

**A SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE:
2009 UPDATED REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION
TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN**

May 18, 2009

INTRODUCTION

In September 2007, the Oak Park Environment and Energy Commission (EEAC) presented the Village Board with a report entitled “A Sustainable Village,” which the EEAC hoped would be the first step towards an environmental policy for the Village of Oak Park. The Report took stock of the environmental state of the Village and suggested actions the Village might take to become a model for combining wise economic growth with environmental sustainability. The Report proposed the following mission for environmental action in the Village: *Mobilize Village residents and businesses to take individual and collective actions towards creating a healthy and sustainable environment, and establish policies that will serve the values of economic growth and historic preservation while reducing the Village’s impact on our natural resources.* The Report organized that mission around four fundamental elements: Air, Energy, Waste and Water.

At the time the EEAC issued its original report, the Board of Trustees was considering appointing a committee to propose a set of indicators to measure the quality of the Village’s environmental life and its movement towards greater sustainability. Consequently, the original Report did not propose sustainability indicators, or major initiatives whose costs and benefits could be measured by such initiatives. Since September 2007, some data has been collected on energy and water consumption in the Village, but the Board has not appointed a team to identify indicators or gather baseline data related to those indicators. The Environmental Sustainability Working Group of the OPRF Community Works Foundation is developing energy-related indicators and gathering baseline data that will inform priorities for major energy-use reduction prospect in Oak Park and River Forest. In the meantime, this report continues to emphasize initiatives whose benefits are well-established and documented and do not require substantial

investment by the Village. These are initiatives the Village can and should take now, regardless of what indicators the Village ultimately develops, or whether it develops any indicators at all.

In Part I we make several recommendations for educational, administrative and planning initiatives we believe the Village must take if it is serious about being an environmental leader. In Parts II through V we address each of the four elements around which the mission is organized.

PART I

ADMINISTRATION, EDUCATION and PLANNING

Mission Statement: Establish programs and policies that will integrate sustainability seamlessly into Village governance and planning, and encourage and enable Village residents and businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

1. Introduction

If the Village is to have a successful environmental action plan, environmental sustainability must become part of the fabric of Village life. The Village must devote resources to administering the plan and educating Village citizens, businesses and employees about the steps we all must take for the plan to be successful. The Village must also incorporate sustainability into all aspects of its planning including building renovation and village funded development projects.

2. Past Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives

- Adopted Energy Conservation Code (2003).
- Designed Public Works Building to qualify for silver LEED Rating, to showcase sustainable design, and to educate the public on sustainability.
- Prepared Environmental Action Report to the Village Board (2007)
- Joined U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement (2007)
- Designed and launched "Green" page on Village website (2008)
- Adopted Public Works policies for using low VOC paints, solvents and cleaning fluids in all municipal buildings (2008)

3. 2009 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Staffing: The Village should either complete the process it began in 2007 and hire sustainability coordinator to fill position that was defined, budgeted and listed in 2008, or shift resources to enable current staff to perform those functions.

Initiative 2: Contracting: Draft model language for RFP's seeking information about contractors' "green" practices.

Initiative 3: Recognizing and rewarding sustainable activity. The EEAC has created a "Green Awards" program to recognize exceptional commitment to sustainability. The program will: 1) create incentives for residents and businesses to devote resources to sustainability; 2) encourage community participation in the Village's sustainability efforts; 3) incubate innovative ideas for making the Village more sustainable; and 4) communicate "best practices" to other residents and businesses.

Initiative 4: Education. The EEAC will work with various groups, including the Green Community Center to present programs to educate citizens on how to live more sustainable lives.

Initiative 5: Building. Advocate to Board to make Colt Building and Lake and Forest developments signature green projects when they are developed.

4. Identification of Potential New Initiatives

Initiative 1: Planning. The Village should establish a policy to incorporate sustainability as an element of any new development plans. It should also review its current planning for DTOP, Madison Street, and other commercial districts to evaluate their "greenness." All developments receiving TIF funds should meet Village Sustainability standards. Among other things, the Village should evaluate the costs and benefits of redirecting TIF funds to provide incentives such as "green grants" to encourage sustainable business practices.

Initiative 2: Procurement. The Village should extend the procurement policies adopted by Public Works – including low VOC products, energy efficient lighting and appliances and water conservation technologies – to other Village departments, and promote them to the Village partner agencies.

Initiative 3: Building. The Village should develop a revenue neutral program for encouraging green building and redevelopment. This could be achieved through an expedited permit process and/or a change in the permit fee structure.

PART II AIR

Mission Statement: To take a supportive and guided approach to reduce smog-forming emissions in the Chicago metropolitan region to achieve compliance with standards of the federal Clean Air Act and to improve air quality in our community.

1. Introduction

The Village should evaluate air quality in two ways: (1) the effects of the Village's air quality on its residents; and (2) the Village's impact on regional and global air quality. The Village's air quality, and thus the quality of life of its residents, is affected by its location in a metropolitan area that is transversed by a major highway and several rail lines. Residents' health is adversely affected by the high levels of particulates (soot), NO_x, Sox, and ground level ozone (caused directly by vehicular traffic and indirectly by coal fired power plants) and mercury (mainly contributed by the power plants). The primary sources of such emissions within the Village are mobile, though there are some stationary sources of such emissions, particularly the cement plant, dry cleaners and furnaces. The adverse health affects of emissions from these sources can include asthma, chronic bronchitis, cancer, and other health problems that can contribute to premature death.

To continue the tradition of Oak Park being a progressive community, the Village should evaluate its role as a global citizen. All emissions, especially carbon dioxide, released from the Village (residential, business, institutional and municipal) should be assessed for their impacts upon regional and global air quality, and targeted action plans should be developed.

2. Past Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives

Transportation

- Installed the Intermodal Station linking Metra and CTA in the Downtown Oak Park area.
- Implemented the I-GO car sharing program.
- Sponsored initiatives to encourage biking and walking, including the Car Free Sunday awareness program, the Bicycle ambassador Program, and the Historic Bike Ride.
- Installed 225 additional bike racks since 2001 bringing the total number of bike racks to approximately 400.
- Conducted a survey of Oak Park residents to identify obstacles to use of alternative transportation and best options for increasing alternate transportation.
- Supported state legislation to encourage CTA and Pace to retrofit buses to reduce particulate matter in diesel exhaust. (2007)
- Adopted bicycle plan drafted by Chicago Bicycle Federation and local citizens (2008)
- Began ongoing education of public on “share-the-road” rules through Bicycle Ambassadors or some other program. (2008)
- Established Village employee carpooling program and subsidized mass transit passes for Village employees. (2008)
- Adopted an anti-idling policy for Public Works vehicles. (2008)
- Developed anti-idling campaign and literature and worked with school districts and bus companies to implement. (2008)
- Conducted anti-idling campaign at all Oak Park elementary schools on Earth Day (April 22, 2009) and created PSAs and short video for Oak Park TV6
- Revised business licensing requirements for commercial waste haulers to include an incentive for vehicles using diesel emission filters and biodiesel fuel (2009)

Landscaping and Tree Care

- Ongoing management and care of approximately 20,000 parkway trees, including completion of the Parkway Tree Inventory in 2000.
- Implemented the Commercial Planter and Gateway Beautification Program in 2002.
- Established tree protection procedures for renovation and new development projects.
- Adopted an ordinance requiring that gasoline powered leaf blowers, operated between June and October, meet EPA emissions standards and are quieter than 65 decibels.
- Partnered with WCCSWA to conduct an annual gasoline-powered lawn care equipment buy-back program with funds from Clean Air Counts.

3. 2009 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Monitor progress on City of Chicago ordinance to reduce diesel emissions by requiring filters on diesel vehicles and recommend comparable ordinance.

Initiative 2: Work with OPRF Community Workers to implement bicycle plan adopted by Village in 2008.

Initiative 3: Research new technologies that would enable Police vehicles to power equipment with reduced idling time (idle control devices).

Initiative 4: Extend Public Works anti-idling policy to other departments and partner agencies.

4. Identification of Potential New Initiatives

Initiative 1: Perform emissions inventory of Village vehicles in order to better assess emission sources and opportunities for emission reductions within the community.

Initiative 2: Continue efforts to increase alternative fuel used by Village vehicles, including biodiesel, electric, natural gas, hybrid cars, and research the possibility of offering biodiesel for sale to residents.

PART III ENERGY

Mission Statement: To minimize energy use in Village-owned buildings, to educate residents and businesses about the value of energy conservation, and to encourage the use of alternative and renewable energy technology.

1. Introduction

The Village recognizes that local energy use by its residents, businesses and community organizations will have an effect on the global climate and generations to come. The Village must commit to taking responsible action toward promoting energy conservation and reducing the negative impact of high energy consumption. Through sharing information and implementing these initiatives, the Village can be a model for sustainability and set an example that will encourage officials to adopt similar goals at regional, state and federal levels.

2. Past Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives

Installation of Energy Efficient Technology

- Installed LED traffic lights at 26 intersections

Building

- Designed the new Public Works facility to achieve silver LEED certification and applied for certification.
- Drafted amendment to new Village plan ordinance requiring certain developments to evaluate benefits of geothermal heating and cooling systems over conventional systems and submit analysis to Village with application.

Transportation

- Operating 10% of Village vehicles on compressed natural gas.
- Increased use of alternate fuels to 48% of fleet by converting to biodiesel fuel.

3. 2009 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Continue with installation of LED traffic lights at two additional intersections.

Initiative 2: Research and propose strategies/legislation designed to 1) reduce nighttime light pollution; 2) move towards replacing streetlights with energy efficient lighting, including new alley lightening.

Initiative 3: Lobby to become pilot town for ComEd smart meter program.

Initiative 4: Develop Best Practices for home energy conservation/post links of helpful information on Green webpage

4. Identification of Potential New Initiatives

Initiative 1: Develop a plan to optimize revenue generation through the MMC “Clean Tag” program by reducing energy consumption in municipal facilities and by Village businesses and residences, and/or b) generating energy from renewable resources. Among the measures the Village should consider in order to reduce energy consumption in municipal facilities are: installing energy efficient lighting systems; replacing aging energy systems (HVAC, boilers, etc.) with more efficient technologies; installing renewable energy systems; and educating Village employees on practices that will reduce energy consumption.

Initiative 2: Conduct an energy audit of Village-owned buildings.

Initiative 3: Meet with partner agencies to educate them about the Village energy conservation plan and encourage similar initiatives in their facilities.

PART IV WASTE & RECYCLING

Mission Statement: To reduce waste and increase recycling by establishing programs for every sector of the Village waste stream.

1. Introduction

The Village's comprehensive Solid Waste Program is designed to effectively deal with increasing amounts of trash, rising collection and disposal costs, legislative restrictions and growing environmental concerns. The success of the program depends on citizen participation.

While the residential program has proven to be measurably successful, the recycling rates in the multi-unit and commercial sectors have barely increased above 10%. The Village must consider these waste streams in a Village-wide approach and develop programs that will fit the needs of each sector and provide recycling opportunities throughout the community.

2. Past Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives

- From 1995 to 2008, the Village Holiday tree recycling program has recycled 817.74 tons of trees (average of 58.4 tons per year).
- The Multi-unit Recycling Ordinance established in 1997 requires all multi-unit buildings to have a source separated recycling program.
- Since 1998, conducted the Paint Exchange Program.
- Implemented the Public Access Recycling program near transit stations.
- Implemented the Public Access Recycling program in parks.
- Since 2004, the single-stream recycling cart program has diverted 31,002 tons of recyclable materials.
- Implemented festival recycling with specially designed festival recycling containers.
- Held Shredding Paper recycling events.
- Promoted WCCSWA Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics collection events.
- Created the Recycling Opportunities Guide.
- Developed "Recycling Ins and Outs" articles for FYI newsletters.
- Implemented Worm Composting Program and presented program to schools throughout District 97.
- Began Waste-free lunch initiatives at District 97 schools, and obtained a grant to build program at Hatch School.
- Promoted smaller refuse cart option to Village Residents.

- Added plastic bags to the list of acceptable items in curbside recycling program.
- Drafted amendment to Village waste ordinance to permit composting of kitchen waste.

3. 2009 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Encourage Composting Activities

- Enact amendment to Village Ordinance permitting composting of kitchen waste.
- Develop and distribute backyard composting educational materials to residents.

Initiative 2: Increase Recycling Opportunities

- Conduct two Paint Exchanges.
- Develop alternatives to proposed consolidated waste hauling contract to reduce number of waste haulers in Village and increase recycling by businesses. Businesses that choose to contract separately for waste hauling should be required to internalize the additional costs imposed on the Village.

4. Identification of Potential New Initiatives

Initiative 1: Research existing programs to eliminate plastic and polystyrene usage.

Initiative 2: Keep Oak Park Beautiful education campaign to reduce litter.

Initiative 3: Work with the Park District to reduce contamination of recycling in parks.

PART V WATER

Mission Statement: To help sustain local and regional water resources, including lakes, rivers and groundwater, by building infrastructure and promoting practices that help reduce consumption and contamination of those resources.

1. Introduction

The Village is fortunate to be situated near abundant amounts of fresh water, but the health of local lakes and rivers is fragile and we cannot be complacent about protecting our water. We must have clean water to maintain our basic quality of life; we rely on local and regional lakes, rivers and groundwater for drinking, bathing, sanitation, food, and recreation, as well as for the life and health of the plants and animals in our community and the ecosystems that contribute to the environmental health of the region. In order to ensure that we continue to have access to abundant amounts of clean water, the Village must implement measures designed to: 1) reduce the amount of water we consume; 2) protect our water resources from contaminants; and 3) reduce flooding caused by the overflow of the storm water system.

2. Past Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives

Water conversation through native landscaping

- Implemented sustainable landscaping along the Jackson Boulevard, Lake Street and Madison Street corridors, and in the commercial planter program.
- Eliminated use of pesticides in municipal landscaping.
- Installed native and low maintenance plantings along Le Moyne Parkway.
- Designed the underground irrigation system on Marion Street between Lake Street and North Blvd.
- Distributed 200 rain barrels to Village residents.

3. 2009 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Work with League of Women Voters to promote Rain Barrel Usage in the Village.

4. Identification of Potential New Initiatives

Initiative 1: Promote the installation of native and low maintenance plantings by businesses and residents.

Initiative 2: Research the costs and benefits of permeable pavement in appropriate applications, such as alleys.

Initiative 3: Install low flow fixtures in Village facilities and educate the public about the benefits of water conservation by installing these technologies.

Initiative 4: Research technologies for using “gray water” in appropriate applications.