



Summit County Green Policy Task Force Year End Report

Presented by Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro, Chairperson
December 14, 2009

OVERVIEW

In March 2008, the Green Policy Task Force was established to recommend to the County Council and Executive environmental policies that would create jobs promote entrepreneurial partnerships and expand green business opportunities for those who live and work in Summit County.

The Task Force was initially made up of representatives from:

- Summit County Executive's Office
- Summit County Council
- Summit County Engineer's Office
- Summit County Sheriff's Office
- Homebuilder's Association
- Solid Waste Management Authority
- Metro Parks
- First Energy
- Sierra Club
- Ohio EPA
- Soil & Water Conservation District
- Other Groups or Individuals Necessary to Provide Balanced Advice on Environmental Protection and Economic Growth

After initial meetings, the following recommendations were submitted to the Council and Executive for approval:

1. Extend the Task Force by 24 months to pursue the following initiatives:
2. Consider restructuring or expanding the Task Force to include representatives from the following sectors: education and health (hospitals); Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce; Metro Regional Transit Authority; Summit County Fiscal Office (Treasurer's Division) and others as appropriate.
3. Explore the feasibility of a construction demolition policy that requires recycling or re-use of 25% of debris generated from demolition of all government, commercial and industrial sites.
4. Using 2007 as baseline data, establish the goal of reducing electricity and natural gas usage in all County buildings by 15% by the year 2015.
5. Construct a plan for a green business certification program that would provide businesses with a step-by-step approach for achieving environmental sustainability and natural resource conservation.
6. Analyze successful, socially responsible Green Fleet policies and create a Summit County Green Fleet Policy by the end of 2009.
7. Explore the feasibility of establishing tax abatements for expanding or relocating businesses that clean up brown field sites located within Summit County.
8. Investigate the feasibility of creating model legislation or a model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would encourage the use of economic incentives for businesses that create green jobs or show significant reduction in energy use; reduction and/or restoration of natural resources; or reductions in solid waste based on established standards.
9. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a County Office of Sustainability.

With the Council and Executive's approval, the task force was expanded to include representatives of:

- Akron Public Schools
- Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce
- Metro Regional Transit Authority
- Akron Zoo and
- Summit County Fiscal Office

Two of the task force recommendations related to reducing natural gas and electricity usage in County buildings and creating a green fleet policy for Summit County vehicles are being addressed by the internal Summit County Green Team, which has members on the Task Force.

The final three recommendations related to establishing tax abatements, suggesting possible economic incentives for green businesses and establishing a Summit County Office of Sustainability were considered premature and put on hold for future consideration by the Task Force.

During the past year, the Task Force continued to investigate ways that the County can adopt environmental awareness, education, and incentive strategies that reduce the use of natural resources through energy efficiency, water conservation and sustainable land use, promoting the highest quality of life for Summit County residents.

The sub-committees have been meeting monthly since June, looking to develop 2-3 objectives/recommendations and high level action plans to report back to the Summit County Green Task Force through representatives who are members of the Task Force.

To that end, the Task Force decided to move forward in three specific areas with sub-committees devoted to the following issues:

- **Green Business Certification** -- a plan and possible incentives for businesses to become more environmentally responsible.
- **Deconstruction and demolition** -- making the most environmentally-friendly use of building materials and solid waste management
- **Community Engagement and Education** -- focusing on energy reduction in homes and businesses and "green education" initiatives in our schools.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATES TO DATE

Green Business Certification:

The Green Business Certification Group sub-committee was divided into two groups to look at Best Practices and to develop a Green Business Survey to determine the current level of environmental practices among businesses ranging from 5 to 500 employees in Summit County.

The Best Practices group focused on reviewing existing green business certification programs in other communities, both to identify characteristics of a strong program and to select an existing program to follow. In order to reduce costs and implementation time, the plan is to form an arrangement to use an existing program, modifying it to be branded as Summit County's program. After reviewing several Green Business Certification plans and web-sites, the Best Practices group decided on a model used by the City of Columbus, Ohio on its "GreenSpot" web-site as the Green Business Certification model for its initial program. A business plan has been drafted by the group for review by the Task Force. A small group of Summit County businesses have also agreed to participate in a "pilot" program, using the current Columbus GreenSpot business certification model.

The Survey group has finalized an electronic Green Business survey for Summit Co. businesses. It was distributed by the Greater Akron Chamber to their members (via Survey Monkey) between November 13th and December 11th. The results were tabulated in a summary report (see attached – pg. 7).

<Looking Ahead >

In early 2010, committee meetings will be dedicated to the following tasks:

- (1) Review and discussion of the data established from the Green Spot Pilot and the Green Business Survey.
- (2) Set priorities and objectives for the Green Business Certification plan.
- (3) Recommend appropriate format and measures to use for the web-site.
- (4) Determine incentives and recognition for Green Business Certification.
- (5) Establish a timeline for implementation by April of 2010.

Deconstruction and Demolition:

The Deconstruction and Demolition sub-committee has formed a sub-group to work on gathering resources (lists of builders, recyclers, materials for re-use and locations) for a “Green Pages” Directory and to incorporate environment-friendly measures and practices into the Neighborhood Stabilization Program efforts with the County and the City of Akron.

Another group was formed to address transportation issues related to recycling in new construction and deconstruction sites. Members of that group have met with the Executive’s Office, County Health District and Community Planning and Development officials to determine the feasibility of hauling regulations and incentives related to construction and demolition debris (C&DD) and recycling vs. landfill dumping. Local, regional and national examples are being examined to incorporate into a plan for Summit County.

<Looking Ahead>

Over the next two years the County will:

- (1) Research, draft and submit legislation incorporating into the County’s procurement process either requirements or preferences for vendors with the County to recycle C&DD in County related projects for the Department of Administrative Services, DOES and the Engineer’s Office.
- (2) Research the possibility of a LEED-based incentive program in connection to Community Reinvestment Act areas in both the Townships (governed by the County) and municipalities (independent).
- (3) Research, draft and implement procedures (and legislation if necessary) to incorporate requirements, incentives, etc. into County’s Community Development programs (i.e. HWAP, CDBG, etc.).
- (4) Research, draft and implement changes to the Summit County Building Code that will incentivize recycling of C&DD in private building projects.

Community Engagement and Education:

The Community Engagement and Education team is looking at a two-fold approach to provide information and encourage environment-friendly behavior changes with Summit County residents.

The first would be a user-friendly web-site that showcases green resources, organizations and events, energy reduction and sustainability tips, plus standards and incentives to achieve higher levels of “green-friendly” behaviors. The team looked at several examples and concluded that the Columbus (OH) “GreenSpot” web site was an appropriate resource to emulate. Talks were initiated with Mayor’s Office officials in Columbus involved with the GreenSpot and a template for the site has been offered to Summit County at no charge pending the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding shared use and development of the site moving forward.

In recent meetings, the team has met with Summit County IT and Communications Web-Designers to review specifics of creating the web-site adapting the Columbus Green Spot template. Additional contacts have also been established with the University of Akron to provide additional resources and support to help develop and maintain the site. Discussions have also taken place with potential corporate partners locally to sponsor the site.

The second approach would be to incorporate “green practices” into the school system via environmental curriculums, recycling programs, service projects and clubs, incentives and competitions. Some of this is already being done, but a more focused, consistent effort is needed to keep students engaged and interested to effect behavioral changes.

<Looking Ahead>

In 2010, future committee meetings will be devoted to:

- (1) Developing a content outline and submitting information to include on the site.
- (2) Creating a marketing strategy and activity plan to successfully introduce the new site.
- (3) Recommending funding options and maintenance resources for the site.
- (4) Establishing objectives, priorities and timelines to successfully implement an education plan.

Green Business Survey Summary

Response rate of 17%.

74% of the respondents were from companies with less than 100 employees. The following are highlights of the responses:

- 83% of respondents currently implement “green” or sustainable practices
- 94% practice recycling
- 57% practice energy efficiency (water, gas, electric)
- 35% have implemented green building practices

- The top 3 motivators for green practices were:
 - Corporate responsibility (76%)
 - Reducing Costs (69%)
 - Customer Demand (21%)

- 73% of respondents have not received 3rd party certification of their products, services or practices
- 78% of respondents don’t have a written policy or strategy for sustainability goals
- 69% of respondents don’t measure their progress towards sustainability

- For those respondents who don’t currently implement “green” or sustainable practices, their top 3 motivators to initiate a program include:
 - Reducing Costs (92%)
 - Corporate Responsibility (57%)
 - Government Incentives (44%)

- The top 3 interests of those who don’t practice sustainability are:
 - Recycling/Reuse (72%)
 - Energy Efficiency (70%)
 - Buy Locally (41%)

- 61% of the respondents have not made any significant energy efficiency improvements over the past 3 years and are unaware of their energy savings

- Respondents would be interested:
 - 62% in learning more about potential opportunities to save energy
 - 57% in utilizing services and resources provided by a local business or organization to become “green”
 - 64% in a structured Green Business Certification program in Summit County if implemented at little or no cost

- 85% of the respondents found value in having access to one-stop web-site of “green” information, local resources and certification information