

Worksession

Agenda Item #	4
Meeting Date	July 6, 2009
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Approved By	Barbara B. Matthews City Manager

Discussion Item	Council Discussion of How to Approach Environmental Issues in Implementation of the Strategic Plan
Background	In adopting the Strategic Plan (2010-2015), the Council committed to focus on the three high-level prioritized goals of becoming a sustainable and livable community with an engaged, responsive, and service-oriented government. This discussion will provide the Council with an opportunity to discuss how best to approach environmental issues and advance the Plan.
Policy	Strategic Plan (2010-2015)
Fiscal Impact	For discussion only.
Attachments	Section of the Strategic Plan on becoming an “Environmentally Sustainable Community”
Recommendation	Hold discussion and provide direction to staff.
Special Consideration	During the Council Comments section at the June 15 City Council meeting, there was interest expressed in suspending the Committee on the Environment to form a new task force that would focus more broadly on the Council’s environmental sustainability goal. The Council may wish to provide direction to staff.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Assumptions

- Residents support policies and practices that encourage the City and the community - our residential, commercial, and institutional sectors - to become more environmentally responsible.
- Residents would, if the infrastructure were in place, prefer to walk or bike to and from work and school, to local businesses, and for recreational purposes.
- Residential and commercial development near transportation lines and hubs will become more desirable as the community explores alternative modes of transportation and the use of public transit.
- The maintenance, restoration and preservation of our open spaces and natural resources (e.g. Sligo Creek, parks, gardens and urban forest) are priorities of the community.
- The existing Public Works facility is obsolete, inefficient, and in need of replacement.

Strategies

- Coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions to foster and promote comprehensive, environmentally sound development and redevelopment in the community and throughout the region; support higher density retail, commercial, and residential development near transportation routes and hubs, that is environmentally sensitive and of a design and scale appropriate to surrounding neighborhoods and their historic nature.
- Review existing environmental policies and programming to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Develop new policies and procedures that significantly reduce the City's energy use and its environmental footprint.
- Advocate with county, state, and federal agencies for the provision of increased and appropriate mass transit services in and around our city.
- Implement existing plans that promote the use of alternative modes of transportation and reduce the negative environmental impacts of the City's operations.
- Expand and enhance existing infrastructure to provide access to, and promote increased use of, alternative modes of transportation and walking.

Priority Projects and Initiatives

- Create and enact a five-year plan for improving the environmental sustainability of the City with corresponding budget. Plan should consider vehicle use, fuel use, facility

efficiency, purchasing preference for recyclable and green products, use of alternative, less environmentally damaging products, etc., as well as a review of alternative work schedules for city employees.

- Develop a five-year CIP for the City's storm water management programs; identify new projects that will enhance water quality, including improvements to existing infrastructure.
- Review existing policies and develop new policies that advance the City Council's environmental sustainability goals; develop, in partnership with the community, the Committee on the Environment, Friends of Sligo Creek, and others, programming for City Council consideration; coordinate timing of recommendations with the City's budget development process.
- Revise the Local Action Plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; establishing reduction goals that are consistent with state, county, and MWCOG plans.
- Review the requirements of the City's Ordinances (e.g. Trees and Vegetation and Stormwater Management); updating as appropriate to ensure the furtherance of the City Council's environmental sustainability goals.
- Perform sidewalk studies to identify need for additional sidewalks based on identified priorities; identify opportunities to expand sidewalk network to address priority needs; develop a funding mechanism that is equitable throughout the community.
- Prioritize improvements and provide funding for improvements included in the existing bike transportation enhancement plan.
- Complete construction of a new, energy efficient Public Works facility, incorporating, to the greatest extent possible, LEED standards.
- Establish educational and incentive programs to increase the community's awareness of actions they can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce use of resources, enhance the natural environment, and improve water quality. Encourage residents and businesses to undertake and maintain storm water management projects on private property (e.g. rain gardens, reduction of turf areas, and development of infiltration areas).
- Establish benchmarks and key indicators, providing for an appropriate means of measuring progress made by the City and the community to improve our environmental sustainability (e.g. water quality and emission standards).

Key Indicators

- Completion of Priority Projects and Initiatives within established time frames.
- Improvements in key indicators developed by the City as a means of measuring progress made towards achieving environmental sustainability.

- Increase in the number of linear feet of sidewalk that meets ADA and city standards.
- Increase in the percentage of residents rating the ease of travel in Takoma Park by walking as good or excellent as reported in the Takoma Park Resident Survey and other evaluation tools.
- Increase in the linear feet of bike routes available in the community.
- Increase in the percentage of residents rating the ease of travel in Takoma Park by public transit as good or excellent as reported in the Takoma Park Resident Survey and other evaluation tools.
- Reduction in City use of non-renewable resources.
- Increase in the percentage of residents rating the City's Stormwater Management program as good or excellent as reported in the Takoma Park Resident Survey and other evaluation tools.
- Increase in the number of residents participating in educational programming and accessing available incentives to establish and maintain stormwater management projects on private property.

AN ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Assumptions

- Household income, housing prices, and access to credit by local businesses and developers will continue to be affected until such time as current economic conditions improve.
- Residents, if given the opportunity, would prefer to support local businesses and service providers.
- The appearance of a business and the condition of the building in which it is located is important if the business is to remain financially viable.
- The cost of purchasing a home in Takoma Park will remain above the national average, limiting homeownership opportunities for working-class families and potentially threatening the socio-economic diversity of the community.
- Property taxes for homeowners will become increasingly unaffordable as the ten percent cap on increases on assessments is phased out. The City Council anticipates that the assessments of long-term homeowners will increase at a rate in excess of the rate of inflation and the increase of the average household income.