

Baltimore County Sustainability Network



Development of a Sustainability Strategy for Baltimore County

September 2011

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2008, former County Executive Jim Smith took three major steps to advance sustainability in Baltimore County. 1) The County Executive established the Office of Sustainability within the Executive Office to oversee the development and implementation of sustainability strategies for County government operations and the community at large¹. 2) The County Executive pledged that County government would reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from its operations by 10% by 2012. 3) The County Executive established the Sustainability Network (SN), an advisory committee of citizens, private sector and County representatives, and charged the SN to develop recommendations for a sustainability strategy for Baltimore County (Attachment A).

Phase I: Baltimore County Operations Sustainability Strategy

In November of 2008 at the SN kick-off meeting, the County Executive asked the members to first develop recommendations for Baltimore County government operations given that “we should lead by example.” To carry out this charge, the members established four work groups. Collectively, the recommendations provided by these work groups produced Phase I of the SN’s work, the County Operations Sustainability Plan. The work groups are listed below.

1. Protection of Natural Resources Work Group

The Protection of Natural Resources (PNR) Work Group was tasked with reviewing the County’s existing environmental policies and programs to assess their contribution to the County’s GHG emissions reduction goal. It was also asked to recommend improvements or additional actions to further reduce GHG emissions. The Work Group developed recommendations in six areas:

- Forest Management for Enhanced Carbon Sequestration
- Managing Urban Trees and Forests
- Afforestation, Reforestation, and Restoration of Forests and Wetlands
- Protection and Conservation of Agricultural Land, Coastal Wetlands, and Forested Land
- Market Incentives
- Soil Carbon Sequestration with Biochar

2. Our Built Environment Work Group

The Built Environment Work Group was tasked with reviewing the development of Baltimore County, including existing and new buildings, energy generation, wastewater pumping stations, vehicle miles traveled (VMTs), and walkable communities.

¹ In 2011, the new administration merged the office with the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management creating the current Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS).

3. Education & Outreach Work Group

The Outreach and Education Work Group focused on ways to educate and motivate people toward practical and measurable behavioral change for energy conservation, and to help foster the movement toward an acceptance of systemic changes. Initial efforts were focused on behavior change and an energy conservation campaign for County government employees.

4. County Operations Work Group

The County Operations Work Group was tasked with developing recommendations to improve energy efficiency and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions of County operations. The group focused on day-to-day operations of our buildings, staff, fleet of cars and trucks, and reviewed the efficiency of these operations.

Recommendation Process

The four work groups developed specific recommendations to meet the GHG emissions reduction goal for County government operations (Phase I of the County's sustainability efforts). A GHG emissions inventory was completed for both government operations and the County at large through a consultant (Attachment B). In addition to the expertise on the work groups, each group called in technical or operational advisors to better understand how the County operates and to review approaches taken by other jurisdictions. 121 recommendations resulted which are contained in the attached work group reports (Attachments D-G).

The full SN met in June 2009 to discuss the work group reports and recommendations (Attachment C). The SN identified twelve of the 121 recommendations as critical to building the institutional capacity to implement the full suite of recommended actions. The twelve recommendations have been grouped into four categories as listed below: *

Baseline Information and Policy Adoption

1. Complete the baseline emissions inventory for all County entities.
2. Create a comprehensive energy policy/plan for County operations and community-wide.
3. Adopt and implement a no-net-loss trees and forestry policy.

Implementing Energy Efficiency and Conservation with Employees and County Operations

4. Hire a County energy coordinator.
5. Develop department energy champions to report back to department heads/Director of Environmental Protection and Sustainability/County Executive the status of conservation programs, next steps, etc.
6. Develop a professionally designed, effective, ongoing, energy conservation plan/program for all County employees to be made available as a turnkey model that can be utilized by other public and private organizations in the County. This would include an assessment of the implementation of recycling at all government facilities.

7. Provide training and the capacity for technical and operations personnel to understand and implement energy savings techniques, LEED standards, etc.
8. Maximize efficiency in operations of all County fleets.

Implementing Audits, Building and Landscaping Standards

9. Analyze and prioritize buildings for audits to determine comprehensive reductions in energy usage.
10. Have all county buildings, either newly constructed or renovated, meet LEED standards (silver), or be implemented in a way that maximizes efficiency to meet LEED guidelines.
11. Develop and implement conservation landscaping measures for County buildings and new and redevelopment projects.

Addressing Employee Commute Options

12. Actively promote Commuter Choice Maryland and other programs to give employees a variety of options to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Work with the private sector where appropriate.

*The numbering does not denote ranking of importance among the twelve.

Next Steps: Implementing Phase I Recommendations & Completing Phase II Community-wide Sustainability Strategy

In April 2009, Baltimore County was notified that it was the recipient of funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program through the Department of Energy (DOE). This involved submitting an energy strategy to the DOE, a list of programs and projects to be funded, and a proposed budget. The recommendations prepared by the SN were used as guidance to prepare the submission to the DOE. The amount granted, \$7.4 million, must be spent by December 2012. Currently, grant-funded projects are underway which relate to the top 12 recommendations and to the community-wide sustainability strategy.

The Sustainability Network members have been invited to continue in their pivotal role as Baltimore County implements the County Operations Sustainability Plan (Phase I) and to refine and implement the County's community-wide sustainability strategy (Phase II). Baltimore County secured the services of consultants, KCI Technologies, to assist in and manage the community-wide strategy development. KCI has produced a draft Phase II report for the SN's review, which begins following the submission of this Plan.

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