

ICMA 2012 Annual Awards Program
Program Excellence Award – Community Sustainability
City of Evanston Project Narrative

Introduction -The City of Evanston is a national leader in promoting building energy efficiency through the successful implementation of the City's Green Building Ordinance using the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating System. This program is innovative because it was developed by engaging citizen volunteers practicing in the green building industry and working collaboratively with City staff and elected officials. The ordinance demonstrates leadership in climate action and sustainability by covering public and private developments for new construction, major renovations and additions. At the time the Ordinance was created, only 12 of 137 green building ordinances nationwide included commercial, multi-family and municipal buildings¹. Renovations projects are virtually unaddressed by the majority of other similar ordinances. Evanston remains the only community in Illinois with a comprehensive green building ordinance.

Overview – Evanston's Green Building Ordinance requires that all new commercial, multi-family and municipal constructions and additions over 20,000 square feet achieve LEED Silver certification through the USGBC. New construction and additions less than 20,000 square feet and renovation projects have the option of achieving LEED certification or employing a number of efficiency measures. City Staff along with active engagement from community volunteers have continued to refine the Green Building Ordinance and adapt it to meet the needs of both sustainability and economic development.

Program Context -The Evanston Green Building Ordinance was created in a parallel to the

¹ Marne Sussman. January 2010. Municipal Green Building Ordinances in the U.S. Center for Climate Change. Columbia Law School.

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development of the Evanston Climate Action Plan (ECAP), enacted in November 2008, which supports Evanston's commitment to reducing carbon emission 13% by the end of 2012. Because approximately 80% of Evanston's annual community carbon emissions are from building energy use², a key recommendation of the ECAP is to develop legislation requiring new construction to meet LEED standards to help reduce emissions from building energy usage. The ordinance was initiated by the Evanston Environmental Board in 2007, a citizen advisory commission focused on environmental policy in Evanston. The Evanston Environmental Board reviewed other city's green building ordinances, obtained input from downtown planning meetings and solicited feedback from the City's Green Team, Department heads, and staff from the Facilities and Community Development department. They also conducted outreach to the largest employers in the City and held several public forums. Once the Climate Action Plan was passed in 2008, City staff took a larger role in facilitating the development of the Green Building Ordinance and continued to work collaboratively with the Environment Board.

Community Engagement and Partnerships - Community engagement and partnerships are a key element in the successful adoption and implementation of the Green Building Ordinance. Following the early work by the Evanston Environment Board, the role of citizens and other partners was formalized when the Evanston City Manager appointed a nine-member Green Building Ordinance Committee to finish development of the ordinance in July of 2009. The Committee was comprised of three City staff members, three community business members

² 2011 City of Evanston Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Update

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and three Environmental Board members and included architects, designers, and developers working in Evanston. The inclusion of local builders and architects on this committee was critically important in gaining broad community acceptance for this ordinance. The Committee held numerous public meetings and worked with the city's legal department to draft the formal ordinance language. On October 26, 2009, the Evanston City Council approved ordinance 14-O-09 as the Green Building Ordinance.

Program Implementation and Costs -The cost of creating the Green Building Ordinance was limited to staff time for developing the ordinance and creating guidance documents for developers and owners. On-going costs are limited to staff time for verifying compliance and providing support for developers who have questions with the ordinance. The city's Sustainable Programs Coordinator is a LEED AP and has supported developers during the project development phase. The City saved significant costs by leveraging help from volunteers and community members who were actively working in the green building industry and provided invaluable support during the process.

Application of Technology - Green Buildings reduce energy use and resources through a variety of different technology applications. Although the Green Building Ordinance does not mandate the use of any specific type of technology, it does act as a catalyst for using the best and newest technologies available to meet the requirements of the LEED Silver standard and the Evanston Sustainable Building Measures which buildings now must achieve.

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Program Replication- The Evanston Green Building Ordinance provides a case study and replicable model for a community to leverage existing climate action or sustainability plans and high community support to implement a green building ordinance. City Staff would be happy to develop a case study and share specific ordinance language that could be used by other communities.

Results and Outcomes - The Evanston community has increased the efficiency of new, large building projects and provided a visible means to show the city's commitment to greenhouse gas reductions. Buildings represent nearly 80% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Evanston and green buildings contribute approximately 35% less emissions than standard buildings. Implementing a far reaching Green Building Ordinance is one of the most effective ways in which to lower our overall greenhouse gas emissions over time. Green building construction in Evanston resulting from this ordinance includes: Commercial Buildings - 4 LEED Silver buildings, 1 LEED platinum building, 70+ interior renovations and one commercial geothermal project; Residential Buildings - 2 LEED Silver for multi-family homes, 30+ interior renovations.

Cost savings/ efficiency- Industry research shows that green buildings save owners 26% off their energy bills, 13% off their maintenance costs, and 20% life cycle savings for construction costs. Green buildings also have a 27% rate higher occupant satisfaction. The number of buildings impacted by this program is still relatively small but the city's 2011 greenhouse gas emissions inventory shows a 8% reduction in commercial natural gas since 2005. Over time the City will continue to evaluate the impacts to the Green Building Ordinance.

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Lessons Learned- A key lesson learned is the need to balance environmental sustainability and economic development in creating and implementing the Evanston Green Building Ordinance. Due to the economic downturn, Evanston experienced a slowdown in building development and it was more than a year later before the first promising new business and building project came to the city. Originally, the ordinance required LEED Silver certification for buildings over 10,000 square feet. This first project was a 15,000 square foot retail building and the developer expressed concern about the added cost of making the building LEED Silver certified. To respond to this concern, the City Manager and Sustainable Programs Coordinator re-convened with the Green Building Ordinance Committee to review the requirements of the ordinance and solicit their input. Rather than abandoning the ordinance or remaining inflexible to the development, the Committee came up with a compromise that would give more flexibility for buildings between 10,000 and 20,000 square feet in size by creating the Evanston Sustainable Building Measures for New Construction list. The list can be used by developers for mid-sized projects and reflects specific green building priorities in Evanston. Buildings larger than 20,000 square feet in size are still required to achieve LEED Silver certification or better. The Green Building Ordinance's remains an important part of the city's Climate Action Plan and offers both flexibility and transparency of all the requirements which is important to developers and owners.