand to their current statewide nonprofit status.

### Self-Taxing Mechanisms

Some participants have found success creating self-taxing mechanisms to discourage waste and support resource efficiency. Portland, OR, for example, instituted a one-percent energy fee to fund an internal building energy efficiency retrofitting program. Retrofits resulting from the program were sold to department directors on the basis of high returns on investment.

### Utility Funding

Many sustainability directors have built strong revenue streams from local utilities through demand reduction strategies for energy, water, solid waste, and other infrastructure-driven resources. Examples include: Seattle, WA's Office of Sustainability & Environment, which has been historically half-funded through Seattle City Light & Seattle Public Utilities; and the Town of Babylon, NY, which has used solid waste fees to help finance a building energy retrofitting program.

### Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECBs)

Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECBs) are qualified tax credit bonds that can be used by state, local, and tribal governments to finance energy conservation projects, including energy efficiency capital expenditures in public buildings; green community programs (including loans and grants to implement such programs); renewable energy production; various research and development applications; mass commuting facilities that reduce energy consumption; several types of energy related demonstration projects; and public energy efficiency education campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

For more information on clean energy funds, visit:

[http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/documents/pdf/clean\\_energy\\_fund\\_manual.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/documents/pdf/clean_energy_fund_manual.pdf)

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on revolving loan funds, visit the Council of Development Finance Agency's Revolving Loan Fund webpage: <http://www.cdfa.net/cdfa/cdfaweb.nsf/pages/rlffactsheet.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE), Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds; [http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/incentive.cfm?Incentive\\_Code=US51F&re=1&ee=1](http://www.dsireusa.org/incentives/incentive.cfm?Incentive_Code=US51F&re=1&ee=1)



**FOUR STAGES OF SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

**Stages of Sustainability Institutionalization Checklist**

Four steps to help you track the progress of your organization through the stages of each sustainability function and anticipate future activities



1. FUNCTIONS: What are the key functions of sustainability offices?	3. ACTIVITIES: In which of these activities does your organization engage?	4. NEXT STEPS: Based on the activities left unchecked in your current stage and the following stage(s), consider what specific skills/knowledge you may need in the long term. See Tool #3.
<p><b>Planning Government's Sustainability Initiatives</b> Develop vision, definition, case, goals for sustainability &amp; role of local government. Develop initiatives, plans, budgets – within departments, across government. Establish performance metrics, scoreboards, and progress reporting processes. Study other cities' sustainability efforts. Coordinate sustainability planning/goals across departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials articulate vision, definition, and case for sustainability, and local government's role in making sustainability happen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials &amp; top managers identify &amp; announce first sustainability initiatives/action agenda/blueprint</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Some benchmarking with other cities' sustainability efforts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments engage employees in thinking &amp; caring about sustainability and trying new behaviors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Internal communications and education to promote culture of sustainability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers communicate with public &amp; media about sustainability vision &amp; initial initiatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments develop Web site(s) with resources for sustainability actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments assess performance and produce improvement plans/budget adopted by elected officials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments increasingly set shared goals requiring high degree of collaboration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government employees make culture of sustainability increasingly the norm</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community holds significant expectation that sustainability initiatives will be sustained and expanded</li> </ul>
<p><b>Developing Government Culture of Sustainability</b> Engage employees in thinking &amp; caring about sustainability &amp; trying new behaviors. Conduct internal communications and education to promote culture of sustainability. Embed sustainability goals and initiatives in employees' position descriptions &amp; performance evaluations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments engage in further development of initiatives focusing on greening internal government operations (recycling, green buildings, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments produce &amp; elected officials adopt plans/budgets for achieving goals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees generate new initiatives &amp; model sustainability behaviors for community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials partner with civic organizations to undertake community visioning processes and education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials engage stakeholders &amp; constituencies in developing plans and partnering with government on external initiatives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government and civic leaders engage leaders of other communities in region in coordinating &amp; collaborating on sustainability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials establish a regional structure for sharing information, projects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials create technical advisory groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers increasingly fund some sustainability functions from GF or restricted funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish prioritized performance goals &amp; metrics: government-wide, community-wide, and by department</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials set up progress report process for departments</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Departments' sustainability goals and initiatives embedded in employees' position descriptions &amp; performance evaluations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Growing number of community partnerships spread sustainable goals—outside of government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government and community groups develop community-wide sustainability scoreboard</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government and community groups drive public outreach/education with measurable increase in community awareness of benefits</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials set incentives (rewards, sanctions) for departments/agencies achieving goals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials adopt performance scoreboard for publicizing &amp; monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers create government-wide sustainability knowledge creation and innovation function</li> </ul>
<p><b>Developing Community Support and Action</b> Communicate with public &amp; media about sustainability vision &amp; initial initiatives. Develop Web site(s) with resources for sustainability actions. Partner with civic organizations to undertake community visioning processes and community-based sustainability education. Engage stakeholders &amp; constituencies in developing plans and partnering with government on external initiatives. Engage leaders of communities in region in coordinating &amp; collaborating. Develop community-wide sustainability scoreboard. Support public outreach/education to increase community awareness of benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers create sustainability function with staff &amp; funding (short term)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Top managers build connections with outside expertise and peers in other cities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials fundraise to support budget &amp; staffing for sustainability initiative development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers create "horizontal coordination" among departments to achieve shared goals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government and community groups support community-based sustainability education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials and top managers revamp functions, structure, funding &amp; staffing of sustainability office to increase effectiveness and reflect growth of other structures inside and outside government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials set incentives (rewards, sanctions) for departments/agencies achieving goals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials adopt performance scoreboard for publicizing &amp; monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers create government-wide sustainability knowledge creation and innovation function</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials establish a regional structure for sharing information, projects</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government officials create technical advisory groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected officials/top managers increasingly fund some sustainability functions from GF or restricted funds</li> </ul>



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## JOB DESCRIPTION - LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR

*This job description was developed from a 2011 survey of 82 members of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. It is not a model job description, because there is so much variation in the responsibilities and competencies of local sustainability directors. Instead, it is a standard template that offers composite descriptions.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Generic Title**

Director of Sustainability Office of City or County

### **Local Title**

May vary – including Chief Sustainability Officer, Sustainability Coordinator, Environmental/Energy and Sustainability Manager, Facilities and Sustainability Manager, Director of Sustainability and Strategic Planning, Director of Sustainability and Long-term Planning, Climate and Sustainability Program Coordinator, Manager of Urban Design, Director of Environmental Planning, Environmental Initiatives Program Manager, Director of Natural Resources Department, Director of Environmental Quality, City Planner.

### **Job Definition**

Is responsible for managing, coordinating, facilitating, and advising the development, implementation, monitoring, and improvement of local government policies, programs, and initiatives that promote local environmental, energy, economic, and social sustainability.

### **Reporting Structure**

Typically reports to Mayor, City/County Manager and/or City/County Council. May be a staff position within mayor/manager/council office, or a department director, deputy director, or staff position within a department or agency taking lead on local sustainability.

### **Examples of Work**

- o Lead the planning of city/county sustainability initiatives and programs.
- o Directly manage sustainability initiatives and programs.
- o Facilitate collaboration of interdepartmental/agency task forces, teams, and working groups.
- o Administer the city/county local sustainability office, staff, and budget.
- o Coordinate department/agency directors/managers in managing, measuring, and monitoring sustainability initiatives and programs.
- o Advise and respond to elected officials about sustainability issues.
- o Conduct policy analysis, development & advocacy.
- o Promote sustainability with employees in the government and as a part of the government's culture.
- o Communicate sustainability goals and progress to the public.
- o Develop and implement sustainability measuring and monitoring systems.
- o Engage with state and/or federal governments, and/or other local governments in region.
- o Engage with community and/or interest/stakeholder groups (e.g., neighborhood organizations, environmental advocates).
- o Engage with vendors of sustainability technology, equipment, tools, etc.
- o Fundraising (grant development) for sustainability office and projects.

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<sup>5</sup> Template created by the Urban Sustainability Director's Network.





## **REQUIREMENTS:**

### ***Education***

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Master's degree in relevant field: planning, environmental science, sustainable business, engineering, public administration/policy.

### ***Experience***

Three to five years of experience in the field of urban sustainability, working professionally in the government, business, consulting, nonprofit, and/or academic sectors.

### ***Knowledge and Abilities***

- o Knowledge of current models and programs for urban sustainability, including federal and state policies and measurement/monitoring of sustainability.
- o Knowledge of climate change science, principles of energy and environmental management, social behavior change, and economic development.
- o Knowledge of public administration and public policy development, including government financing mechanisms and intergovernmental relations.
- o Knowledge of organization-change management strategies and methods.
- o Ability to direct/support systems analysis, strategic planning processes, organization development processes.
- o Ability to effectively analyze and develop programs, policies, and initiatives.
- o Ability to manage projects and administer programs and/or an Office of Sustainability and supervise staff, and to coordinate programs with other administrative offices.
- o Ability to develop positive relations with other departments and agencies, and elected officials and to facilitate collaborative planning processes.
- o Ability to develop performance measurement systems and initiate continuous improvement processes.

### ***Salary Range***

Varies considerably, depending on position's responsibilities and size of city, from about \$125,000-\$150,000 for a city department director to about \$40,000-\$50,000 for a city staff position. Average salary for the position is \$70,000-\$80,000.



# Leadership Advice from Fellow Practitioners



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## BUILDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are the foundation of any professional setting. Sustainability directors are no exception. They must build personal relationships across multiple departments and sectors, and find strategic ways to get to know key counterparts. Some strategies for building personal relationships included the following:

### Inviting Counterparts to Meetings

Susan Anderson, Sustainability Director for Portland, OR has bolstered her professional relationships by inviting counterparts – directors of other departments, business and community leaders – to join her at sustainability meetings and conferences. This strategy provided an opportunity to “hang out with them” on a personal level. She builds trust by focusing on the ways that her work connects with these colleagues. She says, “I talk about the things that people really care about, depending on who they are. So if it’s business people I might talk about how Portland needs to be a leader in sustainable technologies. Or it might be kids’ health or helping low-income families save money.” When Anderson is comfortable with individual leaders, she might then ask them to present at events on her behalf. She has found that this strategy extends ownership across sectors, and builds strong commitments and shared values.

### Getting Out in the Field

John Coleman, Sustainability Director for Fayetteville, AR, has built personal relationships with those on the “front lines” performing utility services. To better understand their day-to-day work, Coleman joined pre-dawn shifts on garbage and recycling trucks, worked with water and sanitation crews fixing leaks, and accompanied staff as they went from house to house reading electric meters. This field work not only helped Coleman’s colleagues understand how the concept of sustainability applied to their jobs, it also helped him find new ways to integrate sustainability into the work of the utilities department.

“It allowed for a lot of time to talk with the front line guys, and the middle managers within the city, picking their brains about improvements that can be made, whether it’s water conservation or more efficient processes within their jobs,” Coleman said. “And I was able to let them know what I’m working on. That’s paid off really well just in establishing better relationships up and down the org chart within the city department.”



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## PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Communicating the value of sustainability programs is crucial to the growth, support, and momentum of any program. Some marketing strategies suggested by fellow practitioners included:

### Finding “Hooks” that Resonate with Existing Programs.

Sustainability programs can often support other city initiatives, resulting in expanded agendas and new revenue streams. An example includes: Santa Clara County, CA’s energy efficiency program for home daycare facilities. By tuning up these facilities, Santa Clara has helped daycare providers decrease their energy use while simultaneously reducing indoor air pollutants that can affect the health of children.



### Investing in Communications Staff

Investing in dedicated communication staff often pays off because they help articulate and “sell” sustainability services. Asheville, NC, is an example of a two person office that has a dedicated communications specialist. By keeping communications consistent and strong, Asheville has benefited from enhanced interest in the sustainability office, without sacrificing program priorities.



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### PLANYC'S INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

PlaNYC is a comprehensive sustainability plan for New York City (NYC), which consists of 97 goals and initiatives that are integrated across all NYC departments. Remarkably, after the first four years of implementation, NYC has met 67% of PlaNYC milestones.

NYC's success lies partly in its requirement that a progress report is produced every year. The report lists measurable progress toward each milestone in the plan, and identifies the lead agency responsible for meeting the milestone. If a milestone was not reached, the report must identify the reasons why. This system is successful because the NYC sustainability office meets frequently with each agency to check-in on progress and provide capacity support.

PlaNYC is further institutionalized through a law, passed in 2007, that requires that the plan be updated every four years. This requirement is meant to transcend political administrations, and foster long-term planning. The update process has proven to be an effective way to reengage stakeholders, and to include new, relevant issues. Updating the plan has even become an issue for elections, with candidates running on platforms associated with PlaNYC.



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### AUGMENTING STAFF RESOURCES

Staff capacity is often a significant barrier to achieving the goals of many sustainability offices. The following strategies provide innovative ways to augment staff resources, while enhancing strategic partnerships.

#### Hiring Leaders from Other Sectors on a Temporary Basis

Strategic, short-term hires of specialty leaders (e.g. architects, developers, etc.) can help 1) get specific, specialty work done; 2) enhance your credibility; and 3) facilitate cross-sector understanding and coordination.

#### Seeking “Loaned Staff”

City departments or Federal Government agencies are sometimes willing to “loan” staff if it will advance their own strategic objectives. An example includes: Seattle, WA's Office of Sustainability & Environment, which had a full-time senior staffer from EPA Region 10 (half-funded through the city), via an “inter-personnel agreement” (IPA).



### Leveraging Your Capacity with Interns and AmeriCorps Volunteers

Many sustainability practitioners' plans, programs, and projects have benefited from the on-the-ground work of volunteers and college and university interns. Internships, both paid and unpaid, provide valuable experiences for students entering the workforce and can significantly advance the work of a sustainability office. AmeriCorps volunteers assist communities and municipalities across the country through various sub-programs such as AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).

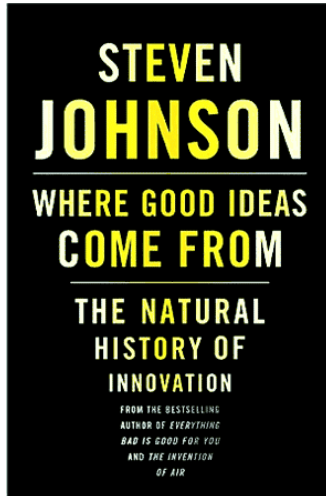




# Leadership Book Reviews



## WHERE GOOD IDEAS COME FROM



Johnson, S. (2010). *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

Sustainability offices function best when they offer new, smart innovations. Steven Johnson's *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, may be helpful in this regard. It identifies seven key patterns that Johnson believes lead to the kind of environments that have historically given rise to innovation. For sustainability directors, understanding and fostering these environments can be critical to a truly collaborative and creative program. Three of the seven patterns are summarized below.

### The Adjacent Possible

Johnson argues that “we have natural tendency to romanticize breakthrough innovations” by perpetuating the myth that brilliant new ideas arise from stand-alone geniuses (p. 28). Instead, he suggests that innovation occurs when “we take the ideas we’ve inherited or that we’ve stumbled across, and we jigger them together in some new shape.” In other words, innovation occurs when old ideas are recombined with new ideas; a phenomenon that the scientist Stewart Kauffman calls the “adjacent possible.”

Johnson provides several examples of the adjacent possible, from the invention of YouTube (not possible without high-speed internet connections and the Adobe Flash Player), to the first computer punch cards (borrowed from similar cards used to control textile looms). Innovative environments, he argues, “are better at helping their inhabitants explore the adjacent possible, because they expose a wide and diverse sample of spare parts—mechanical or conceptual—and they encourage novel ways of recombining those parts.” For sustainability directors, the adjacent possible may be especially rich in cross-department or cross-sector approaches where ideas can mix together.

### Liquid Networks

According to Johnson, the pace of innovation is directly tied to the rate at which old and new ideas come together. Johnson found that “liquid networks”—places where different people and disciplines can come together more easily—greatly accelerate that pace.

For example, he cites McGill University psychologist Kevin Dunbar’s research on laboratory environments. Dunbar found that the greatest innovation occurred most often not in the lab itself, but in the meeting rooms where scientists would “gather and informally present and discuss their latest work” (p. 61). Johnson writes, “the group environment helped recontextualize problems, as questions from colleagues forced researchers to think about their experiments on a different scale or level.” Johnson quotes Dunbar, “the results of one person’s reasoning became the input to another person’s reasoning... resulting in significant changes in all aspects of the way research was conducted.” Sustainability directors could create their own “liquid environments” by purposefully creating forums for people to share different approaches to sustainability.



## Platforms

Platforms are richly innovative environments that build layer after layer of new ideas. To explain, Johnson cites “ecosystem engineers” like the beaver. “By felling poplars and willows to build dams, beavers single-handedly transform temperate forests into wetlands, which then attract and support a remarkable array of neighbors” (p. 182). By engineering their ecosystem, beavers actually create their own habitats, which also benefit other species.

Johnson cites Washington, DC’s “Apps for Democracy” project as a human-created platform. Begun in the fall of 2008 by Vivek Kundra—Washington DC’s chief technology officer—the program invited software developers to build applications using the government’s existing data troves. The project was hugely successful, and spurred hundreds of new project ideas. According to Johnson, Government data is an ideal innovation platform. He explains,

First, they are repositories of a vast amount of information and services that could be of potential value to ordinary people, if only we could organize it better. Second, ordinary people have a passionate interest in the kind of information that governments deal with... Third, a long tradition exists of citizens committing time and intellectual energy to tackling problems where there is perceived civic good at stake. And, finally, the fact that governments are not in the private sector means that they do not feel any competitive pressure to keep their data proprietary.

Sustainability directors could find their own sustainability platforms, building from their government or community’s own “repositories.” For an example of using city data as a platform in this resource guide, see the case study on page 100: *Measuring Sustainability in Minneapolis: Developing Indicators, Using Data, and Reporting Progress*.

*Where Good Ideas Come From*<sup>6</sup> offers an inspiring set of tools and concepts that should translate well to the challenges faced by sustainability directors. Focusing on creating environments conducive to greater innovation may reveal new ways of approaching local sustainability, and new ways of doing business for governments and the surrounding community.

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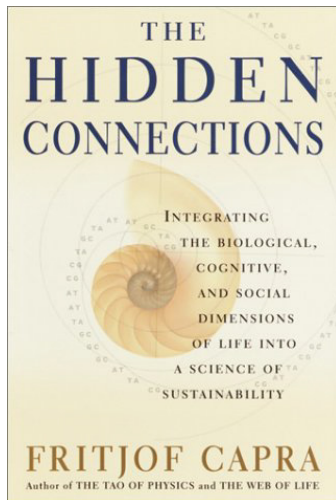
<sup>6</sup> For a fun video on *Where Good Ideas Come From*, visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU>





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**THE HIDDEN CONNECTIONS: INTEGRATING THE BIOLOGICAL, COGNITIVE, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LIFE INTO A SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY**



Capra, F. (2002). *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life Into a Science of Sustainability*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

*The Hidden Connections* provides a rich, highly theoretical, yet practical understanding of the subtle forces at play for organizational change. By understanding underlying assumptions driving their organizations, sustainability directors can tap into the creative potential of their peers, effectively facilitating change from within, rather than imposing it from the outside.

The chapter, “Life and Leadership in Organizations” is especially relevant. Capra explores the reasons that, while nature tends to be continually adaptive and responsive to change, business organizations “seem to be incapable of dealing with change.” He argues that the

reasons for this paradox lie in two seemingly opposing forces in our organizations. He explains, “On the one hand, [social institutions] are designed for specific purposes, such as making money for their shareholders, managing the distribution of political power, transmitting knowledge, or spreading religious faith. At the same time, organizations are communities of people who interact with one another to build relationships, help each other, and make their daily activities meaningful on a personal level.”

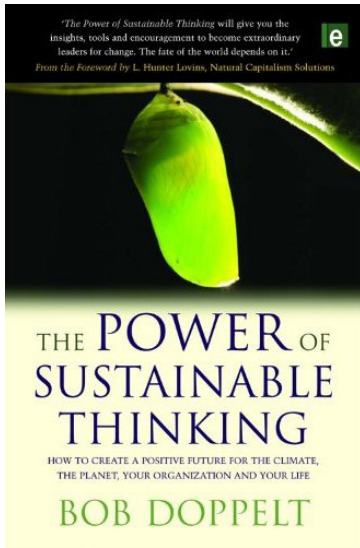
Capra offers an alternative view of organizations based on principles of informal networks. He argues that while formal structures include “sets of rules and regulations that define relationships between people and tasks, and determine the distribution of power,” informal structures reside within personal relationships, and are “fluid and fluctuating networks” rooted in shared meaning. It is these networks, according to Capra, that drive an organization’s “flexibility, creative potential, and learning capability.” Skilled managers, Capra argues, understand the interplay between formal and informal structures, and understand the importance of tapping into the creativity of people.





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## THE POWER OF SUSTAINABLE THINKING: HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR CLIMATE, THE PLANET, YOUR ORGANIZATION, AND YOUR LIFE



Doppelt, B. (2008). *The Power of Sustainable Thinking: How to Create a Positive Future for Climate, the Planet, Your Organization, and Your Life*. Washington, D.C.: Earthscan.

*The Power of Sustainable Thinking* provides essential organizational change tools and strategies for sustainability directors. Carefully guiding readers through the underlying trends and reasons for unsustainable behavior on the personal and organizational level, it allows for fundamental shifts in thinking, and practical tools for influencing others—essential pieces in any sustainability leadership toolbox.

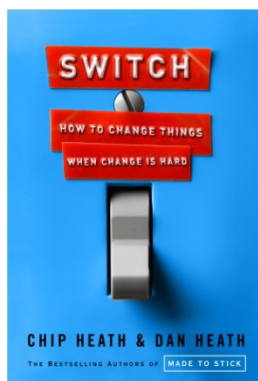
Doppelt’s core argument is that climate change and other environmental issues are fundamentally the result of a “crisis of thought.” Borrowing from the work of social psychologist James Prochaska, who developed a model to map the stages of change,

Doppelt offers a modified version adapted for sustainability change agents. Called the 5-D staged approach to personal, team, and organizational change, Doppelt’s model describes five dominant stages of change, including 1) Disinterest; 2) Deliberation; 3) Design; 4) Doing; and 5) Defending [See Framework: Bob Doppelt’s 5-D Model of Change, above] . Doppelt offers a convincing argument that sustainability change agents should be skilled at identifying each stage, and tailoring their messaging accordingly. For instance, providing information about change actions one can take would not be appropriate for those in the Disinterest stage, while providing information about why one should change would not be effective for the Doing stage.



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## SWITCH: HOW TO CHANGE THINGS WHEN CHANGE IS HARD



Heath, C., Heath, D. (2010). *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. New York, NY: Random House.

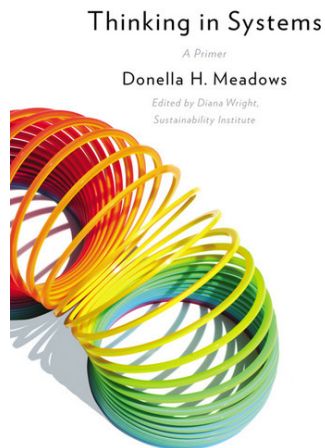
*Switch* draws upon research from the fields of psychology and sociology to help explain the challenges inherent to making change at any level—from personal to societal. The authors offer a three-step framework for overcoming the barriers to change that are inherent to how our brains work. The reason change is hard, they argue, is that there is a perpetual internal conflict occurring between our rational mind and our emotional mind, leading to various forms of inaction or decision-making that are at odds with the final goal. *Switch* provides a psychological foundation for sustainability practitioners to draw upon, which may shed light on common barriers to

change toward sustainability on a personal and organizational level.





## THINKING IN SYSTEMS: A PRIMER



**Meadows, D. (2008).** *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green.

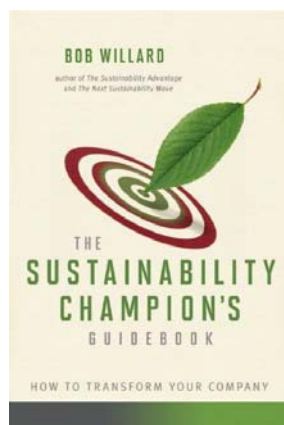
In *Thinking in Systems*, the late Donella Meadows offers a compelling and concise introduction to systems thinking, and offers tools for finding the leverage points of change.

With a strong theoretical framework, Meadows describes eight “systems traps” relevant to sustainability directors. Arguing that “... tinkering at the margins... will not fix structural problems,” Meadows provides insightful ways to analyze and overcome common problems. For example, Meadows describes the pattern of “drifting to low performance.” This pattern allows performance standards to be influenced by negative past performance. When this occurs, a reinforcing loop is created that continually erodes goals. To avoid this trap, she suggests keeping performance standards absolute, while striving for best practices. This could be a valuable practice for sustainability practitioners who are implementing sustainability plans with measurable goals.

Meadows closes the book with her classic article, “Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System,” and a chapter called “Living in a World of Systems,” which provides tools to those who wish to use systems thinking to help solve problems. Her advice is to use systems thinking to fine-tune one’s intuition. She says, “systems thinking by itself cannot bridge the gap [between understanding and implementation], but it can lead us to the edge of what analysis can do and then point beyond—to what can and must be done by the human spirit.”



## THE SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPION'S GUIDEBOOK: HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR COMPANY



**Willard, B. (2009).** *The Sustainability Champion's Guidebook: How to Transform Your Company*. New Society Publishers: Gabriola Island, BC.

*The Sustainability Champions Guidebook* can help crystallize the often complex and “messy” process of change by offering a perspective-building roadmap practical for any sustainability leader. Willard provides four high-level frameworks: 1) steps in the change process; 2) leadership practices; 3) paradoxes of leadership; and 4) “derailers” to avoid. Organized for quick-reference with easy to understand diagrams, Willard provides effective tools for “pushing the envelope.”





# Case Studies







## CASE STUDIES

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## CASE STUDY: CLEVELAND, OH

# Sustainable Cleveland 2019 Leadership Toward an Integrated Economic Future

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### Background Information

The Sustainable Cleveland 2019 summit represents a successful community-based approach to the design of a local, sustainable economy. A 10-year initiative, the summit is convened annually on different a theme, including “vital neighborhoods,” “local foods,” “energy efficiency,” and “sustainable mobility.” Participation at the summit has been strong since its inception in 2009, with roughly 700 attendees each year, and 350 people who actively participate in year-round working groups.

City government leadership for the summit began years earlier when Andrew Watterson, sustainability coordinator at that time, instigated a series of city-wide changes that resulted in environmental improvements and lower costs. His work gained the support Cleveland’s Mayor Frank Jackson, who recognized Watterson’s efforts as important budget solutions.

Mayor Jackson eventually began to see the potential for sustainability as a leading force in new business innovation: If Cleveland fully integrated sustainability principles into its economy, it could help the city regain its regional, national, and even international leadership position.

He approached Watterson and Case Western Reserve University Professor David Cooperrider to organize a sustainability summit for the city, later dubbed “Sustainable Cleveland 2019.” Mayor Jackson chose Cooperrider for his work on an innovative planning method called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). By emphasizing the strengths of communities rather than the deficits, AI encourages cross-sector collaboration around a shared vision for future possibilities. The method has worked successfully in communities, organizations, and businesses all over the world, and Mayor Jackson saw an opportunity to apply AI to his emerging sustainability mission.





According to Watterson, the summit was held at an opportune time, and helped Cleveland reach a “tipping point,” accelerating its path toward a sustainable economy. Faced with an economy hit hard by the recession, and an environmental legacy still marked by the legendary 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River,<sup>1</sup> the summit offered a new vision of the future, in which Cleveland could find new prosperity through sustainability.

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## Process

*Asking the Right Questions.* In 2005, Andrew Watterson came into the position of sustainability coordinator in the Utilities Department, the city’s largest division, under pressure to prove the value of his position. He recalled that in his first meeting with the utilities director, he was told “you have two years to save your job.” The city of Cleveland had hired Watterson only after being awarded grants from the Cleveland Foundation and the George Gund Foundation. The grants pointed to a growing consensus among the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors that Cleveland had to forge new public/private partnerships around sustainability. Moreover, city officials took notice of the importance sustainability played for the city of Chicago when it hired Sadhu Johnston, the former head of the Cleveland Green Building Coalition. Watterson had been a colleague of Johnston.

The Utilities Department faced an annual electric bill of \$20M and managed a water department of 1,200 employees. With the city facing a budget crisis, Watterson set out to institute “triple bottom line” thinking. But he immediately confronted a city culture that was rooted more in environmental compliance than performance. Watterson knew that to be effective, the sustainability office could not be stuck in advocacy alone; he needed his colleagues to move beyond compliance on their own terms.

His strategy was to start by finding savings in the city’s major cost centers, and to work with department directors who empowered him to “ask the right questions” about their operations. By introducing a fresh perspective, Watterson was often able to identify projects that saved money, and earned the trust of government colleagues.

An early success for Watterson came when he was walking through the city’s water treatment plant. He recalled, “I saw this thing in the corner that looked like it was about the size of a Volkswagen bus, with a natural gas pipe going into it that was about 4 inches in diameter.” When he asked what it was, the plant manager explained it was a dehumidifier, meant to treat a room in the plant that had an average of 140 million gallons of water running through it each day. He later discovered that the humidifier was originally installed in the early 1990s when natural gas prices were cheap. The unit was intended to reduce humidity to extend the life of the paint on the plant’s pipes; a measure that had been estimated to save \$30,000 per year in paint supplies and labor. Now with gas prices at higher levels, Watterson calculated that the cost to run the humidifier was over \$130,000 per year. By shutting down the unit, Watterson saved the city about \$100,000 per year.

Watterson found project after project that would generate revenue. He successfully repeated a strategy of leveraging funds—frequently through grants—to start pilot projects, prove their

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<sup>1</sup> This fire led to the creation of the Clean Water Act, which ushered in the modern U.S. environmental movement.



business case, and then hand them over to the host department for expansion and long-term management.

***Making Sustainability an Economic Priority.*** With a sole focus on reducing costs and finding new sources of revenue, Watterson enticed city staff to collaborate across departments. With some promising early successes, he was able to hire new staff and steadily expand his influence. He now directs an office of five full-time employees and one paid graduate student intern.

When Mayor Jackson took office in 2006, he immediately launched a task force to improve the city's operational efficiencies, and the work of the sustainability office drew his attention. Mayor Jackson soon became convinced that sustainability was not only environmentally beneficial, but that it was an important tool in balancing the budget.

Impressed by what Watterson had accomplished, Mayor Jackson made the unusual move of appointing Watterson, who was still working under the utilities director, to sit on the city's budget committee. For the first time, Watterson had the opportunity to advise the city's budget director on sustainability, and to influence major investments in sustainability programs.

That same year, Case Western Reserve University hosted the UN Global Compact forum. The event convened some 400 leaders and educators from over 40 countries in Cleveland for the purpose of aligning corporate operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles related to human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption.<sup>2</sup> Under the Compact, sustainability is considered a leading innovation opportunity for business. The idea persuaded Mayor Jackson to make sustainability a priority for Cleveland, not only because it could save money, but because it could drive new economic development.

Mayor Jackson later explained his new green economic philosophy to a local newspaper:<sup>3</sup> "In order for us to create a sustainable, green economy, it has to be an integral part of what we do every day. It has to be what we do as a community. How we plan, how we invest, how we make money, how we spend money."

The Mayor elevated Watterson's role again, this time moving the sustainability office to the Mayor's office, and appointing Watterson to Chief of Sustainability. It was a bold, yet strongly supported move, based on a solid business case and a compelling economic vision.

***Dreaming a Sustainable Cleveland.*** Appreciative Inquiry (AI) differs from other organizational change methods in two fundamental ways. First, it is strength-based, focusing on what works well rather than the problems or barriers confronting an organization or community. This approach allows people to think creatively, rather than defensively, about possibilities—a visioning effort that Cooperrider refers to as "dreaming." Second, AI engages the "whole system" of an organization, bringing together all of an organization's players, regardless of title, position, or department. Using these two organizing principles, AI summits assemble cross-cutting teams to engage in the "joint design" of ideas. Often unaware of each other's position or titles, teams ask about aspirations and visions of the future, and delve into the creative aspects of their work. The process often yields

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<sup>2</sup> For full list of UN Global Compact Principles, see: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 12, 2009.



unexpected results, allowing multiple stakeholder groups to cross boundaries and discover a latent capacity in their own creativity.

Intrigued by the caliber of conversations that arise from AI, Mayor Jackson asked Cooperrider and Watterson to work together to propose ways AI could help align Cleveland's new sustainability priorities. They began by creating a steering committee of 40 influential and supportive people throughout the city to develop recommendations. This new group soon encouraged the city to host an open AI forum focused on integrating sustainability into its economic development strategy.

The steering committee engaged in an internal, mini-AI summit to help design the larger summit. Christina Vernon, Director of the Office for a Healthy Environment at the Cleveland Clinic, and member of the steering committee, attended the mini summit. For her, it was an opportunity for local leaders to come together around a common purpose. But it was not without its challenges. She recalled when the group was choosing priorities: someone declared that they already knew what issues the group should be addressing. Vernon and several others immediately disagreed. "It was a difficult moment for the first person in that exchange, but that was an important couple of seconds there to kind of rein in," she said. "The beauty of AI is that it recognizes that the whole system contains wisdom. No one part of the whole system can operate in a vacuum and be successful."

The steering committee also suggested that the larger summit should be egalitarian, with proportional representation by citizens, students, NGOs, the private sector, local government, and regional, state, and international interests that matched that of the city. "We crafted the summit attendee list in a way that was genuinely inclusive, which gave power to the group," said Vernon. "It included people with and without power; with and without direct influence; and with and without expertise."

The mayor approved the plan, but added one condition: at least 40% of participants would have to be younger than 40. Mayor Jackson wanted Cleveland's next generation to have a strong voice in shaping the city's future.

In planning the summit, it became clear that some influential players in the city had serious reservations about the AI methodology. They asserted that using AI posed a risk of opening the planning process to many competing interests. They thought that conflicts might arise, or worse, that key economic interests would not be fairly represented.

A key inflection point occurred when the CEO of a local company came to the mayor's office to advise him against the summit. It was a defining moment for Mayor Jackson, who knew that this company influenced city politics. Shortly after the meeting, Jackson turned to Watterson and Cooperrider and asked them point blank, "are you really ready for this?"

Watterson understood the risk of failing for the city and for himself. "I knew that if it wasn't successful then I wouldn't have a job anymore, but I didn't care about that enough not to take the risk. I believed that Cleveland was ready for it." With the confidence of Watterson and Cooperrider, the Mayor moved forward.

*Planning for a Sustainable Cleveland.* Described by one reporter as having "super high energy," the summit had a noticeable impact on Cleveland. With over 700 community members in attendance,



participants were asked to join one of 20 subject-specific working groups, charged with the question, “How might we cultivate or advance this topic?” They produced 28 new action ideas, which were distilled into an action plan used to guide the city until the year 2019.

By all accounts, the meeting was highly successful. One participant, at the end of the three days, exclaimed, “I haven’t had a day like this since my wedding day!” Cooperrider, too, was impressed. Quoted in a local newspaper, he remarked, “This group is amazing. There is enough innovation happening in the city that people were just waiting for the opportunity to come together.”<sup>4</sup>



Participants at the summit included City Council and Planning Commission members, among many others.

Photo: Sustainable Cleveland 2019.

For Vernon, the event was there was about “genuine community sustainability.” She remarked, “It’s how we support our youth. It’s how we support our education. It’s how we foster a spirit of innovation amongst our citizens. How we empower our citizens to take actions through the work groups.” Vernon believes the AI methodology worked well in bringing the community together. “I think that the individuals who are drawn to sustainability are generally individuals who are seeking creative synergies that are perhaps a little unpredictable. That’s one of the reasons that I think AI is so well suited to the sustainability movement. It deliberately creates new conversations.”

The CEO who advised Mayor Jackson against the meeting was also touched by the summit. Impressed by the creativity and drive that the summit generated, he and his company are one of the top champions of sustainability in the city. Watterson also reports that many who attended the summit have told him that they’ve been inspired to either change their company’s mission, or start new sustainable ventures to meet the 2019 challenge. For Watterson, these inspiring stories are promising signs of a city-wide transformation.

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## Lessons Learned

***Demonstrate Your Value.*** When Watterson was first hired he was told to prove the economic value of sustainability. He started by identifying the city’s major cost centers and working with directors who empowered him to “ask the right questions.” This allowed Watterson’s early wins to result in large savings, enabling him to build trust across the city, and gain more access to decision-makers.

***Allow Colleagues to Change on Their Own Terms.*** Cleveland is a traditionally blue-collar town that has experienced a difficult post-industrial transition. Environmental compliance, not performance, dominated the city’s culture when Watterson was hired. He therefore knew that the sustainability office would not be successful if it was focused on advocacy alone. Watterson set out to make friends, address budget concerns, and allow colleagues to come to their own conclusions about sustainability.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



**Encourage Leaders to Attend Visionary Events.** While Watterson’s progress is impressive, it would not have been as impactful without the support of the Mayor. By supporting the Mayor’s participation in the UN Global Summit and his meeting with David Cooperrider, Watterson helped to enable the conditions for the Mayor to reach an “aha” moment, which sparked an elevated role for sustainability in the city.

**Encourage Creative, Rather Than Defensive, Visioning.** AI’s planning philosophy is rooted in the science of human creativity. By focusing on what works well, and “dreaming” of possibilities, planners can let go of unnecessary boundaries to their thinking. In contrast, by focusing only on finding solutions to problems or barriers, people’s imagination tends to be more limited, eliciting more of a defensive, “fight or flight” posture.

**Create Momentum by Convening Others.** Watterson deliberately allowed ownership of the project to be distributed across the city, and kept the official role of the city as that of a convener. According to Vernon, “that’s a big innovation,” because it has allowed the initiative to be independent of election cycles. “I don’t think anyone involved would tolerate an abandonment of this work,” she said. “There’s too much invested, there’s too many working groups, there’s too much visibility, too many success stories.”

**Include the “Whole System,” Including the Private Sector.** AI’s strategy of engaging the “whole system” allowed for a particularly rich mix of ideas to flourish at the summit. For Vernon, accepting “that the whole system has wisdom,” was critical, especially as it pertained to the private sector. “I see a risk that city sustainability managers fill their space with a lot internal political dialogue and nonprofits,” she said. Yet, by deliberately including the private sector from the beginning, Cleveland was able to stimulate true cross-sector dialogue. “Things can be learned from businesses that can be applied to cities; things that cities are doing can be applied to nonprofit leadership; and nonprofit leadership strategies can be applied to businesses,” she said. “I think that cities often shy away from [cross- sector collaboration], but I really do believe that this is so much richer for its inclusiveness.”

**Take Inspired Risks.** Amidst concerns from a local business leader, Watterson was asked to advise the Mayor on whether he should move forward with the summit. With the reputation of Watterson and the Mayor hinging in part on the success of the summit he knew his advice to move forward carried significant risk. He had great confidence, however, in his advisory committee, Cooperrider, and his colleagues, and felt passionately about the emerging vision and tipping point for the city. Watterson saw the potential the summit had to provide an important service to the community, and (rightly) decided the risk was worth it.



*Thanks to Andrew Watterson and Christina Vernon.*

*Case study written by Mike Crowley, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Sustainable Cleveland website:  
<http://www.gcbl.org/2019>

Contact:  
Angela Fleming, Cleveland Office of Sustainability  
(216) 664-2455 ext.711 or email [afleming@city.cleveland.oh.us](mailto:afleming@city.cleveland.oh.us)



## Taking Small Steps Towards Regional Collaboration

### Making the Case for Cooperation

In 2009, sustainability leaders in Bellevue, Washington, a city of 120,000 just east of Seattle, saw great potential for teaming up with other neighboring, “east side” cities on sustainability initiatives. Sheida Sahandy, assistant to the Bellevue City Manager and the lead for the city’s Environmental Stewardship Initiative, believed that these cities – which all had similar demographics, local cultures and economic assets – could do much more together to promote sustainability in their communities than they could individually.

To get Bellevue’s neighbors interested in collaborating, Sahandy realized she needed the right entry point. While there was some history of collaboration among east side cities on the delivery of core services such as emergency dispatch and permitting, collaboration on sustainability initiatives had never been attempted.

The entry point soon came with the Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) expected announcement of its Energy’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grants. All of the east side cities had questions about the grant program that they could better work through with their peers in other jurisdictions. They could also explore using the first round of block grants to lay the foundation for a large regional application for a DOE competitive grant.

At a monthly regional city manager’s lunch, Sahandy made her proposal. “I had to convince them that this was an area where we could be more effective as a group than any one of us could be individually,” she said. Since she was not asking Bellevue’s neighbors to chip in any funds, just to free up a senior staff person for some exploratory conversation, the city managers could easily agree. “It was a win-win proposition,” remarked Sahandy. “They had nothing to lose.”

A small group of senior staff from seven east side jurisdictions began meeting regularly, periodically briefing their elected officials on the effort. While the initial focus was on DOE’s grants, they soon began looking at other avenues for cooperation. They named themselves the C7 New Energy Partnership, and chose three focus areas: clean mobility, residential energy efficiency and commercial emissions reduction. Instead of crafting a formal mission statement, they opted to describe themselves very simply as a group looking to “develop ideas and seek funding for projects,” thus maximizing their flexibility to be opportunistic.

**Together we develop ideas and seek funding for projects in which the C-7 geography, our shared goals and challenges, and our history of successful collaboration allow us to achieve superior outcomes.**

*From a one-pager on the C7 New Energy Partnership*





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## The First Project: Demonstrating Real Value

The first concrete action by the C7 partnership was a joint application for a competitive energy grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. The grants were highly competitive, and the C7's application, although given positive feedback by DOE, was not awarded. Shortly after that disappointment Puget Sound Energy (PSE), a regional gas utility, and OPOWER, a national company that provides information about energy use to utility customers, approached the C7 partnership with another idea. They proposed a pilot program to provide regular home energy reports to a targeted group of residential households. OPOWER offered a significant discount on the cost of the reports in exchange for regional-scale participation.

The staff in the C7 group saw that a partnership with PSE and OPOWER could produce multiple benefits for a low up-front cost. It could reduce carbon emissions and energy use, while saving their residents money. OPOWER's track record running similar programs in other communities meant that there was little risk of the program failing to deliver on its goals. And the cost share by the cities could be covered with EECBG grant funds. Each jurisdiction had little to lose by participating. The staff agreed to seek Council-level approvals, and they worked together on creating a compelling and persuasive pitch.

### PROGRAM RESULTS

- \$2.25 million in energy savings
- An average of 180 to 200 kilowatt hours per household saved during the pilot, or \$18
- An average of 9 therms of gas per household saved, or \$10
- 10 million pounds of carbon emissions avoided
- A platform for future programs

Ninety-two thousand households received six reports on their energy use over a twelve month period. The reports were designed to capitalize on research findings about the power of peer competition to motivate action. They compared each household's energy use to the average use in 100 similar nearby houses, as well as to the energy use in the top 20% of those houses (a measure of the best performers).

Tips on how to reduce home energy use through conservation behaviors, replacement of old appliances and systems with more energy efficient ones, and other actions for improving efficiency were included in each report, as

well as resources for more information and financial assistance. A control group enabled the cities to test whether reductions in energy were a result of exposure to the information in the reports.

Since the project is still young, the quantitative benefits are modest. The real success, Sahandy suggests, is that residents in the seven cities are more aware of the amount of energy they use each month, creating the foundation for a more concerted campaign to drive down energy use in the future.

Follow-up actions under consideration include friendly city to city competitions to reduce energy, competitions among schools, and a more concerted social marketing campaign to influence how people use the information they receive.





Fortified by its initial success, the partnership has also begun exploring other areas for collaborating, including joint planning for electric car charging stations across the region, and a web site showing the region's sustainability assets.

Kamuron Gurol, the Planning Director for the City of Sammamish, believes his jurisdiction has received significant value from the partnership. Sammamish's small size, limited budget and lack of designated sustainability staff made it impossible for the city to undertake many new initiatives on its own, even though it had a sustainability strategy. "Keeping a focus on sustainability is tough when we are asking ourselves if we can keep all our firefighters," he said. "If we had tried to do this home energy reports project as individual cities, it never would have happened."

Gurol believes that in addition to stretching limited city resources for sustainability work, the partnership increases the capacity of the cities to design better programs. "Through the C7 partnership, we made better decisions because we were able to pool our brainpower together," he said.

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## Lessons for Sustainability Practitioners

***Create a Small Group of Similar Jurisdictions.*** The C7 partnership's small size made it nimble enough to pursue an unanticipated opportunity when it arose. "In my opinion, it would have been a lot harder if we were a C14 or a C21," said Gurol. "The C7 found just the right size –big enough to create the horsepower needed to make a difference, but not so big that it is unwieldy or ponderous." Sahandy and Gurol also point out that similarities among the seven jurisdictions created a sense of "peerness" that enabled the partnership to coalesce quickly. In addition to having similar demographics, they share a utility, a school district, and a common set of large employers. Sahandy speculates that the partnership might not have worked as well if it involved smaller cities and a large city like Seattle. Finally, a history of other collaborative ventures in the region – from coordinated emergency dispatch services, to a new common web platform for permit applications – created some cross-city familiarity that could be built upon.

***Make it Informal and Exploratory at the Starting Gate.*** The C7 partnership decided not to create a formal partnership agreement defining the roles and responsibilities of its members, opting instead to describe themselves simply as a group of cities in search of good ideas. "We have nothing but the will of the seven cities to be creative and look for actions we can do better collectively than we can individually," explained Sahandy. This flexible identity allowed the group to be open-minded and exploratory as it searched for the right starting project, one that would offer real value and efficiencies to the participating jurisdictions. Even today, the group does not require that every jurisdiction participate in every project. "As long as there are enough of the C-7 cities to make the thing work (i.e. file for a grant, explore a project) we will pursue it," Sahandy explained.

***Keep Multiple Irons in the Fire.*** Early on, the C7 partnership invested significant time and energy in a joint grant application that was not successful. Sahandy describes this as a time of low morale for the partnership. The interest in cooperating survived the setback because there were other viable,



value-added project ideas already in the works, ready to refocus the group's attention. She recommends that any regional partnership work on multiple tracks in the early phases, to maintain resilience in the face of temporary setbacks.

*Let It Draw Ideas and Resources.* The C7 partnership had not been meeting long when outside organizations began knocking on its door to propose regional projects of various stripes. Puget Sound Energy and OPOWER were the first, but they were soon followed by others interested in taking advantage of the C7's ability to create efficiencies by mobilizing multiple jurisdictions in a coordinated initiative. To take advantage of this robust interest, the C7 organized special sessions for outside organizations to come in and make pitches to the group. "This is very much 'if you build it they will come,'" suggested Sahandy.

*Build on Small Successes.* "This is going to end up doing what I had originally hoped it would: it's going to create something with positive results that we can then take to the next level" said Sahandy. "When we go to our Councils to ask for the next thing, which will most likely require some local government funding, then we can show all these positive results. It allowed us to get through that first activation curve of just getting off the ground, and now we just need a little support to keep flying."

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## For More Information

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## CASE STUDY: PORTLAND, OR

# Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability "Think of yourself like a small business"

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### Background Information

When it comes to urban sustainability, the City of Portland, OR is a standard-bearer, in the U.S. and beyond. In 1993, for example, Portland was the first city to adopt a local climate action plan—the Global Warming Reduction Strategy—which set a target of reducing carbon emissions to 20 percent below 1988 levels by 2010. In 2001 they added a Green Building Policy, also among the nation's first such initiatives. And in 2009, Portland became the first U.S. city to merge its planning and sustainability functions, creating a Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS). The Bureau is arguably the largest and most influential local government sustainability department in America.

The Bureau, as its website describes, "combines the disciplines of planning and sustainability to advance Portland's diverse and distinct neighborhoods, promote a prosperous and low-carbon economy, and help ensure that people and the natural environment are healthy and integrated into the cityscape." Their wide-ranging portfolio of initiatives includes:

- Implementing the community-wide Climate Action Plan;
- Partnering with Clean Energy Works Oregon (a leading building energy retrofitting initiative that BPS incubated for 18 months before it became a separate, statewide nonprofit organization); and
- Developing and implementing an array of long-range development plans, such as the Portland Plan (which will be "a 25-year strategy to guide the physical, economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the city"), the Willamette River Plan ("to guide, inspire and facilitate actions and investments along the Willamette River") and Airport Futures (an integrated long-range development plan for Portland International Airport).

Through this work, BPS seeks to achieve its mission: "to create a prosperous, equitable and healthy city."



To be sure, Portland has a number of favorable characteristics that have allowed sustainability initiatives to thrive. These include a strong tradition of participatory democracy and citizen engagement, a high-level of public support for strong land-use regulation, and the existence of an effective mechanism for regional collaboration and governance (called Metro). Still, the expansion of the City of Portland’s sustainability function—from a one-person Energy Office created in 1979 to the 120-person BPS created in 2009—offers several important lessons that are relevant and useful to urban-scale sustainability practitioners everywhere.

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## Process

Looking back at the evolution of Portland’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, there were three critical junctures at which significant change happened—“inflection points” as senior sustainability manager Michael Armstrong called them. At each of these turns, Portland’s sustainability program gained significant scope, responsibilities, clout, and resources.

It began in 1979 with the creation of the Portland Energy Office, a one-person office that focused mostly on bolstering the energy efficiency of city-owned buildings. It was funded through a surcharge on the energy bills of the city’s main bureaus—essentially a self-taxing mechanism to centrally fund and implement projects to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, and save money. The program was successful, and the Energy Office went on to develop a strong carbon emission reduction goal and climate action plan and program.

In 2000, the Office of Sustainable Development (OSD) was created through a merger of the Energy Office and the city’s solid waste management and recycling programs, previously located in the Bureau of Environmental Services. This expanded the scope of the office to include not just energy efficiency, green building and climate action, but also recycling and solid waste management, and promoting sustainable business practices. The merger “put sustainability on a stronger institutional and financial footing,” according to Armstrong. Susan Anderson, who had served previously as the director of the Portland Energy Office, was asked to bring her entrepreneurial zeal to OSD as its founding director. At OSD Anderson had a staff of 40 and an annual budget of approximately \$7 million, only 10% of which came from the city’s General Fund. The rest came from grants and contracts—“kind of like a nonprofit,” Anderson recalled.

But the biggest change occurred in 2009, when incoming Mayor Sam Adams merged OSD with the powerful Bureau of Planning, responsible for long-range planning and zoning policy for the city. “It’s sort of like those old commercials for Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups,” Mayor Adams said at the time. “Chocolate and peanut butter; it seems so obvious once you put them together.” Mayor Adams emphasized that the goal of BPS was to integrate sustainability into all of the city’s policy, management and planning decisions. “I really wanted to change it so sustainability is the default of all policy, of all management, of all planning decisions,” he recalled. To make that signal clear, Adams appointed Anderson to run the new, 120-person Bureau.

Each of these inflection points resulted from individual acts of leadership by elected officials: Commissioner Mike Lindberg was the driving force behind the creation of the Portland Energy Office; Commissioners Erik Sten (who oversaw the Energy Office) and Dan Saltzman (who oversaw



the Bureau of Environmental Services) teamed up on the creation of the Office of Sustainable Development; and Commissioner Sam Adams, as he became mayor in 2009, created the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

But those seemingly discrete acts of leadership in reality were the by-product of years of community process – what senior sustainability manager Armstrong referred to as “The Portland Way.” “It’s a slow, inclusive process, with everyone and their brothers and sisters sitting around a table in what some consider to be just one endless meeting after another,” Armstrong explained. “But that’s what lays the groundwork for political leadership down the road; that’s what ultimately creates value.”

The “Portland Way” isn’t without its challenges, of course. Rob Bennett, a former senior staffer and the original architect of the city’s green building program, recalls many roadblocks to Portland’s first green building policy. The first policy was modest and backed by a detailed economic analysis, but it was a significant struggle to get it passed. The second green building policy, some 10 years later, passed without fanfare, even though it was “much more ambitious” and less grounded in economic analysis. The reason, according to Bennett, was that by the time the second policy was introduced, the city had a much celebrated LEED Platinum Community Center, and “major developers were building green buildings all over the place.” For Bennett, this showed that the city’s sustainability efforts are directly tied to market forces, and that the role of the BPS is to stay just ahead of the market to be a catalyzing force.

A related challenge, according to Anderson, has been getting the public focused on sustainability. To accomplish this, Anderson consistently emphasized the need to craft messages that resonate with the public, and hired highly-skilled communications and marketing professionals to help her do that. “You need to translate sustainability into things that regular people really care about: protecting kids’ health, saving money for low-income families, helping businesses stay globally competitive,” observed Anderson.

“Nobody’s behavior is driven by sustainability or climate change,” added Leslie Carlson, a public relations consultant who served on the Portland-Multnomah County Sustainable Development Committee for almost 10 years. “You have to talk to people in the ways in which they think about their lives and their community...You can only engage and inspire people based on values they already hold, not ones that you *want* them to hold. The Office of Sustainable Development [now the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability] understands that. They haven’t pushed a sustainability agenda, they’ve pushed a livability agenda, and that has made all of the difference.”

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## Leadership Outcomes

**Portland Climate Action Plan.** As the Portland sustainability program has evolved since 1991, it has delivered a great deal of value to the community. This, undoubtedly, has been one of the keys—if not *the* key—to the program’s longevity and increasing sphere of responsibility and influence. The Climate Action Plan, first developed in 1993 and then updated in 2009, demonstrates the impact of the program. This multi-dimensional strategy, which Anderson cites as one of her proudest accomplishments, has led to a 20% reduction in per-capita carbon emissions compared to 1990 levels—and a two percent decline in total emissions, despite a significant increase in population during that period.





*Clean Energy Works Oregon.* Armstrong points to Clean Energy Works Oregon (CEWO) as one of his favorite illustrations of BPS' approach and impact. The program began as a small, pilot project, initiated by Anderson in 2008 while she was still director of OSD, and well before the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program was launched. For years Anderson had been keenly interested in finding innovative ways to finance and encourage home energy efficiency improvements, especially in Portland's older housing stock. She had an instinct that the timing was right to develop such a program, and hired Derek Smith away from the private sector to make it happen. Smith had been the sustainability director at Norm Thompson, a Portland-based clothing company. He hadn't worked in local government, nor was he an expert on building energy efficiency financing. But he was an entrepreneur and a partnership-builder.

"We took an age-old problem—how to pay for energy efficiency improvements in single-family homes—and brought new voices and partners to the table," Armstrong explained. "And we developed a program that addresses issues we haven't traditionally addressed, such as workforce development, decent wages, and opportunities for disadvantaged communities." Consequently, the program "attracted broad support from unlikely corners of the community, including organized labor and social equity advocacy organizations."

The pilot program, which provides low-interest loans to home owners to finance energy efficiency retrofits, which are paid back over time via their energy bills, launched in 2009. The State of Oregon and the Oregon Energy Trust were key partners, and the EECBG provided \$2.5 million in seed funding. After 18 months, a statewide nonprofit organization was created to bring the program to scale, and Smith was hired to be its executive director. The program's goal is to significantly improve the energy performance in 6,000 homes by 2013. To date they have conducted more than 1,200 audits, retrofitted almost 550 homes and created about 35 jobs.

*Mainstreaming Sustainability.* On top of these and many other significant outcomes, the creation of the BPS is having a much broader impact on the Portland community—infusing sustainability into many of the big-ticket, long-term planning and investment decisions the city is making. "The key is to figure out what really drives your community in terms of quality-of-life, and to align with those drivers so that you can reach a broader audience and have more influence," said Carlson. "In Portland, that driver is land-use planning and policy." With the merger of OSD into BPS, the powerful Portland Plan—which sets long-term land-use policy for the city and region—became a key lever for integrating sustainability into fundamental decisions about where and how the Portland area develops.

"We're a significant Bureau now, we're not just a boutique thing off in the corner," added Anderson. "In my role as Planning Director I can talk about sustainability in places that otherwise would never have had that as part of the conversation...The difference is that I'm their peer now," Anderson said of her relationships with the directors of other key city bureaus. "I had a seat at the table before, but sustainability wasn't mainstream."

For Michael Armstrong, perhaps the most significant impact of the creation of the BPS is that it "broadened the playing field to include social issues, such as addressing economic disparities, and a much broader set of viewpoints, such as equity interests. It built in that third leg of the sustainability stool, and gave us the opportunity, and the obligation, to deliver sustainable development for *all*."



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## Lessons Learned

**Think of Yourself Like a Small Business.** That's the way Anderson articulated the need to be entrepreneurial and exceedingly customer driven. "You need to go out and do needs assessments of your customers," Anderson advised. "You need to fit what you're trying to do into *their* goals and objectives, not the other way around."

Bennett considered Anderson's work on business development "masterful." She was able to take a "little forgotten outpost" in the city forward by focusing on "catalytic projects," and innovative fundraising. Working with federal agencies and private foundations, Anderson created a \$2.5 million green investment fund, developed training and capacity-building programs, built a new "green directory," and more. Before Anderson, fundraising outside of the city was not common practice.

**Build Cross-Sector Partnerships.** One independent assessment of Portland's sustainability efforts attributed their success, in part, to "an evolving process of collaboration between citizens, the grassroots, city officials, planners and other professionals working at various levels to more deeply understand—and work with—fundamental connections between land-use, transportation, demographics, employment and economics." Armstrong put it this way: "We have a rather quirky political system here in Portland...No strong mayor, no master plan, just a lot of folks throwing ideas into the stew...Not everything is a step forward, but it all engages a lot of perspectives—and a fair amount of it ends up working...We get more creativity, more innovation, more failures and more lessons-learned—but a lot of interesting successes, too. It's not death by a thousand cuts; it's more like life by a thousand breaths."

According to Anderson, building relationships with key change-makers in the community is "just hard work." "Identifying business, political and community leaders, taking the time to get to know them, to build a rapport, so that you can get the support and resources you need when you're trying to do stuff—that's really important and really challenging," she said. Armstrong added: "Even if I had the formal authority [to create sustainability-related change], I'm not sure I would use it." He attributed the success of Portland's Green Building Policy, for example, to "10 years cultivating relationships."

**Bring Them Winnable Gains.** "Bring them [elected officials and other key partners] things they can achieve in a year," Anderson said. "They want to be able to show that they completed something quickly. That's the best way to build support for the longer-range things you're trying to do."

**Diversify, Diversify, Diversify.** Like a good stock portfolio, seek a diversity of funding sources for your sustainability program. Anderson and her team have been particularly masterful at leveraging city dollars to attract private capital to their projects and win grants and contracts. "Diversity of funding is critical," said Armstrong. "Utility funds, grants, influencing how others spend their funding, grabbing what you can from revenue streams coming through—these all are ways of getting other people's money working for you."

BPS has an annual budget of \$20-\$40 million, depending on how successful Anderson and her team are at winning grants and contracts to augment the \$12 million annual budget that comes from the General Fund and solid waste management fees.





“Susan is the ultimate scavenger,” observed Leslie Carlson. “She has been a master of patching together innovative funding packages. She’s all about finding a shared purpose, and putting together public-private partnerships to achieve it.”

*Thanks to Susan Anderson, Michael Armstrong, Rob Bennett and Leslie Carlson.*

*Case study written by Steve Nicholas, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability website:  
<http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm>

Clean Energy Works Oregon website:  
<http://www.cleanenergyworksoregon.org/>

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[michael.armstrong@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:michael.armstrong@portlandoregon.gov)

City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability 2011-2013 Strategic Plan:  
<http://www.portlandonline.com/bps/index.cfm?a=336131&c=47518>

The EcoTipping Points Project: Portland, OR – Sustainable City  
<http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/our-stories/indepth/usa-portland-sustainable-regional-planning.html>





## CASE STUDY: ASHEVILLE, NC

# The Evolution of Asheville's Office of Sustainability

## Energy Efficiency, Strategic Planning, and Budget Planning

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### Background Information

In the spring of 2007, the City Council of Asheville, North Carolina, passed two resolutions: one to establish energy and conservation goals and benchmarks for city operations; and one to adopt Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for new, city-owned buildings. In January of 2008, to help implement these policies, the city hired its first Energy Coordinator within the Department of Public Works.

Today, the city has formalized the Office of Sustainability, centrally located in the Department of Finance and Management Services. The office recently won approval to launch an innovative, long-term "Green Capital Improvement Program," which enables the funding of energy efficiency and retrofitting projects for municipal buildings, valued at up to \$5M.

The evolution of the City of Asheville's Office of Sustainability showcases how one community was able to capitalize on successes and lessons learned over the course of several years.

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### Process

*Creating a "Waste-Not" Ethic.* Mark Combs, former Public Works Director for the City of Asheville, gained a reputation for implementing smart, cost effective programs. In 2000, when the state was experiencing significant budget cuts, Combs convinced the city's Police Chief to upgrade his department's fleet of V-8 Ford Crown Victorias with V-6 Chevrolets that had 50% better fuel economy. While the force disliked their smaller size they appreciated the front-wheel-drive vehicle's improved handling in poor weather conditions, and they were just as fast. "The bottom line was that the Police Department saved money," said Combs. "When the Chevys went online, so did the philosophy of saving fuel."



The “waste-not” ethic soon permeated other city fleet purchasing decisions: The Police Department added electric Segways to their fleet; the Parks and Recreation Department piloted the use of electric vehicles for their maintenance crew; and the City Manger even approved the more costly purchase of a hybrid vehicle for the Planning Department. “It starts with one or two people having that religion, or bend, or push, and positively affecting those around them. Eventually, a small seed grows into a big tree and pretty soon the whole organization is thinking that way,” explained Combs.

This grassroots approach is fundamental to Comb’s philosophy on change management. “It takes one person or more in an organization to make a difference,” said Combs. “Having that charisma, dynamic, and resolve to influence others is the single most important ingredient you need to have. The second most important element is having an organizational structure where openness and the ability to be progressive are built within the organization.”

Combs eventually saw a significant increase in sustainability-related actions throughout the city. “Everything was grassroots, and staff-driven—based on financial need—but as the green movement developed, Asheville was ready,” he said. “Now you can’t get elected in Asheville unless you have green somewhere in your name.” The city joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement, adopted LEED standards, and set a carbon emissions goal in an effort to institutionalize sustainability. With this rise of sustainability programs, the city realized the need for a full-time sustainability coordinator.

*High Expectations for Small Beginnings.* In 2008, Combs hired Maggie Ullman as Asheville’s first Energy Coordinator. Ullman was tasked with implementing the city’s energy policies and formally launching Asheville’s sustainability program. Within the first year of her tenure, Ullman partnered with a well-established consulting firm, Camp Dresser and McKee (CDM), to engage in a public-private partnership for the development of a “Strategic Management Plan.”<sup>1</sup> CDM, interested in contributing to the challenge of urban sustainability, provided a written report and researched a long list of accessible project opportunities for the city. “The plan helped us set goals, create a structure for implementation, and identify and prioritize opportunities,” said Ullman. In an effort to understand how departmental goals and challenges might align with and advance the city’s sustainability goals, she then interviewed each of the city’s department directors and senior leaders. The result was a plan that worked systematically toward greater efficiencies, conservation, and a healthy environment, an approach that was in line with Combs’ preference for grassroots action.

As the Sustainability Management Plan neared completion, Combs began transitioning toward retirement. In a move to advance the momentum of Combs’ work, the City Manager relocated the sustainability program to his own department where he could provide direct leadership. In June, 2009, the plan was adopted by the City Council, and the City Manager officially created the “Office of Sustainability,” with Ullman as its sole employee. Ullman explained, “It was strategically put it in the senior-most—the central management office—so that the rest of the organization saw that sustainability wasn’t just a Public Works function—they saw that it was an organizational priority.”

In 2008, the Office of Sustainability was elevated once again when funding became available through the Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program. Asheville was granted \$1.5M which allowed them to grow to a staff of three.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ashevillenc.gov/green](http://www.ashevillenc.gov/green)



**Gaining Further Influence.** In the spring of 2010, in recognition of the financial value Ullman brought to the city, Ullman was promoted to become a Division Manager in the city's Finance and Management Services Department. Today, she reports directly to the city's Chief Financial Officer, and plays a key role in city-wide budget negotiations. "I had influence in the City Manager's Office, but now the influence is in language that everybody values," said Ullman. "I'm at the table because we're all talking about money, but now I'm facilitating the conversation." She now helps direct capital planning and budgetary decisions in a way that helps improve the city's sustainability performance measures, while simultaneously benefiting the bottom line. Instead of influencing department heads, she now creates system-wide policies. For example, regarding vehicle fleets, she said, "I defined four sustainability fleet goals: 1) alternative fuel; 2) downsizing; 3) right-sizing the fleet; and, 4) motor pooling, then I heavily weighted those goals in the prioritization process. Now, when the decision makers come to the table they are choosing to include sustainability parameters because it increases the likelihood of funding their needs."

Because the sustainability program is now located in the central management services division, Ullman's initiatives are becoming more institutionalized. "For the first two years [in the City Manager's office] I was seen as the quarterback of the green program," explained Ullman. "Now, we've shifted to utilizing me as a resource available to help with the green programs our whole organization does."

**Leveraging Savings.** In the spring of 2011, the City Council sought to further capitalize on the savings possible through sustainability measures by adopting the "Green Capital Improvement Program (Green CIP)." The Green CIP annually reinvests savings from municipal energy efficiency and retrofitting projects into additional projects, through a \$5M revolving loan fund. Additionally, through the Green CIP, the city can borrow up to \$1.5M against the loan fund to help finance large projects. The program will help Asheville pay for municipal sustainability projects into the foreseeable future.

Ullman attributes the success of this initiative to the Finance Director's ability to create an effective cross-departmental management team for the Green CIP. The team includes personnel with expertise and experience in financing, energy efficiency, and internal politics.

**Creating an Effective Team.** When the Sustainability Management Plan was first adopted, Ullman attempted to pull together a Green Team, made up of representatives from each of the 13 city departments. She quickly learned that the Green Team model didn't work for the local government culture in Asheville. "Our organization has never successfully had an inter-departmental team with representatives from every department that works," she said. "But we have project teams—for example, a representative from Fleet, Budget, Purchasing, and Sustainability are working together on the fleet capital improvement program, which is working really well. The scale and scope of a traditional Green Team just didn't work. In this case, going 'by the book' was a failure. I was coming to the table with a bonafide 'textbook management tool', but they didn't care, there was no buy-in." Ullman has since learned to bring project-specific teams together in a way that is relevant to all parties involved.

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## Lessons Learned



***Be Persistent.*** Having worked in local government for over 30 years, Combs understood the value of patience and persistence. “My experience in working in government since 1980 is that you have to be very patient and accept set-backs, but that ultimately you will prevail—you can’t get discouraged.” He described it as a kind of evangelical approach, and has learned that “whenever I hit a brick wall, I have to find a way around it.” Although, it is hard to quantify his influence, it is clear that his early work championing the “waste-not” ethic set the stage for the evolution of Asheville’s Office of Sustainability.

***Take Advantage of Collaborative Work Environments.*** Combs credited the current City Manager and his predecessor with creating a collaborative work environment among senior city leaders. “It’s very, very important to be able to work across agencies. If you have autocratic leadership, where everything comes from the top down, it’s a little more daunting.” Combs found this to be crucial when collaborating with the Police Chief to procure efficient vehicles. “He asked me to convince him, and was willing to take that information and make a good decision from it,” said Combs. Ullman has also benefited from the collaborative environment, specifically regarding the development of the Green CIP. “I don’t think [the Green CIP] would’ve ever happened if I wasn’t so influenced by my colleagues in the budget and treasury,” she said.

***Share Successes Publicly and Regularly.*** Combs and Ullman recognize the importance of working with the community to create good policy. For Combs, this didn’t come naturally at first. “Public Works Directors, like me, are not hired because they’re really good at public relations and advertising, he said. “The community is what drives political action; they ultimately set policy and tell us what we can and can’t do. I knew that, and spent 7-8 years getting the politicians lined up so they could succeed—that’s what a good bureaucrat does.”

Ullman concurred, “From my research and my experience, you have to be very consistent... You have to have consistent education, consistent touches with the population you’re working with.”

***Spend Time Building Strong, Effective Teams.*** Building trust among stakeholder teams was critical to the success of Asheville’s sustainability office. According to Ullman, “Our City Manager’s number one philosophy is team management, so that has been the approach I’ve taken that has led me to great accomplishments.”

Ullman’s approach to team building is rooted in promoting diversity and is modeled after the ecological principle of biodiversity. “Ecosystem biodiversity means a richer ecosystem, so if you have a diversity of thought, skills, technical skills, and leadership, you’re going to get a more vibrant, sustainable, resilient outcome,” she said. “Anybody can scratch up some money and put up solar panels, but we’ve been able to set up a program that is going to live past the time that I leave this position and is about pulling teams together out of silos.”

***Serve the Needs of Senior Leaders.*** By aligning sustainability program priorities with those of the key players in Asheville, Combs and Ullman were both able to apply triple bottom line goals to various municipal decisions. During a recent presentation to college-age youth interested in pursuing careers in sustainability, Ullman shared her top piece of advice: “The first thing I would do is figure out who the senior leader is and learn everything I possibly could about what was important to them—what they want to achieve, and what they’re struggling with. Then, I would find a green program that helped them solve their challenge or helped them meet their goals. The approach is,



‘what can I do to help you?’” This tactic has helped Asheville’s sustainability programs succeed by virtue of being under the directive of the community’s top leaders.

*Thanks to Mark Combs and Maggie Ullman.*

*Case study written by Nathaly Agosto Filión, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Asheville Sustainability website:  
<http://www.ashevillenc.gov/green>

Sustainable Cities Institute Asheville City Profile:  
[http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/city\\_profile/content.city\\_profile/City\\_Profile\\_Ashville\\_NC](http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/city_profile/content.city_profile/City_Profile_Ashville_NC)

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## CASE STUDY: VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Vancouver Reinventing a Sustainability Team for New Challenges

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#### Background Information

Over nearly a decade, the Canadian city of Vancouver, British Columbia, has assembled an impressive portfolio of sustainability accomplishments, through changes in the city's policies and operations, through major investments in sustainable energy infrastructure and green building, and through the efforts of its residents to adopt lifestyles that reduce the city's carbon footprint. For example:<sup>1</sup>

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have been reduced to 1990 levels, and Vancouver is on track to meet the target adopted by the international Kyoto treaty (emissions at 6% *below* 1990 levels by 2012) despite a 27% growth in population over the same period;
- Vancouver has pursued compact redevelopment to increase density in its urban neighborhoods, while also increasing their walkability, bikability, and aesthetic appeal;
- The city built the first renewable district heating system to create energy from wastewater, and provide heat and hot water to all buildings in Southeast False Creek, the neighborhood where the new Olympic Village is situated;
- It has implemented the greenest building code for new houses of any city in North America, and the most rigorous requirements for new municipal buildings (LEED gold).

The city's sustainability director and team have been centrally involved in reaching these milestones, in collaboration with champions of sustainability embedded throughout Vancouver's city government. Since its establishment in 2003, the team has undergone many organizational changes. It began as a group of two in the city manager's office and grew to a robust team of 12 with a \$2 million annual budget in just three years. It was then relocated to a less prominent position within

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<sup>1</sup> See: [http://vancouver.ca/sustainability/documents/ClimateLeadershipBrochure\\_final.pdf](http://vancouver.ca/sustainability/documents/ClimateLeadershipBrochure_final.pdf)





the city bureaucracy, where it stayed for two years, reporting to the General Manager of Engineering instead of to the city manager. In 2009, the team was again relocated back to the city manager's office, and began a process of reinventing itself to assist the city with crafting and implementing an ambitious plan for becoming the greenest city in the world.

During each of these phases of the team's organizational history, its director pursued thoughtful leadership strategies given the team's current position and influence within the city bureaucracy, the resources it had, and the kinds of opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. This ability to adapt to ever-changing circumstances within city government and the community at large has created a strong foundation for success in Vancouver's sustainability programs.

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## Process

*Building an Effective Team from the Ground Up.* Vancouver's sustainability team was formed in 2003 by Mark Holland, who was hired as an external consultant. Reporting to the city manager, Holland developed the city's first strategic plan focused on climate protection & sustainable development, and established Vancouver's Sustainability Group. He also hired the office's first two staff members, and its manager, Tom Osdoba.

Osdoba, who prior to joining the Sustainability Group ran his own consulting business in Oregon, took the position at an auspicious time; City Council had a broad political mandate from Vancouver's electorate to fund sustainability initiatives. He began with two staff, but over the next three years, Council requests enabled him to add 11 new positions. These included several positions for developing the city's climate action plan, a position to help the city make its procurement policies and practices more sustainable, and a position dedicated to developing a green building policy and greening the design for the planned Olympic Village. By 2007, the team's budget was \$2 million annually.

Osdoba recognized early on that while the City Council had a great appetite for new sustainability initiatives, his brand new team would not be successful if it authored them on its own. He needed to find ways of engaging other departments in developing new ideas, assessing their feasibility given current city operations, and carrying their implementation forward.

Osdoba coached his team to create direct connections between city staff and people outside the city who were experts on sustainability, whether in the areas of green building, fleet management, or water conservation. When Council asked for a new procurement policy, for example, the team got city procurement staff invited to the regular meetings of a small and energized group of people working on sustainability and purchasing outside city government. The team also made sure that those city staff were invited to a national conference on the subject, and angled to get their work showcased. Inspired by those connections, internal champions emerged within the procurement office. They led the development of a new policy for the city, and approval of a budget proposal to add two sustainability experts to their staff.

Osdoba was also persistent in getting senior department managers involved in responding to Council requests for new sustainability actions. When Council asked the team to make a



recommendation about whether the city should launch an innovative neighborhood energy utility (NEU), for example, Osdoba knew he had to have the city's Finance Director and Manager of Engineering involved at the very outset of the thinking process.

They resisted, arguing that the city should not attempt to set up and manage a neighborhood energy utility – it was too far afield of the city's services. Osdoba emphasized that he wanted to pursue an open-minded exploration of the concept, without preconceptions about the recommendation back to Council. "I told the Finance Director 'we will only go to Council with something you are 100% satisfied with,'" Osdoba said. "My goal was to have him take part in the process. If he was skeptical, that was fine. I just needed him to participate and then come with me to Council to talk about what the analysis showed."

The sustainability team succeeded in enlisting the participation of both the city engineer and the finance director in an inexpensive, high-level feasibility analysis to look at the neighborhood energy utility (NEU) concept. When a consultant handed over a new financial model designed to project costs and revenue benefits for the project, Osdoba convinced the finance director that he should invest time in understanding exactly how the model was constructed. "We made them equal partners in the process," he said. "It wasn't us leading it and consulting with them. It was their process too."

Slowly, over the course of several different phases of feasibility analysis, the two senior city staff took more ownership of the results, eventually becoming strong supporters of establishing an NEU. They argued for its environmental benefits, and the financial benefit that would come from its revenue. On March 2, 2006, Vancouver's City Council approved in principle the creation of the South East False Creek Neighborhood Energy Utility (NEU), to provide space heating and domestic hot water using innovative renewable energy sources and systems. Both the Finance and Engineering Departments are now intimately involved in managing it.

These two examples – the team's work with the procurement staff and with the Finance and Engineering Department – show how consistently involving departmental leaders in forging the city's sustainability agenda created many internal champions. Osdoba also engaged emerging advocates for sustainability in the community. "Too often local governments resist talking to the public unless they they've already decided what they want to do," Osdoba suggested. "We took a different approach." The team held brown bag lunches, inviting people to learn what the city was doing and "be part of the conversation about how to move forward." He and his staff attended the meetings of many community organizations to learn about their priorities. And they sometimes facilitated special workshops to catalyze conversations about specific topics such as green infrastructure.

In April 2007, Osdoba left the Sustainability Group to work at the City of Portland, Oregon's Sustainability Office. Melina Scholefield then took over as sustainability manager until December of 2009. Sean Pander stepped in as acting manager from January 2010 to October 2010.

*The Dawn of a New Role.* In 2009, a sweeping electoral change brought Mayor Gregor Robertson and a new City Council into office, ready to pursue a campaign promise to make Vancouver the greenest city in the world. The change in leadership propelled the city's sustainability team into a position of greater prominence within the city bureaucracy.



Sadhu Johnson, who was well-known for his leadership in developing Chicago's Climate Action Plan, became Vancouver's new deputy city manager. He oversees the city's environmental, economic development and emergency management initiatives.

Johnson decided to move the Sustainability Group from the Engineering Department back to the City Manager's office. "It's always harder to have an impact across all city departments when you are embedded deep in one," explained Johnson. "We wanted to put the team a little higher in the hierarchy of city government, and give them their own specific identify and a little more autonomy, by having them report directly to the City Manager's office."

Johnson also decided that the team needed a leader who could help the team undergo some internal evolution. "The Mayor's new initiative put the ownership for delivering the greenest city on all parts of the city instead of on one little group," explained Johnson. "Over a ten year period the team had managed many projects in response to Council directives, but now they needed to shift to doing less rowing and more steering." In November of 2010, Johnson hired Amanda Pitre-Hayes to direct the team. Her years of experience as a private sector consultant gave her skills for creating a service-oriented organization.

***Building Ownership in a New Sustainability Plan.*** Mayor Roberston kicked off the Greenest City initiative by convening a Greenest City Action Team, comprised of well-known sustainability leaders from the private sector, nonprofit organizations, labor unions and consulting groups in North America and across the world. The Greenest City Action Team issued a report recommending that Vancouver embrace ten long-term sustainability goals, and a set of specific 2020 targets.

Council approved all the goals in 2009, and then in 2011, approved a modified and expanded list of 2020 targets. Among these ambitious targets were: Create 20,000 new green jobs; make the majority of trips be via foot, bicycle, and public transit; ensure that every person lives within a five minute walk of a park, beach, greenway, or other natural space; and increase city and neighborhood food assets (e.g. farmers markets, community kitchens, garden plots) by a minimum of 50%.

Lindsay Cole was hired as the Greenest City Planner under a one year contract from July 2010 to July 2011. Cole worked with the city's sustainability team to map the ten goals onto the city bureaucracy, figuring out which departments and which director-level staff within them "had access to the levers of change." Each of these "goal area owners" were asked to pull together a group of ten external thought leaders from business, environmental non-profits, community groups and other organizations who could help select and prioritize sustainability actions.

"The accountable owners from the various departments led the development of their subsections of the plan, but all the work was done through a coordinated framework," explained Pitre-Hayes, who became the sustainability group's director during the development of the action plan. "We gave them recommendations on the process, the timeline and milestones, and tactics they could use with the advisory teams of external thought leaders, so that they would have some guidance as they solicited ideas for the plan."

Recognizing that the more they mobilized Vancouver's communities during the planning phase, the easier it would be to tap their energy, resolve and support for implementation, Cole and the



sustainability team also launched a “Talk Green Vancouver” campaign. The campaign used a broad and unusual spectrum of strategies to reach out and gather input for the Greenest City plan.

The launch of the campaign in a downtown theatre – an event that generated so much excitement that 2,000 people attended and scalpers sold tickets outside – was modeled after “Pecha Kutcha” gatherings in Japan. A dozen presenters each showed 20 large and visually compelling slides for 20 seconds each. The fast-presentations helped to educate and inspire Vancouver’s residents about the many creative ways that the city could realize its greenest city vision.

City residents were then invited to contribute their own ideas through a variety of channels. Thirty five thousand people were engaged in the process, and 800 people proposed ideas on the Talk Green website, and then voted on their favorites. The winning entries were presented to the Mayor and a group of Council members, and were incorporated, along with the other ideas posted on the site, into the final action plan. The sustainability group also put a resource kit on its web site for community leaders that wanted to host “kitchen table” conversations about the plan.

While this thorough and sometimes splashy public engagement work process was very time-consuming, Pitre-Hayes believes that it created a unique opportunity to educate residents about what being a sustainable city might mean for Vancouver. It also sparked excitement in the city’s communities that will help smooth the way to more rapid implementation. For example, the final plan targets some neighborhoods for the development of new open space. These neighborhoods will experience changes as city-owned rights-of-way are converted to greenspace. Rather than organizing to stop this short-term disruption, they have embraced the city’s open space plans, recognizing their long term value for neighborhood quality of life.

*Remaking the Team.* When Amanda Pitre-Hayes took over the leadership of Vancouver’s sustainability group in November 2010, one of her highest priorities was to assess whether it was configured as well as it could be to help the City succeed with its Greenest City initiative.

Several aspects of the new action plan caused Pitre-Hayes to think that the team might need to reinvent some of its capacities and skills. The plan’s goals were ambitious and far-reaching, and could not be met with a series of “one-off” projects led by the sustainability team. It would require work by many of the city’s 9,500 city employees. “This was a positive change, but it meant that we needed distributed leadership across the city if we were going to be successful,” said Pitre-Hayes. In addition, the plan had significant public visibility; it was a high priority for the Mayor and Council, and the public had contributed to its creation.

Pitre-Hayes concluded that she and the team should take a hard look at whether they should do some reinvention. They began with a thorough evaluation of how their work was perceived by both internal and external stakeholders that they interacted with regularly. She personally met with all of the city’s general managers. She then hired a consultant to meet with 24 director-level staff throughout city departments, and more than 20 leaders from various external stakeholder groups including utilities, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and others. Interview results were compiled and analyzed for themes illustrating where the team was excelling in its delivery of services, and where there were gaps.



The assessment revealed that many external stakeholders felt well served by the team, a finding that was not surprising to Pitre-Hayes given the many partnerships it had built to launch community-based projects. It also revealed that internal stakeholders were not getting enough support from the team. “Our city departments did not feel that we were doing enough to help them achieve their own sustainability objectives,” she recounted. “They felt that we had a tendency to dream up programs, half bake them, and then kind of toss them over the wall to the other departments to own. That way of operating was not well-designed to help the city meet its sustainability goals in the long term.”

Pitre-Hayes took the assessment seriously, concluding that the team needed a new “operating model” to serve a city bureaucracy that had the charge, and growing internal motivation, to take a quantum leap forward in its sustainability. Working closely with her team, she recast its organizational structure with the aim of transforming them from a group of “doers” to a group of “enablers.” She divided the team into four sub-teams, each with a special function designed to serve the whole city and facilitate its achievement of the Greenest City Action Plan. The four sub-teams were:

**The Project Incubator Team**, a group that assists other parts of the city bureaucracy to begin pursuing sustainability innovations, by supplying expertise to help them evaluate and test ideas, and by linking them with external partners and funders such as utilities and foundations. They are currently helping the city to explore how it might develop district energy facilities, a new endeavor with a steep learning curve for the relevant city departments.

**The Program Management Team**, a group focused on catalyzing and coordinating action on programs that are cross-functional and have no natural home in other city departments. This team owns three of the ten goals in the plan, including “Eliminate dependence on fossil fuels” and “Lead the world in green building design and building.”

**The Business Relationship Management Team**, a group that provides “front line support”—in the form of quick advice and expertise—to the various offices in the city that own the other seven plan goals. For example, the goal “Make walking, biking and public transit preferred transportation options,” is owned by the transportation and planning departments, but they may need advice and support as they strive to help the city meet it. This team essentially acts as a consulting service within the city bureaucracy.

**The Monitoring & Reporting Team**, which monitors the measures that have been developed to evaluate success and track progress, and develops ways of reporting that provide information both internally and in the larger Vancouver community.

Once Pitre-Hayes and her team had scoped their re-organization, they moved on to considering whether they had the right human resources for their new functions. “Our assessment shined a light on the fact that we needed more competent enablers; people who are really good at getting results *through* other people, by coaching and supporting those people to overcome obstacles, and being advocates for the resources they need.” It was clear to Pitre-Hayes and her team that they needed a fundamental shift in skill sets.

To figure out if there were people already on staff who could step into this new kind of role, the team had in-depth conversations about the kinds of motivations that are intrinsic to an enabler role,



in contrast to a doer role. Staff members were asked if they could be satisfied and feel successful when they helped others develop new capacities and achieve sustainability results.

This helped team members self-select onto the new sub-teams that would best fit their skills as well as their passions and temperaments. It also identified some gaps in current staffing, and triggered hiring of some people who had occupied similar enabler roles in other organizations.

This thoughtful self assessment process helped Pitre-Hayes make a strong business case for the new organizational model. She took the proposal to the city manager, along with a request for a fundamental shift in the way the sustainability group's work was funded in the city budget. Historically its staff were paid from different pots of time-limited project funding, a strategy that might have made sense before when their main purpose was to deliver projects in response to new Council mandates, but no longer fit where they were headed.

"The case we built was that now that we had a strategy that took us out to 2020, we were no longer talking about one-off projects," explained Pitre-Hayes. "This was a coordinated strategy that we were publicly accountable for delivering on, and to support the city in successfully implementing it, we needed to make sure the funding for our team's staff lasted as long as that strategy and those commitments." She persuaded the city manager that the team's positions should all be funded out of the city's permanent operating budget. While it was a revenue-neutral change, it gave the team a large measure of additional job stability.

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## Lessons Learned

***Cultivate Ownership in the Work Throughout the City.*** Vancouver's sustainability team has worked steadily to inspire and involve the many mid and senior level managers spread across city departments. Osdoba built communication channels between internal managers and external sustainability thought leaders and doers, to highlight what might be possible without always having to "be the advocate." When ideas for potential projects surfaced, the team asked department heads to help assess their feasibility and deliver recommendations to Council. Over the long term, this commitment to cultivating inspiration, understanding and knowledge across city departments has paid dividends; some department heads have become ardent advocates for sustainability, and the city's appetite for more ambitious goals has steadily risen.

***Strive for Regular Communication with City Leaders.*** Being the entity whose job it is to propel the city toward major changes is not without its risks. The best way to avoid getting out ahead of city leaders is to establish regular communication with them whenever possible. It can be hard to land meetings on the calendars of city managers or department heads when there is no immediate crisis, but the space that those meetings create for strategic conversations—both about a city's long-term sustainability goals and about steps for addressing current obstacles—are invaluable. They enable a sustainability director to test the waters, and remain in step with the city's leadership.

***Harness the Power of a Mobilized Public.*** Vancouver's sustainability directors have always looked to community leaders and residents for good ideas about how to accelerate progress towards sustainability. Eschewing a more typical practice of inviting public comment on a near-finished plan or project, they have employed creative ways to get the public contributing ideas in the formative





stages. These conversations make the public more supportive when sustainability projects come to their neighborhoods.

*Keep Asking: Are We Organized for Success?* When Pitre-Hayes became the director of the Vancouver sustainability team, she didn't expect to transform its organizational structure in her first year. "It can feel so easy to stick with a particular structure and set of tactics that have worked in the past," she observed. "But as your organization's appetite to deliver out on sustainability evolves, and as momentum builds, you reach points where it's really important to take stock, and consider whether you need a major change."

*Build Your Own Capacity to Support Distributed Leadership.* As Vancouver's sustainability program matured, the team realized it needed more enablers and fewer doers. Enabling others to own and manage sustainability work requires a very different set of skill sets and personal motivations. You need to excel at coaching and supporting others to succeed, and feel rewarded by that behind-the-scenes role. Thinking deeply about what it takes to be an excellent enabler helped the Vancouver sustainability team honestly assess where its current staffing had gaps, and make some changes to evolve for a new role.

*Thanks to Sadhu Johnson, Tom Osdoba, and Amanda Pitre-Hayes*

*Case study written by Sarah McKearnan, Consultant to the Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Vancouver Greenest City Initiative:  
<http://vancouver.ca/greenestcity/>

Talk Green public engagement campaign:  
<http://talkgreenvancouver.ca/>

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## CASE STUDY: FAYETTEVILLE, AR

# Building Relationships around Sustainability

## Developing Trust and Credibility Across Departments and Sectors

### Background Information

In May, 2007, John Coleman became Fayetteville, Arkansas's first Sustainability Director. Yet, the City Council mandated that the position must pay for itself through annual energy savings. "People thought I was going to be kind of the light monitor going around turning computers off," Coleman said.

The Fayetteville community has a strong history of environmental awareness, particularly around water quality issues, but sustainability was not well understood at the time of Coleman's hiring, and formalizing sustainability within city government was an entirely new concept. Coleman—who was just 29 at the time, with little background in building energy performance, and no budget beyond his own salary—set about to prove that a sustainability office could be viable in Fayetteville.

Four years later, the City of Fayetteville has become one of the region's leaders in sustainability. A few of the city's accomplishments include:

- Adopting a Green Building Ordinance requiring all new public facilities to achieve LEED-Silver certification or greater;
- An annual sustainability report card on the progress of dozens of goals spread throughout all city departments;
- Implementing over \$600,000 in energy efficiency retrofits including all of its primary public buildings;
- Revamped development codes that target infill development, discourage sprawl patterns, and support a wide range of housing within the city;
- A landmark Streamside Protection Ordinance and Low Impact Development Ordinance;



- A \$500,000 grant award from the Home Depot Foundation’s Sustainable Cities Institute<sup>1</sup> (one of just two pilot grants nationwide);
- A grant from the International City Managers Association (ICMA) to develop a Solar Test Bed on its public library;
- More than \$700,000 in federal Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funds, including a municipal energy fund, LED pilot projects, a greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and a community revolving loan fund for local nonprofits;
- A Sustainability Summit for mayors, business leaders, and experts in the region;
- Restoration of dozens of acres of local parks, native prairie lands, forests, and streams.

In 2010, Coleman took charge of Fayetteville’s newly created Sustainability & Strategic Planning Office. Since then, the office has grown to three staff members (including Coleman), and despite a relatively modest discretionary budget of \$25,000, a number of grants have provided the office with substantial resources to undertake new initiatives. For example, Coleman’s office is currently managing Fayetteville’s long-range master planning process for its Solid Waste & Recycling Division; upgrading the city’s residential and commercial building code; and partnering with local and national nonprofits to deliver community programming related to energy efficiency, neighborhood planning, and affordable, sustainable housing.

“I don’t think people question the purpose of (a sustainability office) anymore...Now (other departments) are asking how they can partner with us to bring in new resources.”

— John Coleman

Coleman reports directly to the Mayor’s Chief of Staff, and works with all mayoral departments on projects that cut across the organizational chart. He also leads an inter-departmental “green team” with representatives from throughout city government. “I don’t think people would question the purpose [of a sustainability office] anymore, which is really helpful, and was an initial hurdle to overcome” said Coleman. “Now [other departments] are asking how they can partner with us to bring in new resources.”

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## Process

Coleman acknowledges that mayoral support, a receptive government staff, and an increasingly supportive City Council have helped to quickly grow the influence of Fayetteville’s sustainability office. But Coleman and his colleagues have also been strategic about cultivating support. Coleman utilized a number of innovative strategies to build trust and credibility, develop key relationships across departments, and become more involved in decision-making.

*Identifying Shared Goals, Delivering Value.* With a mandate to reduce Fayetteville’s energy bills, Coleman worked closely with the building services staff who managed all municipal buildings and had more authority and experience with building energy performance. His initial approaches were largely unsuccessful. “I would go in to a meeting with our building services guys and be thinking

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.homedepotfoundation.org/sustainablecitiesinstitute/index.html>



how to convince them to do what it is I want, instead of really trying to assess what their needs were and how they blended with what I needed to do,” he said.

Recognizing the need to form a cooperative relationship with the buildings team, he temporarily tabled his own agenda and began asking questions about the departments’ priorities and challenges. “Coming in and telling them how to make the building better, could easily have been an affront to them immediately.” Instead, he deferred to his colleagues’ expertise, learned about their needs, and began looking for sustainable ways to meet those needs.

Deferred maintenance on equipment in municipal facilities quickly surfaced as one of the department’s greatest challenges—staff spent a disproportionate amount of time dealing with equipment upkeep rather than running the buildings. Coleman identified the maintenance issue as a way to introduce energy efficiency into building management. “Once I figured that out, I would talk to them about the challenges of deferred maintenance, and then secondarily talk about the energy efficiency component,” he said. Together, they worked on a few small projects that would reduce the time staff spent on maintenance while simultaneously increasing energy efficiency.

These projects helped Coleman gain the confidence of the buildings staff, and produced cost savings, which the Mayor and City Council appreciated. Coleman also used the projects as the foundation for a much larger building performance contract—including the replacement of 30 HVAC units to improve the energy efficiency of seven of the city’s largest municipal facilities. Federal funding through EECBG program is allowing the city to retrofit the rest of its buildings.

“(Working in the field) allowed for a lot of time to talk with the front line guys, picking their brains about improvements that can be made...that’s paid off really well in establishing relationships up and down the org chart.”  
— John Coleman

“That really helped our building safety guys, to be able to show that while this more efficient equipment requires more money upfront—which can be a hit on their budget—in the long run, it saves them a lot of hours on maintaining old ... equipment,” Coleman said. “Now the building services manager and I have a relationship where, even if we don’t always see eye-to-eye on every issue, he’ll run his decisions past me and is thinking about how I feel about them from a sustainability standpoint. He’s not required to do that, but we have a dialogue there, which is really helpful.”

***Riding Recycling Trucks, Making Connections.*** In his first few years as Sustainability Director Coleman came to realize that he didn’t have a good sense of the work that many city employees were doing every day—especially those on the “front lines,” performing utility services. Likewise, he believed they lacked an understanding of his own job, his goals, and how he approached sustainability. This mutual lack of understanding made communicating and collaboration difficult.

To remedy the problem, Coleman decided to join his colleagues in the field. For seven months, he spent two days a week with various members of the Utility Services Department. This included joining pre-dawn shifts on garbage and recycling trucks, fixing leaks alongside water and sanitation crews, and accompanying staff as they went from house to house reading electric meters. The field work not only helped Coleman’s colleagues understand how the concept of sustainability applied to their jobs, it helped him find new ways to integrate sustainability into the utilities’ work.



“It allowed for a lot of time to talk with the front line guys, and the middle managers within the city, picking their brains about improvements that can be made, whether it’s water conservation or more efficient processes within their jobs. And I was able to let them know what I’m working on,” Coleman said. “That’s paid off really well just in establishing better relationships up and down the org chart within the city department.” Not to mention the fun Coleman had doing it. “I kind of enjoy that stuff anyway,” he said. “A desk job is fine, but it’s nice to be out in the field and getting dirty, so that’s pretty good.”

*Using Professional Development to get a Seat at the Table.* The Sustainability & Strategic Planning Office has a small budget, and its annual budgeting process is relatively simple; it usually requires no more than a day or two to complete. But with EECBG and other grant funding, as well as ambitions for a bigger budget in the future, Coleman understood that budgeting would be a necessary part of his own professional development.

He asked to sit in on higher-level budget meetings in larger departments, including utilities. What began as an observer role—learning about the budgeting process and what goes into decisions about budget cuts and reallocations—soon became more participatory. In 2010, for example, when the department had to make capital improvement cuts to balance the overall city budget, Coleman helped spare a solar thermal dryer of bio-solids from being eliminated. The equipment diverts waste that would otherwise be landfilled, and it generates revenue as commercial grade compost. More importantly, though, what began as a professional development experience has turned into a seat at the budgeting table in a number of departments, allowing Coleman to advocate for sustainability funding before budgeting decisions have been finalized.

“It’s been really helpful to understand how those decisions are made and what kind of decisions have to be made in a budget crunch,” he said. “I think it makes for more well-rounded employees, too. Other department heads or staff members know that I’m thinking about more than just environmental issues—that I want to understand the process, and they’re more comfortable with me in meetings because of that.”

*Engaging the Academic and Nonprofit Sectors.* With a small staff and budget, completing all of the city’s sustainability projects alone would be a herculean task for the sustainability office. So the office has developed partnerships with a number of local and national nonprofits to help implement its programs:

- The Watershed Conservation Resource Center brought technical assistance and partnered with the city on an EPA grant to restore a 1,200-foot section of an urban creek, whose banks were rapidly eroding;
- The Treadwell Institute administers the \$275,000 community revolving loan fund—a subsection of the EECBG grant—which helps local nonprofits become more energy efficient. Treadwell’s Director, Mikel Lolley, also facilitates the Green Economy Group of Fayetteville Forward, a community-based, collaborative economic development initiative led by the city;
- The University of Arkansas’ National Center for Reliable Electric Power Transmission (NCREPT) uses the library’s Solar Test Bed to research smart grid technology;
- The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) provides staffing, project direction, and management on the implementation of the Sustainable Cities grant.





“If you’re in a municipality... there are a lot of limits on what you can and can’t do,” said Lolley. “One of the beauties of working with nonprofits and volunteer groups is that you can be so much more nimble. They can work in the cracks and the margins where it’s too controversial for politicians and municipalities and chamber presidents to be. They can’t come out on the hard stuff, but the unencumbered and unaffiliated nonprofits and volunteer groups can, and working with them can get a lot of traction within the community.”

Fayetteville Forward—initiated by Mayor Lionel Jordan and driven by community groups—has been particularly effective for engaging the community in sustainability-related efforts. “It’s been a great way for our elected officials, department directors, and community leaders to gain a clear vision of the community’s priorities,” said Melissa Terry, the Sustainable Cities Program Coordinator at NCAT.

Coleman admits that community engagement has been among his office’s biggest challenges, but he also identifies the nonprofit community as his strongest community ally. The recent Streamside Protection Ordinance illustrated the importance of nonprofit organizations in Coleman’s work. They helped organize dozens of public engagement meetings—many among groups that were hostile to the Ordinance because they viewed it as a threat to development—and helped make the case to the public. “That ordinance will go a long way toward protecting water quality,” Coleman said. “It was critical to reach the community in a way that was effective.”

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## Lessons Learned

***Start by listening, not with pre-conceived ideas.*** Many of Fayetteville’s successes, particularly in energy efficiency, originated as ideas from other city employees—not from Coleman or his staff. The role of the sustainability director is often to give a voice to others within the organization, and to include a variety of different initiatives in the sustainability agenda. As with Coleman’s experience working alongside building services, paying attention to the challenges of other departments and employees can generate ideas for how to address them through sustainability initiatives. This builds trust, and helps to create a broader, shared vision of sustainability across the organization.

***Big policy change first requires small victories.*** Coleman began his tenure by taking on major projects, such as writing a city-wide purchasing policy. While he felt the policy was strong, its success was limited because he hadn’t first achieved buy-in from the affected city departments. When he instead turned his focus to smaller initiatives—installing occupancy sensors in bathrooms, for example—and was able to demonstrate their success, he was then able to work with some of the same people on larger issues, such as the performance contracting. His advice: “Work on really small things in the beginning with much larger goals down the road. Don’t just jump straight to creating some policy that you think will have a huge impact because some other city has done it. You have to work your way into that, and in the long run it will pay off.”

***Build relationships up and down the org chart, not just at the top.*** Authority ultimately rests with department heads and elected officials, making their support critical to achieving sustainability goals. But in city organizations of hundreds or thousands of employees, it is often the middle



managers and field staff who have the ability to make the necessary changes, and their input is often overlooked. Understanding the work of these key individuals, and listening to their ideas can go a long way toward generating the momentum needed to make larger change.

*Use professional development to build relationships.* “I think a great way to gain traction with other department heads is to seek them out for some professional growth opportunities,” said Coleman. By taking advantage of internal expertise, and making the position more about learning and less about a single agenda, access comes far more easily. It also provides room for conversations outside of typical goals and responsibilities, which can open up new opportunities and ideas for partnership. Said Coleman, “By and large, people in those positions want to help you if they see that potential.”

*Thanks to John Coleman, Jeremy Pate, and Melissa Terry.*

*Case study written by Tom Wilson and updated by Josh Kelly, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Fayetteville Sustainability & Strategic Planning website:

[http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/strategic\\_planning/index.cfm](http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/strategic_planning/index.cfm)

Fayetteville Forward website:

<http://fayettevilleforward.accessfayetteville.org>

Sustainable Cities Institute Fayetteville Pilot City Program:

[http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/blog/feature.blog/fayetteville\\_ar](http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/blog/feature.blog/fayetteville_ar)

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## CASE STUDY: BURLINGTON, VT

# Burlington Legacy Project

## Burlington, Vermont's sustainability vision for 2030

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### Background Information

In 1998, Burlington, Vermont developed a plan that aimed to transform the city into a model for urban sustainability. *The Legacy Project: Burlington's 2030 Vision* was unusual among urban sustainability plans in its rigorous effort to address each of the “four E’s” of sustainability—Economy, Equity, Environment, and Education.

As the city developed the plan, it engaged hundreds of citizens, as well as key community groups, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and businesses in conversations about what needed to be done to make Burlington a more sustainable place to live. Six key aspirations emerged from these consultations:

1. Developing a sustainable model for economic growth to maintain Burlington as the region's urban center;
2. Improving quality of life in neighborhoods;
3. Increasing civic engagement in governance;
4. Increasing social equity;
5. Providing for and nurturing youth; and
6. Protecting environmental assets.

The City Council adopted the Legacy Action Plan in June of 2000. More than a decade later the plan continues to receive accolades for its success in integrating previously disparate municipal and community actions into one framework for sustainable development. The Project is now being replicated for an upcoming regional visioning process for the greater Burlington metropolitan area. During the fall and winter of 2011, Burlington plans to reengage the community in updating the





vision, incorporating new perspectives and priorities, and re-infusing the passion and commitment for action that has set the Legacy Project apart from other plans of its kind.

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## Process

**Mayoral Leadership.** It was Mayor Peter Clavelle who recognized the value of engaging the community in developing a new vision of a more sustainable city. The Mayor saw dialogue with community leaders as a means to reveal the relationships among different economic, social and environmental health concerns facing the city, and to engender greater cooperation among the fragmented programs that addressed those concerns. Sprawl, for instance, represented both an environmental risk and an obstacle to economic development. Clavelle wanted to show all involved the potential for tackling this issue through a more coordinated effort. “Peter recognized that with priorities we could go a lot further,” said Betsy Rosenbluth, Project Coordinator from 2002 to 2008. “Legacy didn’t try to reinvent what was happening; it tried to create an umbrella where all initiatives were part of a whole and where everybody could see how they worked together. People started to see connections, which was really important because in a small city with limited capacity and resources, we all rely on each other. More importantly though, each group can do so much more when part of a whole. With a handful of common priorities, we could make more progress than we could as a collection of interest groups.”

“The Mayor was really clear in his vision and articulation of why it was important,” said Jennifer Green, the current Legacy Project Coordinator. “He was charismatic and really drove people to work hard.” Clavelle’s leadership elicited an energetic response from the public, city staff, and the Steering Committee created to guide the process.

**The Legacy Project Steering Committee.** Convened with help from the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), the Steering Committee was comprised of high-level decision makers from key constituencies. According to Rosenbluth, “[the Mayor] was very deliberate in saying ‘we’re not just going to have the community relations person—we want the leaders of each of these constituency groups.’” The original Committee included two of the city’s largest employers: Fletcher Allen Healthcare Center (FAHC) (whose CEO joined the committee), and the University of Vermont (UVM) (marking one of the first times the city and the university had collaborated).

The Steering Committee as a whole included representation from a cross-section of the city. Rosenbluth continued, “the Chamber of Commerce and the Progressive Party were co-chairs of the committee, representing opposite sides of the political spectrum. You had high school youth on the steering committee, but also the CEO of the hospital. It was a very diverse group sitting at the table for the first time and talking about how to get things done.” The success of the group hinged upon members’ understanding how much they had in common, despite their differences. Their shared values, in turn, helped them to identify common priorities.

Rosenbluth recounted how the Steering Committee became the champions of the plan. “They motivated and opened doors to their own groups,” she explained. “They really fully participated.” It is a tribute to the success of the process that now, ten years later, many of those institutions continue to dedicate staff time to implementing Legacy goals. The current co-chair of the Steering Committee and the Director of the Community Health Improvement Program at the FAHC,



Penrose Jackson, has been a member for more than eight years. She attributes her long-standing involvement to a kind of “enlightened self interest” in which her personal motivations align with those of her employer. “I’m representing Fletcher Allen, which has an ethos around being a good citizen and would rather be at the table than not,” she said. “In fact, we couldn’t *not* be there.”

Penrose’s co-chair, Joe Speidel, Director of Local Government and Community Relations at UVM, also reported that his institution feels an ethical responsibility to be at the table. “We’re a land grant institution—Vermont’s public university—so one of our goals is to bring resources to the community,” he explained. “It is part of my job description to help make these connections.” Speidel agreed that Mayor Clavelle’s strong personal leadership in the early phases of the project was critical in catalyzing deep collaboration. “He really sold the idea that we’re all in this together and since then, it’s become more that this is the right thing to do; it’s less of a rallying cry and more of a sense of responsibility. But it doesn’t mean we’re any less dedicated.”

*Engaging Burlington.* One reason the project has gotten such strong and consistent representation from Burlington’s key stakeholder groups is that the project has enjoyed widespread support from Burlington residents. From summer of 1999 to the beginning of 2000, the city conducted an intensive community engagement process to gather input for the plan. Over the course of nine months, and with the help of city staff, two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, and several hundred organizations that hosted meetings, consultants collected information about perceptions of Burlington from residents, business owners, and community leaders. These conversations explored the city’s strengths and weaknesses, and began building a common vision, by asking respondents two simple questions:

- What do you like about Burlington?
- What do you want to see into the future?

The questions were posed through a myriad of channels, and participants were told exactly how stakeholder input would be incorporated. “All of a sudden, people were standing on Church Street [the pedestrian mall at the center of Burlington’s downtown] asking people questions, going to the food shelf [an emergency food bank] at meal times and getting people’s opinions, sitting in all the Student Council meetings at the schools, and going to senior centers. So it was all about going *out*—not having people come *to* a meeting, but going to where they are,” said Rosenbluth.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

**Summer, 1999:** Thousands of surveys are distributed at public events and through local agencies and organizations.

**Summer/Fall, 1999:** A series of dialogues are held with stakeholders across the community, using:

- Neighborhood planning assembly meetings;
- Interviews with key individuals from community-based organizations (such as social service agencies, and local schools and universities); and
- Focus groups targeting key demographic groups, such as youth, engaged with help from student councils, and youth service providers in the community.

**Late Fall, 1999:** Public hearings are used to gather input on the first draft of the plan and identify specific recommendations and action steps.

**Early Winter, 2000:** The plan is distributed through another round of surveys and public events.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000:** A final “Summit on the City’s Future” is used to set priority actions.

**Spring, 2011:** Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission wins HUD Sustainable Communities grant making funding available to update the Legacy Plan.

**Fall and Early Winter, 2011:** A new community outreach process is underway.



ISC—which, along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, funded the effort—sponsored an essay and arts contest that got parents and their children involved. The city also organized cultural events that drew out different community groups and helped get them involved in the Legacy Project.

*Seeing the Connections and Aligning Priorities.* The Legacy Project was a way to link and strengthen many disparate sustainability initiatives. “For a long time in Burlington there had been incredibly innovative and progressive work, but there wasn’t really an aligned agenda,” recalled Rosenbluth. Creating such an agenda from the wide range of input that the Legacy project staff collected during their outreach work was challenging. They tried to be transparent in showing how individual voices and stakeholder perspectives were reflected in the action plan. At the final Legacy Project planning meeting, people voted to prioritize actions under each of the goals, using dots to show their support for those they considered most important. This system allowed residents to see whether they were in the minority or majority, and through a facilitated dialogue, to understand how their ideas related to others.

*Implementing the Vision.* A process characterized by open communication, relationship-building, and clear roles and expectations kept the Steering Committee engaged in the Legacy Project after the action plan was adopted. Indeed, the committee members took responsibility for implementing parts of the plan. “So often you get one of everybody from different sectors on these kinds of steering committees, but they’re never really given much responsibility or accountability,” said Rosenbluth. “For Legacy, our steering committee members not only attended meetings and helped guide the process, they also took responsibility for implementing the results.”

Rosenbluth worked with community leaders to find ways of advancing the plan in accordance with their constituents’ interests. UVM, for example, whose mission is to serve students, committed to increasing the availability of local foods in the dining halls. This action gave the students fresher, healthier meals, while also supporting local farmers, one of the Legacy goals. The University also dedicated funds to help instigate the behavior change needed to increase ridership on the local bus system, helping Legacy address the challenge of improving regional transportation. “We allow all staff and faculty to ride the bus for free,” said UVM’s Seidel. “If you want to change behavior, you have to invest upfront.”

One success story, in particular, stands out—the creation of the Burlington Food Council. The Council is an ad hoc group of individuals from disparate agencies and institutions committed to improving socioeconomic and environmental performance indicators related to food sourcing and agriculture. The Council was formed in direct response to concerns about the quality of foods served in local public schools, which surfaced through the stakeholder engagement process. The Council helped launch the Farm to School Project, a collaborative effort to increase the amount of fresh produce in school cafeterias from local, Chittenden County farms.

The Legacy Project has also spurred projects that build the city’s human and social capital. One project works to engage high school youth in civic governance; while another has provided agricultural jobs to Vermont’s refugee population. The city has also adopted a diversity and equity resolution as a result of the project.

To stay connected and relevant to the community, the Legacy Project hosts an annual Legacy Town Meeting to evaluate progress and set priorities for the next year. Rosenbluth acknowledged that the



project’s willingness to embrace the community’s interests is the key reason that the Legacy Action Plan—which she referred to as a “living process”—continues to thrive. Green agreed, pointing out that new priority actions are identified to respond to emerging trends and interests in the community. “The goals are likely to be tried and true, but action to reach those goals may change,” she said. For example, the surge of interest in climate action planning and reducing greenhouse gas emissions has recently become a priority area for the city.

**Legacy Action Plan 2.0.** Using a regional sustainable community planning grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the spring of 2011, Burlington is updating the Legacy Plan, now more than a decade old. Known as the “ECOS” Project (for Environment, Community, Opportunity, and Sustainability), it will also update the Chittenden County Regional Plan, The Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Plan, and the County’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

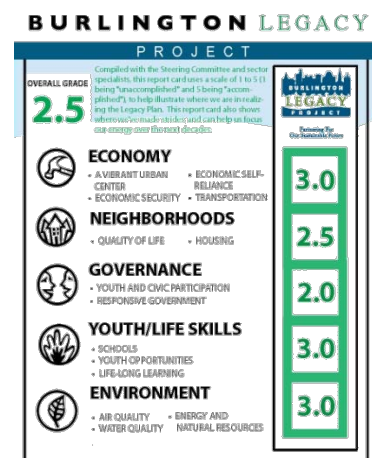
The project will utilize the same community engagement approach used to gather input for the first Legacy Action Plan. According to David Raphael, a principal planner at LandWorks—the firm contracted to conduct the stakeholder engagement—this revision of the Legacy Action Plan will create “an overall regional understanding of, and approach to, sustainability over the next 20 years and beyond.”

The public engagement process is being structured to explore five pre-selected themes:

1. Built Environment (Housing, Transportation, and Infrastructure);
2. Economy Infrastructure (Workforce Education and Economic Development);
3. Energy and Telecommunications;
4. Natural Environment and Natural Resources; and
5. Social Community (Health, Education, Governance, and Social Equity)

According to Speidel the central question that participants will answer is: “If you imagine a sustainable Burlington—in terms of living, playing, working, raising a family—what would it look like in 30 years? What’s working? What’s different from today? What are the obstacles? What need to happen to get us there?” The process will again engage diverse constituencies, using art and new online tools as primary outreach mechanisms in conjunction with traditional public meetings. The website will include an informational mapping platform where participants can identify community resources, such as green job centers, alternative energy sites, and hubs of sustainability practice.

**Demonstrating Progress.** Reporting on the effectiveness of the Legacy Project has been important since the beginning. But finding meaningful performance indicators has taken time. According to Rosenbluth, “We tried to get the indicators going and during the first two annual meetings we reported on them, but people didn’t care or didn’t understand. And the people who really used indicators (policy makers and some administrators) were already using their own.”



The Legacy Report Card measures the Project’s progress on a scale of 1-5.  
Image: Burlington Legacy Project

Green pursued a more qualitative approach, asking experts and community leaders in each of the thematic areas to assess the city's progress on a one to five scale, where five meant "accomplished." But she would have preferred to work with a set of quantitative indicators. "In my ideal world," said Green, "you would even have a checklist at the back of the plan [showing] 'What's the data you're going to look for? How does it connect to any particular goal? Who has it? And how are you going to rank it?' so that annually you could look at how you were doing. We never really figured that out."

When Speidel assumed his leadership position in the Steering Committee in 2008, he was especially interested in helping clarify how the Legacy Project measured its progress. "There's always been this question of whether something happened *because* of Legacy or whether it was in the spirit of Legacy and may have happened on its own," he said. "Some things Legacy helped influence, but they now have a life of their own." Speidel believes Burlington has a community ethos uniquely suited to the Legacy approach. "If you look at campus sustainability initiatives, for example, they may have influenced Legacy or they may have been influenced by Legacy—it's hard to pick these two things apart." Burlington continues to measure progress on individual projects, but because of the collaborative approach to implementation, it's often hard to tease apart which actions were spurred by the plan itself.

Given the progress Burlington has made since 1999, there is a strong sense of promise for the next iteration of sustainability work in the Greater Burlington Area, and the members of the ECOS coordinating team—many of whom have also served on the Legacy Steering Committee—are eager to expand and improve upon the Legacy Project model.

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## Lessons Learned

***Build from Existing Strengths.*** The Legacy Project aimed to better coordinate existing sustainability efforts. This approach helped the Project gain the support of the community and it made the implementation of the plan a shared goal. The approach continues today, as the ECOS project has created a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" for residents and stakeholders from throughout the region to think about the future of Chittenden County as a whole.

***Prioritize Meaningful Community Engagement.*** By convening the Legacy Project Steering Committee—comprised of high level decision makers from important organizations—the Mayor gained the support of politically powerful stakeholders. A highly inclusive community engagement process fortified the work of the Steering Committee, by building broad support for the Legacy Project. The continued existence of the Steering Committee is a testament to how successful the plan's initial public engagement was. Its members recognize that not only do they belong at the table, but, as Penrose shared, "we couldn't *not* be there."

***Sustain Your Focus but Remain Open to Change.*** The galvanizing spirit Mayor Clavelle and the original Steering Committee brought to the early stages of the Legacy Project gave it its original sense of purpose and direction. Changes in leadership and project staff, coupled with changing interests and trends in the community have shifted attention to new goals and priority actions. This transition can be difficult to navigate, but being flexible is what keeps Burlington city staff, key stakeholders, and the public engaged and invested in their commitments.



*Prioritize Performance Measurement.* The Legacy Project missed an opportunity to use the community engagement process to develop performance indicators. In updating the Legacy action plan, staff expect to create a clear implementation matrix for carrying forward short-, mid-, and long-term priorities across the many jurisdictions and community partners which have a stake in the process.

*Thanks to Jennifer Green, Penrose Jackson, David Raphael, Betsy Rosenbluth, and Joe Speidel.*

*Case study written by Nathaly Agosto Filión, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

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Photo: Jason DeRusha



## CASE STUDY: MINNEAPOLIS, MN

# Measuring Sustainability in Minneapolis

## Developing Indicators, Using Data, and Reporting Progress

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### Background Information

The City of Minneapolis enjoys a number of distinct advantages when it comes to sustainability: a Mayor and 13-member City Council extremely supportive publicly and behind the scenes; engaged citizens who understand the importance of sustainability; and a Sustainability Office located within the City Coordinator's Office, which works with all city departments.

This supportive environment has allowed an impressive number of sustainability initiatives to flourish in Minneapolis. With a sustainability staff of just two, and a \$30,000 non-discretionary budget, the city has implemented a number of major internal policies, including Environmental Purchasing, LEED-Silver building requirements and an Indoor Temperature Control Policy for all municipal buildings, Low-Impact Cleaning, and Green Fleets as well as a variety of ordinance revisions and programs related to transportation alternatives, local food, and storm water management. The city's bike program has received numerous accolades as being among the nation's best.<sup>1</sup>

Minneapolis had long been known for individual environmental programs, but it wasn't until 2003 that the City Council created a formal resolution to adopt sustainability goals. At that time Gayle Prest, who is now the city's Sustainability Director, was working on environmental regulatory compliance at the Department of Public Works and remembered it as a challenging process, "I think it was overwhelming back in 2003 to figure out what sustainability meant to us, because it wasn't a commonly used term and there weren't a lot of good role models out there."

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<sup>1</sup> One recent example comes from Bicycle Magazine, which ranked Minneapolis as its "#1 Bike City": <http://www.bicycling.com/news/featured-stories/1-bike-city-minneapolis>.



To define what sustainability meant in Minneapolis, Prest helped lead an effort to develop the city's sustainability indicators. These indicators were adopted by the Council in 2005, and have since been incorporated into the city's most fundamental policy documents: For example,

- Every department incorporated the indicators into their 5-year business plans;
- The 2000 Comprehensive Plan was amended in 2009 to include the relevant sustainability indicators as a strategy for balancing growth and sustainability. The document is now titled *Planning for Sustainable Growth*;
- Amendments were made to the Zoning Code—including changes such as eliminating minimum parking space requirements and instituting maximums—to support more sustainable land use and development; and
- *Access Minneapolis*<sup>2</sup>, the city's innovative 10-year transportation plan, was developed in 2005 and offers strong support for biking, walking, the streetcar system, and downtown planning.

In 2006, after another public engagement process, the Council adopted numerical, ten-year targets and performance goals for each of the indicators, in order to measure progress and analyze trends. The resolution also required Prest and her colleagues to report on every indicator annually, including both city-wide data—both positive and negative—as well as data broken down by geography, socio-economic status, and race. That year, the city released its first Sustainability Annual Report, and it has been updated every year since.

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## Process

***A Quantifiable Sustainability Policy.*** In 2003, the Minneapolis City Council set out to adopt a sustainability resolution that would set a vision for the future and guide the city's decision-making. At this time the City Council formally adopted sustainability as part of the city's vision and decision-making process using a triple bottom line framework that accounted for the "three Es" of sustainability—environment, equity, and economy. Careful to avoid vague sustainability goals, the Council mandated in its resolution that the city identify "key sustainability indicators" and "establish 10-year sustainability targets and measure progress towards these targets."

***Developing Measurable Indicators.*** Minneapolis followed a two-phase process to develop sustainability indicators and targets. To kick off the effort, the city created the Minneapolis Sustainability Roundtable—a series of public meetings that provided a venue for getting public input and building community support—attended by more than 100 Minneapolitans and led by city staff.

The meetings resulted in indicators that were not easily understood by the public. "In that first phase we didn't scope the expectations well enough, and the city did not specify the desire to develop sustainability indicators that the average person could embrace," said Prest. "Some people wanted to make this very science based, and other people advocated for something the general public and the Council Members could easily embrace and understand." A compromise was

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/public-works/trans-plan>



reached: the indicators remained straightforward, while some of the targets under each indicator were more technical.

At the end of the process, the City Council adopted many but not all of the indicators that the Roundtable originally identified under three main topic areas. The list has since grown to include a total of 26 indicators:<sup>3</sup>

- A Healthy Life (6 indicators)
  - Healthy Infants; Teen Pregnancy; HIV and Gonorrhea; Healthy Weight; Asthma; and Lead Poisoning.
- GreenPrint (12 indicators)
  - Climate Change; Renewable Energy; Air Quality; Biking; Green Jobs; Downtown Transportation Alternatives; Airport Noise; Tree Canopy; Healthy Lakes; Waste Reduction & Recycling; Storm Water; and Local Foods.
- A Vital Community (8 indicators)
  - Affordable Housing; Homelessness; Brownfield Sites; Violent Crime; Graduation Rate; Community Engagement; Employment & Poverty; and Arts & Economy.

#### EXAMPLES OF NUMERICAL TARGETS WITHIN INDICATORS\*

##### Climate Change:

- Reduce municipal operation's carbon dioxide emissions by 1.5% annually.
- Reduce citywide carbon dioxide emissions by 17% by 2020 using 2006 as a baseline.

##### Healthy Infants:

- Reduce infant mortality rates overall and within each racial/ethnic subgroup to 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2010.
- Reduce the proportion of infants born at low birth weight to 5% by 2010.

##### Employment and Poverty:

- Reduce the percentage of employed Minneapolis residents living in poverty from the 2008 baseline of 10.1% to 7% by 2014.
- Reduce the percentage of Minneapolis minority residents living in poverty from the 2008 Census Bureau reported average of 36% to that of the 2008.

\*Minneapolis City Council is scheduled to make some revisions to these numbers by December 2011

While the Council mandated that each indicator include measurable targets, Prest found identifying those targets to be a challenge. Numbers like graduation rates were relatively straightforward, but data for some of the other indicators was minimal or non-existent. Prest decided that in the absence of ideal data, it was still worthwhile to move ahead with basic, small targets, knowing that they could always be improved and expanded in the future.

“In some cases...we didn't know where to start,” said Prest. “But here are some numbers we have as a placeholder: We started out measuring just the miles of bike lanes and after a few years it turned out that the data needed to be corrected. We don't know if this is the right place to land, but we're just going to start. Now we have more accurate bike usage numbers, based on actual counts and census data, but this too will improve as we continue.”

In some cases, the challenge had more to do with the emergent nature of some sustainability initiatives, like those focused on carbon mitigation, renewable energy, or green economic development. Emily Stern, the lead staffer from Minneapolis' Community Planning and Economic

<sup>3</sup> A reference chart of all 26 sustainability indicators and their numerical targets can be found at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/docs/2010IndicatorsMatrix.pdf>.



Development Office working on the Twin Cities regional green job creation initiative known as “Thinc.Green<sup>MSP</sup>”,<sup>4</sup> was initially hesitant to design a tracking system prematurely, as new research and data on green businesses and jobs were just beginning to emerge from the federal and state governments. “I was reluctant to put out over-blown or under-researched expectations or goals, but I realized that this was an iterative process,” shared Stern. Thankfully, the City Council and general public are supportive of this approach, “Putting something out there as an aspiration gets you moving in the right direction. This is a work in progress and we’re all climbing up the same learning curve together. It’s not definitive and can be adjusted as we collectively learn,” said Stern.

As the sustainability program gained momentum, and internet technologies revolutionized access to data, the city sharpened its targets. Staff learned how to interpret state and county numbers and US census data in a more meaningful way, and developed new data sources to measure the less well-defined indicators. Similarly, as new data and methods become available, staff keep track of how their process aligns with those of others facing similar challenges and apply lessons learned.

*Breaking Down Silos through Collaborative Data Collection.* Collecting data was key to building and maintaining the relationships necessary to carry out sustainability work in Minneapolis. For Prest, finding the right measurements served as an entrée into discussions with other department heads. Rather than beginning conversations around what they should be doing, she could simply ask what data they had and how they recommended measuring a given indicator. In this way she was able to engage government leaders while still deferring to their experience.

“When we started doing this, I think we were off the sustainability radar in 2003 and 2004. But it quickly became a lot easier to get top 10s for most ratings that came out, because they could access our data. Suddenly it had a useful life. It wasn’t just a perfunctory report, it was a living document.”

— Gayle Prest

Gathering sustainability data was also a key to departments working more closely with one another. Prest had been leading an Environmental Coordinating Team, comprising staff from throughout city departments. Lead staff were assigned for each indicator, and tasked with finding and collecting data on one or more of the indicators related to the work of their department or the city in general. In almost every case, however, finding that data—and moving it in a positive direction—became a cross-departmental enterprise.

“It was hard because (the Coordinating Team members) might know only about what was going on in their department, but it forced them to make connections with what’s happening in other departments,” Prest said. She cites reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips as an example: “That’s not just a Public Works issue, that’s Community Planning and Economic Development Department issue, and it requires financing tools, and the Communications Department to work on community outreach. We realized they were going to have to do some work gathering data and talking to people in other departments, and that’s breaking down silos. It’s not easy, but it’s necessary.” Stern concurred, “The key success factor for the sustainability indicators approach is that it embeds responsibility and ownership within city departments and staff that work on these issues day-to-

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<sup>4</sup> A case study on Thinc.Green and the collaboration between Minneapolis and St. Paul is published in The Institute for Sustainable Communities’ Climate Leadership Academy on Sustainable Economic Development, A Resource Guide for Local Leaders, Version 2.0. The document is available for download here: [http://sustainablecommunitiesleadershipacademy.org/resource\\_files/documents/Twin%20Cities,%20MN.pdf](http://sustainablecommunitiesleadershipacademy.org/resource_files/documents/Twin%20Cities,%20MN.pdf)





day.” By distributing the implementation of sustainability initiatives across departments, meeting shared goals for sustainability became more engrained into city operations.

**Using Data to Build the Case for Sustainability.** Though slow-going at first, the data collection process has proven to be extremely valuable not just for reporting on the indicators, but for scaling up successful initiatives. For example, data analyses have helped to build both internal and public support for the development of bicycle infrastructure that has made Minneapolis one of the most bikable cities in the country.<sup>5</sup> Data gathering efforts include annual origin and destination bike counts performed throughout the city, which are used to reveal gaps in the bicycling network. “When you have six years of trend data, the story becomes richer, more robust, and more credible,” Prest said.

In addition to driving change, readily available data has also helped sell the local and national image of Minneapolis as a sustainable city. Many top 10 lists and other rankings—which become a point of civic pride and competition, and which reinforce sustainability efforts—are based on the data that cities make available. “When we started doing this, I think we were off the sustainability radar in 2003 and 2004,” said Prest. “But it quickly became a lot easier to get top 10 city ranking for most ratings that came out, because they could access our data. Suddenly it had a useful life. It wasn’t just a perfunctory report, it was a living document.”

**Reporting on Progress.** In accordance with the City Council resolution, the Minneapolis Sustainability Office generates an annual report on the status of the indicators. At first, no one knew exactly what form that report would take.



Each sustainability indicator is represented on a single page in the annual sustainability report.

Image: 2010 Minneapolis Sustainability Report

One idea was to make it departmental. Prest had seen the benefits—particularly in the media—of highlighting individual city employees in non-leadership roles who had accomplished something innovative within their own departments. Said Prest, “I remember one (employee) was in our fleets and one was in our property services, and let me tell you, all of the fleets loved it, and all of the property services loved it, when one of theirs was highlighted. They felt really proud.”

Despite the sense of departmental pride, however, Prest understood that no sustainability issue could be solved in isolation, and the report needed to reflect that reality. So early on she decided not to list the accomplishments of individual departments, but instead simply credit every accomplishment to the city. “By making sustainability part of everyone’s success it’s getting easier to break down those silos,” she said. “Psychologically it helps break down department roles.”

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bicycling.com/news/featured-stories/1-bike-city-minneapolis>



Prest has been intentional about including accomplishments even when they were not at all motivated by sustainability. One example is a recent reduction in the size of the city's fleet due to budgeting constraints. The reduction was not driven by emissions reductions, but the annual sustainability report still celebrated it under the Climate Change and Air Quality indicators. "It's about highlighting the positives, hammering it home whenever anybody does something positive," she said. "That's the low-hanging fruit that can give credit to others. It's a great way to make friends."

The city accomplishments section soon became inclusive of broader community successes as well. "We realized that the community was doing so many things on their own that were so special and so important," Prest said, "and so we started including in our annual report not just city activities, but recent community activities as well." Doing so helped reinforce the message that sustainability wasn't the job of one person, department, or even government; it was an effort for which everyone was responsible and could be proud, including schools, places of worship, neighborhood associations and community-based nonprofits.

"It really shows the importance of partnerships. The report has become a great tool for neighborhood organizations and others to say 'Hey, this group is doing cool things!' or 'The city is really committed to strong partnerships, I can work with them,'" said Prest.

Community-wide targets, however, also represent a challenge for city staff tasked with reporting on an indicator over which they have limited influence. According to Stern, "In the case of city-wide efforts which represent the collective efforts of multiple partners or individuals, staff tend to struggle a little more." But she also considers this to be an essential part of enabling widespread community progress for sustainability. "It's a challenge, but it's essential to overcome: city staff play the dual role of having direct programmatic activities, but also have a role in promoting, and influencing broader community action."

The annual report itself has developed into a useful communication tool, and not just for the sustainability office. Each indicator is represented on a single page, which includes a brief description of the overarching goal; annual and 10-year performance targets; a "trend analysis," indicating progress toward targets; a graph showing relevant data; a bulleted list of city and community accomplishments; links and resources; and an illustrative photo. It's colorful, and most of the language remains non-technical for a broad audience.

The report also doubles as an outreach tool for the Mayor, Council Members, and other department heads. "Media relations and community relations resources are often the first to go (in lean budget years), so if a sustainability director can help get the word out about what we're doing—asking 'How can I tell your story better?'—that's really helpful," said Barbara Sporlein, Minneapolis' Planning Director and former Environmental Coordinating Team chair.

Helping other officials speak intelligently about Minneapolis' progress also integrates sustainability into the fabric of city government. "I love it when the planning director is out there giving sustainability talks, when the property services director talks about green building," said Prest. "We can all talk about each other's sustainability work and it puts us all on the same team."





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## Lessons Learned

***Find Champions Throughout the City Structure, Not Just at the Top.*** With 3,600 city employees in Minneapolis, finding champions at a variety of management levels is critical for broad success. “A lot of times it’s not the directors or the assistant directors, it’s a staff person. What could they do? A lot of them really love this stuff, and there’s plenty they can do to move sustainability agenda without going all the way up the chain of command,” said Prest. Internal “green teams” and engaging departments in data collection are two ways that Prest has expanded her reach.

***Start Small and Publicize Success.*** Starting small—either on overall sustainability efforts or individual pilot projects—allows for early victories, and grounds sustainability efforts in demonstrable change. Pilots are also a reliable way to gather new data. As Prest said, “I’ve never had a pilot that failed as long as I learned something.”

Demonstrating success can also include highlighting what’s already being done. Prior to the Council’s official adoption of sustainability indicators, the city was already doing a lot of great work that went unrecognized. Bringing existing successes to the forefront—both internally and with the public—is an easy, no-cost way to demonstrate value to the organization. Prest describes “going crazy” celebrating the small wins the city achieved early on, whether or not she had been involved.

***Give Credit to as Many People as Possible (and Avoid it Yourself).*** Acknowledging others within an organization for work they are already doing is an effective way to build trust and credibility, develop relationships, and begin promoting a shared vision of sustainability. Prest willingly provides background information when speaking to the press about Minneapolis’ sustainability efforts, but tries not to be the one quoted in the newspaper. “You have to make it about the policy makers and other departments,” she said. “It’s only important that a few people know what I do. You have to let your boss know what’s happening behind the scenes, but otherwise the more you can distribute credit, the better.”

***Use Whatever Data you Have Available, Then Refine it and Collect More.*** Stories and anecdotes will garner good press, but to maintain support for sustainability over the long-term requires delivering measurable progress, and being proactive about unearthing new data sets. To build trust, it’s also important to be transparent about the data’s limitations and to explain when data sources change or improve. “It can be a little awkward, if you’re reporting on bike lanes one year and suddenly your graph looks a lot different the next,” said Prest. “But you report it out and acknowledge the better data. And you don’t blame the messenger if something isn’t perfect; we’re all doing the best we can.”

***Build in an Evaluation Process for Sustainability Goals.*** Though satisfied with the indicators and targets they had identified, members of the Sustainability Roundtable also recognized the need to keep them current and in line with the city’s vision for sustainability. “I won’t tell you that 26 is the magic number (of indicators); in fact, 26 is kind of a lot,” said Prest. “I won’t even tell you that we necessarily have all the right sustainability indicators. But our process allows us to reevaluate them every two years, to see if some should drop or include different targets, which keeps them relevant.”

***Report on Results Simply, but Regularly.*** While collecting and measuring data is important, communicating effectively about that data is critical. Producing simple graphics and giving elected officials and department heads talking points will go a long way to garnering internal and public



support, receiving outside (i.e. national) recognition, and institutionalizing sustainability work. Data that is targeted, simple, and accessible is most effective for communications.

Most important is communicating results regularly. Regular reports demonstrate trends in data, provide more chances to celebrate small victories, and send the message that the work is serious and will be sustained. “When (the other departments) realized the sustainability report wasn’t going to go away, it made it much easier to work with them,” said Prest. “A lot of times these reports last one or two years, but it’s important to send the message, ‘this is going to stick, folks.’”

*Thanks to Gayle Prest, Barbara Sporlein, and Emily Stern.*

*Case study written by Tom Wilson and updated by Nathaly Agosto Fillion, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Minneapolis’ Sustainability website:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability>

2011 Sustainability Report:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/docs/2011MinneapolisLivingWellReport.pdf>

2011 Environmental Report:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/docs/2011GreenprintReport.pdf>

Contact:

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## PlaNYC: Using Data to Identify Leverage Points



New York’s comprehensive sustainability plan—PlaNYC—includes an ambitious set of initiatives to create a “greener, greater New York.” The plan, which was first released in 2007, was the result of a city-wide planning process guided by New York’s Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS). It describes what actions are needed to improve New York’s infrastructure, its environment, and the quality of life it can offer to its residents, even as its population grows by 1 million over the next twenty years. In April, 2011, Mayor Bloomberg released an update to the Plan, including 132 new or expanded initiatives.

Many cities are creating, or aspire to create, an action agenda to guide their sustainability programs. One of the key challenges that leaders in these cities face is deciding which of many possible sustainability actions they should focus on, and devote their limited resources to implementing.

Adam Freed, Deputy Director of OLTPS, reports that his office is relentless about using good empirical information to decide how to prioritize. “If you want to gain traction with the Mayor, the city’s numerous agencies, and the public,” he suggested, “you have to be data driven.”

Freed offers a story about how his office used different kinds of data, collected from multiple agencies, to choose a bold new recommendation for the updated plan.

*Choosing Actions to Improve Air Quality.* One of the ten goals put forth in PlaNYC is for New York City to achieve the cleanest air quality of any city in the United States. The question OLTPS had to wrestle with was: What were the most feasible and cost effective steps for realizing that goal?

The city maintains a network of 150 air quality monitors throughout the city that gather data on air pollution. Using this data, the city’s Department of Health determined the locations with the highest levels of particulate (or soot) pollution. It then analyzed what sources could be causing those high levels. A revealing relationship surfaced: Areas of high particulate pollution were correlated with the locations of buildings that burn No. 4 and No. 6 heating oil—types of fuel that contains high levels of sulfur. Further analysis determined that 85% of all building-related particulate matter in New York’s air comes from just the 1% of the buildings that combust the oils.

The Department of Health then quantified the benefits that would result—in terms of health outcomes and reduced health care costs—if the city were to ban the use of No. 4 and No. 6 fuels.

They assembled a suite of data showing that exposure to particulate pollution annually causes approximately:

- 3,200 deaths
- 2,120 hospital admissions for lung and heart conditions
- 6,000 emergency room visits for asthma

These figures, and the corresponding estimates of costs to the city and health-related institutions, made a powerful case for a regulatory change. OLTPS and the Department of Environmental Protection decided to seek Mayor Bloomberg's support for a new rule requiring the phase-out of No. 6 fuel oil, as well as the slightly better but still highly polluting No. 4 oil.

"We went to the Mayor fully prepared to characterize exactly what the public health impacts were," recounted Freed. "This data was essential not only to persuade the Mayor, but also to prepare him for responding to the tremendous pressure not to issue a new regulation from building owners and operators."

Mayor Bloomberg was persuaded, and the new rule—issued by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection—became part of PlaNYC's April 2011 update.

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## Lessons Learned

According to Freed, this example describes just one of many times that OLTPS has used the analysis of empirical data as its principal means of deciding which initiatives to recommend to department heads and the Mayor. For Freed, this had become a sound way to identify the best leverage points for making progress towards sustainability.

"We use data to challenge our assumptions about what the real problem is," said Freed. "A good analysis can point you in unexpected directions. It may show you that you don't need to take really large steps that are difficult to achieve, because there is another more creative solution."

He points out that examining the relationship between fuel oil and air pollution did just that—it challenged the assumptions that OLTPS and other departments had about what they needed to do to curb air pollution. The analysis showed that 85% of building-related particulates were coming from a relatively concentrated source (10,000 buildings, or 1% of the city's total building stock). It would be much more difficult, for example, for the city to achieve the same reduction in particulate pollution by reducing vehicle miles traveled in the city.

New York City's proposal to require the use of cleaner heating fuels sparked substantial opposition from a powerful constituency, but the disciplined analysis of the multiple benefits such a regulation would produce for the city—reduced energy use, cost savings, reductions in the incidence of sickness and mortality from respiratory problems—gave the Mayor arguments that were difficult to dispute.

Smaller cities may question whether they could locate the data they would need to reveal the best leverage points for sustainability in their cities. Freed points out that even though smaller cities may collect and store less of their own data, they can still gain access to very useful information through county and state governments, as well as federal agencies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or local academy institutions. He suggests first assembling what is readily available, and then seeing where there are critical gaps.

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## For More Information

PlaNYC website:

<http://www.nyc.gov/planyc>





## CASE STUDY: CHICAGO, IL

# Chicago's Climate Action Plan

## A Comprehensive Effort to Prepare for and Respond to Climate Disruption

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### Background Information

In the fall of 2006, Mayor Daley and his senior environmental advisors decided that Chicago should develop a climate action plan. Mayor Daley's decision to sign the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement—a pact among mayors across the United States to meet the goals set out in the Kyoto Protocol within their communities—solidified his commitment to produce a more strategic and comprehensive blueprint for responding to climate impacts in the Windy City.

Two years later Mayor Daley publicly unveiled Chicago's Climate Action Plan which outlines a broad set of actions to meet specific goals for reducing the city's greenhouse gas emissions. At the press conference that day, he was flanked by city leaders from local businesses, non-profit s and civic organizations that assisted the city throughout the plan's development.

Chicago's Climate Action Plan (CCAP) has become a model for other sustainability leaders that aspire to catalyze a coordinated climate planning process in their cities because:

*It builds on a deep exploration of what climate change will mean for Chicago.* Many cities have analyzed their carbon emissions and set aggressive reduction goals, but very few have identified the specific and tangible climate impacts their city will experience in the coming decades;

*It addresses climate mitigation and adaptation simultaneously.* Chicago was the first city in the nation to consider how to increase its resilience to expected local impacts of climate change; and

*It has spurred many bold initiatives.* The Plan led almost immediately to programs that have substantially reduced Chicago's energy use by increasing the efficiency of multi-family and commercial buildings, and promoting public transportation and transit oriented development.

Sustainability practitioners from smaller cities that don't have the resources or staff available in Chicago might think this model is out of reach. Yet those most closely involved in the development of Chicago's plan emphasize that the leadership strategies underlying its success are replicable in





any city. They also share their insights about what Chicago could have done better, to inform climate planning in other parts of the country.

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## Process

*The First Step: Reaching Out for Partners.* “We went into this a little bit cold,” reported Sadhu Johnson, Chicago’s Former Commissioner in the Department of Environment (DOE) and the visionary who led Chicago’s planning process. “We knew we wanted to do something, but we didn’t know what the shape of it would be, and we only had a small allocation of \$50,000 from the city budget. So we decided right away to pull in some partners from the outside who could help.”

The city’s first partner was the Global Philanthropy Partnership (GPP), a Chicago-based non-profit run by Adele Simmons, the former president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Building a close partnership with an organization deeply rooted in Chicago’s non-profit sector enabled the city to connect swiftly with a broad network of community leaders and potential funders.

“We weren’t leading an environmental group that wanted to get something specific out of the process,” said Adele Simmons. “Our only interest was to ensure that Chicago produced the best possible plan, so we could act as a neutral facilitator.”

DOE and GPP began by examining other climate and sustainability plans around the country, and quickly concluded that a “quick and dirty” \$50,000 plan did not fit their evolving vision. Acknowledging the critical role that Chicago organizations and communities would play in responding to the challenges created by climate change, they wanted to make a plan for all of Chicago, rather than just city agencies. GPP brokered relationships with many funders in the area who were inspired by that vision. The Joyce, Grand Victoria, and Lloyd A. Fry Foundations ultimately contributed over \$1.5 million to support Chicago’s process.

Strategic partnerships with other non-profit organizations further expanded DOE resources while building a broad sense of ownership in the final product. The Chicago Civic Alliance, a non-profit consulting firm, for example, helped the city secure pro-bono consulting services valued at over one million dollars. Once the plan was complete, the Chicago Community Trust, the metro area’s community foundation, helped convene a special CCAP funders group, where the city regularly presents its funding needs for implementation, and foundation partners can coordinate their giving.

*Engaging Stakeholders.* One of the Department of Environment’s first actions was to convene the Chicago Climate Task Force, a group of 19 leaders from business, civic, environmental, foundation and non-profit organizations throughout the city. Adele Simmons served as Chair.

During its eight formal meetings between December 2006 and February 2008, the Task Force provided input on the plan’s emissions reductions goals, helped shape the approach to studying climate impacts, connected the city to new resources and partners and helped forge a list of possible mitigation and adaptation actions for further research and refinement.



“What struck me during the whole process is that we were really all collaborating together,” recounted Simmons. “You didn’t have the sense that there were silos or competing organizations. You had the sense that this was a group of people from different sectors of the city all working together to produce a very strong plan that was grounded in science.”

When the Climate Task Force was in the midst of its work, the city made a fundamental change in its role. Mayor Daley had initially asked the Task Force to author the plan, populating it with its own recommendations for how the city and communities throughout Chicago should act to address climate change. As the process unfolded, Mayor Daley decided the plan should be issued by the city itself. Adele Simmons recalls that the Task Force was pleased that the Mayor wanted that level of ownership in the plan; it would give it greater weight, and increase the likelihood that the recommended actions would be taken up by city departments and others.

It was also, however, a challenging moment, compelling Task Force members to regroup and shift the nature of their work. “We were no longer in a world where the Task Force could say without hesitation, “all these things should happen,” said Simmons. “We had to go over all the recommendations and modify them on the basis of whether they were really doable for the city.”



GPP’s Lessons Learned report about the CCAP process suggests that it might have been better, in retrospect, to make the decision of who would ultimately own the plan at the outset of the planning work.

In addition to the extensive work with the Climate Task Force, GPP and DOE also organized larger forums—four “Climate Summits” and one “Big Ideas” Forum – where invited community and business leaders could hear briefings of the scientific work and provide their own ideas for climate action. DOE also formed sector groups to provide ideas and feedback on implementation challenges in certain areas of climate action such as existing buildings, waste, water and information infrastructure, and green urban design. These sector groups were comprised of a mix of city staff and stakeholders. Input from these meetings was drawn upon heavily in the final plan.

***Understanding Local Impacts.*** Chicago is lauded for its decision to simultaneously develop strategies for reducing its carbon footprint and adapting to a changing climate. The decision to address adaptation evolved organically. “We said wait a second, before we look at what we should do to mitigate our emissions, we first need to understand what is going to happen in our city on the ground in terms of climate impacts,” explained Johnson. “Then we can look at our baseline emissions, and with those two pieces in place, we’ll be ready to develop our strategies – both for reducing our carbon footprint, and for getting our city prepared. From there it evolved further to a focus on those strategies that would have a dual benefit.”

Those foundational ideas—that the plan should spring from a close look at local impacts, and recommend both mitigation and adaptation strategies—shaped everything about Chicago’s process. It created a vision that inspired outside funders and partners. It also prompted the city to engage scientists and economists from universities, non-profits like the Center for Neighborhood Technology, and a small cadre of consultants to develop a data-driven picture of what climate change would mean for Chicago.



Don Wuebbles and Katherine Heyhoe from the University of Illinois were brought on to conduct an extensive climate impact assessment using data from global models that was “down-scaled” to Chicago’s geography. To help focus the assessment, Wuebble’s team was encouraged meet with city staff and discuss the impacts they were most concerned about. “Other cities are often reluctant to bring in scientists, or they simply don’t know how to find us. Chicago’s willingness to work so closely with scientists on the plan really strengthened it.”

The city also hired consultants and scientists to build on this assessment by specifying how climate impacts would affect city operations—from snow plowing, to operating buildings, to maintaining parks—and to calculate the economic costs of preparing, versus holding to the status quo. This extensive work produced a detailed set of reports painting a comprehensive picture of what climate change would mean locally. The various experts were then invited to present their results at internal meetings, as well as meetings of the Climate Task Force and other stakeholder meetings.

“This kind of analysis doesn’t have to be perfect,” explained Aaron Durnbaugh, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Environment, and the city’s lead on climate adaptation efforts. “For example, there were gaps in our analysis of the costs of adapting to climate change. But it gave a rough estimate of the total cost—up to 700 billion—and those numbers got people’s attention.”

According to Johnson, looking at climate impacts and adaptation challenges ultimately compelled city staff and community leaders to take the mitigation side more seriously. “For the naysayers and the old school folks, the description of a future with climate change helped them make sense of changes they were already seeing. That helped them realize that the wisest course of action was to adapt our operations and infrastructure, and it helped them understand the importance of reducing our carbon emissions in the first place.”

*Engaging City Departments.* The huge investment in engaging leaders outside of city government was a key strategy that helped forge broad-based public support for the Plan. In retrospect, Sadhu Johnson wishes that he and other leaders of the process had invested as much in engaging the upper echelons of agency management within government. He offers an example of this missed opportunity: As part of the work to quantify the costs of adapting city infrastructure and operations to changing climate patterns, the city’s consultants requested meetings with all the key departments. Mid-level staffers were usually sent to those meetings. Often, they found it difficult to provide informed feedback about what their department would likely do to respond to climate impacts, and the questions that those meetings raised did not percolate up to senior management.

School Board staff, for example, were briefed on the number of days of extreme heat that might occur during late spring and early fall months. Since they lacked the understanding and authority to anticipate the policy changes that would be triggered by such extreme heat and its risks for school-aged children, they suggested that the School Board was unlikely to add air conditioning to its schools. This resulted in what Johnson understands to be a major underestimation of the costs of adapting to extreme heat in Chicago’s city facilities.

Johnson believes more dialogue with the School Board itself, and senior managers across the city, would have resulted in better analysis of what climate impacts would mean for city operations. “We did so much work with our external partners, and we had very high-level people from the unions and businesses and other organizations,” he said. “With our commissioners, we mostly updated them once in a while. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to have a high level internal steering



committee, or at least embed some of our Commissioners in the Task Force, to get them more deeply engaged in shaping the work.”

**Choosing Goals and Metrics.** Through the CCAP, Chicago committed to reduce emissions 20% below 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% by 2050. Olivia Cohn, a GPP staff member who works with DOE on a performance management system for the plan, notes that there was great value on selecting an interim 2020 goal. “Since it was a number of years out from the formal release of the plan, it gave us some wiggle room to think more about how to actually implement all the actions,” she explained. “But it was close enough in time that we weren’t waiting decades to hold ourselves accountable for what we were able to accomplish.”

Preliminary targets for individual recommended actions (such as a percentage increase in the tree canopy throughout the city) were also set. The targets included in the plan were very rough, but Durnbaugh and others suggest that it was important to include them, because they motivated people inside and outside of city government to get to work, even if they were mostly “place-holders” at that point. Over time the targets have been refined with more detailed technical analysis of what is achievable, and the associated benefits for carbon reductions.

**Getting to a Final Plan.** When Sadhu Johnson thought the plan was ready, he took it to the city’s press office and to senior departmental leaders to get a sign-off on the document’s key recommendations. But instead of getting approval, Johnson encountered resistance. DOE worked through multiple re-writes, but nothing seemed to be working. “I was banging my head against the wall,” recounted Johnson. “There were subtle things happening that I just didn’t pick up on.”

It took a full six months for Johnson to get all the approvals he needed. He attributes his success to two things. First, his position within city government had changed. He was now the Chicago’s Chief Environmental Officer, reporting directly to Mayor Daley. Occupying a high level position in the Mayor’s office gave Johnson an ability to move the document through a complex city bureaucracy.

“Many of us folks that are passionate about the environment have a tendency to want to jump on a soapbox...But we had to start talking about what going green represents for the City. We had to talk about the jobs pieces of it, and the money we would save from implementing the strategies.”

— Sadhu Johnson

Johnson also realized that the resistance he was encountering was less about the plan’s content, and more about its overall framing and tone. At the foundation of the document was a vivid picture of how Chicago could be affected by shifting climate patterns. Summers would be much hotter, approximating the current weather patterns in Mobile, Alabama. There would be more intense storms, droughts, and larger snow events. What Johnson finally realized was that the stark description of risks facing the city was “scaring” city managers, and the only way to build positive support for the plan within the city was to change the tone.

“Many of us folks that are passionate about the environment have a tendency to want to jump on a soapbox and scream and shout about everything we need to be worried about,” explained Johnson. “But we had to tone down that ‘city is going to hell in a hand basket’ approach, and start talking about what going green represents for the city. We had to talk about the jobs pieces of it, and the



money we would save from implementing the strategies, and the ways in which acting would protect our residents and improve their quality of life.”

*Leading by Example.* Chicago’s Climate Action Plan is only three years old, but major initiatives recommended in the plan are already completed or well underway, including a large scale building retrofit program, an update to the city’s energy code, a new strategy for increasing the use of renewable energy sources and a nationally known green jobs training program. Daley’s mantra that the city must “lead by example” helped create this forward momentum.

“Whether it is building more energy efficient facilities, or greening a fleet, or putting green roofs on buildings, Daley always said that if the city doesn’t do it, no one else will,” said Durnbaugh. “He insisted that we needed to clean up our own house before asking others to clean up theirs.” Leading by example creates moral authority that the city can draw on when it asks its leading non-profit organizations, businesses and civic organizations to get directly involved in implementation. It also can help to drive the transformation of markets.



In 2001, a 20,300 square-foot green roof was installed atop Chicago's City Hall as part of the Urban Heat Island Initiative. When compared to an adjacent normal roof, City Hall's green roof was nearly 100 degrees cooler, and contributed to \$5,000 in annual energy cost reduction. *Photo: City of Chicago*

Durnbaugh offers Chicago’s work to promote green infrastructure as an example. CCAP recommended the expansion of green roofs and other green infrastructure throughout the city. “We knew we couldn’t go out and change our policies immediately,” explained Durnbaugh. “We had to build the market up, and grow the number of vendors. So we found some money and announced that we were going to build our first green roof.”

Once the city had demonstrated that green roofs could work—both to ameliorate the urban heat island affect, and to reduce the energy needed to run cooling systems and pump water—it began offering incentives for private developers to do the same (for example, increases in the allowable “floor area” in a new development in exchange for the installation of green infrastructure).

When the city convened a Green Ribbon Committee of national and local leaders (many of whom had served on the Climate Task Force) to help monitor and guide the implementation of the new climate plan, it signaled accountability for its commitments. Simmons points out that the group has no formal authority, but because it includes many powerful and respected community leaders, it can push effectively for acceleration of effort in areas of the plan that are languishing. “Someone working for the Mayor would have a hard time going to him and saying things are not going well,” she said. “But having this group is good for the Mayor. Some of the people who are valued most by political leaders are those who are willing to offer constructive criticism.”



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## Lessons Learned

***Partnerships can be a Fulcrum for Effective Climate Planning.*** It may be startling to hear that Sadhu Johnson launched Chicago's process with only \$50,000 and "not much of a grand plan." He and others in DOE saw the wisdom of inviting a philanthropic organization with deep roots in Chicago to help shape and support the process. That openness to partnership—and the vision that emerged from it—ultimately enabled the city to leverage millions of dollars in funding from inspired foundations, as well as expert assistance from well-respected universities and firms. While the landscape of organizations varies from city to city, Chicago's experience demonstrates what strategic partnerships with community-based organizations can accomplish.

***Start by Asking: How will Climate Change Affect our City?*** The City of Chicago's decision to ground its plan in an exploration of local climate impacts catalyzed a new way of thinking. For city managers who were skeptical about the need to invest in climate planning, it made an unassailable case for the costs and risks of inaction. For community leaders, it motivated deep involvement in the process of figuring out what Chicago residents should be asked to do. Durnbaugh urges cities to remember that looking at climate impacts is no different than looking at any other external factor that drives city planning, whether its fire risks or storms or population trends. Sustainability leaders can begin changing their cities' resilience to climate change just by inviting key city managers and stakeholders to ask: how will climate change affect us here?

***Credible Science Makes Climate Change Real for City Government and Residents.*** Chicago completed a set of scientific and engineering studies that were ambitious and comprehensive by any standard. That pursuit of excellence was possible because generous Chicago-based foundations aspired to create a model metro-scale climate plan. The plan's architects emphasize, however, that high quality and credible climate plans can be forged with much less investigation, by drawing on good existing data, and if necessary and possible, funding some modest investigations to fill gaps in understanding. Scientific information about impacts, especially when it is gathered or developed in close consultation with its ultimate consumers, can provide a powerful impetus to action.

***Invest in Internal Outreach.*** The city convened a Task Force of business, civic and non-profit organizations, and made integrating the group into all the steps of its climate planning one of its highest priorities. Since the plan was about what both the city government and its residents should do to address and prepare for climate change, it was essential to build the community's understanding, and invite their input, from the beginning. However efforts to build the understanding of city department heads and senior staff were launched much later in the process, causing a missed opportunity to engage them in specifying what the city should do and what it would cost. While challenging, it's important to find ways of balancing internal and external outreach, so that neither is neglected.

***Give People Reasons for Optimism.*** Looking at how climate change might affect day to day life in a city can tax the hopefulness of even the most optimistic sustainability practitioner. Johnson learned the hard way, after trying for months to get a sign-off on Chicago's plan, that too much focus on the risks resulting from shifting climate patterns can erode the political motivation to commit to bold new actions. A plan can present risks honestly, and still describe the many benefits that will accrue to city residents and government agencies from being on the leading edge of climate mitigation and adaptation, including green economic development, and job growth.





*Choose Near and Long Term Goals, and Take Early Steps to Model Commitment.* Chicago signaled its commitment to its plan when it adopted two goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions – one for 2020, and one for 2050. Having a goal twelve years out from the release of the plan helped spur the city bureaucracy and the community at large to begin implementing the plan’s many recommendations right away, without forcing accountability for quantifiable progress too soon. Continuing a long tradition of Mayor Daley’s administration, the city has galvanized significant progress—especially in the retrofitting of old inefficient buildings and the increasing use of green roofs, street trees and other green infrastructure—by doing its own model projects.

*Thanks to Sadhu Johnson, Aaron Durnbaugh, Olivia Cohn, Don Wuebbles, and Adele Simmons.*

*Case study written by Sarah McKearnan, Consultant to the Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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## For More Information

Chicago Climate Action Plan: <http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org>

Global Philanthropy Partnership website: <http://www.global-philanthropy.org/>

“Lessons Learned: Creating the Chicago Climate Action Plan,” Julia Parzen, July 2009.  
<http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org/filebin/pdf/LessonsLearned.pdf>





## Collaboration Nets Results and Mutual Benefits

Launched by Mayor Thomas Menino in 2009, the Renew Boston Residential Program provides building energy retrofits and renewable energy installations for low to middle income residents in Boston.

The program compliments the state-regulated, utility-administered Mass Save® energy retrofit program, which provides energy services for residents at 60% of area median household income (AMI) or greater. Mass Save® provides free energy assessments and a 75% rebate up to \$2,000 for air sealing and insulation improvements. Yet, for many low to middle income residents (within 60-120% of the AMI), the 25% cost share is a significant barrier to program participation. In addition, Mass Save® has been primarily marketed on TV and radio without successful connection to Boston residents with urban issues.

To address these issues, reduce barriers, and accelerate retrofits, Boston's Chief of Environmental and Energy Services James Hunt structured the Renew Boston Residential Program to target hard-to-reach low to middle income residents by reducing program costs to residents, enhancing customer service, and building unique collaborations with local community organizations.

Using \$2,050,000 of the city's Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant (EECBG) funds, Renew Boston has provided free energy retrofits for low to middle income residents within 60-120% of AMI. However, marketing the program represented one of its greatest challenges. "We didn't expect anyone to be banging down the door and taking advantage of these free services", said Jake Glickel, Renew Boston Assistant Director. "The challenge is raising public awareness and generating demand while delivering a streamlined product."

To accomplish this, the city established the Renew Boston Community Outreach Program by awarding EECBG-funded grants of up to \$15,000 to local nonprofit organizations. 13 community groups applied for and were awarded funds. After bringing each group up-to-speed on the specifics of the program, the city encouraged the grantees to develop their own plans to get the message across.

The majority of local organizations were fully committed partners. For example, the Boston Climate Action Network increased public awareness by quickly incorporating Renew Boston into their existing outreach campaigns. Similarly, Boston Building Resources, a nonprofit that accepts donations of reclaimed building materials for resale, successfully helped to raise awareness by providing customers with information materials on the retrofit program. Additionally, several Community Development Corporations (CDC) distributed information to thousands of first time homebuyers that they serve.

While the majority of local organizations developed successful outreach mechanisms, a few groups were less effective. The city found that these groups generally had missions that were not closely linked with energy efficiency, or that they struggled to make Renew Boston a priority.



A few months later, after an evaluation of program successes, the city made an additional \$150,000 in EECBG funding available to three of the most effective community groups (\$50,000 each). These groups were directed to hire “Renew Boston Neighborhood Network Coordinators” to further increase the outreach efforts.



Using a blower door to assess energy efficiency in a residential building

One of the grantees to receive additional funding was the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) CDC, located in East Boston. With 24 years of experience in creating affordable housing and revitalizing neighborhoods, they were in an ideal position to promote Renew Boston to East Boston residents. “Renew Boston has created a great bridge between our housing and environmental work,” said Kim Foltz, NOAH’s Director of Community Building and Environment. “Our role has been to reach those residents that are difficult for the city to reach, especially immigrants and especially the Latino community. We have a lot of trust built up in these communities.”

The second grant greatly accelerated NOAH’s effectiveness. “Having a full time staff person means we are able to do so much more outreach in the community and to build relationships with the largest employers to get their employees to sign up,” said Foltz. “It allows sustained relationship building and has tripled our outreach capacity.”

NOAH has continued to evaluate which outreach methods would be most effective for the East Boston residents. For example, they found that utilizing senior volunteers to conduct outreach has been less effective than expected. “We need volunteers that are bilingual, plus families in many of our neighborhoods are often younger,” said Foltz.

Foltz credits Renew Boston and its partners for being flexible in its implementation. For example, Next Step Living—one of Renew Boston’s retrofit installation contractors—extended its service center calling hours to handle an unexpected influx of evening calls. Similarly, to take advantage of word-of-mouth, Renew Boston recently added a referral program, which provides \$50 for referring a friend to the program. And, after experiencing challenges obtaining tax returns from participating residents, the city adjusted the program requirements to accept simple income affidavits in order to speed up the approval process.

To date, Renew Boston has completed over 600 residential retrofits and over 3,800 residential energy assessments, resulting in more than \$1 million in annual energy savings and supporting the creation of at least 58 new jobs.



*Thanks to Brad Swing, Director of Energy Policy and Renew Boston Program Director, Jake Glickel, Chief of Staff and Renew Boston Assistant Director, City of Boston Office of Environmental and Energy Services and Kim Foltz, Director of Community Building and Environment, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing CDC*

*Written by Josh Kelly, Institute for Sustainable Communities.*

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*This blog post, circulated through ICLEI USA's newsletter in the fall of 2011, is particularly relevant to the themes of this Urban Sustainability Leadership Academy.*

## 10 Tips to Increase Support for Your Sustainability Program

Most sustainability programs start with an internal operational focus on sustainability basics: an assessment, setting up a green team, starting green house gas inventories, establishing a committee, and getting the momentum internally to institutionalize sustainability throughout the organization. My administration's expectations were to focus externally, which ran contrary to the direction of typical sustainability programs of nearby cities and agencies.

My role was to make Beaverton, a first-tier suburb, a progressive sustainability leader through programs that reached the citizens in their homes. This left me to ponder: Is it a good thing to first focus on reaching out to the residents of a city versus concentrating on a city's internal operations?

Two years into my role as a sustainability manager, I have been privileged to develop, witness, and celebrate a wealth of successful sustainability projects that have focused on the Beaverton community as a whole. My viewpoint has evolved: It IS okay to engage the public in sustainability from the outset of a city program and shout it from the mountain top—loudly! Below are 10 key points that I want to share with all government local sustainability professionals as they begin to engage the public—and their municipal colleagues.



*Cindy Tatham, Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Beaverton, Oregon presents some great lessons learned for sustainability practitioners as outlined in this excerpt.*

### **1. You don't have to have your house "in perfect order" before you talk to the public about sustainability.**

Will your organization ever truly be sustainable? Not likely. It is a journey, the destination unclear and ongoing. It is about doing the best you can, striving for improvement to make better choices and institutionalizing the thought process into everyday operations. To wait to "achieve" sustainability before reaching out to the public is not necessary. Your organization can simply declare where it is at and what it is doing to move forward.

### **2. Take a chance: Do a public pilot program and learn from it.**

Before we rolled out Solar Beaverton, our city-wide residential bulk solar installation program<sup>1</sup>, we conducted a targeted pilot. The beauty of a pilot program in local government is you can test the waters and declare that you are learning from the test. Come out declaring that you are "gauging the interest of the community" and state a goal. Evaluate and use the data to determine your next steps. This is a great way to educate your community and organization while still allowing you to get the kinks out along the way. If a pilot proves successful, then prepare for a city-wide roll out based on the lessons learned.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, please visit: <http://livelightenergy.com/solarbeaverton/>

### 3. The public likes to see demonstration on their turf, not just at City Hall.

Introduce green technology as a demonstration in a high-traffic public place. One example from the City of Beaverton was the installation of a solar canopy in the Farmers Market. The canopy demonstrated solar power and became a booth for local sustainability-minded organizations to use for engaging the community. People were relaxed and welcomed to participate in conversations about sustainability.



The author takes a ride in an electric vehicle

### 4. Market, market, market. Paint the picture internally and externally. Brag and pitch it right.

Shout it from the mountain! Get to know your public information department; they are your friends. The media team can help your program get the right buzz to reach the citizens in your community. Tell the residents what your City has already done, what it means, and where you want to go. Report your progress publicly.

Show them that you understand how your program supports the efforts of the economic development program, stimulates the local economy, saves money, supports the Mayor's and Council's agendas, and builds community. For example, the Solar Beaverton program chose a local company for its solar installations, used materials manufactured in the same county and generated local jobs.

Talk about your great environmental program in two languages: your administration's language and the public's language. What does your Mayor or City Manager talk about when he/she engages the citizens? What are his/her main goals? Find a way to make your program language support the main organizational goals.

Externally, our Solar Beaverton staff highlighted the 12 local jobs that the program created, how the use of solar electricity would save on a homeowner's bills, and how the tax credits would bring state and federal money to our local community. We did not emphasize that everyone should go solar because renewable energy was the best for the environment; that point took a back seat to the economic benefits.

Internally, we repeatedly communicated that the Solar Program Pilot stimulated over a 1000% increase in permits in a few short months, during a recession. This environmentally focused program helped stimulate revenue in a department that was experiencing budget deficits due to the economy. Changing the message internally and demonstrating how the program affected the City without dwelling on the environmental benefit drove the program forward with great support. I loved that our Mayor quoted the permit increases repeatedly in his presentations.





**5. Make it about money—creatively. Talk about green tech and why it is important to your city and the state’s economy; then support it and welcome it.**

Make the conversation about supporting green technology so that new industries feel welcome in your city, and demonstrate it. The City of Beaverton installed a charging station that was donated by a local company, to show support for that company as well as to demonstrate the new technology.

**6. If you save money, ask for it.**

Ask for any money savings to roll back into an account to continue your program. For example, the City of Beaverton set up a budget line item to transfer the electricity savings from the installation of LED street lighting into a fund to buy more lighting, instead of just letting it fade into the general fund. Track the savings, tell your administration how much your program saved, and try to get the savings back into your program to keep it moving forward!

If you generate savings through a joint project with another department, ask for your share of the money saved to go to a sustainability-designated fund. If your request is rejected, don’t give up: Keep asking and make sure you maintain good records of money savings to back up your proposal.

**7. Act like a consultant to other departments and programs.**

Show all departments how your sustainability program can work with them and add to their objectives. If you are in the Mayor’s office, make sure you are accessible to other departments.

**8. Don’t forget to keep the important things on your work plan—even if you get diverted.**

You know that the sustainability plan needs to be completed, the green team initiated, and the inventories finalized. Find time for the basics and keep them moving forward. You can and should still work on getting the internal ducks in a row when the focus is outside.

**9. Hire whomever you can and don’t let them go.**

It is likely your position is new and of course, you need more staff. Sustainability is a huge job. Be creative, look to interns, volunteers, or existing employees to help your program. Are there departments that have slower workloads due to the down economy? Perhaps there are opportunities to share some projects. Once you get staff, try to use money from your demonstrated savings to cover the costs of keeping them. Don’t forget to write grants and use the funds for staff. Philadelphia is a great example of this, using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to hire key staff. AmeriCorps members are a great way to build up your team as well.

**10. Pick your battles. Your work is so important.**

Reach out to colleagues for support when you hit the “sustainability wall.” We have all been there! Keep driving and be tenacious, but accept defeat or delays. If you cannot make something happen at that time, set the project aside for another day and remember to pull it back out when the opportunity for success is better.



*Thanks to Cindy Tatham and ICLEI USA for permission to reprint this article.*

*Written by Cindy Tatham, Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Beaverton, OR, October 12, 2011.*



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## For More Information

Article Webpage:

<http://www.icleiusa.org/blog/10-tips-to-increase-support-for-your-sustainability-program>

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