



City of Coconut Creek

City Green Plan and Annual Reports

*“Creating a Culture of Green Excellence
Through Accountability and Action”*

Alliance for Innovation

**Transforming Local Government: Innovation Award Submittal
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**Department of Sustainable Development
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PROGRAM: City Green Plan & Annual Reports: “Creating a Culture of Green Excellence Through Accountability and Action”

DESCRIPTION:

The City Green Plan is a ten-year planning document that provides a unique comprehensive approach to achieving environmental and economic sustainability. The plan is an integrated, all-inclusive, strategic document that guides the future of Coconut Creek through a series of action steps categorized specific to the City. Annual reports provide assistance in community decision making based on the assessment and data of each action. By implementing this plan, the City will provide long-term benefits to the health and well-being of the community, and will be uniquely poised to lead the green city planning effort in South Florida.

OVERVIEW OF PLAN:

The plan was developed with a holistic planning approach and contains four main components: (1) adoption of a city green image, (2) the identification of sustainable themes for plan measurement, (3) a range of action steps, and (4) a method for annual monitoring. Below is a brief summary of each section of the plan (*see attached City Green Plan document*).

City Green Image

The branding of the City Green Plan is important. By utilizing a consistent green image, the community can identify programs and events that are a part of the green planning effort, and embrace the image as part of the green community culture. The concept of the image is simple. The butterfly image created by the City, commonly dubbed “Fluffy”, is placed on top of two leaves with Fluffy representing the City and the leaves representing the environment. The green image is used on all programs and events, banners, posters, flyers, etc., that are directly related to the goals and action steps of the Green Plan.

Sustainable Themes

The document outlines seven thematic areas for plan measurement. The themes follow the framework of the United Nations Green Cities Declaration and Urban Environmental Accords, which is a collaborative call for action for cities to recognize that 75% of the world’s resources creating our environmental challenges are consumed by cities. The sustainable environment themes addressed in the plan are: energy, water, urban design, urban nature, waste reduction, transportation, and climate change.

Implementation

The plan will be implemented through a series of action steps under nine categories. Through each categorized action, there are means to conserve energy and water, reduce waste, improve community participation, and demonstrate environmental stewardship while achieving greenhouse gas reductions. There are different levels of effort ranging from City-controlled to voluntary community participation to regional leadership. There is no particular order for implementation and some action steps can be completed within short timeframes, while others will require a longer timeframe.

To assist with implementation, the City formed a staff City Green Team. The formation of a Green Team is essential to achieving the goals of the plan. The Green Team consists of City employees with one representative from each department, who assist with action steps and annual reporting. In addition, the City's Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) reviews the plan and annual reports, and is the recommending body to the City Commission. The participation of a City Green Team, the Environmental Advisory Board, and City Commission are all important components to the implementation process (*see attached Implementation Process graphic*).

Plan Monitoring

Of key importance is the need to monitor the plan through an annual City Green Plan Report. Annual reports follow the progress of each action step and act as a performance measurement tool for management, collaboration, and coordination. At the end of each calendar year, the City Green Team will collect data and generate a report for the City Commission. The reports contain a summary of accomplishments for that year by implementation category, identify the status of each action, list the measurements for each action, and summarize the results of each action. The City Green Plan Report serves as a "report card" and is presented upon the completion of each calendar year to the City Commission and public for review. The City completed the first City Green Plan Report in 2009, which established benchmarks for future years (*see attached 2009 Green Plan Report*).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The City is widely recognized as a well-planned community with a unique environmental consciousness and a progressive planning approach. The development of green building requirements, a master greenways plan, annual free tree giveaways, and the official trademark as Butterfly Capital of the World[®] has set precedence for the city to maintain a green and sustainable image. The City was maturing and it was important to brand our image. With continuous efforts in "green" it was abundantly clear to the City Commission and the community that what made Coconut Creek special was our environment consciousness and desire to be environmental leaders.

This became more evident in May 2009, where the City held a visioning session called "Vision 2020" with residents, community leaders, business owners, city staff, and City Commissioners. The purpose of the assembly was to gather input on city-wide issues and to develop a "greenprint" for the future growth of Coconut Creek. During the assembly, a consistent theme was discussed regarding the City's green image. There was the overwhelming sentiment that the green movement advance and be infused throughout the community culture, be promoted as a community focus, and be contained in City operations. As a result, the City Green Plan was developed by City staff and adopted by the City Commission on December 10, 2009.

OVERALL BENEFIT AND IMPORTANCE OF PLAN:

The City Green Plan was developed based on the fundamental concept that human activities have a profound impact on resources and the natural environment. A comprehensive plan was needed for the City to monitor its impact and demonstrate accountability for its actions. The City had no such mechanism in place to accomplish this goal. Therefore, the plan was developed with three main objectives: (1) to improve the overall environmental quality of the City, (2) to assist the City Commission in decision making based on an assessment of the plan, and (3) to provide accountability through annual monitoring.

Environmental Quality

By having a plan in place that addresses environmental sustainability, the City can improve the overall health and well-being of the community. The plan makes good economic and social sense, and guides the community toward the future of sustainable programs and practices. Through a series of action steps, the City will be able to monitor the progress of the plan and be a leader in environmental accountability.

For example, Category 1: MainStreet and Green Development, Action 1.9 states the need to increase density along major transportation corridors to support long range planned transportation systems. Category 6: Sustainable Transportation and Mobility, Action 6.2 states the need to increase mobility in the City with new shelters, bicycle parking, bike lanes, trails, and the use of the local bus service. Together these actions support one another, and will provide alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle giving residents the opportunity to conserve and protect the environmental integrity of their community. Category 7: Community Outreach and Empowerment contains numerous actions that will engage the community such as Action 7.3, which states the need to implement a yearly green lecture series for the public. To date, there have been five lectures with great community participation. There is also Action 7.2, which states the need to implement a city green award program that recognizes homeowners, neighborhoods, and businesses that incorporate green and sustainable practices. This program will be created in the near future and will benefit each and every resident and business that participates; again empowering the community to conserve and protect the environment.

Decision Making

With an annual monitoring requirement, the City Green Plan becomes a tool for the City Commission in decision making based on an assessment of each action step. Each action is analyzed based on a series of annual measures with specific results. The annual evaluation is done by calendar year where the budget process is done on a fiscal year. This approach allows the annual report to be completed at the same time the budget process begins thereby allowing the City Commission to determine potential funding for the City Green Plan. City operations are the most impacted by this process and will result in cost savings based on diminished demand of resources generated from operations.

For example, Category 8 of the City Green Plan is specific to city operations and contains nine actions, of which Action 8.4 states to reduce overall energy consumption on City owned sites by 20%. To support this action, the Information Technology Department implemented a power management scheme for all employee computers to reduce energy consumption. This effort results in annual cost savings of \$9,300 and a yearly reduction of CO2 emissions by 148,000 tons. This effort will be monitored as time

progresses to determine if changes are necessary such as implementing new technologies or if a dedicated funding source can be identified that advances this green effort. Again, this approach allows the City to align green efforts with the budget as a means of sustainable best practices.

Accountability

The plan was developed with the requirement to generate an annual report so the City could account for its actions. The Green Plan Reports are expected to outline areas for improvement through the implementation process of ten years. By having an annual report, the City is obligated to identify, explain, and answer questions on being green. The City has never had such a document or requirement related to green programs and initiatives. As the Butterfly Capital of World® it's inherently an obligation. The City wants to ensure Coconut Creek remains unique, competitive, and a leader in South Florida while preserving the environment for future generations.

RESPONSE TO APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

How is it a quantum leap of creativity?

- Requiring a process to measure performance on an annual basis
- Ensuring accountability and action
- Annual reporting makes this plan a “living plan”
- Useful tool for community decision making

Who has benefited from the innovation?

- Residents and visitors
- Businesses, contractors, and developers
- City Commission and staff

How was the innovation initiated and implemented?

- Advancement of City's green image
- Send a clear message to our customers
- Consistent with growing trends
- Result of City's Vision 2020 session
- Defines sustainability for the City
- Guides staff on developing programs
- Provides cohesiveness in presentation of data

What risks were associated with planning and developing the innovation?

- Beyond comfort zone of typical department functions
- New trend with limited comparisons
- Identifying what data to gather and analyze
- Need to be flexible with the ability to modify based on technological advances
- Need for climate software

What was the environment in which the innovation was created and sustained?

- City Commission – policy driven initiative
- City wide team atmosphere through City Green Team
- Creative and flexible culture with department wide support

What were execution costs and savings?

- Staff created and Commission supported
- Execution costs determined through annual monitoring process with expected reductions
- Identifying meaningful savings is on-going process

What lessons were learned that could be shared with other local governments?

- Need for research locally, regionally, globally
- Formation of green teams – both operationally and in community
- Develop consensus on necessary actions
- Categorize specific to your community
- Adopt and need to monitor

Which department and/or individuals championed the innovation?

- Lead department: Department of Sustainable Development and all departments
- Dedicated staff: Sustainable City Coordinator for coordination and implementation