Notes from Leading the Way—Montgomery County Confronts Climate Change

**Small Group Discussion: Sustainable Communities**

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*Sustainable is*

* Resilient, independent
* Locally empowering
* Can keep \_\_\_ without destroying the environment
* Will last to 7th Generation, 100 years from now
* Closed loop
* Self-perpetuating
* Without outside impact
* Distributed infrastructure
* Limits to growth
* Fine space and resources

*Communities are*

* Neighborhoods
* Watersheds
* Jurisdictions—local, state, regional, national, global
* Diverse communities
* Faith Communities – Church/Synagogue/Mosque
* Schools
* Bio Region
* Parks
* Businesses
* Economic strata
* Homeowners
* Renters
* Virtual
* Civic and social

Action Themes

Food & Waste/Agriculture

Transportation

Land Use

Outreach/Education/Competition

**Sustainable Communities Unpacked**

Outreach/Education/Competition

* Culture change - how to accomplish
* Outreach to churches and other groups - people aren’t aware of what they can do
* How to best do education around these issues - faith communities - groups like “the Elders” AARP
* Engaging people in their own communities, civics
* Who can cut carbon emissions more quickly — organize community competitions, e.g. Rockville & Silver Spring
* Replicate for carbon reducing the Takoma Park’s energy challenge program, <https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/sustainability/neighborhood-energy-challenge/>

*Info Resources for all this*

* enewsletter/websites
* commuter services
* My Green Montgomery
* Raise visibility of Rainscapes programs
* Refuse- Reduce- Reuse - Recycle

Culture Change - interpretive signs; cultural events; art - ways to communicate

Food & Waste

Zero Waste (challenge)

Reducing Food Waste

Food Rescue program – Manna, Hungry Harvest, etc.

Food Council submitted plan to County Council

Waste:

* Moving away from single use in Howard County
* In apartments, stop little water bottles
* Schools, youth - get rid of single use.
* Refuse — stop using plastic;
* Shipping recycled plastic to China - not sustainable
* “save/pay as you throw” – increase cost of single serve plastic to include the impact
* We need follow-up plans and mechanisms

Composting

* How to get into schools.
* More markets where people can drop off kitchen scraps
* Educational -- for residential composting
* Need composting facility in County - look at incinerator site for this

Agriculture

* Regenerative (or smart) agriculture - healthy soil act
* conference for youth farm
* Yard Share – bring more backyards into food production.
* Other smart agriculture for more carbon uptake

Transportation (= 51% of CO2 emissions)

Sustainable modes: Carpools, electric vehicles, BRT, Light and Heavy Rail, Micro transit - and with smart growth, more bike lanes, dockless bikes, safe pedestrian routes.

MCDOT now supports bike share - piloting dockless bike-share - transportation management

Car pooling – MCDOT now works with Commuter Connections (web based car pooling) - Promote carpooling in county garages; require/incentivize new buildings to include car/van pooling

Goal - Fossil free- zero carbon streets.

Complete Streets everywhere, cars, bikes, peds all over

Challenge road building - climate impact, induced demand,

Buses

* Reduce bus idle time
* Move toward electric buses - but keep in mind that overwhelming part of GGE are car trips
* MCPS - Electric School buses – Initiate plan/efforts for MCPS
* coordinate buses - metro etc for more efficiency
* Incentivize Mass Transit; Disincentivize cars

Add green infrastructure to existing road projects - stormwater management, trees

Land Use

* Need more trees in East County
* Publicize Rainscapes program, for greater uptick
* Recognize that old county policy/landuse was encouraging cars, sprawl, low-density
* New normal: dramatically increase transit, density walkability
* How can exceed county requirements
  + shade and cool impervious surfaces
* Environmental//economic/social policies and programs - all have different impacts
* Better land use patterns
  + still 30 years later, zoned residential around Metro stations

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

Participants joining other small group discussions offered the following additional suggestions to the Sustainable Communities poster:

* Electric school buses
* Plan for the limits to growth
* More people in fewer vehicles, bus rapid transit and purple line
* Implement “complete streets” principles throughout county – car/bike/pedestrian routes
* No synthetic turf playing fields and playgrounds
* Explore if mattress recycling facility and disposal fee program can be set up in county
* Make any growth smart growth and provide some incentives for climate research, renewable energy, pollution reduction, decarbonization businesses that bring jobs
* Incentivize solar panels over parking lots
* Incentives to plant trees at commercial sites and plan for utilities that don’t destroy trees
* Create biking and walking trails connecting neighborhoods to commercial areas