

WARD 3 VISION WORKING PAPER

WARD 3 NEIGHBORHOOD SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS PILOT PROJECT: BEGINNING A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

The DC Office of Planning is launching a Ward 3 Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Pilot Project (the Sustainability Project). Ward3Vision is a community-based smart growth organization which embraces sustainability as part of its core mission and guiding principles. To begin our participation in this community dialogue and as a means of generating conversations around the ways in which our community can address “sustainability,” we have prepared this working paper. Among our goals are to:

- raise awareness about issues of sustainability
- provide initial suggestions as to ways in which our community might participate in sustainability
- identify ways in which general qualities surrounding sustainability can be turned into measurable action items, as the initiative moves from planning to implementation.

What is Sustainability?

By one conventional definition issued in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The 2006 District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan articulates a vision that is consistent with sustainability – that is to “protect, restore, and enhance the natural and man-made environment in the District of Columbia, taking steps to improve environmental quality, prevent and reduce pollution, and conserve the values and functions of the District’s natural resources and ecosystems.”

What is the Office of Planning Sustainability Project?

As we understand it, the Office of Planning (OP) has initiated the Sustainability Project to study sustainability measures within a defined area – generally ANC 3F. Working with its consultant and neighborhood study teams, OP will evaluate four elements:

- Sustainable Development
- Natural Resource Management
- Conservation Planning, and
- Strategic Planning and Urban Land Use.

As a pilot project, OP has indicated that this will serve as a model which can be adapted to other neighborhoods.

How Can the Pilot Project Help Our Community Move Toward Sustainability?

It is the hope of Ward 3 Vision that the Sustainability Project will provide:

- Opportunities for the constructive engagement of our community to refine the definition of and agree on a shared vision for sustainability
- Specific steps and action items for individual, community-led, and public and private sector initiatives to achieve environmental sustainability
- Metrics for ongoing measurement to gauge success and effectiveness of whatever sustainability initiatives are embraced by the community.

Who Can Engage in Sustainability?

Inherent in definitions of sustainability are the concepts of stewardship of resources, awareness of and respect for the environment, and active engagement in the protection of the environment. These broad definitions suggest opportunities for a wide range of engagement in sustainability initiatives. Ward3Vision envisions that the Sustainability Project will provide opportunities for engagement in sustainability by:

- individual property owner
- community groups
- city agencies
- not-for-profit and for-profit stakeholders in our community, and
- various collaborations and partnerships of the above.

A sampling of the types of engagement that might result from the Sustainability Project can be found at the Ward 3 Vision website (www.ward3vision.org)

Implementation

For the Sustainability Project to serve as an effective pilot project for our community and the city at large, we believe the following must be part of the outcomes:

- A clear and concise definition of sustainability as it pertains to our community.
- A set of “guiding principles” – concepts that reflect broad philosophical underpinnings of efforts to achieve sustainability.
- Specific tasks and items which can be acted on – by citizens, city agencies, etc. – as reference in the section “*Who Can Engage in Sustainability?*” above.
- Procedures for ongoing assessment of community sustainability efforts and associated metrics to measure performance.

For further information, please visit www.ward3vision.org

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Opportunities for Individuals, Households and Property Owners

At the individual and household level, there are actions which can be implemented which will help reduce the ecological and carbon footprint. These include:

- A Home Energy Audit which may result in an assessment of energy saving methods such as insulation, caulking and other remedial fix-up items. Work with apartment building owners and condo associations to conduct this audit on multifamily buildings (see OP/DOE etc for details)

The Home Energy Audit may yield simple recommendations such as:

- Replacing incandescent lightbulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs
- Placing electronics on a power strip and turning it off when not in use
- Replacement of inefficient appliances
- Utilizing a programmable thermostat to control heating and air-conditioning
- Insulation, caulking, storm-windows and other gap-closing measures

- Transportation Audit to reduce household Vehicle Miles Traveled and switch to no / low emissions travel (use an approach such as ‘TravelChoice’ personalized transportation information to help people make the switch <http://www.transformca.org/campaign/travelchoice>). Reduced emissions travel include:
 - Ride transit, bicycle or carpool to work rather than drive alone
 - Get a rack to carry groceries and ride your bike to the store rather than drive
 - Shop locally, driving shorter distances rather than long treks to the suburbs
 - Join Zipcar and get rid of the second car or go carfree.
 - Ask for Zipcar or a company vehicle at your office so you can leave your car at home & use a work vehicle for trips during the workday that require a car.
 - Ask your employer for tax-free monthly Metro Smart Benefits.
 - Ask for the “cash out” from an employer-subsidized parking space – forgoe the parking space, pocket the cash.

- Learn to take the bus – check out Metro’s “Ride Guide” and “Next Bus” information - <http://www.wmata.com/>, http://www.wmata.com/rider_tools/nextbus/arrivals.cfm
- Join SmartBike for trips downtown, ask for SmartBike in your neighborhood.
- Dropping off children at school by bicycle or walk rather than drive
- Reduce stormwater runoff from your homesite or apartment building by implementating water management measures such as cisterns to collect rain water to use to water lawns, greenroofs, reduced imperviousness,etc
- Water conservation audit – assess household water use to reduce consumption of appliances, landscaping. etc.
- Opportunity to improve tree canopy on individual properties
- Assessment of land management practices in terms of fertilizers and other organic/zero emissions maintenance to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, and emissions.
- Produce some of your own food in front & back yard gardens and window boxes to reduce reduce food miles
- Implementation of Energy Production such as Geothermal heating and cooling, photovoltaic generation and solar water heating
- Identify opportunities for community gardens and other food production beyond the homesite -level
- Reduce household waste by reducing/elminating disposibles, use of non-recyclable materials

Other Opportunities (e.g., for community groups, city agencies, not-for-profit / for-profit stakeholders)

- Assessment of housing stock and housing types to meet the demographic and income needs of a changing population and reduce energy consumption(DCOP, DHCD & DOE Housing Profiles)
- Education on embodied energy in structures/renovation versus replacement (particularly pertinent in historic structures and districts (see greenestbuilding link below)
- Assessment and evaluation of materials associated with street construction, sidewalk construction, recommendations for permeable surfaces and water filtration efforts
- Water Run-off management via public spaces, such as the installation of bio-swales, etc.
- Micro-transportation solutions such as bike-sharing stations, Zipcaroptions, increased mass-transit, increased walking access and safety
- Assess condition of Soapstone Creek and other assets within the Rock Creek Tributary;

- Include City based recycling collection and pick-up in public spaces
- Neighborhood Transportation Assessment
 - new transit lines or treatment of transit vehicles in roadway to reduce travel time, increase connectivity and convenience,
 - strategies to increase ridership on underutilized transit service
 - Neighborhood-based discounted transit passes (e.g. “EcoPass”
http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8835&Itemid=3002)
 - School children who walk to school – how to change from driving drop-off to walk.
- Smart-Grid and other technology enhancements to better manage consumption
- Identify renewable energy sources, regionally and locally
- LEED certification (at minimum, perhaps a Gold rating) for new construction and renovations;

Links

www.ward3vision.org
www.smartergrowth.net
<http://planning.dc.gov/planning/site/default.asp>
<http://green.dc.gov/green/site/default.asp>
coolcapital.org
<http://www.earthaid.net/>
<http://www.thegreenestbuilding.org/>

Other Carbon Calculators:

<http://green.yahoo.com/calculator/> This is a basic but good calculator for comparison between household sizes.

http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html A more complicated but comprehensive calculator.

Video on energy consumption (Customer Care Research Consortium)

<http://www.smartgridcustomervideo.com/gridecon/>